Annual Programme Report

July 2016 – June 2017

Building Relationships
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CRIS’s Organisational Values

**We believe in Fairness**

We work to engage people from all sections of society. We ensure that everyone who comes into contact with the organisation is treated fairly as an individual and as part of any group or organisation to which they belong.

**We believe in Respect for Diversity**

We celebrate the differences between individuals and groups of people. We recognise that understanding differences improves lives and makes our communities and society stronger.

**We believe in Relationships**

We recognise that all people and groups of people are shaped by the relationships that they hold with themselves and others. Our potential as human beings and as a society is dependent on the quality of our relationships with one another and these are to be nurtured and given space to flourish. We strive to build community. For us, Community is not a noun but a verb – it is about doing, making, building and changing.

**We Believe in Challenging Bias**

We recognise that prejudice is a natural part of being human, however, in our context it has also led to on-going bias, stereotyping and discrimination. Through our work, we seek to overcome this by adopting strategies that provide opportunities for meaningful encounter with others and growth of resilience and upstanding.

**We Believe in Human Potential**

We believe that we are all in our formative years regardless of how old we are. Learning is a constant and therefore we all have the potential to grow and change.
A Welcome from the Chair of Community Relations In Schools

It is both a privilege and a pleasure to present the Community Relations in Schools (CRIS) Annual Programme Report for July 2016 - June 2017.

The year was another very busy and hugely successful one for CRIS as we continue to build on over 35 years of work and commitment, based on our avowed aim of being ‘a leading agent for change’ in a society which faces many challenges.

Our core work has always, and still is, founded in building relationships, challenging bias and believing in human potential.

We remain closely aligned to the T:BUC areas of Children and Young People, Our Shared Community, Our Safe Community, and Our Cultural Expression.

CRIS has continued to offer groundbreaking programmes which are transformative and are characterised by imaginative planning, high quality delivery, tangible outcomes and visible change.

Our work is carefully planned in a respectful and purposeful way and is built around practice support for schools and their communities working and growing together. In this era of ever increasing outcome based accountability, but seemingly ever decreasing resources and support, we have a strategic focus on capacity building within schools and communities. We believe that CRIS can be instrumental in disseminating this focus through the embedding of our approaches more widely in society.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to our funders and partner organisations whose support is simply invaluable as we continue to develop our programmes and influence.

My thanks are also due to the CRIS Management Committee members for their dedication, commitment, insight and guidance throughout the year.

I will conclude by placing on record the appreciation we all have for the vibrancy, skills, expertise and motivation of our staff team members all of whom give so much to CRIS and to the schools and communities in which they are leading change. It is important that we acknowledge their exceptional talents which have also, deservedly, been recognised and valued more widely through a number of awards.

I commend this report to you and hope you will find it interesting and informative.

Harry Greer
CRIS Chairman
In welcoming the reader to this programme report, I would like to start by commending the school partners, staff teams, family members, and children and young people who have played a central role in shaping this past year. Through their participation, activism, and appetite for change, another great year has passed that sees the power of the everyday peacebuilder become more and more relevant and necessary.

At a time in our wider context when political uncertainty deepens and the messages emanating from our TV’s, social media and radio is one of being stuck in division and negativity, there remains a strong desire, hope, and energy among many in our grassroots who long to see Northern Ireland reach its potential as a shared and cohesive society. A place where aspiration is a driving force for change; where responsibility is shared; where people can be alongside one another, and for this to be the norm.

With a sense of urgency to share good news at a time when it is most needed I would like to state our appreciation and gratitude to the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations (UNAOC) and the BMW Group for seeing the value in the work between our school partners Holy Cross Nursery School and Edenderry Nursery School who together with CRIS were awarded the Intercultural Innovation Award in November 2017 at a ceremony in the United Nations Head Quarters in New York.

I was honoured to represent the ‘Buddy Up’ partnership and take home the award - that has twenty years of work behind it, and the active involvement of thousands of children and hundreds of families in the Ardoyne and Shankill communities. Over the coming year we will endeavour to utilise the support that accompanies this honour. It will advance the work and shine light on this powerful story of how everyday hands can build everyday peace. A story that has the potential to switch mindsets, not only of how we see ourselves and this place we call home, but of the possibilities around us to foster change and build hope.
CRIS was established three and a half decades ago, with the aim of improving Community Relations in partnership with education providers. Although our present context is very different from that of the early 1980s, our over-arching mission remains the same. CRIS has honed its position and reputation as a values-driven, forward-looking organisation that develops, trials, embeds and evaluates approaches to peacebuilding and reconciliation. This report provides a summary of what was achieved between July 2016 and June 2017.

