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A CONNECTED FORCE FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE

Possible

*We know for sure that these are days when the improbable can become the inevitable.**

Collective Impact | Community Engagement | Evaluate Community Impact | Community Development | Collaborative Leadership

Photo: Tamarack Institute


And yet, the dream of a companion,
however naive it may be,
becomes an inspiration
for acting together.

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** Front cover quote: Jim Dwyer,* New York Times, *October 25, 2014*

Cover photo: Annalee Giesbrecht

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Geez *magazine*

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Sponsors and donors: *Maytree, J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Government of Ontario, Google, Microsoft*

Special thanks to: *Aiden Enns, Annalee Giesbrecht, Kyla Neufeld, and Tim Runtz of* Geez *magazine.*

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Engage! *is published annually and distributed to Tamarack's network of members, partners, and community change leaders. A monthly electronic issue of* Engage! *provides the latest thinking on community change to more than 12,100 subscribers around the globe. Subscribe online at www.tamarackcommunity.ca. For bulk orders of this magazine, please contact louise@tamarackcommunity.ca.*

Charitable Registration Number: 862808615RR0001

Printed in Canada

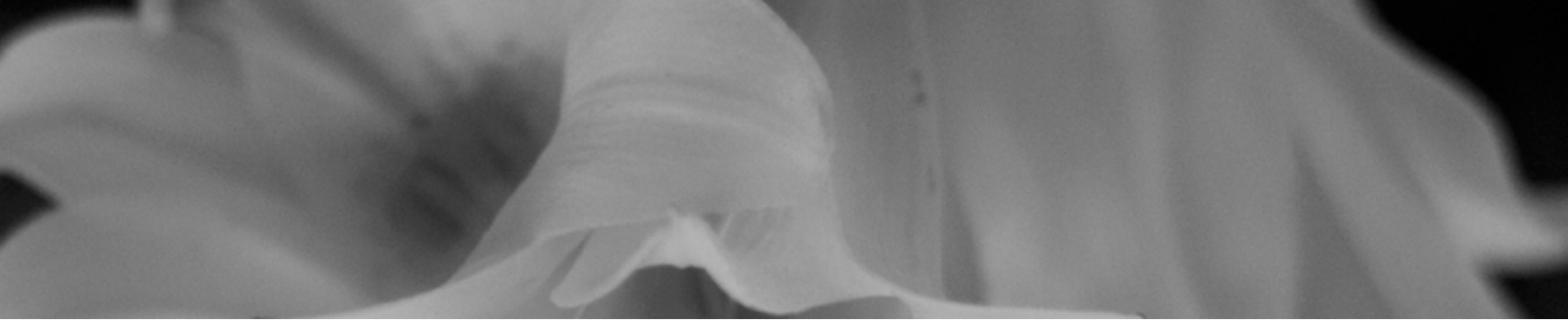

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Photo: Sandi Howell

Tamarack's three key priorities are to build a connected force for change, end poverty, and build a sense of community in Canada and beyond.

Possible

by Paul Born

"But we know for sure that these are days when the improbable can become the inevitable." – The New York Times

I have some wonderful Facebook friends, though they can, at times, really depress me. Most recently a friend posted, "I am struck by people who still think that all the good efforts we engage in today to fight climate change will matter. We are past the place of optimism. When will we realize it is too late?" The post went on to suggest that knowing it is too late can be a wake-up call similar, I suppose, to realizing the Titanic is sinking. There's simply no time to waste, it's time to act if we want to survive.

What happens when we give up or admit that there are no possibilities of making things better? What happens when we give up on the possible?

I am an optimist – an unequivocal, over the top, believer in good. My wife sometimes tells friends, "Some people see the cup as half-empty or half-full. Paul sees the cup as overflowing and most days that just pisses me off." I get it, optimism is not for everyone. A yoga instructor once challenged me by asking if I thought my optimism was getting in the way of embracing reality. "How might you accept things as they are, in the moment?" he asked.

For those of us concerned about social change and making the world a better place there is a definitive place for optimism, for a belief in the possible and hope for a better future. It drives us to work harder and it helps us to stay motivated.

But does our belief in the possible actually distract us from reality? Does it keep us from seeing things the way they really are?

At Tamarack we believe in systems change and our work assumes that we can change "things", whole systems, for the better. We look for evidence of change in our communities – like improvements in individual or family outcomes, increased capacity of a community to address social issues, or new policies and programs that improve people's lives.

In other words, we embrace possible.

Is the world getting better?

In a search to determine if the idea that systems change is possible or just a dream, I began to look for evidence of real positive change in the world.

I found it in the article, "26 charts and maps that show the world is getting much, much better," by Dylan Mathews.

With global information on indicators, including economic progress, health care, peace and security, government and social services, and technology, the charts provide evidence for optimists like me that we should have hope in a better world.

There is a definitive place for optimism, for a belief in the possible and hope for a better future.

For instance, extreme global poverty has declined,

wars are less prevalent, infant deaths have decreased, and literacy levels have improved. Most of these substantial improvements have been made in the last decade.

Extreme poverty has fallen: Economic growth in India and China – as well as in other developing countries – has led to a huge decline in the share of the world population living on less than $1.25 a day, from 53 percent in 1981 to 17 percent in 2011. (See "26 charts and maps that show the world is getting much, much better," by Dylan Mathews, March 20, 2015, at vox.com.) While we can argue about what a decent and fair poverty line should be, we cannot debate that there has been significant progress on this indicator over the last few decades.

Life expectancy is rising: Globally, both male and female life expectancy increased by six years from 1990 to 2012, but the gains were highest in low-income countries, which saw an increase of about nine years for both men and women.

War is on the decline: It can be hard for people to believe that war is on the decline, but the number of overall deaths from organized political violence are falling and analysts have argued that the end of war is in sight. Indeed, in his article in *The Wall Street Journal,* "Violence Vanquished," Steven Pinker argues we may be living in the most peaceable era in human existence (September 24, 2011).

Solar power is getting cheaper: Climate change is one area where we are not making progress, but a bright spot is the declining price of solar power, which is fuelling a rapid increase in adoption.

We may be living in the most peaceable era in human existence.

Does the data here tell me to stop fighting for an end to poverty or to create peace in the world, or does it fuel me to believe in the possible? Can more be done? Maybe, if we just keep working, could we end poverty in Canada and ensure our children grow up in a peaceful country that welcomes people from all nations?

If we can reduce global poverty, increase life expectancy, and end wars, surely there is room for optimism.

Possible Canadas

In Canada we are on the cusp of massive change. Some days it can be difficult to believe things are getting better, and I have to admit when I follow politics it is easy to get cynical, but for the most part we have a lot to look forward to.

A recent study released by Adam Kahane and the team at Reos Partners – with the support of the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, Maytree, and others – considered the approaches that Canada requires to create a good future. They interviewed 56 diverse Canadians from government, business, and civil society, asking them each 10 questions on what it will take for the country to be able to address its challenges and realize its potential. And while there is concern about the future of Canada, what struck me most was the keen insight these 56 Canadians shared as to what it might take for us to realize a better future, to reach what is possible.

People were energized by the determination of our young people, the creativity in our cities, and the way we are making diversity work. When I think of possibilities for our future as a country, I cannot think of three assets I would rather bank on.

Asked what would happen if things turn out well, the interviewees replied: We would become more ambitious, we would transform our economy, and we would restore our connections to one another and the land. These people are singing my song! Tamarack's three key priorities are to build a connected force for change, end poverty, and build a sense of community in Canada and beyond.

When asked what it would take to succeed in creating a good future, respondents had two simple responses: We need the courage to acknowledge our challenges, and we need to engage and act in partnership to address these challenges. Key insights for sure in realizing the possible.

When asked how our situation is changing and what risks we are facing in Canada, respondents sounded a clear warning of what might happen if things turn out badly: We will fail to adapt to a changing world, our education and health systems will fail, and our society will fall apart.

Possible is a call to action and an act of faith

To make the changes required to reach our possible future, we need the knowledge and skills to deepen community, collaborate across sectors, measure and evaluate community change, foster citizen engagement, and support place-based innovation. We need to learn to change together.

We believe that true community change occurs when citizens and organizations adopt a new way

Community change occurs when citizens adopt a new way of thinking and working together.

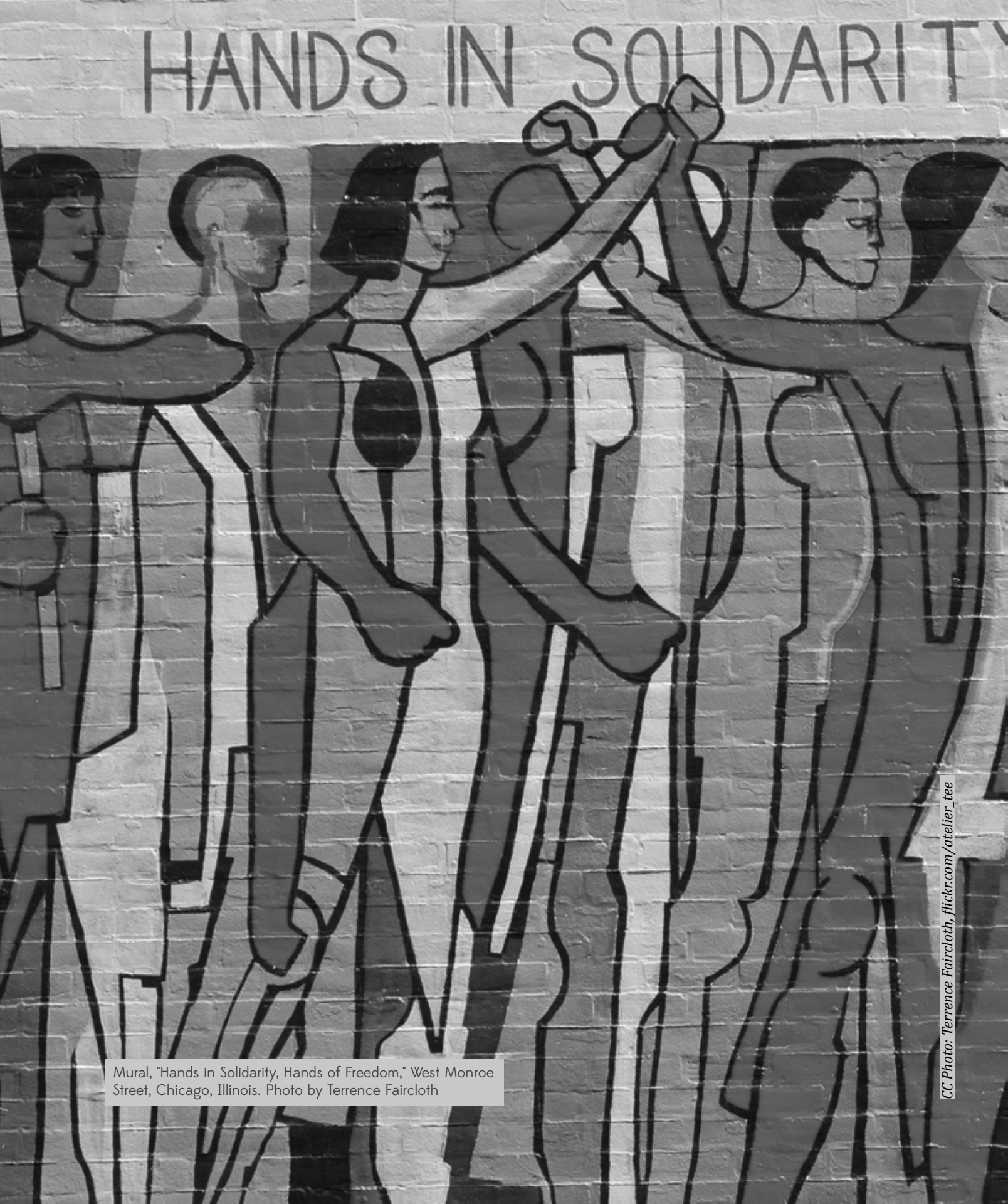
of thinking and working together; at the core is adopting an asset-based approach to change and thinking together about what is possible if we work in collaboration.

The very "prospect of the possible" is the actual miracle: Our collective belief in the possible is the force that drives us to work with others to innovate, release, accept, and make things better for each other.

This is how the improbable becomes the inevitable.

Paul Born is the president and co-founder of the Tamarack Institute. He has a passion for big messy conversations, engaged citizens that deepen their community, and collaborative leadership that leads to collective impact. Possible is what happens when people are engaged, their collective altruism is evoked, and they work toward the common good. Reach Paul at paul@tamarackcommunity.ca. //

Photo: Don Shall, flickr.com/donshall



Mural, "Hands in Solidarity, Hands of Freedom," West Monroe Street, Chicago, Illinois. Photo by Terrence Faircloth

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HANDS OF

Photos: Tamarack Institute; bottom left, Kellie Trenkle

(Im)possible leadership

by Louise Merlihan

Sometimes we can become stuck or feel burdened in our work. Here are strategies for managing emotions and moving forward in difficult times.

We come to the work of community change with full hearts and good intentions. As leaders of change initiatives or organizations, we seek to make a difference in the world – to effect change that impacts the lives of our neighbours and the future of our communities.

There are times, however, when we become stuck, paralyzed by indecision and unable to find a way forward. And it's not for lack of skill or resources. Sometimes, the fundamental question for leaders is, How do *I* do this?

Managing self: The essential role of leadership

As a leader, you manage meaning for others – offering a way to make sense of the work, how to interpret a situation, and how to react emotionally. We rely on other people for emotional stability. Because we are by nature social, we attune to the emotions of others. Consider the last big public event or festival you attended and the mood there, recall the anxiety that pervaded a substantial change you were instituting, or the joy and happiness that radiated at a wedding you attended – the emotions in those spaces were writ large by the sheer number of people experiencing them.

It's critical that you set an emotional tone that says this work of community change is possible. That is difficult to do when you can not see the way forward yourself.

Distress erodes our mental abilities and decreases emotional intelligence. When we are upset, we have trouble reading emotions accurately in others, which decreases our empathy and impairs our social skills.

Every feeling is a multi-layered experience. When an emotional chord is struck, it stirs past memories of the same feeling. If, for instance, you feel anxious, you are not just anxious in that moment, you are remembering anxiety from other times in your life. Powerful emotions can also block out others, meaning that when we experience a particularly strong emotion, such as anxiety, it can be difficult to access joy.

The fundamental question for leaders is, How do *I* do this?

This is where self-awareness is so important. Self-awareness is the ability to identify feelings, thoughts, values, and wants and put them into words. It is the ability to observe yourself in the moment, reflect on the source of your reactions, and move to an

informed choice about how to step forward. The key is to be conscious about what is happening in the moment and to separate what is past (implicit emotional experience) from what is present (what is actually occurring that you can learn from).

When you find that you are acting from emotion and feel mired in uncertainty, take a deep breath and ask yourself these questions:

- What do I feel?
- What do I think?
- What do I want?

What do I feel?

Name the emotion(s) you are experiencing. What impact is this having on you?

All emotions are essential – whether they feel good or not. They are part of the human experience and provide us with valuable information.

Building and sustaining joy is essential to getting to possible.

Fear, for instance, is one of the oldest human emotions. Its gift is protection and safety – fear tells us to pay attention. For many, feelings of fear are often related to the fear of failure. Leaders who experience fear often work even harder to accomplish their goals and to do well. And while the gift of healthy fear promotes safety, fear can leave us feeling anxious, diminished in vitality, and immobilized.

When experiencing intense feelings of fear or anxiety, how might we move from an emotional space of "impossible" to "possible"?

One thing to do is name the emotion we are experiencing. When our feelings are intense, we often bundle several of them together. If you are feeling anxious, notice what feelings lie beneath it. Stress and uneasiness can be generated by feelings of inadequacy, and helplessness. Practice identifying and naming the underlying emotions to quieten their impact upon you:

- Notice patterns in different contexts in your daily life. For instance, do you feel hopeful and optimistic at the beginning of the day? Do days of meetings leave you energized or depleted?
- Notice what triggers certain emotions. What happened just prior to a feeling of unease? Make a list of these triggers to identify patterns.
- Ask those close to you how they experience you and your feelings. Sometime it is easier to identify an emotion when another names it for you.
- If you are in an intense situation and are unable to identify what you feel, notice your body. Is it tense? Are your jaw or shoulders tight? Are you slumped over? Identifying how the emotion affects your body can help you name it.

Invest in joy

When we are most ourselves we feel capable, optimistic, and resilient. With good emotional energy we experience vitality, feel confident, take risks, and recover quickly.When we are fatigued or burnt out, we become more careful in relationships and withdraw from challenge. It becomes difficult to sustain hope or see how we might move forward.

Building and sustaining joy is essential to getting to possible. Investing in joy begins with turning the focus back on ourselves and practicing self-care.

What do I think?

What assumptions, judgments, ideas are going through your mind right now? What do you know for sure? What needs to be clarified?

No one else sees the world quite as you do. Over time, your values, beliefs, and experiences shape your view of the world and yourself in it.

The mental models we construct affect what we observe, the assumptions we make, and the conclusions we draw.

Have you ever searched all over for something – like your cell phone or the ketchup in the refrigerator – only to have someone else reach around you, pick it up, and hand it to you? Psychologists call this phenomenon a "perceptual set." It's essentially a picture in our head of how the item should look, where it should be located, its colour, etc. When the reality does not match our perceptual set – for instance, the ketchup is on the second shelf behind the mayonnaise rather than beside the mustard – we cannot see the object.

The perceptual set we hold about ourselves as leader affects what we see is possible. We become contained by the story we have developed about our strengths, capacities, and the impact we can have on others and in the community.

To uncover the underlying assumptions and beliefs you hold about yourself as leader, reflect on these questions:

Photo: Tamarack Institute

- What is a good leader?
- What helped to shape my opinions on this?
- How do I describe myself as a leader?
- What is a key learning I have had about leadership? Where did that come from?
- When do I know that I am being a "good leader"?
- What do I think is possible when I lead?
- What would my leadership look like if it was effortless?

What do I want?

What are your intentions, hopes, and desires?

It can feel selfish to focus on what we want, particularly for those whose work is so focused on improving conditions for others. But articulating what you want as a leader makes you aware of your own needs. And finding ways to meet them enhances your life, vitality, and productivity by spending your energy on moving forward rather than resisting.

Invent a new story

Shame and vulnerability researcher Brené Brown writes in her book *Daring Greatly* (Gotham, 2012), "What we know matters, but who we are matters more. *Being* rather than *knowing* requires showing up and letting ourselves be seen. It requires us to dare greatly, to be vulnerable. The first step of that journey is understanding where we are, what we're up against, and where we need to go."

In exploring what you feel, think and want you take the first step of that journey. You uncover the emotions that drive you, reveal the story you have been telling yourself about your leadership, and move forward by articulating what you want.

It can feel selfish to focus on what we want.

And since the story you have been holding about yourself as leader is one you have invented, you can create a new story, one which sees your leadership support the improbable to become the inevitable. A story where your leadership says, I'm Possible.

Louise Merlihan is Tamarack's current director of engagement and has a passion for leadership coaching and personal growth that leads to engagement and collaboration. Possible starts with personal transformation that provokes people to engage their communities to consciously learn and change together. Reach Louise at louise@tamarackcommunity.ca. **//**

REFRAME DIFFICULTIES

How to befriend your nemesis

by Sylvia Cheuy

"Us" versus "them" is a luxury we cannot afford when we seek solutions to intractable problems. Reframing our perceptions of "the other" is challenging particularly with perspectives we don't understand or trust. However, our capacity to do this enables us to enhance shared wisdom. This tool can be used by individuals or groups to reframe the actions of a perceived nemesis to build greater empathy and understanding.

In the first column, list irritating qualities of that individual or sector, things that really "push your buttons."

Now list the opposite of each quality you named in column one.

In the third column, reframe each quality in column one as a strength. For example, what would your nemesis call this trait?

Finally, identify potential benefits of each "bad" quality from column one.

What irritates me most about X?	Some opposing attributes	Reframe irritations as positives	Potential benefits of X's attributes
Stubborn	Flexible	Persevering - won't give up	Keeps going despite resistance
Rigid - everything has to be done "properly"	Easy-going, laissez-faire	Methodical - orderly and logical	Keeps us organized and on track

Once you've completed the table, consider the following:

- Can you think of situations where the qualities in the fourth column could help you achieve ends that you value?
- How are you or your own sector perceived – either positively or negatively – by others?
- Are there any additional realizations or insights you've gained from this exploration?

