COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT |

A FOUNDATIONAL PRACTICE OF COMMUNITY CHANGE

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"Life is a voyage of discovery. If we follow our curiosity and keep asking the next question and the next question about why we are here and where we want to go, our lives will be rich in love and satisfaction. Fear need not stop us, for it is just information and energy we can use to create the world we want."

— Frances Moore Lappé

WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

At Tamarack, we define community engagement as, "citizens engaged in inspired action as they work and learn together on behalf of their communities to create and realize bold visions for the future." We believe that community engagement is a foundational practice of community change work because the most innovative and sustainable solutions to some of our communities' most intractable issues are discovered by bringing together a diversity of sectors and perspectives in ways that encourage them to learn and work together to generate new solutions.

For more than fifteen years, our work has connected us with a rich network of community changemakers from around the world who share a common interest and desire to make the world a better place. These individuals have generously shared the knowledge and learnings gleaned from their efforts to engage a diversity of perspectives across their communities, so that we, their peers, can accelerate our collective understanding of the value of authentic engagement. It is through the work and insights of these community changemakers that we, at Tamarack, have gained a deeper appreciation for why community engagement is an essential practice in the work of community change.

This paper will use this learning to offer a more in-depth exploration of the practice of community engagement. It will:

• Explain why community engagement is a foundational practice in the work of community change;
• Highlight the value of engaging community members and those with first-hand experience of the issue being addressed in creating a successful change effort;
• Identify unique challenges that need to be addressed when bringing together community members and organizations to work together; and,
• Make the case that cultivating diverse community leadership – from individuals and organizations – helps increase the resilience and long-term sustainability of a community change effort.

Because many of the issues that communities face are complex and involve many interconnected and dynamic factors, it is unlikely that any one sector, working alone, will generate the kind of lasting, systemic change that people are hungry for. Albert Einstein wisely observed that, "we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."

Tamarack's experience has shown that one of the most effective ways to challenge our own biases and generate the new thinking necessary to solve community challenges, is to emphasize diversity and welcome the perspectives and insights that are brought by those whose experiences of the issues are different from our own. In keeping with Einstein's wisdom, community engagement is rooted in the belief that the best solutions to complex community issues are most often discovered when a dedicated group of community leaders,

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from multiple perspectives, work together to better align their individual efforts and partner together on new community innovations. It is these approaches, often using the Collective Impact framework, that have been found to show the most promise for high impact. The need and value of having multiple perspectives working together on a shared issue or opportunity highlights why we believe that community engagement is a foundational practice of community change.

But engaging diverse perspectives to work well together is not always easy. It requires those at the table to be willing and able to suspend their belief that they have "the answer" and instead become curious about the experiences of others to broaden their own understanding. To do this, all are required to let go of blame and judgement and slow down our thinking in order to create a common language and a richer appreciation of their shared issue.

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A focus on aspiration, combined with an attitude of curiosity and continuous learning, is central to building an effective foundation for authentic community engagement. In _The Ripple Effect: How Change Spreads in Communities_, Richard Harwood describes it this way: "a growing number of individuals and groups have been relentless in continually learning about what is working and not working in their efforts and how to better understand the real challenges before them." He goes on to highlight that this focus enables people to show up "differently in how they engage with one another – from the questions they are asking to how decisions get made. The idea of 'learning' – its very nature and what it takes – is of critical importance here." (Harwood, 2015, p. 8)

Achieving a shared commitment to an aspirational vision and engaging in conversations that enable people with diverse perspectives to learn from one another is necessary to generate new solutions. Paradoxically, when groups are able to "slow down" and think together, their collective work is able to move more quickly. Those of us more comfortable with a "take action" style of operating are often uncomfortable with this slower pace. However, we must learn to keep our eagerness for action in check, and recognize that "thinking and learning IS part of doing."

The power of a strongly held and shared community aspiration anchors people in their connection to the community and their common purpose. This is an important step in moving a shared aspirational vision forward and identifying, "manageable pockets of change that help the community to achieve the small 'wins' that generate trust, stronger relationships and greater confidence in the capability of their community." (Harwood, 2015, p. 15) The Harwood Institute has developed a simple but effective Aspiration Facilitators Guide to help undertake the work of building consensus around an aspirational community vision.

