

## Down to Zero: Waste Reduction and the Art of the Possible

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### Introduction and Context

Thank you for those kind words of introduction. It's great to be with you this morning to share ideas in the shadow of the mountains that frame Sun Peaks Resort - an inspiring stage on which to have a conversation about something that matters. The opportunity to speak to you also represents something of a return to my professional roots, in a sense. More years ago than I care to mention, I helped to establish a used oil recovery program here in B.C. - my small contribution to the zero waste cause, if you will. More seriously, I think it's possible, perhaps even necessary, to divine a true line that links the province's work from as far back as *The Litter Act* in 1970 to Pollution Prevention Planning and Extended Producer Responsibility to the current provincial goal of leading the world in sustainable environmental management. I'll return to that lofty goal later in my remarks.

The American scholar, John Schaar, has described the future in a way that frames much of what I want to share with you this morning. He said:

*The future is not a result of choices among alternative paths offered by the present, but a place that is created - created first in mind and will, created next in activity. The future is not some place we are going to, but one we are creating. The paths are not to be found, but made, and the activity of making them, changes both the maker and the destination.*

I like those words; I draw inspiration from those words, because they remind me that I have an opportunity, perhaps even an obligation, to create something, as opposed to simply reacting to what is presented to me. And the act of creating requires courage - courage to use both the head and the heart to identify possibilities, to divine new ways of being. Hence the title of my remarks this morning, "**Down to Zero: Waste Reduction and the Art of the Possible**".

There are times when I lament that in our quest for zero waste, we have kept our eyes too squarely focused on the ball and perhaps lost sight of the game, or more accurately, the passage of the ball through time. What I mean by that is that we are preoccupied with transactional performance (doing things right) rather than transformational performance (doing the right things). And so it is that we become incredibly good doing things that don't necessarily create the future we want. We become slaves to process and lose sight of the outcome. Don't get me wrong, waste reduction and its cousin, pollution prevention, are good, even important things to do, especially when the average Canadian sends over 300 kilograms of waste to landfills and incinerators each year, but what is the larger story of which they are a part? And how does RCBC and its supporters connect to and shape that story? Put another way, what does RCBC do in a world without waste?

An important part of this conference is celebration, and rightly so, but I think an equal measure of reflection and renewal is also good. I want to challenge you this morning, invite you, to raise the height of your radar and think about the journey to zero waste in new ways. My comments are intended to highlight those aspects of our collective thinking on "waste" that should be celebrated, loudly and proudly, but equally, to shed light on opportunities that have heretofore been overlooked. There are three dimensions to my remarks:

- Waste as it is popularly viewed by the environmental community and the general public
- Waste in a broader management context
- Waste reduction as a driver of social and organizational change.

### **Waste as it is Popularly Viewed by the Environmental Community and the General Public**

What is this thing called waste, and why do we care about it, or getting rid of it? Well, waste as it is popularly, or perhaps I should say traditionally, viewed by the environmental community and the general public is any material with no inherent value or usefulness. There's a story unfolding in my newly adopted home of Calgary that speaks to this particular view of waste.

Last October, City Council approved the idea of a curbside recycling program to serve single-family homes. That's right, despite many outstanding features, Calgary doesn't yet have curbside recycling - unless you count the well-intentioned but limited efforts of

a few private suppliers. Now, apart from the inevitable carping about costs (\$24 million a year is the current estimate), and timing (pickups would start in 2009), the focus of this story is glass, newspaper, plastics, packaging and organic materials - the stuff of everyday life in a single-family household. THIS is what most people see, smell, touch and otherwise experience when they think about waste. Chris Turner's lucid description of "e-waste" in the current issue of **Canadian Geographic** reminds me that I should probably add those ubiquitous airplane headphones to the list, but you get the idea. The business or industrial analogue is construction and demolition debris, metals, liquid and hazardous industrial waste. And none of this is particularly exciting or interesting. Or is it? What would our world be like if these things were no longer waste? What if we had solved this particular waste "problem"? The answers to these questions represent the first layer of possibility; the base of a metaphorical waste pyramid in which we reconsider the resource intensity of our lives, and strategically reduce or remove some of the "waste".

