



# 1000 conversations

To Shape the Future of  
Community

## Conversation Guide

## Imagine...

City planners designing neighborhoods to increase social capital; elderly people staying in their neighborhoods for another 5 years; mental health rates declining because neighbours are caring for each other and creating a greater sense of connection and belonging together. Seeking Community is a learning community for individuals who care about the vibrancy of their communities. Our aim is to encourage and connect individuals who are hosting conversations to recapture the idea of community; to make it a guiding force in organizing our neighbourhoods and institutions and for envisioning policies for well-being.

Seeking Community brings together people with diverse experiences and understandings of community into a dialogue about the importance of having a deepened sense of community. This online community allows you to create a profile, listen to podcasts, post blogs, post links to other websites, and other resources. Over the next 3 years, we will host 1,000 conversations about community. Our online learning community will act as a vibrant space to document these conversations; analyze them to see what patterns emerge; and engage the learning community in co-generating insights from this data. Once clear understandings begin to emerge, we will bring these to policy makers, celebrities and other people of influence to propose policy changes that acknowledge the importance of community.

We are thrilled you wish to hold a conversation and, in turn, work with us to create a better world!

## Getting Started:

This guide includes everything you need to successfully host a community conversation. In this guide, you will find:

- The Purpose of having these Conversations (pages 3 and 4)
- Preparing for a Community Conversation: Logistics, Supplies and Tips (page 5)
- The Conversation Guide: Questions (pages 6 and 7)
- Next Steps (page 7)





## Community Is Good For Us

More and more people believe that community is important because it helps...

- Shape our identity more broadly
- Us create a sense of belonging
- Us to care and be cared for (mutual aid)
- Our economic prospects
- Our health improve
- Us To be happy

The first step to building a community is having a conversation. It is through talking with each other that we build connections and relationships. This is also true within well-established communities. Having conversations is how we learn from and stay connected with each other.

## The Campaign

Fall 2012 Tamarack launched a three year campaign called, "A Thousand Conversations to Shape the Future of Community." Through this campaign, we hope to raise the profile of community in the minds of people across the country and to gain insights that will help in the creation of policies and programming that supports neighborhood resilience and social capital. We will be doing this through creating a national dialogue on community. We believe that if people strengthen and deepen their community experience, we will be better able to respond to the challenges we face and build a better future together.

There are three stages to this campaign:

### Stage 1: The Conversation (Enjoy Each Other)

We will help a thousand groups: faith groups, neighbourhoods, service clubs, cultural hubs and schools across Canada have a conversation about community. To make this easier, we have created a conversation guide to walk groups through this intentional dialogue. We then ask that groups provide a reflection of their conversation on our learning community: [www.seekingcommunity.ca](http://www.seekingcommunity.ca).

*Goal: To get people talking about community and sharing their experiences with each other*

## Stage 2: Sharing with each other (Learn to Care for One Another)

We will create monthly updates to send to all groups who have hosted conversations. These updates will reflect on patterns and insights that have emerged through the various conversations. This allows us all to learn and grow with each other as the campaign expands and spreads across Canada.

*Goal: To co-generate learning between groups by sharing insights, patterns and inspiring stories*

## Stage 3: Creating policy and programming (Work Together for a Better World)

In the final stages, we will put the conversations into groups based on common themes (ex. health, food, neighbourhood space). Once in these themed groups, we will analyze them and look for patterns. At this point we will engage thought leaders in these sectors to also evaluate these conversations and give their feedback. Based on all of this we will then make policy and program recommendations to the relevant organizations and governments.

*Goal: To create policy and program recommendations that will increase the capacity of groups and people to build and strengthen their communities and to better handle the issues they face.*



## How you can help?

Become part of the campaign!

*Step 1:*

**Host** a conversation at your work, in your community or with friends and family.

*Step 2:*

**Share** with us what your group talked about and what stories inspired you on [seekingcommunity.ca](http://seekingcommunity.ca).