The focus of CRIS’s work continues to be on ‘depth and quality’. Interestingly, however, over the last year CRIS has worked directly with more than 4000 distinct people – many of whom have taken part in long-term programmes of several sessions or more!

Organisational Outcomes and Learning

In recent years funders and government have moved towards ‘Outcomes Based Accountability’ as a tool for evaluating social change. ‘Outcomes Based Accountability’ asks groups to consider, “how is anyone better off as a result of this intervention?” It goes beyond ‘just outputs’ (e.g. “10 people took part”) to determine impact. CRIS first explored tracking ‘outcomes’ five years ago as part of its own organisational development and has since considered this question during planning and evaluation of all programmes. Outcomes are identified through participant feedback, evaluation and observations. However, our intentional focus on depth and quality is an outgrowth of regularly taking time to critically reflect on our practice, and to consider what we are learning from its development. This annual report will therefore seek to report on both our outcomes and our learning by tracking both as important to organisational learning, development and dissemination.

Policy Connections:

CRIS considers its direction and activities within the context of the Northern Ireland Executive’s Together: Building a United Community Strategy (T: BUC) (2013). It also seeks to support educational policies for example, the Shared Education Act (2016), and school improvement strategies such as Learning Leaders (2015) and Every School a Good School (2009) as outlined by the Department of Education (DENI). The Shared Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 placed a statutory responsibility on the Education Authority to encourage, facilitate and promote shared education, which it states is secured by ‘the working together and co-operation of two or more relevant [education] providers.’ Naturally, much of CRIS’s programme work also seeks to support schools to maximise the benefits of shared education by promoting collaboration and sharing between schools of different sectors.
‘Moving Forward Together’ (MFT) is a collaborative education, community and peacebuilding partnership. Together schools from the Antrim and Randalstown area form this wholly unique partnership which seeks to: raise standards in education and achievement, improve community relations, and promote the sharing of resources through the development and growth of formal collaboration and system leadership. The MFT partnership collectively educates approximately 6000 pupils aged 3 to 19 on an annual basis and includes Nursery, Primary, Post-Primary and Special schools from the controlled, maintained, integrated, selective and non-selective streams. CRIS, the sole community partner in MFT, co-leads its development by coordinating its daily operations and supporting all stakeholders as part of a multi-agency approach to collaborative education. Born out of the CRIS/IFI Whole School Community Approaches Project (2009 – 2013) and formally established in February 2014, the MFT Partnership has become a showcase model of collaborative education practice across Northern Ireland.

In the 2016 – 2017 Academic Year, MFT has continued to grow in remit, activity and impact as it seeks to enhance the delivery of education, inclusion, collaboration and community development. This year five key strands were addressed:

1) Partnership Group and Steering Group Development

A critical aspect of the success of MFT is stakeholder investment and ownership. Over the course of the year the Partnership Group (consisting of representatives of all 19 schools, CRIS and Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council) held termly meetings to: network and build relationships; debate educational themes; develop strategic and operational plans; approve actions and associated budgets; and to inform the development of internal systems and policies. In the 2016-17 Academic Year this also included a two-day retreat for school leaders which allowed for the further development of inter-school relations and the creation of the 2017-2020 Strategic Plan. The MFT Steering Group (consisting of representatives of all education sectors in MFT) also met regularly throughout as a working group to support ongoing operational development and to ensure that cross sectoral representation in all MFT activity. A benefit and outcome of the partnership was increased access to training. For example: Peer mediation for Year 6 & 7 pupils led by NICIE, staff training to support pupils with ASD, Dyslexia and Dyspraxia for SEN coordinators led by Empower, and involvement in ‘Collective Impact’ a project run by Barnardos with a focus on literacy, numeracy, revision skills and emotional wellbeing.
2) Development of MFT Staff Roles:

As part of the ongoing development of MFT - and the delivery of meaningful engagement activities for school staff, pupils and the wider school community - the partnership approved the creation of two, part-time positions of MFT Coordinator and MFT Administrator. The role of MFT Coordinator is to support the strategic, policy and relationship development of the partnership on an ongoing basis. This position is held by a CRIS Staff member and is funded through core funding from the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council (NICRC). The role of MFT Administrator was created to meet the growing need for a centralised communication system and processes for all activity. As the partnership continues to grow, both positions will be critical in the development of a centralised ‘Hub’ that supports the school communities to work and achieve together. This position is held by an existing school secretary and, to date, has been funded through school contributions.

