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Engage!

Transforming our Communities

Transformation conjures up many images.

For some, it might be threatening because it means a change. It might energize others because that change is something that improves their community or even themselves.

There is something alluring about Peter Drucker's quote. It conjures up images of thriving communities where people work together and have a sense of belonging. There is recognition that all things are interconnected and people naturally collaborate with one another. Conflict is mitigated by a collective understanding that what affects one affects all.




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Pavel Losevsky

Peter Drucker says he sees a change happening. He does not judge that change or predict its outcome.

This, I believe, is where the challenge lies in his quote. The opportunity is there to transform our communities for the better but the opportunity is equally there to allow this transformation to evolve into something awful and destructive.

Community transformation is partially about the way we *think* about our work and also about the way we *do* our work.

 [Paul shares the story of Hamilton, a community undergoing transformation](#)

By: Paul Born

Moving Beyond the Facts

Real learning happens when we move beyond facts to spaces of transformation.

Wikipedia collaborators define [transformational learning](#) as “a process of getting beyond gaining factual knowledge alone to instead become changed by what one learns in some meaningful way.”

Alumni of the Communities Collaborating Institute recently shared what works when trying to create transformational learning opportunities with our colleagues or within our collaboratives. Their tips include:



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- allow time for the process to unfold
- foster participation & input to gain buy-in
- encourage participants to leave their politics at the door
- articulate values and a shared vision and return to them often
- create authentic multisectoral collaboration opportunities whereby those affected by the issue are at the table as experts
- “dance in the fields of the emerging issues”
- pay attention to the process
- articulate the transformation taking place through reflection and appreciative enquiry.

By adopting such practices and supporting open and honest exchanges, we can encourage and create learning spaces that evoke and support meaningful change.



[Move beyond the facts and access more tips for transformational learning on Louise's blog](#)

Learn More:

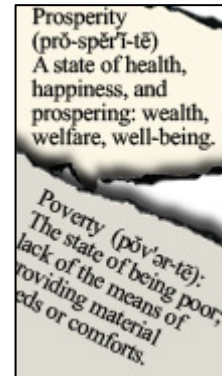
- Have a transformational learning technique, tip or story you'd like to share? [Email Louise!](#)
- [Visit the Transformational Learning online space](#)
- [Listen to our interview with Etienne Wenger on developing collaborative Communities of Practice](#)

By: Louise Kearney

Change the Frame

Poverty reduction looks different if you call it prosperity enhancement.

How you frame the discussion transforms the results. A Tamarack learning circle concluded that the goals of national organizations focused on prosperity and on poverty are related, and that both groups would benefit from connecting the debates.



How you approach a question is key. One of the lessons from the [Learn to Include, Include to Learn](#) tele-learning series is that engaging low income leaders is similar to engaging business leaders. The [Shifting Societal Attitudes Together](#) group concluded that achieving deep and durable poverty reduction requires shifting how people think about people living with low income.

In 2002, the provincial government in Quebec passed a law against poverty and social exclusion, then developed an action plan - contrast that approach with current consultations in other provinces aimed at developing poverty reduction strategies. Changing the frame to improve the quality of life for all citizens might create different results.

More... The Learn to Include, Include to Learn series looks at utilizing the skills that low-income residents bring to leadership roles. [Listen](#) to the first two sessions in the series, or [register](#) for the final session on April 23, 2008.

Learn More:

- Get resources and notes from the [Poverty Reduction and Prosperity Enhancement](#) learning circle's sessions in the online library
- Examine alternative approaches to conceiving [Poverty & Poverty Reduction](#)
- Visit the [Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté](#) website for info on the law against poverty and social exclusion

By: Brenda Doner

Vibrant Communities Updates

Waterloo Region, ON - Recommendations for both federal and regional poverty reduction strategies have emerged from Opportunities Waterloo Region's Community Conversations series, as well as a letter campaign. Learn more at the [OWR website](#).

Surrey, BC - This new [community story](#) from the Caledon Institute describes Project Comeback, one of Vibrant Surrey's partners. The project combines employment and housing support for homeless day labourers. Download the story [here](#).

St. John's, NL - Vibrant St. John's recently received feedback on the activities and staffing model included in their plan during a peer input session with Vibrant Communities colleagues. Learn more about Vibrant St. John's [here](#).

Waking Up to a New Way of Learning

My work at Tamarack has led me to experience a profound shift, not only in the way I think about community, but in the way I learn about and engage with the issues affecting the health of communities.

I recently took a seat in Oprah's "A New Earth" online class to join in a conversation about the concepts of Eckhart Tolle's latest book *A New Earth*.



©<http://www2.oprah.com>

Thousands of people are enrolled in this 10-week online course. And, despite minor technology glitches and a mass of people to compete with when "raising your hand" to speak, there is little to get in the way of this powerful learning community. This experience is more than just spiritually transforming; it will inspire and excite you about learning online!

There are a couple of essential elements that contribute to the success of this online course, including dynamic presentation, effective organization, and the personal nature of the subject matter.

At Tamarack, we recognize the power of a learning community and we've started to explore the possibilities of online learning to improve the work of communities collaborating, helping researchers, practitioners and communities across Canada to share their knowledge and learning with one another.

This is a journey that has only just begun!



Rachel shares more about her *A New Earth* online experience on her blog

Learn More:

- Join Rachel in the class. You can register through the Oprah website.
- Visit Eckhart Tolle's website

By: Rachel Gainer

3, 2, 1, Lights Out!

Many lights all across the world were voluntarily turned out March 28th at 8pm to observe Earth Hour, an effort aimed at reducing energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions globally. Across Canada, power use was reduced by approximately 5 per cent.

People gathered for various concerts and events armed with flashlights, candles, glow sticks, to celebrate and support the event.

Although some question whether or not Earth Hour had a significant environmental impact, there is one obvious and undeniable truth – events like this prove that we are unified by a global sense of responsibility and a desire to work together to action positive change.

Although these events tend to create momentum around an issue, it's clear that we still need to take a much more serious approach in order to see environmental improvement.

Earth Hour and the upcoming Earth Day (April 22) are great examples of how we can begin to think about tackling global issues collaboratively – but it can't stop there.

So, what are your plans for Earth Day and beyond?



Give us something to do! We are committed to giving back to the environment and need your suggestions and ideas! How should we spend our Earth day (and are willing you do the same)?



©<http://www.earthhour.org/>

Learn More:

- [Check out Earth Day Canada's top 10 suggested actions to help the environment](#)
- [What is your Ecological footprint? Take the quiz and then take action!](#)
- [Read more about Earth Hour 2008 as reported by TheStar.com](#)

By: Laura Zikovic

Featured Resources

[Just Another Emperor?](#) - Business involvement in philanthropy is increasing day by day, but is it a blessing, a curse, or somewhere in between? *Just Another Emperor?* is the first book to take a comprehensive and critical look at this vital new phenomenon. Whatever position you take, this could be one of the most important debates of the next 10 years. Learn more [here](#) and download the book for free [here](#). [Source: Charity Village]

[More Bang for the Buck](#) - Scores of pundits have written books, research reports, and articles about how business leaders extracted greater productivity from their companies. Yet few have paid attention to this topic in the nonprofit sector. Recognizing that increasing productivity could be a powerful way for nonprofit organizations to multiply the impact of their work, the authors explore how three nonprofits succeeded in reducing costs without sacrificing the quality of their services. Download the article [here](#). [Source: Stanford Social Innovation Review]