

HUMAN VENTURE

2017 Community Update



"IN OUR TRADITIONAL WAY OF TEACHING, THE
AIM IS TO DEVELOP WISDOM. A PERSON
BECOMES WISE WHEN THEY CAN SEE WHAT
NEEDS TO BE DONE AND DO IT SUCCESSFULLY
WITHOUT BEING TOLD WHAT TO DO"

Johnny Morgan, Inuit Elder, Silatunirmut

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THE HUMAN VENTURE

Capacities for strategy, innovation, systems thinking, resilience, and ethics are highly valued in our society, but they are in limited supply. Human Venture Leadership helps participants develop these capacities, providing the maps, tools, and ongoing support for a life-long learning journey. By strengthening the capacity of leaders to learn, think, care and act in adaptive ways, we strengthen the capacity of organizations and communities to meet the most significant challenges and opportunities facing them.

Our organizations and communities face enormous global challenges: climate change, resource depletion, population growth, cultural clashes, human rights abuses, global inequities, and more. Course-correction is vital. But how do we extricate ourselves from the progress traps we've created?

Changing the path we're on requires more robust ways of:

- * Understanding human progress – what it is and what it is not
- * Understanding human development – how our thinking, caring, priorities and behaviors are shaped
- * Identifying and preventing developmental paths that lead to catastrophic breakdown and collapse
- * Strengthening our collective capacity for wisdom

None of this is possible without looking at the bigger story in which we're all embedded. By studying common patterns in human striving, failure and achievement across history and disciplines, we can understand ourselves and our predicament more deeply. We can begin to develop the capacity required to help us innovate and problem-solve for generations to come. Welcome to the Human Venture.



ALUMNI STORY: MARK HOPKINS

Co-founder, Swallow-a-Bicycle Theatre

"The Human Venture approach is the best I've found for learning from the entire record of human triumph and failure, in all of its complexity... and for starting to understand what it would take to be helpful in the face of existential challenges like climate change, armed conflict, genocide, income inequality and more. It doesn't provide easy answers, because there aren't any easy answers that respond to the full breadth and depth of the situation. It does, however, sketch out a promising path forward, and that's the path I'm trying to take.

There have been lots of significant changes for me since taking the program, but I'd say the biggest is the way I understand myself as part of the human story. We're a remarkable species of primates with a tremendous capacity to build upon the triumphs and failures of distant generations and geographies. When scientists map a genome or land a space probe on a comet, we did that. Humans. When warlords abduct children and turn them into soldiers, or when corporations ravage our forests and watersheds, we did that. Humans.

I used to have difficulty understanding how "normal people" could help perpetuate a genocide...but understanding that they're humans, that their learning is the product of their situation, helps. Much as I perpetuate and benefit from the inequities of the situation I'm in, were we to swap places, I could very easily take the same path. It takes incredible self-authorization to learn and act without the support of your culture or context, and can come at incredible risk and cost.

So... now, when I see people or groups acting in ways that are incomprehensible, I try to comprehend, look beyond the words and actions to their origins. And I try to do the same for myself – understand why I believe the things I believe, and do the things I do."



OUR HISTORY

In 1998, the McConnell Foundation and Volunteer Calgary created a cross-sector leadership program, known as Leadership Calgary. In 2001, the Leadership Edmonton program was created, drawing on the same model and curriculum. After many years of successful operations, the Leadership Calgary and Edmonton programs merged in Fall 2015 to launch a new charitable non-profit organization called Human Venture Leadership.

Human Venture Leadership continues to introduce individuals across sectors in various communities, including Edmonton and Calgary, to the same curriculum through leadership programming.

