

A WORLD OF IMAGINATION

IMAGINE NAGALAND is an attempt to foster a culture of peace and freedom through a series of inter-generational workshops—the first ever in this Indian state with sixteen major tribes and many more sub-tribes. Eighty percent of Nagaland is Christian, with a Tibetan-Burmese tribe called Naga its primary inhabitant. Nagas have resisted incorporation into India on the grounds that they share no cultural or ethnic similarities with people from the rest of the country. Though Nagaland became an Indian state in 1963, violent clashes between militias and the Indian army have shown persisted. At one point the Indian army stationed 100,000 soldiers to stand guard over a population of 300,000. A fragile ceasefire was announced in 1998.

Under the joint sponsorship of UNICEF India and the State government, the “Imagine Nagaland” initiative began in 2001 to connect local community leaders and young people. More than seven thousand interviews were conducted, each interview starting a ‘cascade’ of six additional interviews which extended the conversation about the region’s future into even remote pockets of the state and brought everyone into the dialogue.

Workshops encouraged discussion around five themes: Unity & Peace; Ecology & Development; Education & Employment; Equitable Development; Strengthening the Rule of Law. One-third of the participants were young people who participated side by side with government officials, business leaders, teachers, church leaders and activists.

“O’ future Nagas, let’s stop this evil. Let there be peace again. Stop the gun culture, it’s not ours. For we cannot survive in this pool of hatred, conflict and corruption.” These were the words of one young participant in the workshops that began in April 2001. Similar sentiments poured forth in the workshops and through the individual interviews with these “dream makers.” Education and gender discrimination were two of the priority issues for young participants. Others focused on protecting the environment from the devastation of war and on economic revitalization to increase tourism to this lush, green, and beautiful section of India. By the close of the first day of meetings, young people had produced a wide range of poems, paintings, and slogans to dispel any notions that war was preferable to peace.

What effect the “Imagine Nagaland” initiative will eventually have in the territory is unclear. Some of the suggestions put forward at the Imagine Nagaland workshops have found their places in the draft 10th Plan of the State, giving special emphasis on communitisation of development schemes. It is a welcome start in re-engaging civil society in a part of India where much is at stake.

IMAGINE CENTRAL SINGAPORE

[www.centralsingapore.org.sg/
cti_bin/volunteer/
Imagine.cti](http://www.centralsingapore.org.sg/cti_bin/volunteer/Imagine.cti)

Through the Central Singapore Community Development Council and the Office of the Mayor of Singapore, Imagine Central Singapore has facilitated numerous projects which include:



- *Coffee for Your Thoughts:*

Inspired by Singapore’s huge coffee culture and the even bigger culture of collecting free postcards, this project encouraged the public to send in postcards recording ideas to improve the community. The best ideas were rewarded with free coffee vouchers!

- *Pay It Forward:*

Inspired by the movie starring Helen Hunt, this movement starts a chain reaction of goodness, where any person does a good deed and asks for it to be paid forward. The idea is simple enough – Small Miracles Inspire Living Everyday (SMILE)! Pay It Forward has been introduced at the individual, community, and corporate organization levels. Stories of goodness have been solicited by organizers, and participants have been honored with a tea reception.

- *Mayor’s Imagine Fund:*

Set up in the belief that youth can make a difference, the Mayor invites youth (aged below 25) to apply for funding and support to actualize their dreams for positive changes in the community.

IMAGINE GARFIELD HEIGHTS

www.garfield-heights.k12.oh.us/projects/IGH/index.htm

The residents of an inner ring suburb of Cleveland have been informed and inspired by a community visioning process led by high school students. The transformation began in 1998 with the first Mayor's Prayer Breakfast which focused on "The Church in the City," a major initiative of the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, designed to reinvigorate central cities through new forms of partnership and overall regional development. A team of community leaders then met regularly to consider ways to bring a new spirit to Garfield Heights. Superintendent Ronald Victor loved the stories Rick Krivanka of the Diocesan Pastoral Planning Office told about Imagine Chicago, and offered public high schoolers the opportunity to participate as consultants to the town.