This exercise was developed by Frances Westley and Brenda Zimmerman for the Graduate Diploma in Social Innovation at the University of Waterloo.


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Deepening community

Realizing the potential of citizen leadership

by Sylvia Cheuy

"The world doesn't change one person at a time. It changes as networks of relationships form among people who discover they share a common cause and vision of what's possible. Community is the answer. Community is the unit of change. The only way we get through difficult times is together." – Meg Wheatley

Those of us working in organizations and municipalities can easily find ourselves daunted by the scope and complexity of issues we face. Which should be addressed first? How should we start? How can we respond effectively in the face of growing mandates and shrinking budgets? When doing more doesn't appear to be the answer, perhaps it is time to take a step back and find ways to view the situation differently.

In June 2015, I re-read John McKnight's 2013 article "Neighbourhood Necessities: Seven Functions that Only Effectively Organized Neighbourhoods Can Provide." In it, McKnight notes that, as non-profits, governments, and businesses occupy less space in society, "the functional space they no longer occupy creates either a crisis or an opportunity." My Chinese grandfather taught me that, in Cantonese, the character for *crisis* is a combination of two characters: the first is *danger*, the second is *opportunity*. What if we viewed changes through the lens of opportunity? What new possibilities might we uncover?

McKnight reminds us that citizens are essential "producers of well-being," that citizens need work to restore their capacity to fulfill this role, and that there is an important distinction between "care" and "providing service." He defines care as "the freely given commitment from the heart of one to another." While organizations and systems can provide quality services, they cannot provide care.

Deeper communities: The opportunity of our time

Deepening the experience of community in our neighbourhoods and cities is *the* opportunity of our time. It is the work of engaging and reconnecting residents to each other, of facilitating processes that transform isolated individuals into groups of powerfully connected neighbours who can actively co-create a positive future together. When local connections and relationships are cultivated, the community's capacity to care for one another is restored.

Paul Born's 2014 book, *Deepening Community: Finding Joy Together in Chaotic Times,* serves as an anchor for the work of Tamarack's Deepening Community Learning Community. We are curating the growing body of knowledge – research, programs, policies, and practices – that affirms and accelerates the creation of strong communities and neighbourhoods. Our work answers the book's call to "make a conscious, proactive, intentional effort to hold on to and build on the connections between us, connections that will help us resist the pull of the often neurotic social responses to the complexity of our times. . . ." Our shared aspiration is to see the power of neighbourhoods and communities recognized and acknowledged as vibrant and resilient. We are engaging community leaders to learn together and identify the shifts in thinking, skills, and approaches required to reweave the social fabric of our communities.

Photo: Tamarack Institute

Deepening community for individuals

> The community's capacity to care for one another is restored.

Loneliness and feelings of isolation can have a devastating impact on our individual health. In *The Village Effect*, author Susan Pinker makes the case that the place where you live makes a difference to your health. She cites a 2003 Harvard study which demonstrated that "social capital – as measured by reciprocity, trust, and civic participation – was linked to a community's death rates. The higher the social capital, the lower its mortality rates, and not just from violent crime, but from heart disease too."

The power and impact of strengthening community connections was recently illustrated by the Grey-Bruce Health Unit in Ontario. Their team partnered with Tamarack on a local Deepening Community Initiative, which hosted 47 conversations between diverse citizens across their rural region. These conversations built consensus around six priority issues for shared action and generated measurable results in participants' experience of community. Specifically, participating in a community conversation generated:

- An 11 percent increase in participants' sense of connection to one another.
- A 22 percent increase in participants' awareness of the experiences and perspectives of each other.
- A five percent increase in participants' willingness to work together to strengthen their community.

As one participant noted, "strengthening connections is important."

Deepening community for neighbourhoods and communities

A 2012 study by the Vancouver Community Foundation, *Connections and Engagement*, said, "It is only through strong relationships that we can care enough to work together to make our community a better place for everyone."

The study found that:

- One third of the people surveyed, including 41 percent of those between the ages of 25 and 34, said it was difficult to make new friends in Vancouver.
- One quarter of people reported being alone more often than they would like to be.
- Neighbourhood connections were rated as cordial but weak. Most knew the names of at least two neighbours but did not do simple favours for them.
- When people feel lonely, they are also less likely to feel welcome in their neighbourhood or participate in activities that make it a better place.

In 2013, Edmonton's Highlands Neighbourhood became the launch site for that city's Abundant Communities Initiative. The goal was to "build the social fabric of Edmonton's neighbourhoods," and provide a framework to build "collective efficacy" in Edmonton neighbourhoods.

Many municipalities have embraced a 'vending machine' form of government.

After interviewing every household in a particular neighbourhood, project leader Howard Lawrence reported that the conversation data had been collated into a series of lists to help guide neighbourhood decision-making and connect neighbours' interests, skills, and experiences. He cites John McKnight's blog "Gifts, Skills, Interests, and Passions: The Glue that Holds Communities Together," as the inspiration for this project. His own experiences in the Highlands neighbourhood affirms McKnight's observation that, "Whenever a neighbourhood comes together in powerful and satisfying ways, it is because two things have happened. First, they have found out about each other's gifts. Second, they have made new connections based on these gifts. It is the sum of these connections that 'glues' a neighbourhood together."

Deepening community for municipalities

In an article published in *Municipal World Magazine* titled "Social Infrastructure: Underpinning the Success of Cities," Milton Friesen makes the case that in the future, "the most profound and powerful long-term innovations in cities will be social." From this, he suggests that municipal attention needs to broaden beyond physical infrastructure to consider "the social infrastructure that contributes to thriving cities." This work begins by understanding and effectively engaging the networks of institutions and organizations already operating within the city.

Another important aspect of enhancing the social infrastructure of our cities involves the meaningful engagement of citizens as leaders and partners in shaping its future. In *Community Building: How to Do It, Why it Matters*, Ed Everett, a retired city manager of Redwood City, California, makes the case that being efficient and effective is important and necessary, but insufficient for creating great cities and communities. He observes that many municipalities have embraced a "vending machine form of government with the public viewing themselves as customers," and he asserts that this mindset has "caused them to lose their sense of being responsible citizens and accountable for their community."

Everett believes that embracing a community-building approach offers municipalities an opportunity to facilitate a shift from the "vending machine" form of government to a partnership with residents. "It is important to get your citizens together differently, help them build relationships, share stories, and have conversations about issues that matter to them."

In 2010, the city of Hamilton, Ontario, launched an innovative Neighbourhood Action Strategy to make neighbourhoods better and healthier places for all residents. Now active in 14 of the City's more than 200 neighbourhoods, the strategy engages residents "to identify, plan, and lead the changes they want to see."

Hamilton's process is innovative in that it brings together an asset-based community development approach with a land-use planning process that "depends on the relationships between residents, staff, and other neighbourhood stakeholders." Their experience is that this kind of work has its own unique momentum. "It's not really about the numbers of people involved; it's about the chemistry that happens when people who really care about their neighbourhoods and their neighbours get together to make change."

The importance of championing and developing resident leadership is a core tenant of the Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy because it is seen as critical to the long-term sustainability of

Community knitting project
Southmead, Bristol, England

its neighbourhood-focused work. Pat Reid, past Chair of the city's McQuesten Local Planning Team, summarizes this point well, "A resident-led planning team is fundamental to a grass-root movement where residents' voices are heard and where they can put their plans into concrete actions. . . . When the neighbours find their voice and develop skills to articulate ideas into action they give life to a community." The city's Neighbourhood Leadership Institute – a partnership with the Hamilton Community Foundation – helps passionate resident leaders develop the skills needed to translate their neighbourhood project ideas into action.

Relearning the skills to build community

While humans are hardwired to live in community, evidence shows that our actual experiences of being in community have been steadily declining since the 1960s. We need a deliberate and intentional effort to re-learn the skills to effectively build community if we hope to harness its full potential to address the complex issues and opportunities of our times.

Humans are hardwired to live in community.

As Paul Born observed in *Deepening Community*, the benefits of community are very real. Community helps shape our identity, as well as offering us opportunities to care for others and be cared for ourselves. This builds a sense of belonging that can be a source of support in both good and bad times. However, he also observes that "community is not automatic, and it is not automatically optimal."

So, how do we go about re-learning the skill of building community? Born has identified four specific actions to help deepen the experience of community:

1. **Sharing our story:** When we share stories about ourselves we open up to one another. This helps to build understanding and establish relationships.
2. **Enjoying one another:** Spending time together creates a sense of belonging within a group. Finding simple and easy ways to make this happen is important.
3. **Caring for one another:** This action involves creating places and opportunities to care for – and be cared for – by others regularly. It means knowing that we will be there for one another in sadness and in celebration.
4. **Working together to build a better world:** When we know, trust, and care for one another, we naturally reach out and together build the community/world that we want to be part of.

A recent paper published by The Aspen Institute's Forum for Community Solutions, *21st Century Civic Infrastructure: Under Construction*, acknowledges that the current civic infrastructure of most cities was not designed with deliberate intention. Their vision is that a 21st Century civic infrastructure should "ignite a cycle of accountability that leads to policy making that produces better social ties and political results."

The four actions of *Deepening Community* offer a foundation for action that support the establishment of a new civic infrastructure by introducing a set of simple actions for those eager to embrace the work of building – and deepening – community.

The simple power of conversations

Liz Weaver offers this advice: "When the work you are undertaking is complex, the tools you use need to be simple." As we search for innovative solutions to the complex issues confronting communities, we discover that hosting and documenting conversations amongst diverse groups of citizens can be a powerful starting-point for uncovering untapped resources.

Our recent work to partner with local community leaders to host Deepening Community Engagement Projects is creating a series of unique action learning opportunities that are simultaneously highly aspirational and profoundly practical. Recognizing that no one sector working alone can effectively address complex community issues, these local projects are providing communities with opportunities to create and strengthen relationships, identify opportunities for shared action, and foster citizen leadership.

Community well-being requires organizations, governments, and citizens to each contribute their unique skills, knowledge, perspectives, and resources. The benefits of this work to communities is powerful. The benefits of embracing this approach for individuals, while not always as obvious, is equally profound: it transforms the place where you live to a place you know and can call home.

Sylvia Cheuy is Director, Deepening Community at Tamarack. Sylvia is passionate about community engagement, multi-sector collaboration, and collective impact. Possible is the result of system change where engaged citizens work together to create dynamic and well-connected places. Reach Sylvia at sylvia@tamarackcommunity.ca.//

‘Let the future tell the truth, and evaluate each one according to his work and accomplishments.’
– Nikola Tesla

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Five ingredients for a community garden

by Jason Hartwick

Early in 2013, I was walking my children to school and noticed a great deal of activity in the park a block from our house. I asked what was going on and found out that people were putting in a community garden.

The garden coordinator wanted to make our neighbourhood a safer place to live and show the children that you can make a difference.

Over the course of the next two years, as our garden grew, people in our neighbourhood went from walking face-down and avoiding eye contact to waving, smiling, and talking with each other, even with strangers.

Jason Hartwick and his son in the community garden in Peterborough, Ontario.

Here are key five ingredients to get you started with your own garden:

1. Good leadership.
It helps to have a coordinator who's experienced, optimistic, and heavily involved in the garden (our coordinator has her own plot in our garden this year).

2. Set a goal of community betterment.
We had an issue with theft, and some gardeners wanted a fence. Our solution was to build a "fence of food": raised garden beds protected by berry bushes. Don't think that's a fence? Walk in a raspberry patch some time!

3. Be inclusive.
We put in a butterfly garden to include those not keen on veggies.

4. Engage children.
When a child in the park comes over and wants to help, we talk to them and invite them to join in. Each year we present one child with a plaque to celebrate their effort in the garden.

5. Invite local groups to participate.
For each of the three seasons we have had the garden, the church two blocks over has had what they call a “potluck plot." Most of their produce ends up being distributed throughout the neighbourhood. Last year a management team from General Electric dug a potato plot, a pumpkin patch, and a cucumber bed for us.

You can find a range of community gardening resources at the Peterborough Community Garden Network's website, *growpeterborough.org/gardening-resources*.

Jason Hartwick lives in Peterborough, Ontario.

What change do you want to see?

Last year Tamarack worked with 98 partners to create the change they wanted to see realized.

Reducing infant mortality rates in major cities. *Improving the connection between museums and the community.* ***Teaching city employees about new technologies for community engagement.*** *Leveraging campus-community resources to leverage policy change for poverty reduction.* ***Increasing the capacity of provincial staff to articulate outcomes and their impact.*** *Business engagement strategy for poverty reduction efforts.* ***Facilitating a community engagement session to mitigate the impacts of adverse childhood experiences.*** *Enhancing the collective impact knowledge of a province-wide collaboration of English literacy providers.* ***Building a poverty reduction strategy with community partners.*** *Supporting the application of collective impact in Aboriginal and First Nations communities to improve health outcomes.* ***Developing a healthy communities strategy to advance statewide early years initiatives.*** *Enhancing an organization's capacity to address elder health and engagement across the state.* ***Coaching supports for a youth opportunities initiative.*** *Assisting a provincial government to evaluate investment strategies to date and build a poverty reducti* ***tewide obesity*** *eir theory of c* ***organization*** *ross the city an* ***active living s*** *rnment ministry to facilitate collective impact initiatives across the province.* ***Preventing youth suicide.*** *Building a community engagement strategy.* ***Deep-***


Louise Merlihan


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When we learn and change together

The possibilities of learning communities

by Paul Born, with Louise Merlihan

Together, through dialogue, we become more than the sum of our parts.

In the fast-paced world of social change leadership, we need more time for thinking together. Specifically, we need time together to understand connections, context, and how context influences societal behaviour toward the type of change we desire. Together we can assess patterns of change, turning theory into practice or actions that can influence system behaviour. I believe this type of thinking can be achieved through learning communities, which help us achieve a collective impact.

I am intrigued by collective thinking processes, such as the one that Op Ed columnist David Brooks describes as "crystallized intelligence." In his recent article featured in *The New York Times*, "Building Attention Span," he defined such intelligence as the ability to use experience, knowledge, and the products of lifelong education to deepen understanding and build wisdom.

Brooks also makes a compelling case for slower learning, where people connect more deeply with ideas and each other: "When people in this slower world gather to try to understand connections and context, they gravitate toward a different set of questions. These questions are less about sensation than about meaning. They argue about how events unfold and how context influences behaviour."

I wonder if being part of a learning community and engaging in dialogue can give us this same sense of space and lead us to a kind of crystallized intelligence.

David Bohm, a famous theoretical physicist, was also curious about how people connected in dialogue. He was especially interested in what happens between people during the dialogue. His observations and research convinced him that the true intention of conversation is to provide the means by which people think together.

Together, through dialogue, we become more than the sum of our parts. This way, true breakthroughs to the possible can happen.

Learning together

About 10 years ago I was part of a learning community on applied dissemination, convened by the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation. Each member of the learning community was an innovator who had developed a successful program idea in a community in Canada. The Foundation wanted each of us to consider if our work could be scaled (more cities) or deepened (more results), and thought that if they brought these people – who had shown such great potential to learn from each other – the Foundation's grants would have a higher chance of impact.

In the early days of this learning community, speakers joined us so we could engage with their ideas. But what we hungered for, more than anything,

Photo: Tamarack Institute

was to hear each other's stories. Through structured conversations that enabled understanding of, and also provoked empathy for, the challenges we each faced, we were able to articulate common patterns and engage in deep dialogue about our work. Just about every partner in that learning community was successful at both scaling and deepening their work. Today, the project idea we brought to that learning community, Vibrant Communities Canada, has formal partners in 47 cities across the country. Collectively we have set the target to reduce poverty for one million people.

Systems change requires us to learn together

I see social change as a process of people learning together to change how we act and think about an issue. Large-scale change occurs when we engage an entire system, like a community, to learn, become engaged, and act.

If we were to impose a social change on people through force, or via democratic means (a policy), they might conform because they want to follow the new norms or they fear the consequences of not conforming. Though this type of social change may be effective in changing a specific situation in the short-term, like making a neighbourhood safer by installing a new stop sign, long-term, sustained change requires people to be engaged. I would argue that kind of change necessitates a different way of thinking.

> Long-term, sustained change requires people to be engaged.

Learning communities are a mechanism that prompts large-scale change in thinking – where a group of people can develop a collective wisdom that causes them to act and live differently. It's not a stretch then to argue that those engaged in collective impact are also members of a learning community.

Collective impact starts with bringing people together to collaborate on a common agenda. Working together, and continuously communicating, the members of the collaboration test ideas, make sense of

Photo: Tamarack Institute

Learners respond to John McKnight at Neighbours: Policies and Programs workshop, Hamilton, Ontario, June, 2015.

the work they are doing, and find mutual context.

A backbone organization keeps everyone acting collectively together by creating structure and processes that help the collaboration work more effectively.

As community leaders host conversations, they invariably uncover ways to better align community systems.

Collective impact learning communities ensure that members learn together to see what is working.

A learning community

Learning communities create spaces for people to learn together and, when taken to scale, change a community.

Each year, Tamarack connects people who are interested in community-building and social resilience to strengthen cities and neighbourhoods. Each participant brings tacit knowledge about the power of community. Learning takes on a generative quality at these events and creates a network or social structure that can both deepen each learner's knowledge and create better knowledge and action for the field.

By making a commitment to learn together in a co-generative process, learners co-create a space for reflection and knowledge creation. The basic structure of a community of practice includes three components:

1. **Domain:** This creates a sense of common identity. It becomes a statement of what knowledge the community will steward.
2. **Community:** This includes the people who care about and interact with issues related to the domain. The community creates the social fabric of learning.
3. **Practice:** This is the specific knowledge that the community develops, shares, and maintains.

When member cities of Vibrant Communities Canada start working towards reducing poverty in their communities, they spend a solid year engaging business, government, not-for-profit leaders, and people with lived experience in dialogue about why so much poverty exists when supports are already in place. Over that year, as community leaders host conversations, they invariably uncover ways to better align community systems. They look to modify existing social policies and envision new ones that will reduce poverty. This year-long process of engagement and learning deepens citizen and organizational commitment to work together.

Convening learning communities, our experience

At Tamarack, we implement three kinds of learning communities. We host face-to-face learning events by creating an environment where people can learn as much from each other as they do from experts. We host online learning communities, where people can engage with their peers through interactive webinars and blogs. And, we have created two "campaigns" to facilitate action learning, where members participate in a continuous cycle of learning, doing, and reflecting on their common work.

Learning events: Tamarack hosts more than a dozen workshops on topics related to community change each year. We organize each event to ensure people experience a sense of "commons" through deliberate interaction, such as learning labs and interactive workshops. We facilitate trust-building between learners so that they can engage with genuine questions to challenge their ideas and create new knowledge.

We also aspire to build a common language between learners by highlighting the emerging knowledge, skills, and resources available to us. Ultimately, we want to create a supportive community where people can regenerate a sense of energy, mission, and purpose in their work so they can go back to their communities and implement what they articulated and learned.

Online communities: In addition to our main website, tamarackcommunity.ca, we host three online spaces for specific learning communities: Tamarack Communities Collaborating for Impact for collaborative leaders utilizing a multi-sector approach to solve complex challenges; Vibrant Communities Canada for cities with comprehensive poverty reduction strategies led by multi-sector roundtables; and Deepening Community for those looking to recapture the idea of community, make it a guiding force in organizing neighbourhoods and institutions, and envision policies that foster well-being.

Each learning community hosts resources, interactive blogs, learner-initiated communities of practice, and webinars.

Campaigns for Change: Currently, Tamarack leads two action learning communities that support practitioners working to achieve large-scale community change. The first is a growing network of 47 cities, known as Vibrant Communities – Cities Reducing Poverty, who are creating comprehensive poverty reduction strategies to impact the lives of one million Canadians living in poverty. Members of this network believe this can be achieved through aligning poverty efforts at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels. If we all work toward the same end, the result will be a healthier, wealthier, and more vibrant Canada.

The second action learning community is Deepening Community which supports a network of cities in two areas of practice. The first is exploring social resilience through understanding and ultimately deepening the experience of community for residents. The second practice area is creating and sustaining strong, robust neighbourhoods.

> We organize each event to ensure people experience a sense of 'commons.'

Successes

These learning communities have been successful. We see consistent growth in membership and participation in each space, resources are being used, and learning events are oversubscribed. Those of us working to create large-scale social change crave the opportunity to come together to share resources, reflect on our learning and experience with other practitioners, support each other in what is often isolating work, and consider new ways forward.

