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EDGES

NEW PLANETARY PATTERNS

MO EDOGA, *Signatum der Hoffnung, Documenta 1992*



Participatory Society

ICA
CANADA

Creating a Participative Society and a Facilitative Leadership

R. BRIAN STANFIELD

In both private and public sectors, there is a great need for effective participation and for facilitators. Without facilitation, meetings are chaotic. Without participation, the group knowledge lays dormant, and leadership becomes isolated.

Those awful meetings

Without orderly process, meetings get chaotic. Once Gary, a colleague, was describing how difficult it was to have a good meeting at work:

"I have a job and a boss. I go to meetings with him occasionally. One meeting in particular, every other Friday morning, has been going on now for what seems like eons. At the end of the meeting, the same ritual takes place. Not only my boss, but everyone else goes out the door saying that everything they did at this meeting could have been done in the last five minutes. My boss goes into more detail than that because we have a long walk from the meeting place back to our office. So every other Friday we leave this place and go through

*I believe that moving from an
adversarial to a dialogue stance
is the core requirement, if we are
to move from co-stupidity
to co-intelligence.*

ROBERT THEOBALD

this same ritual, in great detail, about how everything done there could have been done in the last five minutes.

"I finally got tired of listening to it one day. I decided — I think it was just out of meanness really — to say, "Now suppose we take this conversation we've been having together over the last year a little bit further. What are the three things that a

group of people needs in order to have a different kind of meeting? What do they need to have?"

"My boss is not a particularly bright man, but I was amazed. He said, "They do not know how to solve problems. They can't think together." (I thought, "That is not bad.") "They can't plan. It would be a miracle if they could simply talk one at a time. They would be far down the road towards operating as a team. They do not know how to work together as a team. Thirdly, even if they did know how, they do not want to." I was amazed.

Gary went on to describe the accustomed flow of many meetings he had been in:

"The meeting opens with an irrelevant comment. Then someone either asks a question or states the nature of the problem, and someone else makes a joke about the problem. Another participant argues that what has been stated is not the problem. This is followed by a debate on the nature of the problem. Finally, the meeting decides that the originally stated prob-

lem is indeed worth discussing. Two people offer different analyses of the problem. A comment is made that both analyses are biased. Someone says that the group needs a course on teamship. Someone tells a story about a course on teamship she went to. Someone questions the validity of that course. One alert participant suggests that they have wandered far from the problem. Someone else makes another analysis of the problem. One participant comments smugly on how easy it is to analyze problems and how difficult to solve them. Those with analyses in hand give a spirited defense of the power of analysis. The leader of the meeting throws his pen down and stalks out of the room in disgust.”

Have you been to meetings like that? We all have. They're terrible. Doyle and Straus in *How To Make Meetings Work* refer to this phenomenon as “the Multi-headed Animal Syndrome.” One thing you notice about that meeting — no one is leading it. No one is facilitating it. The meeting is like a ship in a storm, with a broken compass.

Gary's group is trying to do a highly complex thing — to be a team solving a problem — without any leader, without any method and without any respect for each other. They need a facilitator and a workshop method. Those who have used ICA methods (trademarked as ToP™ Technology of Participation) know that the situation just described desperately needs a process that pulls out everyone's ideas on the topic, pushes for clarity on what each person meant, looks for similarities in the ideas from which to develop themes, and pushes these ideas further, to come up with a well planned answer to the problem. The process, in other words, needs a consensus workshop. (See ICA Canada's *The Workshop Book*.)

Often meetings involve very relevant comments and interesting discussions, or so people report. But at the end they have not really decided anything or moved the topic forward. Given the cost of having the people around the table, it is amazing that we do so little to prepare for a meeting. We just wing it. We don't think through objectives and outcomes; we don't plan a process; we don't check out issues ahead of time to make sure all the information will be available to make a decision.

Gary said that just this morning he spent 20 minutes talking about a database issue with nine people around the table. After the meeting they called their database consultant, who said he could fix the problem in one minute. They didn't do the preparation work to make sure they had all the data, and an issue that was worth the group talking about.

Innocence of process

Most managers, most people for that matter, are quite innocent of process, and the concept of steps in a process. Most people do not know how to take a huge topic and break it down to its components. They don't know how to think through the parts of a process. They do not understand how to pull data from many sources into one picture. They walk into a room, and ask, “What is the winning strategy we need in this area?”, and make bold to hope that the results will be worth something.