Ultimately, the core work of effective community engagement is to engage diverse partners in a learning journey so they are able to transcend their individual good in favour of the common good. The Harwood Institute refers to this way of working as Turning Outward, which they define as, "building a deep knowledge of your community through engaging not only official leaders but everyday people; using that knowledge in a deliberate way (along with data and best practices) to shape strategies and community solutions; and working in a way that not only solves problems but improves the way the community itself works." (Leavy, 2017, p. 2)

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WHY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IS A CORE IDEA IN COMMUNITY CHANGE

Tamarack has identified community engagement as one of five foundational practices that we believe are central to the work of community change. Engaged citizens are a tremendous source of ingenuity and creativity and they are, perhaps, the greatest untapped resource for solving the most complex and intractable issues of our time. In spite of this potential, we know that the work of authentic engagement is not for the faint of heart.

Authentic community engagement requires some essential skills but that is not all. To do engagement well also requires a long-term commitment to relationship-building and an investment of adequate resources so that engagement becomes more than a "one-off" event that is budgeted for – and occurs – only at the start of an initiative. To fully harness the "extraordinary power of ordinary people," community engagement should be a pillar within every effective community change strategy. The need to continually engage throughout a change effort is part of what contributes to the ripple effect of community change. The Harwood Institute encourages communities committed to change of the importance of, "making sure they are continually inviting new individuals and groups to join with them…to reach beyond the usual players in town and even the newer ones that are now engaged." (Harwood, 2015, p. 29)

Community engagement is a practice that does take work and, for organizations and individuals who embrace it as part of how they operate, it also requires a recognition that engagement work is often "messy and unpredictable." This reality is one of the reasons why many

TAMARACK'S FIVE IDEAS FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE

Tamarack has focused expertise in five idea areas that our experience has shown to be central to the work of community change.

1. **Collective Impact** – One of the biggest challenges facing community change leaders is impacting systems and policies to improve the well-being of citizens. The Collective Impact idea provides a useful framework for community change that promotes a disciplined form of multi-sector collaboration that enables different sectors to work together effectively, in a comprehensive way, to address complex social and/or environmental issues with a focus on systems and policy change,

2. **Community Engagement** – Community Engagement is the process by which citizens are engaged to work and learn together on behalf of their communities to create and realize bold visions for the future. Tamarack stresses the importance of approaching engagement with an outcomes-based lens, of always involving context experts, and to provide broad community ownership of solutions whenever possible.

3. **Community Innovation** – We see Community Innovation as a particular form of social innovation that is place-based within the specific geography of a community. As dynamic "living labs," communities offer the perfect container for innovation.

4. **Collaborative Leadership** – The premise of Collaborative Leadership is that if you bring the appropriate people together in constructive ways, with good information, they will create authentic visions and strategies for addressing the shared concerns of organizations and communities. At Tamarack, we believe that collaboration is the new leadership and we work with communities and organizations to implement it.

5. **Evaluating Impact** – New approaches to community change require different ways of evaluating impact. We are experimenting with new ways of measuring change, exploring who is responsible for outcomes, developing methods that adapt to the pace of community change, creating alternate ways to involve change-makers involved in the assessment process, and using the results to drive new thinking, better strategies and deeper impact.

Source: *Tamarack Institute 2017 Progress & Impact Report* (Tamarack Institute, 2018, p. 6)

organizations are much more familiar with "informing stakeholders" than actively engaging them in developing solutions. This reality is summarized by Eric Bonabeau, CEO of Icosystems, who wisely noted that, "managers would rather live with a problem they can't solve than with a solution they can't fully understand or control."

However, there is a rich reward for those willing to wade into the sometimes unpredictable work of authentic community engagement. Al Etmanski, one of Canada's renown social innovators, reminds us that, "human ingenuity and creativity in the face of adversity is what defines us as a species. It's something we can count on, not a speciality reserved for a few." (Etmanski, 2015, p. 35) The knowledge, passion and capabilities of community residents is a rich, often untapped, source of innovation as well as a much-needed resource in the implementation of promising solutions to our toughest social and environmental issues. For those of us who work in the realm of community change, strengthening our skill in the practice of authentic community engagement is a worthwhile investment in our own professional development and something that promises to be a source of benefit within our organizations and our communities.