In a survey conducted in June 2014, learning community members shared that the value of connecting and collaborating with others enabled them to advance their community change efforts. Over the next five years, we plan to invest in strategies that improve the ways in which members can engage with Tamarack, with each other, and with their communities.

Challenges

Convening a learning community isn't without its challenges. Chief among these is sustaining the ongoing learning of members by providing regular opportunities to interact, easy access to resources, and keeping the sense of the commons when learners are dispersed. Capturing, making sense of, and reflecting back the knowledge the community creates

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remains a resource-intense challenge.

Time to participate is another reason for not joining in on learning activities. My good friend Al Etmanski often reminds me, "it is our job to make it easier for people to do the right thing." By scheduling short webinars and communities of practice, and providing e-magazines and events that allow people to "take the time" to learn and share knowledge, we make the work of joining a learning community easier.

We turn theory into action by connecting people.

Theory into action

At Tamarack we work with leaders in non-profits, government, business, and the community to make their work of advancing positive community change more effective. We do this by teaching and writing about collective impact, community engagement, collaborative leadership, evaluating community impact, and community building. We turn theory into action by connecting people into networks to advance the change they wish to see in their communities. This is our contribution to a learning community of over 14,000 people.

Building learning communities provides a unique opportunity for those of us that want to see large-scale change. Learning together reframes the agenda and enables us to ask bigger-meaning based questions, which in turn creates a deeper desire to collaborate and change the current system.

We are smarter together. Crystallized intelligence, collective wisdom, a common agenda, and shared measurement systems are all roads that lead to mutually reinforcing activities. Somehow I believe that learning communities are the ideal understanding of the continuous communication required for collective impact to work. We communicate to engage with one another, we learn about what works and what does not, and we change together. We become the change we want to see.

Paul Born is the president and co-founder of the Tamarack Institute. He has a passion for big messy conversations, engaged citizens that deepen their community, and collaborative leadership that leads to collective impact. Possible is what happens when people are engaged, their collective altruism is evoked, and they work toward the common good. Reach Paul at: paul@tamarackcommunity.ca.

Louise Merlihan is Tamarack's current director of engagement and has a passion for leadership coaching and personal growth that leads to engagement and collaboration. Possible starts with personal transformation that provokes people to engage their communities to consciously learn and change together. Reach Louise at: louise@tamarackcommunity.ca. //

A future community

In May 2014, the Grey Bruce Healthy Communities Conference, "Collaborative Partnerships Making Community Change Happen," was held in Owen Sound, Ontario. Conference delegates were delighted to have local artist **Kyle Haight**, aka KH8 of Pridnear Painting, provide a live portrait of the conference proceedings.

Kyle described himself as the filter for the energy in the room throughout the conference. This "energy" was created through the discussions, interactions and collaborative efforts of the participants.

Using colour and shape, the flow of the piece was determined by the audience, with Kyle acting as the conduit between the participants and the painting. The piece is circular to reinforce the importance of creating circles in building healthy communities. //

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Transformational change is possible

Six essential elements for lasting change

by Liz Weaver

Working in complexity can surface some tough challenges, but they are not insurmountable.

The problems our communities face are complex and challenging. We have been lulled into a sense of complacency by trying to find micro-solutions to complex issues. Communities have compartmentalized how services are delivered. The charitable and non-profit sector in Canada is the second largest in the world with an estimated 170,000 organizations providing services and programs to communities and citizens, and yet, true change seems impossible.

In 2011, John Kania and Mark Kramer of FSG Social Impact Consultants published a paper providing a new way forward for communities. Collective impact, a framework for community and systems change, is built on three pre-conditions and five core conditions. A fundamental principle of the collective impact approach is that complex problems require a different way of working, as well as the intense engagement of a wide variety of influential partners who leverage their collective resources to drive toward outcomes.

A collective impact approach also requires that communities commit to engaging with all five conditions in the framework:

1. Building a common agenda,
2. Engaging in shared measurement,
3. Supporting the collaborative work through mutually reinforcing activities,
4. Keeping partners and the community engaged through continuous communications, and
5. Ensuring that the collective effort is supported by a backbone infrastructure.

In their first and subsequent articles about collective impact, Kania and Kramer provided examples of communities that took up this challenge to work differently. They shared the stories of the Strive Partnership in Cincinnati, the Elizabeth River Project in Southeastern Virginia, and Vibrant Communities in Canada. While the issue each of these initiatives was tackling was different – educational achievement, environmental regeneration, and poverty reduction – the approach was the same. These communities were no longer satisfied with incremental, small scale or individual change; they were collectively moving toward transformational change, toward the possible.

The key elements of possible

Transformational change is not easy. Since the initial article on collective impact was published in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* in 2011, countless communities and collaborative efforts have ventured

on the journey of achieving transformational change and have learned many lessons about this emerging body of practice.

The Tamarack Institute has been actively engaged in the evolving nature of collective impact efforts across Canada, the United States, and internationally. Over the course of the past four years, we have convened partners to increase our shared understanding of collective impact and the elements needed to move toward deep and lasting systems change. This interest is heightened by the place-based efforts Tamarack supports in communities across Canada working toward reducing poverty, deepening citizen engagement, and revitalizing neighbourhoods.

Transformational change does not rely on a single leader.

So what does it take to get to transformational change? We need six essential elements:

1. **Practice system leadership:** System leaders have the capacity to both see and understand the complex problem from micro and macro perspectives. They bring a relentless focus to the health of the whole.
2. **Embrace a framework:** While each community or collaborative effort is unique, a framework provides a container for testing and proto-typing system changes.
3. **Assess community readiness:** Change happens when all sectors of the community believe in the need for the change to occur and embrace their individual and collective contributions to this change.
4. **Focus on data and measurement:** Two of the most challenging elements of transformational change is maintaining the persistent focus on using data to inform the problem and identifying and tracking measures that lead to outcomes.
5. **Communicate and engage:** Often seen as a peripheral element in community change efforts, a focus on communication and deep engagement is foundational.
6. **Ask, What's next?** Be curious about the future and embed continuous learning and reflection into the work.

These six elements are key to getting to transformational change. On the surface they may seem simple, but working in complexity can surface some surprising and tough challenges.

System leadership: moving from the individual to the system

Getting to possible requires a unique kind of leadership. Many have referred to this as system leadership. In their article, "The Dawn of System Leadership," Peter Senge, Hal Hamilton, and John Kania identify three characteristics of system leaders:

1. System leaders are not singular heroic figures, but those who facilitate the conditions within which others can make progress toward social change.
2. Any individual in any organization, across sectors and formal levels of authority, can be a system leader.
3. The core capabilities necessary for system leadership are the ability to see the larger system, fostering reflection and more generative conversations, and shifting the collective focus from reactive problem solving to co-creating the future.

System leadership involves a different orientation to community change efforts. These leaders recognize that they can't drive or force the change to happen; they can inform and bring their perspectives, but collective will is the driving function. System leaders need to have a continuous and relentless focus on the health of the whole system. This is not to the detriment of individual programs and services. Rather, system leaders look for opportunities for synergy and alignment, which help move the collective forward.

Transformational change does not rely on a single leader, as Kania, Hamilton, and Senge point out, but rather on the engagement of multiple leaders who are willing to put their individual egos aside to work toward a collective outcome. This, of course, creates tension. System leaders agree to embrace the dynamic tension of this approach because they understand that the current structures, systems, and processes are not working.

In many ways, system leaders must first have conversations with themselves about the roles and contributions they want to make. How do we increase our capacity to become a system leader?

- Learn on the job: get involved in system change efforts
- Focus on outcomes

Photo: Tamarack Institute

- Have a process orientation
- Balance advocacy and inquiry
- Let go of your own agenda and work towards the collective agenda
- Invest in and build your own leadership tool kit
- Work with other system leaders
- Create opportunities for self-reflection

System leadership skills are challenging to acquire, particularly when the focus of the system is on individual achievement rather than collective outcomes. Collective impact is changing that focus in many communities, but investing in and developing a system leadership orientation is critical for collective impact efforts to be successful.

Embrace a framework

When communities move toward transformational change, it's likely that they are looking to tackle a complex community problem. Complex problems have a number of elements that make them unique and often more difficult to address. Brenda Zimmerman, in a webinar podcast for the Tamarack Institute, described the unique attributes of complex problems which illustrates why they are so tough to tackle.

Embedded systems often work against one another. Complex problems face many independent attributes:

- **Not predictable in detail:** Complex problems are not predictable in detail. There is no one experience of homelessness, for instance. We may know that certain elements can lead to homelessness, but we can't predict that this will always be the case.
- **Order without central control:** You don't need a hierarchy where the top of the organization drives things down.
- **Natural emergence:** You can't explain the outcome from the part that created it. The outcomes are different from the sum of their parts.
- **Simple Rules:** A few key patterns of interaction can repeat over and over again to create patterns we see within systems.
- **Embedded systems:** We are never outside the system, we are always influencing systems and being influenced by them.
- **Co-evolution:** As you change your environment changes and so you are co-evolving with your environment.

System leadership skills are challenging to acquire.

When the problem is so complex, how do we move forward? The process for getting to possible can be helped by a framework which then can be utilized

as a path forward for the community. There are a number of different approaches to community change efforts, including collaboration, network building and analysis, asset-based community development, and neighbourhood revitalization.

The collective impact framework is well-suited to transformational change efforts and the characteristics described above. The five conditions of collective impact provide a simple design for complex interventions and intuitively enables the local community context to be amplified.

Assess community readiness

Photo: Catherine Roller White

Change happens when different sectors of the community believe in the need for the change to occur and embrace their individual and collective contributions to this change. There has to be a willingness to act, to move forward toward real, and outcomes-driven change. This is more than single sector-collaboration; this is a signal that the community is beginning to understand the underlying complexity of the issues, that systems leaders are willing to play a role, and that the community is ready to engage in a new way.

In blog posts on the "7 Habits of Highly Effective Communities," Jay Connor identifies both the challenges faced by communities trying to move toward transformation and the habits that need to be formed as communities and leaders venture down this path. Included in the seven habits are: reach for an aspirational goal; move forward with who is at the table; keep the circle open; choose measurable outcomes; develop a sense of urgency; and keep going. This is wise advice for getting to possible.

There has to be a willingness to act, to move forward toward real change.

Often, collaborative tables are hindered by the obvious. In some cases, they hold off on moving forward because they feel that they need everyone at the table before they can begin. Keeping the circle open allows for movement in and out of the table and builds resiliency.

Developing a sense of urgency and measurable outcomes are connected habits. Effective collaborative practice is informed by data and builds towards results.

In the paper, *Putting Community in Collective Impact*, Rich Harwood writes about the importance of community readiness in tackling complex issues and moving toward transformative change. In their work, The Harwood Institute has identified five "community rhythms" or stages of community readiness: the waiting place, impasse, catalytic, growth, and sustain/renew. Understanding the stage of readiness is a key element to determining how and if a community can move forward toward transformational change.

Focus on data and measurement

Focusing on data and measurement is fundamental to getting to possible. That famous saying, "what gets measured gets managed," is especially true in collective impact.

Understanding who in the community is being challenged by the problem and the degree to which they are impacted is really helpful when determining strategies to employ moving forward. Transformative community change efforts also need to identify indicators to provide evidence of progress and impact, which can compel a community to continue down the path of change. Tangible signs of progress have a positive impact on the population being served. In "Five Simple Rules for Evaluating Collective Impact" (*The Philanthropist)*, author Mark Cabaj notes that evaluation and measurement should be used to enable strategic learning. In order for evaluation to play a productive role in a collective impact initiative,

it must be conceived and carried out in a way that enables the participants to learn from their efforts and make shifts to their strategy. This requires them to embrace three inter-related ideas about complexity, adaptive leadership, and a developmental approach to evaluation. If they do not, traditional evaluation ideas and practices will end up weakening the work of collective impact.

Communicate and engage

Engaging the broader community and growing a sense that transformational change can happen is essential to getting to possible.

For the last 12 years in Canada, communities have been working on the issue of poverty reduction. During that same period of time, this collective effort has led to some remarkable and transformative results. Vibrant Communities Canada started with a base of 13 communities and has grown to include more than 47 local and provincial/territorial community partners. All provinces and territories across the country are investing in poverty strategies including place-based initiatives and alignment of government programs and services. In May 2015, more than 300 leaders participated in a poverty reduction summit with the intent to change the conversation about poverty in Canada.

An evaluation of the Vibrant Communities initiative, called *Inspired Learning*, revealed the importance of continuous communication.

> VC supports invigorated local processes by injecting energy and inspiration. They also enabled the creation of a shared language that afforded local participants a common base for communication.
>
> When coupled with financial incentives, this common base provided the foundation for a new learning orientation. Collaborative and community based learning translated into valuable strategies in multiple communities. The supports helped communities to access the ideas and experience base of other communities, facilitating learning about specific challenges or issues, or new program or policy ideas.

Harwood and Connor also emphasize the importance of community engagement to move toward transformational change. Vibrant Communities Canada learned that the broad base involvement of diverse stakeholders at the community level, including individuals with the lived experience of poverty, is important. Communities cannot get to possible if voices are excluded from the conversation. Harwood calls this "turning outward," and Senge et al see it as a core capability of system leadership.

Ask, "What's next?"

The final element of getting to possible is being relentless about asking what's next, which enables communities to probe deeper, ask harder questions, and be ever vigilant about transformation. Communities are complex and dynamic, continually shifting and evolving; asking "what's next?" helps surface new opportunities and challenges that might not be immediately obvious.

Collective effort has led to some remarkable and transformative results.

Getting to transformational change, getting to possible, is not the easy path. It calls for a new kind of leader and a new way of collaborating and working collectively. There are frameworks for communities to follow, but no step-by-step manual. Working in this emerging practice can be frustrating for those of us who like to follow recipes or the user manual. Instead, getting to possible evokes a different energy. But, if we lead with a system approach, embrace a framework, consider our community's readiness, focus on data and measurement, communicate and engage, and remain future oriented by asking what's next, that creative tension will push our communities to consider both the process of community change and also the product. There are challenges, but they are not insurmountable.

Getting to possible is happening in communities every day.

Liz Weaver is vice-president of the Tamarack Institute and leads the Tamarack Learning Centre. Liz is passionate about the power and potential of communities getting to collective impact on complex issues. For Liz, possible evokes energy, opportunity, and the power of new beginnings. Reach Liz at: liz@tamarackcommunity.ca. //

TEAM WORK

Collaborate: 5 ideas to consider

by Paul Born

When organizations attempt to develop large-scale collaborations in an effort to impact systemic change, two issues typically arise early in the discussions. The first is a desire to reach out to organizations that are alike. Non-profits mainly want to talk to other non-profits, businesses want to talk to businesses and public sector organizations and governments seek the same. The second issue is that organizational leaders want to move to action quickly without taking the time to engage broadly.

We seek to work first with those we know best because it is easier and because we want to get our "own house" in order, ensuring everyone is on the same page before we reach out.

When we work in single-sector engagement for large-scale change we often get stuck on technicalities or worse, we fine-tune what we already have in common.

My advice to those holding large-scale conversations is to reach out to diverse groups – all at the same time. The synergy of ideas creates an excitement and builds a momentum when diverse groups are engaged. Here are five ideas to consider for collaboration:

1

Diversity encourages creativity. Diversity builds new relationships. Diversity opens doors to new possibilities. Allow for emergence in planning processes. Once members of your diverse team get to know each other they will become engaged and their contribution value increases.

2

Multi-sector teams are more open to discovery than single-sector teams. Once a team is formed, give members time to tell their stories before moving into planning. Then wait for the miracle of engagement.

3

Start by engaging the agencies already working on the issue you want to address. In many cases, these agencies will be able to identify business and government leaders willing to help.

4

Communication is critical in all engagement strategies. Build a database of names from day one. Grow it as you engage your team and their networks. Create a communication piece, such as a newsletter with updates and stories, that is shared regularly to capture the excitement.

5

When you build a multi-sector team you can **worry less about formal consultative processes**. Once people know each other's stories they draw from them to offer ideas.

Paul Born is the co-founder and president of the Tamarack Institute. See his feature article, "When we learn and change together," on page 24.

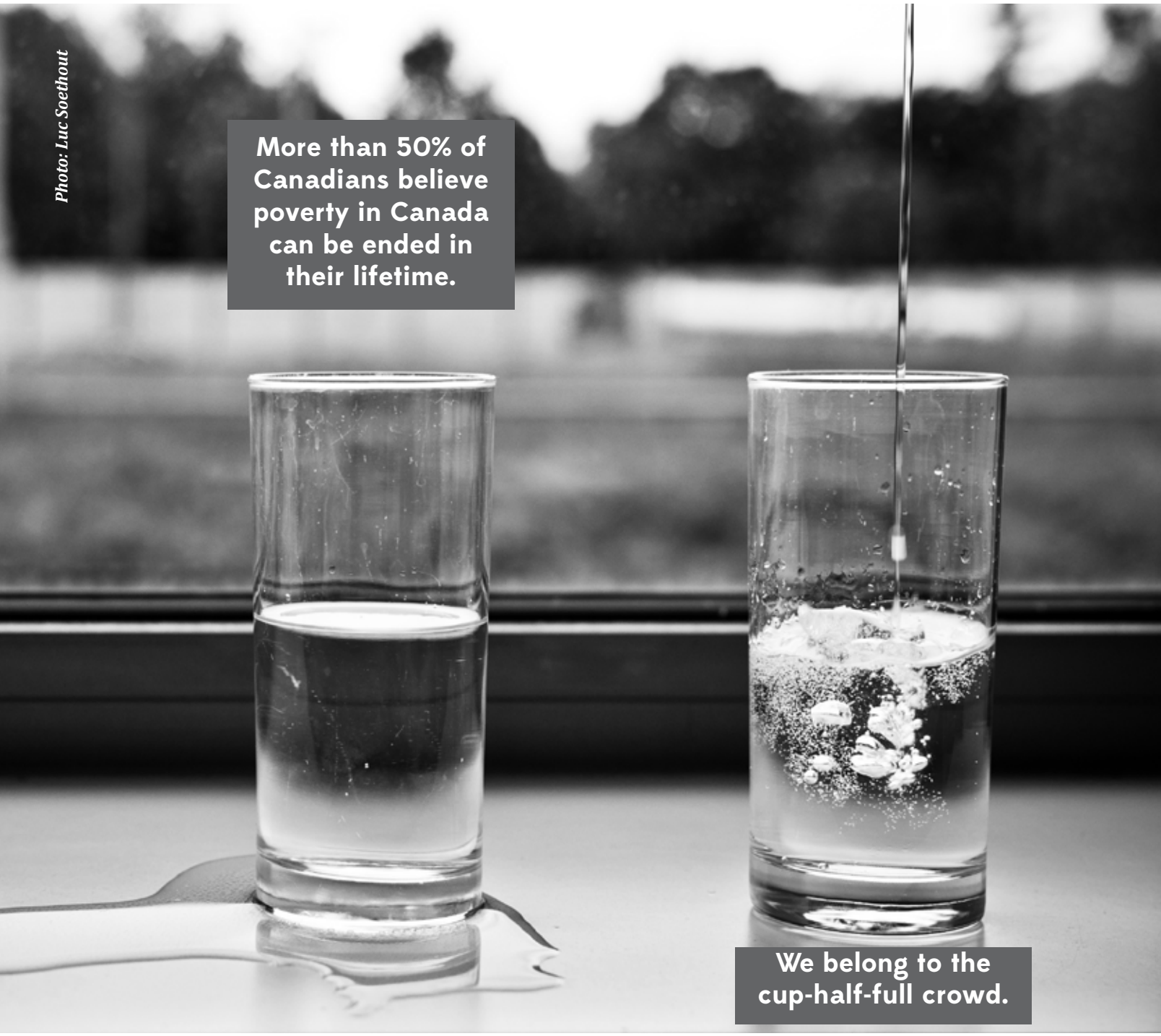

Photo: Luc Soethout

Join us for this event:
Cities Reducing Poverty: When Mayors Lead
April 5-7, 2016, Edmonton, Alberta
www.vibrantcommunities.ca

Vibrant Communities is a network of 47 cities who are creating comprehensive poverty reduction strategies to impact the lives of one million Canadians living in poverty.

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Forward

How technology improves community engagement

by Lisa Attygalle

How new technologies are lending fresh perspectives and putting power back into the hands of communities.

