



THE STORIES OF SCYMF

Draft proposal

ABSTRACT

Using conversation and contemplation to chronicle the formation and values of the Sierra Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends (SCYMF).

Gil George Assistant Clerk SCYMF

1. Introduction

Up to this point SCYMF has been engaged with the formation of our Yearly Meeting. While the events that have drawn us together are still relatively fresh it is time to preserve our stories. We will be using queries centered around drawing out stories about our formation, hopes, conversations, dreams, hurts, trials, failings and the interconnection of those things. It is an exciting thing to see the larger picture of the Spirit's movement among us. In the telling of our stories we will be discovering the underlying narratives that bind us together.

2. Outline of the process

- a. Phase 1: Identify/recruit the team (2 months)
- b. Phase 2: Refine process and Create Queries for Contemplative Interview (4 Months)
- c. Phase 3: Introduce Team, Queries, and Interview format (1-2months and 1 quarterly gathering/annual session)
- d. Phase 4: Interviews and data entry (3 months)
- e. Phase 5: Team/Consultant Data Analysis and editing (3-6 months)
- f. Phase 6: Consolidate the stories into book form and web excerpts (3-6 months)
- g. Phase 7: Celebrate and Encourage local meetings and others to join us in reading and listening to the stories.

Phase 1: Identify/Recruit the team (2 month timeline)

Working with the Coordinating Committee, Equity and Inclusion, and external consultants we will recruit interviewers and editors from each meeting associated with SCYMF, and a small team to interview Individual members and those who are no longer part of SCYMF, but were part of its formation.

Proposed team composition:

- Team to be clerked by: Gil George SCYMF Assistant Clerk
- Interviewers from each monthly meeting and a team to reach out to independent/former SCYMF participants:
- Editors
- External process and accountability consultants. \$2500-\$3000 depending on time commitments. This will not be a perfect process, and I am certain that my own biases will creep into this document as will the biases of each of us creep into the results of the process. It will be crucial for the Equity and Inclusion Committee to be involved in this process from the outset, including in the creation and evaluation of this initial document. Additionally, we will be identifying and employing persons with indigenous lenses like Randy Woodley and Erna Hackett (others TBD) and organizations like Friends World Committee for Consultation (others TBD) from outside of our group to provide diversity, equity, and inclusion accountability and support for our process.
 - BIPoC Perspectives
 - LGBTQ+ Perspectives
 - FWCC/other Friends' group Perspectives

Outline of Phase 1:

- 1) Get CC approval for project plan.
- 2) Get YM approval for project plan and budget.
- 3) Recruit Interviewers and editors.
- 4) Retain consultants.

Phase 1 Goals:

- 1) Project Approval by CC and YM.
- 2) Recruit Interviewers, editors and consultants.

Phase 2: Refine Process and Create Queries for Contemplative Interview (4 month timeline)

During our initial meetings the Interview team will go over this document, and refine the plan to better reflect the makeup of the team, and to decide the ways we will be evaluating and editing stories together. We will get input from our consultants on ways to screen for bias and still find the pattern of Light within each reply.

Outline of Phase 2:

- 1) Initial meetings to establish rapport, learn about appreciative inquiry and gain input from consultants on things to consider. (1 month)
- 2) Develop Queries and web form to hear stories to help us appreciate and be grounded in the best of what is, to help us imagine what could be, and guide our team in crafting a chronicle of our formation and the values inherent to our YM. (2 months)
- 3) Gain feedback on Queries from consultants, standing committees, and update web form. (1 month)

Our queries will be centered around drawing out stories about our formation, hopes, conversations, dreams, hurts, trials, failings and the interconnection of those themes.

We will be using the outline of appreciative inquiry which has five parts:

- Define – What is the topic of inquiry? – It is important to define the overall focus of the inquiry (what the system wants more of). Definition is used to clarify the area of work to be considered. In spite of being the starting point of the cycle, it's a recent addition – the 5Ds were originally the 4Ds, including discover, dream, design and destiny. Definition defines the project's purpose, content, and what needs to be achieved. In this phase, the guiding question is, "What generative topic do we want to focus on together?"
- Discover – Appreciating the best of 'what is' – Discovery is based on a dialogue, as a way of finding 'what works'. It rediscovers and remembers the organization or community's successes, strengths and periods of excellence.
- Dream – Imagining 'what could be' – Imagining uses past achievements and successes identified in the discovery phase to imagine new possibilities and envisage a preferred future. It allows people to identify their dreams for a community or organization; having discovered 'what is best'. They have the chance to project it into their wishes, hopes and aspirations for the future
- Design – Determining 'what should be' – Design brings together the stories from discovery with the imagination and creativity from dream. We call it bringing the 'best of what is' together with 'what might be', to create 'what should be – the ideal'.
- Deliver/Destiny – Creating 'what will be' – The fifth stage in the 5Ds process identifies how the design is delivered, and how it's embedded into groups, communities and organizations.

