Communities Ending Poverty

2023

Summit for
Strength
Learnings

How have communities
been **transforming**
systems **differently?**

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what is
COMMUNITIES
ENDING POVERTY

Founded in 2002, Tamarack's Communities Ending Poverty (CEP) network has become a powerful collective impact movement that, between 2015 and 2020, contributed to poverty being reduced for more than 1 million Canadians. CEP's overarching goal is to help reduce and sustain Canada's poverty rate to less than 5%. We know that success is contingent on addressing Indigenous poverty, working poverty, and deep poverty, and collectively we strive to realize the following:

- Equity is foundational across anti-poverty work
- Local government and businesses expand and enhance their social roles, including by meaningfully engaging people with lived/living experience in leadership roles
- CEP members' efforts are community-wide, evidence-based, and successful
- CEP members achieve sustainable funding and leadership structures
- CEP members are influencing high impact policies that advance equity
- Hope, optimism, and momentum are generated for the end of poverty

Why a Summit for **Strength**?

Over the last three years, communities have been working to address poverty across an increasingly challenging landscape: COVID-19 and its compounding effects, more frequent climate events, ever increasing cost of living and growing awareness around status quo systems that perpetuate inequities against Black, Indigenous, and racialized people.

Communities have pressed forward, resilient in their efforts to create a better world where systems are purposefully re-designed to serve everyone. The Summit for Strength gathered community members to build solidarity around the individual and collective strength we need to do things differently.

THINKING ABOUT **STRENGTH**

THROUGH A TRAUMA-INFORMED LENS:

Recognizing that prolonged stress undermines the ability of individuals, organizations, communities, and systems to cope, and that no two people experience trauma or a similar adverse event in the same way. A trauma-informed approach shifts the focus from "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?" (Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Center)

BY LOOKING AT RESILIENCE IN A NEW WAY:

Rather than forcing and expecting individuals to be resilient, collaborations, communities, and systems can: adapt to emerging opportunities and respond to unanticipated challenges; bounce back (or bounce forward) from setbacks and take time to reflect; be prepared for future challenges and setbacks, and strengthen their ability to respond to and rebound from threats. Trust-building is key here – building the capacity to map broader systems and to develop strategies that engage and partner with system players who are both usual and less usual.

TO DISRUPT SYSTEMS:

Disruption does not mean to cause chaos or disorder but rather denotes "replacing" the usual or the norm with something new. As Buckminster Fuller says, "To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete," rather than fighting the existing reality. Disruption is an opportunity for change.

STRENGTHENING "AGENTS OF CHANGE" AT ALL LEVELS

Individuals
Focusing on equity, and empowering the voice of lived/living experience
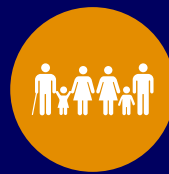
Neighbourhoods
Strengthening connection and a sense of belonging

Organizations
Strengthening capacity, leadership, and financial sustainability, and sharing what works

Businesses
Implementing models that share wealth with employees and share social benefits equitably across employees, employers, and communities

Climate Transitions
Addressing eco-anxiety, and unequal impacts

Funders
Pivoting to achieve funding models that are flexible and more effective

Youth
Supporting young people to lead in systems change efforts

Local Governments
Leading on understanding the conditions for well-being and collaborating on solutions

HOW HAVE COMMUNITIES BEEN DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY?

Though systems change can often feel like it can only take place at the level of changing far-reaching public policies, steps towards transformative change can start with smaller (but meaningful) actions like growing networks, sharing promising practices, redistributing resources, and changing organizational policies.

What we heard at Summit for Strength is that communities are already working to change systems at all these levels, no matter the contexts they're working in, whether they're a smaller organization, in a rural or remote area, or if they're under-resourced. People across Canada are taking small actions every day that contribute to and are laying the foundation for replacing oppressive systems with systems that work for all. They are: **shifting culture towards love and care; changing the way they work by imagining better ways of moving forward; and nurturing meaningful, transformative relationships as a key step towards transforming power and systems.**

"Resilience acknowledges the unique gifts we all have, as individuals and communities, to bring about systems change."