Technology has changed the way we engage the community. Fifteen years ago, there wasn't a way for the majority of the community to share their opinion without calling a town hall meeting, voting, or going door-to-door. Now, people share their opinion without being asked.

There is a growing trend towards civic participation, localism, and being active in community-based decision-making. In this age of technology and connectivity, everyone has a platform and everyone has a voice. If people care about something they will talk about it. Loudly. And if you're not present in that discussion or better yet, leading that discussion, there's a problem.

Studies show that a community's sense of belonging is directly connected with their ability to understand and help shape the vision for their community. Increasingly, citizens are looking less to their elected representative to create change in their communities. They want to be involved in creating the change themselves. They want to be engaged.

The possibilities of technology and the trend toward community involvement have spurred a renewed interest in community engagement. It is not a new field by any means, but there is definitely new-found energy.

I believe this revitalization has occurred because of two main factors: First, the communication methods available to us have grown exponentially, and second, technology has made deeper engagement possible online, which can expand the breadth, depth and quality of engagement.

The exponential growth of community engagement methods

Technology enables those who want to be involved in their community. It allows people to participate across geography, regardless of timing, and without physical or psychological barriers. It allows people to champion their ideas, share broadly with their networks, and advocate for change in ways that weren't previously accessible.

You have seven seconds to capture someone's attention.

Technology has also enabled the facilitation side of community engagement in many ways. Online surveys and polls are easier to set up and administer compared to their traditional versions. The amount of manual input is reduced and the tabulation and analysis of the data are built into the tools. The average cost per person is less than offline methods. And, the breadth of exposure widens with sharing capabilities available through integration with social networks and email.

Notwithstanding the advancements in technology, the fundamental principles of designing an engagement strategy are still relevant. I love using the Community Engagement Continuum as a framework and checkpoint when designing engagement strategies. The continuum was originally developed by IAP2 in the early 1990s and has been adapted and evolved ever since. Despite the modifications, I still prefer the original, mostly for its simplicity.

When online communication methods are layered onto the continuum, it becomes evident just how many options there are to engage the community in the online space alone. This makes the work of designing engagement strategies both easier and harder, while raising a series of new considerations:

Your audience: How do they receive information, how can you reach them, where are they already interacting, are there any barriers to engagement?

Your resources at hand: What's your budget, do you have creative people or resources to use?

How your engagement will be iterative: How are you engaging the community to generate ideas rather than waiting until you have the answers?

The appropriate level of engagement: How complex is the initiative? How much time do you have? How interested is the community? How do you want the community to feel at the end of the initiative?

The term *buy-in* is often used when referring to the goal of engagement activities: "We need the community to buy-in to the idea of X, Y, and Z." But it's important to note that buy-in should only be the goal when informing, consulting, or involving. Buy-in is when the community feels informed and agrees with the decisions made, whereas ownership is when the community feels part of the decisions made.

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Consider both online and offline engagement strategies and link them together. The lower levels of engagement are easy to facilitate online since the technology has been around for over 10 years. Most initiatives have websites, newsletters, email lists, and social media accounts that make informing easier than it's ever been before. Informing used to be done by paper fliers, going door-to-door, by radio and television, which are all more expensive than the online methods available to us today. It's also easier to track the reach of how many people saw the message – opened, clicked, interacted with it – than with offline informing methods.

You can also use online and offline versions of

the same strategy to reach a diverse and potentially wider audience. For example, an online survey and a paper survey, or social media and a paper comment card. Consider tactics that bridge online and offline, like an online survey on a tablet at an event, or inviting people who vote online to an in-person community roundtable.

How do you ensure that the community is informed?

Most of us look at the engagement continuum and aspire to invite deeper levels of engagement – which is great – but informing is still absolutely critical at every stage. Informing is a fundamental component of consulting, involving, collaborating, and empowering. For example, you would not be wise to invite community-wide decision-making where people make decisions based on varying information.

Informing is also the way by which you demonstrate accountability to the community. Once you consult, the community needs to be informed of what happened – what did you learn, what new thinking emerged, what is the most popular option at this stage, is there consensus? This feedback loop is fundamental. Engagement is iterative, so these feedback loops of informing and engaging foster progress.

How will your message or invitation get through the clutter?

People are inundated with information and there are many communication channels vying for their attention. To help your message get through the clutter, Dave Biggs, Chief Engagement Officer at MetroQuest, shares these four tips from the advertising world for designing engagement strategies:

1. **Know your audience:** Decide who your primary audience is and design your strategy with them in mind. Then think about your two secondary audiences. You'll be more successful if you design for someone rather than designing for everyone.
2. **The seven second rule:** You have seven seconds to capture someone's attention. People are busy, they're driving past signs, skimming the paper and scrolling quickly through their Facebook news feed. If you don't capture someone's attention within seven seconds, you'll have to try again later.
3. **The seven minute rule:** Once you have someone's attention, you've only got it for seven minutes.

Using technology to facilitate budget decisions

The City of Vallencia has a budget of $1.5 million to spend on public services and asked citizens to propose ways to use it. In a final shortlist of 17 issues (the engagement process started with crowd-sourced issue and idea generation), citizens can vote on how they would like the money to be spent over the coming year. The only constraint is that the total must not exceed $1.5 million. Participants are asked to consider each issue and decide whether they want the city to move ahead with funding the proposals.

All of the options under consideration have been grouped under different topics:

- Health and Safety
- Recreation
- City Improvements
- Police and Fire Services
- Environment
- Education

Within each topic, participants can rate how much they support or oppose each option and weight the topics in terms of importance to them. Participants will have more influence on topics they identify as important.

The city used Ethelo to generate a database of scenarios by looking for actionable combinations of options. In this decision, there are 22,359 such scenarios that fit within the budget criteria. Ethelo analyses the vote information and ranks all the possible scenarios, according to the strength of group support.

While technology makes the process easier, the biggest barrier to community-based decision-making is fear. Fear that the community will want something that is out of scope or out of budget. Fear that consensus won't be reached. Fear that the decision will only represent the opinions of part of the community.

Using an online community decision-making platform helps to ameliorate these fears and still allows us to assert control through the setting of parameters, demonstration of accountability, and ensuring consensus is reached.

The above example is based on an interactive hypothetical case study, available at ethelodecisions.com/sectors/consulting.

Design your engagement activity to take fewer than seven minutes, or if that's not possible, split it up into seven-minute sections. Always let the person know how much time their involvement will take.

4. **Use visuals over text:** Visuals resonate with us more quickly, evoke emotion, and are more memorable than text. Use visuals for every kind of engagement you do.

Engagement is not one-size-fits-all and what is appropriate for one initiative will not be appropriate for the next, just as the online communication method that works well for one sub-group within your community will not work for another.

> What is appropriate for one initiative will not be appropriate for the next.

Learn and be curious about what other communities are doing. With the growth in engagement methods available to us, it's unlikely you will be able to try them all. But if you are strategic and always keep your audience at the front and centre of your efforts, you will likely create real opportunities for people to engage with you.

The possibilities of community decision-making

It is only with the advent of newer technology platforms that deeper forms of engagement are even possible online. Now we can engage the community with crowdsourcing, online mapping, online budgeting, and online decision-making, using platforms such as IdeaScale, MetroQuest, TownHall Social, CrowdGauge, and Delib, to name a few.

If there's one area of community engagement where I see huge potential for the use of technology, it is in community-based decision-making: Placing the final decision making power in the hands of the community. It is the deepest form of engagement on the Community Engagement Continuum.

The only way we could do community-based decision-making a decade ago was through voting. Now, large scale decision-making has become possible and easy to conduct because of advances in online technologies and the intersection of data collection, data calculation, and social reach.

Ethelo Decisions is one platform that makes community decision-making possible. It combines functionality like surveying, commenting, and analytical processing to solve pressing community and organizational challenges. With technology like this, the potential use-cases are endless – from public consultations, to strategy development, planning, program and service design, participatory budgeting, fund distribution, dispute resolution, and policy development.

Setting parameters

Community-based decision-making platforms allow for setting criteria or constraints that must be met for all possible solution scenarios. This way you will never run into the situation where the community chooses a solution that doesn't fit within your mandate. For example, when electing board members or a working group, your parameters may be that the board must include 10 members, of which at least 40 percent are male, 40 percent are female, one is an accountant, and two are people with lived experience.

With each additional parameter you can see how many scenarios are possible. With these parameters set, all solutions will then fit within your required mandates.

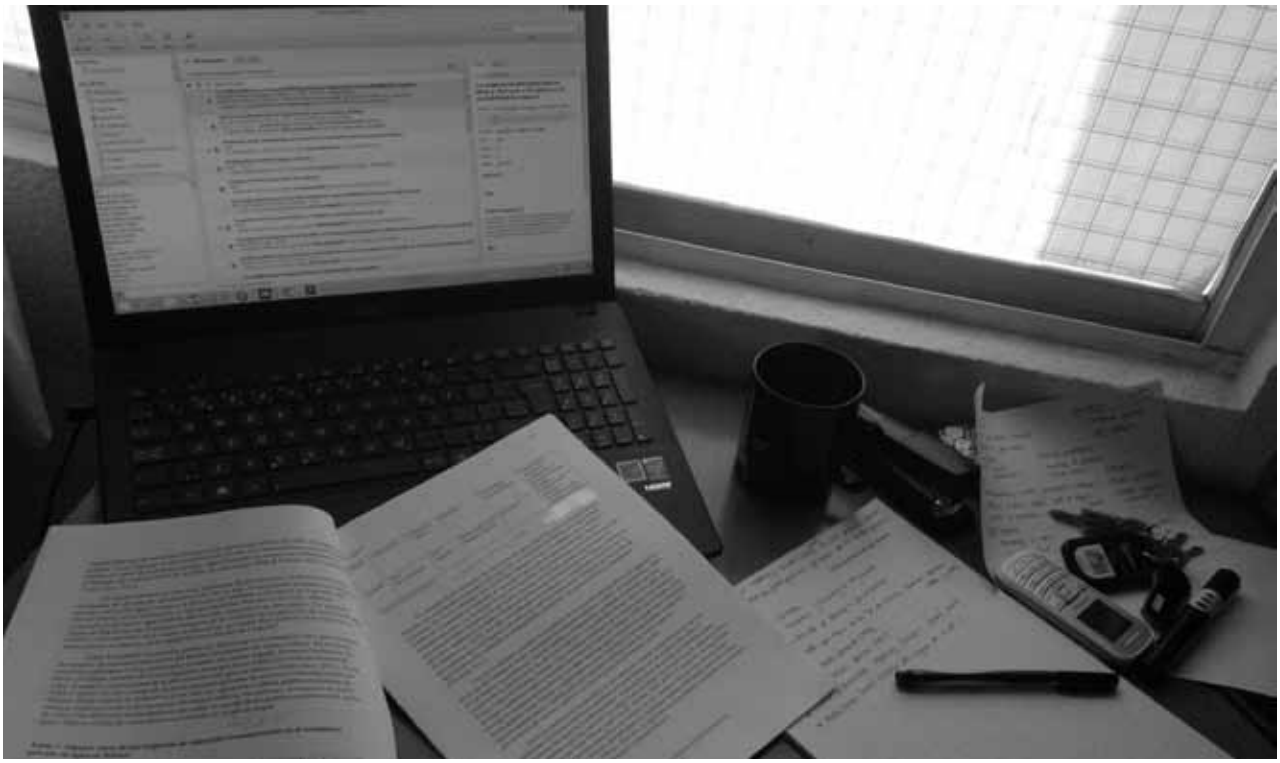
Demonstrating accountability

There's always a question of accountability with a community-based decision-making process – how can I be sure that the full community voice is represented? I would argue that you need to do everything in your power to ensure all demographics are invited in to your process and that there aren't barriers to participation, but at the end of the day the community needs to be accountable for sharing its opinion if it wants its opinion to count. It's the same as a traditional voting system.

You can, of course, use technology to assist in ensuring accountability as well. The process can be designed to be invite-only. If you have specific people that must be involved, you can restrict access and only analyze the results once all participants, or a certain percentage of participants, have contributed. You can also ask demographic information, such as postal code, age, or background, to ensure that the contributions are representative of the community. And if you're worried about misuse of the system, these platforms typically have a built-in functionality that tracks input to detect and correct double voting.

Getting to consensus

How do you ensure that the final decision is something the community wants? What if the community is fragmented?



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Each platform is designed with different analysis algorithms. For example, Ethelo finds and ranks outcomes that optimize satisfaction and minimize resistance due to unfairness and polarization; it calculates the will and wisdom of different stakeholders into a set of possible solutions that are most likely to succeed.

For example, if one population group prefers Option A, can live with Option B, and strongly opposes Option C, and another group prefers Option C, can live with Option B, and strongly opposes Option A, a standard vote would result in Option A or C winning, depending on which group was larger. This outcome would lead to a lot of unhappy people. Ethelo will prefer solutions where overall satisfaction levels are higher and support is united rather than split, so in the scenario above Option B would likely win.

The fear that we bring when considering community-based decision-making really comes down to an issue of control. With these new technologies, we can know that whatever happens inside will be safe and supportive. We can let go of the fear and allow the community to decide. That's an exciting and progressive step!

So what's stopping this mindset shift? What are the barriers within your own organization that would limit the scope of your community engagement activities?

What's stopping this mindset shift?

Ask your community what they want. Consider the ways you currently engage your community, and try one (or more) of the many online methods. Who knows? It may lead to greater engagement, improved outcomes, and a fulfilling sense of community ownership.

Lisa Attygalle is Tamarack's director of engagement (on leave until September, 2016) and is passionate about engagement, customer loyalty, and the use of technology to communicate and engage. Possible means approaching situations with optimism by saying "yes," "tell me more," and "let's make that happen!" Reach Lisa at lisa@tamarackcommunity.ca. //

Photo illustration: MjZ Photography, mjzphotography.zhemproductions.com

Photo: Tamarack Institute

TALKIN' 'BOUT A REVOLUTION

Host a conversation café

by Louise Merlihan

At Tamarack, we've found that a conversation café can be useful early in a collaborative process to create authentic dialogue when participants don't know each other well or when we want to build a sense of common purpose. Conversation cafés invite people to engage in deep listening and participate in profound conversations about questions that matter to them.

To host an effective café, you will need at least two hours and 12 or more people. Arrange participants into small groups and, if possible, provide a café-like ambiance with tables, tablecloths, refreshments, and a "menu" of questions.

The process

Invite all participants to review, and commit to, the Conversation Café Agreements. Introduce the café process and explain how to use a "talking stick." Introduce a question for discussion before each new round of conversation.

Between each round, invite participants to change tables. They will carry key ideas and insights from their previous conversation into a newly formed small group. One "table host" should stay at each table to share the key insights and questions that emerged from previous dialogue.

Conversation rounds 1 and 2

As the talking stick is passed around, each person briefly responds to the dialogue question without interruption. After everyone has shared, the talking stick is passed around a second time and participants have an opportunity to deepen their own comments or speak about what has meaning for them now.

Conversation round 3

To invite synthesis, the group moves into an open conversation about the question at hand. The talking stick may be re-introduced if the group's conversation loses focus.

Final conversation round

Again, the talking stick is passed around, and each participant shares his or her final insights and reflections.

Conversation café agreements

• **Stay open-minded**: Listen to and respect all points of view • **Be accepting:** Suspend judgment as best you can • **Embrace curiosity:** Seek to understand rather than persuade • **Seek to discover:** Question your assumptions and look for new insights • **Be sincere**: Speak from your heart and your own personal experience • **Strive for brevity:** Go for honesty and depth, but don't go on and on

"Very great change starts from very small conversations, held among people who care." – Margaret Wheatley

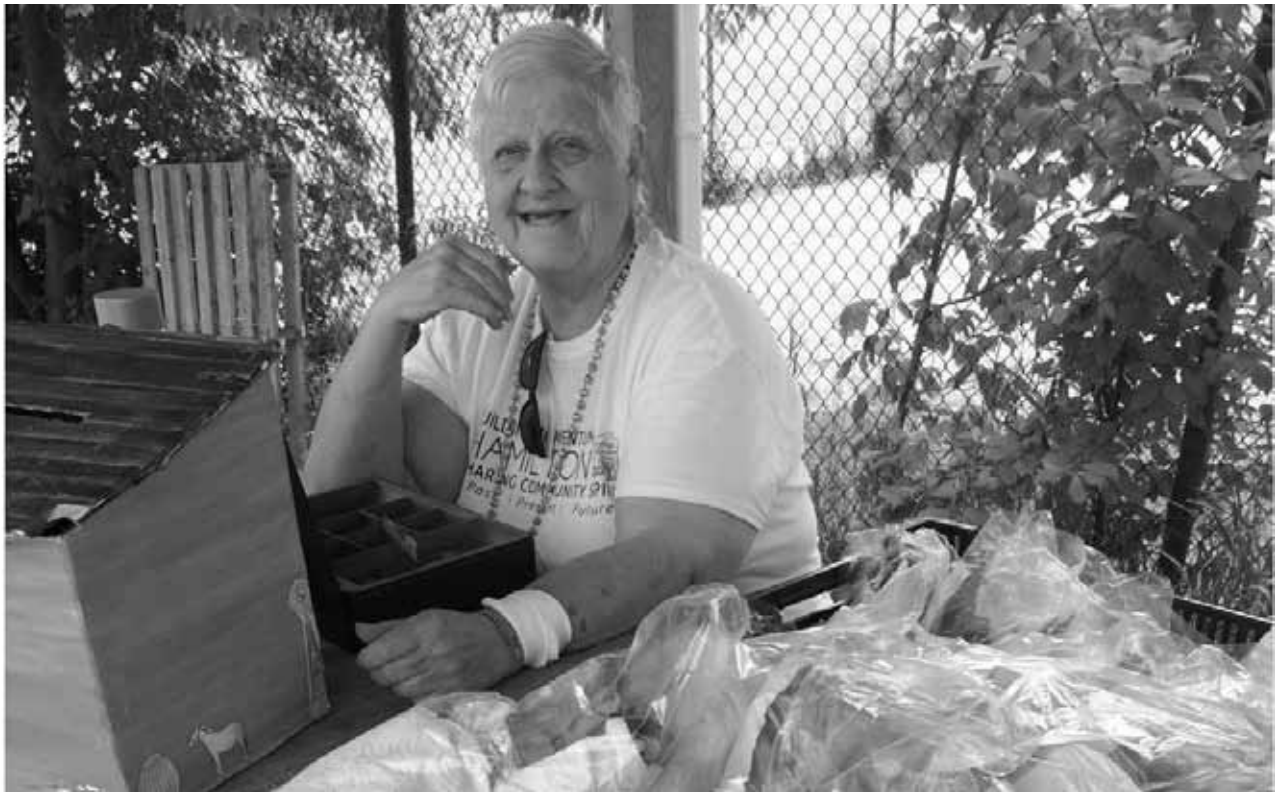


Photo: Courtesy of Pat Reid

Pat Reid at the McQuesten Urban Farm in Hamilton, Ontario.

HAMILTON

A farm in the city revives the community

by Pat Reid

We have seen dynamic changes in the McQuesten neighbourhood in Hamilton over the last 14 years. It began with two resident groups, the Martha Movers and Ori-Mar-Rox, who were concerned about the isolation of people living in the neighbourhood and set out to address the issue. These two groups became the McQuesten Community Planning Team. Over the years our neighbours have identified many issues and have set about to resolve various problems and improve our quality of life.

Each year we have two big parties: the spring event is called the McQuesten Crawl and the fall event is called the Block Party. Each includes a free BBQ and provides the opportunity for over 600 neighbours to gather and get to know one another. Various service agency partners participate and inform the community of the programs they offer.

There's a history of partnership in this neighbourhood. The Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board allows us to use a former school as a community centre, now called the St. Helen Centre at McQuesten. We have a great working relationship with the Hamilton Community Foundation, which has over the years generously funded many neighbourhood led initiatives, and has given us much guidance and encouragement.

From the beginning, we used the model of Asset Based Community Development and this has

blossomed into a Neighbourhood Action Plan in partnership with the City of Hamilton. Neighbours came together to identify the following goals: increase neighbourhood safety and security; strengthen economic opportunities and investments; enhance community health and well-being; strengthen neighbourhood pride and promote community beautification; and promote, strengthen, and encourage education opportunities. In September 2012, we presented this plan to Hamilton City Council and it was approved.

