

TGIF Taking Great Ideas Forward



Improving Northern Capital - Sustainable Development in the Northern Tier

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“There is only one success – to be able to spend your life in your own way.”

-Christopher Morley-

MEETINGS and EVENTS:

Links will provide additional information. Dates for recent additions are in **bold**.

| <i>What</i> | <i>Date</i> | <i>Time</i> | <i>Where</i> |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------|--|
| Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Conference | June 19 & 20 | All Day | Cable, Telemark |
| MREA Renewal Energy Fair | June 20-22 | All Day | Custer, Wisconsin |
| Pie and Politics | June 25 th | 7:30 PM | Big Top Chatauqua Bayfield / Washburn, WI |
| Inventors & Entrepreneurs Club | July 3 rd | 5:30 PM | Coffee Shop US 2 & 63 |
| BCEDC Board Meeting | July 14 th | 10:00 – Noon | Washburn Library |
| Lake Superior Day | July 20th | All Day | Everywhere! Especially in the Lake Superior Basin |
| WIN Technology Conference | August 7th | 8:00 am – 3:00 pm | WITC Ashland |
| BCEDC Board Meeting | August 11th | 10:00 – Noon | Washburn Library |

The REFORM of SCHOOLS

Criticism of Bayfield County schools has once again surfaced in the context of economic development. Education and economic development are linked in a chicken and egg-like paradox. Which comes first? Biologists often respond to the chicken and egg paradox with the clever quip that a chicken is just an egg's way of making another egg. Or, with a slightly more modern twist; a frog is just DNA's way of making more DNA. Unfortunately insights from biology are unlikely to help unwind the education and economic development paradox. Asking; Which is more important, education or economic development? The answer, perhaps, is “yes.”

Families of substance are attracted by good schools. An argument is mounted that very high quality schools could attract a population surge in the county that would not demand that jobs – good, high paying jobs – be here first.

Interesting theory. Most theories rise above conjecture, attempt to predict the future, are (or should be) based on evidence and, at least in a scientific sense, be subject to falsification.

The theory predicts that schools with a reputation for being the “very best” would attract families that have independent means and do not need employment or that bring their own employment with them. Build excellent schools and they will come. The experiment the theory demands would be very expensive. Better that we first sort through any available empirical or dialogical evidence.

Bayfield County already has a modest population of young people who are starting families while being supported by inherited wealth or substantial family net-worth. They are here because of wonderful natural resources and the exciting opportunity to live off-the-grid, close to the land. The growth of farmer's markets across the region is one testament to the life styles and ambitions of these young folks. They want to sell their extra produce; but some (perhaps many, certainly not all) eschew growth of the very population levels that will provide customers for their produce. Seems like another hike down paradox path.

Clearly our schools, in their present form and with the present system of state aids to education, would benefit from a growing population of young families. Will good schools create this growth or will growth create good schools? Saying that the answer is “yes” doesn't provide much help. Clearly we need something beyond the merely clever.

In one fantasy about schools, I would like to engage a conversation that would center around an assumption that schools will be shut down in Bayfield County. For conversation sake we might say that for a period of 16 years beginning in September 2012 all of our schools would be shuttered because transportation of children five-days a week for nine months is no longer possible given the high dollar and climate-change [costs of transportation](#). (Local biodiesel-based solutions to the transportation problem are off the table.) We would really concentrate on the hypothetical premise of “no schools for education.” We would have four years to figure out how we are going to provide top quality learning experiences for our children. Experiences that are every bit as good as, maybe better than, experiences in any schools.

Home schools families would, of course, have little problem with the premise and would contribute to the conversation by relating their experiences. They should be bombarded with questions. If we could, in a spirit of genuine inquiry, suspend our assumptions, the observations, concepts, stories, theories and skills that spill out may engender new thinking about education, about learning, about how our children, our communities and, yes, ourselves, might acquire more capacity, in **Peter Senge**'s words; “to do what we want to do.” This conversation would go way beyond a recipe replicating a home school.

I suspect we would emerge from the figurative conversation pit with new insights about how children learn in the absence of the accoutrement of the school, curriculum, standardized textbooks and certified teachers.

Perhaps there is a path to excellence in education that does not demand an assumption that schools are needed or necessary. The kind of conversation I envision could enlighten a county-wide, region-wide dialog about how our schools might reform and in the process serve to enlighten, if not stimulate, our economy.

LIGHTER SIDE:

As with most jokes the original author is unknown. Whoever you are; "Thanks!" Names, when added, are intended to tease the innocent.

In the Confessional:

"Bless me Father, for I have sinned. I have been with a loose girl."

The priest asks, "Is that you, little Joey Pagano?"

"Yes, Father, it is."

"And who was the girl you were with?"

"I can't tell you, Father, I don't want to ruin her reputation"

"Well, Joey, I'm sure to find out her name sooner or later so you may as well tell me now. Was it Tina Minnetti?"

"I cannot say."

"Was it Teresa Mazzarelli?"

"I'll never tell."

"Was it Nina Capelli?"

"I'm sorry, but I cannot name her."

"Was it Cathy Piriano?"

"My lips are sealed."

"Was it Rosa Di Angelo, then?"

"Please, Father, I cannot tell you."

The priest sighs in frustration. "You're very tight lipped, Joey Pagano and I admire that. But you've sinned and have to atone. You cannot be an altar boy now for 4 months. Now you go and behave yourself."

Joey walks back to his pew. His friend Franco slides over and whispers, "What'd you get?"

"Four months vacation and five good leads."

Take care and enjoy a great weekend!

/BRUCE

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Bruce Lindgren is Principal of [B.Lindgren CONSULTING](#). The consulting practice serves small business, local government, school districts and non-profits providing support for research, grant development, technical writing, marketing support and project management. Bruce brings his background in biological sciences, education, small business and media technology to generate and implement ideas contributing solutions to mission critical challenges.

In addition Bruce maintains the following affiliations:

[Bayfield County Economic Development Corporation](#), (BCEDC) Director

[Bayfield CountyLakes Forum](#), Board Secretary

[Chequamegon Institute, Inc.](#) Initial Registered Agent

[Coalition for Eco-Industrial Development](#), (CEID) Acting President & CEO

[IDEA Consortium LLC](#), Owner

[Inland Sea Society](#), (ISS) Director

[Lake Superior Binational Forum](#), (LSBF) US Co-Chair

[Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board](#), (WIB) Member

[Raindrop Garden Gallery](#), (RGG) Co-owner

The encircled fractal triangle represents an integrated cluster of seven ideas – economics, ecology, equity, ethics, experience, education and energy – that may be considered a core for sustainability studies. Bruce is available to present illustrated lectures and facilitate discussions about role of education in Industrial Ecology, Sustainable Development and the Sustainability Revolution.