

Brief Encounters with the Taos Institute

Experiencing Human Flourishing at the Fourth Global Forum



By Robyn Stratton-Berkessel

When we strengthen our relationships across the planet through conversation, we deepen our connections and find points of shared desire, and that's what sparks innovations.

Six weeks after participating in the 2.5 days [Fourth Global Summit](#), Discovering Flourishing Enterprise, I am still savoring a host of positive emotions and thoughts throughout my entire being. The experience will remain one of my high point moments - a story that I will tell over and over again in the future about experiencing human flourishing.

Before getting into some explanation of the Fourth Global Forum, I reflect on what was happening in the relational space that enabled this to be a high point experience:

- 1) The environment, people, sound, images and objects– those things we could physically experience that delighted and touched us in different ways, triggering a range of associations, emotions, dialogue and imaginings.
- 2) A design that created a container to enable us to experience an abundance of energy that quickly filled us up with amazement, anticipation, joy, hope and possibility.
- 3) Conversations that were intimate, deep, expansive, delightful, and sacred.
- 4) Stories from business leaders, from academics, from students and workers validating that our work is making a positive difference in the world, while encouraging us and provoking us to do even more and even better.

Summing up the above contributing factors to what made this a high point story, the overarching factor is *diversity*. It was the diversity of the entire system that expanded this relational space for learning, growth, dreaming and human connection beyond the physical space. The depth of human connection was nurtured this space. We reported out frequently we felt safe and nourished. It gave witness to our oneness and the love we share for human kind and the commitment we share to co-create a peaceful, just and equitable co-existence for all sentient beings on our beautiful planet, Earth.

The Fourth Global Forum was held at Case Western Reserve University, in the modern Tinkham Veale Center University Center, diagonally opposite the traditional architecture of Cleveland Museum of Art. I offer that detail, as location played a role in contributing to a beautiful unfolding set of experiences. The staging of the forum in the university building offered a changing kaleidoscope of audio visual sensations as the Forum agenda flowed over 2.5 days. A gentle stroll across to the Museum offered a different location to mingle around artful presentations of food, engaging in various conversations that enriched our understandings and celebrated our human connection in that spacious atrium full of a summer's late evening light. Adding to the visual delight of the space, every nation's flag greeted us in an arch formation. Each of us took responsibility for a flag or two to hold it up and bless it with the chant of the Peace Ceremony, "May Peace Prevail on Earth."

The Appreciative Inquiry design, an inquiry into “Discovering Flourishing Enterprise” flowed seamlessly throughout, punctuated by short presentations that were acutely on topic and in tone with our inquiry. We laughed, we cried, we expressed awe and surprise at many of the stories from the stage, as well as our own stories in our small working groups. Again, it was *diversity* that kept us awake, curious, delighted and aware of the glorious richness of our myriad experiences and what else is possible.

Woven into the design was not only the brief presentations on stage, but also an award ceremony honoring winners of the [AIM2Flourish](#) global challenge to find businesses who are achieving one or more of the U.N.’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). AIM2Flourish was born out of a working group at the Third Global Forum, forming alliances across the globe with universities to build Business as an Agent of World Benefit into their business management curriculum. The *diversity* of these stories filled the space for deepening connection, conversation and commitment. These awards and hearing the voices of the business leaders today who are positively impacting the world, and the students who will be the leaders of tomorrow filled us with great relief and confidence. When we strengthen our relationships across the planet through conversation, we deepen our connections and find points of shared desire, and that’s what sparks innovations.

To find out more about AIM2Flourish and hear some of the voices in the room and what the experience meant for others, please take a [listen to this podcast](#).

*“**Flourishing enterprise** is about people being inspired every day and bringing their whole selves to work; it’s about innovation arising from everywhere; and it’s about realizing remarkable relationship value with stakeholders – customers, employees, communities, and the biosphere – to create unprecedented, enduring business advantage.”*

– [David Cooperrider, PhD](#)