3) Collaboration with Shared Education Signature Project (SESP):

During this academic year, MFT was recognised by SESP as a unique example of sharing in education. At present 14 MFT Schools participate in 6 SESP Partnerships with the potential of the inclusion of more MFT schools in SESP programmes in the 2017-2018 Academic Year. SESP worked closely with MFT representatives to develop a collaborative agreement that will see SESP supporting both the coordination and administration of the partnership, allowing for growth in shared planning, activities and resource management. This is a critical step for the partnership as recognition of its potential to enhance education and sharing grows. Examples of this include an MFT supported SESP Coordinator Network for SESP Coordinators throughout this academic year. As well as sharing best practice, this also supported a joined-up process for the delivery of Shared Education within the area.


MFT developed its first ever Strategic Plan throughout the latter part of this academic year. A critical aspect of this was the recognition that the MFT partnership modelled a Good Relations approach to Collaborative Education which generated improvement of educational opportunities for pupils, staff and the wider community. The Strategic Plan focusses on 8 strategic collaborative headings:

- Partnership and Collaborative Development
- Shared Practice and Learning
- MFT Directed Pupil Programmes
- Shared Education
- Special Educational Needs
- Transition
- Continued Professional Development (CPD) and Teacher Professional Learning (TPL)
- Families and Communities

Clear targets and milestones have been established for each Strategic Collaborative Heading which in turn has led to the creation of MFT’s first Operational Plan covering the 2017-18 Academic Period.
5) Pupil Programmes:

Throughout the 2016-17 Academic Year, the MFT partnership benefited pupils in the Antrim and Randalstown local area. Peer Mediation, for example, was piloted in 12 Primary Schools and involved the training of 30 school staff and over 300 Year 6 & 7 pupils; the recruitment of over 100 Peer Mediators; and the roll out of Peer Mediation within each primary school. As well as developing both individual and institutional capacity, this programme supports schools to develop alternative approaches to conflict and behavioural management. The Islands Project, an arts-based initiative was facilitated by BEAM Creative to support pupils to explore and develop inclusive communities. Finally, the “One Mile Challenge” fun run was held at Antrim Castle Gardens and led by the MFT Post-Primary Schools in partnership with Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and SESP. The event saw 16 schools participate in a day of exercise and relationship building with over 600 pupils completing a one-mile sprint, jog or walk around the grounds. The event was hosted by the Mayor of Antrim and Newtownabbey, John Scott.
Why engage families in peacebuilding?

In their seminal research, *Too Young to Notice? The Cultural and Political Awareness of 3-6 Year Olds in Northern Ireland* (2002) Paul Connolly, Alan Smith and Berni Kelly itemise three key pieces of learning about work with Community Relations in Nursery and Primary settings. They point to the significant role that families play in shaping early attitudes and values, saying:

“[F]or such strategies [Community Relations] to be successful, nurseries and schools need to find ways of engaging and working closely with parents and the local community...this final point simply reflects the central role that the family and the local community play in influencing the awareness and attitudes of young children...

It is certainly not realistic nor fair to expect nurseries and schools to shoulder the total responsibility of encouraging greater understanding and awareness among young children. Indeed, unless parents and the local community are part of this then not only is such an initiative unlikely to succeed, it is also quite possible that it will attract significant opposition within some local areas”.

(Connolly, Smith and Kelly, 2002: pp 53-54)
Intergenerational Peacebuilding

While this research was published sixteen years ago, our experience is that the family unit continues to be an important focal point for inter-generational peacebuilding. CRIS has honed its unique work with parents/ carers linked to schools over the last decade. It has become an organisation that is known for its high-quality parental engagement approaches. Using a professional, warm and welcoming style parents are invited to attend workshops during which they have chance to build relationships with other parents and carers and explore their special role in promoting peace-building. CRIS’s intentional method and approach when working with parents, carers, and families is to create the relaxed atmosphere and comfort of the ‘everyday’ relaxed chats over shared coffee and tea- with important discussion on community, identity and building hope for the new generation. Residential trips are used to consolidate and strengthen these new relationships.

