

# Belonging: Inspiring Community

*A Publication of the New Story Group of WR*

The New Story Group of Waterloo Region is committed to partnering with people and organizations in Waterloo Region to seed and support change that will enhance belonging.

**Inside our Newsletter:**

- Great Civic Spaces 2
- Slow Change 3
- Waterloo Region Belonging News 4

## The Centrality of Relationships

We live in a society where efficiency and technology often dominate. Decision-making tends to be rushed and can easily be bound by rules and institutional procedures. Many non-profit organizations and governments are governed by bureaucratic approaches that put procedures ahead of relationships. We need to recognize that people want deeper relationships rather than shallow transactions.

The desire for deeper relationships is in part the wish that we all have to belong. The Indicators Project of the New Story Group has begun to identify indicators of belonging. Not surprisingly, relationships are central to many of the indicators. Take the indicator “People are

welcomed and acknowledged through authentic hospitality.” To bring this indicator alive, we need welcoming spaces in our services and programs. We need to listen deeply to the ‘other’ person rather than pre-judging or imposing rules. We need to extend invitation, so that people feel included in the decisions that affect their lives. And, we need to notice when others may need support to be involved in community.

There is a growing movement around the world to insert relationships more emphatically into the daily work of human services, government initiatives, and neighbourhood renewal. Research in the UK on

“The Relational State” is getting traction elsewhere. This work indicates that government and human services are much more effective when relationships are at the core of the work. We know that citizen participation and engagement creates better solutions than if government or human service organizations act on their own.

The personal work that many of us are doing is modeling the centrality of relationships. The challenge now is to move this relational work into the systems and services that permeate so many people’s lives.

John Lord



“To understand how we got to this place of profound disconnection from our surroundings and one another, and to think about how we might build a politics on reconnection...will require that we dig even deeper into our past, and move into some distinctly uncharted political territory.”

Noami Kline,  
*This Changes Everything*

## What is a Great Civic Space?

In a recent article from the *Project for Public Spaces*, the value of public spaces is outlined. “Civic spaces are an extension of the community. When they work well, they serve as a stage for our public lives. If they function in their true civic role, they can be the settings where celebrations are held, where social and economic exchanges take place, where friends run into each other, and where cultures mix.” Great civic spaces enhance belonging. They are the “front porches” of our public institutions. “When cities and neighborhoods have thriving civic spaces, residents have a strong sense of community; conversely, when such spaces are lacking, people may feel less connected to each other.” See

[http://www.pps.org/reference/benefits\\_public\\_spaces/](http://www.pps.org/reference/benefits_public_spaces/)

## The Importance of Belonging

David Pitonyak has written a comprehensive booklet, called *The Importance of Belonging*. This resource highlights why so many people are lonely and isolated from human connection. David emphasizes that “loneliness is the only real disability” and challenges us to shift the questions we ask when we are ‘helping.’ This booklet is filled with important questions that we need to ask each other. David also stresses that assisting others to reduce their loneliness requires that we first examine our own relationships. He lists lots of things we can do to enhance our relationships and well-being. In many ways it is all about being intentional with relationships in our own lives and in the lives of people we care about. See

<http://www.dimagine.com/Belonging.pdf>



## Slow Change Nurtures the World We Want Better Than Quick Fixes

Al Etmanski, [www.aletmanski.com](http://www.aletmanski.com)

Despite the urgency, lasting change takes much longer than we appreciate.

Darn.

One way to counteract our impatience is to shift from ‘chronos’ to ‘kairos’ time.

Chronos time is sequential time, measured by the clock and which seems to be speeding up. Kairos time bends and stretches, sometimes it even seems to stand still. Chronos is measured by the clock which many of us try to beat. Kairos unfolds like the seasons, following a natural rhythm and waiting for the right moment.

Quebec philosopher [Jacques Dufresne](#) explains that kairos was so significant to the ancient Greeks that they turned it into a god, personified by a young man who was bald save for a thick tuft of hair on his forehead – that we might seize the moment as it passed!

Fast change and its partner efficiency relies heavily on technique and technology. It powers past the relationships we should be cultivating. Slow change gives you time to learn from your mistakes. It helps you recognize the meaning in seemingly random events and to connect the dots between

disparate experiences, insights, relationships and activities.

Slow change nurtures the world we want sooner and better than quick fixes.

### Books to Consider Reading

Al Etmanski, *Impact: Six Patterns to Spread Your Social Innovation*

“Social movements are the connective tissue for the identity and sense of belonging that characterize struggles for social justice... Movements are a collection of small acts. They emerge from a context in which thousands if not millions of individuals, networks, and groups are feeling and acting on the same impulses.”

Carl Honoré, *The Slow Fix*

“We live in a culture that has been hijacked by the management consultant ethos. We want everything boiled down to the Power Point slide. We want metrics and ‘show me numbers.’ That runs counter to the immensely complex nature of so many social, economic and political problems. You cannot devise an algorithm to fix them.”

## Waterloo Region Belonging News!

- The **New Story Group** is pleased to announce that Sharon Froehlich and Kim Sproul are the new co-chairs. Sharon and Kim both have extensive community experience and are deeply committed to building communities where everyone belongs. Thanks are extended to John Lord for his leadership of the New Story Group in recent years. For further information on the New Story Group, see [www.newstorygroup.ca](http://www.newstorygroup.ca)
- **Facile: Independent Facilitation Waterloo Region** is excited to be re-launching the *Facilitator's Network of Waterloo Region*. This network is an opportunity for facilitators and other interested citizens to share ideas and practices. The next meeting is scheduled for September 23, from 1-3 pm, in the Extend a Family Board Room, 91 Moore Ave, Kitchener. See [www.facilewaterlooregion.ca](http://www.facilewaterlooregion.ca)
- **The Ontario Non-Profit Network (ONN)** has produced a snappy brochure outlining the key role that the non-profit sector plays in building vibrant communities. This material encourages the non-profit sector to get involved in the upcoming election to help ensure that we have a vibrant democracy and thriving communities. See <http://theonn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/DemocracyNonprofits.pdf>
- **The Working Centre** recently sponsored a half-day workshop on *Re-Asserting Relationships in Human Services*. This event included deep dialogue about the importance of relationships in our lives. Several themes emerged, including the importance of reciprocity and trust, and the importance of being willing to be vulnerable in our relationships. The Working Centre will be holding a follow-up event on relationships on September 23. For information, contact [isaiahr@theworkingcentre.org](mailto:isaiahr@theworkingcentre.org)
- **The Immigration Partnership Summer Newsletter** is now available on their website. This newsletter highlights the important work that the Partnership is doing, not only around Belonging, but in its related pillars of Settle and Work. See <http://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/immigration-partnership/>