Imagine a world with no landfills or incinerators. No transfer stations. No trucks driving to transfer stations. Better still, imagine a world in which new economic opportunity is fueled by resources previously deemed waste. The infrastructure to support such a world would be different, by design, and the ways in which we live, the ways in which we satisfy our needs and wants, would similarly be different because we would make different choices, particularly with respect to consumption. We're a long way from such a world. Which means there is room for creativity, room for ambitious, if not audacious thinking and doing. Room for a more expansive articulation and application of eco-efficiency. Whether it be process optimization or waste recycling; eco-innovation or the creation of new services, I passionately believe we can create an exciting new future, a future of access and opportunity. And you don't have to look far afield, or have especially deep pockets to get inspired.

**Mountain Equipment Co-op** has generated savings of \$63,000 a year at its Vancouver store through recycling; **Telus** has saved nearly \$400,000 a year through waste reduction and recycling efforts, and created a new multi-million dollar revenue stream through equipment re-sale; and in Victoria, the **Dockside Green** development intends to have the lightest ecological footprint of any development in the world. Also in Victoria, **Level Ground Trading**, the fair trade coffee importer, has adopted a "nearly zero" waste policy and used it to drive a 90% reduction in landfill waste, with consequent financial benefits. As company co-founder, Stacey Toews, put it in an interview last fall,

"we have reduced landfill waste to a single grocery bag per week...only four months ago we were filling a dumpster every thirty days." Finally, the **Elk Falls pulp mill** on Vancouver Island, a major player in the local economy and a place my father worked for many years, retrofitted its main power boiler, and reduced landfill costs due to a significant reduction in fly ash. Maintenance costs were also reduced, which increased the boiler's availability, and reduced the mill's reliance on other energy sources. An especially important part of the Elk Falls story is the willingness of management to use a modified accounting analysis to more clearly understand the costs and benefits which shape the bottom line. The analysis included landfill costs to be sure, but also included boiler operation and maintenance, and environmental permitting costs. The results pointed to future savings that were more than double the capital cost of \$10 million.

Best news of all? The companies I've named represent just the tip of a pretty big iceberg. And let's not forget the EPR successes to date, which include an 80+% recovery rate on beverage containers and used oil. There's something good happening here in B.C. More and more businesses and households see that green can be the color of money.

When I think of these case examples, the key message that lingers, apart from the flush of cost savings, is the extent to which new techniques, new skills, and new perspectives were brought to bear on the problem of improving environmental quality as well as social and economic opportunity. And so it is that P2 creates efficiencies that improve the bottom line, and EPR redefines the relationship between government, industry, local communities and the public with respect to waste management. This latter story is important; British Columbia had the strategic foresight to recognize that product manufacturers and brand owners are in the best position to reduce lifecycle environmental and health costs. Today the province has the most comprehensive list of products subject to a stewardship program of any state or province in North America. Equally important, the province is getting the prices of goods to more accurately reflect their true lifecycle costs. This is huge. In the current edition of **Report on Business magazine**, Fabrice Taylor underscores the importance of moving to a better form of lifecycle accounting. He says:

*There is a market-based fix to our predicament: If we could find a way to properly account for the full financial cost of our addiction to oil, gas and coal, the invisible hand would adjust prices and demand accordingly. So forget the tree-hugging activists; it's up to the accountants to save us from ourselves.*

He's right, of course. We need to make the accounting for lifecycle costs not a novelty, not something to be showcased in a speech like this, but the norm. Notwithstanding some progress by the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, we need to hold the accounting profession's feet to the fire, celebrate the willingness of managers like those at Elk Falls mill to do something different, and find more good stories to keep us moving toward a day when NOT accounting for life cycle or total costs is an attention grabber. We know this doesn't have to hurt; we know that this can be good for the environment and the bottom line.

The question now, and I appreciate that it's a question that will be debated over the next two days, is "what comes next?"; how do we build from this exciting base of the pyramid and more fully articulate a world in which waste is food, fuel and opportunity?

### **Waste in a Broader Management Context**

In 1969 Ian McHarg published *Design with Nature*, arguably the most influential book in landscape architecture and design in the 20th century, and a book that introduced many ideas that would be popularized thirty years later under the biomimicry and green chemistry labels. He begins with the words "The world is a glorious bounty". What he means is that the answers to our design (and other) questions are inevitably to be found in nature. He says:

*In the quest for survival, success and fulfillment, the ecological view offers an invaluable insight. It shows the way for [humanity to be]...steward, enhancing the creative fit of man-environment, realizing design with nature.*

This is a useful touchstone for us, I think. Waste is, after all, a human construct: in nature there is no waste.

