

Brendan McAllister
Director

**Speaking notes for an address to the
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Observations on Inter – Group Relations in Northern Ireland.

1. **Societal Conflict**, in Northern Ireland, is **cross generational**. Within each tradition, each generation has inherited values, principles and an agenda that shape their sense of integrity.
2. In order to create the Good Friday Agreement, the signatories each had to stretch their sense of integrity. For some, this involved **the suspension of disgust** about another side's past.
3. In signing the Agreement, each side acted on their **best intentions**. Events since then have often appealed more to people's **worst fears**. This, in turn, has led to a loss of confidence down through society.
4. While Agreement supporters may have been able to suspend their disgust about another side's **past**, they have found greater difficulty doing likewise with regard to their impression of the other side's **future** intentions.
5. **Societal Conflict moves forward in stages**, like Nature moving through the seasons. The stages could be described as:
Conflict Management - Conflict Transformation - Conflict Resolution – Maintaining Consensus.
Across the community in Northern Ireland there have been unrealistic expectations about the pace of change. Many people have expected to go straight from conflict to 'conflict resolution' without the in – between stages.
6. **The conflict in Northern Ireland is systemic**. It involves a whole society.
7. Peace / societal change was negotiated at political leadership level. **Change is trickling down through society** in Northern Ireland. It is disturbing the old order of things. The thrust of societal change is towards greater integration. This is generating fear, uncertainty and defensiveness. This is exacerbated by the apparent behaviour of erstwhile opponents. To many people living at community level, the promise of the Agreement now looks more like a threat.
8. **There is a need to promote change within the comfortable divides of N.I.**, not just at the sharp edges of sectarian interfaces.
9. **There is a need to reassure people about conserving aspects of the past while promoting new civic norms for a shared future.**
10. **These civic norms must infuse the institutions which administer N.I. society**, such as policing, housing, education and health.