In early appreciative inquiry development, it was called 'delivery', based on more traditional organizational development practice. The term 'destiny' is more prevalent now.¹

For more information please visit <https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu/>

While using appreciative inquiry we will not be attempting to gloss over or ignore the birthing traumas and national traumas affecting our Yearly Meeting, but to seek out the ways the Spirit has been present to us all along the way.

We will use the queries in a contemplative interview style in which we ask participants to reflect on the queries and respond in narrative form. I would like to give respondents the opportunity to either reply to interview questions with a (Zoom) facilitator, or to directly respond in writing on a web form. This web form will be designed by the team and the results will be private by default unless the respondent gives permission for information to be shared.

Phase Goals:

- 1) To produce queries that use appreciative inquiry to guide reflection on the activity and direction of the Spirit's leading in SCYMF.
- 2) To create a web form to be used for data entry or self-guided interview.

¹ (The David L. Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry at Champlain College, n.d.)

Phase 3: Introduce Team, Queries, and Interview format (1-2months and 1 quarterly gathering/annual session)

This phase is all about communication. We will share about each member of our interview team and our consultants in the way that member prefers. We will then introduce the queries and the web form for those who prefer sharing their stories outside of an interview. We will explain about privacy, and will honor respondents desires to either not share their story broadly, or to anonymize their story. We will then introduce the idea of a contemplative interview, and how waiting and further questions will be posed.

Outline of Phase 3:

- 1) Develop bios and collect desired images, etc. for presentation.
- 2) Create a slideshow to share at YM/QG with desired member info, the queries, and the interview process developed in Step 2.
- 3) Share info at YM, via the newsletter, on the SCYMF web site, and in local meetings.

Phase Goals:

- 1) To produce and broadly share materials and presentations containing introductions of the team, queries, and an explanation of the interview format.

Phase 4: Interviews and data entry (3 months)

This phase will be marked by lots of recruitment in local meetings and with our individual members, interviews via Zoom, in-person as is deemed safe by those involved, and entries via our web form. We need to remember what a great privilege it is to be entrusted with others' stories.

Outline of Phase 4:

- 1) Recruit and schedule interviews.
- 2) Keep up messaging about the web form for those who prefer not being interviewed.
- 3) Thank participants and double check to make sure we have privacy preferences correct.
- 4) Enter the data

Phase Goals:

- 1) Recruit interviewees.
- 2) Hold in person interviews and keep recruiting.
- 3) Ensure privacy data is correct.
- 4) Enter interview results in web form.

Phase 5: Team/Consultant Data Analysis and editing (3-6 months)

This phase will involve editing the stories for clarity and altering details of those who wish their privacy to be protected. We will determine if additional editors are needed. After the edits we will share each story with the interviewee for their approval, and also share those stories with our equity consultants to ensure the edits we made aren't excluding a marginalized voice.

Outline of Phase 5:

- 1) Editors take on a number of stories to work on and decide whether additional editors need to be recruited.
- 2) After each story is edited we will share the edited story with the interviewee for approval.
- 3) After the approval we will share the stories with our diversity and equity consultants for feedback.
- 4) After feedback we will organize the stories around 3 time periods: Before the formation of SCYMF, during the formation of SCYMF, and our first years as SCYMF

Phase Goals:

- 1) Produce clearly edited stories ready for publication.

Phase 6: Consolidate the stories into book form and web excerpts (3-6 months)

This phase will require working with Barclay Press to organize and consolidate the stories into a variety of shareable formats and prepare them for publication in book form. Barclay Press will publish the book and proceeds beyond publishing costs will go to Barclay Press and the SCYMF General Fund.

Outline of Phase 6:

- 1) Coordinate with Barclay Press to determine which formats are best for sharing the stories.
- 2) Upload the stories into Scrivener and work with BP for formatting and final edits.
- 3) Produce excerpts and final draft of the book for publishing.
- 4) Publish excerpts and books in a coordinated fashion.

Phase 6 Goals:

- 1) Publish the stories in a book and excerpts.
- 2) Have the books available for purchase online, and at Yearly Meetings and Quarterly Gatherings.

Phase 7: Celebrate and Encourage local meetings and others to join us in reading and listening to the stories.

This is the final phase of this project in which we celebrate those who contributed to and worked on the project, and encourage our YM to reflect on the stories of our formation to discern potential leadings, and to give our Faith and Practice Committee stories to pull from as they continue their work on articulating the Spirit's narrative which weaves through ours.

Outline of Phase 7:

- 1) Host a launch celebration at YM.
- 2) Encourage Meetings and members to read and reflect on our stories.
- 3) Appreciate the work the Spirit has done and is doing to weave us together.

Phase 7 Goals:

- 1) To end the project well, ensuring that all those who contributed are recognized and thanked for their emotional, mental, and physical labor.
- 2) To have reading and reflection groups scheduled across SCYMF for meetings and individual members.
- 3) To appreciate and honor the stories of our formation.