Enhancing community health

Under the goal of enhancing community health and well-being, food security was identified as a primary need. The closest grocery store is two kilometres away and most of our neighbours do not have a car.

Ten years before we undertook the formal process of creating a neighbourhood plan, we identified the need for a community garden. It started with five beds placed on a vacant plot of land owned by City Housing Hamilton, and adjacent to a geared-to-income town house survey. Today we have 55 plots, eight raised beds, and 10 children's beds.

Through this process, some of the neighbours found a three-acre empty strip of land owned by the City of Hamilton that had lain fallow for over 60 years. We dreamt of having an urban farm where we could produce large quantities of fresh organic produce for our neighbourhood, as well as having a greenhouse where we could grow greens throughout the winter months, teach and learn about food production, and hopefully create a few good jobs for our neighbours along the way.

Once the Neighbourhood Action Plan was endorsed by our City Council, we forged ahead with the dream of an urban farm.

We entered into a partnership with Hamilton Victory Gardens, a charitable organization that has hundreds of volunteers who built over 250 raised bed gardens at the back of St. Helen to grow fruit and vegetables for donation. And food began to grow; more than 6,000 pounds in the first season!

We have seen dynamic changes in the McQuesten neighbourhood over the last 14 years.

We will commence construction on the Urban Farm this September and be in production for the spring of 2016. With the fresh produce from Hamilton Victory Gardens coming to our local Roxborough Food Bank, and now having a weekly farmer's market offering produce at very low cost, we are providing an abundance of fresh, local organic food for our neighbours.

When the food bank is open, we operate the McQuesten Bistro, where we provide free coffee, tea, and healthy snacks. We educate folks about unfamiliar vegetables, like what swiss chard is and how to cook it, or how to make kale chips.

While the food bank is open, another group of residents runs The Clothing Closet, which has free used clothing available for all ages and sizes. We have a senior's program running, as well as the Roger's Raising the Grade Computer Centre, which will soon be available under the auspices of the Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club. This will help us to assist our neighbours search for jobs, create resumes, and simply stay connected to information and people. Another group of residents will be starting Zumba classes and wellness program this fall to promote health and wellness.

Future goals for the Urban Farm are to develop a community food centre with a commercial kitchen available where we can train and mentor our neighbours. We aim to develop social enterprise opportunities for our residents as well as building capacity and skill development for everyone.

Pat Reid has lived in Hamilton, Ontario for the last 25 years and works beside her neighbours to build safe, healthy, and creative communities. //

CALGARY, MISSISSAUGA, PEEL

Affordable transportation for low-income earners

by Anne Makhoul

Going without a car in the city means relying on transit systems, walking, and cycling. Easy enough in summer if you are healthy and fully employed, but transit options become far more complicated if you factor in inclement weather, young children, disabilities, or low incomes. People living in the suburbs and rural communities who commute large distances for work or school face even more challenges getting there. Vibrant Communities Canada reports that, in large and small communities, new approaches – including ride-sharing and reduced-rate transit passes – are catching on. One city removed the barrier entirely by offering *free* passes!

Big city response

In the early 2000s, Vibrant Communities celebrated the institution of a low-income transit pass in Calgary. Now a line item in the city's budget, its example has encouraged several other municipalities – Hamilton, Guelph-Wellington, Niagara Region, Halton Region, and, most recently, Peel Region – to do the same.

Peel Region lies along the inner ring of the Greater Toronto Area's golden horseshoe and includes the cities of Mississauga, Brampton, and Caledon. A community collaborative, which included the regional government and the United Way of Peel Region, formed the Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee in 2008. Members released a strategy in 2012 that identified affordable transportation as a key concern. The committee researched other successful transit pass programs and consulted with the community to address the issue.

Ride-sharing and reduced-rate transit passes are catching on.

In 2014, City of Mississauga Councillors requested that staff explore transit affordability and Mississauga's MiWay Transit staff agreed to participate in the affordable transit project.

In the summer of 2014, Ontario Works recipients living in Mississauga received letters inviting them to participate in the pilot affordable transit project. Most of the respondents were single or had teenaged children who were not able to access school bus programs.

Peel's transit pass differs from existing affordable pass programs in one key way: the program uses the PRESTO Card, which allows participants to travel on multiple transit systems anywhere in the Greater Toronto Area. Participants pay $40 monthly and the Region of Peel and MiWay Transit each contribute an additional $40 each per pass. In exchange, participants complete a monthly survey of the routes they use, their frequency of use, and the purpose of their travel. Participants are also allowed to bank unused travel dollars from month to month, making the initiative more affordable and more responsive to fluctuating work and activity schedules. The results of the pilot will inform future decisions about affordable transit in Peel Region.

Peel Region Poverty Reduction Strategy Advisor Adaoma Patterson is very pleased to report that the pilot project has enrolled 215 riders to date. "This project will be used to highlight how transit impacts peoples' lives and inform future affordable programs in our region," says Adaoma. "Community voices raised this issue and local governments and transit departments are responding. By helping a small group of people access employment, healthier food outlets, medical appointments and to overcome the isolation of poverty, we are building a piece of something that will evolve over time."

Small city response

The City of Grand Prairie, Alberta, started distributing free bus passes to low-income residents in January 2015. People who receive social assistance benefits, and others whose incomes fall below the low-income cut-off, plus an additional 30 percent, are encouraged to apply for monthly transit passes.

Municipal officials are working closely with community organizations that serve low-income and homeless residents to promote the passes as widely as possible. The full price for an adult pass is currently $54. While children under 11 already ride for free when accompanied by an adult, free passes are now being issued to high school and local college students on an as-needed basis as well. By the end of February 2015, 300 low-income individuals were approved for bus passes.

Financial reports and user impact evaluations will be conducted once the program has had a chance

Photo: Tamarack Institute

to get better established. "We are so fortunate to have a city council and transit authority that recognize the importance of removing barriers to prosperity. Transportation has long been identified as a stumbling block for people who are looking for work, particularly people experiencing homelessness and single mothers with young children," says Lisa Watson, Grande Prairie Community Supports Supervisor.

Rural response

Charlotte County is a rural area in southwest New Brunswick, an hour's drive from Saint John. Made up of five mainland and three island communities, residents without vehicles rely on the goodwill of family, friends, and neighbours to get around. Ferry services connect the islands and the mainland, but getting to the boat and to the mainland and back requires a vehicle. Until 2005, taxicabs were the only alternative to private rides. That year, community conversations on poverty reduction priorities put transportation at the top of a list of concerns.

The Charlotte County Alternative Transportation Association was formed in 2005. By September, members had researched and instituted a Nova Scotian Dial-a-Ride model. People living with disabilities, or on low incomes, and seniors were invited to join Charlotte Dial-a-Ride for a small annual fee (also payable monthly). Members book rides 48 hours ahead of their departure time and a dispatcher matches the ride to a volunteer driver, who is pre-screened and possesses the appropriate insurance. Most rides are round trip and drivers can accommodate a series of errands, as requested. The program maintains a discretionary fund to cover membership and trip fees for those who can not afford them.

Because Charlotte County residents have to travel to major centres to access medical and dental treatments, a transportation working group has been established to connect the region to Saint John. Bus service to Saint John would alleviate the financial and volunteer burden placed on Charlotte Dial-a-Ride by the longer drive distances. It would also allow organizers to focus on more disadvantaged community members and establish feeder rides from the outlying areas that would connect to the bus service.

New Brunswick's poverty reduction and social inclusion strategy led to the creation of 12 regional community inclusion networks in 2011. These bodies have sped up the sharing of best practices and lessons learned and Charlotte County Dial-a-Ride organizers are working with other regions to replicate their ride service. Good news travels fast and, with planning and persistence, people do too!

Anne Makhoul is the Principal Project Officer for the Caledon Institute of Social Policy. **//**

Photo: Tamarack Institute

CALGARY

Harvesting outcomes

by Lisa Attygalle

Carya (formally Calgary Family Services) has played a 150-year-long role in Calgary to engage individuals, families, and communities to realize their potential, with Community Development being one of their core strategies. Carya found, though, that the evaluation tools they were using weren't fitting the nature of emergent, non-linear work that is necessary within complex systems.

Outcome Harvesting ... is used by everyone, from funders to front-line workers.

Roman Katsnelson, Director of Community Development Strategies for Carya remarked that, "After attending Evaluating Community Impact we knew there was a different way of approaching evaluation. It was a watershed moment. We then brought a group together to capitalize on the energy surrounding this new way of thinking and there's been a huge shift as a result."

Three core funders in the city – the United Way, FCSS and the Calgary Foundation – formed the Community Development Learning Initiative to bring together front-line workers, community development agencies, and funders. As part of that initiative over the last year and a half, Carya has been leading an action team focused on Evaluation for Learning.

"Tamarack sparked this great energy for evaluation thinking and we've been mindful to sustain this energy to drive change."

The work has resulted in the development of a new, highly flexible evaluation tool, Evaluation Harvesting, which is based on Outcome Mapping and adapted for local use. Outcome Harvesting has now been implemented in multiple projects, is part of daily project use, and has been accepted by the Federal Government as a valid evaluation tool. Most importantly, it has established a common language that is used by everyone, from funders to front-line workers.

Lisa is Tamarack's Director of Engagement. Read her feature article, "Forward: How technology improves community engagement," on page 39. //

CALGARY

Passing the torch, not the buck

by Anne Makhoul

Many community voices in Calgary helped build momentum for Mayoral candidate Naheed Nenshi to adopt a poverty reduction plank in his 2010 election platform. Two reports in particular have shaped the Calgary poverty reduction conversation. *Poverty Costs*, co-published by Vibrant Communities Calgary and Action to End Poverty in Alberta, put the price tag for poverty in Alberta at $8 billion per year. United Way Calgary's *Signposts II: A Survey of the Social Issues and Needs of Calgarians* presented a clear picture of the city's poverty profile.

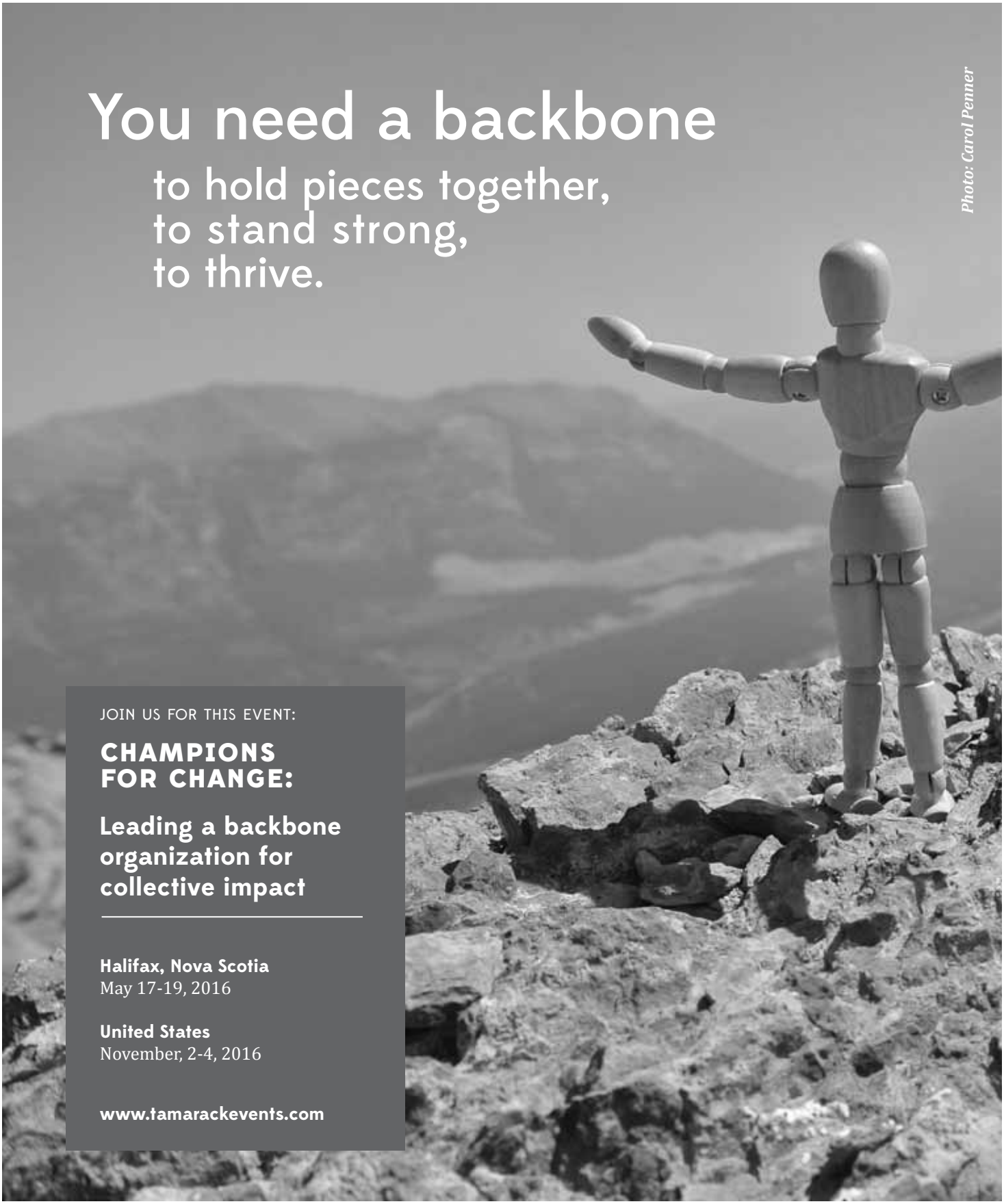
Mayor Nenshi launched the Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative in 2011. A joint initiative of the City of Calgary and United Way of Calgary and Area, it published *Enough for All* in 2013. This poverty reduction strategy is aimed at significantly reducing poverty and vulnerability in Calgary in the short-term, and ending it in the long-term.

In January 2015, Vibrant Communities Calgary (VCC) and the City of Calgary signed a Memorandum of Agreement that gives the organization a four-year mandate to guide the continued implementation of the *Enough for All* strategy. The City and United Way Calgary are each contributing $500,000 per year to the effort. Current funds will not be used for programming. Instead, VCC will sort through *Enough for All*'s 130 recommendations and work to address three vital issues: the competitiveness of the community sector; the non-involvement of large business players, without whom no significant poverty reduction can be achieved; and the spiritual dimension of poverty as it is understood by the Aboriginal community.

Franco Savoia at VCC credits Vibrant Communities Canada and the Tamarack Institute with building the national conversation around achieving collective impact against poverty. As he and his Calgary partners work to build a common agenda and develop a shared measurement system for evaluating their efforts, Franco knows that the city's commitment to walking its own poverty reduction talk will be tested.

Finding inspiration in Vibrant Communities Canada's positive focus, Franco reflects: "If we can find a meaningful way to engage our Aboriginal community and transform our notions of poverty, we will achieve our goals." //

Photo: Tamarack Institute


You need a backbone
to hold pieces together,
to stand strong,
to thrive.
Photo: Carol Penner
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GREY BRUCE

Conversations to build community: Shared hopes, shared actions

by Karen Croker, Amber Schieck, Jason Weppler

In the summer of 2014, the Grey Bruce Health Unit, in partnership with the Tamarack Institute, launched the Community Conversations Grey Bruce project. As part of a national campaign, the project aims to deepen community by facilitating conversations, generating themes, and encouraging community action.

Grey Bruce is a rural region in Southwestern Ontario, with a population of 157,600, covering an area approximately the same size as Prince Edward Island. It consists of one city, several rural towns, and many smaller villages and hamlets. Community Conversations took place across Grey and Bruce Counties with groups from different sectors such as youth, faith communities, community leaders, citizen's groups, arts and culture organizations, and seniors' groups. Conversations explored the meaning of community, identified community strengths and challenges, and outlined future hopes and priorities for shared action.

Over the duration of the project, which lasted from June, 2014, to April, 2015:

- 47 community conversations were hosted,
- 407 individuals, representing more than nine sectors and a range of ages participated, and
- 100 participants attended celebration gatherings to share highlights from the conversations.

A pre- and post- survey was used to record the demographics of participants and collect additional insights. Overall, after the conversations, participants indicated that they knew more about others in their gathering and also felt more connected to people in the group. Approximately nine out of 10 participants indicated they were interested in working together to strengthen their community.

Responses reflected the shared hope for our communities to be healthy, happy, safe and vibrant.

In each conversation, participants discussed the

Photo: Courtesy of Grey Bruce Health Unit

benefits of community. We heard many stories of reciprocity and of communities coming together to support a person or family in difficult times. Community members talked about the trust and friendships that can develop within a neighbourhood. Another well-recognized benefit of community is that the whole is greater and can do more than an individual; there is great power in working together towards common goals.

Despite the geographic and demographic breadth of our conversations, there were many similarities in the hopes and visions of the communities involved. During the conversations, participants were asked to depict a vision of their community in 10 years through words and pictures. The responses reflected the shared hope for our communities to be healthy, happy, safe, and vibrant.

The conversations reaffirmed that there is an abundance of goodwill and commitment across sectors and communities.

Six themes emerged from the conversations:

- *Local economic development:* growth and prosperity, stable jobs, vibrant downtown
- *Affordable housing:* safe, accessible and affordable housing options for all
- *Enhanced resources and services:* coordinated services, community hubs, education and training, high-speed internet, public transportation
- *Youth retention:* recreation, employment, sense of belonging, supporting youth to return "home" after education and training
- *Attracting young families:* making our communities welcoming to young families, employment and recreation services
- *Increased social and leisure opportunities:* activities for all ages, trails and parks, theatre and arts, festivals and celebrations, cultural opportunities

Celebration and action

Six celebration gatherings were hosted across the region to share the findings with participants and support opportunities for collective action. The gatherings also featured inspiring examples of community engagement and shared action.

Participants did a mapping exercise to capture activities that already address the key themes identified in the project. They discovered a number of activities that we can build on and complement as our communities move forward.

The conversations hosted across Grey Bruce reaffirmed that there is an abundance of goodwill and commitment across sectors and communities. Citizens can contribute positively to making their communities welcoming, caring, and dynamic places to live, work, and play.

The Community Conversations Grey Bruce project was highlighted in a session at Tamarack's Neighbours: Policies and Programs event in June, 2015. Future plans include continuing to share the findings with the community and provide delegations for municipal and regional councils.

Karen Croker is a public health nurse and Amber Schieck and Jason Weppler are health promoters at Grey Bruce Health Unit in Owen Sound, Ontario. //

A participant's vision of their community in 10 years.

Photo: Courtesy of Grey Bruce Health Unit

Photo: YouTube still from RedDeerAdvocate.com

The town of Delbourne, Alberta gets a facelift with photos by John Beebe. This is a still image from a mini-documentary made by the *Red Deer Advocate*.

DELBURNE, ALBERTA

Big photos help small town foster a sense of belonging

by Sylvia Cheuy with Karen Fegan and Nora Smith

The Village of Delburne, Alberta, in partnership with Tamarack, convened over 48 percent of the town's population to participate in conversations about their strengths, challenges, and hopes for their community. In total, 20 community conversations were held to discuss the question, What makes Delburne a great place to live? Out of this came the Belonging Delburne photo project.

For the Belonging Delburne photo project, internationally renowned photographer, John Beebe, invited residents to pose for portraits with an item that represented "belonging." A collage of the portraits were then wheat-pasted as gigantic murals on multiple exterior buildings throughout the village to create a striking visual representation of community ownership.

Nora Smith, Delburne Family and Community Support Services community worker, has been particularly struck by the possibilities of art as a community-building tool. "There's something incredibly powerful in tying the art element into the community development piece," says Nora.

Delburne represents a growing shift in Canadian communities and neighbourhoods that want to focus on stronger resident engagement and collaborate with local governments to decide – and implement – important community projects.

Karen Fegan *is the chief administrative officer for the Village of Delburne.* Nora Smith *is a community worker with Delburne FCSS.* Sylvia Cheuy *is Director, Deepening Community at Tamarack. Read her feature article, "Deepening Community," on page 16.*

To view a video from the Belonging Delburne project, visit www.beebe.smugmug.com/Professional/Delburne/i-gP7Lvgt/640. //

Aussie vision | $1 Billion for communities | Collective impact in Israel | Healthy Start, U.S.A.

AUSTRALIA

Visioning Queensland

by Max Hardy

It was early 2013, and the then Queensland Minister for Environment, the Hon Andrew Powell, called us at Twyfords to ask for some help. The Premier had asked him to sponsor a 30-year visioning process. Powell asked, "How can we get the whole state of Queensland interested in this process? How can we make sure it's useful?"

