

Reimagining Our Community Post-election

Image



What's the next best question for building community and embracing accountability and commitment?

In the energetic wake of this year's federal elections in Canada, a small group of Peterborough residents is asking what we as citizens can do to reimagine our community — across party lines.

The group, comprised of [Peterborough Dialogues](#) participants, is proposing we begin with a different kind of community conversation — one shaped on the understanding that a lot of insight can be gained from having conversations among citizens that aren't organized around a specific contentious issue.

But what's the best question around which to form such a community conversation?

“When I’m in a place where I’m really seeing somebody and really really listening, then stuff changes, it shifts.”

— *Jo Hayward-Haines*

A conversation by the group surfaced some possibilities:

- What is the best that could happen with where we find ourselves now?
- What's my responsibility in terms of the mess our culture is in?
- What can we — those from all party lines — do to honour our own divisiveness and embrace a better way than before?

Running deep beneath these questions is a perspective and intention to move past a conversation about fear and start with the premise of the wholeness and otherness of other people as well as a base assumption of their good intention.

“Democracy maybe isn't even possible if the conversation is about fear and you can't accept the wholeness and otherness of other people,” Ben Wolfe says.

There is also an intention and willingness to “look in the mirror” in order to acknowledge and move past the stereotypes and insults that have besmirched the local and national election campaign activities.

A couple of the group member's responses to the question on responsibility are beautifully telling.

"I'm waiting for clues, I'm listening deeply," Jo Hayward-Haines says.

"When I'm in a place where I'm really seeing somebody and really really listening, then stuff changes, it shifts. The person whom I had some perception about, whether right wrong or indifferent, that person's very way of expressing himself or herself changes. That's magical."

"What we need is
to reshape the
culture itself and
the only way I
know to do that is
to be changing
the conversations
that people are
having..."

— *Erik Bjorn*

Jocasta Boone shares her personal commitment to get up every day and move forward in a positive direction — "to do things that I believe cultivate a space for healing so that that we can become whole and complete human beings (which equals) we are filled with love and compassion."

In a [blog](#) posted Oct. 21, Al Etmanski, a respected Canadian social innovator and author, calls for Canadians to "resurrect our peacemaking roots" now that the

federal election is over.

“We cannot address our worries for all that we hold dear without engaging all Canadians,” Al writes.

“We cannot achieve our bold intentions with regard to climate change, inequity, taking care or reconciliation with First Nations people without making room for those we don’t know, don’t like and don’t trust... .We need each other to help us through our troubles. It’s time to make peace.”

Erik Bjorn, who has been co-hosting community conversations in his hometown of Salmon Arm, B.C. for a couple of years now, speaks to the possibilities he has seen and experienced in a different kind of community dialogue — one centred on building community and embracing accountability and commitment.

“If we want to approach everything from strictly a strategic perspective, without being conscious of how culture influences our ability to arrive at those outcomes, then we won’t get to where we need to be,” Erik says.

“What we need is to reshape the culture itself and the only way I know to do that is to be changing the conversations that people are having and change the people that they’re having those conversations with.”

So who will join a community conversation, across party lines, founded on a base assumption of one another’s goodness, for the purpose of building our community? Will you?

This media was originally posted to [PeterboroughDialogues.media](https://peterboroughdialogues.media).

You can comment on this story below, or e-mail [michelle\(at\)axiomnews.com](mailto:michelle(at)axiomnews.com).