

Momentum Project: Using Systems Thinking to Transform and Align Communities
and Enhance Collective Impact



Momentum Project Report and Community Guide:

*Using Systems Thinking and Related Principles and Concepts
to Transform and Align Communities Multi-Sectorally:
Enhancing Collective Impact to Help All Members Thrive.*

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Deborah Gregson: Project Coordinator

HeARTh Social Profit Company



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*Using Systems Thinking and Related Principles and Concepts
to Transform and Align Communities Multi-Sectorally:
Enhancing Collective Impact to Help All Members Thrive.*

Introduction

Trillions are spent on “peacekeeping” and defense, yet wars still persist. Billions are spent on drug development, looking for cures and creating medical systems to support people who are ill, yet illness persists and grows. Decades and billions have been spent to assist people experiencing homelessness- and the problem continues. We tackle suicide and the problem grows worse. In the war on drugs, drug use now seems worse and more widespread than ever.

Industries and economies are created around the problems we attempt to solve, yet these problems still persist. Why? Perhaps it is because the underlying reasons for the problems we identified continue while we heap resources into systems designed around treating or masking symptoms. These systems then take over with a life of their own, and every system is designed to preserve itself. We need to justify the effort and expense and so we provide outcome data and reinforce the need for the resources to continue, and this supports the system, rather than eliminating the problem.

In James and the Giant Peach, when James sees the apparition of his fears, his friends tell him: “Try looking at it a different way.” What if we changed the way we looked at these social ills we continue to struggle with? What if we adjusted the way we operated as communities? What if we developed a new way of being, rather than new ways of doing the same things? What if we stopped looking at these social ills as problems that need to be addressed and started actually addressing the causes of those “problems?” What if we could actually change the systems in which we operate and which operate on us?

What if we stopped trying to “end” homelessness and instead focused our efforts on creating a community culture in which everyone’s success and thrive-ability were equally important. A transformed and transformative community “way of being” where vulnerable people were put at the centre of the circle and all the systems and sectors, while working to maintain and improve themselves, considered the needs of the rest of the community, aligning and coordinating with each other?

Research and human experience have already shown us that this approach, of looking past the symptoms and addressing the causes, works to increase productivity and effectiveness and leads to lasting, sustainable solutions. The Momentum Project was intended to examine these possibilities and find a way to put them into a framework that communities could adopt within their own particular set of circumstances. To develop a way of being that can change the nature and focus of our activity, amplify our efforts, and help us realize lasting and sustainable change.

From State of Homelessness in Canada 2016:

Homelessness costs 7 billion per year, and a plan to end homelessness in 10 years would cost 4.4 billion per year.

Recommendations given for the National Housing Strategy:

ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA

The following recommendations focus on the role of the federal government in preventing and ending homelessness in Canada through the National Housing Strategy.

1. The Government of Canada should adopt a national goal of ending homelessness with clear and measurable outcomes, milestones and criteria

In the consultation for the National Housing Strategy the Government of Canada states that it “believes that all Canadians deserve access to housing that meets their needs and that they can afford.” If this is the case, then setting a measurable, time-bound national goal of ending homelessness should be a centerpiece of its National Housing Strategy. This commitment should be supported by a plan to end homelessness, like the U.S. ‘Opening Doors’ plan.

A CANADIAN OBSERVATORY ON HOMELESSNESS RESEARCH PAPER

To be effective, a National Housing Strategy that prevents and ends homelessness should be grounded in these principles:

- A national goal of ending homelessness
- Broad adoption of Housing First
- An emphasis on prevention
- Local leadership on ending homelessness, with clearly defined roles for all orders of government
- Effective prioritization
- The use of data to target investment, make decisions and track progress
- Building and improving local systems

2. Renew, refocus and expand the Homelessness Partnering Strategy

We recommend that HPS community plans become community system plans focused on preventing and ending homelessness, within the context of a national objective to end homelessness. A community system planning approach to ending homelessness means creating an efficient, wide- reaching system of care that can meet the needs of all individuals facing homelessness. According to Turner (2014) a systems plan requires several key elements:

1. Planning and Strategy Development: Community plans need to move beyond distributing federal funding to integrating a systems framework, grounded in Housing First philosophy
2. Organizational Infrastructure: Essential system leadership and coordination infrastructure must be in place to meet the goals set out in the communities

3. System Mapping: An assessment of the existing services, against a framework of best practice in system planning, to understand where there are gaps and redundancies in the system
4. Co-ordinate Service Delivery: Facilitate common access points, assessment tools and flow-through between organizations and services to respond to the needs of the client
5. Integrated Information Management: Allows coordinated systems delivery through shared data, as well as simplified intakes and referrals
6. Performance Management and Quality Assurance: Ensure that programs and systems are achieving optimal outcomes
7. Systems Integration: The homelessness sector works collaboratively with public systems and services such as health, child welfare, (and as community-based support organizations such as neighbourhoods, faith-based and service clubs, as well as private sector). *parenthesis added*

In true “systems thinking for social change” progression, these recommendations reflect the collective learning and transformation that has taken place over the last few years in relation to homelessness work. At each pass we prepare the ground further and move closer to being able to enact the change we wish to, need to, see. Compare with the National Housing Strategy to see how the Government of Canada has done at incorporating these recommendations into the final plan. Most, if not all, of them are answered or provided for within the findings and results of the Momentum Project. Which represents a paradigm shift based on historical data, best practices, observation, participation and experience with communities trying to “end” homelessness.

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Section 1- Project Final Report

1.) Acknowledgement of Funding:

Funding for this project was provided by the Government of Canada’s Homelessness Partnering Strategy’s Innovative Solutions to Homelessness. It was further supported through gift in kind contributions of time, space, and professional expertise, by HeARTh Social Profit Company, a community development organization, and a number of organizations, businesses and individuals in the communities within which we engaged. We appreciate all of the input, investment, and collaboration.

2.) Executive Summary;

Seeking to examine the sustainable ending of homelessness from a systems perspective, using a core cause rather than symptomatic view point, we applied systems thinking principles to assess the potential of, and develop a facilitation for, communities that could change their way of being. This change would lead to community systems, aligned and integrated multi-sectorally that sustainably support each member to thrive. The community would thus be able to move with emerging needs, better utilize local resources and opportunities and create more, as well as unitedly apply more meaningfully for external support and resources.

We engaged in such activities as a best practices literature and historical document review, a multi-sector participatory and appreciative inquiry within two communities. This included group and individual interviews, participating in existing, and orchestrating our own community gatherings, across sectors, and including an

examination of Indigenous engagement in the process of ending homelessness. We intended to engage a community in a real world, multi-sector systems assessment and development of community alignment facilitation and framework to enhance collective impact. While this did not roll out as we envisioned, we were able to work through, and explore the stages identified in systems thinking for sustainable social change and transformation within a community context to enhance collective impact.

It is our conclusion that it is not only possible, but imperative that as communities we seek to “be the change we wish to see.” In other words, we have to transform our way of being and operating together in order for that change to be sustainable. This work is not easy, requires humility, honesty, accountability, the right kind of mandate and leadership, and is the responsibility of every community member within every sector to support and engage with. It also must be supported and resourced by government, legislation and policy at all levels and in numerous ways. We have collected some insights and made some recommendations to this end. The result of our efforts is a vision, guide and some tools and quick references which communities can utilize and adapt on a multi-sector scale to transform their way of being and which governments can use to better support them in this work. We can be fine; we all just have some work to do.

3.) Project Background and Objective

Innovative solutions in homelessness is an intriguing and needful pursuit. But after decades and billions of dollars spent and myriad approaches applied, it still is happening. There have been some gains in understanding why people become homeless and what needs to be done to stop it. But how do we apply those understandings and approaches in a scale that makes a lasting and sustainable difference? And furthermore, why, after all that has been done and come to be known, is homelessness still a growing problem? Dollars and efforts must show some measurable outcomes. But what outcomes are we actually achieving to justify the resources?

There is an increasing understanding of homelessness as a symptom of a much wider set of problems. Setting up systems to deal with symptoms can certainly help us see results and positive outcomes. But adjusting our current ways of doing things, the systems that have emerged to do them, and changing our very way of being together as humans has the potential to actually eliminate the underlying causes of those symptoms. This requires going deeper than ever before and making an informed choice and commitment as societies and communities about how we are going to operate with each other in order to do so. It involves an honest assessment about what is important to us and for us, and establishing new “bottom lines.” Thankfully research has moved from quantifiable and objective to also embracing qualitative and subjective. We are now finding ways to consider and measure prevention and to take a more abstract and holistic look at a truly complex situation.

There are forces at work in our world that are diametrically antithetical to some of the changes that must be made to eliminate the core causes of homelessness and other symptoms of societal dysfunction. This means that there are systems dynamics and ways of being operating in our world, in our communities, that work against fixing, and that even perpetuate, the underlying conditions which cause symptoms such as homelessness. Whether any of this is intentional or not is beside the point. Either way involves some deep assessment and fundamental changes to how we operate together as human beings. This is a big task. But society is made up of communities and communities are ultimately made up of human beings, operating within various sectors within a local, regional, national and global environment. Changing how we operate as

communities, as human beings within those sectors can impact the rest of it, can be the beginning of the change we wish to see.

Altered Perspective

We had the opportunity, through this funding to take a look at the situation from that perspective. We posed the question: “What if we don’t try to solve homelessness at all? What if we go beyond that and look at how, as a community, we can operate together in such a way that it will solve or at least alleviate the contributing factors to homelessness?” What is the opposite of the pathways to homelessness that we are now recognizing? The opposite of failing is thriving. What were the barriers in the pathway to thriving for individuals and families, communities? Where did these barriers stem from? If they stem from individual systems operating in isolation within our communities, “bumping into each other,” we need a way and the means to examine and adjust those systems dynamics, and the community and political will to do it.

We considered what a community that is able to support people to thrive would look like. What deficits would need to be removed and what assets would need to be introduced or scaled up in order to break the cycles that were leading people into a situation of homelessness, or being at risk of it, and sustainably move them into stability and success? How would we need to integrate and interlink those elements in order to decrease gaps and ensure that people could navigate the resources and opportunities.?

The change we wished to see could not be, has not been able to be, conducted within a vacuum limited to one or two sectors in a community setting that exists within a broader societal context. “Fixing” individuals with the complexity of deficits and potentials (the sources of some of which are beyond their control) as those in homelessness possess, and then sending them out into the same environment that broke them, with no accountability for that environment to help the individual stay “fixed,” doesn’t work. If it did, homelessness would be solved decades ago.

Human beings are complex systems in themselves, operating within and interacting with other systems that operate within and interact with still others. There is a growing recognition for the need of a holistic approach in the care and maintenance of their well-being, and a broader, shared and imperative accountability for their thrive-ability. When we take an honest and informed look, we all need each other, ultimately, on this planet located in the vastness of space. We posit that there is a level of accountability required from surrounding systems and including the individual themselves, for the changes we wish to see. Taking a look at the core causes of homelessness and some of the promising efforts being made to ameliorate it, we recognize that we would need input and participation from all sectors to create lasting change.

Objective

Our objective, then, was to find a way to assist communities in coming to similar conclusions, and helping them align multi-sectorally to assess, reimagine, redeploy, grow and sustain existing resources to help them help every member to thrive, and unitedly seek any external resources or support required. This would mean providing insights, concepts and principles, tools, and a vision of possibility that could help a community invest in becoming the change they wish to see.

4.) Methodology-

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- A. Literature review: Best practices being used in homelessness efforts, systems thinking and related concepts, collective impact and related concepts
- B. Review of historical documents from several communities in Canada and the U.S spanning the last two decades (2000 to 2018)
 - i. Compare, contrast, and coalesce data to determine best practices communities that are identified as successful in decreasing homelessness are using
- C. Observation, engagement and participation in 2 communities
 - i. Environmental scan of homelessness, supporting services, community-based resource provision
 - ii. Participation in several community convenings sponsored by different community “alliances” exploring inclusion, poverty, housing, and homelessness supports
 - iii. Group and individual interviews with stakeholders and leaders from multiple sectors including lived experience individuals, social sector, municipal, provincial and federal government, public sector, private sector and faith-based and community associations to explore the experience of homelessness and its contributing factors from sectoral perspectives.
- D. Surveys distributed to stakeholders in multiple sectors regarding knowledge and perspective of and experience with homelessness, its contributing factors, and its community “fall-out.”
- E. Validation of collected data against historical documents, observation and rhetoric from the field of social supports and homelessness work

5.) Expected deliverables: *We embarked on this project with the intention of engaging a community in real world process of application and development of the concepts, principles and models contained herein toward a number of outcomes. We had hoped to be able to work with our target community to actually go through a few processes leading to:*

- A. Asset Mapping and Gap Analysis (ideally going through the process with a community)
- B. Community Facilitation (ideally worked through within a community setting with a multi-sector working group) for applying systems thinking to enhance community collective impact and improve multi-sector community alignment
- C. Information and insight regarding Indigenous engagement
- D. Private Sector mentorship for community organizations in engaging for support, sustainable development and job pathways creation
- E. A Community Systems Framework to address homelessness

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- F. Center of Excellence- a way for communities to maintain gains, continue to learn and develop interventions and approaches, continually assess and adjust systems, evaluate and enhance the effectiveness of strategies and anticipate future needs.

6.) Key achievements: *While we were unable to fully engage a community in the ways we had intended, we were able, through alternative means, to produce the following:*

- A. 4 Directions Community Planning Framework and Spreadsheet Tool- To assist communities with holistic asset mapping and gap analysis, to consider and assign roles and accountability for community needs and begin to examine dynamics between services and systems. (Appendices B to D)
- B. Community Guide and Tools for Using Systems Thinking to Enhance Collective Impact
 - a. A Systems Thinking Primer- concepts related to Systems Thinking within the context of social change and community development to end homelessness. (Section 2)
 - b. Best Practices descriptions- A quick summary of promising best practices in the area of community development and homelessness intervention and prevention. (Section 3)
 - c. Making Spaces- A fictional account to demonstrate the enactment and potential of the change we wish to see. (Prologue)
 - d. The Story of Us- a holistic description of each sector, based on findings from the Momentum Project, to assist with mutual awareness and understanding to help communities build a foundation for change- includes our engagement feedback from the business sector and a section specifically about Indigenous engagement based on information and insight gleaned from the Project. (Appendix A)
 - e. Community Guide for a Multi-Sector Systems Assessment and Alignment (Section 4, Appendix M)
- C. Model for Community Multi-Sector Alignment, Communications, and Center for Excellence Framework. (Section 5, Appendix G, Prologue)
- D. Community Homefulness Action Framework Visual (Appendix K)
- E. Social Benefit Housing and Community Development Model (SBHCD)- including some introductory information on self-reliance and sustainability, and the potential of local cooperatives. (Section 5, Appendices H to L)
- F. Multi-sector Engagement and Participation in Enacting SBHCD Model Within a Community- real world application and activity with leveraging activities toward sustainability next steps by the end of the project (stay tuned).

7.) Lessons learned

The ensuing Community Guide and Facilitation (Prologue, Sections 2 to 5 and Appendices) contain more and detailed descriptions of lessons learned but here is a summarized listing:

- A. Statistics can be rosy compared to realities within most communities, likely due to a system generated need to justify funding and present positive outcomes, as well as egocentric perspectives when there is a lack of meaningful multi-sector communication.

- B. While good things are happening and successes have been experienced, the majority of the work is still being done by and within a limited number of under resourced and under supported social sector organizations with a narrow base of private sector contribution. Siloism is alive and well in our communities. There is acknowledgement of the need for multi-sector collaboration and a growing desire to do so but communities struggle to put all the pieces of the puzzle together as a matter of daily practice
- C. Sustainability is still a struggle in most “programs” to end homelessness. For example, recidivism can occur once an individual “graduates” from a time-limited program and no longer has the attached supports. Evictions are likely when rent subsidies dry up and no real progress toward self-reliance has been achieved.
- D. Disconnect and siloism leads to overlaps in programs, services and efforts that create inefficiencies, and sap finite resources, and create opportunities for service users and service providers to abuse the system
- E. There are more resources in a community than most communities recognize or utilize and it takes an expanded, collaborative, creative viewpoint and approach to discover and exploit them
- F. It is important to have a mandate, authority, as well as resources to work with a community on such a complex effort as an honest assessment and adjustment of systems.
- G. Laying a foundation for change, takes time and patience
- H. Our way of being is more important than what we do and can make a significant impact on the rate, quality and sustainability of change, as well as the number and level of the “problems” we see in communities
- I. Meeting the community where it is at, is just as important as it is when working with individuals toward healing, recovery, and change
- J. Sustainably ending homelessness is part of a holistic effort that sees communities coming together multi-sectorally to solve the core social, economic, and political challenges of which homelessness is a symptom
- K. This requires the support and collaboration of the macrosystems in which communities operate
- L. Establishing and resourcing the right kind of environment within a community can mitigate many existing problems or challenges
- M. The time for research is past and the time to scale up solutions that have been proven is here
- N. Big picture perspective and a multi-sectoral, multi-level shared investment of consideration, time, effort, resources are required in mitigating core issues such as:
 - a. power imbalance, between individuals and organizations, within communities, between community entities, within and between sectors, between levels of government and communities

- b. economic and social inequity, and a drift away from sustainable practices in all domains that could fuel economic and social progress
- c. short-sighted legislation and policy that perpetuates power imbalance and inequity,
- d. capitalism over social benefit, rather than cohabiting them peacefully and constructively
- e. dysfunctional and ineffective systems that have lost sight of their intended purpose,
- f. lack of connection, lack of awareness, leading to lack of compassion, siloism, isolationism, discrimination, assumptions and judgements
- g. disempowering of self-reliance, enabling learned helplessness or entitlement
- h. taking away the power of individuals by robbing them of accountability, or through a lack of resources to meet basic needs
- i. neglecting the capacity building of natural social supports and the power of community.

8.) Recommendations:

1. Community commitment to creating multi-sector community alignment and helping to develop the right “way of being” within a community should be a criterion for funding and resourced within that funding. All sectors have “skin in the game” and need to see and be accountable for this. It would be worth the investment to help change the way of being within a community to support the effectiveness and increase the scope and impact of the resources being offered.
2. There should be flexibility in funding to help communities move with and provide for the dynamic process of systemic healing, recovery, integration, capacity building and self-reliance development required to produce the sustainable and holistic change that will end homelessness.
3. Governments (at all three levels) who want to end homelessness and its contributing factors and lessen the human suffering and the drain on systems that it causes need to instigate, resource and support local efforts toward sustainable, integrated and value-added housing development. This is just as important and necessary as resourcing and supporting community capacity and social supports to enhance a community continuum of care, and creating flexible economic improvement pathways for individuals, families and the community.
4. Instead of focusing on and trying to mitigate the symptoms of our social deficits, we must, as communities and policy makers, focus on transforming and harnessing the potential of communities as cohesive, sectorally integrated systems where no one is left behind and everyone has the support to make their best contribution and thrive. This will provide for the discovery and creation of more resources and opportunities.

9.) Conclusions

“Physician heal thyself” is an apt conclusion to this project. Many of the principles successfully applied to individuals to assist them from crisis and into community contribution are systems and change related at their core. These same principles and pathways are good for organizations, sectors, communities, provinces and countries. Every system is made up of human beings that are broken in some way, but who possess the ability to transform toward amazing potential, thus impacting every system. There is no magic bullet, one-size-fits-all intervention that will solve the problems for us. But there is a way of being that, if adopted, will open the door to the solutions and change we

seek. There is human and community potential, hope, honesty, effort, vision, and a shared humanity that insists that we are all interconnected and when we help lift others, we lift ourselves.

A community, and a society, like a chain, is as strong as its weakest link. We might be surprised at what that weak link is, when we stop focusing on the “problems” we see and start assessing and adjusting our systems, how we operate with each other, and what lies beneath the surface of the “iceberg” that fuels those problems. There must be an adjustment of the bottom line for all of us, from the most vulnerable end-user of social supports to the highest government official and all roles in between. There must be a change in mindset that includes accountability and assigning value and meaning to all others in our community systems as integral and integrated parts of our own ultimate experience. But this must and can be supported within a transformed community. This is the key to sustainability and enhanced collective impact toward human success, thriving, and realized potential that will make homelessness and its contributing factors a thing of the past.

Greta Thunberg- youth climate activist and movement maker: This is from her Ted Talk in Stockholm about climate concerns, but it is applicable to any major human challenge:

“You only talk about moving forward with the same bad ideas that got us into this mess, even when the only sensible thing to do is pull the emergency brake. And if the solutions within the system are so impossible to find, then maybe we should change the system itself. ... you are never too small to make a difference. Imagine what we could do together if we really wanted to. But to do that we have to speak clearly, no matter how uncomfortable that may be. We cannot solve a crisis without treating it as a crisis.change is coming whether you like it or not... the real power belongs to the people.” From her speech to the U.N.

“The ... crisis has already been solved, we have all the facts and solutions. All we have to do is to wake up and change. If a few children could get headlines all over the world just by not coming to school for a few weeks, imagine what we could all do together if we tried. ... We’ve had thirty years of pep talking and selling positive ideas. And I’m sorry but it doesn’t work. Because if it would have, the emissions (or homelessness) would have gone down by now. And yes, we do need hope, of course we do. but the one thing we need more than hope, is action. Once we start to act, hope is everywhere. “

https://www.ted.com/talks/greta_thunberg_the_disarming_case_to_act_right_now_on_climate?language=en

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Prologue

Making Spaces: A **Fictional** Account of the Change You Wish to See

This story takes place in any community, anywhere, that is emerging from crisis and into success during any time of deep and sustainable change. This story is based on a broad range of information gathered from and about many communities over the course of the Momentum Project and past experience in the Social Sector and community development. It has been included here to provide a vision of what can be by sharing the story of how it could happen.

Gage moved in today. When I left him, the last “homeless” person in our region was sitting in his new apartment, after eating some celebratory take-out with his support team and getting ready to settle in for the night. It’s been quite a journey for him and his cohorts, and on a broader level, quite a journey for our community.

The way we were

Seven years ago, we were in a deep crisis, and in spite of numerous “plans to end homelessness,” there seemed little hope of being able to do so. Increasing numbers of people were ending up on the streets, or at risk of it, and the opioid crisis was in full swing. Daily tragedies and broken systems were wearing us all down. It was a time when the standard “tactics” and programs seemed to be becoming less effective for a new population of people in crisis. After decades and billions of dollars, homelessness was still occurring. It was big business, but the problem persisted. In our area, as in most, we didn’t have enough units, or the right kind of housing, and not enough capital on the horizon to provide all that we needed. We were siloed, within and between sectors, and the community was fractured by emotional and political responses and pressures, philosophical differences, and damaging assumptions about the social needs at the core of the crisis.

It was easy to try to lay the blame on government, our municipality, lack of resources and leadership, an uncaring community, even the people in crisis. The truth is, none of us were at fault, and all of us were. There were numerous reasons things weren’t working, and most seemed beyond our control. So many people were working hard and burning themselves out trying to do more with less, isolated, alone, overwhelmed. It felt as if, no matter what resources, frameworks, opportunities were found or thrown at the problem, it was never enough. We couldn’t seem to connect the dots. We were drowning, and couldn’t navigate to the surface to find our way to shore.

Historically there had been, and even at that time there were, bright spots, but they hadn’t seemed to make enough of a ripple or last long enough to make a permanent or comprehensive difference. There were also blunders; strategies, policies and practices that seemed to contradict each other and perceived solutions that ended up making things worse after a while. There were numerous projects being enacted in isolation which split precious resources.

We were in serious crisis and could see no way out, and it was affecting everything, and everyone, and not just our community. Provincially, nationally, globally, a growing sense of injustice, a wider connection to broader but still relating issues, was, for many of us, creating a point of intentional self-reflection. “There must be, should be, NEEDS to be, more, and better, than this, for everyone.” Priorities were shifting for many, across sectors. Realizations about what truly was important were being had in the face of so many “givens” that we had come to expect and had previously settled with, even if we had never truly made peace with it.

Breaking point

Frustration levels mounted to a breaking point, and then... it broke. After another wave of management retirements and front-line shuffles, and a year of increased social disruptions, overdoses and suicides. After what seemed like years of dialogue and mulling over strategic frameworks, best practice fads and breakthroughs and still more research, surveys, dialogue, I guess enough of us had had enough of the same old. Maybe we were finally in a state of mind and heart that pushed us close enough to the edge to feel like we could climb out of the box.

