



## The Sustainable Knowledge Model of Norm-Educating Mediation

The concept of sustainable knowledge is the core of the sustainable development model of community building—at its base is the belief that what sustains community is the sharing and passing down of knowledge. A community cannot survive if this knowledge is not transmitted to its members. Applied to mediation the premise is that parties have the knowledge and wisdom to make decisions and these decisions should be based on shared information.

A sustainable knowledge society links knowledge and information with social change for democracy and peace. Access to knowledge must be available to everyone. Knowledge is recognized as the heritage and property of everyone. The right to public information and a wide distribution of that information promotes an informed citizenry, one that can participate in political planning and decision making. Information that is private can and should be protected. Knowledge is shared by all members of the community as the decisionmaking process takes place.

In Norm-Educating mediation the parties gather all relevant information, utilize resources and advisors, and share ideas throughout the process. The Norm-Educating model addresses the concept of sustainable knowledge in offering information and negotiation skills during the mediation process. The goal is to sustain communication and sharing of information outside the mediation. Tools for interaction, collaboration, and negotiation are conveyed.

Mediators and/or facilitators can assist groups in engaging in dialogue about social and political issues, but must distinguish between dialogue that promotes the practice of democracy and civil rights, and an empty exercise used for appeasement. Mediation, group facilitation, and other forms of Alternative Dispute Resolution, should not be used as vehicles for suppression of criticism of government or economic institutions. Especially in the case of disenfranchised groups, facilitation may be antithetical to the struggle for justice. One cannot “mediate” between those who have power and those who don’t. If a balance of power is impossible, a “facilitation” becomes unethical.

In the workplace control of knowledge or information is a linchpin in maintaining hierarchies and class divisions. Working in cubicles or alone at a computer has become a “normal” experience for many people. Our world continues to grow rapidly more complex through the explosion of science and technologies. Access to this information and knowledge gives all members of the community the power to shape the environment in which they live. Sustainable knowledge is the model that creates and develops projects with those who benefit from, and make use of the “products.” Projects that are conceived in this way stand a far greater chance of having lasting value.