NOTES - COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND THE SOCIAL ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT
Strengthening the capacity of youth is critical to co-generating impactful, systemic change. This workshop will engage three youth leaders from the CBYF/CEP communities and will explore lessons learned, successes, and how they have supported youth in becoming agents of change.

Workshop speakers
- **Lisa Helps: f**ormer two-term Mayor of Victoria, British Columbia; Housing Solutions Advisor to BC's Premier for the start-up of BC Builds
- **Melanie Burner:** Program Manager of Social Development with the City of Richmond
- **Meaghon Reid:** Executive Director of Vibrant Communities Calgary

<mark>Contexts within which governments are working in the face of a changing landscape: COVID, discoveries at Residential Schools, calls for racial justice, etc.</mark>

Melanie (Richmond, BC)
- There is greater community need and issues are more intersectional – pace of work is increasing, community organizations are stretched (staffing shortages, lack of resources, etc); there is greater awareness about social equity and the increased pressure to advance in those areas
- Highest poverty and need for social services in the city centre – challenges with real estate costs and space issues here
- 60 % of residents born outside Canada
- Higher life expectancy than provincial and national averages
- Structure of the Social Development Department in Richmond: 23 people, staff leads on different issues.

Meaghon (Calgary, AB)
- Challenging to understand what the actual problem is – defining the problem to define the solution. What are the conditions for wellbeing and how do we get to that state?
  - Community Wellbeing Report: https://wellbeing.enoughforall.ca/
- Don't have the muscle to get the info needed and to work in an agile way

Lisa (Victoria, BC)
- Defining the problem – if we don't consider the scale of the problem at the outset, we might not be solving the right problem (e.g. poverty is not just about not having money or food, but the systems/structures in place)

<mark>Innovative practices within government & preliminary outcomes</mark>

Meaghon (Calgary, AB):
- **Municipal government scaling Indigenous and affordable housing by giving free parcels of land to non-profits/developers** - municipal government stepping up where provincial government is working too slow or not pulling their weight. Needed when you

can't compete with rental prices. Local government sees the need for affordable housing from their citizens each day and are filling this gap.

- o City of Calgary gave lots of money to scale up affordable housing
- o Commissioned research from consulting firm for recommendations

Melanie (Richmond, BC):

- **Collaboration as a core principle of all work** - focusing on networks, collaborations and less traditional partners/sector like business
  - o Richmond Food Network an example of cross-departmental funding – was created to work with local businesses; seed funding from City but is now self-sustaining
- **Casting a wider net through community services pop ups that can be scaled in any community** - people knew there were resources in the community but didn't know how to access them (affordable rental housing info, digital literacy, accessible parking permits, navigating health care and benefit systems, supports for newcomers, addiction services, connections to community food supports)
  - o 2nd Thursday of each month in public libraries
  - o Had 22 organizations come – Telus, Ministry of Education, etc.
  - o People with lived experience shaped the project, helped implement, etc. First point of contact with community.
  - o Made postcards

Lisa (Victoria, BC)

- Solutions at all scales are necessary

Opportunities to for local governments to drive change

Melanie (Richmond, BC)

- Can collaborate cross-departmentally to address equity issues
  - o Recreation and Sports department working on an equity tool
  - o Everyone seeing that they play a role, which will be important as they action an equity framework and embed a poverty lens that's people-focused (so that all can get fully involved in community)
- Growing awareness and desire to view sustainability from a holistic approach (ie. Bringing social benefits forward)
- Sustainability goals – we can retrofit buildings without people to do it. Opportunity to work with nonprofits and SEs on job training, etc.

Lisa (Victoria, BC)

- Engineering department was thinking about Indigenous knowledge and consultation/compensation

Meaghon (Calgary, AB):

- Strategies that need to be actioned:

- o City's Reconciliation framework - White Goose Flying:
  https://www.calgary.ca/content/dam/www/csps/cns/documents/cauac/white-goose-flying-calls-to-action-cauac.pdf
  - o Anti-racism strategy
  - o Climate strategy

Addressing loneliness as a top issue

- Best predictor for long term hospital stays in loneliness
- Best poverty reductions strategy is to get to know your neighbourhood
- How are we creating spaces for people to come together, to reach people we haven't heard from in a while (through zoning, etc)?
- Major health concerns around loneliness (impact of loneliness on health is same as smoking a pack of cigs a day); approaches need to be age friendly and poverty inclusive to support participation (Seniors' perspective: age-friendly design, building complete communities)
- Perspectives on urban/community design in regards to preventing loneliness - designing community hubs, transport to get people to spaces. Inclusive zoning.
- Connection between placemaking and spaces of belonging (places of delight)

Q1: Can you pinpoint starting point or tipping point towards community-based and led work? And cross-departmental collab?

Meaghon (Calgary, AB)
- Pay living wage to those with lived experience, intermediaries role.

Melanie (Richmond, BC)
- Stronger voice around equity. Champions across departments within city.

Q2: Our agencies, communities, leaders build plans and agreements and frameworks but I am wondering how this is fundamentally brought back to the original agreement – the Treaty relationship. We are consistently failing at honouring (or even implementing) those agreements. The root of poverty is colonial constructs/design and I worry that we are responding with more colonial construct.

Meaghon (Calgary, AB)
- Yes, agreed. Not limited just to governments but to nonprofits and collectives as well. Need to look at Indigenous governance systems.

Melanie (Richmond, BC)
- Have Indigenous representatives at leadership tables.

Q3: How to reach all residents, not just those with time to kill and an axe to grind?

- Keep scanning for who is not there – requires discipline
- Meet people where they're at. It has to be safe and there needs to be trust.
- Make engagement ongoing, not once every 5 years. Engagement as network and belonging building. Known + noticed + missed = belonging.

Q4: What gives you hope?

- Desire to connect differently
- People are doing to work already – just coming to her for help.

Additional discussion

- Comments in chat re small towns and rural communities - problems are not the same but conditions creating problems are often the same
  - Some city centres can learn from rural communities, not just the reverse. Smaller communities are better at connection/belonging. Opportunities for different sized communities to learn from one another.
- Investing in public realm, public spaces, benches and parks
- Social prescribing – Alliance for Healthier Communities (https://www.allianceon.org/Social-Prescribing), Canadian Institute for Social Prescribing (https://www.socialprescribing.ca/): provides a formal pathway for health providers to address the diverse determinants of health, using the familiar and trusted process of writing a prescription
- Considerations around Indigenous representation and getting more marginalized voices on governance boards - inclusivity by creating extra seats make it seem like an afterthought
- Disparities between local governments and community service organizations (jurisdictions, etc)