


TAMARACK 2015

PROGRESS AND IMPACT REPORT

A Connected Force for Community Change



But **we know**
for sure that
these are days
when the
improbable
can become
the **inevitable**

Contents

04 A Letter From Tamarack

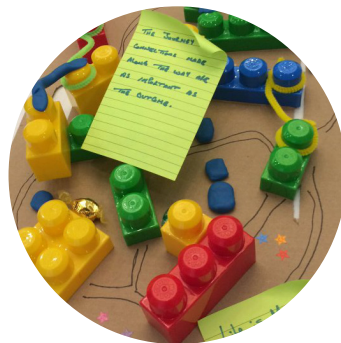
06 Tamarack Institute

08 The Learning Centre

10 Vibrant Communities

12 Deepening Community

14 Operations & Finance



A Letter from Tamarack

Tamarack was founded in 2002 and for the past 13 years we have had one simple goal. Our community of volunteers, learners and staff are dedicated to making this collaborative work easier and more effective.

Cities and communities are where people live. Every city has a unique collection of assets, including a physical infrastructure, local economy, natural environment, and the people with skills, passion, and energy. The first challenge is to recognize these assets and harness them toward a common future. The second challenge is to create a common agenda for change and, at some point, a shared understanding and agreement on the measures needed to assess our progress to a common future – a future that is good for all. The third challenge is to collaborate and work together, to communicate and ultimately create an infrastructure and governance model that recognizes and taps the abilities of all sectors.

At Tamarack, we believe in systems change and our work assumes that we can change 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 peoples' lives.

In other words, we embrace possible.

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 new ways of thinking and working together that embrace an asset-based approach that emphasizes 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.

Please join us!

Paul Born, President
Alan Broadbent, Chairman



Thank You!

We thank you – our partners, members and key supporters – for your contributions to this robust learning network. Your combined efforts enable us all to be a connected force for community change.



**Mennonite Savings
and Credit Union**



**THE J.W. McCONNELL
FAMILY FOUNDATION**

**LA FONDATION DE LA
FAMILLE J.W. McCONNELL**



Highlights

Learners collectively spent over

13,200 days

in our seminars and workshops

170,437

unique visitors joined us online to learn

5 5 2

people

participated in Communities of Practice on evaluation, neighbourhoods, and collective impact

15,089
members of the Tamarack learning community

12,576
people were subscribers to **Engage!** magazine

22 Thought Leaders

contributed their knowledge to the Tamarack learning community

15,321

resources were downloaded during 2015

Learners invested

\$1.4M

to participate in seminars and workshops, which we re-invested in developing learning products and programs

400

people

participated in the first ever National Poverty Reduction Summit in Ottawa, hosted by Vibrant Communities – Cities Reducing Poverty

Tamarack Institute

The Tamarack Institute is a connected force for community change

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 through the Learning Centre by teaching and writing about collective impact, community engagement, collaborative leadership, evaluating community impact, and community development. We turn theory into action by connecting people into networks to advance the change they wish to see in their communities.

We work deeply in two practice areas to advance community change: Cities Reducing Poverty and Deepening Community. Cities Reducing Poverty is a network of cities who are creating comprehensive poverty reduction strategies to impact the lives of 1 million Canadians living in poverty. Deepening Community explores programs, policies and practices that strengthen communities and neighbourhoods, and enhance social capital.

Our belief is that when we are effective in strengthening community capacity to engage citizens, lead collaboratively, deepen community and innovate in place, our work contributes to the building of an more peaceful, equitable society.

Our deepest hope is to end poverty in Canada.



Going Forward

As an Institute, we put a lot of emphasis on training and capacity development in order to equip community leaders with the skills they need to do their work more effectively. We believe that this focus on capacity development is the best way to get to impact.

In 2016, we will host eight multi-day gatherings, and over 10 one-day workshops covering a range of topics within our idea and practice areas. In 2015 alone, learners collectively spent more than 13,200 days in our seminars, workshops and gatherings.

Tamarack will continue to offer the latest thinking, knowledge, resources and interactive online practice, but in 2016 we will offer it in a new online space when we launch a reimagined website at www.tamarackcommunity.ca. All online learning is provided free of charge, and is made possible by the contributions of thousands of people in our learning community.