Then again, some meetings are simply mangled by leaders who don't know what they're doing. Sam Kaner et al., in *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making*, has this no-process story:

A software publishing company held monthly meetings that were chaired by the chief operating officer and attended by all department managers. The managers complained that the meetings were very frustrating. “Sometimes the boss cuts off discussion after five minutes,” they grumbled. “At other times he lets it run on and on. Sometimes it seems like he wants us to buy into a decision he's already made; other times he couldn't care less what we think; and then there are other times again when he wants us to figure out every little detail. It's driving us crazy!”

There is no need for such meetings. There are learnable, teachable skills and processes for orchestrating a meeting that get everyone participating and sharing their wisdom. There are ways to move the meeting toward a creative conclusion.

The demand for full participation

In public consultations things are not much better, despite the strong demand from ordinary people for greater participation in the decisions that affect their lives, and desire a chance to add their creativity to solutions. Wherever groups of people gather today to figure things out, make decisions or solve problems, there are questions of who gets to participate, whose wisdom will be heard, and what process will be used. We are familiar with public meetings where a few people sit at the front high on a stage, and tell the rows of assembled people what to think. Afterwards, the public may ask questions, but not offer their own ideas. The process is top-down and condescending. This is an example of a debilitating dualism that assumes that some folk are “right.” They are the ones with the answers. The rest of the folk are wrong or ignorant, with nothing worth sharing. This is not to deny the role of experts in dealing with many issues, but all too often those in power listen only to the experts, and not to the public at large.

Changing the structure of such meetings and forums could give more voice to the public than simply inviting them to ask questions. I remember going to a public forum on “the water problem.” The experts up on stage spoke, then people stepped up to the microphone individually to ask their questions. I thought, “What a difference it would make if, first of all, we were sitting round tables in full sight of each other. Then a facilitator could come out front with a clipboard, and pose a focus question to the full audience, experts included, such as, ‘What can we do to deal with the water problem?’” The “experts” would be scattered among the groups as a resource and also participants. People would be invited to jot down notes on how they would answer the question. Then the facilitator would write their answers onto the flip chart and help the group pull together their wisdom. Someone working in the background with a computer and printer would have a document ready and printed up by the end of the session, so that everyone could leave with a copy of their work and decisions to work with.

The difference between these two processes would be like night and day. People's creativity would be unleashed. They would become a community dealing with a common problem. All the participants would have the opportunity to get their voices out. The experts would have their turn, and the public would also have a turn. At the end there would be a product to take home.

Greater participation, however, is tricky. Many of us have terrible experiences of meetings where the process encourages “participants” to speak, but then one is lucky to escape with one's life. The attack dogs are set loose. People are freely ridiculed while still speaking. Argumentation and often abuse fills the air. One hesitates to open his mouth in this environment. Even parliaments are not beyond this. Anyone who listens to Question Time in the Canadian Parliament, is aware of how easily the ideas of others are ridiculed and the speakers abused. Debra Tannen's *The Culture of Argument* describes the tendency to argue, which seems embedded in every part of society, appearing as soon as people begin to talk. This might explain the recent outpouring of books on dialogue, which are attempting to shift this culture and provide another viewpoint. It is possible, the authors say, for a group to converse and listen to each other with respect.

The experience of not being heard in public meetings has resulted in a very cynical public, who have taken a variety of unhelpful stances. They turn to apathy, or

intense lobbying for only one position. They just say No to anything the other side proposes, even if it sounds good, because if you give a little you won't get your way. In combative debate, the winners and losers quickly lose any sense of what society really needs as a whole. We still don't as a society know what to do with public input. We don't know how to push input into deeper thinking or group synthesis so everyone has a greater understanding of the topics or issues and the potential solutions.

In the arena of business, strides are being taken to structure participation and mutual respect into decision-making. However in most hierarchically organized companies, you keep your head low, do your job and offer no opinions at all. The wellsprings of creativity are cut off. Management finds little or no feedback from subordinates. Many executives and staff assume that hierarchy-obedience is the final form of the organization. But there are organizations today whose vision goes far beyond greater size or profitability towards higher maturity and fulfillment. (See ICA's *Mapping the Organization Chart*). As the organization passes through the phases of the journey, the participation, interaction and collaboration of everyone involved reaches a high level.

