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All Aboard Manitoba's Poverty Train

By: Sherri Torjman et al.



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Rhienna Cutler

There are no results to applaud as of yet, but there may well be in the future if Manitoba is successful in implementing its latest strategic plan. Recently the province introduced a multifaceted and long-term initiative to reduce poverty.

On May 21, 2009, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Family Services

and Housing invited Manitobans *ALL Aboard*, the newly-minted poverty reduction strategy. *ALL Aboard* represents an annual investment of \$744 million, including \$212 million in new funding. What will Manitobans get for their money?

Within the context of the strategy, poverty is defined as more than a lack of income. Rather, this complex and stubborn problem results from diverse factors that make it difficult for many people to participate in the economy and in society more generally. To tackle the numerous factors that create and sustain poverty, the provincial investment will be directed toward four core clusters of intervention: safe affordable housing; education, jobs and income support; strong and healthy families; and coordinated programs and services.

Beautiful thinking for

September

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Read the first review paper in an upcoming series of papers exploring provincial poverty strategies across Canada by the Caledon Institute of Social Policy

Related Links:

- [Learn more about *All Aboard*, Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy](#)

Igniting Engagement: Why Stories Matter

By: [Pattie LaCroix, Catapult Media](#)

Communities are filled with knowledge about the issues they face and the solutions they need. Stories are important because they build a bridge between knowledge and action, or between data and meaning.



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The stories that we tell have the power to ignite change and fuel transformation. The stories that we hear open us up to new ways of thinking and steer our analysis in a fresh direction by creating context, meaning and access to our values.

Stories dispatch our hope and propel our understanding of what we can achieve. They change meaning, revise perspectives, shift behaviour, and in doing so, change the future.

Marshall Ganz of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government notes that stories “embody our values” and that by sharing our values through stories, we motivate one another to act. “We find the courage to take risks, explore the possibility and face the challenges we must face.”

Because stories create a context, foster connections and impart meaning, they act as a springboard to change.

Creating Your Strategic Narrative

As narrative expert Bob Shaver notes, “Stories make visible that which we would not otherwise understand.” Narrative is an entry point into complexity and serves

to create meaning as it provides us a place where we can begin to see ourselves as participants in change.

To enhance your storytelling it is good to know what stories do well and what stories don't do so well.

Stories are not:

- *Data transfer* - Stories create context and meaning bringing statistics and data to life
- *Knowledge transfer* - Stories fall flat when you seek to tell someone what they should know
- *A panacea* - Stories aren't a fix to all problems

Stories are:

- *Organic* – Stories change over time; they are not static – they live and constantly take shape. A story you heard when you were twelve takes on a different meaning when you hear it years later
- *Co-created* – Stories are told and they are received. Meaning is created by both telling and listening to the story
- *Visionary* – Stories, like very little else, can serve as way for us to know ourselves better, to see the potential in ourselves, to shape our future
- *A tool* – Stories are a great tool for creating engagement

Tips for Tapping into Story

Here are the most important characteristics of a powerful story for you to consider:

- *Emotions* – Tell a story about a time you felt passionate and alive about your work. Chances are if this motivates you it is going to motivate others too
- *Values* – Find stories that demonstrate your values in action, not just program mandates but why you do what you do
- *Clarity* – Find stories that make your work clear to someone who knows nothing about it
- *Success* – People like to be part of a solution, so tell stories that clearly illustrate the effectiveness of what you do

- *Surprise* – Stories with a twist or turn in the plot are very engaging. Tell stories of times when you were surprised by your work or when you learned something new

While stories need to be relevant to the situation you are addressing, remember that most importantly, they are not formulaic; they work best when they come from the heart, when your authenticity shines through with such light and clarity that it engages others and motivates us to take action.

Related Links:

- [Learn more at the upcoming workshop, *The Art and Power of the Narrative: Communicating Through Storytelling*](#)
- [Visit the Catapult Media website to find out what storytelling can do for your community or organization](#)
- [Read *A Narrative Approach for Working with the Skills and Knowledge of Communities* by the Dulwich Centre](#)
- [Learn the five truths about story from Storycatcher](#)
- [View *The Six Stories You Need to Know How To Tell* from the International Storytelling Center](#)

Ideas we're following...