“We’ve got to do things differently!” We all knew it, we all said it, every time anyone got together. There were still differing views as to what that meant, but concepts and philosophies, researched best practices, and the humanity in all of us was mulling and mixing and spilling over boundaries and into the spaces between. There were great things happening, don’t get me wrong! Amazing people and organizations who were working to make things better in various ways. But it was generally accepted that all of these things were still too disconnected, siloed, hard to navigate, and sometimes creating problems for each other. There had been a reluctance to engage in these potential “fixes” for a number of reasons:

1. There had been too many hopeful attempts to do change work in the past that didn’t last, didn’t stick, or just weren’t comprehensive enough to make a lasting difference, but still took a lot of time, energy and resources. Twice bitten, thrice shy, the saying goes. There were low levels of trust. People had been burned too many times.
2. The current funding model for social support services created a threatening atmosphere, intentional or otherwise, where funded organizations were nervous about heading in directions that might lose them “grace” in the eyes of those holding the purse strings. An unfortunate power dynamic was at play in which the obvious leadership entities were not as effective as they could be, didn’t really know what to do, but seemed unwilling to relinquish control. Their view seemed limited, and even if they were working out amazing solutions, it was being done behind closed doors, with little engagement or even communication to the rest of the community. And the not so obvious but potential leaders and community champions were not feeling like they could step into that role.
3. With a competitive funding model in place, leading to a lack of coordination between organizations, there was so much effort being needed to just keep things afloat in key community organizations, that there was little room for extra-curricular activity that may or may not produce desired results. It was a false sense of efficiency that, ironically, compounded inefficiency and taxed limited resources even more. It is easy to see this in hindsight, but at the time, without sanction, mandate, and authority to produce motivation for collaboration, any attempts to make changes were disjointed, difficult to inject, and sometimes seemed to get in the way of individual, siloed mandates and operational strategies.
4. The interaction within and between sectors was spotty and disconnected, creating competing demands on limited pockets of willing collaborators in some sectors, while other sectors carried on merrily toward their own purposes and within their own spheres. There was a lack of understanding of the full scale of the crisis and its creeping effects on the community. And up to then, very little exposure for the broader population to the community and social challenges whose symptoms were beginning to threaten the peaceful enjoyment of everyone.

5. Uncertain economic conditions had created a dearth or at least constriction on the kind of government and private spending for what could make the most difference: more affordable housing units. New, emerging concepts were being considered and tried, but not enough funding was making it to communities like ours. Disconnection and siloism plagued all levels and sectors, so that promising solutions lost their impact or couldn't be adequately scaled up to provide a broader relief. It seemed that, for the most part, a dogged clinging to broken systems and old ways of doing things resulted in continued treatment of symptoms, rather than solutions aimed at core causes for lasting change.
6. And honestly, but not so easy to hear, the community had become dependent on government supports and was not connected enough to recognize or mobilize local resources. Learned helplessness, enablement, caused by systems "fixes" had ended up decreasing the self-reliance of communities. What happens to people that puts them in crisis, can happen to sub systems and communities, too.

There had been brief points of light and efforts that made sense here and there, and I guess the situation finally reached a tipping point. The urgency, the hope, the despair, the hope again, and the sense that *now was the time* seemed to be getting stronger. "If not now, then when?" and, "If not us, then who?" At the same time that things seemed to be getting worse, there were also some concepts that began "gelling," and you could hear it and feel it. But there was still no real leadership, no sense of a way to create an effective framework from which to move forward. Then the call came.

Leadership at last, but the right kind

Our local Community Housing Advisory Board was looking for input for a new plan to tackle homelessness, in the wake of the previous 10-year strategy to end it. There was a recognition that the landscape of homelessness and community capacity was changing. They, very rightly, wanted voices from multiple sectors. This included lived experience, the Indigenous community, social support services, the public sector, government, and business and industry as well as community and religious service organizations. With everything that was going on, going wrong, and going around and round, it was easy for us all to roll our eyes, at first. "Here we go again!"

But something was different this time. Like maybe all the pieces might be falling into place and an opportunity that could not be passed up was on our doorstep. There were concepts and ideas being floated, discussed, toyed with. People were ready to innovate, do things differently. There was an authentic intention not to proscribe the process, but to support a true community effort. And we knew that whatever was decided on as a plan had to include input and perspectives from the whole community. On the "Stages of Change" spectrum, we realized we were moving from a state of precontemplation into contemplation.

Successes in other places, and the best practice research that was happening at the time, pointed toward finding a way to connect all the disparate parts of our community and begin a course of action that could really change things. But it still felt like the desperate flailing and reaching of an addict, hoping that maybe, this time, things could finally be different, while wondering how it really could and preparing for inevitable relapse. Maybe we were just desperate enough, had hit rock bottom finally. But all of those things combined with a leadership group that was ready to engage all of us in creative, permanent solution-making set the stage for community action. There was no win in wasting the opportunity to introduce real change. As the saying goes, we had nothing to lose and everything to gain.

Some change was better than doing nothing and whatever we could do would get us closer to being able to doing more.

Gathering the group and laying a foundation for change

Our “brief” was twofold: First, to use systems thinking strategies and creative, out of the box thinking, to assess, map, re-imagine, and effectively mobilize existing resources across sectors (including but not limited to people, places, organizations, dollars, opportunities and even just stuff) toward ending homelessness and its contributing factors. Second, to develop a cohesive community plan to that end that would make the best use of those resources in an integrated housing and supports model, and make a powerful business case for additional resources from outside the community.

As a multi-sector effort to form a team began, there were some clear “mandates” and “criteria” that emerged. If we all, within our silos, continued to perform as we were, we would expect to see the same frustrating results and trajectories. We knew we had to be humble, we knew we had to be honest, open, creative, forgiving, and have equal measures of patience as well as dogged, passionate, determined energy toward action.

Every community has differences as well as commonalities. While we had reams of best practice information, and examples of programs and projects that worked in other communities, we still needed to make sure that what we did worked well in ours. Our ultimate community plan had to be comprehensive enough to cover the needs of enough stakeholders (at least well enough to get initial buy-in. And it had to provide adequate focus on key issues to see meaningful solutions, produce greater engagement and increase capacity for more action. It had to stand the test of time and succession, and be sustainable, no matter who was in leadership, key community and sector positions, or political power. It had to be able to flex with us on our journey as a community.

I don’t know how many people really could see it or thought about it at the time. But we felt that we were on the verge of a whole new way of being, as a community, that was going to open up possibilities that we had never collectively envisioned before. It was hard to have faith in that, to step out into the darkness of doing things differently. Were we up to the challenge? Could we really make it work this time?

Finding Community and Sector Champions

From accepted and emerging literature and our amalgamated experience in change management, we knew we needed sector champions who were well connected into their sectors and able, or at least willing, to understand the perspectives of the others. They had to be able and willing to commit the time and energy required, and we needed to support them. Just that initial exercise of coming to that conclusion, figuring out how to justify and/or pay for people’s hours and giving them space on their plates to do this work, began a process of collaboration and collective activity toward mutually beneficial outcomes. It was a small, relatively simple and reachable “leverage point” and “collective victory” that offered some immediate gratification and gains to help spur us on to see what more we could do.

It was important that we enter into this process as equals, collaborators, and representatives of all community members that had much to lose if we failed, and so much more to gain if we succeeded. We also understood that we had to mutually lead the process, rather than allow ourselves to be led through a preconceived and orchestrated process to a predetermined outcome. We needed to discover a shared agenda and vision, connected into and

representing our various sectors, and bringing all of our understanding and ingenuity to the table. We didn't want to limit the possibilities for powerful, organic solutions. But we also had to find common ground from which to start to build. We needed a framework to work within that would prepare us for the work, help guide and organize our efforts, leave us the room we needed to explore fully and find the best solutions, and provide a way to see the big picture and potential next steps.

Creating Space for Safe Conversations

Using the work of Helen LaKelly Hunt, Ph.D. and Harville Hendrix, Ph.D., who are interested in developing a more "relational society," we learned about and employed "communal dialogue" working on creating "safe conversations." In their work with couples and family therapy they stopped focusing on the "problems" people thought they had and instead focused on helping them to talk to each other in a way that their needs to be heard, understood and feel safe were met. Talking without judgement, helps us connect beyond our differences. They have been working on the Dallas Project as part of the Mayor's Task Force on homelessness in Dallas Texas, where they are trying out these concepts between cultural groups and across socio-economic levels.

Our facilitators took us through a few first exercises that helped us to create a safe space to do this work. We were being required to be very vulnerable, the process was emotional and often painful. We began with work to define or envision the kind of community we each wanted to be part of and what problems needed to be solved for that to happen. Then we engaged in conversations to understand each other's individual and representative sectoral motivations, needs, goals, challenges and barriers in order to move forward in a good way, toward mutually viable, beneficial, and equitable solutions. But it was about more than solutions. We were modeling a new way of operating together, trying out a new way of being. A more authentic and honest, and ultimately safer and more productive way of working together.

Just the act of improving our communications with each other- with that shared vision of hope, with assumptions that everyone was doing their best, and with an intention toward increasing understanding between sectors, seemed to eliminate a number of "problems" we all thought we had. It helped us focus on the things that mattered most and had the greatest impact toward the solutions we were looking for. We were able, as a community to start letting go of both the "small stuff" that was feeding mistrust, cynicism, and creating unhealthy dynamics, as well as some of the "big stuff" that we weren't able to tackle quite yet. We began to find creative ways to work from where we were at, in the best ways, with what was available.

The City of Dallas, Texas, had experienced this through their Safe Conversations project and we were seeing it duplicated in our community, in our particular dynamic and set of circumstances. Rather than using up precious energy, head space, and time on negativity, pessimism, and the "blame game," we were able to create an environment where people were willing to step back from assumptions and roll up their sleeves in hope. Contemplation had led to commitment and now we were ready to enter into the preparation stage.

Gathering Tools

We had some training and discussions about different tools and ways and means to create a shared "language" and common base of understanding which could help us develop a framework for the work we were doing. We talked about some of the tools and processes in our own areas of expertise around leadership, change management,

communication, systems thinking, determining and measuring outcomes, strategic planning and economics. And we gathered and adapted some exercises, tools and templates we felt would help us in this work.

We settled on things such as the concepts related to Systems Thinking for Social Change, an outward mindset model, and a mandate for flexibility and sustainability (to better manage systems entropy). Armed also with a holistic view of community encapsulated by concepts within the Medicine Wheel, which fit hand in glove with Systems Thinking and the Transtheoretical Model of the Stages of Change, we were ready to begin our journey of discovery and transformation. We decided we would employ situational leadership in which different people would take the lead based on what was needed at each juncture, and who could best supply it.

Creating a Picture of the Current Reality

Much like the process of intake for a support program, we had to, first, start with a big picture view of who we are and where we were at, as a community. Our strengths as well as our deficits or liabilities. As well, we had to gather multi-sector stakeholder input about what could be, in order to make decisions about who and where we wanted to be and how to get there. Making a conscious decision, as a community, to reject the status quo and commit to change, required that we each take a good look at the cost for remaining the same versus the price for making important changes. Not unlike any human being's personal experience when faced, in a crisis, with a choice to make. This would help us strategically map our next steps for best success.

The prospect of looking at what we might be "doing wrong" as a community and as individual entities, was difficult, emotional, and raw. Discovering that you have been complicit, or even just complacent, in undermining the very things you have dedicated your life, career, and daily energies to, is heartbreaking and gut wrenching. But attitude reflects leadership, and so as a team we had to experience what we expected the rest of the community to do in accepting personal responsibility for the change we wished to see. And we had to do it authentically, compassionately, but resolutely. In order to effectively map a way out of the current situation, we needed to know how we got to this juncture. We knew we needed to be honest about what was worth keeping and what needed to be discarded. We needed to be clear about what was dysfunctional in order to be open to what we could do differently.

Using some systems mapping concepts, readily available from a number of sources, we mapped out how our community was currently operating from the perspective of homelessness and its contributing factors.

- What were the dynamics and interactions and their results?
- How we might be getting in each other's ways?
- What important resources were missing to help end-users move out of crisis?
- Where were the missed opportunities and inefficiencies?

This led us to consider what we could actually do right then, what we were in a position, with the will and resources, to work on as a community that would make enough difference to help us move forward in the ways that made sense. As in any change process there are stages of progression that feed into the next. Without the right elements in place to enact certain changes, the process is frustrated and stopped. Working with what is in the environment helps keep the change process moving and it produces outcomes that add elements to the environment which increase capacity for, and support, next steps. We realized that this worked for those we were trying to help as much as it did for us. We are all systems after all, as individual human beings, organizations, sectors, and a community.

Forming a Shared Vision for what is possible

When considering a uniting vision, we wanted to go beyond what we would do and incorporate how we would do it together. We needed the differing perspectives and “bottom lines” of the various community sectors to inform a new way of operating together. Helping each other climb out of limiting boxes by pooling our individual wisdoms expanded our view and ignited our imaginations toward the possibilities of what could be. It fostered a new sense of unity and cooperation. I know, it sounds very “Pollyanna,” but it's true, and it worked. We were able to both reach for new heights and keep our feet on the ground with the practical understanding we each brought from our areas of expertise.

One key insight from our discussions really got us thinking about how we were going about this work. One identified systems story is the “fixes that fail” scenario where, in a limited view, a “band-aid” gets put on as a solution to a problem that actually requires much more than that. It might seem to fix things in the short term (usually because it masks the problem enough that it loses traction for our attention) but the underlying cause still exists. With a multi-sector group determined to find permanent and sustainable solutions, we had an opportunity to examine the root causes of homelessness, rather than just focus on homelessness itself.

We thought, “What if we don’t try to solve homelessness at all? What if we go beyond that and look at how, as a community, we can solve or alleviate, at least, some of the contributing factors to homelessness?” What would a community that is able to support people to thrive look like? We examined all areas because we had input from all sectors. What deficits would need to be removed and what assets would need to be introduced or scaled up in order to break the cycles that were leading people into a situation of homelessness, or being at risk of it? How would we need to integrate and interlink those elements in order to decrease gaps and ensure that people could navigate the resources and opportunities.?

A pragmatic view about what we could manage now, compared to where we wanted to be in order to move us forward to our vision started with “reverse engineering” from the desired outcomes. What needed to be in place for Y to happen, and what had to be done at X for that to be in place, then next and next, along with contingency plans, to see if we had what was needed to get started, present in our environment and what we had to do to manifest it. This would inform each stage of progress. This took some time to accomplish. As tempting as it was to rush out with solutions, we had to hold ourselves back and work on getting a strong, clear picture that would form our roadmap to success and establish a network and community infrastructure to support the action required.

Our new vision: A community that is able to support every member to thrive, in a way of operating together that best uses existing resources, capacities and opportunities for positive change in the core causes of social need, helps sustainably produce more, and presents a united, informed front for seeking external support.

Sharing what we were learning and inviting more engagement

While we were forming and refining that vision, we shared some of our team’s discoveries, to prepare the soil, so to speak, in the community and plant some seeds of insight that would ease the way of change. It also provided us with community level feedback, as we went forward, that helped us to gauge what would be most possible, practical and

palatable. And it informed us about those deeper layers of motivation, perspective and assumption, so that we could work out how to support their transformation.

We had to have an idea of who we needed at the table, who was ready to act with us at each point along the way, and what activities we needed to engage in to help get the people we needed ready and mobilized. We also needed to develop an integrated and intentional process and “network” of communication to help us keep everyone tuned into this work.

Collaborating multi-sectorally meant that we had a broader view of what we had to work with. With some creativity and a little bit of faith, trust, and sacrifice, we were able to figure out how to work the three focuses or our vision into our day to day activities. It was hard for many to get their heads around it, but each of these focuses were directly related and mutually influential. We needed to find ways to identify and track the outcomes that would show us we were being successful, hold everyone accountable for their parts, continually evaluate, and share and gather new knowledge.

We had to ask some tough, humbling questions, at first, that included:

- Why, after we have been working on ending homelessness for so long, did it still exist?
- What areas were we falling short, individually and as a community?
- What were our honest motivations and “pay-offs” for being involved in this work?
- What aspects did we feel “called to?”
- What were we prepared to give up or share control of in order to see success in this area?
- What underlying assumptions and world views did we have regarding people who were homeless, or at risk of it; about other entities and stakeholders in our community; about root causes, accountability, responsibilities and roles?
- What did we see as the core contributors to the current crisis?
- What part, if any did, we, within our sectors, organizations and as community members, through policy or perspective or practice, play in the perpetuation of the core contributors to homelessness? Of the current condition of siloism?
- What activities were working well and helping people, and how could we scale them up, given the resources we had available?
- What other layers of value could we add to our activities?
- What were we doing, or could we do within our sectors and as a community to be the change we wished to see?

We were developing a new “way of being” as a community, a new standard by which to operate that put the people in need at the centre, had an expectation of mutual responsibility and accountability, incorporated that authentic, honest inquiry, a view to next steps, and always an eye on the bigger community picture. The principles and concepts of healing, change management, outward accountability, visioning solutions and moving forward that are best practices in helping individuals and families, easily apply to organizations and communities. “Physician, heal thyself.”

There are a number of approaches available that ask different levels of questions, and have different tools. We explored the material, best practice, our own expertise, and the experiences of other communities to decide how best to proceed with our own assessment and visioning activities. Cross-pollinating, or looking outside of one industry for solutions from others is a recognized practice that has led to successes for others. Applying business

models to social benefit work and applying social benefit principles and concepts to business and industry has expanded the effectiveness of all of us toward a community supporting bottom line.

We began with a systems assessment of our community, based from *Systems Thinking for Social Change* by David Peter Stroh and other related material. There are many approaches and tools available, and we found the ones that worked for us. These included an analysis tool based on the developmental model inspired by the Medicine Wheel, organized according to sectorally related “layers” of involvement. We were able to pinpoint various aspects of systems work as they related to our current issue, and it helped us trace leveraging and engagement pathways, see where the gaps might be, and identify not only who was doing what, but who could do what might be helpful along those pathways.

Oh, my goodness, these were rough days. After so long working in silos, taking care of our own business, thinking we had the answers and seeing others as the problem, it took a lot of trust and honesty to tease apart existing tangles of assumption, and dysfunction. To see how all of our activities fed into, affected or where impacted by those key social challenges that had brought us together, and to envision better dynamics.

Discovering and exploiting leveraging activities

We decided that there were some naturally occurring coalitions and alliances in our community that already created a loose network that we could exploit to assist with this process. Establishing a visual depiction, some collaborative terms of reference and some ways and means toward greater intentionality, mutual benefit, and collective impact was another important and revealing “leverage point” that helped increase energy and engagement. We were starting to see how all of the separate pieces of our community could begin to work smarter and with greater synergy.

We quickly came to realize that there were some smaller projects the community could immediately set about doing, or that were existing and which we could make more effective or scale up. By engaging others in multi-sector task forces to help carry them out, these activities would provide some hope and energy boosting to a waiting community. They would also prove to be very beneficial to the overall task we had set ourselves.

Seeing the fruits of our labours

In one amazing example, we knew we needed more housing units, and the right combination of the right kinds of units. But even though we had a few things in the works, they weren’t enough, they needed some “massaging”, and/or they were going to take at least a year or two to get off the ground. So, with our enhanced ability to collaborate, and our growing sense of trust of each other, and the process, we were able to organize some smaller interventions designed just to help take some pressure off a volatile situation. We could meet the solutions that were in development partway.

Once we really began talking on a multi-sectoral level, with a broader, big picture view of the community and some of the core realities that were influencing homelessness, we were able to see a few areas of movement that could help almost immediately. We knew that we couldn’t make enough housing available for everyone right away, nor would it be a “silver bullet” solution. There needed to be more and integrated layers to our solutions. We also knew we weren’t going to get additional resources any time soon either. We needed to alleviate some of the suffering and bottlenecks, and pave the way to housing success, using what we already had on hand for resources.

A.) Collective Housing solutions: In a community where we had so many who were homeless, there was still a surprisingly significant (but yet not so surprising) rate of vacancy. We decided to see empty units as a collective impact opportunity and began to work on a strategy of communication and coordination that could exploit that opportunity to the mutual benefit of community members that needed housing and some of the landlords with empty units. There were a number of landlords who already saw the benefit of working with the community to find good matches for some of those units that would mitigate risk, and provide at least some income. This was already being done in a limited way. Unfortunately, due to the competitive nature of funding and outcomes chasing, agencies tended to “hoard” good landlords. The problem with this was that their particular clients weren’t always the best match for their landlords, leading to frustration, expensive failures, and landlord burnout. If we could develop a cohesive system of “match-making” and coordinate appropriate supports, we could solve an economic and social challenge at the same time, not to mention improve mental and emotional wellbeing for all involved!

B.) Meaningful Activity and Relationship Building: Research and best practice tell us that a lack of trusting relationships and community connection were contributors to continued mental health and addiction challenges. This was keeping people from engaging more effectively with existing services. We found that we could address this barrier to success and provide a few more pathways to better engagement by creating opportunities for meaningful activity and relationship building. We organized a team made up of lived experience folks, front line workers, and a couple of members each of the business and faith communities. A questionnaire related to meaningful daily activities was sent to all community serving agencies. Then the group assessed the feedback to determine:

1. what meaningful activity options were currently in place in the community;
2. what were seen as needful, that did not yet exist;
3. what resources or opportunities existed that could be cobbled together to provide more; and
4. what further opportunities or added value could be gained from these activities, increasing daily meaningful activity options.

C.) Neighbourhood Capacity Building: We also knew that, while planning new housing was imperative, we were going to be dealing with NIMBY mentality. We had to find ways to increase the willingness of neighbourhoods to welcome these local “refugees” into their hearts and lives. They needed capacity for awareness and understanding, resilience and risk management, and they needed some good “buy-in” incentives to motivate them to be more amenable to their new neighbours. We knew that relationships were key to the change, outcomes, and risk mitigation we were hoping for. Almost every neighbourhood has a community or neighbourhood association, loosely linked in a network and supported on a basic level by the municipality. Here was another potential leveraging point that we could exploit to the immense and important benefit of everyone. So, we got another team working on supporting neighbourhood associations, who needed some help to be more sustainable and revitalize their neighbours interest in, well, their neighbourhoods and introduce capacity building activities.

Experiencing initial outcomes

We found, over time, that the changes we implemented in order to “just get by” while we waited for permanent housing solutions to be completed, actually led to some more permanent solutions for a number of the folks that were in crisis at the time. The bottom line is that so many things are interconnected, and while it creates problems in other areas when one area fails, conversely, the same can happen when one area is strengthened. For example:

Momentum Project: Using Systems Thinking to Transform and Align Communities and Enhance Collective Impact

- Well-being, empowerment, and a better sense of connection was improving engagement and success with Housing First programs for many participants. This meant that current tenant/landlord “matchmaking” efforts were seeing greater success, and more landlords were being willing to extend lower rental rates to support the progress of their, now, most excellent tenants.
- Our efforts to support landlords produced opportunities to create a collaboration between social agencies and existing companies in the private sector to develop small “in-house” social enterprises to provide cheaper maintenance, landscaping, cleaning, and renovation options. These provided the right kind of flexible employment for participants, enhanced skills for taking care of housing, and led to more permanent jobs in those related fields, because we were connected into the private sector.
- We were able to hire a number of our participants in the construction and renovation activities for our permanent housing projects that were beginning to be in development.
- Our organized, clear and communicated strategic activities were attracting volunteers and participation from the greater community, which increased awareness, understanding, tolerance, and integration.
- A growing group of individuals in recovery were able to be more successful than they had been previously, at retaining their sobriety and related it directly to better choices for meaningful daily activity and “safe” spaces to be, with links available to further steps.
- This improved their ability, combined with a willingness of more landlords, who were increasingly confident in our spectrum of supports, to help find mutually beneficial solutions, to get more people into an affordable rental situation.
- Because we were working hard to support landlords, our case management teams and social service organizations had to do some focusing on the neighbourhoods into which their clients were moving. Bringing added value to communities strengthened the case for inclusion and decrease the power of NIMBY.
- We continued to explore, using existing manpower and looking for other cross-sector collaboration opportunities, what kinds of supportive and capacity building projects and programs could be enacted within neighbourhoods. This action brought health, education, and church organizations together in new and innovative ways. Now we are building capacity on the ground in neighbourhoods for grassroots support, healthy social networks, and linkages to more specialized and formal services. According to John McKnight, community development guru and co-founder of ABCD Canada (Asset-Based Community Development) “we have many programs focused on policy and institutions but too few focused on enabling citizens and associations to be producers in their neighbourhoods.”
- Increased involvement of business in social solutions led to improved levels of sponsorship, especially now that we had an organized, cohesive, way of developing and communicating these activities. But, with lived experience and business involvement in that planning and development, it also created spaces for dialogue between those with lived experience, and social and business sectors. This led to increased networking, two-way mentorship and collaboration to create job pathways and opportunities, which led to more individuals

being able to stably rent housing. It also had the added advantage of creating a “grown at home” workforce that was loyal, local and specifically trained.