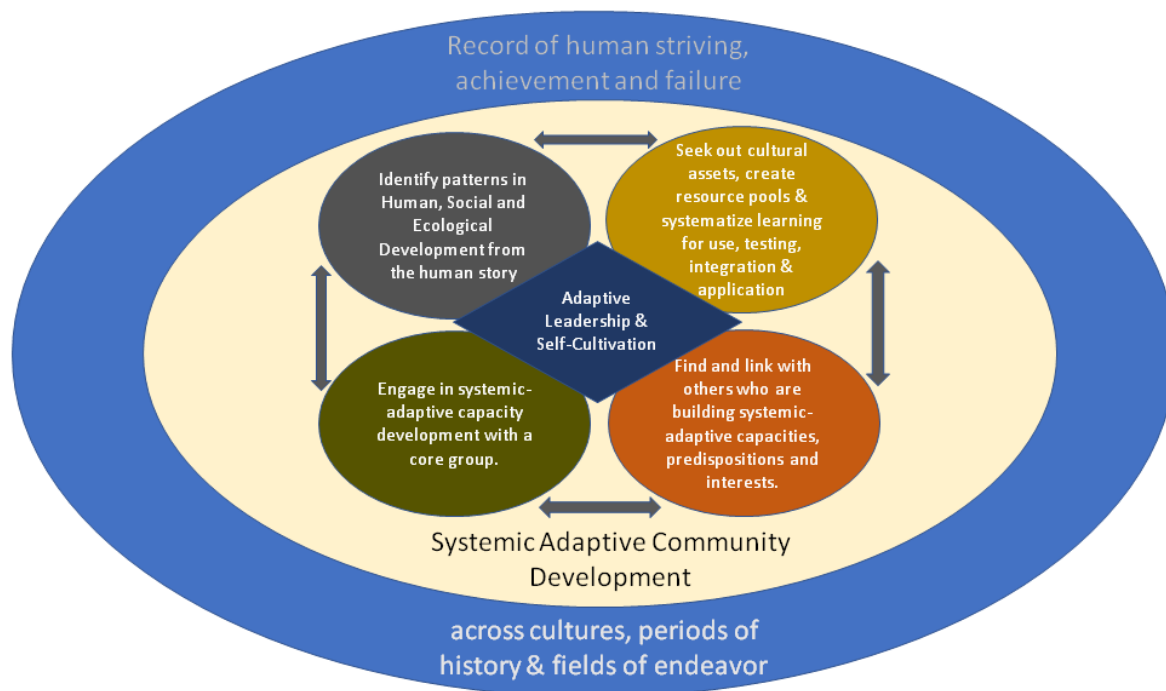
With over 500 alumni in Calgary and 300 alumni in

Edmonton, these leadership programs have a large footprint in both communities, influencing the way leaders across sectors approach their life and work. In the words of one participant “Although social innovation is complex and messy, I can see how we can innovate more wisely – by building on and extending the lessons of many generations, across history and disciplines. I am far more thoughtful about understanding the challenges we face and building the partnerships we need to initiate change.”

There are many individuals and organizations who have contributed to the development of our organization over time, and we are deeply grateful to all involved for their persistence and support through the years.

Human Venture Institute

Preparation, Support & Capacity Building for Systemic-Adaptive Leadership



OUR APPROACH

What we're really hurting for at this point in history are leaders with leading edge capacities – the kinds of leaders who employ disciplined thinking, caring and learning processes to seek patterns across and within systems, to help us identify and prepare for the most significant threats and opportunities coming our way (especially those challenges that most of us don't see, understand, or care about yet). This is essentially the function of leadership.

Systemic-adaptive leadership is critical to helping groups and communities move forward in increasingly effective and adaptive ways. Threats and opportunities are emergent; without adequate foresight and ongoing learning and development, communities can be blindsided by emerging threats and unprepared to seize opportunities as they arise.

Einstein said that the most incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible – that there are recurring, reliable patterns in life that we can come to understand. And therein lies our greatest hope as humans. Patterns help us to manage complexity and navigate change – they help us to detect the most adaptively significant signals in the midst of so much noise – and this understanding can and should inform our line of development as human beings.

Effective leaders draw on these patterns to strengthen the group's capacity to meet the most significant challenges. Community learning and development is achieved by identifying leading edge capacities and approaches, seeking out and creating resources for others to draw on, and testing, extending, integrating and applying them.



NEW DIRECTION IN 2017

In 2017, we will pilot new introductory programs in different formats, tailored to entry points in different sectors and industries over time. These programs are designed for individuals and organizations who need to build capacity for strategy, innovation, prevention, and resilience to address complex community challenges.

In these programs, we take an open-ended and multi-disciplinary approach for life long learning in individuals and groups. We start with the largest communities to which we belong – the communities of humanity and life – and we look at how we can enhance, guide, or correct our path to make progress for people and for the planet.

We completed a week-long pilot program with a small cohort of 10 people. Our full day sessions were interactive, included time for reflection, and ended with a group dinner and evening activities.

Our results showed that we generated increases in

- capacity to learn from history and current events
- capacity to contribute effectively to family/work/community problem solving

- capacity to challenge the status quo
- ability to assess sources of information for quality
- ability to diagnose sources of ignorance and error
- striving skills, tenacity and resilience
- sense of responsibility for challenges and desire to “go to the trouble”

Despite the desired outcomes, the week-long format is difficult to recruit for, as many interested participants are unable to get a full week off from work. As a result, we will be piloting new, more accessible formats.