In the first phase, in 1999, a team of students from the two high schools interviewed a cross-section of community leaders about what gives life to the city and what could be done to enhance its future. The students reported their findings back to larger and larger and more appreciative audiences – first at a joint city council and school board meeting of 250 people, and later at an ecumenical prayer service of 400 people. In 2000, a larger team from Garfield Heights High School expanded their interviews citywide to include informal leaders and residents. In November of 2000, the community supported a \$41.5 million bond issue for a new high school complex, with a performing arts center and a community health and physical education center.

A community leadership conference was held involving over 75 community leaders in August of 2001. From this leadership conference and Imagine Garfield Heights emerged six specific objectives for the city: visionary leadership, excellent schools, all-inclusive recreation, attractive retail, outstanding cooperation and quality housing. The school system began producing a community wide newsletter.

In the third phase, in 2002, every student in the high school participated in an interview with another student about the quality of life in the high school itself. Topics were created by a student team from preliminary interviews with a cross-sections of students and faculty: *Creating a caring community, Doing your best to succeed, Getting a good education, Being involved and building unity.* Major presentations on findings from this work were made by students at two consecutive annual assemblies of all school district staff that numbered over 400 people. The students arrived at very positive and workable suggestions, and the adults listened actively.

In the latest phase, in 2003, students presented interview results at a community leaders meeting. This catalyzed an 'open space' session and the launching of the following initiatives: Community involvement, Excellent schools, Positive diversity, Team recreation and housing, City beautification, School/community recreation, Resident forum, Indoor recreation, Community newsletter, Focus on improving our library. High school students and 8th graders were partners and leaders when planning action steps.

- shared by Rick Krivanka
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IMAGINE BOSTON

Three Saturdays and a WOW!

Imagine yourself as a girl starting high school. You think that someday you might like to be a writer, an artist, a policewoman, a lawyer, a teacher, a doctor. Right now, you have the opportunity to spend a few hours with someone who is living your dream. You interview the Mayor of your city and discover that she grew up in a housing project; you talk with the Latina physician or artist and learn that both struggled with learning a new language and not being included as school children because they were 'different'. You find out that the lawyer in a major Boston firm was not an A-student, that the Superintendent of Schools had to overcome shyness.

It was the third Saturday of an Imagine Boston pilot project, "Three Saturdays and a WOW!", and the atmosphere was electric. This program originated with a call from the housemaster at a high school in a working class community in Greater Boston. She was concerned that too many girls were underachieving, dropping out of school, or making poor choices in their lives. Imagine Boston proposed a pilot leadership program that could accommodate the time constraints of the end of the school year. We suggested she invite girls whom the faculty was concerned about and who showed some spark of leadership. The invitation went out. Imagine Boston volunteers met with a diverse group of ten girls on three Saturdays from 9 to 3:30.

The focus of our first day together was to discover that "spark" that someone in their school had seen in each of them. We did this through a variety of activities including paired

appreciative interviews. During the week, each girl interviewed at least one female adult she knew — a parent, friend, or teacher, to discover what she could learn from their lives. They asked questions about how that person's family came to America, about their high points, and challenges they had overcome.

On our second Saturday, we shared the stories from the interviews and began to craft our own story of leadership. For the third round, we asked the girls to let us know whom they might like to interview and to help create an interview protocol. Except for a woman firefighter, we found people in all the careers that interested the girls. Eleven amazing women took time on a Saturday to come to the school. They were each interviewed by one or two girls and everyone participated in a lively conversation afterwards about stories shared and lessons learned. The conversation continued over lunch. As our guests left, email addresses were exchanged and invitations to keep in touch were offered. All of the guests will be invited to the WOW! celebration that includes a presentation by the girls of what they have learned.

Three Saturdays is not a lot of time to build leadership skills. Yet our experience suggests it is a powerful beginning. As the girls moved through each round of interviews, they developed more poise and confidence. They came to appreciate their own gifts. They forged connections with people whom they came to know as not so different from themselves — some had humble beginnings, came from other cultures, struggled with language. All overcame obstacles and achieved a great deal through hard work, persistence, and the courage to pursue their dreams.

The world of the girls expanded as they saw that there were accomplished people who took an interest in them and took the time to share what they had learned in a way that created the beginnings of a roadmap to their possible future. As the aspiring artist in our group completed her interview, I went to her and asked, "How was it?" She smiled, put her hand on her heart, took a deep breath and said, "Inspiring." And indeed, it was.