- With the increased communication and collaboration between sectors it was now easier to see the potential of looking forward to the emerging trends and needs in the other sectors and work together to create opportunities for our vulnerable community-members-emerging-into community-contributors to move to fill those needs.
- Neighbourhood associations were revitalized, and connected into the alignment framework, and as a community we had a better sense of the needs, dynamics and demographics in each neighbourhood. So, we were able to use that information to strategize housing development to the best benefit of the tenants and the neighbourhoods. There was also an increased capacity for neighbours, with better supportive relationships developing, for not only integration, but also prevention of further crisis. Each neighbourhood was its own little microcosm of community care, linking to as well as informing and being informed by the greater continuum of care. There was an increase in our ability to resource projects on a neighbourhood level, because we could see how it could fit into the overall community picture.

Ultimately, the increased communication and collaboration within and between sectors had started to change our community landscape and dynamic in positive ways.

Capturing the momentum of quick victories

Seeing the benefits from our initial, sort of crisis-oriented activity, we were encouraged and began to work together more intentionally on three levels:

1. Using opportunities that were already in process or development, we created a cohesive business plan and strategic alliance toward developing housing which included pooling current and emerging opportunities and resources to create a connected, sustainable, growing system of affordable housing options. With the help and guidance of our partners in business and industry we applied mixed use, mixed income strategies that were designed to provide employment opportunities, create social enterprise business development, and produce revenues. These revenues will ensure the perpetual sustainability of our affordable housing, and boost resources for our community continuum of care.
2. Developing a multi-sector community alignment framework around a shared vision of a community that helps everyone to thrive. We were able to focus on resourcing, improving and enhancing our local continuum of care and intersecting it with next steps and pathways into self-reliance and resilience, moving from a constant state of crisis intervention to prevention and capacity building.
3. Working smarter, and mobilizing the community around reviewing and adjusting what activities we could do now to alleviate some of the identified and emerging needs and pressures and find more leveraging activities to bring more quick victories and help with the other two areas. This would allow us to move deeper and deeper into our community systems and start addressing some of the below the surface elements talked about in the “iceberg analogy” in systems thinking. Basically, the idea is that the systems “behaviours” that we see are the tip of the iceberg and the result of other elements far below the surface. Things like

assumptions and biases, values, traditions, and cultural or worldviews. It behooves anyone who is looking at change of any kind to examine the underlying elements and contributors to the thinking and feeling that influences today's actions, and the deeper personal, social and cultural aspects that spawned them.

At the end of the day, while many things were starting to fall into place, we still needed more housing units. In the process of and as a result of all of the aforementioned activity and drive, as a community we were able to create a strategic plan for housing that included a number of elements:

1. Better utilization of the government funds that were being allocated for housing projects in our community to provide added value for the community. This meant increased and creative collaboration between benefiting agencies and other community entities to maximize use and decrease expenses.
2. The creation of a housing cooperative to provide a spectrum of ways that community members and entities could contribute to sustainable affordable housing which included:
 - Social benefit housing development and property management collaborations among local nonprofit organizations with some help from the business sector to provide sustainable builds and set up sustainability opportunities for existing units.
 - Social Benefit and Housing Bonds to create capital and provide small and large local opportunities for investment and return
 - A Greening and Environmental Cooperative to utilize government programs and local investment to improve existing and new builds' energy efficiency for savings on operations costs.
 - Community planning and needs assessment embedded in regular practice as a continual process to stay abreast and even ahead of the needs of particular populations or demographics.

Creating a local development opportunity cooperative helped us widen accessibility to social and economic return on investment and involve more community members in a spectrum of opportunities. We were generating local economic well-being while engaging people more fully and meaningfully in the thrive-ability of the community.

3. Privately and publicly funded mixed use, mixed income housing and community development projects that provide expanded opportunities as well as revenues to:
 - improve sustainability of housing units through maintenance and replacement contingencies
 - support more financing for more builds, restorations, renovations, and home ownership schemes flexible to emerging community needs
 - help enhance and augment the local community of care
 - support our collective impact framework, and
 - invest in businesses and social enterprises that help create more revenues and supply employment opportunities.
4. Increased and more effective community collaboration around meaningful daily activity, supplementary grass roots activity and linkages to other community resources and supports to help people remain stably housed, and increase wellness, well-being, self-reliance, inclusion and social support.

With a combination of assessment, action planning and deployment we have been able to enact a number of leveraging activities that are moving us into closer multi-sectoral alignment, increasing local resources and building momentum toward sustainable solutions. Do people still become homeless? Yes, it can happen. But it happens less frequently because we have a system of community care that helps individuals and families increase their capacity and resilience factors which mitigate risk and prevent crisis. If it does happen that someone loses their housing, it is resolved much more quickly. There are more and better options for affordability in housing along a continuum of needs, while we also have a community that works together to increase opportunities for people to thrive.

The way we are

Today, we have a few things in place that we would never have dared to hope for seven years ago:

- Enough diverse and adequate housing and creative housing options that are making revenues for sustainability and perpetuation of affordability and producing added values through mixed use, mixed income approaches. And that include jobs and increased inclusion, among other benefits.
- A responsive and imaginative community way of operating that ensures no individual or family goes without at least basic needs, that respects everyone's right to thrive and supports them in their responsibilities to that process. From neighbours all the way to legislators, people are looking out for each other.
- Economic growth and opportunity, with increased local resources, supportive workplaces and enough jobs for anyone who wants one.
- A multi-sector framework and infrastructure for enhanced collective impact to tackle community needs through a balanced, Big Picture view of what is best for the community, across all sectors, but that puts people in the centre.
- An effective system of communication and planning that helps our community mobilize around emergencies, better anticipate challenges, take full advantage of emerging opportunities, and present comprehensive and effective business cases for the resources we seek from outside.
- A continuum of community care that increases capacity and resilience in our community, helps prevent crises, mitigates them quickly when they occur and can mobilize to assess gaps or emerging trends that might have led to that crisis.
- A connected and navigable community system of care that is connected into and thus supported by all community sectors.

"Everything is impossible, until someone crazy enough comes along and makes it possible." (C.T. Fletcher- American powerlifting vlogger, recovering from a heart transplant at age 59). Seven years ago, people thought we were crazy to believe that things could be different. Seven years ago, we accepted the challenge to bring the vision of a bold new community way of being to life. Today, I think of Gage, and the hundreds of other individuals and families, the organizations, workplaces, policy makers, businesses, neighbourhoods, clubs and congregations that have been transformed and continue to grow, move forward and shape their lives and this community in positive ways. It's amazing what you can do when you don't believe you can't!

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Section 2

A Systems Primer

Understanding Some Important Concepts:

For this discussion and the activity that will hopefully follow it, we first need to take a look at some concepts or principles that have been applied to the consideration of doing things differently. While there are many amazing philosophies and ways of thinking about things, we will be focusing in on a powerful few. Systems thinking, collective impact, outward accountability, the holistic nature of humans, and the stages of change. We are looking not at what we do, but how we do it. We are looking at how to get into a frame of mind and way of being that will change the way our communities operate.

Setting the Stage for Systems Thinking: In an example from the news: A 2016 report by Alberta's auditor general Merwan Saher highlighted numerous problems with the AISH system such as excessive delays between levels of approval, complicated and indecipherable application forms, rejections due to minor details that could have easily been resolved earlier in the process, and clients receiving lower benefits than they were entitled to. The bureaucratic nightmare was such that, at the time, Saher concluded, "The department does not know what it needs to change to improve the program."



At the time of this news story, the government had taken measures to streamline the process and was now considering how to properly resource it to ensure sustainability and prevent staff burnout, which was a step in a good direction. However this serves as an example of how a system can be so dysfunctional that it can't see how to fix itself, which often leads to continued ignoring and shifting or avoiding responsibility until a crisis occurs that can't be ignored (in this case over many years and at a cost to vulnerable Canadians, the people who work in the system, as well as taxpayers).

The change was mandated from the outside to improve that system's interaction with others and the crisis was so severely felt internally that the system was open to making changes, even though things would be uncomfortable for a while. If the action follows through and those resources are found and provided, things might be looking up. Although to be cynically realistic, in another systems story, this time a "tragedy," the bottom line of the cost of this "resourcing" might mean less increases for the AISH payment in the foreseeable future. This will occur if more money is put into hiring more administration to deal with the symptoms of the problem and not enough investment is made in administration looking to see what their practices and inefficiencies may be contributing to the problem.

Systems Thinking for Social Change: We have adapted much of the concepts and treatment of Systems Thinking from David Peter Stroh's Systems Thinking for Social Change with supporting documentation from other sources.



Systems thinking influences and drives change within a change management framework. Incorporating systems thinking into a systems approach is helpful within these scenarios (Stroh, 2015):

- A chronic problem has been resistant to best efforts toward a solution
- Diverse stakeholders with shared intentions are having difficulty aligning their efforts
- Parts of a system try to optimize their action without understanding the impact on the rest
- Short term efforts work against the intended outcome

- There are a large number of different initiatives happening at the same time
- Continuous learning is being stunted by the promotion of particular solutions

All of these scenarios describe the current situation in homelessness management for many if not all communities in Canada, even the ones that are making progress and gains toward “Ending Homelessness.” It must be noted that when expressing that phrase, most stakeholders, in any sector recognize that there will always be a certain element of homelessness. Things happen that even the best run community cannot control so that there may be short episodes of homelessness. But if a community is set up in the right way those episodes are few and short lived. For our purposes here, it is the effective processes of identifying underlying causes and working with individuals and families to provide “Homefulness” options and pathways to housing sustainability that is universally identified as “Ending Homelessness.” Perhaps more appropriately it could be referred to as “Ending Hopelessness.”

A five “stage” model for leading systemic change (Stroh, 2015) consists of:

- Creating readiness for change
- Understanding and accepting the current reality
- Committing to make the change
- Doing the work to move from current reality to the shared vision.
- And then continuing in a pattern of learning, assessing and mutual accountability to keep things flexing forward.

An expanded treatment of this process can be found in Section 4.

The Value of Alignment: At the Social Impact Exchange 2017 Annual Conference on Scaling Impact, Atul Gawande, a surgeon, renowned writer and public health researcher, made a case for alignment. He stated that we are not making progress against the great social problems of our times, not because we don’t know what works, because we do. And it is not due to a lack of resources either. It is due to a lack of a system to implement what works.



Gawande shared his research in finding out “what are the good systems doing?” In one study they realized that in successful hospitals teams behaved, well... more like teams. His researchers found 19 key practices, mostly around communication that set successful hospitals apart from others. In situations of complexity, Gawande suggests, we often want to subdivide the jobs, which leads to a sense of pulling in different directions- demoralization, burnout, anger, frustration. When we pull in the same direction, and these teams that were successful were doing that, it becomes almost effortless, beautiful and fun. And outcomes improve. In another study they found that aligning care with the goals of the individuals being served decreased depression, even increased length of life and quality of life. (Gawande, 2017)

Innovation without follow through: Gawande addresses a fixation with breakthrough innovation and not enough on follow through innovation, or understanding systems and working out how to scale those breakthroughs to increase their reach and make real differences on a broader scale. (Gawande, 2017) This is a theme that has echoed through our research and experience with communities. The demand for more innovation is beginning to be challenged by a cry for resources and support to take these great ideas and implement them in more places on a larger scale. It is not enough to have good ideas and great innovation if they cannot be repeated or more broadly applied. But implementing them on a large enough scale to make a difference



requires systems changes that are often not taken into account, or resourced. As Patrick McCarthy of the Annie E. Casey Foundation suggests “A bad system always trumps a good program.” However, what many are voicing in the area of social change is that when we get people together with the right mindset, focus on relationships, and convene all the voices in the right way with the right attitudes, intentions and good information, the solutions happen.

Overcoming systems barriers to scaling: In an introduction of the topic of Systems Change at the same conference, Fay Hanleybrown, a Managing Director of Financial Services Group states that although the accepted model has been to “pilot, prove, scale,” many interventions have not been able to be scaled because the system dynamics involved work against it. She shares some collected advice from Foundation CEO’s who are beginning to confront the system at the start of their efforts.



- Focus on building relationships and networks. Influencing rather than trying to control will increase ability to effect change within other entities.
- Build and strengthen relationships between entities that are part of the system and creating or affecting the problem.
- Look for leverage points which are sometimes outside of the non-profit sector.
- Understanding motivations and incentives can help influence the behaviour of entities in the other sectors and help change policy.
- Elevate the voices of those with lived experience.
- Work to understand and inform the narratives that underlie public response to the problem.
- Motivate the public to think differently about the problem in such a way that causes them to change *their* behaviour to solve the problem rather than imposing popular programmatic solutions.

(Hanleybrown, 2017)

Scaling up our own awareness and behaviour to “be the change we wish to see:”



Jamshid Gharajedaghi, author of *Systems Thinking: Managing Chaos and Complexity* (2011), discusses five principles that will contribute to readiness for understanding and treating the systems within which we work.

- *Open systems* (of which human beings are one example as a subsystem within populations, or organizations which are subsystems within communities, which are also systems) can only be understood in the context of their environments. Some elements can be controlled, others not, but some can be influenced. This means that we must be willing to look through other lenses than our own, at the elements present in the environments of others. And as a community, our particular context must be considered within any intervention or innovation.
- To be *purposeful* means to be responsive and autonomous rather than reactive, to be driven by values, free will, adaptation and creativity, rather than reacting to occurrences in our environment.
- *Multidimensionality* is really the ability to see how things that seem to be opposing can coexist, interact and be complementary. It requires empathy and compassion as well as humility.

- *Emergent properties* are the “whole” versus its separate parts, but are also a product of the interactions of the parts rather than the sum of the actions of the parts. So, they are not only understood in terms of being, but also as a process of becoming. This means that the process or journey is (at least) as important as the “destination.” Understanding this concept can help us create added value to our activities by teasing out the layered opportunities for more than one population or sector in our community that is engaged with or impacted by our solution making activities.
- *Counterintuitive behaviour* refers to the state in which actions intended to produce a certain outcome might lead to a different result. There are a number of layers involved in this. First, we may apply an action to a problem, thinking it should solve that problem, but in actual fact it makes it worse. Think about prisons, shelters, meal programs. Each of these may seem like a good means to an end of something. But if not done in the right way (e.g. receiving funding for cells or beds filled, or disempowering individuals and families) it actually leads to increasing the use of these things, rather than diminishing them. Conversely, we may think that decreasing meal provision or prisons, or shelter beds might be problematic, but doing so opens the way to solutions for the actual problem those things were meant to fix.

Social systems are resistant to change due to comfort level, fear or uncertainty about what comes next for those working within the systems, and the phenomenon that creates benefit from an obstruction to those who are charged with moving it. Industries and economies are created around the problems we are trying to solve as passive adaptation to deteriorating environments and unsustainable solutions lead us slowly to disaster. Our only hope to stop the madness and have the resources to move beyond it and into new experiences as humanity is to change the paradigm and shift our industry and economies around the activities that lead to the amelioration and prevention of the core causes of those symptomatic at best “problems.”

You can find a link to Jamshid Gharajedaghi ‘s book here:

https://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id=b0g9AUVo2uUC&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=systems+thinking+stories&ots=CDUc2wbG9s&sig=IXLciUx_WmaK8vPt9Bvr1TuOdGk#v=onepage&q=systems%20thinking%20stories&f=false

Obstacles to developmental processes and social change are on page 63. Obstruction to development is covered on page 79-80

In a talk at the Social Impact Exchange 2017 Annual Conference on Scaling Impact, David Peter Stroh provided some powerful insights and the pathways required to scale up solutions. He started with the posit that systems seem to have a life of their own with us providing input and systems doing what they want. There are elements and forces at work within systems and we have to learn how to work with them or we unconsciously work against them. We may understand the idea of openness, that everything is connected to everything, but we don’t really know what to do with those connections. We notice the counterintuitive results of social and justice efforts such as homeless shelters perpetuating homelessness, food aid increasing starvation, tough prison sentences that don’t actually reduce the social ills they are designed for. But we don’t really know how to do things differently to get different results and move the outcomes forward. So, what is happening? (Stroh, 2017)

Conventional versus Systems Thinking:



Conventional thinking, according to Stroh (2017), tells us that when we apply a solution to a problem it fixes the problem. Conventional thinking tells us that we should apply more of the solution when the problem persists. Short term gains can fool us into thinking that whatever we do is working and we should do more of it. But if conceived of and implemented without the big picture (how all the parts fit together and relate to each other), these solutions lead to long term consequences that ultimately undermine the gains we have seen in the short term.

Systems thinking, and our history with big social problems tells us that most quick fixes are not going to make a sustainable difference and can actually make things worse. Stroh suggests we can get caught in a trap of “better before worse” when in actuality, worse before better usually works best. If it’s hard, we are making investments, feeling the short-term pain, creating opportunity for accountability for more than the “helpers”, creating fuel for cognitive dissonance and crisis that motivates different behaviour, and having to work at it before we see the results, then that means we are changing something.

It is hard to see or admit that what we are doing is contributing to the problem or is a barrier to the solution. Conventional thinking is linear- cause and effect. Systems thinking recognizes that there is a difference between the system as we see it and the root causes of that system. Conventional thinking shifts the burden to the intervener, disempowering and entitling the subject of the intervention (Stroh, 2017). Systems thinking recognizes that we are each, however unknowingly, in small or big ways, part of the problem, but also part of the solution, too! And this shifts the burden to... everyone. There is a clear recognition that there is something everyone can do, which leads to empowerment and accountability, increase in resources and opportunities, shared weight of the responsibility and pathways into synergy. Stroh suggests in *Systems Thinking for Social Impact* (2015) that the first leverage point is to be aware of and challenge our own intentions, thinking and behaviour.

Conventional thinking suggests treating and quantifying each part separately. Systems thinking works from a place of improving the relationships between each part of a system. We can all recognize that the correct application of lubricant in an engine prevents so many “symptoms,” enhances the performance and extends the life of that engine. When the relationships between the parts are healthy, the problems seem to dissipate. The way of being of each element of the system naturally eliminates the frictions and “symptoms” that we used to see as the actual problems that needed to be fixed. Conventional thinking leads us to believe that when problems are so big and complex, we should throw everything at them as fast as we can. Systems thinking recognizes that systems respond better through leverage with a few “key, coordinated changes sustained over time” (Stroh, 2015).

Convening:

Convening, or organizing the gathering, for a purpose, of stakeholders, plays a key role in developing solutions. First, it helps increase and strengthen relationships, providing safe places for important conversations. Second, it provides opportunity for participants to work through and toss around the very best of what they are doing in their worlds with the added context of everyone else’s world. If entered into with openness and humility it can increase understanding of each other’s challenges and what impacts their abilities to do what they do. Then a picture develops of how each can adjust what they do and how they do it to provide greater alignment and cohesion.

Outward Accountability:

With an inward mindset, (we) may think only about (our own) needs, challenges, and objectives relative to a given problem. Organizations (and communities) may become more siloed, more conflict-prone, as departments and offices focus on solving their piece of the puzzle. (It is common practice to) try to protect (our current resources) at the expense of organizational (or community) interests... (and) blame others for our inability to solve the problem.

With an outward mindset, (we) focus on collective results... (and) can have difficult conversations about resource allocation, roles, and responsibilities without feeling the need to protect...siloes, defend...decisions, or appear in certain ways. (We) might frame the problem differently, allowing (us) to see new possibilities for solutions and new directions for problem-solving. (Arbinger Institute, 2017. Parentheses added)

Way of Being as key in communication:



As authors and practitioners in the area of marriage and family therapy and psychology, namely communication, Helen LaKelly Hunt, Ph.D. and Harville Hendrix, Ph.D., have been doing some interesting field study in this area. They spoke about this in an interview on *Marie TV* in October 2018. They are interested in scaling up the effects of their developing best practices and creating a movement toward a more relational civilization wherein everyone is equal and safe and where all conversations are safe. They have found on a couples, organizational and community level, that simply practicing a relational method of communication actually eliminates the “problems” that people were feeling that they needed to solve.

They suggest that as human beings we have a strong need to be heard, understood and to feel safe. When this need is not met, negativity, judgement and justification ensue and this interrupts creativity, exploration and curiosity, all elements that are required in solution making as well as problem preventing, for that matter! If we can talk without judgement we can connect beyond our differences (Hunt, Henrix, 2018).

We discover in ourselves what others hide from us, and we recognize in others what we hide from ourselves-Luc de Clapiers (18th century French writer and moralist)

So, it is the space between us where much of the problem often lies and if we can bridge that, problems can be eliminated. In the Dallas Project, as part of the Mayor’s Taskforce on Poverty, this was demonstrated on a community scale, in one of the most socioeconomically challenged parts of the community. They found that the communal dialogue introduced by Hunt and Henrix began healing the connection between the different cultures and groups in Dallas. Even (and this is without actually being part of the initial study) between the groups in their target area and other population groups within the city as people began using these skills within the context of other interactions and relationships (Hunt, Henrix, 2018).

In practice, simply coming together over problems in the ways that we have described, much of the “problems” that have been perceived, based on assumptions perpetuated within systems dynamics, actually disappear. In other

words, when we can make changes in the way we operate within a system, we can change the systems in which we are operating. Thusly, we can change the outcomes. It becomes about connecting as human beings and sharing our stories.

These ideas are not new. They have been being practiced for decades, but they are not as common as they need to be today. And these are some of the innovative solutions that need to be “scaled” into a culture and way of being in community care and social support. Our way of being with each other has as much, if not more impact on solving social problems as anyone or series of “innovative interventions.” Changing our way of being as a community can change our systems, and that is what the Momentum Project hopes to help communities get to a place of being able to do. This is also what Indigenous ways and teachings encourage us to do. A subject that will be undertaken in “chapter 2” of *The Story of Us*, found in Appendix 1.

Building a shared vision: feel the power

Beginning with the end in mind, having everyone rowing in the same direction, and other sage epithets, demonstrate the need for creating a shared vision from which everyone can work and into which everyone is able to weave what matters most to them. The concept of creating a shared vision is something most who are involved in collective impact or supporting change have heard and participated in. It is key in collective impact and systems thinking. According to Peter Senge, author of *The Fifth Discipline*, the building of a shared vision lacks a critical underpinning if practiced without systems thinking.



“The problem lies not in shared visions themselves, so long as they are developed carefully... The problem lies in our reactive orientation toward current reality. Vision becomes a living force only when people truly believe they can shape their future. The simple fact is that (many) do not experience that they are contributing to creating their current reality. So, they don’t see how they can contribute to changing that reality.” (Peter Senge, 1990, parentheses added).

From the perspective of the Momentum Project, the innovation and the ability to scale it up occurs in how we incentivize and support communities to come together, change their existing paradigms and create sustainable practices that align their sectors and systems around the success and thrive-ability of each community member. Knowing and trusting that in this process, which can be as diverse as each community, but contains several universally applicable concepts, everyone will get what they need and more by and through the processes and practices that are organized and adopted.

Understanding the mechanics of change



Change is the easiest and the hardest thing we, as human beings, have to do. When we think about it, one tiny adjustment in an attitude, a physical direction, a perspective, can impact what comes next and even more so down the line. Think of flying a plane and adjusting the heading by even half a degree. It doesn’t take long before we are on a different course, that if not adjusted, will take us somewhere different from where we were initially headed. In order to bring each adjustment into being, there is a process of behind the scenes activity undertaken by our brain and nervous system, sometimes long, and considered, and sometimes more primal and instinctive, that involves a number of elements.