Dialogue is Key to Meaningful Engagement By: [Sylvia Cheuy](#)

Witnessing the exploding emotions, frustration and conflict in recent “town hall” meetings regarding health care reform across America, Sandy Heierbacher, co-founder and director of the U.S. National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD) is questioning how effective such forums are in providing citizens with opportunities to be heard and/or discuss important issues in any depth. Her concern stems from her belief that the absence of meaningful citizen dialogue and deliberation is undermining democracy in her country.

Heierbacher believes strongly that it is possible to “have authentic, civil, productive discussions at public meetings – even on highly contentious issues.” She and her colleagues have developed a set of core principles for public engagement and identified that “reflecting back, using ground rules, working with facilitators, and

having people engage with each other in small groups” are some of the basic but critical elements of any meeting to ensure quality public engagement.

In order for people to deliberate, or wrestle with the complexities of an issue, Heierbacher also believes some important work must be completed prior to the public meeting. Balanced information must be provided about the issue at hand, and a fairly-framed spectrum of possible policy choices should be put on the table for attendees to discuss.

NCDD’s Core Principles for Public Engagement

These seven recommended principles reflect the common beliefs and understandings of those working in the fields of public engagement, conflict resolution, and collaboration. In practice, people apply these and additional principles in many different ways.

1. *Careful Planning and Preparation* - Through adequate and inclusive planning, ensure that the design, organization, and convening of the process serve both a clearly defined purpose and the needs of the participants
2. *Inclusion and Demographic Diversity* - Equitably incorporate diverse people, voices, ideas, and information to lay the groundwork for quality outcomes and democratic legitimacy
3. *Collaboration and Shared Purpose* - Support and encourage participants, government and community institutions, and others to work together to advance the common good
4. *Openness and Learning* - Help all involved listen to each other, explore new ideas unconstrained by predetermined outcomes, learn and apply information in ways that generate new options, and rigorously evaluate public engagement activities for effectiveness
5. *Transparency and Trust* - Be clear and open about the process, and provide a public record of the organizers, sponsors, outcomes, and range of views and ideas expressed
6. *Impact and Action* - Ensure each participatory effort has real potential to make a difference, and that all participants are aware of that potential

7. *Sustained Engagement and Participatory Culture* - Promote a culture of participation with programs and institutions that support ongoing quality public engagement

Taken together these seven recommended principles help to create a safe “container” that enables people to explore contentious issues together in ways that lead to greater shared understanding.

Related Links:

- [Visit the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation website](#)
- [Read Sandy's article, *Upgrading the Way We Do Politics*](#)
- [View this video clip of Canadian Health Care Leaders commenting on the U.S. health care debate](#)
- [Visit our *Resource Library* for more resources on Civil Society](#)

Engaging Business to Invest in Children *By: Garry Loewen*

The Partnership for America's Economic Success (PAES) is a coalition of economists, policy experts and advocates mobilizing business leaders to improve tomorrow's economy through smart policy investments in young children today. It has made the case that business leaders need:

- The best, most skilled employees now and in the future – ones who can create new products, solve complex problems and motivate teams to excel
- Employees who can focus on their jobs and not be distracted because their children are in poor quality care
- Communities that attract skilled employees, produce good customers and spend less tax money on expensive remedial programs
- Public policies that support development of the next generation of workers, so that they can continue to innovate and lead

The PAES has assembled a stable of solid economic evidence on the societal benefits of a broad range of investments in children. It argues that improving children's lives in their earliest years is not only the right thing to do, but also what businesses need to succeed. It has launched a national campaign to make the success of every child the nation's top economic priority. Ontario's own poverty

reduction strategy similarly recognizes the importance of focused efforts to invest in young children and families.

The Partnership is co-sponsoring Business Leader Summits in 20 states across the United States. The summits help business leaders make the connection between early childhood investments and developing a competitive 21st Century workforce; provide opportunities to network with peers who share their commitment to the future; and engage them to advocate for state policies that encourage the successful development of young children, support their families, and further economic vitality.

