

Peterborough Dialogues Tree Forters Trek Into Community Media Making

Image



Participants share dream for more inclusive, thoughtful narrative art

Tuesday's tree-fort session emanating from the inaugural [Peterborough Dialogues](#) series — a community-building initiative designed and hosted by Axiom News — dared to pose the question of creating an alternative community news media.

What unfolded was a rich exploration of opinions, observations, thoughts and ideas around what does and doesn't exist currently as well as what's possible for media-making that fosters community involvement and empowerment as stepping stones to positive change for and by Peterborough, Ont.

This was a conversation that was both thoughtful and thought-provoking. Participants in this tree-fort group, one of many break-out conversations springing from the Dialogues sessions, were diverse. They represented the arts, business, education, activism, community groups and even generative journalists from the Axiom News team, yet a shared desire emerged as the discussion flowed unfettered.

There was a
shared yearning
for media to
help make sense
and meaning of
what is
important to the
community.

That wish is, to break free from story-telling patterns like shame and blame, foregone conclusions, a few voices represented and anonymous comments in order to cultivate a field of knowledge and blooms of written word and images that centre on what is working and emerging in the community with multiple, identified voices, ideas and successes amplified. Fresh approaches to issues could be generated, such as illuminating the city's Official Plan — a bone of contention in some circles — to educate on elements and nuances of the plan and to enlighten on what it could do through respectful dialogue and highlight other forms of community development already germinating.

There was a shared yearning for media to help make sense and meaning of what is important to the community and what is already here and emerging so as to encourage progress by participation.

All this is not to say that there isn't a place for existing media but rather for it and

new media to work alongside one another and even collaborate so each exercises its strengths and does what it does well, ultimately generating a fuller and more inclusive story of community and community building.

It dawned within the circle that Axiom News, with its roots in Generative Journalism and Appreciative Inquiry and current creation of artifacts from the Dialogues, is a fitting place to help seed this idea of media as a new narrative art or practice. And everyone in the circle offered skills or gifts to help flush this out further and agreed to gather regularly.

And so this tree fort will continue, branching out into largely uncharted territory but nurtured by an energy that is fed by both excitement and some anxiety.

All of this sounds and feels so much like the Peterborough Dialogues — way to go Dialogue participants for continuing the conversation to grow a local living oasis. Let's keep learning and growing together.

This blog was originally posted on peterboroughdialogues.media, the news site of the Peterborough Dialogues, a local engagement project designed and hosted by Axiom News.

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