

A Curation of Neighbourhood-strengthening Artifacts

Image



New stories and tools to offer hope and ideas for creating thriving neighbourhoods

As generative media makers we love to receive and discover stories and tools that relate in some way to our deeper mission. This article illuminates some artifacts that have crossed our desks most recently and either energized us or made us curious or both. The tie that binds them all: the work and mission of strengthening neighbourhoods. Maybe one could think of this as a digital museum.

Nextdoor — An Online Social Networking Site for Off-line Neighbours

The Essence: While only U.S.-based at this point, the notion of a social networking site intended to connect neighbours is intriguing. More than 70,000 neighbourhoods are reportedly making use of [Nextdoor](#). “It’s like Facebook, but instead of connecting with existing friends, it connects you with people in your neighborhood,” an article that mentions the site states. “You can discuss community issues, ask for local recommendations, or even organize events with the people you see every day.”

The Energy: Can a technology like Nextdoor actually draw a neighbourhood together — as it’s apparently intended to do — or will it serve to further widen the gap between people? That’s where our energy lies with this one — we’re really curious to learn more.

Inspiration from a Calgary Church That’s Reimagining What It Means to be a Faith Community

The Essence: Hillhurst United Church in Calgary has become a community hub, according to [this recent Calgary Herald article](#). Under the leadership of senior minister John Pentland, the church is reimagining what it means to be people of faith and in the process giving life to a vibrant, growing and important community.

The Energy: John’s deep philosophy and understanding of community building is manifesting in real, concrete, even fun shifts — like the church’s hosting of a pet blessing — that are clearly making a difference over time.

John also offers a great definition of church that could work just as easily for a neighbourhood or community-building effort: “Church shouldn’t be a hidden group, you don’t need to know secret handshakes. Church is a valuable place to share stories, draw solidarity, be in silence, laugh together, cry together. It’s a meeting place.”

A Story-full Entreaty to Not Get “Too Grim and Determined” in the Serious Work of Creating Community Change

The Essence: Community activism can be fun — in fact, it’s better if it is. That’s the heart of [this fabulous article](#) by community builder and author Jim Diers. He tells a bunch of great, true and funny stories of communities that got creatively humorous in their advocacy and change efforts — like the funeral procession organized by

Kalamandu residents protesting the amalgamation of their city with a neighbouring city. Rather than gathering signatures on petitions or testifying at public hearings, citizens dressed in black and, bearing a coffin, paraded through the streets, mourning the death of democracy.

The Energy: If nothing else, the stories in this blog should stir the creative juices of all of those community cultivators, large and small, among us. And even if those creative efforts aren't successful, at least everyone will have fun in the process. As Jim writes, quoting Emma Goldman: "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution."

A Hard-hitting Blog Series from Someone Who Chose to Be Present with a Community at a Crossroads

The Essence: Peterborough resident Allan Reeve recently joined an international cohort of visitors to Grassy Narrows, a First Nations reserve that has experienced many precarious highs and rock bottom lows. Over the course of his visit, [Allan blogged](#) on the experience of being present with the people of this community that, despite its challenge, is demonstrating a deep resilience.

The Energy: There's a sense of "deep wells" running through the spiritual, cultural and community landscape of Grassy Narrows. Can we as outsiders draw from those wells, for our own nourishment and strengthening? Through Allan's writing, at least, we may at least begin to do so.

One of the hard-hitting reflections from Allan's encounters with the people of Grassy Narrows is this — a question posed by a resident, "What privileges are you prepared to risk and lose in order to be a part of the de-colonized solution?"

A Community Resilience Toolkit

The Essence: The [Community Resilience Toolkit](#) is described as a "collection of online tools to help you understand local impacts of the climate and energy crisis in your region and what you can do about them."

The Energy: Though we've yet to delve into this toolkit ourselves, it's recommended by a friend and much respected Peterborough community facilitator,

Cheryl Lyon, whose judgement we trust. So, for now, our energy about it rests in hers, which says a lot.

Conclusion: These artifacts have come to us a few different ways:

- as recommendations from people whose judgement we trust
- through people we deeply respect sharing content they've created
- our own social media "gold-digging" adventures.

We'd love to add to our emerging digital museum of neighbouring-strengthening artifacts. If you have stories and tools that have got you energized or curious, please let us know! You can comment or below or contact [michelle\(at\)axiomnews.com](mailto:michelle(at)axiomnews.com).