



Engage!

Collaborating Up

Think there's only one way to collaborate? Think again.

When the Aspen Institute's Roundtable on Community Change began a research initiative on race and community revitalization they realized communities can collaborate in more than one way. One of those ways is vertically.

Vertical collaboration is the collaboration between communities and entities outside the community (both public & private) who often bring resources to the community.

In the race and community revitalization project, Roundtable Co-Director Anne Kubisch says, "We saw communities engaging with the power basis." They began to question the outside players and the restrictions and demands they make when they bring resources to bear on a community.

On March 17, 2005 Anne will join us to speak about Comprehensive Collaborations, sharing her research on comprehensive initiatives in the US and drawing lessons all community collaborations should consider.

 [On this event](#)

Related Links:

- [Roundtable on Community Change](#)
- [Comprehensive Thinking & Action](#)

By: Louise Kearney

Hitting the Wall – A New Way to Consider Gender

When facilitators for Vibrant Communities Gender & Poverty learning initiative were looking for a comprehensive tool to use in community workshops, they came to the Wall.

The Wall Workshop is designed to tap into women's own experiences and provide them with a way to map out how they are affected by trends and changes in the workplace, home and community, as well as identify actions they – and their community – can take to address the inter-related root causes underlying women's poverty.



The visual picture workshop participants create of the economy and the root causes of poverty – the “Wall” – is a powerful way to represent and share the reality of many women. The Wall also illustrates how men and women are affected differently by poverty.

Now the co-creators of the methodology behind the Wall, Bev Burke and Suzanne Doerge, have launched the Women's Wall Project online.

The website includes an introduction to the methodology; experiences people have had facilitating Wall workshops, and information on how to order guides as well as suggestions for adapting the methodology to your situation.

 [Visit the Wall Workshop!](#)

Related Links:

- [Guide to the Wall Workshop](#)
- [Vibrant Communities Gender & Poverty initiative](#)

By: Louise Kearney

Fair Fares for Calgarians

Paying the bus fare can be a challenge when you're struggling to make ends meet. Several Vibrant Communities members have launched initiatives aimed at increasing transportation support for low-income residents.

The Vibrant Communities Calgary (VCC) Fair Fares Action Team has been working since 2000 to establish a discounted transit pass program for low income Calgarians.

In late 2004 Fair Fares met with a number of City Aldermen to request their support for a motion to subsidize transit passes for people on low incomes and to delay the proposed \$5 increase to transit passes.

Members of Fair Fares spoke at City Council's December meeting and were delighted when Aldermen Ray Jones and Bob Hawkesworth requested that City Staff develop a report on discounted transit passes for low-income Calgarians.

Fair Fares has been working with the City Transit staff responsible for the Report and are hopeful that the City will move forward on a discounted transit pass program that will allow all Calgarians access to affordable public transit.

Related Links:

- [VCC Spring 2005 Newsletter](#)
- [Opportunities Niagara's Transportation Study](#)

By: Kerrie Skillen

Peer Input Helps Groups Move Forward

Working on complex community issues is time consuming and tough. People working in community organizations often come across challenges they struggle to overcome on their own. Seeking advice from peers and colleagues is one way to move forward.

Recently, Vibrant Communities members have been experimenting with a tool called the Peer Input Process (PIP). They have been using the tool to assist two of the Trail Builder communities - Niagara and Victoria - as they encounter challenges and emerging issues in their work.

PIPs follow a pre-determined process. The person-seeking-input explains the challenge or issue they face and asks for input by posing a question (e.g. Our collaboration is new and several funders are reluctant to fund our work because we do not have a "track record." How can we encourage them to invest in us?)

The peer group then asks clarifying questions for 10 minutes and probing questions for 10 minutes. They then engage in a 20 minute discussion amongst themselves about the question posed. This discussion takes place without the person-seeking-input being able to provide comments.

At the end of the discussion the person-seeking-input reflects on the process and any learnings that have been generated as well as how they might proceed based on the group's input.

The easy to use PIP format makes it a useful and relatively quick way for anyone to receive input from others on an important question they are facing.

Community leaders in Niagara and Victoria have found it a helpful process.

 [about the Peer Input Process](#)

Related Links:

- [Opportunities Niagara](#)
- [Quality of Life CHALLENGE](#)

By: Kerrie Skillen

Buen provecho! – Spanish Paella Brings Students Together

I studied languages at university and had the opportunity to do an exchange in Spain during my fourth year. One of my goals for the year I spent living there was to familiarize myself with local customs and traditions and to bridge the gap of cultural difference by celebrating the unique qualities of my new home.

One particular highlight was the Spanish hospitality.

One evening several foreign students and I were invited into a Spanish classmate's home to celebrate and sample traditional Spanish food. As we were all from different areas of the world, our common link was our love of the Spanish language, not to mention Spanish food.

Our generous host welcomed us to participate in a lesson on how to prepare Paella, a traditional Spanish dish.

Not only did our group benefit from our host's hospitality, the richness of the food, and a chance to broaden our ever-growing comprehension of the language, but cooking together also enabled us to build friendships that evening that would last throughout the year and unite us in our memories when we traveled back home.



[Download Suzanne's recipe!](#)

Related Links:

- [Soup's On! Get more recipes and stories from the Tamarack kitchen!](#)

By: Suzanne Holder