Fast forward about nine months and we were celebrating:

- 80,000 contributions to what became known as the Queensland Plan,
- 400 people participating in the Mackay Summit to develop the plan,
- 700 people coming together at a Summit in Brisbane to determine the key directions and priorities, and
- 700 commitments made by government, businesses, peak organizations, non-government organizations, and community leaders about how they would promote and support the implementation of the plan

It was astonishingly successful – more than even the most optimistic of us had imagined But, there were risks at the outset.

While most visioning processes relate to cities, this would apply to an enormous Australian state; that's seven times the size of Great Britain, and two-and-a-half times the size of Texas! As far as I'm aware, there has been no long-term visioning process attempted for a geographic area this large. We were concerned that people may not engage with a long-term planning process for a whole state.

> The more the 'community of interest' owns and shapes the process, the more likely they are to invest in the process.

Another risk was the fear that Queenslanders would regard the process as being a "talk-fest," as other visioning processes have been judged. Skepticism runs fairly high in Australia, especially about anything initiated by government, so it's easy for an initiative to be regarded as a political stunt.

Lastly, we worried that if people did respond, the project team would have difficulty making sense of a large number of contributions. Similarly, there was a concern that participants would not see a link between what they contributed and what showed up in the final plan. If people did engage, we had to make absolutely certain that people believed their effort was valued. Several key factors helped ensure our success.

Bi-partisan support for process

Early in the process the Premier invited the opposition and other parties to participate in and support the development of the plan. To the credit of the vast majority of our political leaders, there was support for this approach. It was tested at times, but there was always sufficient support to continue with the process. The public bi-partisan approach meant that other public figures, such as sporting celebrities, were willing to be associated with The Queensland Plan, and generously participated in television promotions.

Photo: Courtesy of Max Hardy

It can be difficult to achieve bi-partisan support for important matters. While many politicians welcomed this approach, their advisers had more difficulty understanding their role and were sometimes "off balance" by working with political rivals. The Premier's message, that this was a 30-year plan and clearly beyond his current term – and most likely beyond the time frame of every current politician – helped sustain the bi-partisan approach.

The same long-term approach could be used for most problems collective impact initiatives attempt to address, like eliminating homelessness, achieving sustainable energy targets, or complex urban planning; all are unlikely to be resolved within three-to-four years. Just imagine if political leaders could join forces with a similar message – that they are inviting stakeholders and communities to work together to more intelligently, and creatively, respond to these challenges, with an openness and willingness to do things differently. I ask, Why not?

Photo courtesy of Max Hardy

Strong process leadership for the people's plan

Senior public servants played a key role in the process. Agreeing that it was a *People's Plan*, leaders endorsed our suggestion that a broad cross-section of Queenslanders should do this themselves, in collaboration with political leaders and public servants.

In one astonishing day, 400 people at the Mackay Summit identified six challenging questions they believed should be the focus of conversations regarding the future.

They explored *how* each region of Queensland might encourage other citizens to become involved, identifying opportunities for people to explore the questions. What followed the Summit was amazing and unprecedented in my experience. Dinner parties, barbeques, and meetings of regular clubs and groups were held across the State to consider some or all of the six questions, and the output of those conversations fed into an online repository.

What became clear to us was that the genuine invitation to Summit participants to shape the questions, and the process, meant that we had 400 strong ambassadors for The Queensland Plan at the Summit's conclusion.

The more the "community of interest" owns and shapes the process, the more likely they are to invest in the process. If there is a single central champion who defines what it is about, and how the whole initiative will play out, chances are that people and groups will not buy into it at the same degree.

Backbone critical

Backbone support is a critical condition for successful collective impact. Without it, The Queensland Plan could not have happened or been successful.

The team that supported The Queensland Plan was not huge in number, but its members were incredibly dedicated and skilled. They supported the process, but at no time did they take it over. They understood that their role was to help Queenslanders to thoughtfully consider their responses to the six questions and identify key directions and priorities.

Lots more could be said about the process and how it might offer some gems for collective impact initiatives. A key takeaway for me was the importance of what the process itself builds, rather than the final products or outputs. Unless the process itself strengthens relationships, builds confidence, generates new ideas and possibilities, then there is little point to such an initiative. On this occasion there was ample evidence that it did just that.

Max Hardy is the principal of Max Hardy Consulting. He served as the co-lead process designer for the Queensland Plan. //

NORTH CAROLINA

Minting new money for communities

by Russ Gaskin

It was the fall of 1998 and Deborah Momsen-Hudson had a problem. As vice president of investor relations at Self-Help Credit Union, she was responsible for ensuring a reliable supply of capital for Self-Help's community development lending programs across the state of North Carolina. Despite her record-breaking success in bringing in new accounts, the distressed communities they served needed far more capital, and Deborah didn't know where to find it.

Self-Help is one of over 1,000 Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) in operation in the U.S. CDFIs are banks, credit unions, and loan funds that lend into distressed communities, providing loans for economic development in areas such as small business, childcare services, and affordable housing. CDFIs receive capital from a variety of sources, including individual investors and customers, institutional investors, and the federal CDFI Fund operated by the U.S. Treasury Department.

Despite her record-breaking success, the distressed communities needed far more capital.

Deborah knew she wasn't alone. As one of the leaders in her industry, Deborah talked regularly to other CDFI leaders around the country, and they were reporting serious gaps in their ability to fill lending requests.

No simple fix

Deborah brought her challenge to the U.S. Social Investment Forum, a trade association of investment firms and professionals interested in socially responsible investing practices, where I served as managing director. CDFIs accounted for about 25 percent of our membership at the time, and our board was very interested in how we could serve these members' needs. We decided to take on the challenge of finding the capital.

We soon discovered, however, that there was no simple fix for the problem. Alisa Gravitz, the vice chair of the SIF board at the time, recalls, "We didn't know yet how much capital was needed, but we knew it was a lot and we frankly had no idea where to find it…We talked to the folks at [the U.S.] Treasury, but were told that new appropriations to the CDFI Fund were unlikely, and certainly wouldn't be at the scale we wanted. And the big foundations weren't ready to commit that much of their portfolios to CDFIs at the time."

We realized we needed help, so we engaged a team of leaders from across the banking and investing industries who would take on the challenge together and create new ways to approach it. The team was incredibly diverse, with over 30 leaders from banks, credit unions, loan funds, mutual fund companies, foundations, and included financial advisers, individual investors, and money managers. Even at the time (well before we had a clear concept of collective impact), our experience told us that more perspectives and backgrounds would improve the likelihood of finding a workable solution.

Funding challenge

That group needed a goal and needed to understand

Photo: Tamarack Institute

Photo: Tamarack Institute

potential fixes to fill the gap, so they quickly organized into sub-teams – a research group to determine the amount needed and a solutions group to find new sources of money. The research group quickly tallied up a need for over $1 billion in net new capital. After some time, the solutions group brought back a provocative possibility: Get mutual funds to invest in the CDFIs.

At the time, U.S. mutual funds held over $7.2 trillion in their portfolios, and many types of funds held a portion of those portfolios in cash. If we could find some way to convince even a few large funds to move a portion of those cash positions into CDFIs, we would solve the problem. Not just that, we might be able to solve the CDFI funding challenge for good.

We had to test the hypothesis, of course, so we formed a team to interview mutual fund managers and learn what factors might prevent or incentivize them to put their cash into CDFIs. That effort turned up two interesting factors:

First, money managers normally traded securities through computer terminals, where the transactions behind the scenes were largely automated. To invest in CDFIs, they would have to manually open cash accounts and manually move the cash. According to the fund managers, that additional work was a showstopper.

Second, money managers had no idea how the new type of investment vehicle would affect either the performance or risk of their funds, and they had to know this before they would consider investing.

The group dramatically exceeded the $1 billion goal.

Ideas that work

What happened in the next 18 months is a testament to the speed, ingenuity, passion, and progress that a collective impact approach can produce. Trading experts in the group quickly got over 50 of the CDFI's products listed on the country's largest trading platform (which made them as easily tradable as any other security); a small team of portfolio managers ran several simulations that clearly demonstrated that these products had essentially the same performance and risk characteristics as other cash products in use by the funds; and a marketing group designed, tested, and launched *1% for Community*, a media and marketing program that promoted funds that made a commitment to "building America's communities" by pledging at least one percent of their portfolios to that work.

Most importantly, the group dramatically exceeded the $1 billion goal and within three years had moved over $3.2 billion into CDFIs. In contrast, the U.S. government's CDFI Fund has distributed only $1.7 billion in nearly 20 years of operation.

Why did the effort work? We brought together a group of caring leaders with diverse experience and perspectives, they set a goal that was both audacious *and* specific, they moved fast in both their analysis and solution design, and they worked to deeply understand the experience of those whose behaviour most needed to change.

Russ Gaskin is the managing director of CoCreative, a U.S.-based consultancy. //

ISRAEL

Collaborative work in Israel

by Yehonatan Almog

In Israel, there is growing interest in promoting collective impact work in a range of areas. A national conference on March 30, 2015, organized by a coalition of organizations, including the JDC-Ashalim partnership for children at risk, the JDC Institute for Leadership and Governance, and the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute for applied social research, brought together two hundred and fifty senior leaders, professionals, and policy-makers from all sectors together to discuss collective impact and its potential.

In September 2015, another organization, Sheatufim (*Partnerships*), is holding a national conference that will feature a number of collective impact initiatives. One of them is 5*2 – The Initiative to expand STEM education excellence, which leads a network of 50 diverse organizations from the government, business and third sector, and a unique strategic partnership with the ministry of education. The president of Israel will make remarks at the opening.

Many Israeli collaborative initiatives are promoting efforts at the local level to work with at-risk children and disadvantaged communities.

National Program for Children and Youth at Risk

This program includes five government ministries and was first implemented in 2007 in 72 local authorities. Now it has expanded to 180 of the lowest socioeconomic communities.

The goal of the program is to significantly transform the way Israeli society deals with children and youth at risk by creating collaborative planning and implementation at the national and the local level. The local planning teams mirror the national framework, but also include local NGOs and other local stakeholders. It also places strong emphasis on delegating authority and controlling resources at the local level.

A key component in aligning efforts is a shared measurement system that creates a collective

Photos: Courtesy of Yehonatan Almog

database on children and youth at risk. This promotes the development of a shared community-wide plan, which is also used to monitor the services received and key program outcomes.

Better Together Program

This is a neighbourhood-focused program that promotes community-wide collective action on behalf of children in more disadvantaged communities. The program works with over 30 communities throughout the country that have a broad range of ethnic backgrounds. JDC-Ashalim serves as the backbone organization and promotes an organized process of sharing and learning among the communities.

The program aims to create effective systems through which service providers, policy makers, professionals, and residents can work together. In the belief that it does indeed take a village to raise a child, it emphasizes efforts to:

- Give residents a voice,
- Strengthen the community's belief in its ability to change the situation, and
- Train residents to carry out change effectively.

Regional Clusters

Regional Clusters focuses on collective action and cooperation among socioeconomically and culturally diverse communities. The JDC Institute for Leadership and Governance serves as a backbone.

Overcoming barriers, both structural and those specific to the region, is easier once local councils are organized as regional clusters. Leaders from a number of local municipalities form partnerships to promote shared interests. The cluster model allows authorities to share local assets amongst themselves and leverage regional assets. In addition, clusters provide opportunities to include other players from the business sector and NGOs.

Photos: Courtesy of Yehonatan Almog

Five clusters have now been established. One significant example is the cluster in Eastern Galilee where there are a large number of small communities. A group of six Arab and 13 Jewish municipalities adopted the goal of promoting science education and interest in careers in science. The program joined together the municipalities, civil society organizations, and local colleges in an effort that now includes over 15,000 pupils. One of the most important outcomes was the development of a number of shared laboratories that make it possible for small and disadvantaged communities to access such services.

Yehonatan Almog is the director of the System-wide Impact and Measurement Unit at Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute. //

UNITED STATES

Building collective impact capacity for Healthy Start

by Kimberly Bradley and Deborah Dean

"In my experience, community coalitions tend to be comprised of passionate people who want to see positive changes, but they struggle with cohesion and action. The CI framework establishes a pathway to meaningful, measurable success. In some ways the CI concepts are not new, but the sequence and the packaging into a singular framework is powerful. I'm optimistic that using the CI framework will transform the way Healthy Start achieves meaningful change in the community." – Healthy Start Collective Impact Peer Learning Network participant

The Healthy Start initiative in the United States works to improve maternal and infant health. Funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, Healthy Start reaches out to communities with infant mortality rates at least one-and-a-half times the national average, and high rates of low birthweight, preterm birth, and maternal mortality. It connects pregnant women and new mothers with the health care and other resources they need to have healthy births and nurture their young children.

Over its nearly 25-year history, Healthy Start has used a community-driven approach to improve the health and well-being of women, infants, and families. Local Healthy Start programs participate in Community Action Networks (CANs) that help community residents, health and social service providers, and other organizations coordinate and integrate services, and address social determinants` related to poor birth outcomes.

While Healthy Start CANs have had many successes, they often struggle with translating their common commitment to women's and infant's health into meaningful action at the community level. So, the Maternal and Child Health Bureau researched current approaches being used to promote effective community collaboration. It chose Collective Impact (CI), which provides a more structured and intentional process for addressing complex social issues connected to disparities in perinatal health.

To apply Collective Impact strategies, The Healthy Start EPIC Center, which provides training and technical assistance for the program, partnered with the Tamarack Institute to brainstorm. They ultimately decided to design a peer learning series using a virtual platform.

Safe environments lead to collaborative learning

Collective Impact Peer Learning Networks provide a dedicated space for grantees to share their experiences with applying Collective Impact within the Healthy Start context. Specific objectives for the Peer Learning Networks are: developing a deeper understanding of CI; learning about tools that can assist with applying CI; and assisting grantees with developing a CI action plan. Grantees can join the Peer Learning Network most appropriate to their situation.

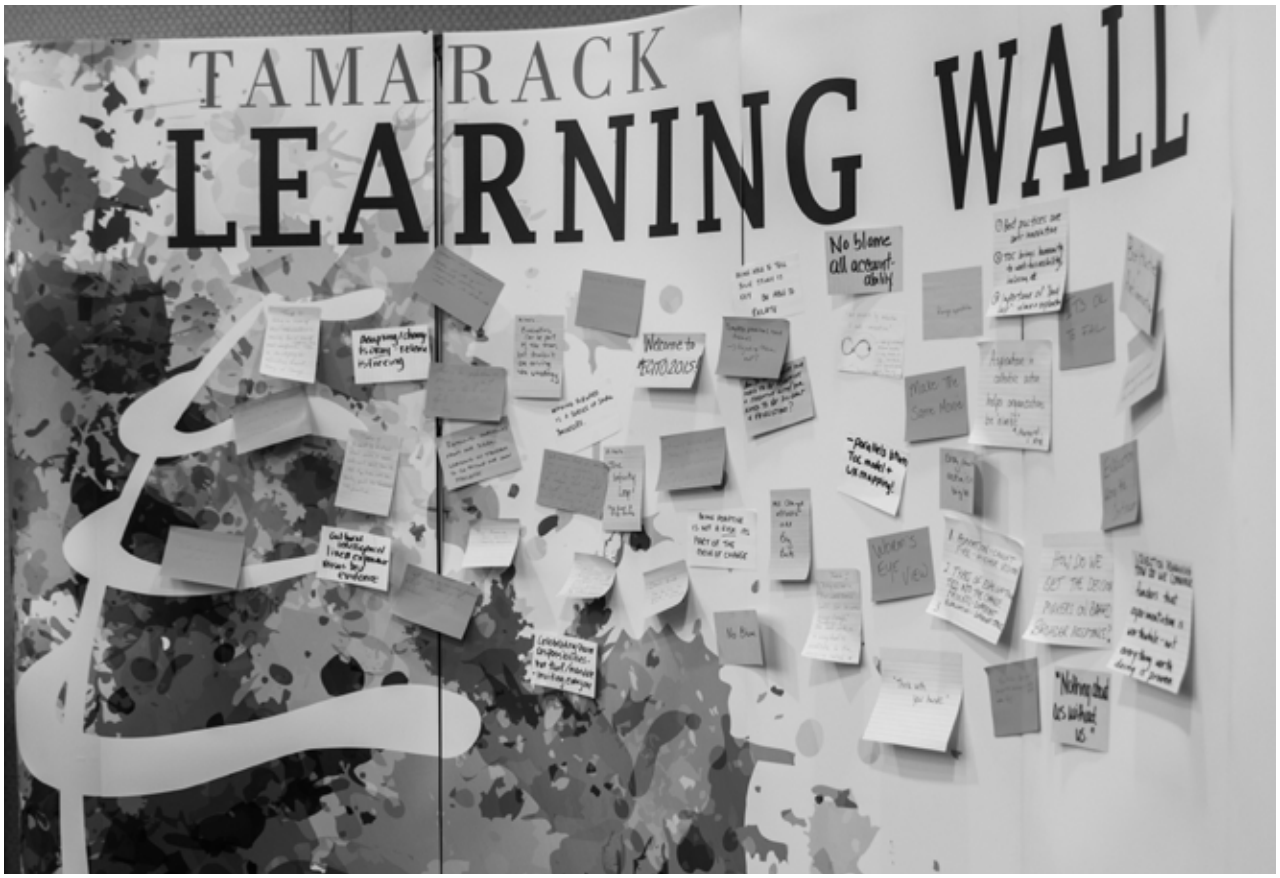
Partner for Collective Impact

A key feature of the Peer Learning Networks design is that each is co-facilitated by a grantee paired with a Healthy Start EPIC center staff member. This pairing helps balance the need for both context and content experience.

Peer Learning Networks meet virtually through a series of eight 90-minute conference calls that occur monthly. Between calls, grantees apply tools related to the CI

COLLECTIVE IMPACT PEER LEARNING NETWORK ROADMAP

1. Building relationships & PLN goal setting
2. Exploring the CI pre-conditions
3. Common Agenda
4. Shared Measurement
5. Mutually Reinforcing Activities
6. Continuous Communications & Backbone Infrastructure
7. Year 1 Collective Impact Implementation Plans
8. Reflecting on our learning journey



condition they focused on during the call to develop a CI Action Plan. The Action Plan serves as a means for grantees to determine next steps specific to their needs for the upcoming year.

Kimberly Bradley, coordinator of the Peer Learning Networks for the Healthy Start EPIC Center, says, "the peer learning networks have the opportunity to mirror many of the core elements of CI that grantees are navigating through within their own CANs: relationship building, creating a safe space for authentic exchange, being okay with not having all the answers, shared ownership. This list can go on… It is our hope that these elements, combined with content, examples of tools, and most importantly peer sharing, will lead to even more robust Healthy Start CANs and systems change at the local level."

The power of possibility

Although the Peer Learning Networks are a recent development, the process has been embraced enthusiastically by grantees, the Healthy Start EPIC Center, and Maternal and Child Health Bureau. Participating grantees greatly value the regular opportunity for peer exchange, have particularly appreciated the CI tools, and are excited by the potential of CI to energize and expedite the work of their CANs.

The process has been embraced enthusiastically by grantees.

As a capacity-building endeavour that serves a national maternal and child health initiative, Collective Impact Peer Learning Networks are empowering Healthy Start programs to improve infant mortality rates in their communities.

Kimberly Bradley is Senior Technical Assistance Specialist with ZERO TO THREE, a subcontracted partner of the JSI Healthy Start EPIC Center.

Deborah Dean is Senior Consultant, JSI, Healthy Start EPIC Center. //

Big ideas 3.0

by Tom Klaus

Last October's inaugural Collective Impact Summit marked the development of collective impact 3.0. The first and second phases were about experimentation and developing parameters and practices. The third iteration will deepen understanding of the capacities and context required for effectiveness. Five big ideas emerged for me:

1. Collective impact does not need to be applied to every collaboration

While known and knowable problems can be addressed by isolated efforts and traditional collaborations, unknowable problems – complex social issues that are difficult to define and even harder to solve – are where collective impact works best.

2. Collaboration needs more 'context experts'

Context experts are people, including children and youth, with lived experience of an issue that is being addressed. They know experientially about an issue and will likely see the greatest benefit from a successful initiative. *Content experts* are professionals, providers, and leaders with formal power who have knowledge, tools, and resources to address the issue. All too often, content experts outnumber context experts. Collective impact 3.0, though, takes as many context experts as content experts to be wholly effective.

