**Debbie Simms on Pillar 5 - ‘Communication’**

Again, it’s really important to communicate as broadly as possible, so think about not only your volunteers and your staff, your sponsors, but also the broader community. And you need to get that information out as widely as possible because, again, there’s no use keeping your commitment as the best kept secret, and if nobody knows about it, then you’re not really articulating and living that commitment to inclusion. So look at your website and how you communicate that commitment on that website, and what sort of visuals are you using? What information do you have on there? Your e-mail bulletins, have a look at, not only your annual reports and those sorts of documents, but also when you have coaching clinics, when you have come and try days, when you have all your coaches and administrators together, how you communicate that commitment, how you make them, themselves feel included, respected, and able to participate and contribute, but how you can also get wider contribution to those sort of options and those gatherings, and how you can help them for what they do in terms of having and including a broader range of people in their activities. Look at meetings, your AGMs, your other sorts of meetings, and again reiterating and getting the message out about how, as an organization, you are committed to inclusion. Some simple strategies or some tips around inclusion, inclusive communication, is keep the sentences when you’re talking to people really short, really simple, plain English, so that the majority of people can understand. Be as visual as you can, so using your hands, using drawing sketches, using people to demonstrate, particularly with a skill, posters, photographs, Pod cast, video, anything that you can do to help emphasize and highlight what you’re trying to say and get across what you’re trying to say. Try and use inclusive language, and by that I mean don’t assume that a person’s partner is always of the opposite sex. Don’t assume that people all celebrate Christmas. So try and think about who you’re communicating to, and don’t use stereotypes. Also, when you’re speaking with people with disability or people who may have poor English language skills, speak directly to the person, not to any carer or attendant or interpreter that might be accompanying them. It’s just much more respectful, and also, if you can, try and research or at least have some knowledge and recognize that culture can have some subtle differences on interpretation of the communication. So that could be things like the use of eye contact. In some cultures it is respectful to use eye contact. In others, it’s the absolute opposite, so just to be able to recognize that and be aware of who you’re communicating to, and be respectful around that. Also touch, some cultures it’s respectful to touch. Others it isn’t. Where you touch, those sorts of things, how formal, how informal you are. With written communication, again, really simple, really clear, plain English. If you’re using PDFs on your website, try and use rtf forms as well because screen readers and they also can be enlarged, so it makes it a lot easier for people that have a visual impairment. Also, try it with Power Points, minimum 24 point, good color contrast, and again, lots of visuals so that as many people as possible can understand what’s up on the screen. But as important as it is to use inclusive communication, it is equally important that we communicate our commitment to inclusion. And there are some simple ways we can do that, but one of the most important ways, and it’s also a way that I find, with most organizations, it’s neglected, and that’s in your strategic and planning documents. Vital that we communicate a commitment to inclusion there because it says that then it is as important and as valued as all the other strategic priorities. It also means that people from diverse backgrounds are incorporated from the start in your plan, and they’re not an afterthought. And it also helps to embed it into everything that you do. Secondly, you need to promote that commitment as widely as possible because it’s fun if you know about it, but if nobody else knows about it, it’s not going to be helpful. And some things you can consider are look at where a broad section of the community gather, so at places like library, doctors’ surgeries, the reception areas, councils, migrant centers, disability services schools. Get information out there about what your organization does and how it’s committed to this particular area. And finally, match the written word with visible action. So simple things, acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on your website and prior to your functions, having flexible uniform policies that make allowances for cultural differences and requirements, say, for example, the wearing of the hejab, making P.A. announcements around respectful and appropriate behavior by spectators. They’re just so simple visible things that you can do to show your commitment. Hope that’s useful.