As human components of the systems in which we engage, and each of us unique, with varied inputs into the sum of who we are, the process becomes even more complex. But humans are systems that also tend toward homeostasis, which means we, as a system seek equilibrium between the interdependent elements. It is a strong physiological aspect, that can lead to apathy or adapting to the lowest point, but physiology is affected by our mental and emotional states. This means we have a choice. We have to consciously, intentionally and consistently make the choice to do things differently, that we see as best to do, even if it is uncomfortable for a bit. Change doesn't happen in a vacuum. It happens because of certain things that are going on in our internal and external environments, a complex mix of events, pressures, and influencers. If this is true, then we literally *can* be the change we wish to see, especially when we work together. And that is very encouraging, indeed.

In any situation involving or requiring change, it is important to determine how ready we are for it. It is the same for individual humans as it is for organizations or communities. The Transtheoretical Model of Behaviour Change developed by Prochaska and DiClemente in the late 1970s has been adapted or tapped into for many successful applications along the lines of change management. It provides a quick readiness assessment that would be helpful for any community embarking on systemic change activity to help gauge where in the process different elements in the community are, personally, as organizations and as a community as a whole. This can be the first step in figuring out how to move forward. Sometimes we can convince others to work with us and sometimes we have to find “work arounds” and leveraging points to help us, and everyone else, get to next steps.

The Transtheoretical Model (or Stages of Change):

Stage	State of being
Precontemplation	No intention of taking action, not considering consequences, fearful of making any changes, avoiding new information.
Contemplation	Some sort of crisis has happened that creates some dissonance. The price of staying the same starts to outweigh the cost of change, accepting responsibility for and therefore power to make some changes.
Preparation	Moving toward making a commitment, learning, gathering resources,
Action	Significant changes in behaviour are occurring, assignments have been made
Maintenance	The hardest part is over, is now the work of holding ground and laying a foundation for more growth. We have changed the status quo but we don't want to stay there so we look for other opportunities to tweak and improve what we do and start the process over again.

Using the stages of change and development to form a community model of care:

In Appendix B- 4 Directions community planning, we have paired the Stages of Change model with a developmental model, adapted from the Medicine Wheel, depicting four stages of development. Note: There are numerous Indigenous cultures each with their own variations on a theme, and we are using one version or teaching of that model to help us represent the holistic nature of a community continuum of care. In one iteration of the Medicine wheel we identify the cycle of life: birth, youth, adulthood, and eldership. These represent chronological life phases but can also describe where a person is at in any life domain.

- Babyhood can represent crisis: As babies we are dependent on others, often with high and demanding needs. It is the role of society and our families to take care of us and guide us as we grow to greater ability and self-reliance. A person in crisis is vulnerable and fragile, like an infant, and requires a lot of concentrated care to help them get past the crisis, but they also have the potential to be a contributor, if they get the right kind of help. In this phase they are moving from a state of precontemplation into one of contemplation. Crisis has created a situation where they are considering whether the price of change is greater or less than the cost for staying the same and contemplating what either would look like. As a community we need to help make the price of change easier to bear, if we want to see different outcomes. (physical)
- Youth is a time for learning, so in the next phase the person has grown enough past their initial needs to start moving forward in their lives. They need to learn some things and acquire some tools and resources to help them do so. This equates with the preparation stage described in the Stages of Change. (mental)
- Adulthood- Once a skill is learned, it needs to be mastered by practice in the real world. Adulthood is equated with the period of mastery as we take on more responsibility and accountability and apply what we have learned. It equates with the action phase of the Stages of Change. (emotional)
- Eldership is a time of wisdom sharing and transcendence. After a skill is mastered, in order to continue to keep it fresh and vibrant, we mentor, or teach others. This phase equates with maintenance. We have made the commitment, we are set in our new way of doing things and now we can walk with others, lending our strength to their journey. This adds a new layer to who we are and to our experience. (spiritual)

Relapse, as part of the Stages of Change, can occur at any time along this continuum. When this happens, and it usually does, to some degree, we pick things up at an accessible point on the continuum and continue to move forward. We can come into this continuum at any stage, depending on where we are at in any domain, and this determines the types of concerns and activities we will be having within that domain. People can be at any stage of this continuum in a given domain, and often are at different stages in different domains at the same time.

The potential that comes with multi-sector community alignment adds another layer to this. In our model we have also imposed concentric rings that represent the different sectors of a community or society. This demonstrates the potential links between sectors and the opportunities and accountabilities that are inherent in an intentional, mindful, examination of the stages of change and continuum of development against a social challenge such as homelessness and its contributors. Elders, mentors, teachers, are there for the learners, and those who are mastering skills can assist the ones in babyhood or crisis. They need opportunities to help, to serve, to strengthen their skills. In Appendix A: The Story of Us, we have provided information about the various populations, entities and sectors involved in community. A developmental treatment of a community can help us think about and envision:

- That each different phase of development offers something to the other. And each sector takes a role in that process.
- The ways in which every person or entity in a community has things they need at their particular point in their journey, and things they can offer to the journey of others.
- How walking with learners can help those who are mastering skills, they in turn can be supported by a mentor.

- How those who have reached eldership in a domain are able to, in their wisdom and experience, be patient and understanding of the foibles of someone in babyhood in that same domain, who, in their turn, are grounded and stabilized in the authentic regard offered to them by those who remember what it was like and know there is a way forward.

This layering allows us to create a mindful and comprehensive template for asset mapping, gap analysis and community that gives us a picture of how the sectors are performing and integrating, and what they are requiring to fill their role in a community continuum of care or collective impact.

- In Appendix B we organized a spectrum of community care needs in a table according to each sector's role or accountability, either directly or by supporting another sector, in relation to those experiencing homelessness and its contributing factors (in black).
- Each community will have their own set of needs and related needs and activities.
- There are also domain needs identified (in red) where others have a responsibility to those sectors to help them fulfill their role.

To assist further in community mapping, Appendix C is an example of a spreadsheet that allows space to list who is doing, or needs to do, whatever has been identified in that phase of development in your community.

- It is a way of creating a picture of the integrated nature of the work of each sector, organization, and individual in a community.
- It is a way of taking a look at the entire community and identifying potential resources that can lead to creative solution making and enhanced collective impact.
- It is a way to envision the different aspects of an action and assign them to others in the community to make the most of each opportunity, meeting needs, and therefore stretching resources, through the meeting of other needs.
- Your community can organize it and populate it in the ways that work for you, respective to what you are trying to achieve.

Laying the foundation for systems change through understanding the human components

Introduction: When we talk about systems tragedies and dysfunction, especially in relation to homelessness and its contributing factors, we are talking about impacts on human beings. Individuals in crisis, whatever their personal skills and strengths, often have difficulty managing information, organizing themselves, making decisions and even moving or taking action. Normal emotional reactions or coping strategies are either amplified to the point of dysfunction or compromised to the same end. Sadly, there are two important things to consider. The first is that most of the systems designed to "help" the end users, are staffed by fellow human beings that could also find themselves in the same predicament chronically or episodically due to the nature of the human existence and the stress of unhealthy systems dynamics. Second, these systems can be operating in such a way, or from such a perspective as to make it very difficult for the end users (and those who are supposed to be helping them) to engage successfully.

Many of our human care systems are box checking, criteria filled and unforgiving. David Stoh, author of Systems Thinking for Social Change, suggests that systems are perfectly designed to accomplish what they were designed to

accomplish (2015). The irony is that systems evolve naturally to serve themselves in those tasks, and while this isn't true of all, many have evolved away from having the very people they were designed to help at their centre. There are also inconsistencies across the "human interfaces" of these systems that lead to varied outcomes for systems users. And we need those human interfaces! To fully automate something as personal and human as the social supports we are considering here would be problematic on a number of levels. The disconnected, siloed nature of many of our human care systems are a navigational nightmare for compromised and challenged individuals and the people who are trying to help them. There are too many ways these systems tragedies unfold to detail them here. What might be more useful is to first describe the systems interactions that have shown the best outcomes and then to list a few criteria or considerations for anyone working with vulnerable populations.

Best Practices tell us that systems successes in addressing homelessness (or any complex social challenge) come from such elements as:

- Intentionally creating community environments and interactions that spawn and support mutual respect and accountability, where client and service provider work as a team, and service providers are supported and resourced well.
- Interactions where the power dynamic is balanced and people are able to develop the capacity for self-reliance during their journey through the community continuum of care.
- The services that people do connect with being networked, informed about and able to connect clients to other relevant services and opportunities to create synergy.
- Holistic or wraparound services, supports and resources through coordination with numerous relevant services and sectors.
- Having adequate numbers of sustainable, affordable, and appropriate housing options.
- Services, or more rightly, systems of services that anticipate and are connected into and ready for the next steps when their clients are ready to move forward.
- A shared vision or plan that creates a big picture view which includes all community sectors and stakeholders and informs and creates accountability for the community as a whole.

You may look at these best practices and identify many or all of these within your own organization, and your experience or perception of how you interact with others in the community. But chances are, if you have not yet solved all of those complex social challenges, this is not the case for your whole community. Starting with a really honest and comprehensive check in to see how everyone is experiencing community is the first step to recognizing the systems changes that might need to be made in your neck of the woods. Ensuring that the above described experience is universal in your community will open up new worlds of perspective, possibility, and potential you never dreamed possible. If you are willing to do this you may not need to read farther. But just in case you need them, we have compiled a number of insights and tools to assist, or at least inform, your journey.

Criteria and Considerations for your community support activities:

Addressing Silos: Are we perpetuating siloes or blasting them open? Our investigation and experience with community development and while carrying out this project makes it clear that in spite of some huge community victories, and some gains and progress in this area, or at least some increased awareness, "siloism" is still alive and well in many communities. There are a number of negative consequences of operating this way, including waste of resources, burnout, gaps in support, inefficiency and inconsistency in interventions, service navigation challenges. It is also easier for individuals to abuse disconnected systems, as there is decreased accountability from service

providers, and difficulty in tracking users and outcomes. There are some policy and operational elements that need to change in order to eliminate silos, or the same practices will continue to perpetuate the problem. A multi-sector, systems thinking approach as a community, including three levels of government, humbly, honestly, and intentionally reviewing policy and practice in terms of desired outcomes will go a long way to making more of existing, and helping to prioritize any additional, resources.

Maximization Strategies: Are there more layers of opportunity that can be explored? Meaning, can we meet the needs of one individual or population through meeting the needs of another? For example, someone who is in the mastery phase in a particular domain, can benefit by volunteering in a related capacity within a program that is assisting people who are in crisis in that area. Employment pathways can include peer support opportunities. Another example of this might be creating intergenerational engagement opportunities, where seniors are helping mentor youth while the youth are helping bring social connection and service to the seniors. This has applications for day program and accommodations.

Intentionally engaging persons in recovery from addiction or mental health challenges in community service increases local resources to provide grass-roots, natural community support systems as well as opportunities for meaningful activity that increases connection which fills the voids that fuel addiction. Doing this kind of thing in an organized, cohesive way, with a big picture, multi-sector view, helps communities identify, track and amplify positive outcomes, while decreasing burn out of existing systems and connecting a broad spectrum of elements for opportunity and sustainability.

In a multi-sector context, a community housing project can engage numerous private sector businesses, through contract work. But take it a step further by using this opportunity to develop relationships, increase understanding of the purpose and intent of the project and educate those connected businesses on aspects of the issues being addressed. This can lead to increased capacity and awareness in the private sector to assist vulnerable populations, discussions and collaboration about next steps such as employment pathways development, volunteer opportunities for team building, donation and sponsorship or board service. It can also lead to mentorship and capacity building for social sector organizations regarding private sector engagement and how to do it best, as well as other principles and concepts from the business world that can assist those organizations in next steps and sustainability.

Accountability: Is everyone aware of and being held accountable for their own responsibilities in the activity? This includes the client as well as those providing the services and goes beyond to other means and ways of sustainably supporting the service. It also includes being willing to recognize where services are not achieving outcomes and need to be re-assessed, or re-formed. There is a multi-sector potential and necessity here as we look at how outcomes are being determined, operationalized, evaluated and funded. This includes those with lived experience through to three levels of government and all sectors in between.

Flexibility in funding, for example, can help organizations move with the needs. An integrated, cohesive community system can also help flex across the spectrum of needs more seamlessly, making the best use of the right resources and helping to assess future needs, funding allocations, and deployment of community resources. Best use, allocation, and accountability for staff hours can stretch funding scope and effectiveness. Real-time, on the ground information from lived experience individuals, frontline, formal and informal supports inform these processes. But this only works if, first, people are talking to each other, and second, there is willingness to honestly and authentically work through systems dynamics.

Realizing Human Potential: Most importantly, are the people who are being helped being considered as valuable, contributing members of the community and accountable participants in their own solutions? When we operate with this lens we can see beyond the immediate crisis, we see more than deficits. We hold a strengths-based perspective that allows us, even compels us to include clients in their own solutions. This practice leads to considering and including their inherent strengths and characteristics in the community arsenal of (as-yet-to-be-fully) identified and tapped community resources made available through creative, sustainable solution making.

People in these vulnerable populations really, first and foremost, need to be seen and treated as the valuable and capable human beings they are. This theme will repeat over and over in this work, and it should. Systems, and the people who are “cogs” in the machines tend to fall into patterns and practices that work best for the system. Convenience, efficiency, standardization, defaulting to fit the average user, are among many practices that can lead systems to become out of touch from and inaccessible to the kinds of individuals with the kinds of challenges seen in homelessness. It requires consistent effort and mindfulness to begin to enact the right kinds of changes on toxic systems, where practical. It requires humility and bravery to create new ones where necessary. And it requires passionate attention to keep systems centred around the real meaning and mandate of human thriving.

Housing First, as an example, was designed around that uniqueness of need, of the unique situations, different speeds and styles of the individuals being served. When done right, it is very successful, producing the expected outcomes for the most part. But it is not a magic bullet, one-size-fits-all-solution. It is a tool to be used toward a solution. Unless a community is geared toward inclusion, creating opportunities and pathways, walking with and helping to nurture people as potential contributors, more people will fall through the cracks. It can, like any other good intervention, become an entity unto its own self, where lip service is paid to its original intentions, without diligent effort and the awareness that ending homelessness takes a community.

Overcoming Systems Traps: There are numerous examples of success stories where individuals and families have moved beyond their crisis and into better circumstances. Many do continue in stability, but a common systems tragedy unfolds when many participants “graduate” from those “successful” programs and no longer have the supports that have helped those programs achieve and report the outcomes they were designed for, and cannot sustain those gains on their own. This doesn’t have to be the case. An important question to ask is why, when the program ends, do we see a continued measure of “recidivism?” Here are a few suggested, systems related answers to that question, gleaned from our research and experience:

Masking symptoms versus curing the disease: There are complex needs and deficits, both within the individuals served and within the communities in which they are being served that have been “masked” by an enabling rather than empowering set of supports, and which remain unresolved. This is a common system “archetype,” commonly known as “fixes that backfire.” The seeming “solution” decreases the “symptoms” and renders the problem relatively invisible, so it is deemed to be solved, when in fact there have only been reductions in symptoms. This is comparable to taking symptom medications to feel better from an infection. A person can continue in relative comfort but at some point, the infection, left untreated, defies the effect of those convenient medications. There is a price to be paid, and it is usually the individuals we are trying to help that bear the brunt of it. This systems story bears out eerily like an addiction. Supporting a barriered individual to stay in housing with a swarm of helps with a limited window of time, if the focus is to keep them in housing, can lead to some dependencies on symptom relief that don’t necessarily equip the individual or their community for long term “health.”

Limited and short-sighted funding mandates: Often, there are limited or no efforts toward “next steps” because funding is not flexible in its mandates. So, you will see people perpetually circulating around a set of supports and not being able to move on from there. Funders with good intentions can get in the way of true solutions when they limit the scope of the dollars they are applying to a social problem. If it is aimed at a symptom rather than the cause, it creates a “trough” at which many feeds, but doesn’t lead to lasting change. Organizations spring up or follow the money to deal with a social challenge because there is money to address that challenge. The average model of not-for-profit leads to a dependence on outside funding. That funding is earmarked and organizations are held accountable to use it for the purposes outlined by the funders. Outcomes must be demonstrated, quotas filled, and funders satisfied. When this becomes the “outcome” of funding, we can lose site of the real purposes for it, and the success of a funded approach can be misrepresented.

Different organizations compete for the same funding, or divide it to survive, in a system archetype called “tragedy of the commons.” Where so many are using the same “grazing ground” that it overwhelms the source and limits the sustainability and growth of resources. Prevention work has historically been difficult to quantify and thus justify for funding. This leads to competition and other conditions which erode effectiveness and limit activity to effectively deal with the contributing factors or core causes of that social challenge. It limits the ability of organizations and communities to plan for next steps that solidify gains and lead people forward out of crisis, into stability, and on to thrive-ability. And an uncoordinated social support environment that is not connected outward to other sectors limits the kind of alignment and coordination that can do exactly that.

Systems “sentience” and self-preservation: In the ultimate systems tragedy, organizations or approaches become their own “systems” and begin to exist to perpetuate themselves, losing sight of the good they were made to do. And in fact, lasting change, while it gets more than lip service from many human components of these systems, can actually be undermining to those systems themselves, which, left without checks and balances, will always innately, and unimaginatively, steer themselves toward perpetuation and system preservation. Silos develop, communication all but ceases, and all that precious and finite funding and human capital misses the mark, which is namely to create solutions for those in our society who are vulnerable and suffering. Homelessness has become a billion-dollar business, reporting great gains to justify the expense (and there are great gains, to be sure), but yet people are still ending up homeless, even if it isn’t the same people, which it sometimes is. There are issues that have yet to be resolved in order to stem that tide. Shelters, who get their funding based on beds used, are set up to perpetuate the need for shelters in order to survive. They often come with strict mandates that preclude flexibility that can lead to other more permanently viable solutions. This can be true of any intervention and the systems set up to carry it out.

Those with the most get more: The deficits these vulnerable populations experience play into a common systems “tragedy” in which those that have more get more while those that have less lose out. Besides the usual situations where some opportunities are out of reach for some based on socio-economic disparities, for almost every manufactured advantage that is created in a community, there are people who, for various reasons, are not eligible, cannot access, or do not get picked for the intervention.

This happens with people and it happens with organizations. So, we end up with organizations, that are actually not as effective or efficacious than others, gaining the lion’s share of attention and resources due to their very size and reach and skills that are unrelated to the work needing to be done. If we are going to reverse trends and cycles that lead to homelessness, we need to reverse this mentality and find ways to give those with less the opportunities they

will need to get more. Sustainable ways, that can be counted on to be perpetually available and that help people move out of risk and crisis into stability and self-reliance.

Embedding this mindset and its accompanying principles and practices into the everyday of community activity becomes an imperative. Research and best practice show us that integrated solutions, involving more than one organization and sector in a community can provide the resources and pathways needed to breach these inequities and level the playing field. This is what truly breaks cycles of poverty, underemployment, mental illness, addiction and intergenerational trauma.

There are solutions: There are solutions to these and other systems tragedies. They include taking a good hard look at how and why we are doing what we do, and determining if and how we can do things differently. One important best practice that has emerged from this kind of assessment is that integration leads to sustainability. Focusing on, supporting and scaling up strengths rather than honing in, with band aid solutions, on weaknesses and liabilities helps us have a more holistic view and leads to greater equity and integration of services. This works for individual humans and for communities.

Every person that comes through our doors seeking assistance and support is an individual, unique, and valuable to the community. A strengths-based and value based rather than deficit-based view for all who are serving and assisting them will change everyone's experience. Why we do what we do and how we do what we do become even more important and powerful than what we do. What we do is going to be based on available resources and opportunities, and is often tied to funding. Changing the paradigm can help a community shift from a limited perspective based on funding mandates and scope to considering as a whole what can be done based on the unique needs of the individuals we are currently serving, with the combination of resources that are available.

This perspective allows us to elevate our view from our own grinding wheel to creatively look for other potential resources that can help those we work with be more successful. This way we are constantly looking at how to make up for deficits (those of the people we serve as well as those within our own program or organization), rather than limiting what we do and how effective we can be, because of them.

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Section 3: Supportive Best Practices Review

The following Best Practices have been identified as important to and interrelated with Systems Thinking within the context of social change and significant to multi-sector community alignment around a continuum of care.

Collective Impact-Five conditions recognized as essential for Collective Impact are:

- common agenda or shared vision for the change which includes understanding the problem and a joint approach to its solution;
- shared measurement or agreed upon ways of measuring and reporting outcomes and successes;
- mutually reinforcing activities or key activities that will move people forward in the changes or solutions that have been identified;
- continuous communication across the many players for consistency, cohesiveness and common motivation
- backbone support either within one organization or housed across multiple organizations to help support and guide the vision and strategy of the initiative (*Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter 2011)

Principles of Practice for Collective Impact- Collective Impact Forum produced a summary of some Principles of Practice they believe need to inform and be added to the Five conditions to help prepare the ground for change and increase the effectiveness of Collective Impact. The summary suggests:

- 1.) Designing an initiative with an emphasis on equitable outcomes for all populations
- 2.) Including community members whose lives are most affected by the challenge being addressed in the initiative in the collaborative. In his critique of the “top-down” mentality of Collective Impact, *Ten Places Where Collective Impact Gets it Wrong*, Wolff suggests engaging the most powerful and the least powerful people in a community and finding ways for them to work together to address community priorities (Wolff, 2016)
- 3.) Recruiting and co-creating with cross-sector partners as appropriate and relevant;
- 4.) Continually using data to learn, adapt and improve the problem-solving process, which is what collective impact essentially is
- 5.) Cultivate leaders with unique system leadership skills who are willing to change their own organizations in service of the group’s agenda, are good at building relationships and trust among players, with knowledge and understanding of the complex and non-linear process of systems change. Wolff suggests that if policies are not changing in order to change systems, the work is going to continue to be fragmented and that this should be considered an essential and intentional outcome. He further states that community psychology, civic engagement, racial justice, public health, political science and organizational development are among numerous resources that build the tools for coalition (2016)
- 6.) Ensure to focus on program and systems strategies Wolff (2016) suggests a focus on the root causes as well as critical social justice issues that address systemic attitudes and contributions to a community issue.

- 7.) Build a culture which fosters relationships, trust and respect. This speaks again to the need for ensuring that all that are impacted by a community challenge are given equitable consideration and opportunity to contribute.
- 8.) Being willing to customize the initiative based on local context. Wolff recognizes that a community may not fit nicely into the five requirements set out as conditions for Collective Impact (2016) Truthfully, with dialogue and understanding many seemingly disparate agendas can find common ground. Perhaps a new iteration, labeled Community Impact, might be a good way to look at a more multi-sector approach for meeting needs.

These best practice recommendations speak directly to the value and incorporation of Systems Thinking into any initiative to support these key principles to strengthen the efficacy and outcomes of Collective Impact.

Using the Functional Zero measurement, rather than Absolute Zero measurement ensures a more reasonable target for municipalities working with the homeless population. (FZ – housing and support services match or exceed the need of the homeless population; AZ – all people are housed; homelessness is completely eradicated). Achieving FZ moves communities along the continuum towards AZ.

Appreciative Inquiry- David Cooperrider, the originator of Appreciative Inquiry argues that we need forms of inquiry and change that are generative: they help us discover what could be, rather than try to fix what is wrong. (Kessler 2013) A.I. advocates collective inquiry into the best of what is, in order to imagine what could be, followed by collective design of a desired future state that is compelling and thus, does not require the use of incentives, coercion or persuasion for planned change to occur, Busche, 2013. Appreciative Inquiry:

- As a research method is not interested in discovering what is as much as allowing a collective to uncover what could be. Bushe, Gervase, 2012 A.I Practitioner, Volume 14, Number 1 February 2012
- Is a model of inquiry that engages stakeholders in self-determined change. Instead of focusing on what is wrong, or using a deficiency model of inquiry, and identifying what is dysfunctional (leading to blame, justification and learned helplessness), we focus on what works (leading to the generation of ideas and expansion of best practices)
- Can lead us to speak to end users who have been successful, or satisfied employees, or team members that have accomplished their planned outcomes, for example, to find out how they were best helped and what elements needed to be in place for their success, including their own accountability
- Can lead us to examine our approaches and pick out the best parts of them to focus on. It can lead us to accept responsibility for what went wrong and identify changes we can make. We map our next steps by continuing to do the things that work and by doing things differently where necessary, identifying and using our collective and existing strengths and resources in different ways to achieve the outcomes we are looking for.
- Is strengths-based and focuses on what the good elements are and use that information to build toward the future. They help motivate us by recognizing our assets so we can use our power for good! In this way the survival and coping skills of an individual or organization can be reframed toward positive and constructive

action. Gervase Bushe posits that the key to successful A.I. is the creation of new ideas that give people new ways to address old problems. Addressing problems that concern people enough to want to change (2012)

- A.I. is based on the assumption that organizations (and communities) are socially constructed phenomena, which have no tangible reality, and that ways of organizing are limited only by human imagination and the agreements people make with each other. It seeks to create processes of inquiry that will result in better, more effective, convivial, sustainable and vital social systems. It assumes this requires widespread engagement by those who will ultimately implement change. From E.H. Kessler, (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Management Theory*, Sage Publications, 2013
- Appreciative Inquiry is a common practice which has yielded positive results and more powerful outcomes when applied in business, community, and in helping individuals, to move forward in a strengths-based way.

