



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

Engage!

The West is in! (And they know how to collaborate)

The Province of Alberta has a reputation as a hot resource-based economy that espouses conservative politics, run by a provincial government that swings back and forth from severe cut-backs to spontaneous spending sprees.

Rarely do images of people and organizations working collaboratively and inclusively to build better communities figure into this picture.

That's too bad, because collaboration is a big part of the Alberta story.

Alberta has been clearly blessed with an abundance of natural capital, but it's rich in social capital as well.

Consider the case of the inclusive *St. Paul's Abilities Network* that provides support for persons with disabilities, or Edmonton's *City Centre Education Project* that is transforming the city's public school system, and becoming an inspiration for school reformers across North America, with its model of inter-school collaboration. In Red Deer, a municipal task force is convening a multisectoral effort to address homelessness, while in Calgary, community organizations and funders are coming up with new solutions to fund community processes.

 [Learn more about Alberta's history of collaboration.](#)

Related Links:

- [St. Paul's Abilities Network](#)
- [City Centre Education Project](#)
- [Potter's Hands Housing](#)
- [Calgary Urban Aboriginal Initiative](#)

By: Mark Cabaj

5 Lessons for Social Change Leaders

Leading a social change or justice initiative can be a daunting, exhausting challenge. In the midst of all the work that you should do, or could do, how do you make sure that you are making a difference?

Advocacy.org offers five key lessons to help leaders and organizations think about the way they approach social change initiatives.

- [Seed the Team : Build effective leadership teams](#)
- [Craft the Campaign: Plan and implement powerful campaign](#)
- [Empower the Coalition: Make partnerships and coalitions that work](#)
- [Speak to Inspire: Design effective outreach strategies](#)
- [Fan the Flame: Address advocacy fatigue and burnout](#)

Advocacy.org is run by the Advocacy Institute, which helps to make social justice leadership strategic, effective and sustainable. The Institute is also co-founder, with the Ford Foundation, of the *Leadership for A Changing World* project.

 [Visit Tamarack's Movements for Change web section for more resources on building and leading a movement for change!](#)

Related Links:

- [Advocacy.org](#)
- [Leadership for a Changing World](#)
- [The Ford Foundation](#)

By: Louise Kearney

Tax Time Pays Off

An informed community will take action. This principle underlies Vibrant Communities Calgary's Theory of Change.

By providing residents with information challenging the predominant view of poverty – that it is caused by individual choices and can be overcome by pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps – Vibrant Communities Calgary (VCC) seeks to increase civic engagement and bring about policy change.

Several successes have already occurred. Successful advocacy resulted in increased Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) benefits for more than 8,000 Calgarians. Community mobilization around transportation issues helped convince City aldermen to establish a low-income transit pass program. Currently, VCC is working with the City to develop a policy to ensure that ethical concerns, such as a living wage, are considered in City procurement.

These successes are promising signs that the future will bring even deeper policy changes, getting to the very heart of poverty reduction.



[Vibrant Communities Calgary: Awareness, Engagement, and Policy Change](#)

Related Links:

- [Fair Fares Calgary Celebrates Reduced Transit Fare Passes](#)
- [Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Public Policy Initiative](#)
- [More information on Vibrant Communities Calgary](#)

By: Susan Eckerle Curwood

Vibrant Communities Update

Hamilton, ON – The Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction has launched a new Web site to share the vision of *Tackling Poverty in Hamilton*. Check it out [here](#).

Calgary, AB - Almost 5,000 Calgarians living on low incomes have now purchased reduced-fare transit passes through the Fair Fares program! Learn more about the program [here](#).

New Brunswick – Premier Bernard Lord, in his state of the province address, set poverty as one of his government's top goals for the next decade, saying, "Within five years I want New Brunswick to have the biggest reduction of poverty rate in Canada." Access the news release [here](#) or the full text of Premiere Lord's address [here](#).

RBC tops list of Canada's most respected corporations - The eleventh annual survey ranking Canada's most respected corporations once again puts RBC Financial Group at the top of the list. Aside from being the overall winner, RBC also scored top marks for corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate governance in the Ipsos Reid survey. RBC Financial Group has made a significant contribution to Vibrant Communities.

Creating Space for Complex Conversations

Have you ever noticed that the most engaging, passionate, intelligent conversations you had with other workshop or conference participants occurred during coffee breaks, over dinner, or in the open spaces between official sessions? You're not alone.

Open Space Technology was created in the mid-1980s by organizational consultant Harrison Owen when he discovered that people at conferences liked the coffee breaks more than the formal sessions.

Open Space has proven effective in a number of settings and with both small and large groups. The success of the process is determined by people's willingness to engage in frank, forthright, and passionate discussion about the ideas and topics that matter most to them.

While the Open Space technology itself is relatively simple, the ideas and concepts explored are generally complex.

 [Learn more about Open Space!](#)

Related Links:

- [Open Space Institute](#)
- [Open Space Technology: A User's Non-Guide](#)

By: Louise Kearney

The Company of Others

A truly inclusive society is one that nurtures a sense of belonging by recognizing and valuing the contributions of all members of the community.

For people living on the margins of society—people living with mental illness, facing old age, and those with physical and developmental disabilities, loneliness and isolation are all too common.



The Company of Others, a new book produced by the PLAN Institute for Caring Citizenship, explores the concept of belonging through the compelling personal stories of five individuals who defy conventional assumptions about people viewed as marginalized or vulnerable.

Each person has their own active social circle—a coordinated network of caring friends and family members. Betty, for example, a First Nations elder and family matriarch is honoured and appreciated by her large extended family; her network spans three generations of relatives who, together, make it possible for Betty to continue to live on the central BC ranch that has been her home for over seventy years.

 [Read an excerpt from *The Company of Others*.](#)

Related Links:

- [Philia: A Dialogue on Caring Citizenship](#)
- [Binding Ourselves Together in Caring](#)
- [Reaching out to forgotten of society](#) by Andre Picard

Edited by: Louise Kearney, with files from *PLAN*

Ideas we're following ...

Failure of Philanthropy - Helping the poor is supposedly a main goal of philanthropy. Yet research shows that most charitable dollars do not go to serving the poor. Tax incentives and public policy need to change to ensure that more money goes to directly helping the poor. Read the review [here](#).

Ending Child Poverty in the UK by 2020 - In 1999, the United Kingdom (UK) announced its pledge to cut child poverty by one-quarter by 2004 and eliminate it by 2020. This paper examines the history of this ambitious commitment, and the progress to date. It also analyzes the components of the national effort—which range from employment supports, asset building initiatives, and child-targeted assistance to tax, welfare, and education policies—and the next steps the UK is considering to meet the goal of eradicating child poverty. Read the paper [here](#).