

Hi there! I'm Martha Toy, one of the co-creators of the Systems Thinking Voices In Canada website. You can meet the other co-creators and website contributors by scrolling down to the bottom of the About section on the top navigation bar on the site. I also need to mention Rick Gold of The Stem Group who is largely responsible for the appearance and software functionality of the site. And Paco Araujo was instrumental in the early development of the Systems Thinking Voices In Canada logo.

A bit of housekeeping: I'll be referring to Systems Thinking Voices In Canada as STVIC moving forward.

I'm also reading from a script that I've prepared because I want to be as clear and concise as possible to help launch the STVIC website into its most beneficial direction.

Topics:

I'm going to be talking lightly on six topics:

Brief introduction

STVIC is a human library and some definitions.

STVIC is organised into taxonomies with categories

The fish and the fishing pole

Become an STVIC registrant

Closing comments

Brief Introduction: The STVIC website arose out of sensing a need to create added ways of building meaningful productive relationships in the systems thinking community. There are many community building platforms in action in the global systems thinking community today. STVIC overlaps with existing global platforms, especially social media platforms, while also offering distinct opportunities for new relationships to develop between people in the systems thinking community. In doing so, STVIC is hoping to add new dimensions to further strengthen the existing systems thinking community building culture.

STVIC is a human library and some definitions.

I think of STVIC as a library, the digital twin of a human library whose aim is to raise the visibility of people who self-identify as Canadian context systems thinkers.

Presently STVIC is like a library with an empty card catalogue index and empty stacks of bookshelves. STVIC registrants are like the book authors who fill the card catalogue index. And your submitted learner activities, professional projects, and community resources are the books that will fill the stacks of bookshelves.

So what do the terms *self-identify*, *Canadian context*, and *systems thinker* mean? These are challenging terms to define due to the breadth of their interpreted meanings. At STVIC we use the term *self-identify* in its most general sense to describe someone who belongs to a particular category or group. For STVIC this category or group is “Canadian context systems thinkers”. The term *systems thinkers* is also meant in its most general sense to describe people who consciously practice the concepts that are foundational to or derived from the formal discipline of Systems Thinking. You can read STVIC’s Terms of Service statement for further information.

The term *Canadian context* is used inclusively to describe Canadians who are practicing systems thinking skills while living, learning or working in Canada or overseas. And also includes non-Canadians who are practicing systems thinking skills while living, learning or working in a Canada-based activity. One example of a group of Canadian context systems thinkers is the international team of co-creators and contributors to this STVIC website project that includes people from Canada, United States, Colombia, Mexico, and an American-Canadian dual citizen. All these people are in the Canadian context systems thinking community because each of us, whether Canadian or non-Canadian, has shared our systems thinking expertise with each other to create the STVIC website which is a Canada-based project.

STVIC is organised into taxonomies with categories

As mentioned before, the STVIC website is much like a library of books along with a card catalogue index where one finds the authors of the books in the library. The STVIC Directory section is equivalent to the card catalogue where each registrant in the Directory is shown with their personal information as well as any of their other STVIC submissions. These other submissions are like the library books that are displayed in the Learning, Projects and Resources sections on the website. If you prefer to browse through book stacks in a library before going to the card catalogue index, you can also do this on the website by browsing through the Projects, Learning and Resources sections because each submission displayed in these sections has a link back to its registrant author in the Directory section.

The Directory, Learning and Project sections are themselves organized into a few taxonomies from which a single category can be selected. Your selected category only displays the submissions in that category for easier viewing, similar to wanting to look only at the books on your chosen book shelf in the library.

We think there are some interesting taxonomies and categories on the STVIC website worth mentioning:

- 1) The year and chronological order of people entering the Canadian context systems thinking community since systems thinking was announced as a formal discipline in 1937. This information is shown in Directory section taxonomy titled “Decade in which registrant began building system thinking skills”. Additionally, there is an [In Tribute](#) category in the Directory taxonomy titled “Practice Community” which shares information about people who have passed on who were amongst the earliest people to enter the Canadian context systems thinking community.
- 2) In accordance with personal privacy laws, high school students can share firsthand your learner activity experiences. And because STVIC can display up to three new learner activity submissions each year, you can see your submissions accumulating year after year and reflect on how your systems thinking skills are building. This same year-after-year accumulation applies to professional project submissions as well.
- 3) Systems thinkers who are not within the student or professional stream yet are building systems thinking skills in their everyday life as parents, senior citizens, local community builders or others.
- 4) Critical systems heuristics which is a hybrid discipline that blends formal systems thinking with formal critical thinking.
- 5) Systemic design which is a hybrid discipline that blends formal systems thinking with formal design thinking. Some communities define systemic design as a blend of systems thinking, design thinking and critical thinking.
- 6) Construction and trades learning streams as taught in polytechnic institutes
- 7) Performing arts and physical education/sport performance learning streams as taught in high schools, colleges and universities