EMBRACING EQUITY AND WELCOMING THE VOICE OF COMMUNITY RESIDENTS

The intentional commitment to meaningfully engage residents and "people with lived experience" of the issue we are wanting to address as leaders and co-designers of new solutions is at the heart of the practice of community engagement. These individuals, often referred to as "context experts" bring a deep appreciation of the unique characteristics of the place where the innovation is to be implemented. This knowledge is invaluable in tailoring a promising solution to capitalize on the strengths and mitigate against the limitations of each neighbourhood or community. Residents and those

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Does Your Organization Face Inward or Outward?

6 QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. To what extent are you listening to and learning from the community in both formal and informal ways? When listening, are you listening to more than just those served by your programs?

2. To what extent does your organization leave time, or intentionally create time, to discuss and review what you are learning about the community?

3. When you talk about "the community" how broad is your definition? Does it include those not directly connected to your programming?

4. When recruiting new board members, do you consider experience with community engagement as a critical skill or capacity?

5. As well as professional and skills diversity, do you seek to ensure your board includes a diversity of race, ethnicity, age and socioeconomic status? If so, do you expect members to speak for their racial or ethnic groups, or do you use diversity as a way to open up conversations with more people in the community?

6. Are you focused on inputs or impact? Are your metrics helping you keep your eye on the ball or taking your focus off the larger community?

To further evaluate the degree to which or organization is mostly turned inward or outward, take The Harwood Institute's Turn Quiz

Source: *Boards Turning Outward: Getting Beyond the Organization-First Approach*

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most impacted by an issue hold information that is critical to the effective design of implementation strategies. Even with strong data that can inform our understanding of a particular issue, rarely alone does it provide sufficient knowledge about the underlying dynamics and critical factors that must be navigated for our intended solution to be successfully implemented.

The commitment to meaningfully engage residents and those with lived experience of an issue does, however, require real tenacity. For many of us it is a new way of working that is fraught with several challenges that can undermine our best intentions. Not the least of these is the reality that there may not be a deep well of trust with residents. To them, our engagement efforts may not align with the issues that they are concerned about. This only affirms their cynicism that our engagement is an organizationally-driven process that has little benefit for them.

When engaging with residents it is important for organizations to appreciate an important distinction between *broad* authentic community engagement and *board* representation that reflects a diversity of ethnicities, ages, academic achievement and experiences or includes program participants or people of the community. While diverse representation on boards IS important, it is unrealistic to assume that a small group of board members can and/or should represent the perspectives of everyone who shares their demographic. A diverse board is NOT synonymous with a deep experience or understanding of a community's aspirations and needs. Organizations who seek to practice effective community engagement must be willing to view it as something that is far more than simply seeking the input of those that they are already serving and ensuring that they are included on the organization's Board.

The reality is that residents have often been jaded by past tokenistic efforts to engage their perspectives. Their trust has often been eroded by past engagement efforts that have been poorly implemented: where they experienced their perspectives as not being heard or respected; or are left unclear about whether and/or how their input and ideas have ultimately been used or not. Organizations that are satisfied with limited, shallow engagement efforts are what The Harwood Institute refers to as "inward-facing" organizations. Inward-facing organizations are "organizations that are focused on their own good at the expense of the common good…and are so confident in their own expertise, best practices, and data that they fail to deeply understand the people in their community and the context within which they are operating." The opposite, referred to as organizations that are Turned Outward, are described as those that have an "understanding the aspirations, challenges and concerns of people in the community and are intentionally using that knowledge to drive decision-making." (Leavy, 2017, p. 2).

Building relationships of trust with both the individuals your organization serves as well as residents of the broader community is the ultimate aim of effective community engagement. Organizations that achieve this goal are those that have embedded community engagement strategies into their standard way of operating. These organizations recognize that the building of social capital with community is a long game, not simply a short-term activity driven solely by their own interests.

A SENSE OF BELONGING: WHERE AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STARTS