If we shift our focus from attacking specific elements of the waste stream to looking higher up on the face of the pyramid, we confront another, deeper definition of waste, "any useless or profitless activity". This definition opens up several interesting and arguably more expansive possibilities, possibilities that draw inspiration from nature, possibilities that speak to changes in entire industrial or organizational ecosystems. This definition has, for example, spurred the lean manufacturing model.

Lean is fundamentally about working with less waste, but waste is here defined in broader terms than simply materials. By adopting a lean philosophy manufacturers

review all business practices in an effort to reduce all forms of waste - time, people, materials of all stripes, and so on. What's more, this review process never stops; the underlying philosophy is that no matter how good a process or practice, it can always be improved.

The Toyota Motor Company is a wonderful exemplar of this philosophy. For years the company has used "JIDOKA", automated machines with humanlike intelligence to "mistake proof" the manufacturing process. This is now found in almost every industrial enterprise, helping to reduce waste while conserving resources. More generally, Toyota has long been a proponent of "KAIZEN", an overarching business strategy rooted in sustained continuous improvement. In particular, it means a serious commitment to eliminating waste. And so it is that Toyota has adopted a vision of the future rooted in the idea of "creating a better society," and with a view toward what society is expected to be like in the medium to long term. This vision sets a course for the many roles to be played by the company vis-à-vis society, people and the planet. What's particularly germane to our discussions here is Toyota's commitment to step up and demonstrate a certain degree of responsibility as a world leader in business; and to benefit society through the creation of value-added products. This is manifesting itself in a move within the company to become a leader in what it calls "regenerative capitalism", capitalism that is good for the planet, capitalism that fosters a "recycling society" rather than a mass production/mass consumption society.

There is a subtle, but critical shift in thinking that is required if a KAIZEN-style approach to waste reduction is going to work. Instead of focusing on individual wastes, or even broad environmental aspirations, it is necessary to step further back and ask two questions: The first is "what are our overarching business or organizational objectives?" The second is "how do our efforts at waste reduction, especially the strategic choice to move toward zero waste, support or otherwise contribute to those objectives?" There's an example of a business not far from here that has asked, and continues to ask those questions.

Tolko Industries Ltd., a privately owned forest products company, operates a plywood mill in Heffley Creek. Last year, the company entered into an agreement with Nexterra Energy, a Vancouver-based company that builds gasification systems that convert solid "waste" into clean, low cost heat and power. Under the agreement, Nexterra has been building a gasification system that will convert 25,000 tonnes per year of green, bark wood residue produced on-site into clean, renewable thermal energy. The energy

produced will displace approximately 235,000 gigajoules per year of natural gas currently used at the mill to produce hot water for log conditioning and to dry veneer.

It's estimated that Tolko will realize fuel cost savings of over \$1.5 million annually, reduce VOC emissions from the mill, and reduce Tolko's greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 12,000 tonnes per year. Tolko management rightly view this venture as a strategic investment in new technology that will help the company become more competitive and energy efficient.

Similarly, on May 19 General Electric, the largest company in America, and if measured by market capitalization, the largest company in the world, released its 2005 ecomagination report, showing that revenues from the sale of energy efficient and environmentally advanced products and services such as the evolution series locomotive, water reuse systems and energy star lighting hit \$10.1 billion in 2005, up from \$6.2 billion the year before. As GE Chairman and CEO, Jeff Immelt put it:

*Ecomagination is paying off for our investors and customers. Our advanced environmental products and services are helping customers increase their energy efficiency and reduce costs and emissions.*

Launched just one year ago, ecomagination is GE's commitment to imagine and build innovative technologies that help customers address their environmental and financial needs. Quite apart from the obvious financial results, further proof that green is the color of money, I find the early work on ecomagination interesting because GE is using it as a platform to improve the energy efficiency of its own operations, helping to lower costs. Put another way, it is using ecomagination as a core plank of a broad competitive strategy grounded in the relentless elimination of waste and the improvement of resource intensity. The ecomagination report, Taking on Big Challenges, details GE's progress in this regard. Highlights include:

- Doubling its investment in clean research and development - GE invested \$700 million in clean technologies in 2005; and
- Reducing its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and improving the energy efficiency of its operations - GHG intensity was reduced 10% and energy intensity was reduced 11%.