But with all this change going on, if we look in on the average NGO Board Meeting or Association meeting, what do we still find? Robert's *Rules of Order*. Of course we owe a great debt of gratitude to the author of *The Rules*, General Henry Robert. First published in 1876, Robert's *Rules of Order* gave enlightenment and comfort to frustrated members of associations who were easily victimized by overbearing chairmen and ruthless small cliques. The Rules armed members of societies and organizations with the know-how to combat those seeking to push through controversial resolutions without proper consideration. Historically, the Rules meant progress. For want of nothing better, Robert's Rules still serve a useful purpose.

While, historically speaking, the advantages of Robert's *Rules of Order* were many and obvious, so were the disadvantages. That book of rules now stands like a Colossus, barring the way to the real and all-round participation of large numbers of people. What blocks the way is the foundational image undergirding the Rules that the way you handle mass participation is by handing everything over to committees appointed by the chair. This way is considered less messy. The committee comes up with a model and brings it back to a large body, who either say yes or no to it. That is often called participation. Or the commit-

Levels of Involvement in Decision Making

Responsibility for Planning and Action Implementing	Full Responsibility	8	Participants have full responsibility for all aspects of the given situation, project or organization.
	Decision-making Authority	7	Participants are authorized to make specific decisions within clearly defined terms of reference.
	Implementation Responsibility	6	Participants are designated to implement a specific decision or project.
Providing Input	Input toward Decisions	5	Participants provide ideas to be considered by those making specific decisions. Plans may be presented to solicit responses or open-ended questions may be asked.
	Input toward Implementation	4	Participants provide ideas on how a decision can be implemented.
Receiving Information and Services	Education	3	Participants are assisted in understanding decisions, how they are affected, and what is expected of them.
	Persuasion	2	People are encouraged to agree or give consent to decisions.
	information	1	Participants are informed of decisions and operate out of decisions and guidelines established on their behalf.

tee presents a motion, there is time for discussion, then they vote.

Participation here is taken to be the reaction to the discussion. In fact, the individual must be restrained somewhat if order is to prevail. The voting process is based on win-lose. There is no recourse for the losers of the vote. There are no opportunities for people to volunteer for tasks. You must be elected to a committee. And the committee does not come up with an action plan, but simply a report, which is "received" and voted on. The process can be so boring it can leave participants brain-dead. However parliaments and organizations and boards still operate out of the Rules one hundred and twenty-seven years after their publication — either a remarkable testimony to their usefulness, or a witness to humankind's lack of imagination.

Levels of involvement

Full participation does not happen all at once. When it comes to decision-making, there is always a spectrum of levels of involvement. (See chart.)

Levels 6, 7, and 8 are levels of authentic participation. Levels 1, 2 and 3 are more like straw participation. We may argue that every organization is on a journey towards 8, which is at present quite rare.

The biggest confusion comes when the leader thinks he is asking for one level of participation and the participants are expecting something else. We all know that leaders sometimes make decisions and the rest of the stakeholders have nothing to say about it. We may not like it, but if we know

that is reality, then we may readily accept it. What really gets people's ire up is being told they have input into the decision when in fact the decision has already been made. Then they will say, "If you don't want my input, don't ask me. And if you do want my input then make sure you use it effectively, or I may not participate again".

The decisions we make about participation in our organizations, companies and public institutions all affect how we relate to society as a whole. As one man said to his supervisor, "You ignored anything I've suggested for the last 25 years I've been here, why should I expect anything different now?" What we do in every meeting we hold sets a pattern and a public expectation. We do need to undo old patterns and change them, but it may take as much effort to change them as it did to put them in place. We will at least need to convince people we are serious about changing.

These days, people know the difference between authentic and straw participation. Witness a recent provincial summit on economic development. The premier at the beginning of his term, called together 120 leaders from business, the unions, aboriginal organizations, and the political arena. Three open-ended questions were put to the assembly. Everyone contributed. All the ideas were synthesized in two stages and distilled into recommendations. Later in his term, the premier admitted that he had built his policies on the outcomes of the Summit.

