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Engage!

Don't Think of an Elephant!

Whatever you do, *don't* think of an elephant. Could you do it? Me, neither.

George Lakoff uses this exercise to make the point that every word evokes a frame - an image, a set of values, or another kind of knowledge - and that adding a negative term such as "don't" or "anti-" to a word nevertheless brings to mind the word's frame.

When working with deeply rooted community issues like poverty, we must be aware of the frames evoked by language. Framing is more than just semantics, and can be critical to the success or failure of an initiative.

Community groups are recognizing the importance of language in engaging and mobilizing communities. Instead of invoking the negative frame of "poverty," positive frames - "Fair Fares," "Family Economic Success," "Quality of Life" - are being used to energize communities around critical issues. When ideas are articulated so as to invoke shared values, such as fairness, quality of life, and success, people see the work differently, as impacting all of us, not just a group of "poor people." Not thinking of the elephant motivates us to action.

 [Don't Think of an Elephant!](#)

Related Links:

- [The Rockridge Institute is dedicated to changing public policy by reframing the public debate](#)
- [Vibrant Communities Calgary's "Fair Fares" Initiative](#)
- [Vibrant Communities Edmonton: Building Family Economic Success](#)
- [BC's Capital Region's Quality of Life CHALLENGE](#)

By: Susan Curwood

Fuel Values: Lead through Vision

Lessons for a Collaborative Leader

It's often been said, "Without vision people will perish." For a collaborative leader a statement of equal importance is, "Vision not rooted in people will die."

The very nature of effective community collaboration is the diversity of people that work together, each person with unique ideas and ideals. The fact that people from different political, professional and cultural understandings can agree on a path forward is in itself a small miracle.

I have often mistaken the coalescence of a diverse group of people as collective buy-in to a vision. At my peril I have sometimes neglected the importance of the values that bind them.

If we understand that the root of all vision is values, as collaborative leaders we can fuel the values by ensuring there is time for people to get to know each other as human beings.



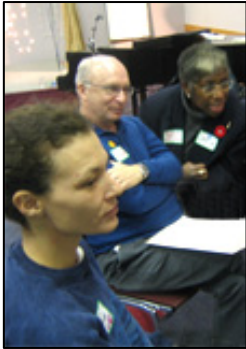
[Read the full article!](#)

Related Links:

- [Lead and Follow at the Same Time](#)
- [Tamarack is hosting a five-day Communities Collaborating Institute in September 2006. Register now to receive an application package for this unique learning opportunity!](#)

By: Paul Born

Step Inside Poverty



The Poverty Experience is an experiential learning tool that demonstrates the positive or negative impact relatively small events can have on a person trying to move out of poverty.

Developed in 2003 by the Quality of Life CHALLENGE's Community Action Team (CAT), the tool has been used to help groups including the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance and the University of Victoria School of Social Work understand the realities of low-income life.

CAT members facilitate the 30-minute experiences at events including staff and board meetings and community workshops. The facilitator, who has experienced living on a low income, presents a scenario and guides a discussion group through a series of choices and events from the perspective of a scenario character trying to participate fully in the community.

The Poverty Experience is changing perspective in BC's Capital Region. "I have a much greater appreciation for the day to day barriers that people living in poverty encounter," said one participant.



about BC's Capital Region's Quality of Life CHALLENGE

For more information about the Poverty Experience, or to explore the possibility of bringing the experience to your group, contact Andrea Wilmot at andrea@communitycouncil.ca.

By: Susan Curwood

Vibrant Communities Update

Saint John, NB – Vibrant Communities Saint John Chair and RBC Dominion VP Tom Gribbons urges the government to do more to boost the participation of the poor in the labour market. Read the full article [here](#).

Waterloo, ON – Opportunities Waterloo Region is preparing for the launch of the Waterloo Region Social Purchasing Portal by forming four working groups for suppliers, purchasers, employment service providers, and marketing and communications. Click [here](#) for full details on this exciting project.

Niagara Region, ON – The Business Education Council of Niagara’s Trivial Pursuit Community Partner Award for 2006 was presented to Opportunities Niagara in recognition of their intermunicipal transportation project. Learn more about this project [here](#).

Caffeine & Conversation

Community organizers looking for a creative process for leading collaborative dialogue, sharing knowledge and creating possibilities for action should consider hosting a *Café Conversation*.

Alternately known as the *Conversation Café* and *World Café Conversation*, the process is an intentional way to encourage dialogue around questions that matter.

It doesn’t take much to set up a café; all that’s needed are a few tables and chairs, a couple of questions for people to consider, and the time and space to converse. The key to a successful café is adherence to the core conversational principles:

- Clarify the context
- Create a hospitable space
- Explore questions that matter
- Encourage everyone’s contribution
- Connect diverse perspectives
- Listen together, notice patterns
- Share collective discoveries

Too often, we forget the importance of communication and the synergies and emotion that can come out of engaging in conversation.

So put the coffee on, pull up a chair, and begin a conversation about the questions and issues that matter to your community.



[The World Café – Café Know-how](#)

Related Links:

- [Conversation Café](#)
- [Public Conversations Project](#)
- [University of the Streets Café \(Concordia University\)](#)
- [The World Café](#)

By: Louise Kearney

Sabah – A Love Story

If you liked *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, then you're sure to like *Sabah*! Canadian writer and director Ruba Nabba has produced a great Canadian movie that thoughtfully portrays the struggle associated with weaving the demands of a conservative, Middle Eastern family with Canadian culture.



Sabah (played by Arsinee Khanjian) is a 40-year old hijab-wearing Muslim woman living a quiet life in Toronto, doting on her widowed mother. Dominated by her older brother, Majid, Sabah's life is controlled by her family, until she happens to meet Stephen (Shawn Doyle), a Canadian man from Sudbury, with whom she falls in love.

While you may think a Toronto-made romance flick can't offer anything new to a familiar story, strong acting and an expressive script create an engaging and intelligent romantic comedy that draws you in as Sabah's and Stephen's worlds become increasingly entwined.

Like most Canadian features, this movie had a short run in the theatres, so rent the video/DVD from your local corner store, pop some popcorn and sit back and be entertained by this realistic, yet humorous glimpse of community life that blends Muslim values and tradition with Canadian culture.



[Visit the Sabah website!](#)

Related Links:

- [Read more Tamarack reviews!](#)

By: Sharalynn Krahn