

Spoken by Carolyn Webb at Anne Goodman's Memorial, August 12, 2013

Before I start I'd like to express my appreciation to all of you for the conversations and emails that have informed what I'll be saying today. If you hear some of your words or thoughts echoed here, thank you.

(About my role and InterChange)

I met Anne almost exactly 10 years ago when I started my Masters in Adult Education at OISE. I later became a Graduate Assistant helping Anne build what she called in the job posting the Virtual Institute for Community-Based Peacebuilding. It was the beginning of a transformative journey that would take over my life... and my heart.

During that first year I worked with Anne to help plan a conference in Toronto to connect peacebuilders together. We all then decided to create an organization around this vision. InterChange was born. Over the next many years we developed our name and our mission, and we established a board. We expanded our community into Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and other places and as a group developed workshops and programs. We shared the idea that everyone can be a peacebuilder.

Now we have, as Anne often called it, a community of community-based peacebuilders... and an international community of people who have loved Anne.

Many InterChange members have been holding their own memorials to remember Anne. InterChange Uganda held a prayer for her on Saturday, gave a presentation of her work, and will be planting 2 trees in her memory. Coinciding with today's memorial, one of our board members Charles, is hosting a skype call to gather those who can't be here.

(Relationships, and why People love Anne)

Working closely with Anne, I've seen her connect with so many people – from her students to people she has met in the corner store – and then profoundly influence their lives. So what was it about Anne that drew so many of us to her?

We could all name incredible traits about Anne – her generosity, her openness, her genuine spirit, and her passion to pursue and stand up for her ideals. But what I think was at the heart of what drew us to Anne was her emphasis on Relationships.

(Connecting)

Anne often described InterChange as an organization based on relationships. And she lived this way in her own life.

What I saw was that Anne put Relationships at the core of her assumptions about how the world works. She believed that people want to connect and that all of our stories are interconnected.

Many of you may have witnessed Anne saying “oh, you should meet this person” and then she'd introduce you. And you'd be thinking “ok, but why?” But then you'd all start sharing stories and ideas, and maybe even making future plans together... and you'd be wondering “who would have thought we'd have this connection?”. Well, Anne did.

(Open to potential)

Anne always saw so much potential in people and in the world. She put herself out there for wonderful things to come her way. And they came.

For our first symposium Anne felt drawn to having water at the centre of our circle. She was saying so to Neil, a man she had just met, and he said “oh, I have a water vessel that you can use”. Neil brought it, led part of our opening ceremony, and the vessel became the centre of our circle for much of the symposium. Neil stayed connected to InterChange for many years after.

Later I asked Anne “does this happen to you a lot?”. With a soft grin she said “actually, it really does”.

So what was going on? I think it’s that Anne believed in possibility and she invited people to journey with her. With an open heart and by including others, exciting things became possible.

(Cared about Individuals)

I also think that we felt so connected to Anne because she cared about each of us as individuals.

You know that classic story about the child throwing stranded sand dollars back into the ocean... The man walks by says “there are thousands – you’ll never make a difference” and the kid stops and throws one back in the water and says “it made a difference to that one”. Anne was the child in that story.

She was always going out of her way to show someone who had just moved to town around; supervise independent study courses to mentor students; or help a board member connect to one of our meetings despite technical difficulties. She was always trying to open doors to make things possible for people. She wanted to help us all because she cared about our lives; she cared about us as individuals.

(Ubuntu)

At the same time as loving us all individually, one of the concepts that Anne referenced, and that to my mind captures how she lived her life, is that of Ubuntu. The term has its roots in South Africa... It is the concept that “A person is a person through other persons”.

Desmond Tutu has explained Ubuntu as “The essence of being human. Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness.” Ubuntu is to say that “My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.” It means that I am who I am only in relation to you.

Anne saw us all as individuals but as individuals who gained meaning from our interconnectedness with each other. She believed that people’s strengths and weaknesses were all a part of our common humanity. And she loved us all for it.

(Where from here?)

So where to from here?

When, 3 or so weeks ago, I heard that Anne was going to palliative care I was in shock. I was at a conference in Thunder Bay. My heart was wrenching. And then that night I had a vivid dream. It was of Anne dancing. And we were dancing with her. She had a radiant smile on her face and her energy lit up the room.

I woke up knowing that while we will miss her tremendously, Anne will live on in all of us...

I'll just take a moment to say that in the spirit of InterChange, we will be having a small activity that people can join in to explore the question "How will Anne live on in your life?". If you want to join us it will take place right here after the speeches.

So back to my speech...

Many of us have tried to make sense of Anne's death. While life doesn't always make sense, maybe some of it is that Anne's healing journey showed us how to go through suffering and pass from this earth with an open heart and in a way that actually connects and strengthens those around us. Always the teacher, Anne has taught us how to live. And she has taught us how to die with strength in our relationships, including our relationships with ourselves.

I'll also carry many of Anne's lessons forward, both in my own life and in how InterChange advances its work. Again, these are:

1. People want to connect – have fun connecting them.
2. Be open to others and invite them on the journey.
3. People are beautiful individuals, so care for them in this way.
4. As individuals, we are all part of a shared humanity and our lives are bound to each other. We are who we are only in relation to other people. And so what we do affects our whole community.
5. That love isn't diminished but just gets stronger when we share it.

Anne will also live on etched in my memory – of her in her garden, at her kitchen table, or just being there for whoever would come along on the 7th floor at OISE, with her tea kettle always at the ready. And I will also always carry this vision of her dancing, radiating her light and her love for all those around her.

In closing, I want to say that at the same time as I've found this big hole in my life with Anne's passing, I've also realized the incredible gift that she left behind and that will live on in my life – a strong and supportive community of people for me to connect with. And we have an obvious starting place for our connection. That is, we were all touched by Anne.