Presently these groups in the systems thinking community are neither very large nor visible but they may have a more influential presence in future Canadian society and culture.

The fish and the fishing pole

At this time, I can't really think of a single "sales pitch" that captures the forces that drive the benefits of visiting or registering yourself on the STVIC website.

However, I do sense something with longterm value that has a consistent presence in the STVIC website experience. The best phrase I can think of to describe it is **building self sufficiency**. Now if you go to the website and come back to me saying No Way Martha! I think I'm at least in the ballpark by using this phrase. In fact, if you have another term or phrase that you think fits better, do let me know!

To explain what I mean by **building self sufficiency**, here are three quotes from different sources that I see a common theme running through.

1)"Give someone a fish and they eat for a day. Teach them how to fish and they eat for a lifetime." Source unknown.

2)"If you want to people think differently, don't tell them how to think. Rather give them a tool with which they can discover for themselves how to think differently." Source: Buckminster Fuller, American architect, systems theorist, writer, designer, inventor, philosopher, and futurist.

3)"Don't force me to swim with my hands tied behind my back" Source: Chris Brown, from his character Jared in the film "Takers"

What I see in common in these quotes is they all have something to do with the teacher imparting some kind of self-sufficiency skills to the learner. These skills empower the learner to continue learning independently from the teacher, on their own terms, and for the rest of their lives.

What has building self sufficiency got to do with the STVIC website?

I see that the presently empty library framework can be likened to a fishing pole. By becoming familiar with how to use the STVIC website, you are learning how to use the STVIC fishing pole. You can become even more skillful at fishing by registering and participating more fully in the STVIC website. And before you know it you'll be catching many kinds of fish on many kinds of rivers for as little or as much time as you want in the future.

Really importantly: If, after reading anything on the site you want help with learning how to use the fishing pole, the STVIC Group is always available to show you, by reaching out to us at info@systemsthinkingvoices.com

Become an STVIC registrant

We encourage people in all branches of systems thinking to register on the STVIC website and join the STVIC community if you self-identify as a Canadian context systems thinker. Registration is free by completing and submitting the Personal Bio Questionnaire in the Sign Up section in the top navigation bar on the site. This questionnaire takes around 15 to 20 minutes to complete, and your information will be published in the Directory section of the website typically within five days after submitting. Also in the Sign up section you'll see other questionnaires and forms explained. These other questionnaires take about 15 to 20 minutes to complete and can be submitted any time after your Personal Bio is published on the site. Only the Extended Learning or the Extended Project submission form takes longer to complete as they enable the registrant to share their deeper dive learning or project experience by creating a video or writing a longer text. Overall these are the submissions that enable you to contribute your work to the Learning, Projects and Resources sections seen in the top navigation bar of the website. It's especially by participating in these sections that your systems thinking skills become truly activated and concretely real to website viewers and the other people in the STVIC community.

Closing comments

There is one noteworthy difference between the centuries old fishing pole story and the STVIC learning culture. The difference is that we as STVIC co-creators and contributors also hope to learn from your developing fishing skills since this builds our collective fishing skills that can result in designing a better fishing pole for all of us.

The learning culture at STVIC is very sincere, mutual, and participatory. We are both learning from each other to improve the learning experience over time. There are several means you can communicate with us, such as emailing us at info@systemsthinkingvoices.com, or by leaving a comment or direct message on the Facebook or LinkedIn STVIC page.

So if you self-identify as a Canadian context systems thinker and building self-sufficiency is your jam while empowering others, then come and join the STVIC community!

I hope this video encourages you to check out the STVIC website. And whether or not you choose to join the STVIC community, consider the advice of a widely respected elder in the global systems thinking community who says: “Think big. Start small. Evolve!” Thank you for taking the time to listen.