

Community Leadership

A partnership between community organizations and Libraries, Community and Voluntary Services Branch (LVCS), Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Wild Rose Foundation, Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture

Feb 2008

Volume2, Issue2

Lessons from Charlie Brown

by Martha Parker

Words of wisdom **for those working in collaborative environments...**

For 50 years the daily comic strip 'Peanuts' entertained millions of readers. Every day, the adventures of Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Linus and the whole gang provided many laugh-out-loud moments while at the same time offering us a daily inspiration and lessons on life. I remember some of the lessons they taught me...

1. Persistence wins out. Charlie Brown often lost, failed at much, but he never gave up. Even though he knew Lucy was going to pull the football away before he could kick it... Even though he knew the tree was going to eat his kite... Even though he knew his team would lose the ball game, he kept on trying.
2. Sometimes you need to talk. One thing the 'Peanuts' gang understood was the importance of talking things out. Whether leaning up against Schroeder's piano or atop the brick wall, they always had someplace to discuss what was of concern to them.
3. Sometimes you need to listen. Even crabby, self-indulgent Lucy knew the importance of listening. She started the famous 'Psychiatry Booth' where any and all could come and be heard.
4. Big dreams lead to big things! Snoopy was the biggest dreamer of them all, but his wild imagination often led to even wilder, more fantastic adventures in real life. Snoopy knew that you must have a big dream if you are going to lead a big life.
5. Action creates reality. As Charlie Brown was reminded time and again after prodding from Linus: it takes action to bring about change.
6. And lastly, laugh every day! Life is only as serious or as humorous as YOU make it... Lighten up. Go play softball. Fly a kite. Dance with your dog. Smile... it makes people wonder what you're up to.

(adapted from unknown source)

Focused Conversations	2
Written Journeys	3
Leadership Organizations Play Vital Role	4
The Myths of Innovation	5
Learning From History	6

“Innovation flourishes in greenhouses. What do I mean by a greenhouse? A place where the elements are just right to foster the growth of good ideas. Where there’s heat ,light, moisture and plenty of nurturing. The green house I’m talking about, of course , is the workplace, the way spaces take shape in offices and teams that work together.

Tom Kelly,
“The Art of Innovation”



The Focused Conversation

Adapted from “The Art of the Focused Conversation”

by R. Brian Stanfield

We have conversations for many reasons - to solve problems, to heal wounds, to generate commitment, to build a vision, and to generate new ideas. Some conversations are better than others and sometimes the conversation we meant to have, turns into something quite different. Intending to have a frank and meaningful conversation can turn into chit chat, create misunderstandings, or may appear to be manipulative or perhaps only deal with one thinking style.

Designing questions that focus a conversation can enhance decision making ability, improve interpreting information and can encourage thinking in different ways.

The Institute of Cultural Affairs Canada has developed a process based on a natural internal process of perception, response, judgment and decision. The book “The Art of the Focused Conversation” is based on the principle “before making a decision it is important to explore the facts, our feelings and the implications.”

The first step is to decide on the purpose of the focused conversation – what are the **rational objectives** (tangible results or products, practical goal of the conversation i.e. to clarify misunderstanding, to make a decision on something, to reflect on learning), and **experiential aims** (refers to the inner impact we want the conversation to have i.e. build confidence, heal wounds, re-open a door to communication) and then make sure the line of questioning is focused and open ended.

It explores the **Objective Level** by asking questions to gather data, facts, external happenings. This helps to get everyone dealing with the same body of information.

What are the facts? What did you hear people saying?

At the **Reflective Level** one would facilitate a discussion relating to people’s relationship to data by revealing intuition, feelings, emotion and imagination. This helps people relate to emotions, memories or associations they may have.

Where were you surprised? Where did you feel uncomfortable? What excites you about the information presented?

The **Interpretive Level** looks at the meaning of the information, significance, deeper exploration into the topic, impact and implications. It’s questions would consider options, scenarios and alternatives. This is where you are testing ideas.

What does this mean for us? What was your greatest learning? What insights are beginning to emerge? What are our options? What if we did this – what would the impact be?

At this point the process may become iterative as you will discover what you don’t know and may need to know or discuss before making a decision. The greatest drawback in using this process is not giving it enough time. Also, people need to come with good data and facts. The amount of homework to be done leading into this will determine its effectiveness in terms of decision making.

At the **Decisional Level**, people are allowed to move to some kind of closure or resolution by confirming new directions or actions to be taken. This level is based on a solid discussion of the first three levels.

What are the next steps? What will we do differently? What actions will we take?

For workshops and to purchase this and other books from ICA visit their website at:

<http://ica-associates.ca/Template/Bookstore/index.cfm>

Community Leadership - Capturing the Journey

adapted from the work of Merlin Thompson and Ken Low

Journalling is about getting comfortable with putting your thoughts on paper – no matter how grandiose or mundane. It is an opportunity to bring another level of reflection to your community leadership experience. Through an intentional ongoing process of documentation-observation-critical reflection, we can be more aware of how and what we are thinking and learning and integrate it into our lives and leadership paths..