A significant challenge to the practice of community engagement is the growing levels of loneliness and lack of sense of belonging amongst Canadians of all ages. In fact, the experience of isolation is not limited to Canada but is a growing phenomenon in many communities around the world. David Brooks, a columnist for the New York Times wrote in his May 17th, 2016 column, "what is the central challenge facing our era? My answer would be social isolation." (Brooks, 2016)
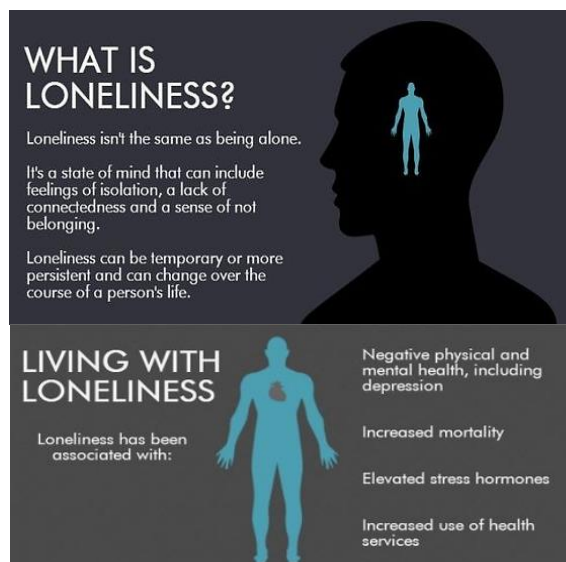

The CBC radio program **The Sunday Edition** profiled the issue of loneliness and highlighted its link to a negative impact on individual health. The program, entitled *How Loneliness Can Make You Sick* cited 2014 Stats Canada data that found that one in five older Canadians describe themselves as lonely or dissatisfied with their lives, and 64 percent of Canadian post-secondary students reported feeling very lonely within the last 12 months.
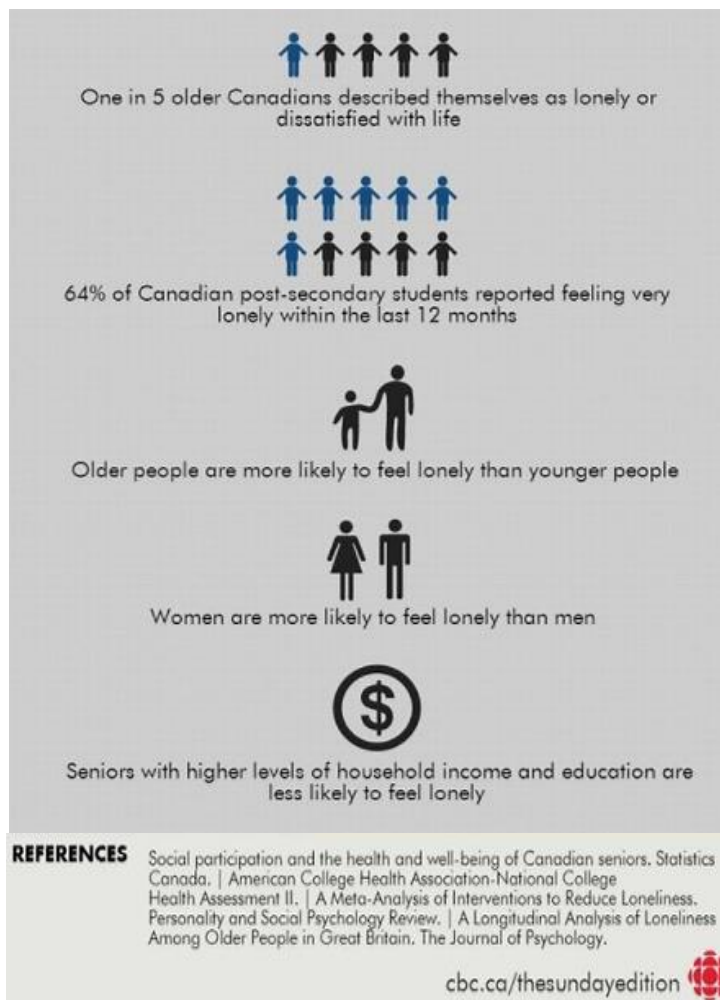
Concern over "the hidden epidemic of loneliness" in Canada was also profiled in a 2016 article featured in the UC Observer, entitled *__All the Lonely People.__* The article, written by Globe and Mail reporter André Picard estimates that as many as six million Canadians live in isolation and that for certain groups – the elderly, people with disabilities, immigrants, refuges and the economically disadvantaged – the "epidemic of loneliness is particularly acute." (Picard, 2016)

The negative impact of social isolation on our individual health is significant. "Study after study delivers a similarly grim prognoses: loneliness is as harmful to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day; having no friends may increase the risk of premature death by about 30%; social isolation can be twice as deadly as obesity; it's a bigger killer than diabetes and it hikes the risk of dementia by 64%." (Picard, 2016)

The experience of social isolation also has a significant negative impact on how connected and committed people feel to their communities and each other. People's sense of belonging is directly relevant to those of us concerned with the engagement of our community. Research conducted by the Community Foundations of Canada (CFC) found that there is a direct correlation between people feeling a sense of belonging and their subsequent willingness to act "in the common good."