In addition to the summits, the PAES provides toolkits on what businesses can do to further this agenda, conducts research to support the value of early childhood investments and identify best practices, and offers resources to guide business advocacy. It provides a powerful model for multi-sector collaboration for social change.

Related Links:

- [Visit the PAES website](#)
- [More resources related Engaging Businesses in Local Efforts to Reduce Poverty](#)
- [Join the *Engaging Business* Community of Practice starting soon! Click for details.](#)
- [Access Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy](#)
- [Visit our *Resource Library* for more resources on Corporate Social Responsibility](#)

Poverty, Hunger & Canada's Food System By: Sylvia Cheuy

Poverty and hunger in both urban and rural Canada are “consequences that can be linked directly or indirectly with Canada’s unsustainable food system.” This is the conclusion of Chryslyn Pais, a recent graduate, whose undergraduate paper, *Causes and Consequences of an Unsustainable Food System*, published in *Esurio: Journal of Hunger and Poverty*, suggests that the market commodity nature of our current food system – when combined with unsustainable practices in the production, consumption, distribution and transportation of food – have left us with a broken system.

While Canada has recognized food as a human right, little action has been taken to fix the problems in the system. According to Pais, this action begins with our willingness to change the way we think about food access.

Chryslyn's paper is just one of several profiled in *Esurio: Journal of Hunger and Poverty*, which was launched earlier this year. What makes *Esurio* unique is that it is a collaborative, student-led, peer-reviewed academic journal that profiles articles "on issues of hunger and poverty through a youth lens." Published by the Ontario Association of Food Banks, the journal produces two issues per year featuring articles written and reviewed by graduate and undergraduate students.

Related Links:

- [Read *Causes and Consequences of an Unsustainable Food System* by Chryslyn Pais](#)
- [Visit the Journal of Hunger and Poverty website](#)
- [View the *Eat Real Eat Local* video by Hellmann's Real Food Movement](#)
- [View *Chicken a la Carte* – an award-winning video about food, taste and hunger](#)
- [Visit our *Resource Library* for more resources on Food Security](#)

Social Enterprise: Key to More Creative Capitalism By: Garry Loewen

Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft, explaining why he and his wife had decided to invest \$39 billion in projects addressing stark inequalities in health and education (affecting children in particular), put the case this way:

If you believe that each life has equal value then it is disgusting to learn that some lives are worth saving and some not...We asked, 'How could the world let these children die?' The answer is simple, and harsh. The market did not reward saving the lives of these people and governments did not subsidize it. So the children died because their mothers and fathers had no power in the market and no voice in the system.

We can make market forces work better for the poor if we develop a more creative capitalism – if we can stretch the reach of market forces so that more people can make a profit, or at least a living,

...serving people who are suffering from the worst inequities. We can also press governments around the world to spend taxpayers' money in ways that better reflect the values of people who pay taxes. If we find approaches that meet the needs of the poor that generate profit for business and votes for politicians we will have found a sustainable way to reduce inequity in the world.

Social enterprises trade products and services to further social and environmental goals. They are led by a sense of social purpose and aim to show that businesses and markets can deliver social benefits and tackle intractable social problems. Many people believe that social enterprises are one of the ways to develop the creative capitalism that can adapt business and the market to better address unmet social needs.

In *Social Enterprise and Social Innovation: Strategies for the Next Ten Years*, the Cabinet Office for the Third Sector in the UK argues that government needs a framework for social innovation in which social enterprise plays a critical role. It calls for a social enterprise policy to be framed within a more comprehensive strategy for social innovation that is designed to deliver social impact by finding new ways to address unmet social needs, and identifies four ingredients to be included within that strategy.

Related Links:

- [Read *Social Enterprise and Social Innovation: Strategies for the Next Ten Years* by U.K Cabinet Office of the Third Sector](#)
- [Learn more about the Social Economy and Social Enterprise in Canada in this Tamarack online audio seminar featuring Nancy Neamtan](#)
- [Want grant funds to launch a social innovation? Check out the Enterprising Non-Profits Program here!](#)
- [Visit our *Resource Library* for more resources on Community Economic Development](#)

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to create vibrant communities

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