Intergenerational engagement can be planned during Shared Education so engagement with parents and pupils is complimentary. For example, CRIS facilitated two ‘coffee morning’ events for Ligoniel and St Vincent de Paul Primary Schools (North Belfast) which coincided with children’s shared classroom days. On each day, we looked at why parental support for inter-school sharing is so valuable and talked about potential obstacles and opportunities to further work. On other occasions intergenerational work is used to compliment the Buddy Up! programme. Pupil relationships are strengthened when parents/ carers whose children are buddied up, also get to know one another. CRIS facilitated two workshops with Randalstown Central and Mt St Michael’s Primary Schools (Randalstown) with involved more than 100 P1 and P2 parents and carers. These meetings were held simultaneously to their children’s ‘Buddy Up!’ days and explored relationship building and the benefits of their schools working together.

CRIS’ Family Community Relations

Residentials

Three family residential programmes were held this year. Each programme included: planning meetings with participating schools, co-ordinating match-funding, facilitating information sharing events in each school, an adults’ ‘First Contact’ session, a three day (two night) stay at Corrymeela in Ballycastle and a post-residential ‘Celebration and Evaluation’ session.
The three residential programmes followed similar formats although the content of the adults’ workshops was tailored to meet the needs of each group. All the residential included positive memory-making activities such as shared meals, holiday activities (including a pirate treasure hunt, group songs and a trip to the beach), dedicated children’s sessions and adults’ workshops. The adults’ programme provided for intentional relationship building and exploration of Community Relations themes such as storytelling, debating and looking at flags and symbols.

Participating schools were, Whitehouse and St James’ Primary Schools from Newtownabbey building upon a strong 25 year-partnership; Steeple and St Joseph’s Nursery Schools and Riverside Special School who for the first time extended their own Antrim-area partnership with an invitation to Riverside Special School; finally, the long-established partnership of Holy Cross and Edenderry Nursery Schools (North and West Belfast) attended their tenth consecutive annual family community relations residential programme!
Alternative Narratives: North Belfast

It is a fact that North Belfast has been disproportionately impacted by the conflict in Northern Ireland. According to *The Cost of the Troubles* (1997) just over a third of Troubles-linked deaths were individuals from North and West Belfast, or as they state “Belfast and particularly North & West Belfast are the principal areas in which victims of the Troubles lived” (Fay, Morrissey and Smyth, 1997 p.36). The legacy of this impact has loomed large over the years. Portrays of the area can often be negative; media attention often focusing on areas of communal tension rather than bridge building. Anchored in a long-standing partnership between CRIS and the two Nursery schools, Edenderry and Holy Cross Nursery, CRIS has supported this ‘everyday peacebuilding’ which has grown steadily over the years. Together with school partners, family members, other advocates and observers, CRIS aims to build a counter narrative that presents a deeper understanding of the levers that tilt ongoing strife, and to juxtapose this with an alternative story of togetherness, hope and triumph - over apathy and hopelessness.

This journey towards ‘hope’ is an ongoing endeavour but offers the chance to shift the momentum at a civil society level, and to ‘change the story’ of this community by taking ownership and collectively working towards a new and more shared, cohesive society. Two initiatives which have aim to re-story the narrative about North Belfast during this year were the ‘Art of Everyday Peace Building Exhibition’ which was launched during Community Relations Week in September 2016. The art exhibition was based on the peacebuilding work with families from North Belfast among others which had occurred in 2016 and was launched at the Houben Centre in North Belfast. The event was concluded with a special CRIS presentation (*The Jane Herron Memorial Award*) made to parent worker Anne McLaren for her tireless energy and commitment to building good community relations, demonstrating the importance of this ‘everyday’ peacebuilding.