An application of Appreciative inquiry could look like developing a shared vision of what we want, then working backwards from that vision to what is already in place or available to achieve it. Then what needs to happen for those elements to be utilized optimally. In this way each person or organization involved can take their place in the vision, accept their parts in the work that must happen to achieve that vision, take responsibility and accountability for their part in helping things move forward, identify what strengths and resources they have to achieve that responsibility, and take steps to eliminate the elements and activities that keep them from using those strengths and resources as well as identify what, if any, other resources they need to pull in. This can lead to restructure or reframing of mandates, priorities and systems. It can lead to collaborations, partnerships, coalitions, and enhance collective impact.

The five principles of A.I. are:

1. The *constructionist principle* proposes that what we believe to be true determines what we do, and thought and action emerge from relationships. Through the language and discourse of day to day interactions, people co-construct the organizations they inhabit. The purpose of inquiry is to stimulate new ideas, stories and images that generate new possibilities for action.
2. The *principle of simultaneity* proposes that as we inquire into human systems, we change them and the seeds of change, the things people think and talk about, what they discover and learn, are implicit in the very first questions asked. Questions are never neutral, they are fateful, and social systems move in the direction of the questions they most persistently and passionately discuss.
3. The *poetic principle* proposes that organizational life is expressed in the stories people tell each other every day, and the story of the organization is constantly being co-authored. The words and topics chosen for inquiry have an impact far beyond just the words themselves. They invoke sentiments, understandings, and worlds of meaning. In all phases of the inquiry effort is put into using words that point to, enliven and inspire the best in people.
4. The *anticipatory principle* posits that what we do today is guided by our image of the future. Human systems are forever projecting ahead of themselves a horizon of expectation that brings the future powerfully into the present as a mobilizing agent. Appreciative inquiry uses artful creation of positive imagery on a collective basis to refashion anticipatory reality.

5. The *positive principle* proposes that momentum and sustainable change requires positive affect and social bonding. Sentiments like hope, excitement, inspiration, camaraderie and joy increase creativity, openness to new ideas and people, and cognitive flexibility. They also promote the strong connections and relationships between people, particularly between groups in conflict, required for collective inquiry and change.

Taken from Bushe, G.R. (2013). In Kessler, E., ed. [The Appreciative Inquiry Model](#) (PDF), from The Encyclopedia of Management Theory.

Appreciative inquiry attempts to use ways of asking questions and envisioning the future in order to foster positive relationships and build on the present potential of a given person, organization or situation. Its aim is to build – or rebuild – organizations around what works, rather than trying to fix what doesn't. This can lead to fundamental change rather than mere “band aid,” or coping activity.

Asset Based Community Development

John McKnight, a recognized community development “guru,” and founder of ABCD Institute, suggests that starting from a needs basis actually weakens a community and reduces the effectiveness of the resources being applied to the community.

In this line of thinking, communities have three main assets- the people who live in the community/neighbourhood, neighbourhood associations, and institutions. Each have their roles and each have things they can offer.

Start by asking: what do we need to do to support community members in caring for each other? What needs to be in place in their neighbourhoods? Who can provide this? A key question becomes: Can you tell us what people have gotten together to do here that have made things better?

Here is a link to a talk by John McKnight

https://www.abundantcommunity.com/home/videos/abcd_festival_keynote_speech.html

Trauma-informed care and practice

The concept and practice of trauma informed care comes from the recognition that a majority of addiction and mental health challenges stem from some sort of Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE). And that ACE have a high correlation with mental and physical and behavioural disorders seen in adults. Without the right kind of management and handling, the systems practices in intervention and treatments have the potential for re-traumatizing individuals with a history of trauma. Five principles of trauma-informed care have been identified, each interrelated and leading into the other in a beautiful logic that allows individuals in intervention or care to advocate for themselves. It also informs how care and intervention frameworks are set up, within a systems context, to assist in decreasing re-traumatization and helping empower individuals in their own care.

- Safety- Including creating spaces for individuals to feel culturally, emotionally, and physically safe, but also having an awareness of and respect for an individual’s discomfort or lack of ease

- Transparency and Trustworthiness- As an important part of feeling safe in engaging with services. This includes providing full and accurate information to individuals in care about what is happening and likely next steps
- Choice- Involving a recognition of the need to consider and honour the individual's dignity and autonomy in any approach. Utilizing informed consent in interventions and respecting individuals' rights to refuse an intervention or approach. This leads to;
- Collaboration and Mutuality- Recognizing the need for partnering relationships and shared decision making to ensure a healing environment. Individuals need to feel seen, heard, understood, respected, and walked with and not acted upon
- Empowerment-Strengths-based interactions where the abilities and assets of the person are identified, validated, respected and built upon

Promising Practices for Homelessness Support in Studied Communities

- Rapid rehousing program – used by all municipalities studied- supports individuals and families whose tenancy must be terminated to quickly find and secure new housing
- Housing First program – used by all municipalities studied- supports individuals and families on a need's acuity basis with a continuum of services and supports to help them find, secure and maintain stable housing
- Wraparound supports – creating an integrated system of supports for greater access, effectiveness, and efficiency. Essentially creates a no-wrong door approach in which end-users can engage at whatever step on the continuum of need works best for them
- Harm Reduction- Used by all municipalities studied to varying degrees- meeting participants where they are at, maintaining housing is a priority and all supports are geared to mitigating effects of behaviours that tenants are not yet ready to address- keeping them safe, and protecting their tenancy. Involves working with all of the other promising practices listed here, closely working with Landlords
- Landlord Liaison and support- Each community is practicing this to varying degrees. Open communication between CBO, municipality, and landlords coupled with education/training for landlords
- The most successful communities have an active dedicated staff to work with Landlords as partners in the process of developing adequate, appropriate, accessible, affordable housing options for a spectrum of needs, hear their concerns, help them work solutions through funding and tenant engagement, understanding, awareness and knowledge.
- Trauma Informed Care- Used by all municipalities studied, to varying degrees- A recognition that presenting behaviours have a basis in past and re-occurring trauma and ensuring that supports, resources, framework for care, and opportunities for healing are present
- Effective community advisory boards - used by all communities to varying degrees of success. The best Community Advisory Boards are populated from all sectors, equitably represented, with a community agenda in the forefront and a person-centred focus

- Centralized and standardized intake - used by all communities in varying degrees
- Training and support for intake workers and managers at point-of-entry agencies and programs
- Quality control and assurance oversight by city department responsible for housing/homelessness

Used in Community that is most successful in mitigating homelessness

- Community Summit: engaging community members, agencies, businesses to collaborate, discuss, become informed, and solicited to participate in the homelessness solution
- Specific engagement of Aboriginal community
- Aboriginal Housing First Impact Initiative
- Housing First programs are recovery-oriented and focused on quickly moving people from homelessness into housing and then providing supports necessary to maintain the housing

Identified in another community experiencing success

- Exit plans, or release plans for participants graduating from Housing First program
- Housing First agency check-ups to ensure accuracy and consistency of intakes through review and evaluation of documents and processes
- Creation of a Community Housing Coordinator (city employee)

Used in Seattle and included here as a promising practice which is being considered or piloted in other communities

- Progressive Engagement: Utilizing a progressive engagement model is a national best practice in addressing homelessness and a hallmark of person-centered service delivery and efficient use of resources. Progressive engagement provides customized levels of assistance to households and preserves the most expensive interventions for those with the most severe barriers to housing success, enabling service providers to effectively target resources. This approach is supported by research that household characteristics such as income, employment, substance use, etc., cannot predict what level of assistance a household will ultimately need to exit homelessness.

It should be noted that the successful activities in all of these communities, are still relatively isolated programs involving some collaborations between stakeholders, none have as yet developed a comprehensive consistent and cohesive way of operating as a community. While one community at the time of this writing had a system in place to effectively deal with chronic homelessness, none evidenced a multi-sector way of being that supported the success of each member. What we are seeing is that the bulk of this work still resides in the Social Sector, and still relies on funding for “programs.”

Best Practices from the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (www.caeh.ca)

CAEH states: 10 Year Plans should identify: (note: these are covered in the framework we are developing)

- a single point of accountability for implementation;
- a process for systems organization, planning and coordination;
- a process for monitoring the effectiveness of the homeless-serving system; and a plan for adapting to environmental changes, learning, best practices and improved information.
- Building a research capacity into community Plans to End Homelessness creates understanding of the dynamics and effectiveness of the local homeless-serving system and unique community needs.
- Effective means of collecting homelessness data, and information on the functioning of your homeless system of care to the community is essential. Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is used in National Homelessness work.
- Ten Year Plans challenge the status quo and will have controversy, detractors and difficult conversations. Anticipate conflict in the planning process and ensure planning committee has a measure of independence, a balance of perspectives, a focus on action and results, an agreed upon process and, importantly, a deadline.
- Ensure connection to and support of local financial assistance services as necessary links for people exiting homelessness.
- Include a thoughtful and methodical prevention strategy that includes: early detection, emergency assistance, system coordination, housing and support services, and access to the income necessary to sustain housing (through employment or mainstream income support programs as required). Integrate with existing support systems or adopt your own if they are not available in your community.
- By creating a clear path to housing and support from those institutions – in the form of case management, access to services or housing assistance programs – we can reduce the role that state-run institutions play in creating homelessness.
- A spectrum of housing options including low-demand and supported housing is needful
- Housing locators to search local housing markets and build relationships with landlords. Successful program components include:
 - incentives to landlords to rent to homeless households;
 - creative uses of housing vouchers and subsidies to improve affordability; and
 - links to resources to help clients maintain their housing.
- Invest in creating affordable, appropriate housing; utilize market rental housing with support services and subsidies, and develop options with on-site supports.

These recommendations speak not only to the value, but to the necessity of purposeful and intentional multi-sector engagement in assessing and adjusting systems to provide a cohesive, connected, and consistent strategy for engaging the entire community on all of the levels and approaches indicated in effectively ending homelessness.

Social Sector “Bionics:”

Bionics basically is the practice of using concepts in one field or realm to assist in another. In this case it is the combination of biology and technology. Think “Six Million Dollar Man.”

Applying business models and principles to social support services can be termed as Social Sector “bionics,” taking the best parts of something good and making it better, stronger, faster, and in this case, more sustainable and self-reliant by adding in parts from something else. The work of the social sector is to help humans, families and communities to increase capacity and be self-reliant within the context of wellness, mental health, social behaviours, economics and integration, to reach their maximum potential. But in relation to social sector bionics it becomes a case of “physician health thyself” for the sector. In a 2013 article in The Guardian, international Edition, entitled: *Eight Ways in Which Social Sector Organizations Can Improve*, Dame Mary Marsh talks about eight ways social sector organizations can improve by engaging in social sector bionics.

1. Strengthen governance- Boards need to increase diversity, and thus their capacity to understand and deal with today’s challenges. It is important to ensure that boards have a broad multi-sector representation. There is work that can be done, in an aligned community, to provide the kind of expertise social sector boards need.
2. Attract and develop leaders- This speaks to leadership capacity across all levels of the organization, not just at the top- funding should reflect support for this need. Marsh suggests that “the quality of leadership is at the heart of success in the social sector.” (2013)
3. Routes into and through the social sector- making the social sector attractive and accessible to qualified people, but also hiring people for their potential and then assisting them to qualify. Again, funding should consider this aspect.
4. Sharing skills- this speaks to sharing within the social sector as well as sharing between the social sector and the public and private sectors. This introduces new thinking and “cross-pollination” of ideas that can assist growth, but it also increases and strengthens connections between sectors
5. Digital fluency- In order to engage more effectively with end users, supporters and other stakeholders, the social sector needs to take advantage of new technology and be open to mentoring and skill sharing with “digital natives.”
6. Data-informed social change- As with the public and private sectors, the ability to gather, manipulate, learn from and share data, informs and drives the most successful and effective organizations.
7. Enterprise capability- The financial game is changing and new sources of revenues and capital are emerging, or need to be accessed. Funders can support the development of the capacity to imagine, access and manage that access as part of an investment relationship

8. Collaboration- can allow flexibility in horizontal structures, combining respective strengths to yield greater value. Basically, helping end users move through the continuum is better served by collaboration. Merger is not necessary in a collaborative environment.

Disempowerment, a cautionary tale:

When we do too much for people we can, in another example of a systems tragedy, actually end up disempowering them. Creating dependence on services perpetuates the need for those services. When they are taken away, say, because an arbitrary time limit has been reached, or funding is no longer available, or any other reason, the individual is unable to function at capacity and loses ground. Entitlement becomes a double-edged sword which slashes the effectiveness of programs designed to help people out of crisis and into functional contribution. Yes, people are entitled, as human beings, to certain needs being met, for example. But personal responsibility and accountability must be included or a dependence on the system occurs.

The key to functional contribution to community, in any life domain, is self-reliance. Self-reliance is built in a supportive environment where the ingredients for success exist, a connection to those ingredients is available, and a responsibility and accountability is present for the individual to make use of the ingredients, along with support for that accountability. Babies don't learn to walk if they are constantly carried. If desirable items are not put in their sight but just out of reach, they do not stretch and problem solve to get them, thus exercising and coordinating the muscles and neural pathways they will need to do even more. Intrinsic motivation, which is motivation that comes from an internally motivated place, is much more powerful than extrinsic, or outside, motivation. While the second can help lead to the first, it can also create a negative feedback loop wherein the inner drive to try is not developed. Successes help build intrinsic motivation, but they need to be carefully and thoughtfully orchestrated so as not to stunt the growth of the growing being.

It is hard, when services are funded per the number of people using them, or are based on an externally identified or "cookie cutter" need, not to get caught in the trap of disempowerment, creating a different kind of addiction cycle. Continually looking and working toward next steps as a connected, aligned community will help keep the stream of end-users steady. But after a while of concerted coordinated effort, the hope would be that some services would no longer be needed and the resources that have fueled them can be turned toward another step on the pathway to success. It becomes then, not only a community practice but a broader policy-related consideration to be concerned with providing for the development self-reliance in any given domain and then next steps once it has been achieved. Continually building capacity of end-users and the rest of the community will eventually end never-ending cycles of social need.

For Profit Social Enterprise and the Social Business Model

The idea of being able to do good in the world without having to rely on government funding, endless fundraising, and the constant challenge of doing more with less, while actually making a living for oneself is an appealing prospect. Sustainability and self-reliance for a social serving organization is as important a concept as it is for a person trying to leave homelessness behind. And both can be served by utilizing a business minded approach. The need for this kind of thinking in social support provision has become apparent in best practice and over the course of the Momentum project, and is something we have been interested in exploring. It is difficult for social agencies to cross over into a business mindset, but that is exactly the solution of the future.

A business mindset is about sustainability and generating returns in growth, expanding and satisfied markets, and profit. Affordable and social housing has always been and continues to be a challenge. In most conversations about how we are going to end homelessness, the comment has been made that we don't have enough affordable housing. All the great programs in the world are not enough if there are not enough housing units to house people. And underemployment continues to be a contributor to homelessness, which homelessness definitely creates difficulty for stable employment. These and other challenges continue in an unending, negatively reinforcing cycle. But they also provide some exciting business opportunity for intrepid organizations and communities.

Housing Solutions that do more:

Historic solutions to the challenge of affordable housing stock include government funding and managing of affordable and social housing. Having low cost housing is difficult to maintain to high standards. Substandard environments impact the health and well-being of people who are already compromised. More government money is required to improve or replace failing buildings. As well, its "corrals" people with similar challenges but maybe different reasons for those challenges into closed groupings that can pose their own unique challenges. Even when people move forward and improve their economic situation, they are "rewarded" by having to leave their home and neighbourhood support system because they no longer qualify to live there.

Another solution has been the offering of government funding to private developers to build housing that is affordable for a certain number of years, after which they can go to market housing. This solves the problem for the short term but when the rents finally go up, we start the cycle all over again. And the profits, if there are any, go into private pockets while more government and philanthropic dollars are poured into social programs with no financial return. What if we could solve all of these problems and make money to provide stability and sustainability in the continuum of care, as well?

Recently we have seen the idea of government "investment" where government owns part or all of the project. This can become problematic for a community or investor group that sees itself losing control of its investment. There are limitations and constraints placed on use, and then there is the question of where the net revenues end up. For communities that typically don't see much government funding, the problem is three-fold. Getting help to begin with, limitations in use preventing the kind of revenues that lead to sustainability without more government commitment, or, if there are revenues, the fear of those dollars going back into government coffers and being unavailable to a community that typically doesn't see government funding. There are usually agreements in place for that third contingency, but it can never be a certainty.

Mixed use, mixed income housing is one way to address this issue, and to be fair, the concept is being considered and piloted by government. This means that there are some units in a housing complex or apartment building that are rented at affordable or social rates and others that are rented at market housing and commercial rates. This brings in more revenues. And creating social enterprise around housing, a basic need that will always be there, allows social serving organizations to provide perpetually self-sustaining and regenerating housing that is higher in quality. It also allows for a mix of residents that can provide a natural layer of support and reinforcement for recovery and cycle breaking through positive modeling, healthier support networks, healthy expectations as a neighbour, and safer and healthier housing environments. It provides for added value features that can help people move forward like easier access to services and amenities, and even employment close to home.

The business of housing people also opens up some spin off markets that savvy, entrepreneurial organizations can tap into for more social enterprise opportunities. Renovation and repair, furniture reclamation, moving, cleaning, landscaping, maintenance, are services that someone has to be paid to do. And that business might as well benefit the social continuum. Being able to employ people helps them be successful and stable renters, and it helps them move on from crisis.

There are communities being designed to provide a local live, work, play environment for their residents. One challenge of these types of communities, if it is not intentionally planned for, is that they can become exclusive to higher socio- economic demographics and crowd out the lower income earners. But it is possible to provide for all levels of need and ability in these types of communities and housing developments. Planning mixed use, mixed income housing development to include affordable and supportive housing situations and sustainability opportunities for those who need them brings added value to the entire community. Now we have amenities, services and community capacity building opportunities coming into a neighbourhood. We have social programs with trained support workers who can assist with integration working right in the neighbourhood. And to be clear, not everyone who needs help with housing has a serious addiction, mental illness, or behavioural challenge that requires constant support. For the few that do, that embedded and sustainable support can benefit the neighbourhood.

Social enterprise housing, providing social benefit while operated at a profit with that profit going back into more social benefit can offer other advantages. Social benefit profits can be used to hire support workers, start other social enterprises, invest in other housing development, and enhance the continuum of care. In this way, social benefit organizations can take advantage of government offers to provide affordable housing and keep that housing affordable perpetually while offering greater advantages to those they are serving than just a place to call home.

The lower the financing costs, the more revenues can be generated to do better. Convincing governments and philanthropists to provide one-time startup funding for a system of housing that sustains itself makes sense. There are successful supported housing programs with employment pathways, but they are often run in isolation and require constant fundraising.

The value of integration has been demonstrated. Creation opportunities for integrated supported housing makes sense, especially when that integration can provide sustainability. As well, continued local investment to develop more housing provides economic opportunities right in the community. Cooperatives are not a new concept, but are becoming an emerging solution to provide the capital for sustainable solutions to local needs while growing local wealth, and making it more accessible to a broader spectrum of economic situations.

Section 4: A Systems Thinking Guide for Multi-sector Community Alignment

Through the course of the Momentum Project, we have examined best practice, historical data, observed and engaged with communities, and applied and considered the concepts we have shared here within that context. Through this work, a model and framework for community alignment has emerged. We have experienced barriers, failures, insights and victories alike. This section will take you through an expanded process of using systems thinking and align it with the stages of change as it relates to community collective action and impact toward mitigating homelessness. Systems Thinking for Social Change by David Peter Stroh (2015) is a fantastic resource for using systems thinking to address community systems work and has been heavily relied in our considerations. We will provide you, also, with insights and learnings we have gleaned regarding enhanced collective impact through multi-sector community alignment. Additionally, within the Appendices, we have included some of the tools we have developed to assist with this work, that may be useful, or help you create your own.

(See Appendix M for a framework visual)

Precontemplation- In this “pre-stage,” a person has no intention to change or take action any time soon. Head in the sand, the individual is uninformed and kind of wants to stay that way, about the consequences of their behaviour. Or, they have tried previously to change behaviour and been unsuccessful. They shy away from receiving any new information that seems to influence them to make the change. A community in precontemplation is going to sound a bit like this: “What will it look like to maintain the status quo? Is it really so bad? What can be done to get by?” We will see justification and the blaming of others, trying to foist the responsibility for what is happening on other shoulders while blithely continuing in the same activities. With a social challenge like homelessness, it is easy for some of the other sectors in a community to leave it to the public and social sector. But think of a person in addiction getting the help they need to recover and then being thrown back into the same dynamic that led to their addiction in the first place. Does it not make sense that the entire “community” of that person be involved in what it takes to support their recovery? The same goes for homelessness or any other social “symptom” or core cause. Helping to change community systems means realizing the big picture of that challenge and helping other sectors to see their part in it. When this happens, real progress can be made.



Enter crisis: the “gateway drug” that can lead to change. In the life of every person or community there will always come a time when the lack of action toward needed change clashes with the consequences for not making a change, and crisis occurs. At this point the person or community is ready to consider doing things differently. In a change environment, we are seeking to bring the subject into this crisis state. Introducing some cognitive dissonance, providing some opportunities for considering the cost for change against the price of staying the same.

As individuals, communities and entities, we need to ask ourselves... are we working hard to maintain the status quo? Do we engage in an overage of research and dialogue with little action? Do we change as little as we can with band aid solutions and convince ourselves that we are doing something about anything? Do we lay the blame on external elements over which we have no control? Or leave it up to others? Or worse, feel frustrated in our attempts to make changes because no one else in our silo is? Are we unprepared to admit what really needs to change because the price seems too high? These are harsh questions. They need to be asked, honestly answered, then followed up with “So, now what?”

In order to help a person, move from precontemplation to the next phase or stage of change, something needs to happen; a crisis, a wakeup call. But research and experience tell us that in order for this to have the best effect and not lead to learned helplessness or worse, the “patient” needs to have access to a foundation upon which to enact the change. There must be awareness, knowledge, skills and a framework in which certain things can happen so that, when the moment for decision comes, there is safety, confidence, support, and resources available to help the person move naturally and logically to the next phase.

Systems thinking for social change suggests that in order to instigate the change we seek we need to first build a foundation for change. Information and awareness, finding ways to engage, developing relationships built on authentic mutual regard and common ground, as well as tools that build capacity for imagining and achieving the solutions required for the desired change all set the stage for those “cross-roads moments” for end-users and community entities alike, where the “road less travelled” suddenly seems possible and maybe even preferable to staying on the current path.



Moving a community in this direction and supporting its transformative moments requires a handful of intrepid, authentic, humble, visionaries with enough of the big picture to see and share the grand vision of possibility as well as the potential contribution everyone can make to it. It requires people who are willing to see past paradigms and operate outside of boxes to change the systems within which they work to help create that “incubator” required for the transformations to take place. The chrysalis that aids the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly. These people often know who they are, but don’t feel they have the authority or even “space on their desks” to do it. They must be inspired, supported and resourced! This cannot happen if isolation and silos continue. Spaces (mental, emotional, spiritual, physical, and even financial) must be made for these folks to meet, mingle and mix it up.

Community Alignment Component 1- Build a foundation for change- Building relationships and a safe space to make



the changes is an important part of laying a foundation for change. Getting the current picture is also important and involves examining historic documentation, finding like-minded folks to start the process with you, and engaging with the community to get a firsthand glimpse of what is going on.

