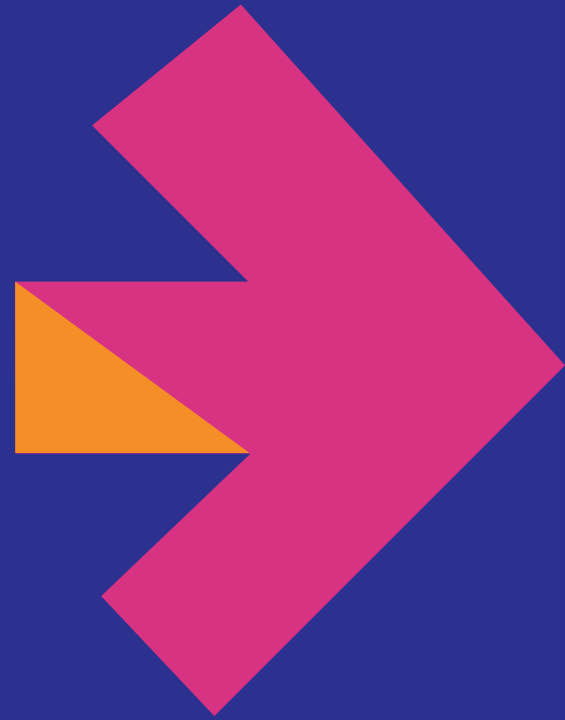


# 20 Years of Impact:

Looking Back  
and Leading  
Forward



# Tamarack at 20

## Late 1990s

### The vision begins

Tamarack's story begins in the late 1990s with a series of conversations between Paul Born, who was heading Opportunities 2000, and Alan Broadbent, chairman of Maytree. Paul and Alan talked about what it takes to get a broad range of stakeholders working together with people with lived experience of poverty to address big, complex issues. They began to see the outlines of something bigger: a national organization to promote the art and science of community change for cities, where people are engaged and working together to strengthen their community.

## 2000

### Tamarack is established

Alan as Chairman and Paul as President jointly launched Tamarack: An Institute for Community Engagement. Its mission was to develop a process to help people create bold visions for the future of their communities and work together to achieve those visions more easily and effectively.

## 2001

### The early days

Alan, through Maytree, made a long-term commitment to funding and giving leadership to Tamarack, and with this confidence Paul consulted with a small group of founders on how to scale Tamarack and the Opportunities 2000 learnings to a national level. Among the early founders were Alan Broadbent and Ratna Omidvar of Maytree, Tim Brodhead and Katharine Pearson of the J. W. McConnell Family Foundation, Frances Westley of the McGill-McConnell program, and Sherri Torjman of the Caledon Institute of Social Policy.



## 2002

### Vibrant Communities launched

With leadership support from the J. W. McConnell Family Foundation, just over 50 community leaders from 14 cities gathered at the Ignatius Jesuit Centre in Guelph, Ont.

*"We spent four days together having a really good conversation. On the last day, we introduced the idea of Vibrant Communities Canada. People were excited." – Paul Born*

## 2003

### Building and sharing knowledge

Tamarack established a Learning Centre to document community-building activity and disseminate the learning. It grew to include web-based learning, e-newsletters, tele-learning, online workshops, and research papers. The knowledge was shared freely with anyone who wanted to access it. By 2004, more than 5,000 people used the services every month.

*"The building of the knowledge base has been very important and was intentional at the outset. This was going to be the basis of Tamarack's work – we would not only work with communities but learn from them, document their learning, and leverage their learning so other communities and individuals could benefit." – Alan Broadbent*



## The first Community Change Institute

Tamarack's signature learning event, a five-day gathering to inspire and renew community changemakers, took place at the Ignatius Jesuit Centre in Guelph. Interest ran high, so Tamarack arranged off-site accommodations and buses to carry people back and forth.

*"We wanted to produce events that gave people the very best experience. There was a sense that the people coming to our events were going to contribute to the wellbeing of the Institute." – Paul Born*

2005

## Entering a new phase

As the Trail Builder experiment drew to a close, Mark stepped down as Vibrant Communities Director and Liz Weaver, of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, took up the role.

*"Tamarack was in the process of engaging its Vibrant Communities partners in a conversation about where to go from here. What would be the next iteration of the poverty reduction movement? How could we keep working together and building momentum? We started to refocus on what Cities Reducing Poverty could look like." – Liz Weaver*



2010

2008

## Publishing books, sharing knowledge

Tamarack captured Trail Builder stories and learnings in a new book, *Creating Vibrant Communities – How Individuals and Organizations from Diverse Sectors of Society are Coming Together to Reduce Poverty in Canada*, edited by Paul. That year Paul also published *Community Conversations: Mobilizing the Ideas, Skills, and Passion of Community Organizations, Government, Businesses, and People*, a book that is now a Canadian best seller and has sold more than 20,000 copies.



