Unity and Diversity in P.E.O.
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In Scotland, sheep dog trials are open-air exhibitions of the skills dogs show when herding sheep. No dog “wins”. No dog “loses”. Each is affirmed, valued and encouraged. And if some do not come up to the mark, they are always told that they are welcome back later when they have had more practice to develop their skills. All are successful.

Diversity in P.E.O. means community. As we work together to learn about and understand our differences, we also continually strive to be a welcoming and accepting community. Community life means that we can be different while sharing common values, goals and aspirations that transcend differences, and learn and grow within our traditions. When we speak of diversity, we are speaking of our core values. Diversity is simply the mix of similarities and differences each one of us brings to our work. We have more in common with one another than we have differences. Uncompromising ethical conduct, moral behavior, fairness and compassion are all virtues we hold dear. There is much that binds together we sisters in this room and these similarities are important in our diversity, too.

Assigning characteristics or placing things and or people in categories is the way humans process information and begins from the moment of birth as we try to figure out the way the world works. This stereotyping is a process we use to simplify our world. However, it can also blind us to individual differences and talents and can be maladaptive and counter productive. Avoid the temptation to make assumptions; they can lead you to frustration not only with others, but with yourself as well.

Without trying to create a single homogenous blend out of the plurality of our weaves, or sacrificing any of our colors and textures, it becomes possible to be inspired by others to the point that one welcomes and fosters mutual transformation. This results in taking on aspects of others that are lacking or weak in us. We need not sacrifice our own spiritual perspective or diminish ourselves. When self-acceptance is manifest, divergence is intriguing rather than threatening. Giving oneself permission to shine gives those around us the opportunity to do the same. Each person’s perspective, whether emotional, sensing, or analytical, is unique and genuinely contributes to the whole. Whoever leads and whoever is led, the journey shared commences, developing from indifference to tolerance to curiosity. Curiosity engenders openness and lack of rigidity, which opens an opportunity for growth and development, leading to understanding and empathy. It is a long, subtle and never-ending process in the creative fulfillment of our human potential. This is not an attitude that grows and matures without nurturing.

The diversity of our organization has made it strong. While other organizations have dwindled and some even faded away, we have grown in size and influence. Without sacrificing that which makes us unique, we should examine those things we do as a group, which hinder our success, and be clear as to whether there is a mission requirement for us to continue them. Our world is always changing and we have to change with it if we expect to continue to attract and retain the best in our communities. When people look through our window, we want them to see something special and valuable. Our variety and differences are precious resources. As we conduct the business of Oregon State Chapter, let us continue to discover and celebrate one another and return, as do the sheep dogs to their trials, that we might form a more unified yet diverse organization.