ACTIVITY SHEET 2: PRINCIPLES OF UNITY

Principes of unity are collectively documented values and agreements for how membership chooses to work together. Principles clarify what is expected of all members. To develop principles of unity, have the group reflect on the work accomplished so far, and brainstorm agreements that support participation by all. After the brainstorm, vote and document the list. Post the list so it is visible at meetings. Remember that principles are meant to help members interact in new and positive ways. It can be challenging, but working to uphold principles creates a safer, healthier, and more productive space.

Below is a sample of principles of unity developed by the students of Engaging Education (e²), a student organization at UC Santa Cruz. (Note: the comments on each principle were not written by e².)

Be willing to constructively challenge, check and grow
This principle encourages members to take responsibility and voice opinions, even when it challenges others' ideas. It also reminds members to not assume they are right and to grow through dialogue.

Be honest
Honesty is not always easy, but it's essential for members to be honest if an organization is to benefit from hearing all ideas and resolving differences.

Invest and take ownership
It can be easy to stand aside and criticize. Being fully engaged and responsible offers a more rewarding experience for members and keeps the organization constructive.

Actively work to build trust
In a society that promotes individualism and competition, members can sometimes be at odds. It takes attention and effort to work through differences and misunderstandings.

Avoid judging
Members can make snap judgments that are superficial and inaccurate. This leads to miscommunication and mistakes. Judgments can also make others feel objectified, less valued, and less open to participating fully.

Respect yourself and each other
Growing up in a society that does not empower young people can undermine self-confidence and the ability to work with others as equals. Self-respect and mutual respect is regained through working with others democratically.

Act out of love
This principle defines love as grounded in respect, understanding, and a wish for others to grow and find their own way of being healthy, happy, and fulfilled.

Be patient with yourself and others
All organizations make mistakes and have internal disagreements. This can be valuable experience if members take time to reflect and learn rather than react or draw conclusions too quickly.

Be forgiving
Mistakes are opportunities for individuals and groups to learn, not reasons for blame and punishment.

Be solution-based.
Members can focus on developing solutions and move through problems if the group keeps the goals of the organization in mind.