

## **Institutional Multicultural Audit - background information**

Dear Friends,

At the June 24<sup>th</sup> Called Meeting, the body considered a minute that contained a reference to conducting an “institutional multicultural audit.” While there generally was interest and support expressed, many Friends did not know what such a project was, and I promised to share background information and a description of what such audits usually include.

Simply stated, an institutional audit (sometimes called a self-assessment) is a mechanism for an organization (faith community, corporation, educational institution, neighborhood or non-profit organization) to evaluate itself according to a set of principles, following a set process. In the specific case of an institutional *multicultural* audit, the focus is on how the organization welcomes, includes and supports members from a full range of cultures and truly includes all in the community. The purpose of *all* audits is to help an organization step back and take a careful look at itself — using its own goals, hopes and dreams as a lens — to identify its strengths (where the organization is meeting its professed mission and goals) and where it falls short. All aspects of the life of the organization are considered, including interpersonal interactions, as well as the structures and processes used to maintain it. The outcome usually contains a summary of the data, as well as recommended steps to address the organization’s weaknesses.

Some institutional audits can be done by the organization itself, using formats developed by organizational change consultants and inviting in a team of trained observers to carry out the actual assessment. One example is the Multicultural Assessment Project (MAP), used by many independent schools in the 1990’s and 2000’s to assess their ability to recruit, support and include students and staff of color and to create curricula that is inclusive of the whole of human experience. Most audits, however, are conducted by outside (of the organization) professional consultants who have developed a variety of ways to help an organization “see” itself in a new light. Some of these consultants conduct the institutional multi-cultural audit themselves, while others train a team of organization members to do the actual data collection and then lead the team in analyzing the data and creating an improvement plan.

Given that we are a faith community and that we have committed to addressing racism within Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and beyond, an institutional multicultural audit would focus on how well we are moving towards our dream of becoming a beloved community, in which each one of us feels wholly known, recognized, heard, appreciated and included, and whether our current interactions and structures and practices are moving us towards that dream or standing in the way. This kind of an audit could help us see where we are currently living into our faith and where we are falling short. It could also help us understand the varied experiences of Friends with PYM and what changes we need to make so that *all* members and attenders feel wholly a part of our faith community.

In our country, there are many outside professional consultants who lead Institutional multicultural audits/self-assessments and several Quaker organizations have begun them.

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