

THE GREAT TURNING IN THE CAPITAL REGION: VICTORIA, BC, CANADA
ENGAGING A COMMUNITY IN DIALOGUE:
REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCESS – FALL, 2006
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“We humans are a choicemaking species that at this defining moment faces both the opportunity and the imperative to choose our future as a conscious collective act. Changing our future begins with changing our stories.”

David Korten, *The Great Turning* <http://www.davidkorten.org/>

Our premise is that the ‘Great Turning’ is happening in this region in British Columbia, and that David Korten’s book, support and leadership creates the focal point to bring together many aligned initiatives and perspectives. This document is a reflective record of the process of community engagement and communication in Fall, 2006. It is a personal reflection by Diana Smith, the Ginger Group Collaborativeⁱ, as a facilitator of the process along with colleagues in the Ginger Group. We hold the intention to be a catalyst for the great turning by convening and holding the ‘space’ for cross boundary dialogue and action to emerge. A metaphor for what we do is that *we are coming together like rivers to the ocean!*

What Happened and Continues to Emerge

David Korten came to Victoria on November 3 and 4th, 2006. His appearance was spearheaded by the Values-Based Business Network [a local chapter of BALLE], Royal Roads University Foundation and Continuing Studies, The Ginger Group Collaborative, Integral City, Coast Capital, VanCity, and the First Unitarian Church of Victoria.

During the month before his appearance, two early morning breakfast dialogue sessions [see facilitators’ guide] were convened at a local restaurant, promoted widely through the networks and reach of the collaborating groups. About 40 individuals attended each of the dialogue sessions, providing a forum for discovery and connection among diverse individuals and groups in the region.

350 people attended Korten’s public presentation, embracing the ideas from his new book *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*. The Gettin’ Higher Choir [www.denisdonnelly.ca/gettinhigherchoir] opened the evening with a rousing chorus of hope and possibility. Korten focused on the importance of building local living economies; what it looks like to build a sustainable global society; how we go beyond the conflicts and habits that limit our collective potential and threaten our future; and what we can do as individuals and organizations to play a role in this transformation.

The follow-up community dialogue [see facilitators’ guide] on Saturday, November 4th at Royal Roads University aimed to change the conversation about the local, national and global possibilities and how to implement change in the Victoria region. 80 individuals, representing a cross section of the Capital Region participated in the dialogue and emerged with a recognition of:

- Courage, spirit and heart at the core of unbounded possibilities.
- The value of hearing all voices, and weaving together the differences and distinctions.
- The importance of women’s contribution and role in bringing about change.
- The possibility of engaging the community for a common purpose.

A 'nexus'¹ of individuals and groups interested in collaborating at a new level toward societal transformation is emerging and meets early in 2007. The intention is to create the conditions for change in this bio-region and add fuel to the fire of the many initiatives which are already occurring. Each and everyone interested in contributing to building the connections is invited.

How We Engaged the Larger Community: The Explicit and the Implicit

The key elements of engagement and collaboration:

1. create a **shared intention** among many groups to collaborate and engage.
2. **catalyze diverse networks** and relationships.
3. **convene conversations that link** the personal and global, inner and outer dimensions of who we see ourselves to be.
4. **notice what emerges** and adapt.

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We **explicitly** and intentionally:

- Convene conversations throughout the process with key individuals in each of the sponsoring groups through invitations for dialogue about possibilities and opportunities.
- Build on the energy and commitment of individual citizens and community leaders.
- Use principles of dialogic process and collaborative leadership.
- Walk the talk of collaboration and shared leadership among ourselves and with partners.
- 'Fan out' information and engagement through our diverse networks and email lists.
- Use specialist resources e.g. a communications expert for publicity and public awareness.

Our approach **implicitly** and intentionally taps into the wisdom derived from head, heart, spirit, and body by:

- Working individually, in small clusters, with entire organizations and communities to generate breakthrough results and lasting impact.
- Identifying and building on people's strengths, deepest longings and what is working.
- Accepting people where they are and respectfully moving them toward meaningful results and enduring solutions.
- Designing and facilitating dynamic learning experiences in formal and informal settings.

Inquiry is the essence of our work. We help to find the question that opens the way into a shift in patterns of thinking/being from what's wrong to what's possible, from impasse to action, from problem to opportunity.

We experience these **challenges and ongoing 'creative' tensions** in being trail blazers:

- Honoring the emergent nature of the process and having a loose enough structure to allow it to occur.
- Developing the collective capacity [e.g. time, money] to build the momentum that will lead to action and systemic change.
- Keeping the information flowing among diverse interests and initiatives.
- People come from different starting places and perspectives...we try to accommodate all realities.
- The roles of being leaders and facilitators of the process are sometimes contradictory and 'fuzzy'.

¹ **Nexus** is a Latin (origin) noun which means connection or centre of something.

FACILITATORS' GUIDELINES

A. Breakfast Dialogues [two 1.5 hour sessions at a local restaurant]

Intention of the Sessions:

1. To engage individuals in a conversation about what matters most to them.
2. To make connections and build relationships.
3. To link to body, mind, heart and soul.

Overview and Outline:

Individuals sat at tables of 4-6 persons over breakfast. The session opened with a brief overview of the 'Great Turning' with reference to the website and to key articles as well as the book. Principles of dialogue were introduced.

Each individual received a business card with key questions on one side and principles of dialogue on the other. They were invited to talk about each of the three questions for 15 minutes, after which each of these times, the facilitators intervened to ask that they move to the next question. A 10 minute large group debrief focused on the question 'what stood out for you' ended the dialogues.