A connected force of 15,000 learners

True community change occurs when citizens and organizations adopt new ways of thinking and working together. We believe that to accelerate impact, people need to connect with each other, share resources, learn from each other's challenges and successes, and support each other in what we all know to be important, but often lonely work.

This model of working together is called a Learning Community and the Tamarack learning community grew to over 15,000 people in 2015.

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 deepen our desire to collaborate and change current systems.

We are smarter together. As members of a learning community, we 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.

Highlights

19 webinars

were held with 3,517 people registered

8

multi-day workshops with 1,748 people participating

3,712

people were members of the Learning Communities

13,281

days of learning

were delivered, including collective impact, community engagement, cities reducing poverty, deepening community and evaluating community impact

170,437

unique visitors to our websites (14,203 a month on average across all sites)

10

one-day workshops were held with 287 people participating

82

partner organizations helped to host local events

100

custom training events delivered in cities across Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand

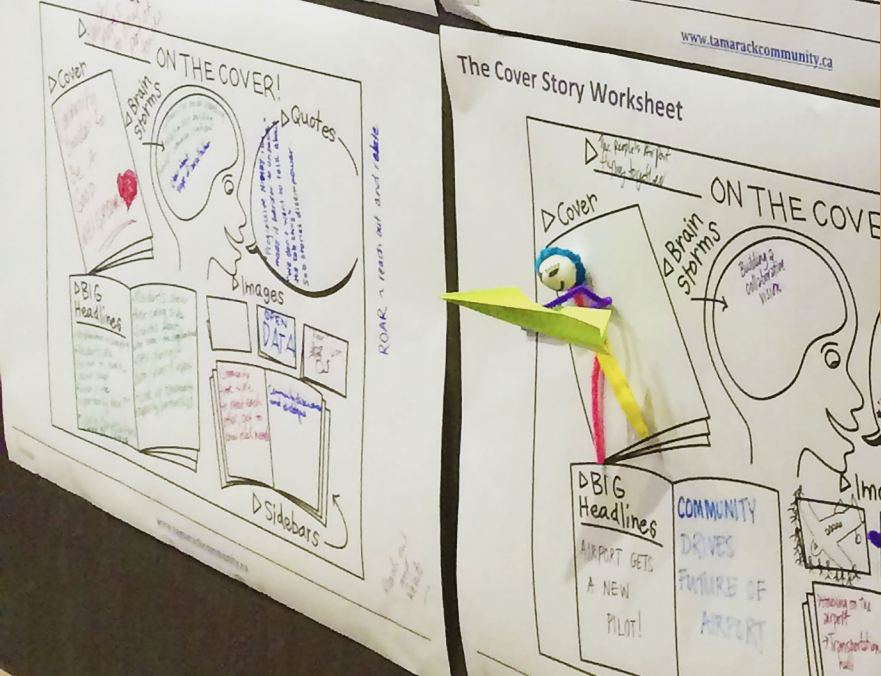
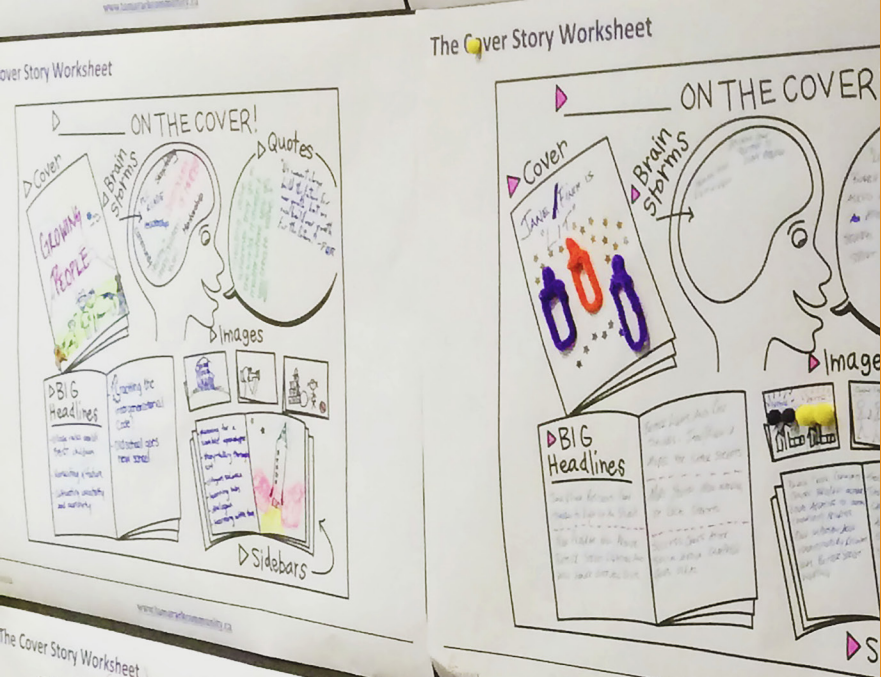
Learning Centre