*Art of Everyday Peacebuilding Exhibition. Anne McLaren, winner of the Jane Herron Memorial Award, featured with the Principals of Edenderry (Nancy Magrath) and Holy Cross Nursery Schools (Nuala Gallagher) and CRIS Director, Lisa Dietrich September 2016*
Life as I See It Exhibition

The alternative narrative of North Belfast was also showcased in a second art exhibition which was a demonstration of the photography, crafts and artwork of both parents and children involved with the two Nursery Schools. Held in March 2017 and entitled, ‘Life As I See It’ the exhibition was well attended and were covered by a local Belfast TV station, Northern Visions Television (NVTV). Participants enjoyed seeing their work on public display in their own community. Receiving such positive feedback bolstered confidence and a sense of individual and collective achievement.

Alternative Narratives: North Belfast

• Profile of hope-building work in North Belfast raised.
• Dozens of adult family members engaged in active peacebuilding.
• Intergenerational participative framework for reconciliation established and embedded.

CRIS reflects that using the arts encourages a creativity that stimulates new ways of communicating that builds a common language.
Peace Education with Children and Young People

Since 2010, CRIS’s portfolio has a reduced emphasis in pupil-based programmes. This is due to a shift within the Community Relations and Education sectors towards supporting schools to build their internal capacity—a strategic shift which CRIS believes aids sustainability. At times, however, pupil delivery is necessary when it is linked to school development, teacher training, or in geographical areas that are considered of strategic value to CRIS’s wider work. During this reporting period our pupil peace education work included the promotion of Buddy Up! methodology, the delivery of our signature curriculum “Celebrating Difference” and “Knowing Me and Knowing You” and the Unity Project an anti-bias, anti-bullying project.

Buddy Up!

We are eager to share the Buddy Up! Model regionally and often support schools who are wishing to implement this approach. Buddy Up! is increasingly being used with all primary year groups from Nursery, Foundation and Key Stages 1 and 2 (Ages 4-11). Furthermore, it can be combined with our other curriculum packages such as “Celebrating Differences” and “Knowing Me Knowing You” as a methodology for delivery.

As an example, CRIS was asked to use Buddy Up! with Primary 4 pupils using the “Celebrating Differences Programme” with their buddies from St Bernard’s, Glengormley Integrated and Mossgrove Primary Schools in Glengormley. Generously supported by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council this is the second consecutive year this successful programme has been run with these schools. CRIS also used the Buddy Up! methodology with Primary 7 classes within two dynamic and inspiring schools Glencraig (North Down) and Hazelwood (North Belfast) Integrated Primary Schools who used Buddy Up! to cover CRIS’s popular identity/culture themed curriculum ‘Knowing Me, Knowing You’ Programme which is designed to complement Key Stage 2 Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) curriculum. “Knowing Me Knowing You” and “Celebrating Differences” were also run as stand-alone programmes at several additional schools wishing to gain additional support to bolster curriculum and to enhance school-based discussions on building an inclusive ethos. For example, at the newly integrated Loughries Integrated Primary School, CRIS worked with every class to deliver a programme of workshops that explored ‘what integration means to us’. CRIS continues to be delighted to help support schools to build tolerance, trust and an inclusive ethos.
Unity Project

The Unity Project is a dedicated anti-hate and resilience programme that was developed by the Center for Preventing Hate in Maine, USA and is delivered in Northern Ireland exclusively by CRIS.

It is a hard-hitting intervention that supports young people to explore their potential as ‘upstanders’ with the capacity to positively affect shifts in culture.

During this year, in partnership with Belfast City Council (Good Relations Unit), CRIS has delivered the Unity Project in eight Belfast post-primary schools:

- Ashfield Boys’ High School
- Corpus Christi College
- St Joseph’s College
- Belfast Boys’ Model
- Malone Integrated College
- Mercy College
- St Rose’s Dominican College
- Breda Academy

Key aspects of the project during this period include: ongoing planning meetings with key school staff, work with student leaders, a leadership development conference for young people held during Anti-Bullying week in November 2016, and a celebration event marking the ending of the project. The following is a brief summary of the main activity:

Student Leader Workshops

Student Leader Workshops (SLWs) included a full-day session that typically engaged about 35 – 50 young people in each session. During this year, CRIS worked directly with almost 1000 young people through the Student Leader Workshop methodology. This included every Year 10 student in each of the participating eight schools. Each SLW followed a similar pattern, although the content was tweaked in each context following learning from the schools Climate Assessment Report. Each session used interactive, experiential learning techniques to explore themes including, ‘Migrant Awareness’, ‘Impact of and Intention behind routinely used derogatory language’, ‘Identity and key Section 75 groups’ and ‘Leadership and Upstanding’. 
Unity Conference at Girdwood Community Hub