Session 1 Questions [approx. 4 weeks before the public presentation]

- When I think of the current situation in the world, I feel...
- When I consider what can be done, I find that...
- To do what I do, I get courage and inspiration from...

Session 2 Questions [approximately 2 weeks before the public presentation]

- What are you doing now to shift toward sustainable living practices?
- As the 'great turning' occurs in our community and the world, what are you most afraid of?
- What are you excited about?

B. Community Dialogue: Co-Creating the Stories that will be Our Future [4 hour session, the day following the public presentation]

Intention of the Day:

1. To shift the stories and catalyze collaborative action toward a 'local living economy, living politics and living culture' in this region.
2. To help collaborative ventures toward 'the great turning' come alive.

Overview and Outline:

Individuals were seated in circles of 7 people, with a facilitator to 'hold the space' for conversation and contribution. See ideas after the outline about the facilitator's role.

Time	Particulars	Notes for Facilitators
9:00- 9:15 Setting the Stage	Welcome and Intentions of the Day	Introductions and context setting Share guidelines for dialogue
9:15 – 9:30 Sparking the Energy	David Korten: Shifting Our Stories: A Personal Reflection of His Journey	This will be a presentation for the entire group, reflecting his experience
9:30 – 10:30 Sharing Individual Stories	Dialogue Group I- The Stories that are Changing our Future Intros and check-ins: 10 minutes Question 1: 30 minutes [max. 4-5 minutes each] Question 2: 20 minutes	Short check in and introductions [1 minute each around the circle] Question 1: Share a story about a time when you made a courageous choice? Question 2: What were the life conditions that inspired the choice you made?
10:30	Break	Encourage people to mingle, complete mapping process of current initiatives, and move to another group
10:45 – 11:20 Deepening our Collective Perspectives	Dialogue Group II Checkin and intro- 7 minutes - 1 minute each Question 1: 20 minutes Question 2: 10 minutes	New group: short check in and introductions Question 1: When I consider what I might contribute to the ‘great turning’, I find that..... Question 2: What ‘burning question’ is there for us as a group out of this conversation? [reach consensus on what is ‘potent’ for the group] Appoint one person who will be asking the question and holding the ‘space’ for further inquiry and deep dialogue in the ACE-it process which will follow. Note: Write your burning question on a card and give to the facilitator.
11:20 – 12:00 Focusing on the Burning Questions	ACE-it process – a guided facilitation process 40 minutes for the process plus short debrief	[using Burning Questions Generated from the Group]- One person poses the question for the group, and is the ‘silent’ presence during the process – others engage in dialogue [see guidelines – follow them – they work well!!] The intention is to deepen shared meaning by tapping into the collective wisdom of the group.
12:00 – 12:45 What’s Possible in this Region?	Fishbowl with David Korten	David Korten will be invited to engage in a fishbowl with participants who wish to join him. Anyone can step into and out of the circle we create.
12:45 – 1:00 What’s Next	Wrap –up; Where to From Here	Next steps, thanks and acknowledgement

NOTES ABOUT FACILITATION IN THE CONTEXT OF SYSTEMS THINKING AND LEARNING

Tap into the collective wisdom in the group. Remember that everyone is an expert. We have long assigned hierarchy and judgment. However, in the new arena of changing environments, we are all pioneers in uncharted territory, collaborating with each other to yield up the implications of thinking creatively.

Learn to let go of the role of ‘rescuer.’ As facilitators, we have all been taught to rescue groups from chaos in the mistaken belief that conflict, frustration and confusion are the necessary alternatives. Rather participants will need you to support them in their exploration and push them even farther into their own journey. Remember, keeping inquiry alive is a discipline.

Recognize the personal nature of the process of change. The exploration of the concepts of change is an intensely personal experience. There are no ‘right’ outcomes and it is important to allow the diversity and richness of a group to emerge. As people create new information and discover new relationships, new possibilities will become apparent. Honor the differences which emerge.

Welcome the unexpected. Your ability to “leave the door ajar”, to allow for the unexpected and unpredictable is a powerful example of effective leadership and teamwork. You provide participants with an opportunity to study the behavior of a leader and to realize their own capabilities in leadership roles.

Focus on creativity rather than on problem solving. Focussing too quickly on practical applications of the new information limits possibilities and reduces the potential of the information to what we already know.

Open questioning encourages dialogue and inquiry. What...where... [for facts, context], how...[for process, feelings], why...[reasons]., when...[history, background], and could.... [maximally open].

ⁱ The Ginger Group Collaborative is a dynamic collaboration of 18 consultants, planners, organizational development specialists, facilitators, educators, evaluators, coaches and change agents with significant community and global experience. We are a nonprofit community of practice that is committed to fostering learning and growth about complex, dynamic living systems. Since 2001, we have been honing our capacity to accelerate change that has social value within the multi-dimensional communities and workplaces to which we relate.

Out of the community of practice, a social enterprise was created in 2005, among affiliates throughout Canada and in the Pacific Northwest. We build on our experience with public, nonprofit and private sector organizations, national federations, colleges and universities, global interests, community coalitions and joint ventures, and with all levels of government to help our clients develop and accelerate their capacity to adapt while tackling new challenges.

We guide groups, organizations and communities to collaborate on complex issues with innovative approaches that create the conditions for transformational change. It’s not only what we do, it’s how we do it that makes the experience of working with the Ginger Group Collaborative unique. Bringing knowledge, resources, experience and a fierce resolve to our work, the Ginger Group works with multi-party partnerships and collaborations to innovatively address complex issues and create the conditions for transformational change. Further information: www.gingergroup.net