Each of these can assist the other. It helps to start first with those on the front line of the issues being addressed. Then expand to those connected into that work, or that you recognize should be, generally through the relationships of your key participators. It requires applying some principles and practices that create a safe space to converse about hard things in positive ways. And this, in turn, helps build strong and resilient relationships that can withstand the pressures of change management. The length of time this foundation building takes depends on a number of factors from community buy-in to strength of mandate and leveraging points.

A mandate for community alignment might be more palatable as criteria for funding, especially if it comes with tools and resources to help the community align in support of better outcomes.

1. Engaging key stakeholders- identify who they are, figure out how you will engage them as a group and also individually- This may be a complex process, time consuming and at times frustrating. It is hard to get people to buy in to creating something they might not yet know they are missing. In communities where there are divided priorities, and lack of enthusiasm to change the status quo, this can take some time and work. This is where a mandate and some leverage would come in handy. For funders and policy makers- embedding a community plan as criteria for funding, could go a long way to incentivizing the change you are wishing to see. Engaging an intrepid few requires some strategizing to see who are the movers and shakers, the visionaries, and what do they need from you to get motivated to champion the cause. Starting with one key and emotionally charged issue and developing solutions that engage more layers of the community can be the way “in” to start the evolution of alignment. People are more willing to work with you when they can see a light at the end of the tunnel (and it’s not a train) as well as, and often more importantly, being made aware of what good this will do for their part of the system. Knowing your community stakeholders and understanding what is important to them and for them will help you work their needs and interests into a plan for engagement and a growing vision of what could be.
- Introduce the project and invite participation- those who want to take part are who you want to initially invite to the table. Find champions within each sector. Form and strengthen relationships with them by meeting them where they are at, taking an authentic interest in their work, helping them with tasks,

valuing the work they do. Others will become engaged as you work through the next phases of this stage. It is important to balance your efforts. While you need to be persistent, you cannot spend all your energy and resources chasing unwilling participants. The best thing to do is show them how things can be, how they can get there, and be willing to walk alongside, offering resources to help. But be willing to work on multiple fronts so you can walk away and work around tough to move spots and break ground or create space and resources for future progress.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world;
indeed, it's the only thing that ever has. Margaret Mead

- Create a safe space for meaningful dialogue. Go through the concepts that have been identified in Section 2 and 3 (and others you feel are important) as foundational knowledge to create a willingness for authentic conversation and humble inquiry. As a group you need to be willing to do what you want the rest of the community to do. Let go of the status quo and embrace something different and sometimes challenging, but that will pay dividends.
2. Find common ground- through discussion, sharing stories, looking at the historical information and best practices, develop initial pictures of where things are at right now and how they compare to what people would like to see.
- Gather and review historical documents, anecdotal information, interview representatives from the different sectors, administer surveys. Begin an asset map or work from one that has already been created, in order to paint a full picture that includes what is working, what is not, and the potential resources, opportunities, collaborations and pathways available.
 - Analyze your big picture to map out the systems dynamics at play, that hinder but also that can help things work better. In this way you can create an assessment of the situation that you will be able to present to your community collaborators and which might motivate more to come to the table, when they see how things can be successful.

(See Using the Stages of Change and Development to Form a Community Model of Care, in Section 3. Also, Appendices B and C provide some tools that might be helpful)

This free online resource demonstrates a number of different kinds of mapping: <https://medium.com/disruptive-design/tools-for-systems-thinkers-systems-mapping-2db5cf30ab3a> .

David Peter Stroh's Systems Thinking for Social Change also provides some ideas and resources for creating a map of your systems dynamics

Advice that is commonly given for mapping is to ignore your need to solve and just embrace the chaos. First you will be collecting and compiling the data of what is, then you will be analyzing the relationships and potentials between all the players. As in all parts of this process, openness, humility, and making space for the experience of others, not passing judgment, will help the group extract and organize the collective knowledge needed to form a complete picture of the area under examination. Types of systems mapping that could be helpful in this context include behaviour over time graphs, connected circles, causal loop diagrams and the iceberg model. Examples of these can be found through the link provided.

Increasing and deepening our levels of understanding of a system increases our ability to leverage for change. We see the events or symptoms; these are most visible. We react to events and over time or by looking more deeply, patterns of behaviour emerge and we can be proactive in our responses to them. But we are still simply responding to what is happening. Looking even deeper we can see what actually is producing those actions, as well as their consequences or effects on other parts of the system. This enables us to alter the source of a problem versus simply dealing with the symptoms. This is where systems thinking resides. Archetypes are the systems stories we need to be able to see and understand if we are to make headway in leveraging systems change.

Here are the links to two great resources for understanding systems thinking and archetypes:

https://thesystemsthinker.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Systems-Archetypes-I-TRSA01_pk.pdf

on page 8 you will find a chart entitled systems archetypes at a glance

<https://www.saybrook.edu/unbound/systems-archetypes/>

3.) Build capacities for collaboration- Help people to think systemically by looking at the big picture and the systems dynamics you have noted, to communicate constructively about the issues, and to take responsibility for their part in the way things are

- Engage key stakeholders in assessing and refining your big picture view, as well as your analysis of the historical data. Encourage honest and open dialogue, leave ownership, ego and emotion at the door. This is an intellectual exercise designed to ignite a desire for change, there is no room for hanging on to the past, or being loyal to an idea or way of doing things. Only room for assessing what is working and what is not working in moving the community toward that vision. Do we want know if we are on the right track or if we have to make some changes? And if we do need to make some changes, do we want to be part of the solution or part of the problem?
- Reflection and responsibility- have conversations, ask open ended questions, about what is happening systemically in their world, how their activities and intentions align and collide and how their visions can be adjoined and aligned into a shared vision they can see the benefits of and commit to working toward. Continually encourage those whom you are engaging to assess and acknowledge their responsibility and accountability for the way things are. This doesn't always have to be negative!

“Unlike any other creature on this planet, human beings can learn and understand without having experienced. They can think themselves into other peoples’ places.

“We do not need magic to change the world, we carry all the power we need inside ourselves already: we have the power to imagine better.”

— **J.K. Rowling**, [Very Good Lives: The Fringe Benefits of Failure and the Importance of Imagination](#)

Tips from the Trenches: what we have learned from enacting the Momentum Project and previous community



development experience

1. When people ask for help for a friend or loved one, they believe is experiencing a mental health disorder, the best advice to give is to provide information. People in a state of precontemplation need compelling information to begin to create the cognitive dissonance that can lead to the desire to change. People who are trying to help people they feel are in pre-contemplation need to be willing to recognize the ways they, too, are in that state of being. We need to be willing to ask and answer the questions that are being required of our “target audience.”

2. Be prepared for this to take longer than you think it will. Change is hard for many, and systems are often precious to those participating in them, even when they are clearly not functioning optimally. There will be some who will embrace the idea for change and others who will maintain a stranglehold on current ways of doing things, and be suspicious and resentful of the idea that things need to change, or feel that their part is doing well, it is everyone else that needs to change. Justification is a great coping tool, but does not help bring about the change we wish to see.
3. Have a clear framework. When we began the Momentum Project, we didn't yet have that roadmap, this made it difficult to engage in the ways we envisioned. The purpose of the project was to create a framework for this process, which is what we have now done. Your community will be able to start where this project left off, and adapt it to your community situation.
4. Foundational work is key. Relationship building, knowing the community, finding ways to get the buy-in and support for a systems assessment takes time. Some communities may have already been involved in this process and are looking for the "how" of next steps. Others are starting from a realization that things need to change and are looking for yet others who feel the same to start making waves.
5. Your initial group need to be like-minded in recognizing the need for change, open to new ideas and out of the box perspectives, but also connected in to the sectors you wish to address in your efforts. They will be champions of the work you want to do. Knowing your community, you will be in a good position to find those individuals.
6. It is important that you are well informed about both the history and status quo of a community in this area. Take the time you need to get to know how the different elements work or don't work together.
7. Being positive and supportive about what is working and coming from a place of using some new principles to support continued learning, understanding and improvement of a systems framework will be more helpful than suggesting things are just not working (which can feed into the blame game).
8. You may have to do a lot of work first. People who are tired and jaded need clear sightlines to the outcomes they are seeking to encourage them to engage.

9. It might be helpful to prepare the ground by seeding principles and ideas, finding organizations who will work with these concepts or who already do, and introducing them in a non-threatening way. In the Momentum Project, we made the mistake of not doing this before engaging our first “working group”. In hindsight, it would have made a difference to take the time to compile and then introduce some systems education and a clearer vision of what we wanted to accomplish so that people could see within their realm of experience where these principles are being applied and helping, and where they might be applied to areas that are not working well.
10. Successful systems assessment must be accompanied by a willingness to bear responsibility for the status quo, even, and especially, when the status quo is not working so well, or may have outgrown the initial approaches. A supportive and forward-thinking environment and culture rather than blame and justification will help. In the end, everyone wins. Taking responsibility and being open to making change paves the way for a collaborative, supportive process. The climate for this kind of community soul-searching needs to be formed. What we found was that this takes time, study, and relationship building before launching into the engagement piece. After stepping back from engaging, and covering the foundational bases through the course of the project, we began to see, a year in, the beginnings of some peripheral change and awareness, and a team began to emerge. And from some unexpected places.
11. This work will go much better if sanctioned by a community authority, or as part of a requirement to qualify for further funding. We found the lack of this to be a barrier in the progress of our project. The intent of the project was to engage a community with this process. What we were able to do was create a guide that can now be enacted with a community that has buy-in. This guide could be adapted as a Funding Framework and readiness and outcomes assessment tool for communities to develop a plan in order to receive funding. Motivation is essential in change work.
12. Executive Directors, unless they have the space and ability to take on the role of Community Champion in this work, are not always the best to work with going forward. They are busy and beleaguered within the expectations of the current system. Encourage those E.D.’s that are “with” you to identify someone in their agency they trust with the process, who can spare the time to do the work. Encourage participating organizations to “put their money where their intent is,” and look for ways to scratch out a few hours of staff time to dedicate to the process. This can be part of an important initial exercise where participating organizations are recognizing their contribution to the current problem and their accountability to its solutions by taking the opportunity to assess their systems, find ways to realign their missions, mandates,

processes and practices, within the context of this growing shared vision of what needs to and can be. Our first initial group of trepidatious but willing people were mostly executives of their organizations and did not have the time or energy to engage fully unless there were strong tangibles happening for them. They just did not want to continue the same high-level discussions they had been having and seeing little or no progress from. It wasn't until we were more than halfway through our project timeline, with more foundational work done, that we had the beginnings of a working group.

13. The more persistent, confident, and strategic that you can be, the sooner you will see progress. Hindsight is always 20/20. With the groundwork done and the facilitation developed, we have been able to increase and improve in these areas. But we have missed some key opportunities along the way. That being said, any movement forward is progress and with persistence and consistent efforts, elements build on each other to a tipping point.
14. An important tool in helping individuals move from precontemplation to contemplation, as discussed previously, is to introduce them to others who have had success in similar change processes. When participating organizations and entities can share their successes with the principles and demonstrate the benefits of moving forward, it will spark confidence and inspiration for others to follow. Being our best selves inspires and lifts others, giving them permission to move into different arenas. (Marianne Williamson best describes the power of this phenomenon in "Our Deepest Fear"). In some communities this is possible because there are successful projects happening, where the principles you are trying to float are at play. In others, you will have to share inspiration from elsewhere to help the people see themselves in the vision.

Stages of Change Stage Two: Contemplation- With an awareness of the consequences of the behaviour but also the



positive and negative effects of making a change, the person is uncertain which direction to go, what to try, and procrastinates or is unable to move toward change. Is remaining in the status quo going to be less painful than pushing toward change? Is the cost of staying the same greater than the price that needs to be paid for something different? The main thing, at this juncture, is that there is a recognition beginning to dawn that the person (or organization, or community) has some choices to make, and some responsibility needing to be taken, in that growing awareness.

This might be where a community will create a systems or philosophical framework- this is what we want things to look like, these are the philosophical underpinnings of our forming vision. These are the wrongs we want to right and the reasons we need to do things differently. This may occur within different organizations and systems in a community and can create stress and frustration if done in isolation. There may be a fairly broad agreement to that

framework and philosophy. But it cannot stop here. If it does, the cycle begins again at precontemplation. And repeats itself until momentum toward change builds again, and the elements are present that will kick it into the next stage. For many, it feels like banging your head against a brick wall repeatedly. But understanding why these cycles of awareness and enthusiasm happen and then fizzle can help individuals, organizations and communities do some work to inject the right elements into the environment to help grease the wheels of the change engine. In the systems thinking world, these can be identified as leveraging activities that help inch the process along.

In systems thinking for social change this would be where we enter stage two: understanding and accepting responsibility for the current reality- knowing that something needs to change, accepting our role in things getting to this point, and our responsibility in making the change that we see needs to be made. Spending time in this stage is important. When we are converted to the big picture and see the logic in transforming, it is easy to want to forge ahead. And in fact, pockets of this happen all the time within “siloes”. Good ideas are introduced and even mandated by well-meaning policies while systems are built up around the latest and greatest “best practices.” Some improvements are seen, reinforcing us in our addiction to creating solutions, being right and making a difference. But we need a coordinated and cooperative effort informed by the big picture and dosed with accountability and humility to see how we each have contributed to the status quo. Without it, those surface applications begin to chafe against the grain, produce discomfort, create inefficiencies and frustrations. We can then find ourselves re-entering the cycle again and spiral around through the first three stages of change readiness until the next crisis rings the bell on another wake-up call.



When is a crisis reached? When questions arise that can't be answered. Rizzared Kapuściński
Crises and deadlocks when they occur have at least this advantage, that they force us to think.
Jawaharlal Nehru

Man is not imprisoned by habit. Great changes in him can be wrought by crisis -- once that crisis can be recognized and understood. Norman Cousins

Community Alignment Component Two:



Understanding and Accepting responsibility for the Current Reality

This component involves participating in and organizing focus groups, sector discussions, multi-sector forums. Paul Born, from the Tamarack Institute developed a 5-step guide to develop a common agenda for collective impact. In it, he suggests 25% of an initial working group coming from each of the four main sectors: community or not for profit, business, government and people with lived experience. Here is a link to that publication:

<https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/hubfs/Resources/Publications/CommonAgendaforCollectiveImpact.pdf>.

1. Gather Community Systems Information:

Decide who to interview about the history of the current situation and which questions to ask- This is where we hone the story, focus in on specific points, starting to identify where the changes may need to be made and asking key questions from the context of moving toward that shared vision that is starting to take shape as you engage people in these conversations. Organize and improve the quality of information- with your smaller, selected and committed group, refine the picture.

2.) Pave the way with Pre-Analysis:

Analyze the system dynamics (how different parts of the system have interacted over time to support or undermine achievement of the vision- with a small group of knowledgeable people. It is important to be able, when presenting the big picture and showing where the changes may need to happen, that you have some background for your observations. Try to identify the systems archetypes at play. Systems archetypes are universally recognizable patterns of behaviour. One typical example of a systems archetype has been identified as “the tragedy of the commons.” In this system story a common resource is used by everyone for their own purposes with no thought to its sustainability. Think of logging companies in a patch of forest, or a bunch of free-range cattle ranchers putting their herds on the same free range. Without coordination and forethought, those “available” resources are used up and forever lost to everyone, when they could be sustained and even increased through a cooperative effort. Resources such as finite funding pockets, social and human capital, community spaces, available housing units can fall into this archetype. Systems Thinking for Social Change by David Peter Stroh is a good resource to learn about other important systems archetypes your community might recognize!

Here are the links again to resources for understanding systems thinking and archetypes:

https://thesystemsthinker.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Systems-Archetypes-I-TRSA01_pk.pdf

<https://www.saybrook.edu/unbound/systems-archetypes/>

If people can identify how things went wrong, or where current approaches fell short, or didn't flex with the needs, they can find their way back to getting things moving in the right directions. Conversely, if a community can recognize systems behaviours that work toward sustainable, successful outcomes, they can be scaled up or more broadly applied for greater impact. This is where the seeds of solutions start to germinate.

3.) Inform and Support Self-Analysis:

Stroh (2015) suggests using your initial findings, to engage others in their own analysis as much as possible- through consultations, focused discussions, asking them to help you refine your information. This includes not only an assessment of what is happening and how it relates to the shared vision, but also contributing to that vision by injecting multiple perspectives to form a more holistic and complete plan. We can begin here to prioritize about what is important to put our resources and attention to and what will naturally change from the key leverage activities that result from this.

4.) Mental Models:

Systems thinking literature introduces some mental models that explain the behaviours.

- **Feedback Loop:** This is one of the most common and easy to spot mental models we run into with any system, human, organizational, or societal. There are two types of feedback loops. The balancing feedback loop, also known as homeostasis, leads the system toward equilibrium, which is good for maintaining the status quo, but creates resistance to change. The reinforcing feedback loop leads the system to change, either to grow or to atrophy. They can be *virtuous*, where feedback reinforces positive action. For example, self-reliance practices leading to permanent movement out of crisis. Or they can be *vicious* where feedback reinforces a negative response. Think of learned helplessness, where individuals or community entities are continually made to feel powerless with no discernable ways of making a difference, or the efforts they have made continually shut down by other individuals or community entities.
- **Bottleneck:** In the Theory of Constraints it is recognized that every system has one constraint that is tighter than the others. This is the bottleneck. This is a sticking point that holds everything else up. Think of a "traffic jam" on a highway caused by an accident at some point which closes a lane or two. Until it is cleared, the traffic will continue to be slowed and backed up. Each individual, organization, or community, needs to work out what these are for them and resolve them enough to keep the change machine moving along. It can be resource, process, or mindset related. If we are feeling stuck, we need to ask and assess what is holding up progress? Taking the time to work through these will be important time and energy well spent to get things

moving again in good directions. They can't be avoided. They are opportunities. They can lead, first to a connected multi-sector community alignment process, and then to creative and sustainable solution making.

- Leverage: Talk of bottlenecks leads directly to conversation about leverage. When we are experiencing a block to forward movement, we have to have the right elements and resources in place to solve that blockage. Sometimes, most of the time, we have to be strategic about this and the shortest distance between two points is not always a straight line, especially in a complex system like a community. Where can we apply the most meaningful pressure to get the gain or movement we seek? Sometimes we have to apply pressure at small leveraging points (for example, sharing insights, data, or learning to help increase awareness and cognitive dissonance to incite or “insight” a desire for change) in order to adjust the environment or mindsets enough to get to a place of being able to have a larger leveraging point. It is important to watch for these leveraging opportunities, where we use what we have now in such a way as to help us move to the next level.
- Second-order Thinking: This follows logically from the previous mental models. It includes the act of utilizing those models in our perception and conceptualization of our systems situations. Rather than simply reacting to what is in front of us, we are looking ahead to what will come from our potential actions, and considering it holistically. It moves us from reactivity to responsiveness. It fits with outward accountability in that we are considering how what we do will impact or is impacted by other elements in the environment. This, of course, is an important mental model for community alignment and collective impact. It introduces a much more advanced and mature way to operate, rather than just reacting to circumstances or focusing on our own small piece of the grand puzzle.

Here some links to other information about mental models:

<https://medium.com/@SparksRemarks/systems-thinking-the-essential-mental-models-needed-for-growth-5d3e7f93b420>

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/senges-mental-models-definition-lesson-quiz.html>

<https://fs.blog/mental-models/>

5.) Conversations:

Create times and spaces for conversations that are catalysts for awareness, acceptance, and alternatives. Design engagements for each sector as well as for multi-sector discussions. This can be done by intentional participation in existing forums and venues, or by organizing specific gatherings or convenings. These can be great leveraging activities that take small amounts of resources but can result in big gains. They create space and support for second order thinking. They can help dispel bottlenecks and provide relevant and appropriate feedback loops. All of these are engines to keep our systems dynamic and flexible, moving in good directions. Determine and invite focus groups. This is where you can start to engage your key players for your working group in specific conversations that introduce concepts and allow for exploration of them within the various parts of the current environment as well as with a community big picture focus.

Tips from the Trenches:



1. In this stage of the process, you will probably have found and continue to discover like-minded organizations and individuals that are already doing this work in a limited way within their own organizations or focused partnerships. It is important to identify those models and dynamics at play, and work with what already is happening in the community rather than introduce new activities.
2. The work you do in Component 2 will help you evolve a focused and carefully crafted presentation to the community that will engage them where they are at. You will be helping them apply these principles to familiar territory, from their own deeply held intentions, challenging them to stretch their thinking and take on some accountability for it, rather than introducing foreign ideas, alienating potential change champions, and perpetuating damaging systems archetypes and mental models.
3. You will also be ready at this point to help clarify not only where these principles need to be applied, but how they can be, and what the outcomes could be. It is a well identified positive leadership trait to bring solutions when discussing problems. Experience has shown that many meetings and gatherings, unless they have an intentional action and accountability component are simply information sharing times with a list of shoulds and coulds and little or no action resulting. Your team, coming from and being influential in many of these areas, can infiltrate community gatherings and instigate the right kinds of conversations, pushing for clear and determined action items to come from these gatherings.

4. Providing a picture of the way things are, reinforcing the concepts discussed here, and identifying some ways forward has the potential to encourage motivated engagement, rather than discourage and overwhelm already overwhelmed and discouraged people. Even if the solutions you bring don't end up being adopted, (and you have to be willing to let them go) they will lead the participants to enlightened solutions that work for them. They will provide a "light on the path" that can help the community alignment effort move forward incrementally.
5. Use your champions and their activities within the scope of your project- you don't own this process. Your job is to help it happen in a community. Nurture the seeds where they sprout, cultivate the ground so they can spread. Support promising activities and try to connect them. Help people recognize and accept the parts of the process they are going through. This has been one of the most challenging parts of the Momentum Project. When you think you have a good idea or a way forward, but it doesn't fit with where the majority or community dynamic is at, you have to work organically and sensitively with what is. You can find strategic "workarounds" and ways to leverage incremental changes that can benefit and help maintain the good directions a community is taking.
6. Be observant and take note- not all information will be given directly to you. You will glean much usable "intel" by just watching and listening. In this way, your engagements with people and entities do not always have to be manufactured.
7. Consider the potential of solutions to obvious challenges rather than rehashing or opening old wounds. Challenging processes, looking for ways through and around the challenges inherent to the changes you are proposing, and that people have identified as necessary. This is where understanding mental models can come in handy.
8. Relationships are building in this stage and you will get farther with positive, authentic and vibrant relationships. Find those you can rely on and support them in their work.
9. Continue to assess who still needs to be at the table. Find your way in to those sectors and areas. Your networks are enlarging, constantly look for potential connections as you interact with the gathering players. And don't be discouraged if you lose people. Your initial contacts may not be who you continue on with. You want people who are not only committed to making change happen, but have room in their lives and "on

their desks” to do the work necessary. The rest will come back around when things start moving in a positive direction, they can justify themselves getting involved with.

10. Accept the efforts made and look for other ways to get things done, or encourage and support informal partnerships/collaborations between people from different organizations or even sectors as appropriate. Multiple perspectives are better than one in creating a common vision and agenda. Here is the link to the Tamarack Institute publication by Paul Born, once more.

<https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/hubfs/Resources/Publications/CommonAgendaforCollectiveImpact.pdf>

Stages of Change Stage Three: Preparation- In this phase, the vision of what can be is formed enough, and the decision has been made and the person is ready to commit to the price of change. There is an intention to take action very soon. There are, however, some things that need to be assembled or prepared to help support the success of that action, so this is not a stage we want to skip. We are gathering the resources that we will need to change the behaviour. This requires some work around what needs to be addressed, what exists and what needs to be acquired or created, to address it- each community that is at this stage is going to look a bit different. This is the place where we consider and apply those mental models that can impede or assist the change we wish to see.



For an organization or community, this is where the common vision starts to increase in form and substance. This stage requires leadership. For a community to be successful, there must be a leadership group or entity that helps the community get itself organized. This is where promising best practices that seem like they could fit within community ability are assessed and adopted. Sharing these success stories, showing how similar things can be done in your community and encouraging messages all help increase self-efficacy and motivation.

It makes sense that this work be done by a group that represents the community as a whole, all of the interests, needs and resources of each sector in order to form an accurate picture of where the community is starting and how they can achieve the desired outcomes or vision. A plan of action is created, that considers and addresses those interests, needs and resources within the context of the challenge that started the process. It is then presented to the larger group for feedback, then taken back into the smaller group and refined based on that feedback.