Beyond these works in progress, GE has several clean or eco technologies in its R&D pipeline, such as photovoltaics, biofuels, transportation initiatives with even higher

emissions and fuel efficiency standards, and an offshore wind turbine project with the U.S. Department of Energy. Not all of these will work, or be commercially viable in the short run, and some of them never will, and in part that's why I like what GE is doing. The company has deliberately chosen to create a new future, where the rules have yet to be written. In the business vernacular of today, this is called a blue ocean strategy, a choice to leave the cutthroat competition of the known market space (the red ocean) for markets that no one else thinks about or sees. In our journey toward zero waste, in our journey up my metaphorical pyramid, and most certainly in British Columbia's journey to world-leading sustainable environmental management, we need to think more about blue ocean strategy.

Before leaving this second layer of possibility in waste reduction, I want to talk briefly about industrial ecology. My reasons are twofold. I want to tie my remarks back to Ian McHarg. And I want to explore the question of whether zero waste is always in the public interest?

Several years ago, Michael Porter, the Harvard professor and arguably the world's greatest authority on competitive strategy, and Dan Esty of Yale University examined the extent to which industrial ecology could convey competitive advantage at the level of the individual firm. Time doesn't permit a full discussion of their work, but I find their conclusions a useful caution on those of us who might otherwise promise too much, too soon in the drive to zero waste, thereby inadvertently losing credibility. Porter and Esty concluded that:

*"...industrial ecology will often be useful for firms seeking to improve their resource productivity and thus their competitiveness. The systems perspective that industrial ecology promotes can help companies find ways to add value or reduce costs both within their own production processes and up and down the supply chain. But industrial ecology cannot always be counted upon to yield competitive advantage at the firm level. In some cases, the cost of closing loops will exceed the benefits".*

The authors further conclude that:

*"...because industrial ecology focuses attention on materials and energy flows, it may not optimize other variables that contribute to competitiveness within the corporate setting".*

I am perhaps stating the obvious, but it seems to me that as we look for more sophisticated and nuanced approaches to waste reduction, particularly as part of a broader sustainable environmental management objective, we need to foster a way of thinking, as well as the requisite tools, that allows us to consider multiple variables that affect organizational performance. We are then better positioned to frame waste in a broader management context, and open up the even more exciting proposition of waste reduction as a driver of social and organizational change. At a firm level, this means understanding that when you make an environmental intervention, the rest of the company's activities, notably marketing and R&D, don't stop. Within government, this means bringing cabinet and ministerial colleagues onside - we have to stop preaching, generally, but especially to the converted, and listen to what others want to achieve. We then have to create or co-create the conditions where we can collaborate in the fullest and truest sense of that word.

### **Waste Reduction as a Driver of Social and Organizational Change**

What happens as you reach the top of the waste pyramid? Is it possible to think of waste reduction as something that might actually drive social and organizational change? A recent article in *The Calgary Herald* sheds some light on this question. The article, in the business section, profiled Internet pioneers who are placing strategic bets on the "net big thing".

Two decades ago people like Steve Case (America on Line founder) and Bill Gates (co-founder of Microsoft) saw the Internet as a way to make money and change the world. Today, they think green technology is poised to make a similar impact. John Doerr, a venture capitalist who invested early in Google and Amazon, recently set up a \$100 million fund to invest in "green technology", something he believes could be the largest economic opportunity of the 21st century. As Case put it in an interview published in *The Washington Post*, "the green movement is going mainstream and we want to ride that wave".

Now, some of you might think this is a bit of a stretch, but there are some real parallels between clean technology and the early days of the Internet. Chief among them is the fact that clean tech is starting from a relatively small base, it's being driven by radical innovation, and it's underinvested relative to the size of the potential market.

In this room today we have the hearts and minds necessary to ignite a pretty exciting conversation about where and how clean technology, RCBC and its supporters, and the journey to zero waste come together. Equally, we have the wherewithal to talk about paradigm-busting ideas that lead not to "best in class performance", but to breakaway strategies that put you in a class of your own. I encourage all of you to spark these kinds of conversations. As inspiration, I think of **TerraCycle**, a small and energetic new company, founded by a Canadian, that produces the world's first consumer product line that is both made from waste and packaged in waste.

The product is plant food, derived from organic waste, and the packaging is used pop bottles. The bottles are collected through school fundraising drives across the US and Canada. In this way, the company has found a novel way of sourcing a key raw material, and inspiring students to actively engage with their communities. These bottles are stripped, cleaned, and filled directly with TerraCycle Plant Food. This past year, over 250,000 bottles were collected - many of which ended up on the shelves of Home Depot, Loblaws, and Whole Foods, to name a few. Last summer TerraCycle set a record for the fastest selling plant food in a Home Depot Website test.