3. Buy-in doesn't equal ownership

Buy-in is what happens when content experts come up with an idea and need to convince context experts that it is the best way forward. But *ownership* happens when ideas come straight from the context experts. Since it is theirs from the beginning, they need no convincing. Content experts are infamous for doing good *to* others, but not *with* them.

Photo: Tamarack Institute

Artwork by Elayne Greeley.

4. Best practices are the enemy of emergence

Best practices from past experiences have limited value; if we are convinced that we already have a solution based on previous experience, we will be unable to see other solutions as they emerge.

5. Change happens at the speed of trust

John Kania argues that deeper relationships among collective impact partners are needed to support the movement and continue its progress. It is not about predetermined solutions with emergent interactions and relationships, it is about predetermined interactions, with relationships and solutions that will inevitably emerge as a result.

Tom Klaus is a Tamarack blogger and thought leader, and the co-creator of the R2F model for measurable and sustainable community change. //

The alchemy of vulnerability and care

by Vickie Cammack

My godmother Martha was a feisty Lancashire lass who drove ambulances for the air force in the Second World War. In the early 1950s, she left the U.K. in a huff, disgusted at how veterans like herself were being treated, and made the big move to Canada on her own. Martha was tough, opinionated, exacting in her standards, and known for the dry wit she delivered with a twinkle in her eye.

In her 80s, she had become frail and brittle, living in a care home. She sat motionless in her chair, her short shock of white hair combed back with a pouf at the front, and a pair of wraparound sunglasses kept the whispery shadows she still saw to a minimum.

As I bent over to give her a hug, I said, "Gee, Martha, you look pretty cool with your shades and slicked back hair."

Martha replied in her lingering Lancashire accent, "Oh, yes the aids have been telling me I look like Elvis. But I told them there is only one difference between me and Elvis."

"What's that, Martha?"

"I'm not dead yet."

Of course I laughed. But I knew Martha was right to remind the world she wasn't dead yet. In a society obsessed with material goods, speed, and productivity, Martha had to fight to be seen as relevant. But would the world be better off without her? I think not. You see, before she left this world, Martha's impairments, vulnerability, and stubbornness had been catalysts for kindness to blossom in the neighbourhood where she lived.

Before entering the nursing home, Martha had lived alone in a two storey home. She couldn't get down the stairs, so she was confined to the top floor unless she was carried out to an ambulance. It seemed obvious to everyone that Martha should move. But Martha's infamous pride and stubbornness took on mythical proportions on this matter.

Between her brusque manner and lack of gratitude for support, it would have been understandable if her neighbours washed their hands of her.

But they didn't. Instead, they brought her books and sweets. They kept an eye out. They brought over turkey on holidays, even though Martha insisted she could have done do a better job of roasting it herself. They organized get-togethers at Martha's house, and over time, they got to know each other. Now when they bumped into each other they always had something to talk about – another Martha story, a shared chuckle at one of her jokes, or worries about her health. While they often cursed her stubborn and demanding nature, they rarely failed to acknowledge how inspired they were by her spirit and feistiness. As her challenges grew over the years so did the relationships among her neighbours.

Martha transformed her street into a neighbourhood. Because of Martha, her neighbours became patient and inventive. Because of her cantankerous spirit her neighbours became hospitable and gracious. Because of her humour they understood the true meaning of resilience. Because of her stubbornness they entered her home and each other's lives.

Martha was tough, opinionated, exacting in her standards, and known for her dry wit.

We need people like Martha, even those who are difficult and prickly. They are alchemists transmuting vulnerabilities into the potent force of caring. Our collective vulnerabilities are seeds that grow care. They are elixirs, converting every day actions into beauty and tenderness.

Vickie Cammack is a social entrepreneur, a Tamarack thought leader, and the founding director of Tyze Personal Networks. //

Charting steps from poverty to middle class

by Karen Pittman

I am a collective impact data junky with a passion and, some would say, a gift, for inspiring local leaders to tackle big issues. I am always on the lookout for powerful ways to help leaders see and think differently about the challenges that wear them down every day. Sometimes I find these tools, and sometimes I work with my staff to create them. In either case, we only know they work when people use them to make sense, make connections, and make change.

My story of what is possible comes in three parts, each focused on the same challenge – ensuring that more low-income and minority young people make their way into the middle class. Each part helps me to explain and replicate a powerful example of community change.

1. What does it take to help children born into poverty become middle class by middle age?

This was the big question asked by researchers at the Brookings Institution who created the Social Genome Project. I had the privilege of being an advisor to the project. I carry a chart with me everywhere I go that, though it doesn't do justice to the project, explains the need for collective impact in the most elegant way I have ever seen. Here's what you need to know:

- There are conditions and behaviours at each developmental stage that, if present, increase a young person's chances of being "on track" for middle class by middle age (before age 30).
- There is no developmental stage at which being "off track" absolutely shuts down the possibility of "getting on track." Movement, in fact, is quite robust.
- There are no guarantees that being on track at one stage guarantees being on track at the next. Middle childhood, for example, is a very volatile period in which almost as many move off track as come back on track.
- Educational achievement and attainment, not surprisingly, are key factors that predict "on trackness," but they are not the only factors. Acceptable social behaviour and strong social skills are important in the early developmental years. Avoidance of risky social behaviours like early parenthood and crime are key factors in the later years.

I like this chart because it screams what is *possible*. It sums up millions of dollars of sophisticated modelling that proves that there is no excuse for leaving a child behind at any age for any reason. I love this chart, however, because it is a road map to the *probable*.

2. What happens when young people ask themselves what it takes to become middle class?

This was the big question my organization, the Forum for Youth Investment, asked a decade ago when we adopted a set of community organizing projects that hired high school students in disadvantaged urban communities to be Youth Mobilizers. Their job was to understand the statistics about the numbers of youth who are "off track." Talk to them to find out how they got there and what they think it would take to get on track. Keep talking until some of the answers point back to what young people and their families can do, and some answers point to external factors. Research all of the barriers and opportunities identified. Figure out who needs to be persuaded to make change: Young people. Parents. Faith leaders. Store owners. Educators. Politicians. Persuade them.

They did their jobs well. In Nashville, Youth Mobilizers decided that money management was an issue. They trained themselves, trained their families and neighbours, and then organized to shut down the cheque cashing businesses. They worked with the United Way to mobilize families to file for Earned Income Tax Credits, bringing thousands of untapped dollars into their community. They learned that students were being directed off track

because they were being discouraged from going to college. They worked with the high school principal to reform the guidance program, and then they worked with the parents whom, they found, had valid reasons for wanting their children to stay home. College attendance almost doubled in four years. The lessons learned from these projects and others helped fuel a robust youth organizing movement that is still challenging the assumption that off track now means off track for life. These youth beat the odds in their communities in part because they became a part of the solutions that helped others beat the odds as well.

I love sharing the Nashville story, and other stories, almost as much as I love the Brookings chart. The actions these young people took were the epitome of what John Kania calls "emergence." But I always struggle with how to sum up its implications. The story shows what is possible, but it doesn't convince people that the possible is probable.

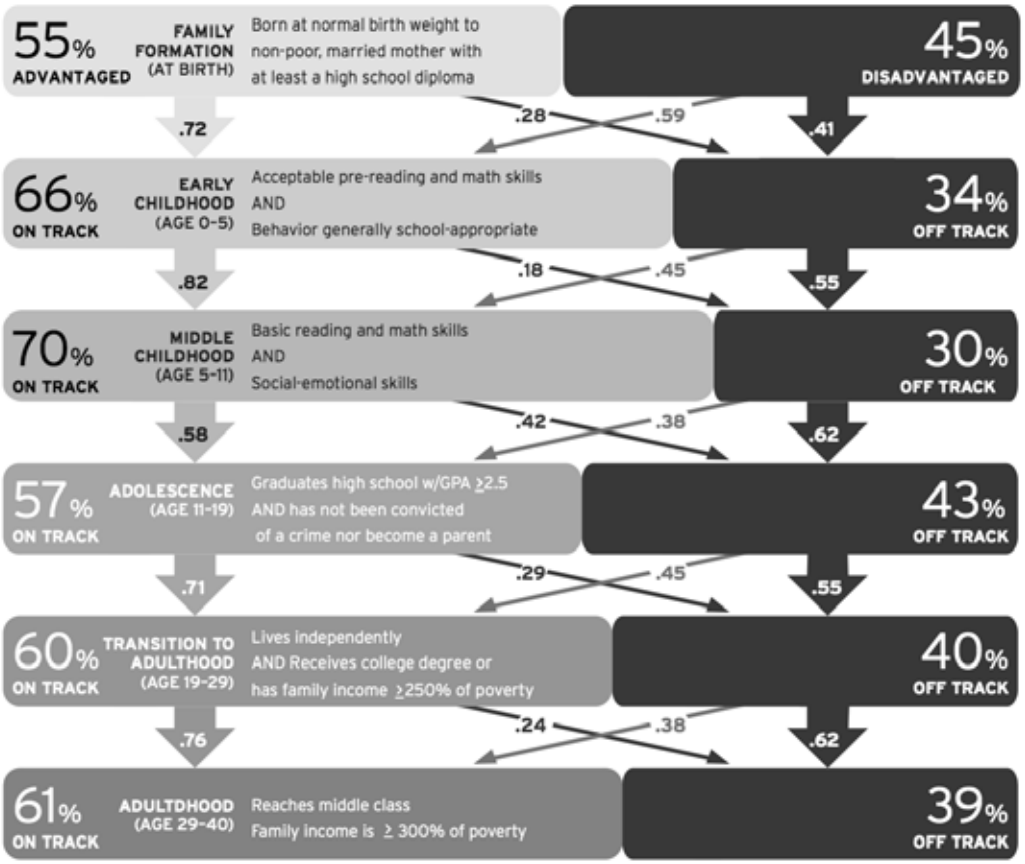


Chart from the Brookings Institution, Center for Children and Families, The Social Genome Project, September 20, 2012.

3. What happens when we ask what's on the arrows?

This is the question I have started asking leaders after sharing the chart and telling the story. I ask them first to name the "blue arrow" [i.e., grey in the chart above] things that work in their communities at every developmental stage – home visiting programs, quality child care, community policing to reduce arrests. They begin to see why no one program is a magic bullet. They also see why a web of programs can not only help young people beat the odds, but actually change the odds in their favour. Then, I ask them to talk about the "red arrows," [i.e., black in the chart above] those things that pull on track kids off track. This is harder. These arrows relate more to promises broken, people lost, program staff that failed to engage or support, places that changed from safe to scary, good possibilities that fizzled, dangerous ones that appeared. Protecting young people from "red arrow" realities requires people who are not only present and prepared to look for signs of slippage, but people who can create opportunities for young people to name and practice the skill sets and mindsets that will help them be resilient in the face of adversity and resourceful in the face of opportunity.

Once we get leaders thinking differently about what it takes to be vigilant in the pursuit of equity and realizing how a focus on youth readiness can pay off in surprising and powerful ways, we learn that there's more to the work we do. The lesson I leave you with is that with the right tools, leaders can come to believe that the possible is not only probable, but predictable if they make the right investments not only in programs, but in people and places as well.

Karen Pittman is co-founder, president, and CEO of the Forum for Youth Investment. //

Feature conversation

John Kania and Fay Hanleybrown on collective impact, philanthropy, and leaders who hunger for change

by Liz Weaver

Liz Weaver from the Tamarack Institute caught up with John Kania and Fay Hanleybrown of Foundation Strategy Group (FSG) at the "Champions for Change – Leading a Backbone Organization for Collective Impact" conference held in April, 2014 in Vancouver, B.C. John and Fay shared their latest thinking about Collective Impact in this interview for The Philanthropist*, published in July, 2014, and condensed and reprinted here with permission.*

Liz: Given the tremendous take-up and momentum of Collective Impact in the past few years, this must have been a tremendous learning opportunity for you and your colleagues. Has anything surprised you, and what would you say has changed the most since John and Mark wrote the original article in 2011?

John: My initial surprise was the incredible nerve it seemed to strike with many people. There was a lot of resonance, not only in the U.S. and Canada, but around the world, and we were amazed with the number of people that responded. This idea was consistent with what they were learning about how to achieve progress at scale, and it hit a deep visceral chord for many.

Fay: The timing was really right for the article. There was frustration with trying the same approaches and not getting results. Having a common language and frame around Collective Impact has been helpful for people. We were also surprised at how quickly this was picked up by non-profit and public entities. The White House Social Innovation Fund has written Collective Impact into their most recent round of funding. The Centers for Disease Control have started doing pilots focused around Collective Impact. There have been hundreds of new Collective Impact efforts catalyzed around the world as people try to do this work more effectively. It's been very exciting!

John: One merit of the framework for those who have been doing this kind of work for decades is that it gave them a common language and a consistent way of talking about comprehensive community change. Typically when bringing up that term, unless you're deeply embedded in doing the work, eyes glaze over. But when we talk with others such as government or business – they don't spend so much time doing this work but can contribute – they immediately perk up. The five conditions of Collective Impact gave language to what many people already intuitively knew, but in a way where we can now have consistent conversations about this work, and people understand what it takes to do this work in a rigorous way.

And there continues to be a great hunger among practitioners for information about how to do this better. For example, this conference is sold out with more than 250 people in attendance. We see the same at every conference we've had on Collective Impact since the publication of our first article. We have just launched an online Collective Impact Forum in partnership with Tamarack, the Aspen Institute, and others. In the first week, more than 1,000 users signed up. There is so much hunger for knowledge and engagement around Collective Impact. People doing this work understand the importance of working collectively, and they know it's critical to do it well. Developing a common way to describe

this helps us to better understand challenges and overcome barriers.

Fay: I'd like to stress that this is not a rigid model – Collective Impact looks different in different contexts. We have found tremendous value for practitioners from learning across different efforts, so that's why we've launched the Collective Impact Forum. There is great opportunity for learning from one another, but also a danger if people see Collective Impact as a model that looks the same in each place.

Liz: You have had the opportunity to work with many people and organizations in Canada and, indeed, around the world. Have you identified any systemic or cultural differences between the United States and Canada that might lead you to interpret the framework any differently here?

John: I've thought about this a bit, though we haven't directly consulted on Collective Impact efforts in Canada. But my sense in talking to folks like Liz and other practitioners here in Canada is that I wouldn't interpret the framework itself – the five conditions – differently between the United States and Canada. There are some countries – for example, many countries that are not democracies – that are just not ready to do Collective Impact, but there is not so much difference between the U.S. and Canada.

I do think I've observed key differences that are a matter of degree, rather than fundamental oppositions, between the United States and Canada. I can think of four specifically:

First, readiness and enthusiasm to work collectively seems to be higher in Canada. Americans are more drawn to success of the individual, which is part of our historical and national narrative. We recognize and hold up on a pedestal the awesome individual or organization. Canadians tend to want to believe that the whole can deliver better than the sum of parts and are more willing to act accordingly. National healthcare is an example. Canada seems to me to be a culture more comfortable with collective action.

Second, role of government. The debate about the role of government is everywhere but is perhaps less fierce in Canada than in the United States. For example, it is more natural in Canada to see a municipal or provincial government play a role as a backbone coordinating resource. It's not impossible this would happen in the U.S. – we have seen some instances in the United States where government is playing the backbone role – but it is more the exception than the rule.

Photo: Carol Penner

People doing this work understand the importance of working collectively.

Third, impact of philanthropy. In the United States, philanthropy typically has larger dollars and a larger voice in collaborative efforts than in Canada, but this is a double-edged sword. On the positive side, in the U.S. where there is more philanthropy, theoretically there should be more flexible funds to support Collective Impact initiatives and to fund backbone support and shared measurement. But on the flip side, because the U.S. has a fairly crowded funder landscape (particularly in major populated areas), funders love to own their specific initiatives and to pick and choose who they work with. This drives a culture of isolated as opposed to collective impact. This is something we need to overcome in the U.S. that seems less challenging in Canada.

Finally, appreciation of systems efforts. I think there is greater appreciation among thought leaders and practitioners in Canada for the complex nuances of systems change. Not that this doesn't exist in the U.S., but proportionally, there is a higher percentage of thought leaders in Canada who are engaged in better understanding the nature of systems change. As a result, there seems to be a broader and deeper dialogue in Canada about understanding Collective Impact through the lens of systems and complexity. This is one place where I think Canada is ahead of the U.S. Not that people in the United States don't get it, but it's a smaller voice in the dialogue about how to make progress against social problems. I often look to Canada for what I can learn from leading practitioners and thinkers here about systems change.

The five conditions of collective success

1. **Common agenda.** "Collective Impact requires all participants to have a shared vision for change, one that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions."
2. **Shared measurement systems.** "Looking at results across multiple organizations enables the participants to spot patterns, find solutions, and implement them rapidly."
3. **Mutually reinforcing activities.** "The power of collective action comes not from the sheer number of participants or the uniformity of their efforts, but from the coordination of their differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action."
4. **Continuous communication.** "Participants need several years of regular meetings to build up enough experience with each other to recognize and appreciate the common motivation behind their different efforts."
5. **Backbone support organizations.** "Coordination takes time, and none of the participating organizations has any to spare. The expectation that collaboration can occur without a supporting infrastructure is one of the most frequent reasons why it fails."

From "Collective Impact," by John Kania and Mark Kramer, published in Stanford Social Innovation Review, *Winter 2011, and available online at ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact.*

Liz: Looking ahead, what would you say are the greatest challenges facing Collective Impact?

Fay: One of the recent trends we've observed is that as more Collective Impact efforts take off, we are seeing instances of competing efforts in the same geography and on the same issue area. There is competition about who plays the backbone role. This is ironic, because it represents isolated impact in the context of Collective Impact. It is not helpful to communities if the various stakeholders are investing in competing Collective Impact efforts.

Another set of challenges is around measurement and data. This is one of the biggest barriers that we hear many collaboratives talking about: the ability to identify shared measures that all partners agree on; and the capacity to look at data, learn from data, and make course corrections as you go.

A third major challenge is around funding and sustainability. Collective Impact efforts often take a long time to execute. Large-scale change takes years, if not decades, to accomplish. It's important to keep a Collective Impact infrastructure in place over a long period, which requires a mindset shift among funders to allocate funding to infrastructure (providing backbone support, convening players, and building data systems) and to have the patience to allow the process to work and solutions to emerge. Often the expectation is to see results in one year, or in one grant cycle, but you need to make a considerable long-term investment to get to large-scale change.

John: I can put together two of these challenges: the long-term nature of the work and the ability to measure progress. These are challenges for all of us who work in the social sector, especially when addressing complex issues. We have a set of funding entities – usually government and philanthropic funders – who (as they should) want to be rigorous, use dollars wisely, and see outcomes from what they invest in. But when we are talking about Collective Impact efforts, where it takes years to see progress, outcomes are not the result of one organization but a collective effort. Many of the outcomes you see in the

early years relate less to population-level outcomes and more to how people work together differently in order to come up with more innovative ways of scaling evidence based practices.

But these two stakeholders in the change process – government and philanthropy – are structured to want precise outcomes-oriented data that is often very difficult to deliver in a Collective Impact effort. That's no one's fault. Everyone wants to see outcomes in as clear a fashion as possible. But, as Albert Einstein said, everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler. It can be very difficult to find that middle ground for reporting results between making things simple and clear, but not oversimplifying things so much that you disguise the complexity of what's happening on the ground. It's something we all need to work on.

Liz: One of the compliments that we hear often is about the clarity and detail of the Collective Impact framework – I call it "deceptively simple." On the other hand, we imagine that this poses a bit of a burden as experience is gained. We also think that you have been very clear on the importance and interdependence of the five conditions. Are you feeling any need to revise or evolve the framework at this point?

Fay: Since publishing the initial article, our team at FSG has continued to research successful Collective Impact efforts around the globe, supported the launch of dozens of new Collective Impact efforts, and trained thousands of practitioners about how to put this work into practice – and the five conditions still hold. We've been pleasantly surprised to see how consistently important they are across the work we're studying and doing. So while we wouldn't change the Collective Impact framework itself, we have deepened our understanding of what it takes to be successful in this work. Take, for example, the importance of cross-sector collaboration. While it is not spelled out explicitly in the framework, we have seen how powerful it is to bring different sectors together around a problem. Each partner holds important keys – no one group alone can solve the problems we're trying to tackle with Collective Impact. Having them all at the table creates a different level of dialogue and action than would occur if you only have the usual suspects or people engaging in their usual groups.

