

I want to thank the Research Transfer Network of Alberta (RTNA) for giving me the opportunity to attend the RTNA conference “Lost in Knowledge Transfer – Finding our Way Together” held in Banff, Alberta September 28 – 30, 2008. The following notes will answer two questions:

*Why would anyone be interested in attending a Research Transfer Network of Alberta conference?*

*What did I learn from attending the RTNA conference?*

### Telling the Story of a Conference Participant

The keynote speaker, at the beginning of the conference, Elliot Churchill, emphasized the importance of story-telling in the transfer of knowledge. As she began her presentation, she told a story about herself. She was imparting information, however, at the same time she was building a relationship with each one of us at the conference. Ms. Churchill talked about trust, and how trust and a connection with each other helps build the relationships we need for knowledge transfer.

Dr. J. Parboosingh, Professor Emeritus, University of Calgary, and Joe Tetlich, an elder of the Tetlit Gwich'in First Nation, while their topics differed, both reinforced the importance of community, a shared goal, a connection and most importantly how relationships assist in transfer of knowledge. The conference itself was a forum for building a sense of community among the participants and either starting, or reinforcing relationships. The second day's concurrent sessions provided an overview of a variety of types of networks or communities, and the tools used to facilitate these communities.

The final speaker, Dr Bryan Kolb, shared his experiences with transferring of knowledge to other professionals. His presentation emphasized how we need to work with the beliefs, values and cultures of others in order to be heard. While Ms Churchill talked about culture in the terms of different countries, Dr Kolb talked about culture in terms of different professions.

Take away message: As health care leaders we need to recognize the importance and invest in conversations and building relationships. We need to build into our programs the opportunities for conversations which would allow relationships to grow, based on trust. Somehow we need to balance this opportunity for conversation with the belief that if you are not running – you are not accomplishing all you need to. Where did that belief come from? Is that mine alone, or a shared belief?

As leaders, we need to harness the power of stories and assist and encourage staff to link with others with similar positions. Stories allow us to get to know each other, to start trusting, and to begin building a relationship. Sharing a story allows glimpses of our inner selves. As healthcare professionals, we all have a passion for areas within our practice. The conference brought together various practitioners with a passion for knowledge, for sharing that knowledge, all with a purpose to provide the best care possible. We need to remember in this age of information and technology, the power inherent in a conversation between two people passionate about improving the service they deliver.

I would recommend anyone to attend a RTNA conference. The committed, passionate people involved willingly share their energy, albeit unknowingly, and I came away energized and believing in the power of networks and communities.

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