



The Learning Circles Project: *Values & Practices*



How Learning Circles Are Organized

by Guy Ewing

We found that there was a wide range of ways that inclusive learning groups are organized, but all of them were supported, in one way or another, by community organizations.

At one end of the spectrum are groups within organizations. For example, the Multicultural Women's Group operates within a neighbourhood services organization. The Hand Drum Circle operates within the Barrie Native Friendship Centre. The Digby Portfolio Group operates within the Community Learning Centre. These groups are seen as part of the organization's programming.

At the other end of the spectrum is the New Tusket Women's Institute, a learning group with its own community organization and network organizations which, over the years, have been developed to provide support.

In the middle, there are groups which have their own identity and direction, apart from community organizations, but which rely on community organizations for support. Examples would be the Fisheries Discussion Group, which draws on the resources of the Bay of Fundy Marine Resource Centre, and the Stratford Women's Group, which uses the resources of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Stratford.

The groups that were created within organizations and the groups that rely on community organizations for support are not greatly different. The main difference may be how much support and guidance the group gets from paid staff at the organization.

The Ontario Workers Art and Heritage Centre in Hamilton is not a learning group as such, but is an interesting organization to consider when thinking about inclusive learning in the community. This organization reminds us that there are ways besides learning groups to promote inclusive community learning.