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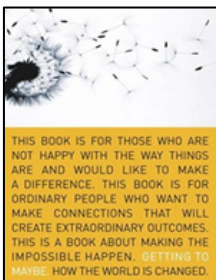
Getting to Maybe

A day in the life of a social innovator – how the world is changed, or not...

Consider the passion, the pain and the people, driven by an unquenchable desire to change the conditions that humanity inflicts.

Consider Bob Geldof, animating the plight of poor countries; the heart-wrenching struggles of Romeo Delaire trying to make sense of senseless war; or Muhammad Yunus, recognized with the Nobel Peace Prize for development in Bangladesh.

These stories could easily become epic blockbuster films. But, the reality of a social innovator is no such story. *Getting to Maybe*, by Frances Westley, Brenda Zimmerman and Michael Quinn Patton, is an intimate portrayal of social innovation.



As social innovators follow a feeling or make sense of seemingly unconnected events, *Getting to Maybe* is a fitting description of their work.

Long and lonely hours of self-doubt and discontent, fueled by delusional passion - this is the real story of social innovation.

This issue of Engage is dedicated to *Getting to Maybe*. We invite you into the world of social innovation to explore its richness and importance.



For more on *Getting to Maybe* and social innovation, click here.

Related Links:

- [Listen to Getting to Maybe co-author Frances Westley discuss social innovation](#)
- [Valuable tips for social innovators](#)
- [Read more about social innovator and Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus](#)

By: Paul Born

Sustaining Social Innovation

What happens when you pull together social innovators from across Canada?

Inspiration becomes palpable. Energy is multiplied. Learning is exponential.

Since 2002, a group of Canadian social innovators has been meeting annually and collaborating online at the invitation of the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation.

These practitioners, who are concerned with applied dissemination and sustaining social innovation, come together to share strategies, experiences and dilemmas, and to draw inspiration from one another.

The group also draws inspiration and learning from a variety of experts like [Lisbeth Schorr](#), [Brenda Zimmerman](#), and [Frances Westley](#) on topics such as scaling up, tracking progress, the life-cycles of social change initiatives, social marketing, and complexity theory.

The sheer energy that's generated by learning together with others who are working at the edge is incredible.

In this learning community, social innovators find inspiration and renewed energy for the often lonely work they do to create change in the world.



Learn more about the Sustaining Social Innovation learning community here!

Related Links:

- [Learn more about the participants in this unique learning community!](#)
- [Brenda Zimmerman on Complexity](#)
- [Frances Westley on Panarchy](#)

By: Louise Kearney

Collaborating to Innovation

When Vibrant Communities was organized in 2002, its goal was to assist 5,000 households in their journeys out of poverty by the year 2006. For those involved, this was a “stretch goal” – a goal that would get communities innovating, working, and inspired.

To date, Vibrant Communities has impacted over 17,000 individuals and families, achieving more than 300 percent of their original “stretch” target.

The authors of *Getting to Maybe* use Opportunities 2000 (the experiment upon which Vibrant Communities was founded) as an example to offer the following advice to social innovators:

- Watch for and nurture the conditions that lead to tipping points.
- Support “early wins” to reach momentum.
- Set goals around learning, not just performance.
- Don’t just gather information – share it.

Applying these principles has allowed the Vibrant Communities movement to increase in energy, attaining intensity and momentum far beyond the dreams of its original collaborators.



Visit Vibrant Communities online

Related Links:

- [What is a Vibrant Community?](#)
- [Learn more about the social innovators behind Vibrant Communities](#)
- [Click here to find out what's new in the Vibrant Community nearest you](#)

By: Susan Eckerle Curwood

Vibrant Communities Update

Hamilton, ON – A strategic framework has been developed for Hamilton's four-year community plan. The framework's four key points include strategies in the areas of Making Hamilton the Best Place to Raise a Child, governance and leadership, community engagement and evaluation and learning. View the document [here](#).

Calgary, AB – Conservative leadership candidates respond to Vibrant Communities Calgary's questions. Read their views on [affordable housing and homelessness](#) and on [affordable transportation](#).

Microcredit for Macro Results

Reduce world poverty by 50 percent by 2015 – this is the goal of Muhammad Yunus, founder of the Grameen Bank.

By pioneering the use of seemingly insignificant loans, Yunus and his bank have helped poverty-stricken people around the world buy the food and supplies they desperately need to get ahead.

Yunus' model now operates in over 100 countries, offering microcredit to over 35 million families with the goal of getting each borrower out of poverty in less than 10 years.



Often described as “the person who has done more than anyone in history to empower the poor,” it only seemed natural when, together, Yunus and Grameen Bank were awarded the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for improving economic and social development.

“Poverty is not created by poor people,” advocates Yunus. “It is created by the concepts and institutional arrangements under which people live.”

Yunus believes that lasting peace cannot be achieved unless people find ways in which to break out of poverty. Microcredit is one such means.

 To learn more about these 2006 Nobel Peace Prize recipients, [click here](#).

Related Links:

- [The Grameen Bank Homepage](#)
- [Ten Indicators to Assess Poverty Level by Muhammad Yunus](#)
- [What is microcredit?](#)

By: Susan Eckerle Curwood & Rachel Veira Gainer

Comfort Food for Innovation

A simple pleasure for complex work

No matter your age, race, profession or economic wealth, anyone can take comfort in coming home to warm, gooey chocolate chip cookies.

I've always taken solace not only in eating this wonderful treat, but in preparing it as well. As a babysitter, I would bring the neighbourhood children together in the kitchen to help in gathering ingredients. Then, we would spend hours playing games, enjoying delicious cookies and one another's company.

Taking time to reflect and relax is important for anyone, especially for the emotionally and intellectually taxing work of social innovators.

As Frances Westley, co-author of *Getting to Maybe*, says, "It is virtually impossible to engage in social innovation without facing extreme isolation and failure."

So, in those moments when the challenges of social innovation seem to outweigh the rewards, why not return to those blissful simple pleasures? Crank up the tunes, dance around the kitchen and make your inner child smile with these classic treats.

Don't forget the milk!



[Click here for Anne's Chewy Chocolate Chip Cookie recipe.](#)

Related Links:

- [Visit our *Soup's On* page for more recipes from Tamarack](#)

By: Anne Blayney

Featured Resources

Approaching Intractable Social Issues - How do we move from creating social innovations to sustaining them? That is, how do we embed them into our social systems and institutions so that they endure? This [Philia dialogue](#) looks at the working principles, patterns and attributes that contribute to the sustainability of innovations - in particular, those that address "intractable" social problems. Learn more [here](#).

Theory of Change - This joint venture between [ActKnowledge](#) and the [Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change](#), is an interactive online suite of tools for creating, sharing and using Theories of Change. Theories of Change are an innovative tool to design and evaluate social change initiatives. By creating a blueprint of the building blocks required to achieve a social change initiative's long-term goal, such as improving a neighborhood's literacy levels or academic achievement, a Theory of Change offers a clear roadmap to achieve your results identifying the preconditions, pathways and interventions necessary for an initiative's success." Learn more [here](#).