In their 2017 National Vital Signs Report, ***Belonging: Exploring Connection to Community***, CFC found that, "when communities are made up of people who feel they belong and trust each other: we are healthier; neighbourhoods are safer; people give more time and money to support the community; social inclusion improves; and, we are more resilient in the face of community emergencies." (Community Foundations of Canada , 2017, p. 2) The same report revealed that 38% of Canadians don't feel like they have a stake in their local community and only 50% think that being involved in community events or activities is important to their day-to-day lives. (Community Foundations of Canada , 2017, p. 18) Vital engaged communities are places that make deliberate efforts to foster acceptance and inclusion of all. Individuals also play a critical role in taking responsibility to nurture their own connectedness within community.

One in 5 older Canadians described themselves as lonely or dissatisfied with life

64% of Canadian post-secondary students reported feeling very lonely within the last 12 months

Older people are more likely to feel lonely than younger people

Women are more likely to feel lonely than men

Seniors with higher levels of household income and education are less likely to feel lonely

REFERENCES Social participation and the health and well-being of Canadian seniors. Statistics Canada. | American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment II. | A Meta-Analysis of Interventions to Reduce Loneliness. Personality and Social Psychology Review. | A Longitudinal Analysis of Loneliness Among Older People in Great Britain. The Journal of Psychology.

cbc.ca/thesundayedition

If we are not connected to our neighbours, we cannot work together to make our communities healthier, stronger, more resilient places. We cannot prepare to meet challenges like climate change, social tensions, poverty, or an aging population. The reverse is true as well. If we are isolated from each other, we will not be able to seize the opportunities that come along with these challenges, such as developing a sustainable, green economy or finding innovative ways to create economic and social inclusion and reduce poverty. For communities to be resilient and thrive, they need to be built on a foundation of care and deep connection. For communities to address complex issues, they need to bring together many sectors and tap into the potential of citizen leadership.

CULTIVATING COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Time and again it has been shown that communities where people know and care about each other are far better able to navigate the unknown than those where isolation is the norm. Communities become more resilient when they strengthen their natural networks of care. In

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times of crisis, whether it's a flood, ice storm, or heat wave, communities need their municipalities, organizations and citizens working together and harnessing their collective skills and capacities. This is a community's social infrastructure.

The importance of community leadership in advancing positive community change cannot be overstated. The global consulting firm, McKinsey & Company emphasized this point in a report exploring the economic potential in Australia, saying "given the task of rejuvenating a region and the choice of $50 million, or $2 million and 20 committed local leaders, we would choose the smaller amount of money and the committed leaders." (McKinsey & Company, 1994)

Leadership and multi-sector collaboration have also been recognized as common characteristics within resurgent cities, those that have demonstrated an above average capacity to thrive after experiencing hardship. In its report, _Lessons from Resurgent Cities_, the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston stated that, "our examination of resurgent cities' histories indicated that the resurgence involved leadership on the part of key institutions or individuals, along with collaboration among the various constituencies with an interest in economic development." They continue on to note that, "in these success stories, the instigators of city revitalization recognized that it was in their own interest to prevent further deterioration in the local economy, and they took responsibility for bringing about improvement." (Federal Reserve Bank of Boston , 2009, pp. 14-15)

Community leadership may emerge from any sector but when leaders from across the community intentionally form a network and unite behind a commonly held community aspiration, the result can be transformational. Virtually all community leaders, regardless of the sector they operate in, demonstrate the following six core functions:

> **MAKE THINGS HAPPEN**
>
> **CREATE VISION**
>
> **INSPIRE OTHERS**
>
> **FACILITATE RELATIONSHIPS AND COLLABORATION**
>
> **INSTILL A POSITIVE MINDSET**
>
> **FOSTER LEADERSHIP IN OTHERS**
>
> **(Kenyon, 2017, p. 57)**

Community engagement can play a foundational role in helping to nurture and create an enabling environment to foster the necessary the community leadership that enables community change efforts to thrive. The Federal Reserve Bank of Boston's research identified the following as ingredients that help to create this enabling environment:

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- Different layers of leadership
- Organizations and groups that span boundaries and bring people together
- Conscious community conversations and networks for learning and innovation

The reality for most communities is that, this enabling environment is weak and must be strengthened before a community can work together and make positive change." (Harwood, 2015, p. 6) The value of harnessing a diversity of perspectives – from a variety of sectors and including a good mix of both organizational and resident leaders – cannot be over-emphasized. Finding effective ways for such a variety of perspectives to "think well together" is both the challenge and possibility of effective community engagement.