2011

## Collective Impact gains profile

Tamarack was writing its *Trail Builder* report when the article *Collective Impact* appeared in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. It presented a framework for how organizations across all sectors could work together to achieve a common goal. It described, in fact, what Tamarack had been doing since 2002 with Trail Builder.

*"We had been doing [Collective Impact] ourselves, just using different language. We were doing a Canadian version with on-the-ground experiences and practices. The ideas we had been writing about and implementing in communities became very popular thanks to our partners at FSG and Aspen in the United States." – Mark Cabaj*

## Trail Builder Success

Results were tabulated and they were extraordinary. The experiment would eventually impact nearly 250,000 people, producing solid evidence that collaborative, cross-sector action is a successful way to reduce poverty. Based on these results, Vibrant Communities opened its model to all cities. Membership jumped to 26 cities.

*"In Calgary, city council adopted a process that would allow anyone who was low-income to get 50% off their bus pass. That was our first big systems change, affecting about 10,000 people." – Paul Born*

2012





2013

**Growing and evolving**

Bolstered by an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant, Tamarack attracted more cities to the Vibrant Communities network. Tamarack refined its learning approach by grouping resources and learning into five core idea areas: Collective Impact, Community Engagement, Collaborative Leadership, Community Innovation, and Evaluating Impact. Based on Paul's research for his forthcoming book, a community of practice known as Deepening Community, with Sylvia Cheuy as director, was formed to explore how to build stronger, more inclusive neighbourhoods.

2014

**Deepening community in Canada**

Paul published his book *Deepening Community: Finding Joy Together in Chaotic Times*, which has sold more than 20,000 copies to become a Canadian best-seller. The book presents four pillars of "deep" community: When people share their stories, take time to have fun together, care for one another, and work together to make the world a better place, their communities become more connected and resilient places to live. These themes formed the basis of the growing Deepening Community practice.



2015

**Poverty summits are established**

Under Paul's leadership Vibrant Communities began hosting annual national summits that continued raising the profile of poverty reduction in Canada. The 2015 summit in Ottawa called for the three levels of government – municipal, provincial, and federal – to align their efforts to reduce poverty.

2016

**Poverty reduction gains momentum**

The 2016 Vibrant Communities summit in Edmonton, called *Cities Reducing Poverty: When Mayors Lead*, drew mayors from cities large and small across Canada to discuss and share ways to build economically inclusive communities. The 2017 summit in Hamilton, *Cities Reducing Poverty: When Business is Engaged*, featured business leaders who profiled initiatives such as Living Wage, and financial empowerment. With the federal government committing in 2016 to a national poverty reduction strategy, momentum was on the rise, and Tamarack was a national voice and advocate.



2017

**Two national movements and a learning center**

Vibrant Communities was engaged in two national campaigns to reduce poverty and deepen community in Canada. Cities Reducing Poverty has a bold goal to improve the lives of 1 million Canadians within 10 years. Cities Deepening Community is building a network of 25 member cities by 2021 to strengthen local communities and deepen bonds between neighbours. Tamarack's Learning Centre is positioned to grow the capacity of the 24,000 community builders in our network by equipping them with the skills, knowledge, resources, and connections to make lasting change.



## The Learning Center

In August of 2017, Tamarack appoints Liz Weaver to join Paul Born as Co-CEOs of Tamarack. Liz continues to provide leadership to the Learning Centre, significantly increasing the scope of offerings for community change makers for a growing audience from around the world. Over the next five years, the size of our learner network nearly doubles from 24,000 learners to over 40,000. Joining Liz are Lisa Attygalle, Sylvia Cheuy, Myriam Berube and Jean Marie Chapeau, making Tamarack a key thought leader in 5 core areas of community change: collective impact, community engagement, community innovation, collaborative leadership and evaluating impact. The Learning Centre builds strategic partnerships with global leaders advancing community change including the Collective Impact Forum, Aspen Roundtable for Community Change, and Place Matters UK.



2017- 2021

## Growth at Cities Deepening Communities

At the same time, under the leadership of Heather Keam, Cities Deepening Community turned momentum into a movement as communities united working together to rebuild Canada's social infrastructure. In 2019, Cities Deepening Community Launches a formal membership approach in attempt to replicate the success of Communities ending Poverty, at a major national conference they host in Edmonton (Edmonton is the first member). By 2022, Cities Deepening Communities is scheduled to be supporting members working in nearly 50 communities and supporting over 8,000 learners as part of their movement.

Based on the success of Tamarack's first two campaigns, two new campaigns were added to support communities to build better futures for

and with youth and to create just transitions to climate change. In partnership with Employment and Social Development Canada and through the leadership of Liz Weaver, Tamarack launches a third campaign and is now working closely with 20 communities as they build collective impact strategies with youth in Communities Building Youth Futures. Nathalie Blanchet is hired in 2020 to lead this team. A fourth campaign is started when Laura Schnurr is hired to support communities to localize the Sustainable Development Goal through Community Climate Transitions.