- Shared by Muriel Finegold, *Imagine Boston*

IMAGINE CAPETOWN

www.imaginecapetown.org.za

Launched after a successful two-day conference in 2000, entitled "Business Beyond 2000: Values, Ethics and Spirit in Business", Imagine Cape Town has grown into a voluntary association of individuals from diverse professional backgrounds, in the areas of business, community development and the media. The group recently hired a network coordinator to help maintain communication and organize regular meetings among the network; link and coordinate network projects; facilitate the emergence of new projects; collect and circulate stories, images, updates, events and quotes among existing and future partners; update the website and issue a quarterly e-zine.



Imagine Capetown has helped to grow several projects over the last year:

- As part of the Imagine Manenberg initiative, Self-Help Manenberg, together with community volunteers, are currently conducting AI interviews with the youth of Manenberg, with a view to starting a Youth Development forum.
- NGOs and volunteers in Lavender Hill conducted thousands of AI interviews door to door, before establishing the Lavender Hill Development Forum.
- Bonteheuwel, another neighborhood, has been divided into precincts, each 7-12 streets wide. Community members from each precinct underwent multi-mindset training, followed by an AI process and the identification of precinct-level developmental projects. Each precinct has held its own exhibition day, culminating in a Bonteheuwel Day on in November 2003.
- Junior City Council members were introduced to Appreciative Inquiry in preparation for conducting interviews with councilors, schools and youth groups. 60% of all households in Westlake have already been interviewed in preparation for a Westlake development forum.

Imagine Hout Bay, together with schools and community organizations, is leading a project to develop an educational complex in Hout Bay that will meet the aspirations and needs of all sections of the community.

IMAGINE BENDIGO

Reclaim the Night is an annual march to protest sexual violence against women. It marks the end of the Week Without Violence, the last week in October. Traditionally in Bendigo, (Victoria, Australia), a small working party of committed women from women's organisations planned and ran the event. Numbers for the march were getting smaller every year.

In 2003 a different approach was tried. Instead of focussing on the negative of violent relationships, the organizers decided to have a community event that built on community connections. The Community Party idea was born. It would take place on the Friday of the Week Without Violence, when the Reclaim the Night March was traditionally held, and the March would follow the Party. The Party started at 5.30, and was held in the open air pedestrian mall in the centre of town. Several different acts were organised to perform in the band rotunda as the entertainment. They represented lots of different community groups, including: an indigenous group welcome; rap dancing teenage boys; belly dancers; the multicultural women's choir; highland dancers and a capoeira demonstration (from an

Aboriginal boy who had just come back from a year in Brazil).

The process was successful. A great diversity of individuals and associations came to the working party, and a large core stayed! One member commented at the evaluation that this committee had the most people she'd ever seen who kept coming! Instead of the usual core of three or four, seven to ten people came regularly and contributed. Significant connections were made (and have been maintained) with community groups who had not traditionally been associated with Loddon Mallee Women's Health before. These were really positive outcomes.

Twenty minutes before the Party was



Reclaim the Night poster

scheduled to start, an unseasonal hailstorm hit the city. The person with the public address system decided to take it away for safety reasons. It was freeeezing! Attendance at the event was way down, and the performances were limited by the lack of a sound system. But all acts performed and were cheered, and the Reclaim the Night March was full of energy and enthusiasm. The teenage rap dancers were a highlight; when a toddler wandered onto the performance area, they treated him with such tenderness and good humour that it dispelled the negative stereotype about teenage boys.

Was it a success? Yes, because the process was so positive and increased community connectedness. While the weather was bad news, the Community Party for Reclaim the Night was much more than one evening's event. - Shared by Linda Kirkman, Loddon Mallee Women's Health <www.lmwh.net>

IMAGINE TASMANIA

www.imaginetasmania.com

Following a visit by Bliss Browne to Tasmania in 2002, and a broad community conversation in 2002-2003 about Tasmanian hopes and fears, interested community members hosted a half-day conference in early 2004 to examine four questions:

1. What has happened elsewhere? (Imagine projects worldwide)
2. Is Imagine Tasmania a 'Go' or 'No go', or is it unclear at this stage?
3. What might success look like and what qualities might Imagine Tasmania have?
4. What "next steps" make sense?