Through our Learning Centre we work with leaders in non-profits, government, business and the community to make their work of advancing positive community change easier and more effective. At Tamarack we follow five idea areas:

- **Collective Impact**
- **Community Engagement**
- **Collaborative Leadership**
- **Community Development**
- **Evaluation for Community**

We turn theory into action by connecting people into networks to share, learn and work together, and by working one-on-one with organizations to help advance their specific agendas.

The Learning Centre services include workshops, gatherings, custom training and coaching, research and publications, and an online learning community that houses learning resources, hosts webinars, and provides a forum for thought leaders and community change leaders to share their latest thinking. These services are designed to facilitate this transference of knowledge and to help participants to turn ideas into action.



Going Forward

In 2015, Tamarack published its first ever magazine called *Engage* and distributed it to more than 5,000 people through our learning events, custom services and workshops. If you would like your copy of *Engage*, simply email tamarack@tamarackcommunity.ca.

Over the past year, there has been significant growth in the Learning Centre as it becomes a go-to place for resources, articles, tools and workshops. We anticipate this trend to continue into 2016 and look forward to your participation in a Tamarack Learning Event.

In 2016, we will launch a new website to enhance the learning experience. It will be an interactive space where learners can access the latest thinking on the five idea areas or learn about our extensive series of workshops, webinars and learning opportunities. The website will also host Tamarack thought leaders as they share their perspectives on how communities can and are changing.



Highlights

1,191
people were
subscribers to
Cities Connect
e-magazine

4,256
resources were
downloaded

12 provinces and 3 territories
have poverty reduction strategies or are
working to develop one

657 people
participated
in a Vibrant
Communities
webinar event

**25
cities**
are in the process
of developing
poverty reduction
strategies

11 cities
are considering developing a poverty
reduction strategy

**657
people**
were members
of the Vibrant
Communities
Canada
learning
community

**400
people**

participated in the
first ever National
Poverty Reduction
Summit in Ottawa
hosted by Vibrant
Communities – Cities
Reducing Poverty

**73
cities**
have poverty
reduction
strategies in
place

Vibrant Communities

Since 2002, Vibrant Communities Canada has been building a national network of cities focused on place-based poverty reduction.

Over the last 13 years, collaborative leaders from business, government, the voluntary sector, and citizens alike have worked together to effectively reduce poverty for more than 202,000 Canadians. These local community efforts have been bolstered by the leadership of provincial and territorial governments as they adopt or renew their own poverty reduction strategies, and through the generous support of our funders, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, Maytree Foundation and the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation.

Through Vibrant Communities, we continue to link together Cities Reducing Poverty - a collective impact movement inclusive of over 50 Canadian cities - with the aim to reduce poverty for 1 million Canadians.

The Vibrant Communities — Cities Reducing Poverty network is primarily made up of citizen-led coalitions and municipally-led strategies from across Canada. Our members represent cities, counties, regions, rural towns and even provinces/territories, that share their tools, resources, and lessons learned through an interactive website, www.vibrantcanada.ca, and through online and



face-to-face seminars, practice calls and workshops. Vibrant Communities also supports its members through access to professional coaching, access to poverty indicator data, fundraising and evaluation support, an annual gathering called Cities Reducing Poverty and more.

Every year, more communities join this pan-Canadian initiative, helping to strengthen our collective learning and poverty reduction efforts. To learn more about the benefits of membership please download our brochure: http://vibrantcanada.ca/files/vc-brochure-e_version.pdf.