From here, the individual parts are organized, assignments made, and resources identified, allocated and gathered. At this point, for an individual, is where the commitment to action forms, based on a sense of having all the bases

covered, everything in place (or enough to be getting on with); an environment that is tuned for success. Without action, that piled up arsenal of resources is useless and eventually starts to feel like it is messing up the landscape. All of the pieces of the puzzle can be present, but if they are not put together with action, then confusion, inefficiency, frustration, cynicism, distrust, apathy, and entropy descend. From the research and observation, we have undertaken, this is where many organizations or communities may find themselves at the end of a funding period, or as the years of a strategic plan are coming to a close if those strategic plans have not been fully resourced and operationalized.

To alleviate this paralyzing situation, all the players instead need to commit to take their parts and play their roles, taking their own share of accountability for the whole. Being able to make a commitment is an important result of and motivator for preparation. If this doesn't happen, and isn't continually supported, movement fizzles, mandates become confused, people become bored or disenchanted and momentum is lost. The feedback loops that lead to homeostasis and the path of least resistance pull us once again into a "status quo", maybe for a time slightly better than it used to be, with many good tools and resources within our reach. But without intention and consistent oversight, eventually the cycle returns to its dysfunctional normal until a new crisis reminds us once again that we need to take this more seriously and try something different.

Current economic and social crisis, evident across the globe, tell us that whatever we have been doing, we either haven't yet hit on the best solutions, new elements have emerged that need to be accounted for in our practice, or we haven't put the right pieces together in the right way. More likely it is a combination of these. If we are honest, and have the right mindset, we will agree that solutions and the resources to achieve them are present if we will just look with fresh, creative, collective eyes and a germ of belief that we can be successful. That "we will be alright, but we all have some work to do."

Systems thinking for social change will tell us, at this point, that we are entering Stage 3: committing to make a



change- We now have a committed multi-sector vision and leadership that has been formed out of the previous work of accepting responsibility and accountability and are now willing to pull together the arsenal required to be ready for action. Paul Born, a Collective Impact expert out of the Tamarack Institute reminds us that a common agenda is more about building commitment

than prescribing an exact plan. What we are trying to do is create a culture of awareness, accountability, and commitment. Within that culture, with the big picture view of outcomes and how we operate together providing some parameters and guidelines, the players will naturally identify and coordinate their roles and pieces of the action. This is because they recognize the value that moving toward the shared vision has to their own mandates and can then commit to be part of the team. Born posits that a common agenda is "more about building a collective

commitment to community change than it is about having a plan.” (Born, 2017). The work of Hunt and Henrix on relationships confirms this. In the right environment, with the right way of being, among connected, collectively minded individuals, entities and organizations, much of the change we wish to see will begin to happen naturally. This is why making that commitment as a community, with the full picture and with every sector at the table is so important.

Community Alignment Component Three- Committing to make a change



This happens within the context of a committed multi-sector representative group that has been formed out of all of your discussions and consultations up to this point. You will have feedback from enough sources that will provide the background for this next phase. You will have had some focused activities with key members of that group, and done some preparatory work with the entire community previous to the formal engagement. How long this takes will be different for each community. It depends on what opportunities and resources are present in the environment as well as the buy-in or mandate from community. The literature for systems thinking within the context of social change suggests the following steps:

1. Engage and evaluate-

- As a community leadership group, with representation from all sectors, identify the case for staying the same and the cost of change and compare this with the case for change and the cost of staying the same- from the collective results of your discussions and analyses,
- At this point you are ready to create solutions that achieve the benefits of both or be willing to make the trade-offs for choosing between them. You don't have to do everything all at once. In your community it may look like many baby steps and smaller leveraging activities. Or there may be some big things that are on the horizon that can be undertaken to galvanize the community and see those encouraging gains and victories that help motivate continued efforts. Generally, it is a combination of both.
- Make an explicit choice and move into operationalizing the vision that has been created. People should feel called or impelled by this vision (Stroh, 2015) and see the ways they can bring it to life within their spheres and scope.

2.) Formalize and fortify-

- This is where formal agreements could be helpful, not necessarily to line up a specific plan of action, although that can be a way of going about it, if there is buy in to that plan. But mostly as a commitment to the process, with roles defined, resources allocated, assignments for accountability to certain outcomes given. This is a way of creating that safe, mutually supportive environment that Hunt and Henrix suggest actually helps to

eliminate perceived problems and encourages meaningful and efficient interaction within relationships and communities. Maybe it looks like a detailed strategic plan with specifically assigned and named collaborators.

- Set up a system of regular check-ins and consistent communication to determine how things are progressing and what each entity can do to help the process from their position, situation, and role. This is where a model or framework for multi-sector community alignment can come into play. Collective Impact requires communication. Every community has sectors and naturally occurring alliances that can be more formally organized into a communications and leadership framework to inform, support, and motivate continued change efforts. We have created a sample model that can be found in Appendix G.
- An outwardly accountable mentality, such as that shared by the Arbinger Institute, can fortify that mutually supportive environment where a community or group of organizations can develop a supportive infrastructure. Here is a link to a YouTube video from Arbinger that introduces the concept of the outward mindset: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Qkh5gMRnr4>

Tips from the trenches:



1. Depending on your community, your experience with a working group can be formal or informal. Without a strong mandate within the community, where people see the value of making formal time for this work, your experience may be one of “spot engagement” where you are working individually with agencies or stakeholders, or participating in existing activities. The same work can still happen, although it can take longer.
2. In this case, make sure to log and share the “state of the union” information you have gleaned from your interactions and give the community a picture of its own readiness. You will be having conversations with people, injecting ideas, receiving validation for the insights you are forming.
3. The time it takes for preparation is the time it takes. Don’t be discouraged but do develop a good picture of solutions and the community’s ability to enact those solutions.
4. When you reveal your findings, you will also reveal the potential solution action that can take place. What you see as already achievable given the different parts of the puzzle that you have observed to exist in the community. This works so much better than just giving a “report card,” stating the obvious about the status quo.
5. People are resistant to change (remember homeostasis and human nature) for numerous reasons. In this context those reasons include:

- They have been disappointed too many times and are experiencing stakeholder burnout
 - They are not yet seeing how this helps their mandate or bottom line
 - They are overwhelmed by immediate and pressing concerns and pressures and can't get above it to see the big picture
 - They are in a system that is micromanaged and have no clear way of stepping outside of the box
 - They want to see that there are motivations and resources that will help them make the change, be it community leadership and buy-in, support for their time, dollars, a motivating mandate like criteria for funding, a board priority and direction
 - Funding pressures and the siloism that current funding systems perpetuate, as organizations focus on keeping their funding and don't want to rock the boat
 - Some will not join in until they see successful activity in that direction
 - Some don't want to increase their workload, or are in a good place where they don't have to work too hard and don't want to rock the boat.
 - Sadly, there are those that see solving problems as the end of their own jobs, which is why we need always to be looking for and having support to flex toward next steps, for everyone.
6. It is clear why this kind of process really needs to be done on a multi-sector level to minimize the barriers and open up possibilities that each sector or organization could not imagine on their own.
7. There is always a "tipping point" no matter how long it takes, where the information you have gathered tell the story well enough, and the potential and hope for actually being able to change some things creates sparks in a few places that can be fanned into flames of change.
8. Make sure your information is as complete and compelling as possible and that you share it with the right people- by now you should have an idea of who those people are. The right people are people of influence- the ones that are respected in the community. These people may not be in positions of recognized "power" or authority, although that can definitely help if there is respect and good relationships exist with that authority. They are people who are directly related to the areas you are looking at for change. They are people who can envision the big picture.
9. Share your information and findings as you go, with key people. Help to build the vision in their minds of what the potentials are so they will be more prepared and thus enthused about working on solutions. You

may not readily see it, but there is movement and progress happening. Everything that is done to challenge the status quo and inject new ideas or germs of solutions, has some effect on the internal and external environment and landscape of the community.

10. It is amazing what can be accomplished if you don't care who gets the credit for it. Remember that the "bottom line" in this case is creating a community where everyone can succeed.
11. It is also amazing what you can accomplish if you don't believe you can't.

Stages of Change Stage Four: Action- The plan is in action; everyone has their part and systems are in place to



support all the working parts. There are significant modifications being made in behaviour and way of life to move the person (or community) toward change. "Begin with the end in mind," is often the advice we receive. What is it going to take, to see the outcomes we are hoping for? What needs to be in place, in process, in the environment to support those outcomes? What actions are needed to make those things happen?

1. Operationalizing action- This is where we move from a shared vision into real world activity that moves us toward the vision, in which all can engage. That vision has become a common agenda for mutually desired outcomes. Action starts with an idea of desired outcomes which leads to planning steps forward, or creating a roadmap based on what we think it will take to achieve those outcomes. From that roadmap, each moving part, with the vision in mind, takes a piece of the puzzle that makes sense in their world, having or developing a clue or two about how what they do impacts everyone else and what that means for their performance.
2. Establishing and communicating accountability- To be successful in the change we wish to see, there must be accountability attached to each of those pieces. The model for multi-sector community alignment, with a multi-sector representative community leadership group, discussed in Stage 3, can be adapted within the natural structure of a community to communicate and support that accountability.
3. Outcomes measuring and reporting- We know the action is successful when we see those outcomes come into fruition. A shared way of measuring outcomes and a clear way of communicating or reporting them is an important part of the change process and collective impact. Best Practice and experience tells us that clearly measuring and reporting outcomes provides important information for deciding if what we are doing is getting us

where we want to be. It helps us justify our priorities and resource allocations, and get support for what we are trying to achieve.

4. Evaluation- Evaluation is a systematic determination for the worth and significance of something, based on criteria governed by a set of standards. It is a way of providing checks and balances to the action we have undertaken, and the systems we create and operate within. It is necessary to ensure they are not only accomplishing what we intended them to accomplish, but that they are doing it in the way we intended.



Systems Thinking requires that we move forward at this point. Even incremental changes are better than cycling around again and regurgitating rhetoric. This is the place where individuals, groups, organizations, communities sputter and stall unless steps forward are taken. It might not be perfect, but the act of doing something will help us iron out the wrinkles of how we work together and what is really needed, discover new reserves, resources, and realities that fuel our journey forward. What we do is going to be based on what is available within the environment- the parties that are engaged, the clarity of the shared vision, the needs, the challenges or barriers, the commitment level of those involved, what tools or resources are available. These are changeable, dynamic elements that will adjust with each step toward the outcomes being sought. And each adjustment will inform and effect the next steps.

Community Alignment Component Four: Action and Activity



The working group consults with key community entities (based on need as well as willingness to engage) and implements the action plan. Remember that sometimes changing systems is not within our power, but we can do some workarounds that will still impact the situation and prepare the way for further engagement in the change process down the line. We have to start somewhere and this is where we decide where we can start. Everything we enact is designed to move us from the way things are toward the collective vision of what can be that has been created. This can include actual actions as well as simply mindsets, frames of reference, attitudes and ways of being and doing. Anything that is different, in positive ways, from how we did things before will help move us in good directions.

1. **Design Leverage:** With community input, propose and refine high leverage activities to: increase awareness of how the system currently functions; rewire causal feedback relationships that have been identified, shift mental models, reinforce the chosen purpose by updating goals and plans, metrics, incentives, authority structures and funding. Even if it is just hypothetically, it can be presented.

2. Enact Leverage Activities: Community Projects which require the input and participation of multiple if not all sectors are wonderfully galvanizing, leveraging, and help align the moving parts of a community naturally and organically. Especially when there is mindfulness in our way of being with each other. These projects can create real world perspective in support of that alignment. They lead to opportunities to utilize systems thinking tools, refine attitudes and processes, create successes that feed and build momentum toward the common vision. They also build relationships and a community culture that will increase community capacity for continued change, envisioning next steps, evaluating and improving community response to continuing and emerging needs.
3. Common Vision as Frame of Reference: Work together as a community, from a common vision that includes and supports the success of all, using that vision as a benchmark and a frame of reference.
4. Center of Excellence: Systems Thinking best practice, if change is to continue and the individual, organization or community wants to avoid the entropy trap, reinforces the need to establish a plan for continuous learning, monitoring, and outreach to maintain and increase engagement. At this point you will have a committed group that can carry this on, but they need a plan and resources. The focus needs to be sustaining the momentum through consistent and repeated use of the previous steps, continually asking the key questions, refining the vision, education and awareness, ensuring that the right people are involved and finding ways to engage them. What we are talking about here is a Center of Excellence that can be incorporated into a Community Alignment Framework. A sample is provided in Appendix G. Setting up a sustainable community oversight or leadership committee:

Start with naturally forming or formed alliances and coalitions. These alliances are the germs of systems thinking in a community. They come together for a reason. The oversight committee can start as representation from each of these and from each sector... This doesn't always have to be the same person, and could be a shared role, situational depending on what is the emerging concern. Within our model for a community alignment framework, each sector supports and sends their best minds for the task at hand, armed with the information they feel is relevant for the determination required. What needs to be determined comes from the work of alliances and individual entities within the sectors which informs the big picture view. In each community there may be natural entities that could be utilized as an oversight committee. There are varying views as to which. It is something your community will have to consider carefully so as to encourage, rather than stifle, forward movement.

- This group must be multi-sectoral in nature, with good representation from each sector.

- They cannot be tied up in bureaucracy. They must come with authority from the entities they represent (sectors or alliances) to make decisions within acceptable parameters. This changes the nature of the meetings from informing and sharing to providing prior information and background, focuses and questions so participants are coming prepared to make decisions, with the expectation that the work of consideration for any particular area of focus has been done within the fields they represent.
- They must be seen as a good community bridging and relationship building entity, and not an ultimate authority (although, if things are done right, they will be able to make decisions, or at least powerful and trusted recommendations for the community).
- They must be less prescriptive and more influencing and supportive of creativity.
- They need to be able to extract the information they require from their interactions with the community alliances and strike a balance between appropriate research and overthinking.
- Their role is to keep things moving in good directions, not tie up the process with too much control.
- They are conveners and suggesters, the big picture view, and
- They are not micro managers.
- They inform and send suggestions to the alliances, sectors and other community entities, which would then, within the collective wisdom of their ranks be able to operationalize, assign, and support action.

Tips from the Trenches:



1. Each community has to figure this out for themselves.
2. City government does not always have the dollars that can support the work needing to be done, but they may at least have staff hours that can be allocated. In a full community alignment effort, using systems thinking to make the most of every resource, city government, and other community entities from each sector can take a look at their department and systems responsibilities and allocations and take their related pieces of the puzzles, along with everyone else.
3. Along that note, in many communities, there is a lack of confidence and trust in the bureaucracy of government entities. So, leadership for this kind of heart-wrenching, soul-searching and life changing work may be better coming from some other source in the community, with support and participation from bureaucracies as participants, rather than being seen as authorities. Everyone will benefit, everyone will learn and increase capacity to do their jobs better. And relationships, which are key in any kind of change work, will be better going forward.

4. Due to existing mindsets and conditions in a community it may be that a concrete project rather than a hypothetical or theoretical discussion gets more engagement to start. The act of pulling together for a tangible community benefit, such as a new housing project, or a multi-sector effort to do more with what resources and opportunities currently exist to increase community safety by supporting the needs of people with lived experience can help jumpstart and create a framework for community alignment work.
5. But there is also a starting point in the hypothetical and theoretical. And there are champions in your community that you will not find unless you broadcast your questions challenges and ideas and invite others to take a look at the challenge and see how their work ties into it.
6. Regular convening is required to check in, gauge successes (and celebrate them!), explore and assess the activities and see how the community landscape can continue to evolve, in which directions you need to go and what may need to be revisited and “tweaked” a bit. With some “second-order thinking” and community coordination, this can be intentionally embedded into activities that are already in process. This is what a Center for Excellence can do.

Stage of Change Stage Five: Maintenance- The hardest part is over, we have changed behaviours and opened up a



whole new world of possibility. We have resources and supports prepared and ready to go, and we are on a committed path of action and activity toward our vision of what could be. But while we may have some room to breathe, now is not the time to rest on our laurels. Now we are working to prevent relapse. This activity includes continuous learning and growing toward the

ideal; refining and solidifying behaviours, patterns, ways of being. It requires vigilance and mindfulness. It requires humility, trust, and a reliance on those strong, healthy relationships we have built with ourselves and with our community collaborators. The process is the same for individuals, organizations, sectors and communities. Each of the separate parts of a community collective impact effort have their own work to do within their own systems to stay engaged with the processes and maintain that way of being that has allowed so much progress to be made.

System entropy is always just around the corner and must be checked and harnessed to keep things moving in good directions. Keeping the change engine engaged in consistently assessing and being proactive toward next steps, expanding the scope of what we can fix, upgrade, update, or scale up, will help a community in this stage to maintain gains and best utilize the dynamic nature of systems work.

Systems Thinking suggests that in this stage, efforts need to be made to keep things moving in good directions.



Creating a Center for Excellence, with Communities of Practice will assist with this. As previously mentioned, our model for multi-sector community alignment could help a community organize itself around these concepts. A multi-sectoral committee that feeds information back and forth between the community coalitions and the Big Picture will be invaluable. It is through this community oversight group that a model for a Center for Excellence and Communities of Practice can naturally flow and be supported. (See Appendix G).

Community Alignment Component Five: Continuous Learning



To maintain hard won change and keep a community flexing for next steps, it is important to be constantly assessing how systems are functioning, seeking better ways of doing things, sharing information on approaches, challenges, solutions, and outcomes. There are numerous ways this can be organized and resourced, and that will be determined by each community. In our model, the Center for Excellence functions as a quality standard-holder for the overall community collective impact activity. It is an information exchange and brokers community training and enrichment. It would support mindfulness around way of being, keep, evolve and manage accountability to, the shared community vision.

The Communities of Practice refer to the collective learning that occurs within each focus area and within Sectors. They are concerned with shared competencies within particular domains, interactions and relationships among members, and the actual practice and expertise in each particular area of focus. But they are connected, informing and strengthening each other. These help to keep the process of change dynamic and cohesive. They require intentional leadership and support through a backbone structure. Here is a link to an introduction to communities of practice: <http://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>

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Section 5: A Vision for a Connected, Intentional, Sustainable System of Community Care: A Model to Develop and Support a Multi-sector Community Alignment and Collective Impact

Introduction and Summary:

In all its separate parts, this model is not looking at doing anything that isn't already being considered or done. The “innovation” is in the combination and synergy of a number of things working together intentionally and embedded within each other for maximum impact and advantage. We are tackling crisis while paving the way for prevention and sustainability. We are looking to leverage existing opportunities in people, places, practices, and perspectives. We are seeking out and creating a system of support and capacity building for collaborators and community champions who are tired of the status quo and see the benefit of working outside the box. We are using a business model to sustainably tackle a social challenge and challenge social systems.

While carrying out the Momentum Project, we have learned that there are needs as well as opportunities in most communities. The goal of this project has been to provide a plan and facilitation to help communities align multi-sectorally in a sustainable system of community care to help decrease homelessness and its contributing factors. Reviewing best practices and observing a number of communities, we have recognized a few opportunities that provide leverage toward positive systems change through some collective impact activity and sustainable housing options within strategic partnerships. Systems Thinking and other best practices have been applied to develop an enhanced Collective Impact/Action Model that we offer here as a starting point for moving toward your vision of a community that cares enough to leave no one behind.

SILOS and SOLOS: A continuing barrier to full effectiveness if it remains at the status quo, and the way out of the current social crisis if it can be recognized and addressed, is the siloed nature of community care and activity. But there are four layers of activity that can make a big difference NOW, that we present as an action model for communities that are wondering what they can do. Some, or even a lot of what we discuss in the next few pages may already be happening in your community.

There are more than likely many in your community who would say “we have that,” “this is already being done,” or, “we don’t have the resources for that.” But the reality is:

- In most communities, things can always be done better, there are gaps, and activity and consideration are limited to a few leaders and agencies.
- Just because something is being done does not mean it is available to all who need it.

- Because of the tendency to operate in silos, many communities are not fully tuned into the resources they actually do have.
- Ironically this is often exacerbated by current funding models and a lack of understanding as to how integrated a community really is, for good or ill, and sometimes a lack of imagination.
- It comes down to the way a community operates together, more than what is or is not happening, that leads to greater success and better outcomes.

Many times, you will hear in a community about big ideas that have not come into fruition or haven't lasted, or you will hear repeatedly about needs and the lack of resources. A long, hard, honest, multi-sectored look around at each other may bring some surprising insights as to as yet unseen opportunities or how people have been getting in each other's way in providing what was needed. You may not have all that you need, but in the process of assessing and re-imagining as a community you will come closer than you ever did before, and will be better able to articulate and justify what you need to ask for. The following activity areas can be adapted as a framework for action and leverage toward aligning systems and sectors and enhancing collective impact for solving homelessness and its contributing factors while moving the community toward a changed way of being.

- Build a "highway of hope"
- Engage in systems analysis
- Align services and sectors
- Pursue a sustainable business model to resource the change work on multiple levels.

Activity number one: Build a "Highway of Hope"

Call it what you want, this is just the tagline we are giving it. Any community can come together on a multi-sector level and take stock of what is available, right now, in terms of funding, existing programs, spaces, staff hours, materials, expertise, interests, community businesses, agencies, entities and individual members that can provide opportunities for, or have relevance to the needs or experiences of vulnerable populations. These are natural leverage points for systems change, because they are readily available but also require some honest accountability, collaboration and creative problem solving outside of silos. They provide inroads into relationship building and creating a foundation that underpins the individual and systems changes we want to see.

Interviews and feedback from people with Lived Experience have told us that it is important for communities to consider and ensure the right opportunities are available for everyone in the homelessness, or at risk of homelessness, catchment. They are very clear that there is a spectrum of need and change readiness in that group and to "lump" them all together in one place, or to see them all as addicts or people with mental health challenges

who are a risk to the community and themselves is to do a disservice. Frankly, it is a disservice to almost every person in that group. Most people in crisis would like to find a way out of it. We can create a broad, effective navigable “highway” that supports travel at varying speeds, with helpful off ramps to services and well-marked exits to change destinations, rather than tiny, obscure mountain paths to help people move forward in hope.

Some of these types of opportunities may already exist in some form, but a process can be undertaken to map and calendar them, so people can know where and when to go. Also, there are potential opportunities that can be created through some collaborative effort and creative combining of people, places and things. Getting the entire community involved will open up new avenues of resources never before considered. It also gives an opportunity for education and information which can dispel the ignorance that leads to apathy, discrimination, and judgement which keeps people from being open to possibilities. In this section you will learn the why and how of this activity and be provided with some tools that can be adapted to your community.

“But how to soothe souls inflamed by the intense torment imposed first by childhood experiences almost too sordid to believe and then, with mechanical repetition, by the sufferers themselves? And how to offer them comfort when their suffering is made worse every day by social ostracism—by what the scholar and writer Elliot Leyton has described as “the bland, racist, sexist, and ‘classist’ prejudices buried in Canadian society: an institutionalized contempt for the poor, for sex-trade workers, for drug addicts and alcoholics, for aboriginal people.”

— Gabor Maté, [In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction](#)

Maté is writing about addiction but the same systemic ostracism for any other human challenge is a subject that could fill volumes. Mate asks: “how to soothe the souls inflamed...?”

Mate has his insights and theories in that regard, of course, but a community Highway of Hope is the beginning of the answer to that question. Because we, as a community, can’t change anything but the environment for a bruised and battered human being, and turn it from a place of “institutionalized contempt” to a patient, compassionate, nutrient filled garden for growth where every person has the same chance as the next to reach their potential and achieve their dreams. Stripping away judgement is not an easy task, especially for those who have not walked a particular path, and sometimes for those who have experienced it differently for whatever reasons.

Where communities go wrong is when they stop seeing their vulnerable community neighbours as deserving human beings with the potential to contribute, the right to the best life they can experience and the inherent knowledge

about what that looks like and what works for them to achieve it. Even in helping, we can exacerbate that “institutionalized contempt” through an imbalance of power brought on by a false sense that “we are helping and they need help.” We do such a disservice to people; we take away their power and strip them of dignity when we prescribe the way and put distinctions on it. The truth and reality are that we ALL are bringing what we have to the circle and have the opportunity to take away what we need. Let’s say that again in another way. Everyone has something to offer to, and something they need from, community. Everyone. Think about it.