During Anti-Bullying Week in November 2016, CRIS hosted a large-scale ‘Unity Conference’ at the Girdwood Community Hub. Each of the participating eight schools selected ten young people with leadership qualities from their Year 10 cohorts to attend the conference. The day was an opportunity for the young leaders to meet with leaders from other schools and explore their potential as agents of change. The participants had chance to delve into their role as leaders, engage with key Unity Project themes and plan their schools-based legacy-project. The day was a huge success and was featured on NVTV’s Focal Point news programme, which can be accessed through the NVTV website (click on ‘Focal Point’ from Friday 18th November 2016). Following the Conference, each Unity Team returned to school and planned a school-based project to promote the messages of the Unity Project and share their learning.

Gavin White with Unity Team from St Rose’s Dominican College and Lord Mayor of Belfast, Brian Kingston (March 2017) at Belfast City Hall.
Recognition from Belfast City Council

The end of the Unity Project was marked with a large celebration event at Belfast City Hall. The Unity Teams were invited to come back together to share their learning and were presented with a certificate of participation by The Lord Mayor of Belfast. A copy of the Summary Findings from the Climate Assessment process and an overall Project Evaluation are available from CRIS on request. Copies of the reports were shared widely with Belfast City Council and other interested parties. In addition, CRIS presented to the City Council Good Relations Working Group about the Unity Project in January 2017. Aithne Kerrigan, the Unity Project Co-Ordinator from Ashfield Boys’ High School also attended to provide testimony of the impact of the project in her school. In June 2017, CRIS presented the project methodology and findings to Belfast City Council’s Hate Crime Working Group, who were keen to learn about the outcomes of the project.

Unity Short-listed for Peace Education Award

CRIS was very proud to be one of ten European Projects that were shortlisted for a peace education award by the Evens Foundation. The Evens Foundation, a public-benefit organisation that is based in Antwerp in Belgium, initiates and supports sustainable projects and awards prizes to projects that contribute to the progress and strengthening of cultural and social diversity across Europe. After being shortlisted, the Evens Foundation representative, Marjolein Delvou came to Belfast on a site visit where she was able to visit two of the participating schools, and tour the context of on-going segregation in Belfast. CRIS received very positive feedback for the Unity Project from the Evens Foundation and although we did not ultimately win the award, two CRIS staff have been invited to attend a Conference in London in November 2017 to share our experience and practice.

A Teacher’s evaluation of Unity Project:

*It was a great opportunity to develop the skills of the boys in Y10 and also help them understand the responsibility and influence they have. The boys we picked [for the Unity Team] weren’t necessarily the best boys, they were boys who have a lot of influence and sway with their peers so it was about educating them to lead in the best way possible*
CRIS believes in sharing its experience and practice widely within the education sector. This year as in others, we have been delighted to be asked to train school staff as well as for students training to become teachers at St. Mary’s and Stranmillis Universities. Teachers have been trained in both CRIS practice values, methodologies and in the delivery of our peace education curriculum.

CRIS’s work in this year has also helped to consolidate Shared Education partnerships. For example, CRIS facilitated a ‘twilight’ session with Ballycraigy and Six Mile Integrated Primary Schools, both part of the ‘Moving Forward Together’ Partnership, to facilitate their development of a shared mission statement. CRIS staff delivered a similar session with teaching staff at Ballyvester and St Anne’s Primary Schools in Donaghadee to hone their vision of their Shared Education partnership and explore their shared school values.

Teaching staff were also trained in implementing the Buddy Up! methodology as capacity building for teachers and classroom assistants wishing to take a lead themselves, for example: Ligoniél and St Vincent de Paul Primary Schools and Glencraig and Hazelwood Integrated Primary Schools received training from CRIS in day-long session a range of relationship building activities, icebreakers and energisers as well as work to build a shared vision and values for partnership.

As mentioned previously CRIS’s signature PDMU Curriculum ‘Knowing Me, Knowing You’ and ‘Celebrating Differences’ is also a sought-after topic for training. In January 2017, CRIS staff organised and facilitated training on the ‘Knowing Me, Knowing You’ programme for Antrim area P7 teachers from seven schools. The day-long session included the chance to learn the pedagogical approach used in ‘Knowing Me, Knowing You’ activities including the use of walking debates, small group work and games and songs. Each participant took away a resource pack and a box of tangible flags and symbols to use in their own classroom.