- Natasha Beedie

SHIFTING CULTURE TOWARDS CENTRING LOVE AND CARE

At the summit, Juanita Zerda quoted Cornel West when elaborating on how we need to have different experiences with one another in order to change the mental models that sustain the oppressive systems we keep recreating: "Justice is what love looks like in public." Time and time again, our cultural reality has upheld oppressive systems and governments as status quo. Centring love and care has driven communities to do things differently, in ways that better serve those who are most marginalized by systems that don't work for them.

SUPPORTING PEOPLE TO FEEL LIKE THEY BELONG	• Reaching out to those who rarely get engaged • Prioritizing accessibility so people can get involved where they want to • Creating spaces for people to come together
ANTI-RACISM & RECONCILIATION	• Approaching poverty with an equity lens so that everyone winds up having their basic needs met (pizza party example: some people might have eaten before the party so they aren't hungry and don't need any pizza, while some people might be very hungry and need two or more pieces of pizza) • Recognizing "settler colonialism" as an ongoing process: Settler colonialism demonstrates that the same values that were held in the development of our country are still held within our systems. To change our systems so that everyone is cared for, our work needs to be built on anti-racism and reconciliation.

COMMUNITY EXAMPLES

SHIFTING CULTURE TOWARDS CENTRING LOVE AND CARE

Inclusive Resilience: Social Vulnerability Index (SoVI)

Partners for Action has developed a Social Vulnerability Index (SoVI) that combines 50 indicators from the Canadian Census with maps web-based GIS visualizations to provide a spatial analysis of socio-economic vulnerability.

These maps help communities move beyond static understandings of vulnerability, to understanding that it is dynamic, contextual, and intersectional, and have proven to be a great community engagement practice as well. They can be used to inform policies to address hotspots for targeted solutions and adopting risk-based hazard management policies across Canada.

Zunga Bus

Zunga Bus is a pilot on-demand transit service operated by the City of Powell River. Faced with a lack of infrastructure to support public transit, the City of Powell River collaborated with Spare Labs to launch Zunga Bus, "Zunga" meaning rope swing – a word that originated in Powell River.

Zunga Bus has had quite a positive social and human impact in Powell River, helping people get out of the house to connect with others, and increasing their ability to access community services.

Rural Development Network

Emele Neufeld, Indigenous Liaison at the Rural Development Network (RDN) shared that at RDN, they go over the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Calls to Action, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) for every single project they support - seeing where these projects interact with the TRC, UNDRIP, and MMIWG, and using these key materials as a lens towards Reconciliation when looking at funding applications.

The Roving Campus

Portage La Prairie's Roving Campus provides an alternate learning experience for up to 30 young people not succeeding in the traditional high school environment with an alternate pathway to a high-school diploma, employability skills and other trainings and certification. The Roving Campus considers the entire community as its "classroom" and moves its location from week to week.

All of the students selected for the Roving Campus have been identified as "non-attenders" and were admitted to the program with the support of an advocate. In order to close the gaps that are experienced by many, each student accepted into the program is given access to transportation, lunch, a laptop, and Internet access as part of the program.

IMAGINING BETTER WAYS OF DOING THINGS

Existing systems often harm people because they are not focused on equity, and they perpetuate scarcity mindsets around access to resources, encouraging individuals and communities to compete with one another in isolation rather than working together. Such systems work hard to protect themselves and often force us to respond to crises urgently. In order to replace these systems with systems that work for all, communities have been taking the time to reflect on their own values and to make space for imagining a better world that provides people with what they really need instead of only what we're able to offer. If we can envision a future where we have successfully tackled poverty and the other complex issues we are facing today, we can work backwards to identify how to get there and what needs to change.

SHARING/ TRANSFORMING POWER	• Asking people with lived/living experience to help create new systems, rather than asking them to function within existing, often oppressive systems • Creating an economy that works better for everyone: businesses, non-profits, governments, and individuals
MOVING TOWARDS TRUE INNOVATION	• Working with funders to support "failing forward" (learning from mistakes) • Enabling local governments to use ordinary municipal tools in an extraordinary way to support reconciliation and poverty reduction
CREATING SPACE FOR REST AND REFLECTION	• Reflecting on values and purpose with every action taken • Holding space for emotions like grief and joy when organizing

COMMUNITY EXAMPLES
IMAGINING BETTER WAYS OF DOING THINGS

Collective Impact Project

The Collective Impact Project based in Montreal moved away from annual written reporting from grantees. Instead, they meet with grantees twice a year in person to discuss challenges and successes.