In hindsight our vision is always acute, but come on, here's a successful new business based on producing an environmentally friendly product from garbage packaged in recycled bottles. I believe we can learn a lot from TerraCycle as we seek to answer the "what comes next" question and move closer to the promised land of zero waste.

The **Ford Motor Company's** Rouge River facility in Dearborn, Michigan is also an interesting example of what can be done as one moves closer to the top of the waste pyramid. The plant supports a cycle-to-cycle protocol, where waste is continually fed into the system as a food source. The company, much in the news of late for poor (some would say junk bond status) performance, has nonetheless done us all a service by developing the prototype car, Model U, a cycle-to-cycle vehicle whose materials can go back to the soil, or back to industry.

Inspired by how the Model T revolutionized personal transportation at the beginning of the 20th century, Ford has invested a good deal of creative thought, and no small amount of money, in Model U. One might well make the case that 100 years ago the Model T offered the most advanced manufacturing and was built with the most advanced materials. What we might see with Model U is an echo of that design philosophy - updated to reflect contemporary aspirations.

It is premature to say that the Model U starts a new era of low or no emissions, radically advanced safety and fuel economy, and not simply green materials and processes, but ecologically restorative materials and processes. It is also not clear if Ford's current financial crisis will overshadow and ultimately eclipse the Model U, or if the car and the thinking it reflects will light the way ahead for the company. Still, the thinking it represents about how the essential human need for mobility might be addressed in a zero waste way is exciting and might well be a blueprint for a host of radical design concepts in the future.

The **Herman Miller** furniture company also serves as a compass in navigating towards zero waste in new and nuanced ways. The company has just released its first cradle-to-cradle, non-PVC chair. This is a fitting tribute to the company's founder, D.J. DePree, who as early as 1936 saw a moral dimension to the design of furniture. The company's cultural ethos is one of concern for the larger issues of humanity and equality and bettering the world we work in. Visit the company's web site and you will read one of the best statements of what it means to be a mission-driven organization:

*What arrives on the truck is furniture. What went into the truck was an amalgam of what we believe in: innovation, design, operational excellence, smart application of technology, and social responsibility.*

I also believe we can learn from a much larger example, an example of what I will call the recycling ethos applied to landscape design. **The Eden Project** near Cornwall, England arouses the senses and dramatically shows how human civilization rely on plants. What has this got to do with waste, you ask? Well, the project was built into and around a 200-foot-deep disused china clay pit. It is a remarkable, and remarkably creative response to several issues that strike at the heart of sustainability - how to create economic opportunity in a depressed region; how to address post-mine closure in a new and exciting way; and how to engage and educate people on the interdependence between humans and the natural world.

Since opening in 2001, Eden, as it is popularly known, has become England's leading tourist attraction. Indeed, even before it was completed, the project had the distinction of being the most visited construction site in the world.

In many respects, the examples of **TerraCycle**, **Ford**, **Herman Miller** and **Eden** are wonderful illustrations of Proust's assertion that the real act of discovery lies not in

visiting new lands, but in seeing with new eyes. They are also living proof of Bruce Mau's Massive Change project, namely:

*The new design model provides a continuous assembly / disassembly line that cycles the product and its constituent matter in a never-ending loop of improvement.*

There is one final story, one final example I want to share with you.

In a speech toward the end of 2005, Ray Anderson, the charismatic Chairman of Interface (and a member of the David Suzuki Foundation Board) highlighted three aspects of his company's journey to sustainability that I find compelling and highly relevant to our deliberations here. The cumulative savings from eliminating waste in the manufacturing process have been \$289 million over 10 years - that's nearly \$30 million of found money each year, and a pretty potent retort to the charge that sustainability costs money. Perhaps more impressive, he says that Interface's products are the best they've ever been because sustainability has proven to be an unimagined source of inspiration and innovation - his people are galvanized around a higher purpose. This is the conversation I'd like you to have - we're all good at "transactional" work, executing the game plan; but are we missing the much more exciting game of "transformational" work? This idea of a higher purpose, is really about self-actualization. And you can't beat it for bringing people together and rounding out the business case. As Anderson puts it, "there is no amount of money we could have spent on advertising that would have generated as much goodwill or contributed as much to the top line, to winning business. To those of you who have the occasional "dark night of the soul" and wonder why we're doing this work, or how we can convince others, there's your answer.

