

Input Workshop Results

By Sue Ellen Fast
Executive Director/Editor

What do interpreters see as key roles for Interpretation Canada in the future? About half of the breakout groups at last fall's workshops described IC's ideal future as a learning community. The other half saw marketing and advocacy as more important.

Many valuable suggestions were offered in response to the focus question, "How can we work together to enhance interpretation and its practice in Canada?"

Seven themes emerged:

- share professional development
- lobby/market
- networking
- standards and certification
- more technology
- training
- develop the field

Responses from each of the 43 breakout groups were categorized and ranked under these themes. The two at the top of the list ranked head and shoulders above the rest. Most responses could then be grouped again under these two themes, which I renamed slightly to reflect this accumulation. This resulted in the tie between learning community

and marketing/advocacy.

I used the term learning community to reflect wording from participants such as "interpreter support network", and the specific suggestions for networking, online courses, training, conferences and so on, such as "training over long distance on a shoestring". The term marketing/advocacy reflects wording such as "wider perception of the profession and its value", "advocacy – buy-in from senior management", and "increase credibility, professionalism and funding." Learning community and marketing/advocacy refer to why interpreters might work together.

The five lower-ranked themes relate more to how. They formed a second tier, all ranking about the same, except for the last which trailed behind. This suggests that there was no silver bullet obvious to workshop participants either, which is reassuring. Many specific suggestions for new directions were contributed, and will be useful for years to come.

Bearing in mind the rough and ready nature of my analysis, that participants were urban-centre based, and that few seasonals participated, the input provides a very interesting picture of the ideas, concerns and dreams of Canadian interpreters for their profession.

How will this data be used? IC board members have already considered it at the board retreat (see page 23), and it will continue to guide their work in months and years to come. Thanks again to all who came out and contributed!

Background

The interpreters providing this input were a mixture of IC members and others who participated in six workshops across Canada in November 2008 and January 2009. Each workshop included a guest speaker and great networking as well as the opportunity to shape IC's future. Input was collected during the open-space discussion from each breakout group and later was posted to the website for participants to review.

More input came indirectly, via the excellent turnout to the workshops. 330 interpreters came, far exceeding our target of 150. The free, afternoon, off-season workshop format really works. I had worried that many would leave after the guest speaker or the coffee break—but no. They liked the guest speakers, and they also valued the discussion and networking and contributing that followed in the open space sessions.

This is evidence of solid interest in IC involvement. Our view of IC as an inclusive grassroots organization that all interpreters can participate in and benefit from was strengthened. We also exceeded our target of 20% non-member participants, suggesting that there are lots of potential IC members out there. How did we attract so many people? No formal advertising was required—people simply spread the word. Through this we also learned that there are more in-house and local networks of interpreters out there than we had thought. These results are also being used by the IC board to plan the route ahead.

For more about the workshops and IC's revitalization project, see the previous issue of *InterpScan* vol. 32:4 pp. 20–22.



Richmond BC, January 2009