One reason managers or decision-makers fear participation is that many methods

of input simply invite people to give ideas, without asking that they process their ideas and take responsibility for the recommendations that they make. Dreaming up long lists of wild ideas for someone else to decide upon or implement leads to unrealistic expectations and demands, and ultimately to disappointment, blame, and increased hopelessness. The consensus workshop method can deal with that problem, as it asks the participants to process their ideas in the "clustering" and "naming" stages, and to name their commitment in the "resolve" stage.

Shift to a new social style

Between the rigidities of Robert's Rules and the lower rungs of the participation spectrum on the one hand, and the world of free participation on the other, lies a chasm that has to be crossed. On one side of the chasm is an old social style. On the other, a radical new style. In between are many image and value changes. Working over against the blocks described above is a series of radical shifts—

...in the way we perceive other people

In the past, truth was perceived as coming from higher up, from a second story of reality. In the old way, one perspective ruled. Other people's answers were either right or wrong. In a flattened out, monolithic view of reality, diversity was a problem. Now all that has changed. We now understand that wisdom is not the property of a priesthood of those in the know, or those in the loop, but that everyone has wisdom. Now multiple perspectives rule, creating a richer sense of reality. Instead of a world in which there are right and wrong answers inherited from the past, we know and understand that our own experiences can yield a rich crop of wisdom and learning. Instead of diversity being a problem, it is now a deep enrichment of process and content.

...in our understanding of process.

In the old style of process, analysis ruled. Things were picked apart. The right and wrong and truth of things was endlessly debated and argued. Consensus meant simple agreement. You created ideas and programs for others to implement. The new style is synthesis and inquiry. Instead of argument and debate and picking things apart, today we are more interested in a curious inquiry into reality. We want to pull ideas together into a synthesis. Consensus means more like a common understanding that we can move forward together. And instead of passing on ideas for others to implement, the new understanding is that those who make the decisions implement them.

...in our decision-making

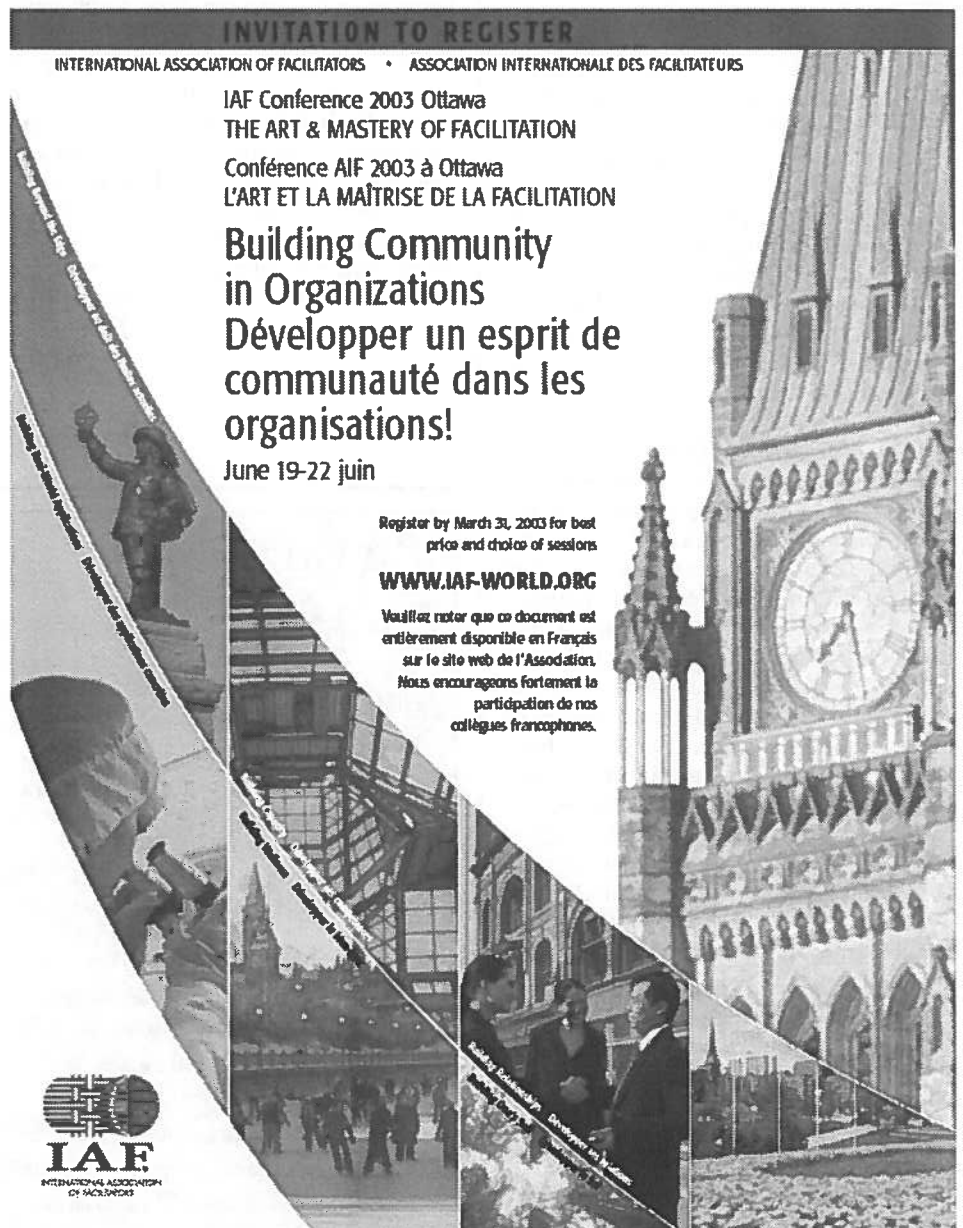
The old style was centered round obedience to the boss's orders. The new style replaces such blind obedience with a joint commitment to a vision. Instead of arguing competing opinions, we seek to grasp the values behind the opinions. Whereas in the old style, decisions were made by a few, in the new we have representative or direct participation in making decisions. Where power and control games ruled, now we favour creative process and partnership.

