



# THE INTERNATIONAL FOCUSING INSTITUTE

*Building on the work of Eugene T. Gendlin since 1979*

## **HISTORY OF THE INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

February 2019

### **TRANSITION FROM GENE GENDLIN AND MARY HENDRICKS-GENDLIN'S LEADERSHIP**

*Note: this section is an edited version of the history given in the 2017 Strategic Plan (found at [www.focusing.org/mission](http://www.focusing.org/mission))*

In December 2013, The Focusing Institute went through a major shift when its Founder, Eugene Gendlin, resigned as the President of the Board of Directors. At the same time, his wife, Mary Hendricks-Gendlin (who was his long-time collaborator and long-time Director of the Institute as well as its Vice President) also resigned. The Managing Director, Melinda Darer, and Kye Nelson (who was co-Executive Director with Mary Hendricks-Gendlin) also resigned at that time.

Upon their departure, Gene, Mary and Kye appointed Rob Foxcroft, Jerry Conway, Robert Lee and Nina Joy Lawrence to be a temporary board for 200 days to arrange for a rotating, ongoing board to take over from them. Jerry soon resigned and was replaced by Cynthia Callsen in January 2014. The temporary Board hired an Executive Director (Catherine Torpey) and appointed a new Board. The temporary board also created a new body, the International Leadership Council, in order to institutionalize an international component within the leadership structure. The Executive Director, Board and International Leadership Council were all in place by the summer of 2014.

The primary goal for the International Leadership Council (ILC) was to begin discerning its identity and role in relation to the Board, the community and the Coordinators.

### **THE IDEA OF THE ILC**

The idea for an International Leadership Council had taken shape in early April 2014. The Transitional Board had a meeting with a consultant (Jay Pacitti) at its board meeting on April 1. One topic of discussion with him was the Transitional Board's concern about the new Board which it was to appoint. A certain type of person was going to be needed on the new Board: pragmatic, business-like, comfortable navigating legal issues and near-perfect English. The Transitional Board was concerned that a small group of such people at the helm of the Institute would exclude many outstanding leaders in the Focusing community. In the meeting,

Mr. Pacitti mentioned that many organizations have advisory boards, which offer a way to involve people without having them serve on the governing board. This sparked the idea that there could be another body which would work alongside the Board to ensure that outstanding leaders in the community would be part of the leadership structure of the Institute. This second leadership group could also be organized to reflect the diversity of the worldwide Focusing community in a way that the Board would not.

### PRESENTING THE IDEA TO COORDINATORS -- MAY 2014

In April and early May, the Transitional Board worked hard to develop a nominating process for the new Board and the International Leadership Council (ILC). A Nominating Committee was a new idea for the Institute, which would allow respected members of the worldwide community to take part in determining who should serve.

The Board worked intensely to be able to present plans to the Coordinators at the meeting in Stony Point. At that meeting, the idea of a Nominating Committee and the idea of the ILC were generally well-received, although there were, of course, a variety of opinions and feelings. Some Coordinators expressed concern that having a Nominating Committee was not the most transparent way of choosing leaders. The Ibero-MesoAmerican group had an objection to the composition of the Nominating Committee. After a special meeting of this group with Robert Lee (from the Board) and Catherine Torpey, it was decided that a good response to their concerns would be to add a specific individual to the Nominating Committee. This was agreed to, and there was a feeling that the process of listening to the concern and responding appropriately had the effect of increasing mutual trust.

