

## Bridging the Gap

By: Anna Koen (Age 20)

A quote by Helen Keller reads, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." Since the industrial revolution, there has been a divide between people living in the cities versus those living in the country. Many people migrated to cities for the prospect of job opportunities. The disconnect that this created caused many individuals to forget that they still rely on each other. Urban people rely on rural citizens to provide many local products while rural people rely on them to purchase their products. To bridge the gap between people living in urban areas versus rural neighbours, we have to look at the current barriers, and how to improve the relationship.

The most significant barrier I see is a lack of communication, sharing of information and education between rural and urban residents. Many children and adults living in the city have limited information on country living. There are very few opportunities for urban residents to experience what country living is all about. A study done in 2018 found that only one in four children living in New York City has ever seen a living cow, and 40% have never gotten the chance to fly a kite. These numbers are staggering, yet even in Red Deer, there are very few opportunities for children living in the city to experience farm life. The more technology that becomes available to the younger generations, the more disconnected they become from nature and the environment around them.

Since the significant increase in emergence of technology, the world has become a completely different place, in many ways it has improved general information sharing; however, it has also created personal disconnect. We are in the midst of a Pandemic, and many citizens in both urban and rural areas are realizing that locally we need to rely more on each other. When we are unable to import all our food and necessities from elsewhere in the world, we began to see the value and appreciate what our local farming community has to offer. In a matter of weeks, the entire world was in lock down, and there was nothing people could do about it. City dwellers became more aware of the confines of city living and began looking for an outlet. The country has always offered an escape to those who want a break from the city's hustle and bustle; however, there are few opportunities to do so without a personal connection to a rural family.



I think there are many ways to improve and nurture the relationship between rural and urban citizens. The two ways that I think will be quite effective are community gardens and beekeeping. These two ideas go hand in hand as they allow people to learn essential life skills and give people a place to build community. Gertrude Jekyll states that "A garden is a grand teacher. It teaches patience and careful watchfulness; it teaches industry and thrift; above all, it teaches entire trust." The idea of community gardens is not a new concept; however, now more than ever, people need to feel like they belong to a community. There is something wonderful about getting your hands dirty and working for the common good beside individuals with that same mindset and also get to enjoy the fresh produce of their labour. The reason bees are an excellent addition to this idea is because it piques people's interest. Bees are essential to human life on earth, and it is a shame that so few people ever get a chance to admire and understand these amazing creatures. If children day camps could be organized in



which they got to see how honey bees work and how beekeeper harvests the honey, it would be fascinating and allow the younger generation to reconnect with nature. After doing some research I have discovered that keeping a beehive is not permitted within Red Deer city limits. Many children have never gotten to eat a honeycomb before, since only large corporations in the honey industry have access to beehives and can see how they work.

Rural families get to experience and appreciate nature every day while urban families don't have this opportunity. In my opinion more common interests should be explored. Hopefully by creating community gardens and observing beekeeping, we can provide neighbors with something to bond over and get excited about. I am sure several organizations would love to support such an enterprise if given a chance too. Two people can come from entirely different backgrounds, but if they can bond over a shared hobby or interest, they begin to form a friendship that will last a lifetime.

- For more information about safe accessible beehives that would be perfect for education purposes research the "Flow Hive."  
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