



View Engage online at: <http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/newsletter/engage.htm>!

Engage!

Leaders Unite

This week, approximately 75 leaders in community engagement have gathered in Guelph for the first ever Communities Collaborating Institute.

The energy is high, the momentum is building and visions are emerging. The Institute welcomes an inaugural participant group that represents a whole community system. Leaders from government, community organizations, businesses and volunteers have come together at Loyola House, a beautiful place of retreat, to share their learnings about collaboration and to learn from each other.



Each day is coordinated with speakers, presentations, workshops and activities that explore important mechanisms for societal change.

Day one featured special guest speaker Sherri Torjman of the Caledon Institute, offering her leadership and insight on the communities agenda. Her wisdom and enthusiasm for collaboration provided a welcomed inspiration for discourse throughout the week, particularly at our evening Conversation Café.

As the leaders collaborate in their learning pods, they've been discussing questions that have emerged throughout the week and that they have been eager to seek answers for throughout their journey in community engagement.

Of course, there are more questions than answers – but we're getting there!

Related Links:

- [The 2006 Communities Collaborating Institute](#)
- [Shared Space: The Communities Agenda by Sherri Torjman](#)
- [Read Paul Born's report on Leadership as Energy](#)

By: Rachel Veira-Gainer

Forming a Learning Community

As some of Canada's leading collaborators unite at Loyola House in Guelph, a powerful learning community is developing, dedicated to collaboration, improving quality of life and community renewal efforts.



Bringing people in communities to collaboration is an emerging field of practice. At Tamarack, our passion for learning and community engagement has produced the first ever Communities Collaborating Institute.

In collaboration with our partners, this one-week institute, followed by a 10-month online learning module, is advancing the skills of collaborators and practitioners in order to help make the work of renewing communities easier and more effective.

As members of an ongoing learning network, we are expanding our vision for the scale of results we set out to achieve in communities across Canada.

Community issues are complex; community initiatives can be complicated. We hope this new learning community will help to shed light on this complexity in an effort to strengthen movements for change.



[Learn more about forming a learning community.](#)

Related Links:

- [Supporting Pioneering Leaders as Communities of Practice](#)
- [Explore Thinking Like a Movement, Acting Like an Organization](#)
- [The 2006 Communities Collaborating Institute](#)

By: Rachel Veira-Gainer

Financial Literacy

Making Cents in Edmonton

In 2005, Edmonton's consumer bankruptcy rate accounted for 40 percent of bankruptcies in Alberta.

Vibrant Communities Edmonton (VCE) recognized that an important part of its goal to help families achieve economic success is to help workers better understand the impact of financial decisions.

In January 2006, VCE began recruiting partners to provide financial literacy training. The *Making Cents* initiative encourages employers to provide financial literacy workshops in the workplace. VCE also marketed the financial literacy program to people who received assistance to apply for tax credits or subsidies through the *Make Tax Time Pay* campaign.

Over three years, VCE will help more than 300 people gain a better understanding of what influences their spending habits, while teaching new habits to help families and individuals establish savings and take control of their debts.

The ultimate hope is for families in Edmonton to achieve their financial goals, improve their financial situations and achieve Family Economic Success!



[View the Making Cents Brochure here!](#)

Related Links:

- [Vibrant Communities Edmonton's Make Tax Time Pay Initiative](#)
- [Vibrant Communities Edmonton](#)

By: Susan Eckerle Curwood

Vibrant Communities Update

Calgary, AB – Vibrant Communities Calgary has submitted a brief on employability issues to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA). Read the document [here](#).

B.C.'s Capital Region – On September 26, Sherri Torjman of the Caledon Institute for Social Policy will speak at the Community Council's Annual General Meeting "Building Resilience in Canadian Society." Learn more [here](#).

Edmonton, AB – Vibrant Communities Edmonton is providing the MAKE TAX TIME PAY manual free of charge to employers. The manual contains applications for seven different benefits and subsidies related to health care, child care and leisure access that you can pass on to your employees. To receive your free copy, e-mail karinahurtado@vibrantedmonton.ca.

Generating "Aliveness" *Communities of Practice*

Because communities of practice are voluntary, their success comes from their ability to generate excitement, relevance and value to attract and engage members.

In *Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge*, authors Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott and William M. Snyder suggest practical ways to generate and spark knowledge.

In this book, the authors ask, "How do you design for aliveness?" For communities of practice, aliveness is paramount in order to bring about a community's internal direction, character and energy. Based on the authors' experiences, they have derived seven principles to guide an institution in becoming "alive":

1. Design for evolution.
2. Open a dialogue between inside and outside perspectives.
3. Invite different levels of participation.
4. Develop both public and private spaces.
5. Focus on value.

6. Combine familiarity and excitement.
7. Create a rhythm for the community.

These design principles are not a recipe but, rather, they embody an understanding of how elements work together to cultivate communities of practice.



To read more about Cultivating Communities of Practice, [click here](#).

Related Links:

- [Read our Cultivating Communities of Practice book review](#)
- [Learn more about author Etienne Wenger](#)

By: Rachel Veira-Gainer

A Song of Praise

The benefits of MP3 technology

I love my iPod!

When I bought my iPod, I was starting a new exercise regime and thought the sounds of Tina Turner's "What's Love Got to Do With It?" would motivate me.

Then, I discovered podcasts and found a whole new dimension to MP3 technology. When Tamarack began offering its tele-learning sessions in MP3 format, I downloaded the entire "Thinking Like a Movement, Acting Like an Organization" series. Now, I listen to inspiring conversations during my 15 minute walk to and from the subway on my way to work.

Or, when I want to engage more in music and less in conversation, I shuffle my playlist to the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra's beautiful rendition of Handel's "Watermusic." The Communities Collaborating Institute is featuring the sounds and collaboration of [Orpheus](#), a conductorless orchestra.

And, when I'm ready to rock and roll again, I tune into Bob Seeger's "Fire Lake."

What's on your playlist?



Listen to Tamarack's podcasts on your MP3 player with Engage to go!

Related Links:

- [What are podcasts?](#)
- [How to download and listen to podcasts.](#)

By: Susan Taylor Simpson

Featured Resources

Getting Punched: The Job and Family Clock - Get the facts on the dramatic labour market changes that result in more and more workers facing dual and dueling responsibilities - those at work and those at home. Businesses that recognize this tension address it through responsive scheduling and paid time off - and these businesses benefit from cost savings when they do. Getting Punched suggests 10 ways that the government should get more involved in promoting responsive workplaces for workers of all wages. It's about time. Download the full paper [here](#). [Source: Csrl-news]

When Working is Not Enough to Escape Poverty - This study discusses the pros and cons of the various definitions that have been used to investigate the phenomenon of working poverty in Canada, and argues for the use of a new definition. In addition to providing a detailed descriptive profile of working poor Canadians, the study identifies the main determinants of low income for workers, and looks at the dynamics of work and low income for the working poor. Access the study [here](#). [Source: CSRL-newsletter, HRSDC]