

# 1000 conversations

## Year Two:

Exploring the  
Possibility & Challenge  
of Community

**Happy 2014!** These first three months mark a new phase for the 1000 Conversations Initiative. We refined our **1,000 Conversations** Initiative after piloting it in four communities in 2013 and set a target of, partnering with ten local champion organizations to host conversations in their communities that invite citizens to do a deep dive into the power and possibility of community to act as a driving force for positive social change. We are really excited to share with you, our fellow journeyers, the new and exciting developments from this new phase of over the last few months.

**175 Conversation  
Shared on Seeking  
Community**

**2,153 People Involved**

### Newsletter Highlights:

- Delburne: A Rural Community's Shared Identity
- The Vision of Delburne
- Kitchener-Waterloo: Gathering Together
- Emerging Patterns in Community
  - Boundaries and Identity
  - Movement a challenge and opportunity
  - Depth Versus Breadth
- Exciting New Opportunities
  - *Deepening Community: A New Book* by Paul Born!
  - Community: Programs & Policies: A National Gathering in June
  - Now, It Is Your Turn



*Figure 1 – People reflecting with each other on the patterns presented at the KW Gathering*

## Delburne: A Rural Community's Shared Identity

Delburne is a small rural town that sits just outside of Red Deer, Alberta. Boasting a population of over 800 people, it exemplifies the small town feel. Recently celebrating its centennial there has been a push within Delburne to actively forge a new future for the community. Lead by the energy of the Family and Children's Support Services (FCSS) and with the support of the village council, Delburne reached out to Tamarack to work with them to help craft this vision for their community. Over the course of four months together we have built a local leadership team and collected twenty community conversations that engaged 48% of the Delburne population. More importantly, we have generated an excitement in the community as people are coming together, sharing their stories and visioning what their community could become. This partnership has been a very positive experience for Tamarack, FCSS Delburne and the community of Delburne.



Figure 2 - Children in Delburne show off their visions for their community in 10 years

"In late October 2013, the Village of Delburne (specifically with the leadership of Nora Smith of Delburne FCSS) and Tamarack began a partnership to gather a series of community conversations in the Delburne, AB. We planned that this process would take place during a 4 month period and would be implemented by a local leadership team and with the support of the Tamarack team. During this time, 15 conversations have taken place and 133 surveys have been completed.

We have been deeply moved and inspired by the initiative and creativity shown by many, many Delburne residents. Unlikely suspects have emerged as key leaders in this project: putting up posters, hosting their own conversations, raising awareness, contacting local media stations, and planning the Stone Soup Gathering (taking place this Saturday, April 26th). We, along with many who have worked so hard on this project, are keen to celebrate and plan the next steps forward as we meet this Saturday. Stay tuned as the story of this vibrant little village continues."

*~Rachel Brnjas Community Animator for Seeking Community and Tamarack lead for Delburne*

Learn more:

[Our First Partnership](#) by 1000 Conversations

[Inspired by Hospitality](#) by Rachel Brnjas

We are eager to secure a couple more communities to partner with in 2014. If you are interested, contact Derek Alton at [Derek@tamarackcommunity.ca](mailto:Derek@tamarackcommunity.ca).

## The Vision of Delburne

A key outcome of the community conversations initiative is the creation a shared vision for the future of the community. Individuals are invited to individually think about the kind of community they would like to be part of within ten years; they are asked to think of the sights, smells and sounds. Individuals then share their personal visions and use them to begin creating a shared vision for the future of their community.

A highlight in Delburne's shared vision process came from a group of children in grades 4-6. The picture of their shared vision is shared below:



*Figure 3 - Top: This is the vision created by the Grade 4-6 group in Delburne. Bottom: Here they are showing with great pride their common vision to the camera.*

This vision included everything from a hospital with a hotel so people could stay with their loved ones, to a zip line that lead to a Bass Pro Shop and Walmart.

Later that night, a group of local business leaders were taken through the same exercise. After they had crafted their own shared vision, they were shown the picture that their kids had drawn. Everyone was surprised by the similarities between the visions of

both groups. The kids may have wanted McDonalds and Dairy Queen, while their parents wanted a nice family restaurant, but both groups were eager to have a nice place to eat in town.