### ANNOUNCING THE IDEA TO MEMBERSHIP

The announcement which was sent to membership in May 2014 described the Board and ILC this way:

#### *THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND THE INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL*

*The Board of Directors would benefit from people with some business experience and understanding, and they will mostly be people from the USA. Recognizing that such a group does not reflect the full wisdom of the worldwide community, we have created the International Leadership Council (ILC) to broaden who is at the center of direction-setting. The Board is the body which has fiduciary responsibility for the organization; it raises and spends money, makes certain we are in compliance with laws, supervises the Executive Director, performs other business-like functions and ensures that TFI is carrying out its stated mission and goals. The ILC will work in harmony with the Board to look at programs and policies that need attention. (One example of something that the ILC might do is consider the question of whether we could improve our system for deciding who gets to be a Coordinator, or if we need a variety of types of Coordinators. They could take many months to consider all the issues, the pro's and con's of changing how we name Coordinators, ask for feedback*

*from the community, and make a recommendation to the Board based on its conclusions.) The Board will always have the final say, but it is our hope and expectation that because the two bodies will be working cooperatively, there will rarely be a need for the Board to override the wishes of the ILC.*

### THE ILC BEGINS ITS WORK IN SUMMER 2014

The group which formed the inaugural ILC was:

Marine de Fréminville (Québec, Canada)  
Hejo Feuerstein (Germany)  
Ruth Hirsch (Israel)  
Akira Ikemi (Japan)  
Sergio Lara (Chile)  
Barbara McGavin (UK)

The group needed a lot of time to find its way. There was a sense of vagueness about what authority the ILC had and what its role was. Some members of the ILC felt that the Institute should be organized differently than it is now, so that the ILC would exist only temporarily. Others saw the ILC as a permanent fixture. It was unclear what relationship it had with Coordinators as well as to the Board. It was a difficult time, and most meetings dealt essentially with the question, "Who are we?"

Much of the first two years of the ILC's work was in these areas:

- 1 – Asking itself what its authority was, what its role was, how the Institute and/or worldwide Focusing should be organized
- 2 – Working with the Board on the development of the Strategic Plan for the Institute
- 3 – Recommending to the Board, in an email on February 9, 2015, that the word "International" be added to the name of the Institute, to reflect the reality of its international character as well as the intention to become more so. (The Board officially followed through on this change by the end of 2015.)
- 4 – Working toward the development of a revised system for naming Coordinators.

### PRESENTATIONS AT SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL 2015

Early in 2015, the ILC had begun to consider whether there were changes needed to certification in the Institute. Catherine submitted a draft document to offer a place to begin the discussion, and the ILC actively discussed and revised this initial draft.

The Board and ILC arrived in Seattle 2 days before the International Conference in order to continue crafting a Strategic Plan, guided by Joe Colletti. (They had had a number of meetings online, and took the opportunity of the conference to meet in person.) During the Coordinators' meeting, the Board and ILC presented aspects of the Plan to the Coordinators, and the Coordinators commented at length. The Plan was then presented to all attendees of the conference, and several meetings were held to get their feedback. This was very well received.

At the Seattle Coordinators' meeting, there was also a brief presentation made by Catherine about the ILC's document proposing changes to how Coordinators are named in the Institute. A handful of people offered strong challenges to the document, asking why it was necessary and expressing concern about its implications. However, overall, the Coordinators were open to considering the ideas presented. No decisions were made about the document, but the conversation had begun and the idea of changing how Coordinators are named was now "out there." It would be developed more in preparation for the Coordinators' meeting at the International in Cambridge.

### *GROWTH IN SELF IDENTITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF METHOD FOR NAMING COORDINATORS 2015-2016*

In the year between the Seattle International and the Cambridge International, the ILC's main areas of activity continued:

- The ILC continued to work with the Board on the Strategic Plan, meeting approximately monthly in joint meetings (while continuing the ILC meetings twice monthly).
- The ILC became energized to work on the question of Certification, and especially the role of Coordinators. They refined the document presented in Seattle and worked to have it ready to present in Cambridge in summer 2016.
- The ILC wanted a better definition of what its role was, and worked hard to craft a statement. It went through many iterations, including feedback from the Board. (See the final document below with the Board's response)

### *CLEARER SENSE OF PURPOSE -- CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL 2016*

The ILC had sent the Board versions of its "Roles and Functions" statement (final version below). The two groups had discussed them through Zoom on several occasions and decided to discuss the document in person in Cambridge. While there, they agreed to have a simple, brief meeting on a picnic bench one afternoon. The Board was satisfied with the document that the ILC had drafted, and especially happy that the ILC seemed to be "coming into its own." The Board gave a verbal assurance at that time that they would approve the document. Upon its return from Cambridge, the Board wrote a formal response to the ILC (see below).