After learning about other Imagine projects, attendees agreed that Imagine Tasmania was a 'Go' and had potential to support individuals with positive passions; provide a forum for community leaders; and be a center of networking and inspiration. They decided that success would consist of a diverse group of participants, committed to an ongoing dialogue about vision, social capital, hope and engagement.

Some potential starting points suggested are a newsletter, a citizen leaders training program, a project bank and an open space to house the initiative.



VoVHUNDSLUND (DANMARK)
www.hundslund.dk (in Danish)

Imagining School Project

VoVHundslund is a community development project in a small community in Denmark, where the 1500 people who live there have decided to make a difference in their shared future. Their first step was to gather children from a local school to spend two days 'imagining their school' in a living community.

Students of organisational development from the University of Aarhus facilitated this process. They teamed up in groups of three to engage with the children. Each morning, all of the students and children gathered to sing songs and share information about their activities. They then divided up into six smaller groups, according to grade level, and embarked on their own unique appreciative processes.

For example, the student-facilitators of kindergarten and first grade presented the process as an 'exploration'. As one of them explained, "A few of the children had heard of Columbus and pirates as well. We showed them our 'treasure chest' and told them that we would like to fill it up with all the best things from their school. The skepticism was obvious; these children had seen better treasure chests than our painted cardboard box. So we quickly discarded the metaphors and went to work. One group was in charge of drawing, another of LEGO construction, another did play dough, and the last went outside with a digital camera. The place quickly became full of activity. The kids were storming around, drawing, building and pulling on the sleeve of the guy with the camera. By lunchtime, we already had a lot of

things to put in the chest. The children were obviously having fun, excited to have someone new to tell all their stories to."

Another student-facilitator observed, "During the first day, a girl shouted through the window to the schoolyard, 'Look at me! See me!' to all her friends. 'See how many post-it stickers I've got?' I asked her what these stickers were about, and she replied, 'They tell all the things that I am good at.' Who gave you all these beautiful stickers? I asked. 'All my friends in the class made them.' Which are you most proud of? I asked. 'That I am very good at drawing, especially drawing mermaids. Would you like to see?' She showed me a whole book of mermaids, so amazingly beautiful. Later that day, the teacher said that this girl is usually quiet, but she had been open and very talkative today. Seeing her shine like a star from the appreciation she had been given by her friends just blew our minds, a confirming moment of the power of appreciation."

Following the success of this process, the second step will be an interview project, in which small groups of schoolchildren will interview parents and relatives about their best experiences of living in the community, and their hopes and dreams for the future. The third step will be a public seminar for everyone in the Hundslund community. Here the results of the children's interviews will be made available, along with an opportunity to participate in a creative process to liberate community imagination. VoVHundslund is also developing a church project to talk about the role of the church in the future.

- Shared by Jacob Storch <js@attractor.dk>

**HUMAN CITY
INSTITUTE**

www.humancity.org

Launched in 1995 in Birmingham (UK), and subsequently spreading to Swindon and Bradford (also UK), the



Human City Institute has initiated a number of projects to make cities more human, just, healthy, safe, attractive, engaged and civic minded. Its projects over the years include:

- *Human Neighbourhood Project*, which revitalises neighbourhoods from within by supporting small groups of local people working on their own agendas to make a difference in their lives and the lives of those around them.
- *Human School Project*, which involved pupils from five Birmingham schools discussing how their schools might become more human and choosing a task to put their hopes into practice.
- *Policing with a Human Face*, where officers from the Bournville Operational Command Unit in Birmingham each undertake small projects to improve the relationships between the local police and communities.
- *Hearings*, where people come together, connect, and share stories and visions of a human city, neighborhood, organization, network or community.

UDAIPUR AS A LEARNING CITY

www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/udaipur.html

Initiatives continue to emerge organically in the Udaipur as a Learning City process, where children, youth and adults are sharing their interests, talents and questions to transform the life and learning options in Udaipur city (based in Rajasthan, India). These efforts include:

- *Identifying Learning Resources:* Thought- and action-provoking resources in the local language (songs, poems, stories, proverbs, sayings) are being continuously collected, which are then shared through multiple forms of community media: small bulletins,



coloring books, poetry/song readings, wallpapers, etc.



