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Engage!

The Heart of Change

Stories lie at the heart of efforts to change our society. Stories give us insights from the past and inspiration for the future; they provide us with a sense of who we are and help us make sense of the world around us. Stories motivate us, giving us a sense of how we can approach bewildering social problems such as systemic racism and poverty.

Veterans of Hope is an inspirational web-based project dedicated to making the stories and wisdom of life-long social change activists accessible to younger generations through the use of video, interviews, stories and more.

Vincent and Rosemarie Freeney Harding founded Veterans of Hope to tap into “the extraordinary resources for personal and social transformation that come from people who have been oppressed and marginalized”. Their compassionate approach embraces cultural, spiritual, and racial diversity and creates a palpable sense of social justice.

Veterans of Hope acknowledges that history, oppression, cultural and social distinctions exist, but it also celebrates the fact that we are all intrinsically interconnected. The stories, lessons, and models for social change the project shares can serve as a source of inspiration and support as we work to effect change in our communities.

 [Visit the Veterans of Hope website!](#)

Related Links:

- [Stories of Change - video interviews with more than 50 Veterans of Hope](#)
- [Lessons from the Journey – curriculum and guides](#)
- [Models of Hope – models of democracy and peace](#)

By: Chris Cowperthwaite

Achieving Canada's Lowest Poverty Rate

In the 2005 Speech from the Throne the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador committed to a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy and invited community-based groups, business, labour as well as individuals to become involved in the process.

Premier Danny Williams writes that his government is committed to transforming the "province with the most poverty to one with the least." The province's broad-based poverty reduction strategy aims to enable all citizens to reach their full potential.

Unlike other provinces, rural poverty is a serious problem in Newfoundland and Labrador. Particular attention will be given to people who have been identified as most vulnerable to long-term poverty. These include families led by single mothers, single older individuals, persons with work limiting disabilities, aboriginal peoples and recent immigrants.

The government is considering the integration of government services, enhanced community based services, and asset building approaches as well as increases to existing income and housing supports as integral to the poverty reduction strategy.

This bold, exciting commitment to poverty reduction is one to closely watch!

 [Reducing Poverty in Newfoundland and Labrador: Working Towards a Solution \(Background Report and Workbook\)](#)

Related Links:

- [Poverty in the Throne Speech](#)
- [Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment](#)

By: David Pell

Mutual Aid, Training & Employment

The energetic team that makes up ECOF-CDEC de Trois-Rivières (the Community Economic Development Corporation of Trois-Rivières) had a busy September as they prepared for the fourth Festival of Mutual Aid, Training and Employment. The successful September 30 event drew 3,200 residents from the community.



The job fair included booths of industries and businesses where more than 1100 individuals applied for one or more jobs. The Festival also showcased the many resources for training and mutual aid available through local and regional organizations. Nearly 400 individuals signed up for more information on training, volunteer opportunities, or to access resources in their search for employment.

ECOF was responsible for the event which was made possible through the generous support of the government of Québec (Emploi-Québec), the government of Canada (Service Canada) and several community partners.

As ECOF's Jean-Francois Aubin pointed out, the Festival offered participants the chance to apply for employment, but it also ensured no one left empty handed. All who attended were provided with hope for their future.

Related Links:

- [Visit the ECOF website! \(en français\)](#)
- [Emploi-Québec \(en français\)](#)

By: Sharalynn Krahn

A Place to Nurture Ideas

The Philia Dialogue on Caring Citizenship was founded on the simple belief that the health, well-being and strength of our society requires the presence and participation of all citizens.

The new Philia website lives out this belief by “braiding together” the core strands of Philia’s approach:



- **Formulating:** deepening understanding of the concepts, principles and values that form the base of caring citizenship;
- **Sharing:** engaging individuals around these ideas and infusing them into organizations;
- **Applying:** inspiring new practice based on the application of these new ideas.

These three strands are reflected in the structure of Philia’s website: *Nourishing Ideas* is a forum for formulating concepts and values, *Good Conversation* is devoted to sharing ideas in dialogue, and *Inspiring Action* focuses on examples of practical application of these ideas.

Philia recognizes that effecting sustainable social change requires a blend of reflection and implementation and welcomes you to the website. [Visit Philia today!](#)

 [Visit our profile of Philia!](#)

Related Links:

- [Nourishing Ideas](#)
- [Good Conversation](#)
- [Inspiring Action](#)

By: Louise Kearney

Oktoberfest is Wunderbar!

In 1969, the first Oktoberfest festival was held in Kitchener-Waterloo. Instituted to celebrate the local German Canadian heritage, this nine-day festival has become the largest of its kind in North America and a season unto itself in our community.

It's not all beer nuts and polka though, Oktoberfest is a genuine community event that brings people together, stimulates the local economy, and benefits local charities and not-for-profit organizations.

The Spirit of Gemuetlichkeit pervades the community over the course of the festival. A Schools Program incorporates multicultural aspects of Oktoberfest, more than \$1.5 million is generated every year for charities, and this year's Oktoberfest Thanksgiving Parade and food drive raised 16,120 lbs of food and \$12,810 in cash for our local food bank.

There's something about Oktoberfest in Kitchener-Waterloo. The festival brings family and friends together, celebrates our community's heritage, and gives us license to make merry. Oktoberfest is wunderbar!



[Visit the Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest website!](#)

By: Louise Kearney