Rewrite Capital

Rewrite Capital helps companies shift towards an employee ownership model. In this way, employees benefit by becoming owners, but companies also benefit as employee investment builds trust: people stay for longer and there are fewer layoffs during recessions. Communities also benefit by retaining local companies and jobs. Through this model, Rewrite Capital hopes to put capital in the hands of those who are low-income or working low-income jobs, who may typically be excluded from investing.

Asset-Based Community Development (ABDC)

ABCD recognizes that communities have several types of assets and resources: contributions of residents, associations, local institutions, local places, exchanges, and cultures/stories.

Mapping out the assets of a neighbourhood starts with looking at individuals first, as well as the associations that connect them, and how both can be brought together to perform the 7 functions of community: stewarding ecology, co-creating care, assuring security, health & wellbeing, local economies, raising our children, and local food production.

PRIORITIZING RELATIONSHIPS TO TRANSFORM SYSTEMS

At the summit, Karen Joseph reminded us that being in relationship with one another and sharing with one another calls us to our higher selves. When we're in relationship, we each impact one other, and one person's experience is a part of our own. Lisa Helps also shared that convening is a key tool to be able to impact change, but it won't be the right change unless those convening trust each other and have the courage to be open and honest with one another.

RECLAIMING OLD WAYS: INTERGENERATIONAL LOVE	• The antidote to intergenerational trauma • Family separation (status quo) vs. family reunification (new system) • Creating spaces for young people to actualize their call to leadership/adulthood, grounded in relationship with elders who bring insights and wisdom about the terrain
CROSS-SECTORAL COLLABORATION TO ADDRESS INTERSECTIONAL ISSUES	• Required because community need is greater, and there is greater awareness about social equity and increased pressure to advance in those areas • Including less traditional partners and sectors, like businesses, to address complex social issues
BUILDING TRUST TO MOVE TOWARDS ABUNDANCE	• When community members trust each other, communities can be diverse, there can be shared power, and members can be tied together even when there is dissent. This leads to building common ground and resilience, which leads to abundance.

COMMUNITY EXAMPLES
PRIORITIZING RELATIONSHIPS TO TRANSFORM SYSTEMS

Giiwe Sharing Circles

Giiwe ("s/he goes home" in Anishinaabemowin) is a model for improving coordination among Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations. Through this model, M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre has contributed to healing relationships among Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations involved in preventing Indigenous homelessness and other reconciliation-related initiatives.

Social Development, City of Richmond, BC

The City of Richmond hosted a number of community services pop ups (a model that can be scaled in any community) to better connect people to community resources that they may have known about but didn't know how to access (affordable rental housing info, digital literacy, accessible parking permits, navigating healthcare and benefits systems, support for newcomers, addictions services, food supports, etc). These pop ups took place at public libraries, on the second Thursday of every month, and had 22 organizations participate. People with lived experience shaped and helped implement the project, and became the first point of contact with community.

Oxford County Youth Council & Leadership Table

The Oxford County Youth Council created a Leadership Table of 15 representatives from youth-serving organizations, as well as local youth, to help guide and implement their suggestions. While youth lead, adults provide support, so they have been intentional about addressing conscious and subconscious biases between adults and youth. They've undergone youth-adult partnership training through YouthREX, provided the supportive adults with youth engagement resources, created practices around thoughtful reflection and conversation, and check in consistently about how the collaboration is feeling.

Thank you.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to Summit for Strength Communities Ending Poverty Virtual National Gathering—to all who generously shared about their work, and to all who attended.

We heard so many examples of individuals, organizations, businesses, communities, and governments striving to transform power and shift systems one step at a time: centring love and care by prioritizing equity, reconciliation, and belonging; imagining the type of world they want to strive towards and challenging the status quo to get there; and building trust and connection to make our communities better places where our systems are purposefully re-designed to serve us all. We were reminded of the power, hope, strength, and resilience Communities Ending Poverty members tap into every day.

RESOURCES

Explore recordings and other content from the keynote presentations, panel discussions, and workshops that took place at Summit or Strength **here**.

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> *"It's important for us to say the things that we are hopeful for, but it's even more important for us to, in our actions, demonstrate the reasons why others can be hopeful too."*
>
> *- Michael Redhead Champagne*