Finally, during this year, CRIS provided an input with PGCE students at Queens University Belfast including case studies of practice. CRIS provided two sessions to fourth year students at Stranmillis University College who had elected to take the ‘Leadership in Diversity and Mutual Understanding Module’. The workshops focused on ‘exploring issues that are sometimes seen as difficult, controversial or challenging’. The student teachers were given the chance to debate, to ask questions and to reflect on their own ‘world views’.

Building Capacity in the Education Sector

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Working with Staff and Trainee Teachers

- Buddy Up! training programme trialled, evaluated and further developed.
- New Shared Education partnerships supported and strengthened.
- Staff confidence built to discuss sensitive issues surrounding identity, including ‘Flags and Symbols.’
- Confidence and capacity of trainee teachers developed. Passion for Community Relations work nurtured at early stages of the teachers’ career.

CRIS has observed how experiential learning activities and reflection on personal experiences, opinions and behaviour develops critical understanding that supports teaching on diversity themes.
In September 2016, CRIS facilitated Stranmillis and St Mary’s Teacher Training Colleges’ shared ‘Diversity and Mutual Understanding’ Residential at Corrymeela in Ballycastle. The three-day programme began with a bus tour of North and West Belfast before the participants spent time together on residential exploring their own knowledge and experience of key Community Relations themes and learning from one another. This holistic, personal and professional development programme focused on the core skills of listening, storytelling and seeking mutual understanding. Finally, CRIS staff facilitated a ‘good practice’ session sharing its learning and pedagogy with a group of students visiting Stranmillis University College from the University of Bristol in May 2017.

Antrim Area Schools Participating in Knowing Me Knowing You Training Seminar, January 2017
Advocacy and Profile Raising

This year, CRIS has continued to invest heavily in advocating for the work and raising the profile of examples of its pioneering practice. CRIS recognised that as a small and dynamic organisation, it must dedicate time and resources to this process and to share its important messages widely. Advocacy and profile-raising have taken place through several mediums, including: public events that CRIS has organised and delivered, resource dissemination, and through attendance and input at events and forums.

The ‘Art of Everyday Peacebuilding’ Exhibition and the ‘Life as I See It’ Exhibition

The ‘Art of Everyday Peacebuilding’ and ‘Life as I See It’ Exhibitions have been described in the section of this report that focuses on Community Development in North Belfast. Raising the profile of the long-history of work between Holy Cross Nursery School (in Ardoyno) and Edenderry Nursery School (just off the Shankill Road) is a key strategic priority of CRIS. There are important lessons for other contexts which can be learnt from this work. In addition, CRIS, the schools and the families feel that it is important to shine a light onto the hope-filled work that comes from communities that are often only profiled for negative reasons.

Washington Ireland Programme (WIP)

CRIS Director, Lisa Dietrich was honoured to be presented with a special award and beautiful painting at the Annual Washington Ireland Thanksgiving Ball. CRIS staff and committee members were delighted to attend and support Lisa as well as to raise the profile of CRIS’s work with WIP, who are relatively ‘new’ to CRIS.

Together: Building United Community (T:BUC) Engagement Forums

CRIS staff and Management Committee members have attended a number of T:BUC Engagement Forums. Each forum brings together interested public, private and third sector bodies to explore specific T:BUC themes. CRIS staff have facilitated table discussions during the large-scale events and feedback thoughts and responses.

Conference Attendance

CRIS staff have attended several key Conferences, including:

- Global Peace Foundation Conference: Ethical Leadership Amid Global Crisis
- Outcomes Based Accountability Summit
- Brexit Implications Conference, Dublin
- Shared Education Learning Forum Conference
- Policy Forum for Northern Ireland – Education Conference
Education Committee Programme for Government Planning Meeting

CRIS staff were invited to attend an Education Committee Programme for Government Planning Meeting at Stormont Parliament Buildings. CRIS put forward several suggestions but unfortunately due to the collapse of the Stormont Executive in early 2017, this has been temporarily shelved.

Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum (NIABF)

CRIS is an active member of the NIABF, which brings together approximately 20 organisations with an interest in promoting cultures of anti-bullying in schools. This year, CRIS has attended quarterly meetings, participated in the ‘website task group’ and presented to a panel of the NI Education Committee.

‘Buddy Up!’ A Whole School Community Approach for Primary and Nursery Schools Advocacy

During this year, CRIS has continued to meet with representatives from the Executive Office to explore how CRIS can support the T:BUC commitment to ‘roll out a Buddy System’ to every Nursery and Primary School in Northern Ireland. CRIS continues to offer its flagship resource as well as knowledge and expertise to make this important commitment a reality.

Northern Ireland Office Communication

During this period, CRIS has hosted meetings with two Junior Ministers from the Northern Ireland Office: Kris Hopkins MP and Chloe Smith MP. CRIS will continue to be open and invitational to all elected Political leaders who are keen to learn more about the nature and history of our work.

International University Groups

CRIS has shared examples, case studies and practice with four American University Groups, during this period. This is a small but important area of work that encourages strong internal reflection at CRIS as we consider what the key messages we would like to communicate about our work really are.

- Keene State University
- Arcadia University (through Corrymeela)
- University of Georgia
- George Washington University
Organisational Investment

For several years, CRIS has recognised the importance of investment in the organisation itself to enable reflective practice and continue to deliver high-quality programmes and projects.

Internal Development Meetings

Over the course of the year, CRIS has dedicated time and resources to internal organisational development meetings and planning sessions. These have enabled CRIS staff and Management Committee members to:

- Plan how CRIS will greet changes within the wider peacebuilding and education sectors.
- Be intentional about the work the organisation takes on and avoid ‘mission drifting’.
- Manage and monitor workload and pressures on individuals and the organisation as a whole.

Several days per school term have been allocated to this process, which has shaped the future direction of the organisation and given all internal stakeholders a voice.

Intern and Initiative Week Placements

CRIS has provided opportunities for two intern placements through the Washington Ireland Programme and one week-long placement for a volunteer from the Corrymeela community.

The Washington Ireland Programme students focused on supporting the ‘Life as I See It’ Exhibition and profile-raising of the work in North Belfast. The Corrymeela volunteer began the process of scoping the #BuddyUp campaign, which ran during Community Relations and Cultural Awareness Week in September 2017 and re-engaged past participants in the North Belfast peacebuilding work as well as raising awareness of the ‘Buddy Up!’ resource and its long history in one of the most divided areas of Belfast.

United Nations Alliance of Civilisation and BMW Group Inter-Cultural Innovation Award Application

As already profiled, CRIS was awarded third place in the prestigious UNAOC and BMW Inter-Cultural Innovation Award, which seeks to support groups from around the world who are engaged in creative, grass-roots peacebuilding work. CRIS was delighted to have been selected from over 3000 applicants representing 130 countries, and considered it a tribute to the important work of ‘Buddy Up!’

Evens Foundation

As discussed in the ‘Unity Project’ section of the report, CRIS applied to the Evens Foundation Prize for Peace Education, which is a Europe-wide competition that seeks to discover schools-based approaches to promoting acceptance, diversity and inclusion. CRIS is delighted to have been chosen as one of ten short-listed organisations and invited to share practice at an upcoming Conference in November 2017.
In Memory of Patrick Sanders

Patrick worked as a CRIS Associate since 2014. He was incredibly talented and a joy to be around. He documented conferences, attended family community relations residentials, facilitated workshops and of course illustrated the flagship resource, “Buddy Up! A Whole School Community Approach to Sharing in Education at Nursery and Primary Levels”.

Patrick has left a tremendous legacy of work at CRIS and we will continue to honour his talent by using his beautiful artwork in our displays, resources and presentations for many years to come.
Funders and Supporters

Grateful thanks are extended to the following funders for their support during the period July 2015 to June 2016.

- Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
- Belfast City Council Good Relations Unit
- Community Relations Council through the Core Funding Scheme and the Community Relations and Cultural Diversity Grants Scheme
- Department of Foreign Affairs (Republic of Ireland) Reconciliation Fund: Strategic Partnership Programme
- Enkalon Foundation
- Family Holiday Association
- Halifax Foundation for Northern Ireland
- Stichting Het Solidariteitsfonds (SHS)
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