Facilitation and transformation

Facilitation has often been imaged as the use of a kitbag of tricks and gimmicks to manipulate a group. Today, it is viewed as a revolutionary instrument for building a civil society. Consultants' interventions have shifted to life-changing facilitation processes. Instead of trying to "fix" things,

today's facilitator is more concerned with awakening passion, involvement, and commitment in the participants. Facilitative leadership is becoming the new form replacing old top-down management practices.

The intent of facilitation is not to promote and instill a few skills, but to promote a culture of participation. This culture will be based on a new philosophy of participation which can be picked up indirectly through the methods themselves, or more directly through training. People today are grasping that when all voices are heard and a diversity of experience brought to bear, it produces a richer form of democracy than the top-down approach favoured by government. Where participation is practiced with good tools of facilitation, a rich social fabric of involvement, mutual respect, high creativity, and a new collaborative style is woven.



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Veuillez noter que ce document est entièrement disponible en Français sur le site web de l'Association. Nous encourageons fortement la participation de nos collègues francophones.



As facilitation takes root around the world through training and consultation using tools such as the ToP™ methods, we are discovering a number of things.

There is a strong demand for ordinary people to have input into the decisions that affect their lives. While the division between rich and poor is still tragically visible, there is another division that is becoming apparent between those who think their lives are decided by others, and those who know that they are in charge of their own lives. People who have experienced facilitation know they are getting the tools that allow them to make their own decisions, solve their own problems, plan their own future, and take charge of their own lives. A workforce that has experienced good participation methods know they no longer have to be spoon-fed by managers or supervisors. They want to intensify the levels of involvement in meetings, and in their organizations in a way that goes beyond tokenism.

Organizations going beyond the top-down control style are realizing that hierarchy/obedience is not the final form of the organization. Participation shifts the style of organizations. It promotes the way of partnership and cooperation rather than competition. In corporations, participation shifts people's image from being anonymous cogs in a machine, to being creative individuals whose input is valued. It overcomes feelings of meaninglessness and powerlessness. It shifts the images of those in charge from being bosses to facilitators.

Human Transformation

The participation paradigm is about human transformation through grasping the power of participation and its methods. It's about bringing people alive with creativity, passion and commitment. People suddenly realize that they are alive, participating, involved, committed, and having a whale of a time. It is as if the dead come alive, the dumb speak. Those deaf to the opinions of others can suddenly hear. Those who have spent a lifetime in bitter argument and ruthless competition find themselves calmed, listening, and sharing insights. The way people talk to each other changes.