We plan to strengthen our alumni network in 2017 by offering more training, workshops and opportunities for collaboration on complex, emergent challenges. Ongoing community building and alumni support is key to generating long-term learning outcomes.

We are in the midst of restructuring our organizational membership and sponsorship model in 2017, seeking partners who are able to contribute to our overall strategic direction and positioning.



ALUMNI STORY: LAURA KENNETT

Supervisor, Asset
Integrity Projects

"As a board member of Human Venture Leadership and a champion for the program within Enbridge, I am in a unique position to speak to the direction of the organization and the impact of the programs on participants within Enbridge.

I participated in the Leadership Edmonton program in 2011-2012 and found the program greatly enhanced my ability to look beyond individual and corporate frames of action, toward community and species level challenges. The program ignited my desire to embrace all engagements and cultural and societal resources as sources of learning, but I realized that being surrounded by a community of people on similar learning journeys is vitally important.

Enbridge has been a strong supporter of Human Venture Leadership and has helped over 30 employees access the program. I see the participants within Enbridge applying the concepts they learned to the decisions they make as corporate citizens. We have conversations that go beyond our jobs and examine how the company interacts with the community and society.

When I recently surveyed the participants within Enbridge, they expressed strong interest in further activities that push their learning in this realm. But, as I observe the benefit that is being realized within Enbridge, I see a need for this benefit to be realized in many other parts of our community. Equipping people with the capacity to see patterns in the complex world that surrounds us gives them skills to navigate the frontiers of human and social development and to meet the challenges and opportunities of our time"



COMMUNITY PARTNERS

As the organization has evolved, we have refined our purpose to support and promote development in both individuals and socio-cultural environments, as we recognize that both are necessary to affect change. We have also expanded the scope of our charitable objects moving beyond Edmonton and Calgary with the intention of working in different communities across Canada, North America, and potentially around the world.

We exist to create and support a mutual learning community that will generate:

- * Increasing numbers of increasingly resourceful, resilient, responsible life-ranging human beings with diagnostic and design capabilities for reducing ignorance and error, waste, suffering and injustice at all levels, from individuals to civilization.

- * Institutions, cultural and societal resources, leaders and ecologies of influence (locally and globally) that support the development and maintenance of systemic-adaptive capacities.

Aside from our formal programs, we support the work of our alumni in multiple sectors. We have an alumni network of energy sector employees and influencers working together to create resources and opportunities for change.

In the agriculture sector, we are in the early stages of partnering with the National Farmer's Union and the Young Agrarians to support their capacity development. We have been approached by Verge Permaculture to partner on pieces of their training curriculum. We are hosting a breakout session on leadership at the Edmonton Resilience Festival. We are also engaging with Calgary Eats via our past program alumni.

For the last 4 years, we have worked with the Alberta Network of Immigrant Women on a leadership program for immigrant men and women.

Other past community collaborators include the Alberta EcoTrust, the Arusha Centre, and TedxCalgary.



ALUMNI STORY: BLYTHE BUTLER

Network Weaver,
First 2000 Days
Early Childhood Network

The work of Human Venture Leadership has been integral in the success of my work with the First 2000 Days Network, a leading Collective Impact network supporting Early Childhood Development. Our challenge has been to create a complex-adaptive response to a complex-adaptive community challenge, and we have been successful in doing that in large part based on our deliberate application of the Human Venture Leadership program principles in our work.


As a result of going through the program I've gained a greater understanding of my own humanity – and our collective humanity. In addition, I'm building the adaptive leadership capacity required to guide systems-change efforts. Part of this process is comprehensively diagnosing the 'problem space' of a complex-adaptive social issue; building capacity in others to do the same; and enabling, supporting and sustaining the process over time. Adaptive design capacity is also essential for mapping out 'solution space' for the kinds of interventions in social issues that will foster resilience and generative adaptive cycles of development.


Human Venture Leadership teaches the common structure for diagnosis and design behind all Creativity, Prevention, Expertise, Strategic Thinking, Futures Planning, Systems Thinking, Critical Thinking and Sustainability. Where many Collective Impact efforts focus on shared measures to track progress at the population level, very few also diagnose the quality of how the system functions (or doesn't) as a key component of the approach. Research shows a network's ability to achieve its outcomes depends on the quality of the processes it uses to achieve those outcomes. The First 2000 Days Network builds diagnosis and design capacity into the system to generate improved outcomes for families and children. This unique approach to Collective Impact is made possible by applying the principles of Human Venture Leadership



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