LESSONS IN ENGAGING BOTH CONTENT AND CONTEXT EXPERTS

At Tamarack, we often make an explicit distinction between what we refer to as content experts and context experts. Tamarack was first introduced to the term "context expert" by the late Brenda Zimmerman at our 2015 Collective Impact Summit. In her paper *The Context Experts*, my colleague Lisa Attygalle noted that it has now "become staple terminology in the field of community change" (Attygalle, 2017, p. 3) Zimmerman described two essential actors in the community change process:

- **Content Experts** – These are the professionals, staff in your organization, service providers, and leaders with formal power who have knowledge, tools, and resources to address the issue; and,

- **Context Experts** – These individuals are the people with lived experience of the situation, including children and youth. They are the people who experientially know about the issue.

Peter Block, author of *Community: The Structure of Belonging*, reminds us that, "most sustainable improvements in community occur when citizens discover their own power to act…when citizens stop waiting for professionals or elected leadership to do something, and decide they can reclaim what they have delegated to others." (Block, 2008, p. 51)

RESIDENT NETWORKS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS: TWO DISTINCT CULTURES

The capacity to be "a good host" and skill in facilitation are essential ingredients to ensure that the collective wisdom of diverse perspectives are engaged and that, as a result, our shared understanding of an issue is deepened and our awareness of possible opportunities for action is broadened. When convening diverse perspectives it is important to remember that each group of stakeholders often brings their own language and "culture" or way of doing things which can get in the way of collective action.

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John McKnight, co-founder of the Asset-Based Community Development approach, uses the analogy of hammers and saws to highlight an important distinction between the "tool" of community and the "tool" of service delivery organizations in the building of strong communities. He emphasizes that, "both tools are important but they each have specific uses. You don't use a hammer to cut wood or a saw to hammer nails. The trick is discernment." (McKnight, 2013)

I find John's clarity between service delivery organizations and communities illuminating. Too often, in my experience, they are referred to synonymously when, in fact, they are actually quite different from each another.   John's paper _The Four-Legged Stool_ outlines the subtle but important distinction between citizen associations and not-for-profit institutions very well when he writes:

"Institutions provide service as a scarce commodity for a price. Associational communities can provide abundant care without money. It is this distinction that is critical to understanding the value of citizen care." John cautions that, "there is no substitute for caring citizens and their associations. Indeed, it is growing common knowledge that we cannot create a community where people care for each other if our approach is to surround citizens with social-service institutions that push citizens and their associations aside. The result of this strategy has been to create institutionally dependent individuals rather than interdependent associations of care." (McKnight J. , 2013, pp. 8-9)

The fact is that institutions and associations each have their own distinct cultures. Where communities tend to be informal and horizontal in their structure; non-profit organizations tend to be quite formal and hierarchical. Where communities rely upon the experience and knowledge of residents that is freely shared; non-profits rely on the specialized knowledge of paid professionals and experts. When speaking of communities it is also important to recognize that a community is much more than a group of individuals who happen to live in close proximity to one another. Strong communities are those where the skills and talents of residents are known, recognized and connected.

Renown Canadian social innovators Vickie Cammack and At Etmanski have been thinking deeply about what they call the natural caring sector which they define as "natural care or love in action." They note that natural caring is something that, "occurs outside the formal sector" of governments, businesses, corporations and non-profit organizations." (Cammack & Etmanski, 2016, pp. 5-6) In a keynote they gave at Tamarack's 2016 Deepening Community Learning Event entitled, _Caring is Life_ Vickie and Al acknowledge that natural caring, of, "each other, our water, our trees and indeed all life" is such a natural act that is so omnipresent that it is easily taken for granted. "Much like the air we breathe, it is so natural and ubiquitous and, I daresay, ordinary that we risk it being undervalued and ignored."