Facilitators who expend themselves on enabling groups to solve problems, plan, and dialogue, often find themselves weary. Yet they realize they have had the time of their lives helping other people move into the future. They find that their organizations and communities discover a new power of humanness in which people are respected, listened to, and heeded. A new spirit is born in the workforce. People realize the power of partnership over against the standard adversarial or competitive style. ❖

Courage to Lead Life Stories

These stories have been given to us as examples of how people have embodied the stances in *The Courage to Lead*. We invite readers to submit further such stories. (Ed.)

Just Showing Up

Consider the case of a man on disability pension. Bob's arteries were made of glass. He had the bearing of a man close to the grave. His voice was harsh and his mood brittle-tempered. In spite of that, he became the leader of his local community for three or four years. His leadership did not consist in great charisma, but simply in showing up at every meeting of his community. When some plan or event was proposed, and it looked as if a decision was hanging in the balance, Bob simply said, "Oh, let's just do it!". His voice and presence generally carried the day, and projects got implemented. So when the proposal to build a small building for a children's program was hanging in the balance, Bob's gravelly voice would sound out, "Let's do it!" Bob's presence created a sense of expectation. He was always there as someone to answer to. He never bought into the syndrome of powerlessness.

John Miller

Martine's Castle

I took my four-year-old granddaughter Martine to the Children's museum. While we were there, Martine decided to build a castle with foam blocks. She had it up quite high over her head and had a block in her hands ready to put it on the top row when a three-year old boy came running out of nowhere and kicked her castle down. Martine was left standing with a block in her hands over her head with nothing to put it on and a surprised look on her face. The boy's father yelled at him "No, you do not to do that." Martine turned to the little boy and said "Would you like to help me build a castle?" The little boy said yes and they proceeded to build a castle. The boy's parents stood there with their mouths open.

I was in awe of Martine. I hadn't seen anyone go through that process so quickly. It seemed instantaneous. I told Martine I was very proud of how she dealt with that situation and that she had great interpersonal skills. I told her that I had learned something from her. Martine said: "I'm learning too, Ma Mère, I'm really learning. I'm learning a lot."

—Sheighlah Hickey

ICA Guatemala Conference

AUGUST 2-7, 2004

Building Society From the Grass Roots

Connecting Local Villages to the Global Village

In 2004 the quadrennial ICA Global Conference will be held in Guatemala with ICA Guatemala as host, partnered by ICA International and the Network of Civil Society. ICAI expects 350 people, with 100 from Central and South America. The conference venue, Antigua, 45 minutes from the capitol, is considered by many people to be the most beautiful city in all the

Americas and has been recognized as a World Heritage site.

The first two days will be spent sharing approaches that work from around the globe in five arenas:

- Community Youth Development
- Sustainable Rural Practices
- Holistic Life Long Learning
- The Culture of Participation
- Vitalized Social Fabric

Guatemala is, in its geography, its people, and its ancient yet changing culture, a beautiful and complex amalgam of the best the Western Hemisphere has to offer. The stunning reality of Guatemala's recent emergence from 36 years of civil war offers this conference an opportunity to participate and support an international process of healing and renewal.

To keep posted, watch www.icacan.ca/institute/.

Announcing a 40-hour Retreat:

This Moment in Time

Explorations in Profound Living

Time for a retreat? Consider *This Moment in Time: Explorations in Profound Living*, a retreat program now offered by an ICA team from both the United States and Canada. The site is the Galilee Retreat Centre outside Amprior, right on the Ottawa River. Picture the Laurentian Mountains in the background, forests, a wide flowing river, a beach and walking paths. You get the feeling you are in another time and place. The date is June 23–25, just after the June 19–22 International Association of Facilitators Conference in Ottawa. We expect that a number of conference participants will be interested in the retreat also.

Many of us are charged with the responsibility of assisting others — individuals, organizations, or communities — to decide about their future direction. To do so requires entering such work with centredness, openness and balance. The need for congruence between our inner being and

our work in the outer world makes it necessary to set aside time occasionally, to retune our being as a fitter instrument for doing our work in the world.