What are the other benefits of keeping a journal?

- It is an investment in yourself. It doesn't require any skill or talents- just a willingness to write when you feel like it. You benefit from the self-expression and the increased awareness of your thoughts and feelings.
- Journalling helps you solve problems by exercising the link between your emotions/thoughts and the challenge.
- It is a user-friendly method of self-help. As you record your thoughts, dreams, desires and feelings, your self-esteem and self-knowledge will increase. Ultimately, this connection can reduce stress and keep you healthy. It can also help you work through some stressful events you may not wish to discuss with colleagues, friends or family.
- Journalling can help you take those reoccurring thoughts that keep bouncing around in your head, focus them and help put your thoughts into action.
- Journalling can help you integrate ideas and thoughts to make meaning of them in the bigger life picture.
- Journalling can help you learn from history and develop a greater sense of inquiry and dig deeper into a situation.

There is no rule for how much you should write or how often. You don't have to write a detailed report of what you've done each day. You can

write about a person, an experience, or a problem you are facing.

There are several journalling techniques you may wish to try:

- Free writing – free flow of ideas in prose form
- Listing – lists of ideas and images
- Webbing – words or phrases showing association
- Altered point of view – writing from the perspective of something or someone else
- Unsent letter – letter to a real or imaginary friend
- Close observation – description that includes sensory detail
- Double entry – two separate entries recorded on one page folded down the middle. One side contains an entry prior to a learning experience; the other side is written immediately following. Or one side could contain the facts and the other side, feelings.
- Drawings, images, photographs



Sometimes we don't pay enough attention to how we are thinking and acting. Leadership requires that we attend to how we think and conduct ourselves. Journalling allows us to learn about ourselves not just as we record our thoughts, but also how we conduct ourselves as we face different challenges in our lives.

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Voluntary Organizations take Leadership Role in Community

By Evelyn Pham

The nonprofit/voluntary sector consists of approximately 19,000 organizations in Alberta. Ranging from social services and health to education, culture and sports, these organizations provide a wealth of services that enhance communities.

It is important that these organizations continue to thrive so that communities remain strong. One way to do this lies with groups that work collaboratively to keep the sector healthy. In Edmonton for example, names like Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (ECVO), Resource Centre for Voluntary Organizations (RCVO), Volunteer Management Group (VMG), Volunteer Alberta and Volunteer Edmonton might not mean much to the average person, but for someone working in the sector, these names are synonymous with words like training, information, advocacy and help.

Their overall purpose—to enhance the capacity of nonprofit/voluntary organizations—may be the same, but the way they fulfill this mission varies for each group:

- **Volunteer Edmonton's** efforts are concentrated in the city of Edmonton and focus on the promotion of volunteerism, advocating for good practices when working with volunteers and facilitating collective action among organizations that support volunteerism. As an online information resource, their website offers resources to both the general public and sector employees, like how to find and list volunteer opportunities, and information on training and volunteer management. Janice Bell, director of Volunteer Edmonton, points out that Volunteer Edmonton acts as a link to already existing organizations and services in the city. "We are not the 'only voice' for volunteerism in the city, however, our primary mandate is the promotion of volunteerism. We work collaboratively with others to get a common message out there—that volunteerism is important and that issues in the sector need to be addressed together before it's too late."
- **Volunteer Alberta** is a provincial organization that works to build the capacity of volunteer centres across the province. Volunteer Alberta also champions the needs and rights of the sector by giving voice to the challenges and issues, and communicating these to all levels of government.
- The **Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (ECVO)** participates in a wide range of municipal, provincial and federal initiatives, with a focus on serving Edmonton's nonprofit community. "Folks in the nonprofit sector are too busy focusing on the task at hand, with their head bent down to the ground," says Russ Dahms, executive director of the ECVO. "What ECVO does is keep our eyes on the horizon to see if there's any trouble ahead and keep a lookout on the things that are happening."
- Another partner is the **Resource Centre for Voluntary Organizations (RCVO)** headquartered in Edmonton. Aptly named "the information destination for Alberta's nonprofit sector", their role is to provide resources on a wide range of topics like nonprofit management, voluntary sector leadership, fund development, volunteer program management, board governance and voluntary sector issues. Boasting a comprehensive library of approximately 6,000 books, periodicals, journal articles, videos and an online catalogue, the RCVO is a one-stop shop for information and research.
- The Edmonton-based group, the **Voluntary Management Group (VMG)**, is a professional association comprised of members who specialize in volunteer management. Their mission is to promote and develop the volunteer management profession in a supportive environment through shared resources, education and advocacy.
- **Alberta Youth Volunteer** specializes in youth ages 12-24 and connects youth to volunteer opportunities in their community through their website.