By the end of the Coordinators' meeting, it was clear that the Coordinators had begun to see the ILC as a useful resource and ally. The ILC had gained clarity and confidence, and its presentation of the proposed change in how Coordinators are chosen reflected that. During their meeting, the Coordinators spent a great deal of time and energy considering the ILC's proposed changes through a well-organized process. The vast majority of Coordinators expressed that they had begun the meeting skeptical about the proposal, but ended feeling very good about it. Many people had hesitations about the idea of a Coordinator in Training needing a team of 5 people, and also about the requirement that there be representatives from the Board and/or the ILC on the team.

## ROLES AND FUNCTIONS STATEMENT AND THE BEGINNING OF A PILOT PROGRAM FOR NAMING COORDINATORS

September 2016: After Cambridge, the Board gave the ILC a formal response to their "Roles and Functions" document. This is the final statement, with the Board's response:

### *ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL*

#### *The International Leadership Council (ILC)*

*The ILC is an official body of The Focusing Institute. It operates within the overall strategic and budgetary framework set by the Board in consultation with the ILC. It generates its own roles and functions as well as visions of the governance of TFI, as it engages in a continuing process of attending to the voices of the worldwide Focusing community. In consultation with the Board of Trustees and the Executive Director, the ILC can form committees to carry out the functions and policies it generates.*

#### *Current Issues of the ILC*

*One of the roles that the ILC has generated for itself is examining the certification process. Another issue that the ILC is engaged with is examining its own identity, starting with how its members are selected, how many there need be, and for how long the terms should be.*

*Approved with this response from board September 5, 2016:*

*Dear members of the International Leadership Council:*

*We, the Board, have discussed your proposal on the Roles and Responsibilities of the International Leadership Council (ILC) at board meetings as well as at joint meetings with you. We have appreciated the chance to discuss this with you and to recognize where we are in agreement and where there are a differences in visions for the Institute. There remain questions of governance to be clarified; nevertheless we feel good about moving forward on the basis of the document you have crafted. We look forward to a dynamic, collaborative relationship as we thoughtfully move forward, shaping each step to further our transformative mission to make Focusing available to the world.*

*Sincerely, the Board of Trustees*

December 2017: The ILC actively incorporated the feedback they'd gotten on the document on naming Coordinators. They also had it translated and held a number of Zoom meetings in a number of languages. They published a final document in December 2017 and announced the beginning of a Pilot Program to try out the new system.

## CONCERNS DOCUMENT AND CONTINUATION OF PILOT PROGRAM -- 2018

In 2018, the ILC had two main foci. One was the continuation of the Pilot Program on the new method for naming Coordinators. The second was the development of a Concerns Procedure, which puts in place a process for the Institute to respond when a member of the Institute has a concern about a leader within the Institute and wishes the organization to take action. Both of these documents can be found at [focusing.org/ilc](http://focusing.org/ilc)

## HISTORY OF MEMBERS OF THE ILC

Barbara McGavin (UK) 2014 - 2016  
Hejo Feuerstein (Germany) 2014 - 2018  
Ruth Hirsch (Israel) 2014 - present  
Sergio Lara (Chile) 2014 - present  
Akira Ikemi (Japan) 2014 - 2018  
Marine de Fréminville (Canada) 2014 - 2016  
Roberto Larios (Mexico) 2016 - present  
Donata Schoeller (Switzerland) 2016 - 2018  
Claude Missiaen (Belgium) 2017 - present  
Evelyn Fendler-Lee (Germany/USA) 2018 - present