In May 2015, Vibrant Communities hosted nearly 400 people at our first ever National Poverty Reduction Summit in Ottawa. The gathering aimed to strengthen networks and relationships across municipalities, provinces and the federal government to build, align and improve poverty reduction strategies. We believe that if we all work toward the same end, the result will be a healthier, wealthier and more vibrant Canada.

www.vibrantcommunities.ca

Going Forward

Out of the 2015 National Poverty Reduction Summit came a momentum to harness the assets of place, fuelled by a growing cities agenda that Vibrant Communities Canada sees as fertile ground for impact. Thus, going forward, Vibrant Communities will embed the work of cities reducing poverty more deeply into the poverty reduction strategies and policy developments of Canadian provinces and municipalities.

We know that key levers for large-scale poverty reduction in Canada are the jurisdictions of municipalities and provinces and that if we are to achieve large scale systemic change, we require these two levels of government to be committed to working together and partnering with citizen-led coalitions in cities.

In April 2016, we will convene a large gathering of poverty reduction leaders, mayors and provincial/territorial and even federal representatives to bring attention to the cities agenda and celebrate the work of mayors who are leading the way in poverty reduction.

Highlights

- 1 local Deepening Community Partnership completed and
- 2 additional partnerships underway

Attracted more than

1,300

learners to four webinars and launched a six-part bookinar:

Patterns in Community and Social IMPACT with Al Etmanski

20 members across **16**

municipalities are members of National Neighbourhood Strategy Leaders' Community of Practice

Documented and shared

21 tools

and resources for building strong neighbourhoods

10,000

copies of the **Deepening Community** book sold to date.

More than

2,000

subscribers to our Learning Community's online newsletter *Seekers Journal*

More than

200 learners

attended the 2015 Neighbours: Policies and Programs Gathering

Deepening Community

Deepening Community is the Tamarack practice area that explores programs, policies and practices that strengthen communities and neighbourhoods; cultivate citizen leadership; and, enhance social capital.

The members of the Deepening Community learning community are building a national learning network that illustrates new possibilities. As communities rediscover their capacity to work together, meaningful projects are being accomplished and residents discover opportunities to get to know one another and build trust. This shared leadership contributes to a reweaving of the social fabric of communities and neighbourhoods and strengthens their resilience.

We are discovering the power of community as an essential driver of effective community change and compiling a body of knowledge – including research, tools and practices – that makes the work of creating strong communities and neighbourhoods easier and more effective. Deepening Community is advancing the communities and neighbourhoods agenda in three specific ways.

www.deepeningcommunity.ca

TAMARACK 2015 : PROGRESS & IMPACT

Local Deepening Community Initiatives

We partner with up to five communities each year to connect neighbours to one another, identify skills and interests they can contribute, and build consensus around specific projects they can implement together to enhance their neighbourhoods and communities.

Neighbourhood Strategy Leaders Learning Network

This growing peer-learning network engages Neighbourhood Strategy Leaders from across Canada to meet, learn from one another, document promising practices, assess impact, and identify policies and investments to accelerate their work.

Maintain and Grow a Vibrant Learning Community

Develop, animate and promote an online learning platform to capture, share, and disseminate knowledge resources and facilitate connection between practitioners.

Each year we host a face-to-face gathering that attracts citizen and organizational leaders from across North America and beyond to demonstrate and share effective approaches to engage and take action at the neighbourhood and community level. In 2015, we took this message on a seven-city tour of Australia.

We also partner with community organizations to host one-day Deepening Community workshops. The curriculum is rooted in Paul Born's best-selling 2014 book – *Deepening Community: Finding Joy Together in Chaotic Times*. It provides participants with the rationale, resources and tools they need to bring the book's four pillars – Enjoying one another; Sharing our stories with each other; Taking care of one another; and, Working together to make our families, neighbourhoods, communities, and the world great places to live in for all – to life.

Going Forward

Paradoxically, while humans are “hard-wired” to live in community, evidence shows that our actual experiences of being in community have been steadily declining since the 1960s. As a result, a deliberate and intentional effort is now needed in order for us to re-learn the skills to effectively build community. When local connections and relationships are cultivated, the community's capacity to care for one another is restored.