*Step 3:*

**Invite** others to join the campaign and host their own conversation.

For more information contact Campaign Animator Derek Alton at [derek@tamarackcommunity.ca](mailto:derek@tamarackcommunity.ca)

## About The Tamarack Institute:

Founded in 2001, Tamarack is a charity that develops and supports learning communities to help people collaborate and to co-generate knowledge that solves complex community challenges. Our deep hope is to end poverty in Canada. For more information visit: [www.tamarackcommunity.ca](http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca)

## Preparing for a Community Conversation



### Logistics

To have a community conversation, it is recommended that the group decide on a conversation leader. This will allow the conversation to run smoothly. **An effective conversation leader...**

- Remains neutral about the topic under discussion
- Explores ideas with people — displays a genuine sense of curiosity
- Listens to people and builds trust
- Pushes people to consider different perspectives — helping folks to understand why others think in different ways
- Has had experience leading or facilitating group discussions

In addition to a conversation leader, the group should identify a note taker (for more information on how to take effective notes, see page 6). The conversation will last around 1.5 hours, depending on the number of questions you choose to answer and how much time you allow for discussion.

**Choose a space that welcomes conversation. Here are some suggestions:**

- Somewhere relatively quiet and free from distractions
- Somewhere familiar to the group; a community space
- Somewhere with additional rooms if there is a large group that needs to divide into smaller groups
- Somewhere that is accessible to all those wanting to participate

### Supplies

Bring extra paper, pencil and pens in case participants wish to take notes. An audio recorder can be used to record the audio of the conversation if you wish. It might also be nice to have some refreshments, or better yet, have a potluck meal for your group to enjoy as they discuss the questions.

### Tips

Have the group establish ground rules before the conversation. Some suggestions for rules include: no interrupting others, respect the differing opinions of others, no phones or other electronic devices allowed during the conversation (unless they are being used to take notes), and to have fun! With a larger group, it might be more effective to break into smaller groups for discussion. Small groups can return and share their findings with the larger group at the end of session, to explore the common patterns.

## The Conversation Guide: Questions

*Setting the Context: (Facilitator to share the context before start with the questions)*

Today you are being invited to participate in a conversation about what community means to you and to offer a chance for you to share your ideas about the kind of community that you want to be part of.

This conversation is part of a national campaign being co-hosted by Tamarack - An Institute for Community Engagement called *1,000 Conversations to Shape the Future of Community*. The campaign's aim is to help build a shared, national understanding of the meaning of community. These conversations are now happening across Canada and the patterns emerging from them is being documented at: [www.seekingcommunity.ca](http://www.seekingcommunity.ca).

Today's conversation will also help us to build a shared understanding of the kind of community we want to create together in (NAME OF PLACE).

Thank you for joining with us as we explore the possibilities of our community together!

### Getting Warmed Up... (10 minutes)

*\*Have people reflect for a minute the following question. Then, invite them to share their thoughts in groups of three. (7 minutes)*

- Ask yourself: Why is it important that I am here today?

*\*Invite people to share their thoughts with the full group (3 minutes)*

### Exploring the Meaning of Community... (25 minutes)

*\*Have people return to their groups of three and answer the following question (5 minutes)*

- What is a powerful experience of community you have had? What made it so powerful?

*\*Form groups of nine for the remainder of this section (20 minutes)*

- Given the stories we have shared, what do we see as the benefits of community?
- Given the stories we have shared, what do we see as the challenges of community?
- What do we see as the job/purpose of community?

### Exploring the Desired Future of Our Community... (20 minutes)

*\*hand out paper and crayons to everyone*

Close your eyes and picture this community in ten years from now. What do you want it to look like?



- Take a few minutes to draw this vision (with images and/or words)
- Share your drawings and ideas in your group of three
- Using the common themes that have emerged in your drawings and conversations, craft a one sentence vision statement starting with: **"In 10 years, our community will..."**

*\*Have each group share their statement with the full group. Then as a full group discuss the following question.*

- What will help this vision become possible?

### **Debriefing with the Group... (5 minutes)**

*\*Have people return to their groups of three and answer this last question*

- What is one thing that another person shared that stood out for you? Why did it stand out?

**Thanks to everyone for participating!** *[Space for Extra Questions, if you wish:]*

---



---

## Next Steps

Firstly, we are so thankful you have invested the time and energy in facilitating a community conversation. Thanks for joining in this exciting dialogue!



### **1. Encourage your note taker to post their reflection on [www.seekingcommunity.ca](http://www.seekingcommunity.ca)**

### **2. Invite others to host a similar conversation with their community group**

- You can access the conversation guide by emailing Derek Alton (Derek@tamarackcommunity.ca) or Rachel Brnjas (Rachel@tamarackcommunity.ca)
- We would be happy to chat with you to offer advice and could even come and help host a conversation

### **3. Explore our Online Learning Community: Seeking Community**

Create a profile and engage with others who are also participating in this dialogue and generally seeking what it means to deepen one's sense of community. This site provides great resources and tools as you continue to seek community.