Vickie and Al estimate that 80% of caring in Canada is done by the natural sector.   They go on to note that, "action fueled by natural care, freely given, guided by love in action, is like the sun and the rain of our humanity…and in its 'ordinariness' we risk overlooking the profound value of

natural care to support individual and societal happiness, well-being and health." (Cammack & Etmanski, 2016, pp. 6-7)

It is Vickie and Al's belief that, "the success of the formal system depends on the health and resiliency of the natural care sector and they identify three dynamics that make it, "a powerful ally in addressing any of the challenges we face as neighbourhoods, communities, individuals, networks and families." (Cammack & Etmanski, 2016, pp. 6-7) These three dynamics are:

1. **It's Relational** – We don't care in a vacuum. The quality of care is about the quality of our interactions with our loved ones, and indeed our adversaries. It is about our comfort navigating the power and powerlessness that lies beneath care relationships, the healing and acceptance, the protecting and letting go, that all underpin natural caring.

2. **It's Reciprocal** – There is an **exchange** in every care interaction but it is not the tit for tat that we have come to define as reciprocity. Sometimes it may be the satisfaction, long after our care has been given, of knowing we did the right thing. Or paying it forward.

3. **It's Responsive** - Natural care is responsive to, and guided by, our needs and the unique trajectory, which may shift from day to day. This flexible dynamic, so individual, finely tuned and honed is the antithesis of how programs, institutions and most organizations function.

The distinction between communities and organizations becomes particularly important as organizations, municipalities and communities discover the power of collaboration and its ability to generate promising new solutions to our most complex issues by working differently together. Not only are these multi-sector solutions often more effective, they also result in stronger communities and more resilient neighbourhoods. The ability to work differently together begins by appreciating the distinctiveness of each of the sectors, and co-creating a new way of working that honours and combines each sector's strengths and differences. When this is done right, innovative new solutions are co-created and able to generate powerful, and often long-lasting results.

Developing the awareness and capacity to effectively engage and facilitate the shared learning, insights and opportunities that can only be created by content and context experts work effectively together is a foundational task of the practice of community engagement. It is also something that requires both individuals and organizations to each embrace a change in their dominant mindsets.

For individuals the mindset shift is to move beyond seeing themselves solely as a recipient of service or source of information, to seeing their role as also including a responsibility to be a participant and leader in generating the kind of communities that we want to be part of. For organizations the mindset shift is one from seeing themselves primarily as "the doers" and providers of programs and services, to embracing a role as the catalysts and co-facilitators of conversations and multi-sector collaborations that share a commitment to strengthening the well-being of the community

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: A COLLECTIVE EXERCISE

Meaningful community engagement is a practice that is rooted in hope and fueled by a belief that, when we can come together and learn from one another, we will find solutions to whatever challenges lay before us and the necessary energy to bring those solutions to life. By it's very nature, Community engagement is a collective exercise. This point was made eloquently by Meg Wheatley who wrote:

> *"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."*

ABOUT SYLVIA CHEUY

Sylvia is a Consulting Director of the Tamarack Institute's Collective Impact Idea Area and also supports Tamarack's Community Engagement Idea Area. She is passionate about community change and what becomes possible when residents and various sector leaders share an aspirational vision for their future. Sylvia believes that when the assets of residents and community are recognized and connected they become powerful drivers of community change. Sylvia is an internationally recognized community-builder and trainer. Over the past five years, much of Sylvia's work has focused on building awareness and capacity in the areas of Collective Impact and Community Engagement throughout North America.

Prior to joining Tamarack, Sylvia was the founding Executive Director to Headwaters Communities in Action (HCIA), a grassroots citizen initiative that fosters collaborative leadership and action in support of a long-term vision of well-being for Ontario's Headwaters region. This experience gives Sylvia practical knowledge and first-hand experience of what it takes to engage and mobilize positive community change. Her work with HCIA was published as a chapter entitled, A Citizen-Led Approach to Enhancing Community Well-Being in the newly published Handbook of Community Well-Being Research.

Sylvia completed her Masters Diploma in Social Innovation at the University of Waterloo in 2013 where she explored opportunities to create change within regional food systems. An active volunteer in her community, Sylvia serves as a member of HCIA's Leadership Council. She also served for nine years on the Board of Community Living Dufferin where she was instrumental in securing $2.8 million in funding for CLD's shared home with Theatre Orangeville, the community's professional theatre company. Sylvia lives in Caledon, Ontario with her husband John Graham and their three children: Gabriella, Garrett and Sean.

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