Over the next 5 years, Deepening Community intends to respond to the need to deepen the experience of community by continuing to grow and harvest insights generated by our primary action strategies: the Local Deepening Community Initiatives and the Neighbourhood Leaders Community of Practice.

Together, with the Leaders of our local Deepening Community Initiatives, we will harvest insights from these 25 local “learning labs” that have used conversations to rebuild neighbourhoods and communities to highlight possibilities for restoring our social infrastructure.

We will also mine the collective experiences of our Neighbourhood Strategy Leaders' Community of Practice to develop a Promising Practices Guidebook and curriculum for creating and sustaining effective neighbourhood action, and identify the necessary investments and policy changes needed to grow this work across Canada.

Highlights

Learners invested

\$1.5

million to participate in seminars and workshops, which we re-invested back into developing learning products and programs

19

Home offices

20

Staff located across Canada

\$1.85

million

operating budget

Board restricted reserve surpasses

\$1 million

ensuring Tamarack remains active, can grow and is sustainable in the long term

Operations & Finance

The Operations team develops and maintains systems to ensure Tamarack is efficient and well run, and that staff are happy and productive.

The Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement is a registered charity supported by member contributions, foundations, businesses and government, as well as through revenue generated from consulting, coaching, and custom workshops and learning events. The Tamarack team and our Treasurer follow best practices in all our accounting procedures and we are audited annually. Tamarack's full audited statements are available upon request. Please email paul@tamarackcommunity.ca to request a copy.

BOARD

Alan Broadbent – *Chairman*

Nathan Gilbert – *Vice Chair*

Colin Robertson – *Treasurer*

Vali Bennett – *Corporate Secretary*

Paul Born – *President*

DIRECTORS

Paul Born – *President*

Liz Weaver – *Vice President & Director, Learning Centre*

Mark Holmgren – *Director, Vibrant Communities*

Sylvia Cheuy – *Director, Deepening Community*

Lisa Attygalle – *Director, Engagement (on leave until Sept 2016)*

Rachel Gainer – *Director, Engagement*

Kristine Culp – *Associate Director, Strategic Engagement*

COMMUNITY ANIMATORS

Kirsti Battista

Manager, Vibrant Communities

Marc Gammal

Community Animator, Learning Centre

Jana Harris

Finance Coordinator

Alison Homer

Manager, Learning, Evaluation and Policy

Graham Jackson

Community Animator, Deepening Community

Sienna Jae Taylor

Community Animator, Engagement

Heather Keam

Community Animator, Learning Centre

Devon Kerslake

Community Animator, Learning Centre

Leah Kocsis

Community Animator, Engagement

Stephanie Murray

Community Animator, Learning Centre

Christie Nash

Manager, Deepening Community

Natasha Pei

Community Animator, Vibrant Communities

Megan Wanless

Community Animator, Engagement

Going Forward

Tamarack is in a phase of growth. We have tested our model for getting to impact and we are now getting ready to expand into new knowledge areas and growing our team.

To do this we continue to solidify our organizational structure, and strengthen the systems and roles within our organization to support learning communities.

Our goal is to become one of the best “decentralized” offices in the country adopting innovative practices of management so people can work where they live. This is good for our people and even better for the environment.

Tamarack is sustainable. Our staff work where they live and most walk to work. Our offices are shared or home based, saving energy. Our BYOD policy saves on equipment purchases. We use recycled materials whenever we can. In 2016 and 2017 we will start to consider carbon credits for all the air travel we do.

Growth also means building stronger relationships with government and foundations, and diversifying our governance structure to ensure that people who benefit most from our success will play a leadership role in our success.



MSCU Centre for Peace Advancement

University of Waterloo
Conrad Grebel University College

140 Westmount Road North

Waterloo, Ontario, N2L 3G6

Web: www.tamarackcommunity.ca

Email: tamarack@tamarackcommunity.ca

Phone: 519-885-5155

Charitable Registration Number:

862808615RR0001

Our Vision:

Building a
connected force for
community change

Our Mission:

Collaboratively
create vibrant
communities by
engaging learning
leaders.

When we are effective
in strengthening
community capacity
to engage citizens,
lead collaboratively,
deepen community
and innovate in
place, our work will
contribute to the
building of a more
equitable society.
Our deepest hope
is to end poverty in
Canada.