Photo: Carol Penner

Another key lesson we have learned is the importance of structure in this work. It's really important to have the backbone function to coordinate all of the work, but as part of that backbone infrastructure you also need to have shared cross-sector governance as well as multiple working groups focusing on different parts of the problem. These working groups are constantly communicating with each other, looking at the data, and sharing lessons. This structure for working together is critical for identifying new strategies, scaling what's working, and innovating.

Hand in hand with structure are relationships. We touched lightly on this in the second article "Channeling Change," but we've really come to see the importance of interpersonal relationships to the success of this work. A wise backbone leader recently said to me, "Progress happens at the speed of trust." Breaking down silos, thinking creatively, and true collaboration just can't happen without strong interpersonal relationships.

True collaboration just can't happen without strong interpersonal relationships.

John: This is where continuous communication comes in. People interpret this as, "We need to talk

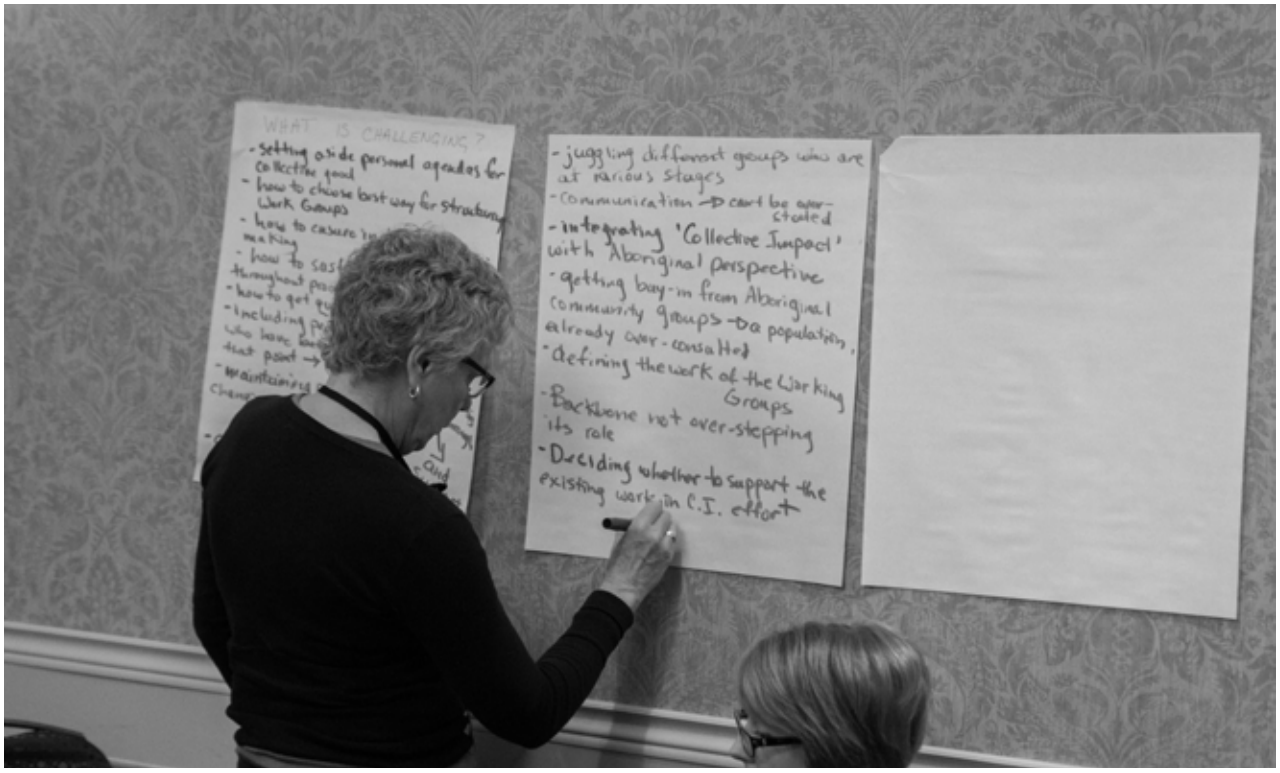


Photo: Tamarack Institute

on an on-going basis to the outside world about what we're doing." No. It's people involved in the Collective Impact effort who must continuously communicate with each other. What we've found is that the five conditions as a framework have held up remarkably well. There's nuance underneath the conditions. Your phrase "deceptively simple" is accurate. Many people, who haven't been involved in the deep and heavy work of community change look at the framework, say "Oh, I get it," and assume it will be easy. Then they begin the work and learn how challenging it is. What I've come to appreciate is that Collective Impact is about really "working the issue" over time. And the nature of this work is that new solutions, not known at the front end of the process, will emerge over time if appropriate attention is paid to structuring the process well. The framework of Collective Impact (e.g., the five conditions) is important, but there's a lot of additional knowledge required to do this work well.

Collective Impact is about really 'working the issue' over time.

Fay: Another key lesson is the importance of including the voice of persons with lived experience. We've seen a huge range of community engagement across Collective Impact efforts in terms of how broadly or deeply different populations are included. But regardless of the degree of engagement, you must have the voice of persons with lived experience helping to define the problem and key measures, and engaging in the development of solutions.

John: Related to this is the notion of ensuring that a representative set of all the people and organizations who are relevant to a particular issue participate in the work. One thing we're constantly amazed at is that, once you bring all the different eyes of people who need to be together across the sectors to deal with an issue, it is remarkable that many of those people have rarely if ever been at the same table together. Solutions emerge that they each individually couldn't get to themselves, but when they get together as a collective, innovative answers nobody thought of before become obvious. We have countless examples of this, although it is counterintuitive for many.

Liz: Are you concerned at all about protecting the integrity and even the "brand" of Collective Impact?

Fay: We have been delighted to see the excitement about Collective Impact and are inspired by the momentum we're seeing in terms of partnerships taking off because of this thinking. At the same time, there is a danger with respect to the term "Collective Impact" being used too loosely. FSG has no interest in copyrighting the term, and we've given it freely to the field. But there is some utility in being definitive about the five conditions, and distinguishing Collective Impact as something more structured and rigorous than typical collaboration. When Collective Impact is used loosely, it can be problematic if the effort subsequently fails because it doesn't have the structure and conditions for success. This could ultimately label all of Collective Impact as a failure and undermine the hard work of many. Not every effort will be successful, but we see real opportunity here to get to large-scale change in a manner that has been elusive for society to date.

John: I've seen misuse of the term when people use it to describe their way of achieving collective ends. For example, we know of one funder that brought together its grantees – and its grantees only – and said, "We're going to hold all of you accountable to achieve a collective set of outcomes that we will define for you. And you need to report to us the progress you're making on these outcomes consistent with our grant cycle." There are so many things wrong with this at so many levels – not just about how Collective Impact happens, but how one effectively supports social change. Yet they're branding it as Collective Impact. It's damaging – if I were to hear about this effort, and it was conveyed to me as Collective Impact, I would think Collective Impact was one of the worst ideas ever! We also see non-profits going to funders who are sincere in their efforts to support Collective Impact and make grant requests in the name of Collective Impact, but they are not really following the principles. This can be very frustrating to funders.

Fay: Collective Impact is not the answer for every community or every set of partners. There needs to be readiness for Collective Impact, and the three preconditions that we have found to be really important are: 1. Making sure there are strong champions for this work – leadership is so critical; 2. Ensuring there is a sense of real urgency for change; and 3. Having resources to support the planning to do this work. We see communities jumping in when the readiness conditions just aren't there, and that is a problem as well. So there is a danger in dilution, calling something Collective Impact when it is not so rigorous, and also the danger of jumping in when the partners are not ready.

Collective Impact is not the answer for every community.

John: Achieving Collective Impact is super hard and challenging for any set of organizations. We're really still at the beginning stages as a society in understanding how to do this work well. We, as well as others, recognize that. I don't think there's a lot of leverage for society in FSG attempting to be the police or certifiers of what is or isn't Collective Impact. What we hope to do, with Tamarack and others through the Collective Impact Forum, is to help those who aspire to Collective Impact access knowledge and tools, and connect with others who are doing this work, so that we can all get better together. While we worry about commoditization of the term Collective Impact, we feel the best approach to address the concern is to keep holding up efforts and communities who are doing this well, and help explain why it's working, so that others can aspire to get better.

Fay Hanleybrown leads FSG's Seattle office and Collective Impact approach area.

John Kania oversees FSG's consulting practice and has 25 years of experience advising senior management on issues of strategy, leadership, assessment, and organizational development.

Liz Weaver is vice-president of the Tamarack Institute. *See her feature article, "Transformational change is possible," on page 31.* **//**

BOOK

Impact: Six Patterns to Social Innovation

reviewed by Christie Nash

Impact: Six Patterns to Social Innovation by Al Etmanski, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc, 2014.

"Social innovation is the latest descriptor of the ageless human pursuit to make the world a better place."– Al Etmanski

In *Impact: Six Patterns to Social Innovation*, Al Etmanski shares his personal journey as a community advocate, activist, and social entrepreneur that led him across North America to meet people who are working together and creating lasting social change.

Weaving together profiles of social innovators with his own personal experiences, Etmanski is less interested in defining social innovation than he is in clarifying its intent. The central questions of *Impact* address the paradox of short-term success versus long-term impact in social change.

Etmanski articulates six deep patterns that can be used to achieve lasting social, economic, and environmental justice:

- Thinking and acting like a movement
- Creating a container for your content
- Setting the table for allies, adversaries, and strangers
- Mobilizing your economic power
- Advocating with empathy
- "Who" is more important than "How"

These patterns do not exist independently of each other. Rather, they are mutually reinforcing, as they blend, merge, and overlap in various ways.

The articulation of these key patterns and Etmanski's rediscovery and celebration of Canada's history of social innovation are both inspiring and provocative. He reminds us that those working at social innovation today stand upon the shoulders of the people who led the way before us. In outlining these six patterns, Etmanski has distilled the wisdom of social innovation pioneers to offer an accessible and pivotal resource for those inspired by, and striving towards, possibility. //

BOOK

Deepening Community: Finding Joy in Chaotic Times

reviewed by Connie T. Braun

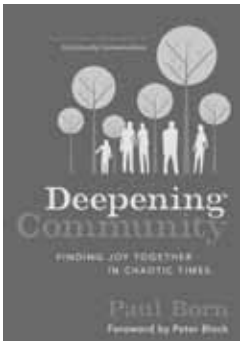
Deepening Community: Finding Joy in Chaotic Times by Paul Born, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc, 2014.

Internationally recognized for more than 30 years as a community activist, writer, and teacher, Paul Born has written his latest book, *Deepening Community: Finding Joy in Chaotic Times* for those who want to deepen community and bring about individual and collective altruism.

Born reminds us that seeking community is natural. The question is whether we seek deep community or shallow; we are faced with a choice. The critical point of this book is that community no longer defines us as it once did. In his words, "We may long for a time community defined us, but we must face the reality today that community is defined by us."

Born's heritage is Mennonite, a community known for its social activism, work with refugees, community development, humanitarian aid, and disaster relief. The shared values of frugality, simple living, sharing, and faith united his family and their refugee group from Stalinist USSR. Rather than basing relationships on fear, the community deepened in their commitment to the well-being of one another. As these hardworking refugees acculturated to Canada, Born witnessed his community – including his family, neighbours, and church – come together to help one another thrive, socialize, celebrate, and, over time, even prosper in work and business. "I often wonder

if the only way we can ever really transcend collective evil we endure as people is to do good together," he ponders.



Born organizes the concept of community into five broad categories: community as identity, place, spiritual, intentional, and a natural living system. He then breaks down his analysis of deepening community through four "simple acts": Sharing our stories, enjoying one another, caring for one another, and working together to build a better world.

In his chapter "10,000 Pies Can Save the World," a group of young friends work together at a Mennonite relief sale, and we learn that volunteerism leads to enjoyment. In "Caring for One Another," Born shares stories of how neighbours can come together despite the failure of subdivisions and city planning to promote a backyard culture.

Ultimately, caring for one another is the heart of community, and the root of peace is selfless giving. According to Born, "the giving and receiving in relationship provides a form of mutuality and takes the work beyond charity. I have called this, restoring our humanity." This takes intentional effort, as the stories in this book reveal.

Deepening Community will, no doubt, be of interest to those in community development, community organization, and the not-for-profit sector, as well as faith leaders, elected officials, policy makers, and bureaucrats. It will also be of significant interest to parent groups, educators, and those working with youth. Born makes the connection between telling our stories and caring for one another; between community volunteerism and joy; and between selfless giving and peace.

In *Deepening Community*, Paul Born guides the reader through shallow and fear-based community to examples of deeper community that extend toward peace, revealing story by story, that this book is not just theory. //

Rap video wins UN youth award

Inspired by Paul Born's book, *Deepening Community*, his son Michael Born and friend Matthew Steinman wrote a rap that focuses on social inclusion, diversity, and kindness to your neighbours.

The harmonious chorus, sung by the talented Nathan Martin, is both haunting and optimistic: "We need to tell the story and enjoy our lives together to hinder the storm in colder weather. Caring for everyone in your life. Working towards the end goal. Making the world a better place for every soul."

For this creative endeavour, they teamed up with friend William Snyder, Video and Media Animator at Tamarack, to direct a music video featuring the piece. The video recently won a United Nations award at the Plural + Youth Video Festival.

Exploring the things that bring people together and tear communities apart, their insightful lyrics discuss a wide spectrum of themes from war, violence, and fear, to finding opportunities for ongoing connection and forming relationships through acceptance, peace, compassion, and respect.

Filmed in Victoria Park, Kitchener, Ontario – home to these four young men – the images highlight the polarity expressed in the lyrics with shots of vibrant natural environments and neglected urban spaces, followed by people of various ages and races coming together around food, play, conversation, and song. *– Sylvia Cheuy* //

Nathan Martin with community members in the award-winning video.

Photo: Tamarack Institute

Deepening Community for Collective Impact

The Community Engagement Opportunity

Evaluation for Change

Collective Impact

Community Engagement: Technologies for Change

Collaborative Governance: 10 Tools to Increase Impact

The First 12 Months – Launching a Collective Impact Initiative

These are only a few of the many workshops we offer.

Invite us to your community:

Contact Liz Weaver:
liz@tamarackcommunity.ca

www.tamarackevents.com

E-BOOK

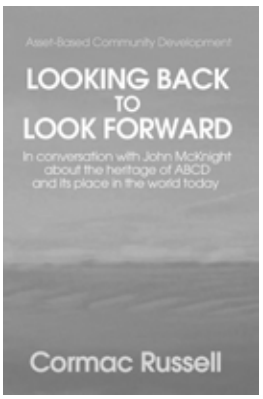
Looking Back to Look Forward: In Conversation with John McKnight about the Heritage of ABCD and its Place in the World Today

reviewed by Christie Nash

Looking Back to Look Forward: In conversation with John McKnight about the heritage of ABCD and its place in the world today by Cormac Russell, Self published, 2015. Available through Amazon and iTunes.

Have you ever wondered what it might be like to sit down with author and ABCD (Asset-Based Community Development) Institute co-founder John McKnight over a cup of coffee to talk about his life, his influences, and his inspirations? For many of us, reading *Looking Back to Look Forward* will be as close as we will ever get to that experience.

Having worked closely with McKnight for more than 20 years, and considering him a close personal friend, Cormac Russell, Managing Director of Nurture Development and world-renowned ABCD thought leader in his own right, attempts to illuminate the John McKnight behind the public persona by drawing out the key influences – the people, concepts, experiences, and conditions which served to inspire and refine McKnight's thinking.



Drawing the audience in with a friendly conversational style, personal stories of connection and life choices are interwoven with ideas from philosophical influences like Ivan Illich and Saul Alinsky, who have helped shape the vision of ABCD. What emerges from these discussions is an opportunity to both reflect and look forward at the same time, hence the name of the book.

The book explores the heritage of ABCD from McKnight's perspective and shares his current thinking about community and society through his relationships with nine people who influenced his thinking. An added bonus is McKnight's top 10 list of recommended books.

Providing a historical commentary on issues of power, race, health, socio-economic status, disability, and consumerism, this book invites you to look at the world through the lens of those on the fringe rather than the mainstream. In other words, "Once you can see what the world is like from the edge rather than the centre, then you have a completely different understanding."

McKnight also reminds us of simple things that are often overlooked in our busy lives, such as taking the time to listen, being inclusive and welcoming, recognizing that everyone has a gift and skill they can share, and learning that more can be achieved when we work together than when we work alone.

These pages chart a radical path towards inside-out development.

As Russell outlines in his introduction, this book is "not intended to be a call to action against an external force that is believed to hold power, nor an attempt to press people into service as foot soldiers for a higher cause against a common foe. Rather, these pages chart a radical path towards inside-out development, where local people come together to use the resources, capacities, and collective power within and around them to secure freedom of expression and association for everyone."

Looking Back to Look Forward is inspiring and grounding, theoretical and practical, serious and joyous. It prompts reflection, illuminates dark corners, opens up new ideas, and encourages us to dream about what is possible. It dives into difficult content such as systemic barriers, power struggles, and the professionalization of services historically performed by community, but it never loses sight of the hope found in the gifts and skills that each person brings to the community and the creative solutions that emerge when people work together.

With the full version set to be released in early 2016, this abridged book is a must read for every community builder or neighbour who needs to be reminded of how we got to where we are and what is possible for our future. //

TAMARACK
INSTITUTE

The Tamarack Institute is a connected force for community change.

Since 2001, Tamarack has been dedicated to making the work of community change easier and more effective for community leaders.

We have worked to deepen the learning of our members because we believe that when knowledge meets practice, it leads to action that makes communities more vibrant and connected, and citizens more engaged.

Ideas

Through our Learning Centre we work with leaders in non-profits, government, business, and the citizens with lived experience to advance positive community change. We do this by teaching and writing about collective impact, community engagement, collaborative leadership, evaluating community impact, and community building. We turn theory into action by connecting people into networks to share and learn together, and we work one-on-one with organizations to help advance their specific agendas.

Practice

We work deeply in two practice areas. Vibrant Communities – Cities Reducing Poverty is a network of 47 cities who are creating comprehensive poverty reduction strategies to impact the lives of one million Canadians living in poverty. Deepening Community explores programs, policies, and practices that strengthen communities and neighbourhoods, and enhance social capital.

We believe

Our belief is that, when we are effective in strengthening community capacity to engage citizens, lead collaboratively, deepen community, and innovate in place, our collective impact work contributes to building peace and a more equitable society.

Possible

Our deepest hope is to end poverty in Canada.

Engagement is core to the work of Tamarack:

- Learners engage with knowledge and learning resources;
- Network members engage with each other to collaborate, share and learn together;
- They also engage with wider communities to learn about issues, involve stakeholders,
- Together they take specific action in order to advance community change.

What our members say

In 2014, we surveyed the members of our network and here's what they told us about who they are and what they want.

- The majority of the people interacting with us are experienced practitioners and leaders who have been in the work of social change for more than five years.
- Learners have a desire to connect and share their work with each other.
- They are looking for information on community development, collective impact, community engagement, collaboration, evaluating community change, poverty reduction, and innovation.
- Learners come to Tamarack for resources, practical tools, and the latest thinking on community change.

Last year

Learners look to Tamarack to help them meet their needs for learning and training events.

- Learners collectively spent over 10,000 days in our seminars and workshops
- Growth of 3,059 members during 2014, reaching 15,485 members at the end of 2014
- 12,105 people were subscribers to *Engage!* e-magazine
- 117,463 unique visitors joined us online to learn
- 14,476 resources were downloaded.
- 528 people participated in eight different Communities of Practice working towards action planning for community change
- 22 Thought Leaders contributed their knowledge to the Tamarack learning community
- 47 cities were members of Vibrant Communities – Cities Reducing Poverty and have formal poverty reduction plans in place
- Learners invested $1.2 million to participate in seminars and workshops, which we re-invested into developing learning products and programs.

We have worked to deepen the learning of our members because we believe that when knowledge meets practice, it leads to action that makes communities more vibrant and connected, and citizens more engaged.


To imagine a better future is daunting.
But when we join with friends and neighbours,
17


our dreams become an impetus
to move through despair.
We discover optimism
and embody hope.

In spite of current ads and slogans, the world doesn't change one person at a time. It changes as networks of relationships form among people who discover they share a common cause and vision of what's possible.

– Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze