Published on Axiom News (https://axiomnews.com)

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Monday, October 24, 2022 -- Peter Pula

To reclaim our capacity to create the world we want to inhabit, we must prefigure that world in the way we gather and work together.

While deep dialogue, once experienced feels perfectly natural to us, it is not something we have built into the structure of our lives. It seems an anomaly, not the practice. Some structure for freedom, for belonging, containers, and practices make the difference. Martial artists, athletes, musicians, learn basic forms first. Basic forms teach us what gave birth to them. Practice in those forms builds muscle memory, cultivates understanding, and reveals insight.

With muscle memory, understanding, and insight, we are then able to, ourselves, move with the motions of the moment, to sense and respond in new ways, ways enabled by the forms we've learned and inspired by insight in relationship with that which is unfolding around us.

That's why Community Conversations hosted persistently and consistently, and enacting practices we can count on, and so examine and learn from, are foundational.

The form of Community Conversation I am referring to is the way in which we host our bi-weekly Cultivating Community calls. It is a deliberate and carefully crafted form. And so, it is learnable.

There is social architecture in it, an intentional one structured to embody the principles and practices of a way of being in community that is also a pathway to our preferred futures.

First, they are invitational. Nobody is compelled to be there but by their own interest and choice. Everyone is invited. The boundary is permeable. People are invited to join as frequently or infrequently as they like.

> When there is that much power in the room we are confronted with the powerful stranger, with our own voice, with freedom, and with choice: What will you do with your one wild and free life?

Second, they are consistent and persistent. We have hosted this space every two weeks for well over two years. This offers a stable point, something to count on. It also offers continuity, not of content, but of container. Relationships are shaped over time, so time must be afforded them.

Third, they are hosted in a consistent internal pattern. Within that pattern there are few reliable forms that are relied upon. Chief among them are the timed-triads, small groups of three in which each person is afforded exactly the same amount of time to voice a response to a proposed question without being invaded or evaded by the curiosity, comments, or questions of their two witnesses, but to be received as fully as possible. In these small groups, you will spend two thirds of your time

listening and being present to others. This is the right proportion. As it is said, we have one mouth and two ears for a reason. The small groups also invoke the art of the provocative question on the part of the hosts, this teaches and prefigures what it means be Leader as Convenor. There is much, much more to be said about all of this than can be said here.

Community Conversations held this way are the most effective way I have seen in more than a decade of hosting for cultivating the conditions for collaborative wisdom and work to emerge. The forms, arts, and practices comprising dialogue hosted this way go straight to the heart of the matter. They form the seat from which each person comes to speak their own voice, in all of their strength and beauty and in the presence and by the witness of others. The diversity that arises this way can be astounding. This diversity, this strength, beauty and so very importantly being fostered in relationship is necessary in order for complexity, and if we're lucky resonance, to become present and directly experienced. Sometimes that is more life than we are accustomed to encountering.

When there is that much power in the room we are confronted with the powerful stranger, with our own voice, with freedom, and with choice: What will you do with your one wild and free life? Who will you do it with, who will do it with you?

The Community Conversation as I have described it here is not the only kind of conversation. It does not do everything. It doesn't facilitate the separation of wheat from chaff in linguistic muddles, grappling with projections, or what is possible between and amongst us. There are other forms for nurturing and unfolding what is coming alive, for shaping organized effort, for arriving at deeper clarity.

But this form does in fact prefigure all of it. The philosophy, principles, and practices lived within and enlivened by this form can prepare the ground, and each person who stands upon it, for creation.

From there, it is a great deal easier to meet with success as we endeavour together to create the world we wish to inhabit.

It becomes easier because we can sense deep down that we are engaged in something that is natural and powerful. This can help us hold to the ground we stand on and not be blown hither and yon by the latest assault from our outworn patterns

or bombardments from afar.

Hosting and participating in these kinds of dialogues is not a matter of pure talent. It’s a matter of practice. This can be learned, or more richly put, re-membered.

With these practices in hand we can unfold what comes next. But these practices come first.

These are some of the reasons why Perennial Community Conversation Matters.

You’re Invited…

Since March 2020, Axiom News has been hosting 90-minute gatherings every two weeks with an intention to Cultivate Community. There is no cost to join. Everyone is welcome.

Click here to RSVP for the next bi-weekly Cultivating Community call.

This event registration is through **Cultivating The Great Community** of which Axiom News is a founding member. The intention behind Cultivating the Great Community is to hold space for people from communities around the world to connect, learn, share stories, and collaborate to support one another in creating the communities and organizations of their dreams.

If you have questions, write to peter@axiomnews.com.