

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

Engage!

More than Words

We spend a lot of time in groups, discussing how to work better together. But, do we ever talk about *how* we talk to each other?

Dialogue requires us to consider more than the exchange of words. It requires us to consider meaning.

David Bohm, a well-known physicist, produced one of the most useful descriptions of the value of effective dialogue when saying, "Dialogue is the collective way of opening up judgments and assumptions." When freed from our biases, we are able to move into a deeper stage of conversation.

In focusing on community and communication, Dr. Joe Schaeffer also advocates the importance of "suspending" assumptions or meaning when engaging in dialogue.

By suspending our assumptions, the avenues of communication open up to allow the free flow of meaning between participants in a conversation.

This issue of *Engage* is dedicated to dialogue. We invite you into the world of effective listening to build successful movements for change.



[What is Dialogue?](#)

Related Links:

- [David Bohm on meaning, purpose and exploration in dialogue](#)
- [Meaning-based communication by Joe Schaeffer](#)

By: Rachel Veira Gainer

Transforming through Dialogue

In order to build great communities, Tamarack has developed the following four transformational ideas for effective collaboration.

1. See the assets in your community
2. Bring the community's assets into harmony
3. Build a vision so compelling that the system is required to engage
4. Learn and change together as the vision grows

Paramount to this work is the art of dialogue.

Our perception of our community shapes the types of dialogues we want to have with people. We should start every conversation by recognizing the community's positive qualities.

Finding synchronicity in a community's assets requires an inclusive conversation. Consider hosting a conversation that brings government, voluntary sectors, business and those influenced by the issue into harmony.

Learning and change occurs naturally when we engage in a positive, inclusive and harmonious dialogue.

When we truly listen and enter into conversation about the system we are trying to affect, we have the opportunity to recognize levers for change.

 [Recognizing and Harnessing Community Assets](#)

Related Links:

- [Asset building: A positive approach](#)
- [Community and Communication in a Diverse Society](#)

By: Rachel Veira Gainer

Voices in Victoria

As part of the Collaborating for Community Change conference in BC's Capital Region, participants were asked the following questions in a conversation café.

1. What has been your personal experience with collaboration?
2. How would you advance collaboration for greater community impact?

This dialogue brought together a diverse group of individuals, including academic, business and government leaders, non-profit organizations and concerned citizens. More importantly, it got people together to talk freely about big issues, such as collaboration.

So, why host a dialogue, such as a conversation café?

According to Christina Peacock of the Quality of Life CHALLENGE, there are an increased number of groups exploring the practice of working collaboratively. While the benefits of this are clear, the messiness of working out collaborations is challenging.

Christina believes, "Conversation cafés are a safe and constructive way to begin to name the challenges, learn from other experiences and incorporate ways of working that build success for collaborative initiatives."



[Visit the Quality of Life CHALLENGE Vibrant Communities page](#)

Related Links:

- [The Conversation Café](#)
- [The Quality of Life CHALLENGE](#)

By: Anne Blayney

Vibrant Communities Update

Abbotsford, BC – After 18 months living in his car, James Breckenridge, a member of the Vibrant Abbotsford Leadership Team, now stays at the Abbotsford Salvation Army. Read James' story [here](#).

Waterloo Region, ON – On November 28, Opportunities Waterloo Region hosted a Community Conversation with Richard Shillington, a policy expert and a member of the task force on Modernizing Income Security Strategies for Working-Age Adults (MISSWAA). Access the full MISSWAA report [here](#).

Calgary, AB – Vibrant Communities Calgary is currently hiring a Communications Advisor. The deadline for applications is December 8. Access the full position description [here](#).

Snapshots of Dialogue

A good photo can tell a story. A great photo can inspire people to generate words, and facilitate dialogue, conversation and engagement around an issue.

If you were asked to take a picture that represented community development, what would it be? Would it be people in action? The results of a successful project? Or, would your photo capture something more abstract, such as an image of nature?

Try the following exercise at one of your upcoming meetings:

A few weeks prior to your meeting, email participants and ask them to spend some time taking pictures that represent the theme of the meeting. When you gather, allow participants to share their photos and why they chose them. Create a collage of images that embody the spirit of the event.

The result will be a tool that facilitates rich, creative dialogue that goes far beyond words.

 [Conversations that give voice to photos](#)

Related Links:

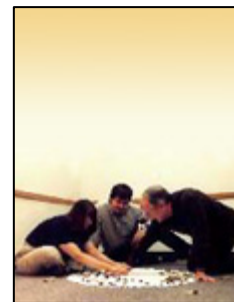
- [Photovoice: Social Change through Photography](#)

By: Susan Eckerle Curwood

Meaningful Communication

By embracing new and more holistic approaches to communication, community leaders can encourage growth, healing and the spirit of community.

As an author, speaker, consultant and facilitator, Dr. Joe Schaeffer focuses on community, communication, decision-making and the management of conflict.



His unique perspective on building community offers a practical approach to communication that encourages us to break through bad habits and divisive attitudes.

In his book *The Stone People: Living Together in a Different World*, Joe takes readers on a journey to a new way of thinking about communication.

His concept of meaning-based communication is a foundation for the establishment of partnerships and communities. It is based on the premise that, despite our similarities or differences, we are equal as human beings.

Joe uses his signature tool, The Stone Game, to demonstrate this communication. This easy-to-learn and fun-to-play game is grounded in communication theories that position players to feel curiosity, confidence, openness and empathy.

Dr. Joe Schaeffer's work is an important influence at Tamarack and is pivotal in understanding and engaging in dialogue.

 [Meaning-based communication](#)

Related Links:

- [About Joe Schaeffer](#)
- [The Stone Game](#)
- [Notes on Communication: Sources of Experience and Meaning](#)

By: Rachel Veira Gainer

Featured Resources

[Methods for Dialogue](#) - Explore some of the most well-known dialogue and deliberation methods, and what contexts these models are best suited for. Learn more [here](#).

[Creating Community Engagement](#) - How do you engage your community? There are a variety of tools that promote different types of community engagement. Learn more [here](#).