### **Concluding Thoughts and Closing poem by David Whyte**

In closing, I'd like to return to the current provincial objective, one of the so-called "five great goals", of leading the world in sustainable environmental management. So of course I need to say something about leadership.

Leadership is about innovation. It's about asking what needs to be done and why. It's about taking a deliberately long-term view. In many respects I think British Columbia can take pride in its environmental performance and talk confidently about leadership. **The Litter Act** in 1970 was a leadership decision. The decisions of the early 1990s on product stewardship, and the launch of pollution prevention planning in the mid-1990s were leadership decisions. I especially remember the language from the province's

document, ***Introduction to Pollution Prevention Planning for Major Industrial Operations***:

*"...today, both government and industry recognize that it is necessary to move up the pipe to avoid, eliminate and reduce pollution at its source...Pollution prevention also provides value-added benefits to industry. It is as much about increasing efficiency, reducing costs, improving flexibility and gaining a competitive advantage as it is about enhancing the ability to protect the environment."*

There is probably a lifetime of work in those words. And it's the best kind of work; the kind of work that makes you want to do more than simply show up. Those words excite me; they make me want to do the very best work that I can do. They also make me want to ask, "Okay, where are we now, what comes next, what needs to be done?" And I'm moved to ask those questions because the people of British Columbia, the constituents we serve, want us to ask those questions. British Columbians have recognized for some time that sustainability of their economy and communities is dependent on preservation of a sustainable environment.

My friends, we need to keep raising the bar, we need to keep asking what comes next? What is the good work that we need to be doing now?

In part, this means taking a closer look at the goal of leading the world in sustainable environmental management and contributing to what I hope can become an ongoing strategic conversation about what that goal means. If we have the best air and water quality, and the best fisheries management, the current meaning of the expression, does that cut it? I would suggest that it does not, but I also appreciate that you've got to start somewhere. It means understanding where we currently sit with respect to performance, and becoming ever more creative in improving performance. This is where the principles and practice of ecological design can help us - we can systematically think or re-think a product or service to minimize the impact of materials and manufacturing, to optimize distribution, to make its use have a light footprint on the earth and society, to optimize the lifetime of the product or service, as well as the end-of-life. This is also where initiative such as **Our Future in the Balance**, an event in Vancouver early last month that profiled waste reduction and sustainability projects in B.C. schools, and the upcoming **Waste Reduction Week** in October, and so many others, are useful arrows in our quiver. But it seems to me that as good and useful as these things are, we need more, we need better, and we need different.

We need to embrace what Joanna Macy calls **The Great Turning**, the essential work of our time, the shift from an industrial growth society to a life sustaining civilization.

We're beginning to do this. We're taking action to slow the damage to the Earth and its peoples, at least in an ad hoc way. And we're even beginning to address the structural causes of our global sustainability crisis - the tacit agreements between individuals, governments, businesses and civil society organizations that define "the way things are done". Equally, we are beginning to propose alternative structural models. Where we have much work to do is in shifting the consciousness of everyone who is traveling with us on Spaceship Earth. As we articulate structural alternatives that redefine our relationship with the earth and with each other, we need to acknowledge that this is the stuff of cognitive revolution and spiritual awakening. We need to step back from what is right in front of us and say that the answers to what most ails us are likely to be found in deep ecology, spiritual traditions, especially indigenous spiritual traditions, eco-feminism, and eco-psychology - **and the integration of these ways of knowing**. And so, whether it is RCBC looking forward 5 years, the government re-thinking one of its 5 great goals, or one of you thinking about what comes next in your personal or professional life, I encourage - no that's not strong enough - I exhort you to embrace The Great Turning. It will help you climb my metaphorical waste pyramid, but it will do so much more than that.

As a motivational bridge that might help you begin this work, I want to share an excerpt from a poem by David Whyte that has always helped to both ground me, and exhilarate me. The poem is called ***What to Remember When Waking***.

You are not a troubled guest on this earth,  
you are not an accident amidst other accidents  
you were invited from another and greater night than the one from which you have just emerged.

Now, looking through the slanting light of the morning window toward the mountain presence of everything that can be, what urgency calls you to your one love? What shape waits in the seed of you to grow and spread its branches against a future sky?

Think of those good words as you listen to other speakers, and to each other, over the next 2 days. Use them as a talisman against the safe, the routine, the transactional. Use them to help ignite transformation.