This Moment in Time focuses on where we are, as individuals, at this moment. Each period of our life is preoccupied with a central organizing question. And this question, whether conscious or not, is as much a part of us as our eyesight or sense of touch, for it allows us to sense the subtlety and promise of our life's path. This retreat gives participants a framework for reflecting on the central organizing questions that will guide the next period of their lives.

The retreat includes individual and group reflection, meditation, art expression, discernment exercises, and the creation of an epic story of each person's life. It also introduces the metaphoric topography of an "other world in the midst of this world". This image gives participants a

framework for reflecting on their own life journeys poetically and experientially. It enables insight on how to engage in care for the world, while maintaining sanity and spirit. As we become centered in our inner worlds we greatly expand our capacity to serve and to enjoy the outer world. We may become, as Joseph Campbell put it, "masters of two worlds."

The retreat guides will be Keith and George Packard from ICA Chicago, Stan Crow from ICA Journeys, of Bothell WA, and Jeanette Stanfield from ICA Canada. All are seasoned veterans of ICA's methods and programs.

Retreat costs will be US\$375. Cheques or credit cards accepted. To register by mail, write to ICA Journeys, 22401 39th Ave SE, Bothell WA 98021.

For more information, contact Jeanette Stanfield at ICA Canada: 416-691-2316 ext. 232; Email: jstanfield@icacan.ca

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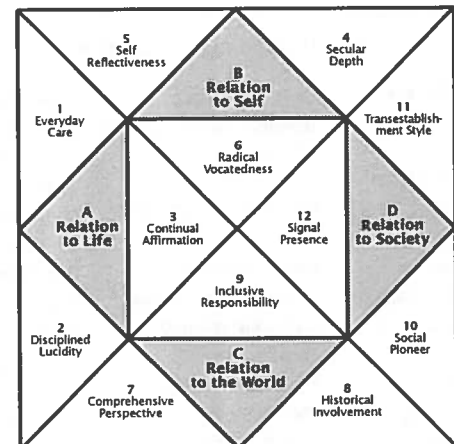
When: Wednesday evenings, 6:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.
February 26, March 12 and 26, April 9, 2003

Where: ICA office, Training Room, 579 Kingston Road, Toronto ON

Cost: \$65 includes the cost of the book. Or \$18 a session.

Come and have your mind blown and your spirit nurtured, in the company of a great group of people.

"It's about what everyone knows, but no one will talk about."



Registration: Call or email Christine at 416-691-2316 or ica@icacan.ca

Questions: Contact Jeanette Stanfield 416-691-2316 ext. 232 or jstanfield@icacan.ca

Retreats

A partnership between ICA Canada and ICA US has created a new retreat program, *This Moment in Time: Explorations in Profound Living*. The program was refined at a retreat at Arcosanti, the site of Paolo Soleri's pioneering community experiment, on January 14-16. The next retreat will be at Arnprior on the Ottawa River, June 23-25, 2003. Jeanette Stanfield is the Canadian representative on the retreat staff. (See article on retreats.)

The Youth Facilitation Project

This project will train facilitators in youth organizations across the country and help them train additional youth from more organizations, through a series of regional training events. The plan involves building partnerships between corporations and youth organizations.

Courage to Lead Study

After several 12-session study groups on *The Courage to Lead*, we have created a four-session study. The first will occur in Toronto on February 26 (see advertisement). Lynne Werker is planning to host a study in Vancouver. Contact: lwerker@telus.net.

Annual General Meeting

The AGM will be held on Saturday, May 10th. Details will follow. Please put it on your calendar.

Art of Focused Conversation in French

For some time people have asked when we are going to have a French translation of this book. Funding was the block, but now ICA Associates has bypassed this issue. The translation will be ready in electronic form in the Spring. ICA Associates Inc. has a full range of facilitation skills courses and consulting services in French. Contact ICA Associés Inc., C.P. 88525, 2600 Ontario est, Montréal, Québec, Canada H2K 4S9, tél : (514)-521-0044, télécopieur : (514)-521-0049, tél. sans frais : 1-877-251-2422, courriel : icafr@icacan.ca

ICA Canada would like to sincerely thank supporters over this past year for helping it to fulfill its mission to build the capacity of people to contribute to positive social change. Contact Vera at 416-691-2316 to correct errors or omissions to this list.

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