- *Self-Organized Learning Communities:* Families from various neighborhoods have embarked on processes of natural living, taking on such efforts as organic farming, vermicomposting, solar cooking and rainwater harvesting, all out of their own homes.

- *City-Wide Reflections:* Dialogues, on everything from increasing walking opportunities in the city to reclaiming our creativity from the readymade world, are being coordinated with different partners in the city. This exhibitions and discussions are often held in conjunction with new and old festivals: like Car-Free Day, TV Turnoff Week, *Rakshabandhan* and *Holi*.
- *Unlearning Workshops:* On-going critical media and creative expressions workshops — exploring drawing, clay sculpting, dance, film, theater, puppetry, music and games — are co-created with children and youth in different neighborhoods in the city.

IMAGINE KINGSWOOD

Public housing residents on the Kingswood Estate in south London, England, are being trained, through self-selected projects, as CITIZEN LEADERS. The program is funded by the landlords, the London Borough of Southwark, in collaboration with Youth Services and the estate Tenants Association. The aim is to establish a self-perpetuating network of residents involved in their own community development. Projects include dance and music, responsible dog ownership, new tenants welcome pack, newsletter, youth activities and various aspects of community health and safety.

The projects were identified through events involving a wide range of interested parties. Special events were held in the local schools with children aged 5-11 and 11-16 on "Respect" and "Safety" (as opposed to bullying). The first group of 20 Citizen Leaders were aged 10 to 80 and represented the cultural diversity of the Estate. The Minister of State for Culture presented them with certificates, designed by young citizens, at the House of Commons. A young persons' Media Group filmed the presentation, for viewing on the new estate website.

For further information, contact kate@imaginehealth.org.uk.

IMAGINE URUGUAY

www.imagineuruguay.org (in Spanish)

In November 2003, following a two-day retreat with 35 influential people, a new independent chaordic organization was launched: Imagine Uruguay. It has among its goals to develop an appreciative process, touching a million peoples' lives, to create a countrywide vision. Four groups are already working on the issue – funding, organization, communications and events/summits. In 2004, a two-day summit has been held, "Summit Facilitators and Interviewers Workshop" and the process slowly continues forward.

IMAGINE ARGENTINA

www.visioncompartida.org.ar/ingles/experiencias.htm

Soñar La Recoleta

Twelve community organizations from the city quarters of Barrio Norte, Recoleta, and Alto Palermo invited eighty residents to a Saturday session at the Roca Museum, where they were asked to dream up, or imagine, the future of their community. The process was called, "Dreaming the Neighborhood" (specifically, "Dreaming Recoleta," a neighborhood in the north of Buenos Aires city).

Although the participants were initially reticent — reluctant to leave their entrenched ways of problem-solving and their preconceived arguments — they came alive during the "dream" phase of the process, when asked to imagine the Recoleta neighborhood in 2008. Their enthusiasm rolled forward into the next session (held three weeks later), where the main themes were elaborated upon in discussions on methodology, design and implementation.

Twelve real projects were hatched from a process outlining the desired future. The event generated enthusiasm and a renewed vision for the future. It has laid the foundation for another project "Dreaming Buenos Aires" ("Soñar Buenos Aires" in Spanish), which is slated to start next year, following an appreciative inquiry in Buenos Aires schools.

IMAGINE DANMARK

www.imagedanmark.dk (in Danish)



In October 2003, at the invitation of Jacob Storch, Imagine Chicago led a 3 day masterclass in Aarhus, Denmark in a community hall, in partnership with Peter Lang of KCC in London. 100 change agents attended, including community workers, organizational development specialists, business and media leaders and representatives of recently arrived immigrant groups. All were interested in how to build stronger community partnerships.

Participants created asset maps of personal and community strengths, shared success stories and imagined and created new ways of supporting and connecting local community initiatives. Emerging out of that conference, Imagine Denmark is a new network to create a shared vision, through constructive dialogue, of how to develop communities in Denmark. It is sponsoring, in September 2004, a 2 day masterclass with Bliss Browne and a 3 day organizing meeting to launch Imagine Denmark and shared ideas. Conference details and outcomes will be posted at www.imagedanmark.dk.

