

## Building Relationships through a *Conocimientos*

A *conocimientos* is a great tool for getting to know one another. Sure, you can ask people their name, where they're from and why they came to an event, but that only tells things *about* them. It doesn't really say *who* they are, doesn't really help them get to *know* each other. So why stop there?

The word "*conocimientos*"

- derived from the Spanish word *conocer* (to know)
- refers to knowledge gained through experience
- may imply familiarity or close acquaintance with another

On first meeting others, people generally share basics things such as:

- who they are
- what they do
- where they live

A *conocimientos* goes beyond standard polite topics to subjects that are easy to share, yet more personal; non-threatening, yet provide a better, more wholistic view of a person.

Using "mutual invitation," everyone in the group would be invited to answer several questions about themselves. An easy place to begin would be:

- Your name
- A story of your name
- Your birthplace
- Your grandparent's birthplaces

You might add:

- A value you learned from your elders that you will pass on to future generations
- One thing you will not pass on.

You could include something related to a topic the group will be discussing. For instance, a workshop on worship might include:

- One thing you have learned about worship from your elders that you will pass on to future generations
- One thing you do not want to pass on.

For longer events, there could be multiple opportunities for a *conocimientos*. As a group becomes more comfortable with one another, the topics can go deeper. For example:

- Something that defines and shapes who you are  
(something that once others know this about you, they'll understand you better;  
but if they *don't* know it, they don't really know you)

In one of our intercultural events, the in-depth *conocimientos* included topics such as:

- Name a culture or sub-culture that you represent  
(not as you would report it in a census, but something that is an active part of your identity, that you are proud of and would stand up for)
- How did you first learn about some culture other than your own?  
(story, fiction, educational experience, face to face meeting?)

- Describe the first cross-cultural experience that had an impact on you.