In 2022, 19 communities embark on a year-long learning journey to build the foundations for creating community wide collective impact community plans for climate transitions.

## Vibrant Communities

At the beginning of 2017, Paul, now Co CEO of Tamarack gives leadership to Vibrant Communities that is growing two national campaigns to end poverty and deepen community. Over the next 5 years, Communities Ending Poverty becomes a major contributor to ending poverty for over 1.3 million Canadians. Under the leadership of Alison Homer, The CEP membership is scheduled to grow to over 100 regional networks, representing nearly 350 municipalities in Canada developing and implementing plans for poverty reduction. In 2018, Canada Launches Opportunity for All and Tamarack is recognized as a key contributor to Canada's Poverty Reduction Strategy. By 2022 Tamarack is recognized internationally and by the Government of Canada for our contributions to Canada's success in poverty reduction.



## A renewed vision and strategy for Tamarack

In April of 2019, Tamarack engaged a revitalized board of directors with a mandate that prepares Tamarack for the next 20 years. The board is chaired by a community social innovator Shauna Sylvester and Co-Chaired by Brock Carlton, Former CEO of the Canadian Federation of Municipalities. It includes 12 individuals who are very familiar with Tamarack's work and bring new energy to the work.

Tamarack's Liz Weaver releases a new book *The Journey of Collective Impact: Contributions to the Field from Tamarack Institute*. Importantly Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health releases the report *Connected Communities: Healthier Together*, recognizing Tamarack for our role in Collective Impact and Deepening Community. Paul Born is appointed to the Order of Canada. TogetherBC is launched and Tamarack advocacy causes Communities Ending Poverty to grow significantly.



## Growing our movement for change

In 2020, Tamarack began a bold journey to set its vision for the next ten years. A newly elected and expanded board begins the process of strategic thinking just as the COVID-19 Pandemic was starting. After completing internal consultations with the board, staff and members; engaging an external evaluation; and exploring trends impacting community change the Tamarack Board set a vision for Tamarack to 2030.

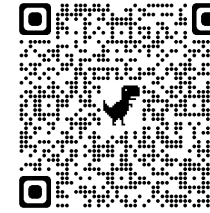
A new 10-year plan, *New Energy*, is launched:

- **Tamarack online learning is launched** with Asynchronous online courses, growing to 5 offerings by the end of the year.
- **Tamarack launches Community Climate Transitions** in 2021 with Laura Schnurr leading.

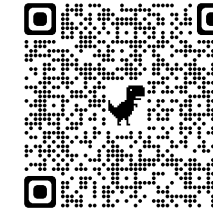
- **Tamarack hires Myriam Berube** to develop and implement a Quebec strategy.
- **Tamarack launches a new Digital Engagement Sales and Learning** division to grow its digital learning capacity with Jeff Doner leading.
- **Tamarack is asked to increase its impact** and grow CBYF to 20 communities.
- **CRP becomes CEP** during joint event with CBYF, which bring together over 1000 change makers to support the end of poverty and improved future for youth.
- **Tamarack releases a paper in Stanford Social Innovation** describing the role it has played as a Field Catalyst.

## Speakers for change

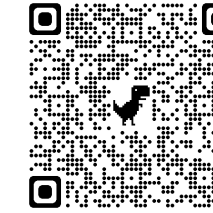
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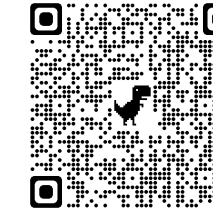
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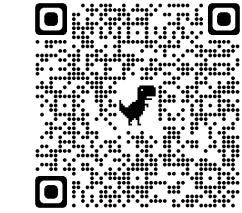
Tim Brodhead



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John McKnight



Jennifer Splanksy  
Juster

## 2020-2021

A new 10-year plan was launched. Paul Born announced his retirement and the board recruited a new Co-CEO Danya Pastuszek was appointed in early 2022 as Tamarack's new Co-CEO. Danya joins the Tamarack network after a decade with Promise Partnership of Salt Lake, facilitating school, community and regional partnerships solely focused on equitable economic mobility outcomes.

With an energetic board, a growing membership in nearly 500 cities and with more than 42,000 learners and our inspiring Co-CEO's Liz Weaver and Danya Pastuszek they will implement Tamarack's 10-year plan.



## With a lot of hard work, change is happening

Tamarack's first 20 years have been dedicated to helping community leaders ensure that everyone can live in a great city, free of poverty with a deep sense of community. The next 20 years will be a time of unprecedented change in Canada and the world. The work of Tamarack will be more relevant than ever as we help citizens and networks work together, learn together, and care for each other to ensure a great world for our children and our children's children.

**We look forward to the challenge.**

*"All of us who do this work are privileged to be able to do it. You only get there by going at it every day and working hard and keeping at it. All of us must have a sense of faith and trust that our efforts will pay off for the communities we live in, and particularly for those who have the most difficulty and struggle, so they can live lives of dignity." – Alan Broadbent*



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