Other commonalities that emerged from people's vision statements included:

- More business with a particular focus on restaurants as a community hub
- Greater accessibility to health care services so people did not have to travel into the Red Deer;
- More year-round recreation and community events that were available to all ages;
- Beautifying Delburne's downtown while maintaining its historical charm;
- Building on the small town feel of a caring community that was engaged in everything; and,
- Creating a greener more sustainable future.

Many people noted how affirming it was to realize that others shared their desire and vision for a healthy and prosperous Delburne. It can be incredibly empowering for a community to learn that they are singing the same song even if in slightly different tunes.

Learn More:

[Out of the Mouth of Babes](#) By Elaine Maddex

[A Community of Care](#) By Emma Pilkington

[Delburne Analysis So Far](#) By Rachel Brnjas

## Gathering Together in Kitchener-Waterloo

The 1000 Conversations Initiative has always been a co-created process. There are so many inspiring people who care deeply about, and contribute to the creating of strong, vibrant communities. It is a privilege for us at Tamarack to hear, and share, these stories. In Kitchener-Waterloo four individuals worked with us to organize a community gathering to share what we had learned from 40 community conversations held in the area.

Trudy Beaulne – Social Planning Council of KW and Festival of Neighbourhoods

Martin De Groot – Multicultural Cinema Club

Leon Kehl – The Abrahamic Peace Builders

Niki Stevenson – The New Story Group



The KW Gathering opened with Tamarack's Derek Alton highlighting some of the common themes and patterns that emerged in conversations about community in KW. (You can find a video of that talk [HERE](#) and the transcription [HERE](#)). Gathering attendees then held small group discussions to reflect on emerging themes from their community's conversations. Here are some highlights:

- **Neighbourhoods** were recognized as the most common place where people stated they wanted to take action to build more community. People talked about wishing for more connection with their neighbours. One person shared that they had not met any of their neighbours over seven years. We also learned that, in Turkey, people buy their houses based on who their neighbours are more than on the house itself.
- **Time Use** – Where we spend our time and how it is structured was recognized as impacting our sense of community. Generally, people remembered having more unstructured time to be in relationship with each other but observed that now everything seemed more structured and committed.



- **Intentionality** - Several people recognized the importance of being more intentional about making community a priority.
- **Acknowledging Current Community-Building Efforts** - People had great pride and joy sharing about their current efforts to build community. Food was recognized as an important way to bring people together. For example, the Central Frederick Neighbourhood had decided to host 100 potlucks in their neighbourhood in a year.

To access the complete notes from the KW Gathering, click [HERE](#).

As a result of the KW Gathering, several people committed to taking action. Some specific commitments included: sharing their learnings from the event within their networks; reaching out to their subdivision; supporting their neighbourhood association; and, one person even committed to running for political office.

This is the first of many. Two more Community Gatherings are planned in the next two months to share results from the *1,000 Conversations* Campaign: one in Delburne, Alberta on April 26<sup>th</sup>, and one in Milton, Ontario on May 27<sup>th</sup>. Stay posted to [www.seekingcommunity.ca](http://www.seekingcommunity.ca) for more.

## Emerging Patterns in Community

### Group Identity and Boundaries

One of the earliest conversations held was with East Zorra Mennonite Church. At the core of East Zorra, is this idea of family. For many of the members East Zorra is more to them than simply a faith community, the relationships go much deeper.

When we call something a family we are saying:

- We feel like we belong
- We are invested in each others' lives; a responsibility to each other
- We celebrate and mourn together
- There is a sense of permanency to it
- We have common rituals, traditions, patterns and history

Family implies a strong sense of identity. This identity is important because it is what makes us feel like we belong.

The stronger this sense of identity, the more clear the boundaries are of the community. The advantage of this is that you know if you are part of this family and it is very hard to fall out.

But if these are the perks to having well-defined boundaries, there are also some clear downsides. Boundaries mean that it is harder to get in from the outside.

As the group at Mannheim Mennonite church talked about, setting clear boundaries can be difficult because we do not want to build walls around our communities and also because it is hard to find consensus on where those boundaries are. But without boundaries, you do not have a strong sense of identity, and without a strong sense of identity, it is hard to build a deep sense of community.

Learn More:

[Exploring the Boundaries of Community](#) by Mannheim Mennonite Church

[Connection, Belonging and Family in the Church](#) by St. Christopher's



*Figure 4 - Local government leaders in Delburne having a community conversation*

## The Movement Challenge

There are many shifts in society that have influenced how we develop community. One of the most important is our move towards a more transient society. Historically, people have stayed relatively close to where they were born. In recent years, with the advancement of technology to make transportation easy and affordable combined with technology, which allows us to keep in touch regardless of distance. This combines with a more interconnected and globalized world has seen the rise of a regularly moving and shifting population. Simply put, we move more often and over greater distances.



*Figure 5 - Youth in Delburne meeting at the local yoga studio to share thoughts and ideas on Delburne's community*

As we become more transient as a society, not only do families become harder to hold together, but the importance of neighbourhoods has also decreased. People are finding it less important to invest time building relationships with their neighbours when they don't feel committed to the neighbourhood long-term. It is hard to put down roots when you know you are going to move. The same impact has also been felt in other key areas such as the workplace and hobby groups.

Learn More:

[Cards, Tea and Friends](#) by 1000 Conversations

[Talking about community in the workplace](#) by Jessica Stealwall

## Depth vs. Breadth

We are the most interconnected society that has ever existed and yet as many reports coming out are now stating there is a growing feeling of isolation and loneliness. A part of this dynamic comes down the difference between depth and breadth of relationships within our communities.

To have great breadth of relationships is to have a large network of friends. One can have 600+ facebook friends, most of which one only interacts with viscerally. Another example is to be part of many different clubs, groups and associations, something that our current society encourages.

In contrast, to have great depth of relationships is tied to a combination of intimacy and regular interactions. Developing deep relationships requires time. Because of this it is hard to have more than a couple deep relationships within your life at any one time.

Both types of relationships are valuable to have in your life. Often it has come up in conversations that our society today's has significant breadth of community but that it lacks the depth of real and meaningful connection.

Learn More:

[Why Am I Here?](#) by 1000 Conversations

[The evolution/devolution of my social life](#) by Derek Alton

## Exciting Ways You Can Get Involved

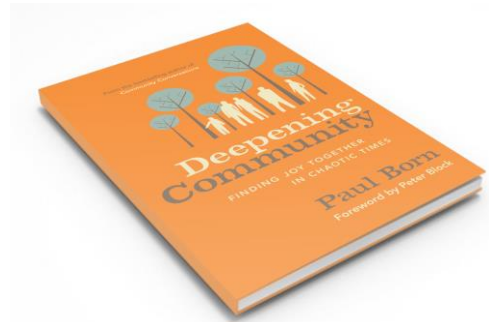
### Read *Deepening Community* a New Book by Paul Born

Community shapes our identity, quenches our thirst for belonging, and bolsters our physical, mental, emotional, and economic health. But in the chaos of modern life, community ties have become unraveled, leaving many feeling afraid or alone in the crowd, grasping at shallow substitutes for true community.

In this thoughtful and moving book, Paul Born describes the four pillars of deep community: sharing our stories, taking the time to enjoy one another, taking care of one another, and working together for a better world.

It's up to us to create community. Born shows that the opportunity is right in front of us if we have the courage and conviction to pursue it.

[Learn More](#)



### Attend *Community: Programs and Policies* – A National Gathering, June 23-26, 2014



[Community: Programs and Policies](#) is a national gathering of community builders, civic leaders, academics, community and neighbourhood residents, politicians, and other passionate learners to explore ideas that will accelerate the Communities agenda. Join us in **Kitchener, ON** from **June 23-26** where we will explore the emerging patterns, innovative programs and policy priorities that are needed to establish a supportive environment for citizen-led community change and can serve as a catalyst for system-wide innovation. The learnings and insights from the 1000 Conversations Initiative will feature prominently.

[Learn more](#)

## Now, It Is Your Turn...

There are lots of ways you can get involved in this growing movement to strengthen the role of community. You can:

- Host a conversation at with friends, family or colleagues then share it with us through [www.seekingcommunity.ca](http://www.seekingcommunity.ca). You can find a conversation guide [HERE](#).
- Engage with [www.seekingcommunity.ca](http://www.seekingcommunity.ca), read other people's reflections, create a profile and share your own. Join the conversation.
- Host a Community Conversation - Have your community become one of our ten local partners. Contact Campaign Animator Derek Alton at [Derek@tamarackcommunity.ca](mailto:Derek@tamarackcommunity.ca) to learn more.
- Share your thoughts on community through this [online survey](#).

Your input will be used to create policies, programs and practices that deepen community all across the country and beyond.