UK IMAGINE NETWORK

The New Economics Foundation in London helped introduce the Imagine process to the world community by including it in its excellent resource guide in 1998 on tools for participation. It utilizes the Imagine method in a variety of contexts: housing, health, community planning, and have created a local UK Imagine network. Their experiences with growing this localized UK Network are shared in "Imagine: A Briefing" available on their website: www.neweconomics.org.

IMAGINE NEPAL

Between 2002 and 2004, Imagine Nepal has facilitated many daylong Open Space Technology and Appreciative Inquiry workshops. These have helped launch several Imagine projects at the district level (government administrative unit): Imagine Parbat, Imagine Lalitpur, Imagine Humla, Imagine Kavre, Imagine Dhankuta, and Kathmandu 2020. The expansion of the Imagine process has been especially aided by Nepal's several Appreciative Inquiry networks, a growing community of practice in the country. Imagine Nepal has also focused on peace making and the refugee situation, and have recently launched "Imagine Bhutanese Refugee Camps Nepal."

IMAGINE HUMANE

www.imaginehumane.org *Connecting Around Compassion*

When Bert Troughton and Sue Clement started designing an Imagine initiative for animal welfare they didn't even know each other. From their home offices at opposite ends of the country, Bert and Sue had long phone conversations and frequent emails about their values, their experiences and their dreams for the field. "From the first conversation we were learning from each other – it was exciting and energizing," says Bert, "and we knew early-on that we wanted to unleash this kind of learning connection for our whole field."

In the United States, 5,000 independent animal shelters struggle to deal with more than 10 million homeless animals annually. Imagine Humane believes that lasting solutions reside beyond the typical boundaries of animal protection and require an evolution from focusing on humane organizations to focusing on humane communities. 62% of Americans live with companion animals, and the majority are self-described animal lovers. There's a tremendous opportunity for animal organizations to work together to effectively engage the caring public in saving animals' lives.

Imagine Humane searched for a process that would energize and mobilize efforts of caring individuals and organizations and bypass typical silo thinking and resistance to change. Building on appreciative inquiry, dialogue education, and Imagine Chicago's work, Imagine Humane now designs and facilitates hands-on learning opportunities where animal welfare professionals ask appreciative questions, listen for and celebrate successes, learn from each other's experiences, and build effective partnerships.

In its first 18 months, working in partnership with PetsMart Charities, Imagine Humane has initiated appreciative dialogues at two national humane conferences and in three major U.S. cities – Cleveland, Minnesota, and New York – with some exciting results. People are getting to know and understand each other, and design plans for working together. The conversations have already spawned a detailed community assessment, a successful legislative campaign, and several joint spay/neuter initiatives. Some groups are taking the process back to their organizations and applying appreciative inquiry in staff and volunteer meetings, strategic planning, and



A dream which emerged out of Imagine Humane's dialogue: "Unconditional love in 24 hours. \$29.95"

their interactions with the public. On more than one occasion, foundations have volunteered on-the-spot to fund plans generated during Imagine Humane events.

Animal lovers are full of stories about trust, devotion, unbridled silliness, and unconditional love. They are richer for

practicing compassion. Elevating and connecting their stories is not only good for animals; it adds an important dimension to building healthy communities. Sue and Bert hope Imagine Humane will provide a learning community for animal welfare and a point of entry for every caring individual to add their efforts to the cause.

Core Practices of Imagine Humane

ACCELERATING LEARNING

Adults learn best when information is relevant and immediately applicable, when the setting fosters interaction and relationships, and when the format provides for hands-on practice and application.

ADVANCING DIALOGUE

Structure, open questions, and nonjudgmental language create a healthy and safe environment to advance mutual understanding, and make it possible for people to build upon – rather than debate – a variety of ideas and methods.

FOSTERING COLLABORATION

Our recipe: begin with people who want to participate, create a shared vision for a better future, design a project plan that includes an appropriate and meaningful role for each participant, make time for relationship development and plan implementation, and communicate and celebrate often along the way.

ACCELERATING COMMITMENT