Collectively, they provide support in the form of training on subjects like advocacy and human resources, presentations to the general public, networking events and working with other sister organizations to promote the value of volunteerism.

“The Myths of Innovation”

by Scott Berkun

Einstein said “imagination is more important than knowledge...” We often assume that people who earn the label of “creative” are unique by nature, but as Howard Gardner explains in his book “Frames of Mind”, they are people not bothered by inconsistencies, departures from convention, non-literality and run with unusual ideas that most adults are too rigid, too arrogant, or too afraid to entertain.

Scott Berkun explores not only this myth about innovation, but several others including the **myth of epiphany**. We want creativity to be like opening a can of soda or taking a bite of a sandwich; mechanical things that are easy to observe. In reality it's like “working on a puzzle...when you put the last piece in place, is there anything special about that last piece or what you were wearing when you put it in? The only reason the last piece is significant is because of all the other pieces you'd already put into place.”

“Any one who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new”

Einstein

Tom Berners-Lee, who invented the world wide web explains his experience, “Journalists have always asked me what the crucial idea was or what the singular event was that allowed the www to exist one day when it hadn't before. They are frustrated when I tell them there was no Eureka moment...it was a process of accretion (growth by gradual addition).

Berkun debunks this myth by saying “Any seemingly grand idea can be divided into an infinite number of smaller, previously known ideas and insights.”

The **myth of the lone inventor** inhibits our ability to study how innovation happens by giving credit to a

“genius” or hero that had special powers. All innovations have been built on the ideas of others. Who invented the electric light? Though Edison gets credit for it, the electric light was invented by two lesser-known inventors Humphrey Davy and Joseph Swan. Even the invention of the automobile (credited to Henry Ford), was produced by Karl Benz from Germany in 1885 sometime before Ford's efforts. We often credit the person who brings the idea forward to us. Ask any four year old who invented love and he would probably answer, “my mom”.

Another **myth that all innovation is good** is also examined. Let's look at the automobile again...It has countless benefits:

it personalized transportation and boosted commerce and urban development but it also creates half of pollution in the urban areas, 40,000 annual fatalities (US) and traffic. There are always two sides to innovation.



as

The question arises as to why Berkun spends time in his book debunking the myths. I see a couple reasons for this:

- We sometimes think that the current path of progress is the only path we could have taken, when in reality, there are many innovative paths that could have been followed. We should not assume that the current path is the only one that was meant to be. Technology accelerates without discrimination and it is up to us to discern what is worth continuing and what has actually had a counter effect.
- By accepting the myths of innovation, (Berkun lists ten), we fail to understand the process and therefore assume we are not capable of creativity and innovation. We don't understand well the history of innovation and our need for a quick answer or nicely packaged process creates limits to our potential.

A partnership between community organizations and Libraries, Community and Voluntary Services Branch (LVCS), Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Wild Rose Foundation, Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture

From the Editor...

Do you have a leadership story from your community or organization you would like to share?

If so, please give me a call or email me—I would love to hear from you...

Duna Bayley—Editor

Libraries, Community and Voluntary
Services Branch

Municipal Affairs and Housing

duna.bayley@gov.ab.ca

780-644-3095

803 - 10405 Jasper Avenue

Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4R7

Fax: 780-415-8594

Contributing Partners

Martha Parker

Ken Low

Merlin Thompson

Evelyn Pham—Volunteer Edmonton

Learning from History... Innovation Challenges

The first speculations about the possibility of the sun being the center of the cosmos and the earth being one of the planets going around it go back to the third century BCE with Archimedes. As with innovative ideas, others, including Copernicus, through extensive inquiry and experimentation, refined this idea. During the sixteenth century the Copernican issue was not considered important by the Church and no official pronouncements were made.

Less than 100 years later, Galileo's belief in the Copernican system eventually got him into trouble with the Catholic Church. The Inquisition was a permanent institution in the Catholic Church charged with the eradication of heresies. A committee of consultants declared to the Inquisition that the Copernican proposition that the Sun is the center of the universe was a heresy. Because Galileo supported the Copernican system, he was warned by Pope Paul V, that he should not discuss or defend Copernican theories. In 1624, Galileo was assured by Pope Urban VIII that he could write about Copernican theory as long as he treated it as a mathematical proposition. However, with the printing of Galileo's book, *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, Galileo was called to Rome in 1633 to face the Inquisition again. Galileo was found guilty of heresy for his Dialogue, and was sent to his home near Florence where he was to be under house arrest for the remainder of his life.

Source: galileo.rice.edu

For past issues of the Newsletter visit www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca

- click on the “Municipalities and Communities” tab on top
- click on the arrow to open “Services for Communities” link on the left
 - Click and open “Leadership Development”