Does this mean we let people take advantage of the system? Certainly not! Many of us have met people with lived experience that are very angry with peers who are abusing systems and the people working in those systems who let them or even tell them how, in order to achieve their own ends. It is a symptom of struggling, broken, or failing systems. But a connected, aligned, intentional system of care and support for success can create room for both the compassion, *and* the accountability required to build an empowering environment designed for success for everyone. This environment gives room and freedom for the authentic, sincere, participant, and reveals very clearly those that are in a different stream. We need to be careful though, in our judgement, because still within that “system abusing group” are people who are doing what they do for reasons related to deficits in their environment that, if solved for, could change things for them as well. Accountability and Community are powerful tools for motivating and supporting the change we wish to see.

Creating “way stations”

Community entities can assess and coordinate existing resources to create and support an intentional, organized spectrum of engagement points. The engagement points or ‘way stations’ would provide meaningful, resilience and resource building activities that vulnerable community members can engage with while they wait for housing to be available. These activities can be organized into three main groups or types or stages. Each stage is connected to the next and traversing them is not a linear experience. Each stage is necessary and needs resourcing. Doesn’t it make sense to make the effort as a community to organize, enhance and augment these types of activities and maximize the chances of getting people back on their feet in the minimum amount of time? Being intentional about how we organize ourselves around these things will pay huge dividends.

“Boredom, rooted in a fundamental discomfort with the self, is one of the least tolerable mental states.”

— Gabor Maté, [In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction](#)

First Stage Engagement

Outside of a supported and programmed 24 hour shelter, these opportunities can include “come as you are,” harm reduction day time spaces that can provide an emergency shower, laundry, meal, some activities for healing, creativity, and a safe place to wait out a “high,” or any kind of crisis that involves behavioural or safety needs. A community may decide and find a way to resource it, that the local shelter can be used for this purpose with extended hours. Or it may be practical for these activities to take place elsewhere, perhaps in different locations for further local need and impact. Whatever is decided, isn’t it much more efficient if the whole system is connected and the people who are supposed to be using it know where to go, when to go there, and what to expect from the engagement? Having the right people and services popping in and out of these particular “way stations” can initiate that process of relationship building that has been proven to encourage movement along a continuum of change. Again, your community may very well have something like this already happening, and that is great! However, take a really good, honest and out of the box look at how the community can really make the most of this kind of first engagement point.

- Do people feel welcome, and valued in these spaces no matter what they are presenting?
- Are they going to be and feel safe? Is there someone there that can help them moderate emotions or behaviour? Not everyone who presents difficult social behaviours is high or drunk. Some are experiencing symptoms of untreated, undertreated, or misdiagnosed mental illness.
- Do you have someone in the space that is able to either help people work through their current crisis, and knows when to call for more intense intervention?
- Are true harm reduction principles being used?
- (Here is a little one page intro to harm reduction from the harm reduction COALITION_ <https://harmreduction.org/about-us/principles-of-harm-reduction/> and a link to the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition web page with further links for more information and perspectives on harm reduction that can inform your action: <http://drugpolicy.ca/issues/harm-reduction/>)
- Are there supplies and amenities that can help ease physical, emotional, mental and spiritual discomfort?
- Are there opportunities for information and links to other relevant services?
- Are there opportunities for information and links to other stages of engagement so your guests can see what else is available?
- Are there opportunities for them to find meaning and regain contact with their own strengths, interests, passions, humanity and to connect with community?
- Are there opportunities for other community members and sector representatives to have contact, relationship building, awareness and education experiences?
- Are there opportunities and support for food, rest, healing, and compassionate self-inquiry?

- Are there alternative “hole fillers and soul food” available? For example, music, art supplies, non-judgmental or demanding conversation, good things to eat, craft or trades type activities.

If we put the human being in the center and work the situation based on compassionate acceptance of their reality, we can creatively set things up to change their experience in ways that can positively impact their trajectory. But we have to be patient and accept that the major work done to make a change is done by the person themselves. We only set the stage. And set it we must.

Some more Gabor Mate quotes that might inspire and inform how first stage engagement can be operated and maximized:

“Not why the addiction but why the pain.”

— Gabor Maté

“It is impossible to understand addiction without asking what relief the addict finds, or hopes to find, in the drug or the addictive behaviour.”

— Gabor Mate, [In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction](#)

“We may not be responsible for another’s addiction (*or mental illness*) or the life history that preceded it, but many painful situations could be avoided if we recognized that we are responsible for the way we ourselves enter into the interaction. And that, to put it most simply, means dealing with our own stuff.”

— Gabor Maté, [In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction](#) (*italics added*)

It takes the right kind of people to be stewards over such sacred spaces of safety and calm for people who are having difficulty finding that for themselves in the chaos and pain of their situation. An aligned community effort can ensure that the right people are in the right positions to provide the right environment. And ensure that this environment is connected onwards to next steps with bridging and relationship building supported and resourced. You may have organizations already operating in your community whose main purpose is to promote and resource harm reduction for substance users. They and others are well-versed in trauma-informed care and can assist your community in setting up spaces and opportunities.

Research and best practice are catching up to the fact that for most people, the best way to help them overcome an addiction or gain mastery over a mental illness is by providing them with a way to fill the deficits they are

experiencing which have led to the addiction or are exacerbating their mental state. The right kind of first stage engagement for folks who chronically have trouble fitting in or managing themselves in any other social setting will help people get their feet under them and start to lay a foundation for the changes we (and they) wish to see in their lives.

Second Stage Engagement:

This kind of engagement, in this context, refers to engagement opportunities that have some criteria and expectations attached to them. Requirements that participants be sober and able to manage their behaviour, but not necessarily needing to be “clean” or “well” to be there can be designed to authentically nurture, support, and encourage “the shift” that precipitates real and lasting change, by providing resources with some accountability. These engagement opportunities are especially important for those who are *not* abusing substances or experiencing severe mental illness, that also need some relief from the chaos of the shelter or street environment. Some may be trying to remain in recovery and absolutely need safe spaces to nurture their wellness and continue to make gains.

These kind of engagement spaces can provide opportunities such as showers, laundry, art, music, learning, crafts, sharing circles, hobbies, computer work, or a chance to use trades skills, etc. to help people reconnect with their interests and abilities, and have meaningful daily activity. They don’t have to provide everything in one place. In this way agencies, organizations, businesses can pool resources and create specific kinds of opportunities based on the available expertise, interest, passion, space and supplies within that particular collaboration. It also works well for assisting in motivation, relationships and network building for job pathways when members of business or industry in a community are participating in the act of actually helping open up pathways for potential future workers. And the multi-sector collaboration opens the way for multi-sector community alignment

It would be great for participants to have opportunities to volunteer or do some paid work. If outreach workers and agency staff are able to engage in these spaces with the participants, relationships and connections for the “warm transfers” to other services and more formal reclamation and recovery activities can take place. Lived experience input is necessary for solution making and in this kind of aligned community environment there are opportunities to create conversation cafes or a peer advocacy group that can connect into the big picture view.

These spaces could be open to all community members to encourage inclusion and foster understanding and relationships. But they would be designed to help those who are most vulnerable to preserve their dignity and safety, and be personally accountable to respect themselves and others as well as the space. This assists them to continue building a foundation for moving forward and upward. Some good questions to ask include:

- Do these engagement opportunities continue to support safety and wellbeing?

- Do they empower participants with just enough support but not too much to get in the way of personal growth, creativity, exploration and compassionate self-assessment?
- Do they set the stage and supply resources for all of the above?
- Do they have just enough expectations to produce a sense of safety and security but not too rigid or directive so as to discourage full and open participation?
- Are they able to follow through consistently with consequences of a breach in a participation agreement, and just as easily forgive and forget for the next chance?
- Do they provide room for participants to explore, experiment and express safely while being accountable to the safety and peaceful enjoyment of others in the space?

Supporting this activity intentionally and honestly as a community will help create a foundation for the process of aligning sectors and services around a community of care. Through improved and increased working relationships, enacted with outward accountability, focused on maximizing what already exists in the community we are doing systems change work. If we can purposefully nurture and resource natural support networks, individual capacity building, and collective action, we would help more people experience more positive progress. We could increase our effectiveness in crisis management, and intervention and prevention work by creating environments which empower participants as advocates and even leaders in the process of creating their own solutions. From here, with a community that is working better together, there are natural links to third stage engagement that has higher criteria and more formal, focused and specialized purposes.

Third Stage Engagement:

For our purposes here, third stage engagement refers to more specific and specialized engagement that is completing the transition from crisis into stability, from dysfunction and disconnect into functional inclusion. These generally exist to some extent in any community, although difficult to navigate, with stiff criteria for entrance, and either under-utilized or overwhelmed. With some effort, organization, and community will, these services can become connected to previous stages of engagement and pathways and a chain of relationship intentionally formed.

Employment, medical, mental health, addiction recovery, financial and educational services and programs can be connected into the moment people are ready for next steps because a process and relationship exist, eliminating gaps and navigation challenges, supporting momentum, and more than likely speeding up the process of change.

There is an opportunity to pool resources, be strategic and intentional, make better use of what we already have available to us, and create more spaces, opportunities and room for the vulnerable populations we support to move closer to where they want to be while waiting for all the pieces to fall into place.

Within a housing context:

In this environment communities can also, through collective strategizing, take better advantage of immediately available housing options and get the right tenant “matches” into currently empty housing units with a reduced rent as an investment by forward thinking landlords into stable tenants. The practice of agencies “hoarding” landlords for their own clients (if those clients are not a good fit for their units) can lead to frustration and landlord burnout. Sadly, this runs counterproductive to the intention to provide housing for those clients. Opportunities can be better taken advantage of based on relationships, advocacy, and good old-fashioned practicality. Clients then get the best fit for *them*, and those generous and socially minded landlords, trusting those recommendations and knowing their tenants are connected to the right pathways to support their success, get a tenant that is a good fit for their unit and management practice.

We have provided a visual guide and some helps to assist with this collective impact action which requires representatives from agencies, community groups and organizations, business, lived experience individuals and the community at large, to be part of a working committee to assess what is available and what is needed, help operationalize current and potential engagement points and then create a “map” for folks in need to use. These can be found in Appendices H and I.

Activity number two: Engage in systems analysis

On a multi-sector level, engage in a systems analysis, using the framework laid out in Section 3, or some other systems assessment process. To recap the suggested framework:

Stage	State of being
Precontemplation	No intention of taking action, not considering consequences, fearful of making any changes, avoiding new information.
Contemplation	Some sort of crisis has happened that creates some dissonance. The price of staying the same starts to outweigh the cost of change, accepting responsibility for and therefore power to make some changes.
Preparation	Moving toward making a commitment, learning, gathering resources,
Action	Significant changes in behaviour are occurring, assignments have been made
Maintenance	The hardest part is over, is now the work of holding ground and laying a foundation for more growth. We have changed the status quo but we don't want to stay there so we look for other opportunities to tweak and improve what we do and start the process over again.

Before engaging in this change work, a community is in Pre-contemplation stage- where things are maintaining at a status quo. But systems and communities don't exist, and certainly don't thrive, in a vacuum so when elements shift

or are introduced into the environment create crisis, we move into a place of chaos where change is not only possible but also needful. This is a process that will be continually repeated and can be managed through a Community Alignment Framework and Centre of Excellence such as that described in activity number three.

This five “stage” model for leading systemic change (Stroh, 2015) consists of five phases that coincide with the Transtheoretical Model of Behavioural Change, or the Stages of Change.

- Building a Foundation for Change -coincides with pre-contemplation and is an engine for readiness
- Understanding and accepting the current reality- coincides with Contemplation
- Committing to make the change-coincides with Preparation
- Doing the work to move from current reality to the shared vision- coincides with Action
- Continuing in a pattern of learning, assessing and mutual accountability to keep things flexing forward- coincides with Maintenance. and includes creating a community alignment framework or process that can continue to feed the change engine and support maintenance of gains and growth into next steps for the community.

Use or adapt Section 4: A Systems Thinking Guide for Multi-sector Alignment to help your community accomplish this. Appendices A through E can help. Or find another approach or program that works better for you. There are multiple Social Change and Systems oriented organizations and think tanks that provide guides, insights, and facilitation that can be matched to your community’s capacity and budget.

Activity number three: Alignment of services and sectors

After coming together to tackle the crisis, and with the right kind of leadership, a community can begin using its existing governance systems, alliances and coalitions, to feed into a multi-sector community “brain trust” to share information, look at the big picture, make priorities and plans, then make suggestions and assignments back down the chains. This would enable the community to be much more efficient in their activities, assist with supporting individuals and families along pathways to success, increase local resources to handle local needs, fill in gaps in service and support, increase economic opportunities.

Every community has a combination of coalitions, networks, alliances in each sector that are operating at some level on a spectrum from loosely connected and purely informational to highly coordinated and purposeful. An initial assessment of community systems can provide some insights into where and how these naturally occurring entities actually and potentially connect and collide. There may already exist a multi-sectoral body in your community that can collect information from those entities to form a big picture view of the community.

This becomes a system of assessment, strategy and action planning that considers and provides for next steps for the entire community and develops a way of being which naturally solves problems and meets challenges while continuing to build community capacity, self-reliance, resource sustainability, and empowerment to thrive. With a self-sustaining leadership group (through training and succession planning) to help keep things consistent, different representatives from the coalitions could attend depending on the topics of focus. This way, concerns, ideas, and resources that land outside of the scope of each alliance, can be addressed, accessed, and allocated, with the big picture of community able to inform priorities but also provide more and better targeted resources toward solutions. (See Appendix G).

Activity number four: Pursue a Local Housing and Community Development Coalition or Cooperative

In order to generate sustainable housing solutions and revenues that will support Actions 1, 2 and 3, expand resources, provide growth, healing, recovery and economic opportunities, and help community members to develop resilience, self-reliance and empowerment.

It is clear, from our past experience and through what we have learned and observed through this project that even when there is a shared vision of what is needed, organizations will still “do their own thing,” pursuing whatever opportunities look to be in their best interest, and within their mandate. As an aligned, collectively acting community, the chances of developing viable options are increased. and most importantly, what does happen can be more effective. A community that is communicating multi-sectorally has an increased scope for more effectively using and enhancing existing opportunities, finding locations, keeping development and building costs down, and putting a plan together to apply for funding and financing both locally and externally.

Mixed use, mixed income approaches are currently at the forefront of best practice in housing for a number of reasons. The revenues from these endeavours, depending on the financing costs, and how clever a community is at maximizing revenues through mixed use and mixed income will help them grow more housing, develop sustainability activities and support the previously mentioned activities. At the same time, mixing socio-economic populations in a building provides added layers of and opportunities for social benefits, if intentionally enacted and properly supported.

Gather interested community entities to form a collaboration. Use an existing entity or create a Cooperative, and make a pitch for municipal, provincial, federal and local investment and support. While cash is nice as well as necessary, there are more ways than just money for community entities to contribute. There could be an unused existing building that is sound and could be repurposed, for example. With cooperation from community government, and with local creativity and expertise, there can be ways found to make it work. If not, there may be

community land that can be allocated, or land that can be donated or sold cheap or in combination with other benefits the community can come up with for the seller.

While there may be some similarities, every community is different, too. What we hope this section offers you is some inspiration and motivation, and maybe a few effective tools to look around at each other and see what you can do together.

There are a number of principles that apply to this type of activity, but there are two important areas we will cover here. First, is the need for sustainability and self-reliance in providing affordable housing and other activities as foundations for sustainable added value community development. Second, the idea of local Cooperatives as a way to achieve this and more.

Sustainability and Self-reliance

The Oxford definition of sustainability is “the ability to be maintained at a certain level or rate.” For the individuals we are trying to help, this means helping them to maintain their gains and trajectories of growth and success. Within the context of providing social supports and affordable housing required to help end homelessness, sustainability means being able to perpetually provide what supports are necessary to help those we serve to sustain their gains and trajectories of growth. This includes being able to pay for the development, upkeep and eventual replacement of housing.

Both of these aspects of sustainability involve finding clever ways to produce revenues from what we do, or for what we do. It also means meeting our needs without keeping others from meeting their needs. From this perspective, to create a sustainable community means that everyone be willing to give a little to the whole. Whether off the bottom line of private business revenues, through giving of time or supplies, or simply by contributing positively wherever we are, there are many ways that every community member can be accountable for and contribute to sustainable community development. The act of contributing, in itself, creates added value in social returns and benefits.

The lower the financing costs of a community project, the greater the surplus revenues that can go to its continuation and security as well as continued community development. Local contribution can happen in numerous forms, and local financing done right, if financing is needed, keeps more local money local. But even with outside financing, a project that is dedicated to social benefit provides value into the community rather than solely to private or outside interests.

Three types of sustainability to consider:

- Environmental- the systems within the environment can continue to renew themselves at the same rate they are used
- Economic- Independent human communities with access to the resources and opportunities they need to help every member thrive
- Societal-Universal human rights to have adequate resources in support of a healthy and safe community, with cultural, labour and personal rights upheld for every person

Self-reliance means “the ability to rely on one’s own powers and resources rather than those of others.” For the humans we are trying to help, this means helping to set up the community environment for them to be as independent and autonomous as possible with the least amount of formal or paid supports necessary within the parameters of their abilities and challenges. It means setting up housing, communities and neighbourhoods in such a way as to foster and support that self-reliance naturally, as much as possible. Within the context of providing social supports and affordable housing it means being able to do as much on our own as possible, as individuals, organizations and communities, and not being dependent on outside sources to continue.

Obviously, there are varying degrees of self-reliance, based on the particular challenges of the individuals, organizations and communities. As communities it makes sense to plan and prioritize, be creative and strategic to be able to be the least dependent as possible on unpredictable and inconsistent outside sources, and provide a constant stream of resources. This means different things for different communities. What your community is able to do will depend on what opportunities are available in your environment. It could be housing or it could be a local business, turned into employment opportunities and a social benefit revenue generator.

It does take some input from others to get sustainable projects going. But the right projects are the ones that after the initial influx of capital and other assistance, can support themselves indefinitely. Consider a supported housing project that could, if funding for support workers ended, continue to support its residents who require permanent case management. Or that could afford support staff out of its revenues so that limited government funding for case management could be used in other ways in the community. To support market landlords who are willing to offer lower rents, for example. Better yet if they can create more revenues and opportunities in addition to just maintaining themselves with only a social return on investment (although for many, this would be enough).

Creating sustainable community development means creating an engine of self-reliance, whether it be increasing the capacity of people, places, or ways of being human together. Capacity for self-reliance is an important foundation of sustainable community development that is worth investing in. Developing a business plan for such an enterprise, as an aligned, connected community with multi-sector collaboration with a clear, shared vision is a good start in garnering public and private dollars and other support and contributions. If we can, as communities, help our

governments make better use of our tax dollars, we are expanding the potential and impact of systems change and fostering a broader sustainability that will provide its own return on investment for our communities.

In a 2006 paper Principles for Self-Reliance and Sustainability: Case Study of Bangladesh, Dora Marionva and Amzad Hossain posit that there are five characteristics of self-reliance that tie into sustainability: *Simplicity, Responsibility, Respect, Commitment, and Creativity*.

The abstract of their paper can be found at this link:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/252625110_PRINCIPLES_FOR_SELF-RELIANCE_AND_SUSTAINABILITY_CASE_STUDY_OF_BANGLADESH

These characteristics aptly set the tone for a multi-sectorally aligned community participating in enhanced collective impact. They also lead nicely into a discussion about Cooperatives as an added value way community can achieve the change we wish to see.

Cooperatives

We are looking at financing and supporting sustainable housing or other backbone project that can contribute to local sustainable development, with accountability to local needs and environments, and the greatest impact locally. Does it not make sense to look for ways to finance it locally? In this way, the return on investment remains in the community, adding to its economic health. The concept of a co-operative has been around for quite a long time. It is an important sustainability and self-reliance option to consider for raising support and capital for a locally run and benefiting project and being able to perpetually safeguard that project until it is no longer needed. As well, it provides a greater opportunity for flexing the project (at least until all of our systems are morphed enough) to provide for emerging needs and next steps in a social support “economy” where redundancy is a valued commodity. It provides for an ebb and flow of participation, with members free to join and leave at any time, in a dynamic responsiveness to needs and community visions, rather than reactivity. It also provides for broad, multi-sector oversight and governance of sustainable community development. It creates, if groups are willing to be carefully creative, opportunities for different kinds of investments that can translate “sweat equity” so to speak, into economic gains. This creates access to a larger portion of the community to benefit in more ways than just economic, but in that way too.

There are some benefits as well as challenges to starting a co-operative, and different types of cooperatives that could be started. It is important to take the time to learn about this option, within the context of the need you are trying to fill and the projects you would like to undertake, in order to determine good fit. The information provided

here is cursory, collected from a few different sources. We have provided a few website links. Most provinces have a Cooperatives Association that can provide information, guidance and assistance in setting things up to provide the best protection and economic safety for local investors. There are a number of iterations available from numerous sources of why and how to set up a cooperative. Here is an amalgamation of several we found:

Groups organize themselves into cooperatives for a number of reasons including:

- improving bargaining power
- reducing costs
- obtaining products or services
- creating new and expanding existing markets and opportunities
- improve quality of products and services
- increase income.

By their very nature they can be sustainable collective impact engines that can provide for all three levels of sustainability discussed earlier. The very act of creating and running a cooperative venture in itself contributes to the systems changes we wish to see.

Stage 1- Determine economic need- what is it going to take to make what you want to have happen a reality? What is the vision for the change you wish to see? What will it require for you to make it a reality?

Stage 2- Determine if a cooperative is the solution- This requires educating the group about cooperatives, kinds of cooperatives, and how they can be set up, and considering if there is a good fit in relation to the project or vision you have in mind.

Stage 3- Determine if there is interest in membership- are there people in your locality that have the interest and ability to invest in the project on the terms you are looking at. Who needs to be invited to the table? Who do you need on your team? You are then going to have to convince people to join you, which leads to stage 4.

Stage 4-Is the cooperative plan feasible? Prepare an in-depth business plan identifies project, costs, risks and mitigations of those risks, feasibility considerations, and an organizational map (incorporation and bylaws) about how the organization will operate. What will be your processes and policies for gathering, using, and providing a return for the capital you are seeking. This should answer any questions your potential collaborators might have, and will lead you to setting up the checks and balances required to keep risk to a minimum. The risk is born locally, but the benefits will be felt locally.

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Stage 5 - Getting commitment of capital or other investment such as business volume, materials and supplies, expertise, etc.

Once you have been able to do these things, you will be ready to get started making the difference you have envisioned.

In the model suggested by the Momentum Project, a multi-sector group of individuals and organizations comes together to create mixed use, mixed market, mixed income value added housing that produces revenues to fuel continued sustainability and self-reliance development and activity. Creating economic opportunities that can be accessible to a broader base of community members while meeting immediate and emerging social needs will lead to sustainability.

See Appendices J and K for more details.

Here are a few links to discussions about Co-operatives:

http://cultivate.coop/wiki/Steps_to_starting_a_cooperative

https://www.cdsconsulting.coop/start_coop/4_cornerstones_in_3_stages/

<https://www.startnonprofitorganization.com/form-cooperative-steps/>

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/CIR45-14.pdf>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJeh1C0Z2-g>

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Epilogue:

I have had a few conversations in the last few days of putting the final touches on this first iteration of this work. They were with people who, as soon as I mentioned that I was doing a project related to homelessness, closed up and glazed over, stating that there were just some that couldn't be helped. Comments were made along the lines of "they deserve to be where they are," or "They want to be homeless." This is something we have seen and heard over and over during this project.

These kinds of comments speak the lack of understanding about what it means to be in, enter, or be at risk of homelessness and just who those humans are that are in those categories. There is little understanding of the countless elements that exist which can impact individual and family health and well-being, employment, housing affordability, and the cost of living. Or, in these uncertain times, how tenuous a hold most of us have on stable housing. Those kinds of comments also speak to a lack of vision and understanding about how a community can operate so that the capacity and resilience of individual, family, community, and sector systems improves enough to mitigate the impact of those elements. For all of us.

Those comments are based on deeply held beliefs based on misinformation, ignorance, and lack of accountability. A few small examples have reinforced or justified those beliefs and biases. The view from the tip of the iceberg is limited.

As a final wish and prayer for this document: we are all in this together, on this tiny planet in a vast expanse. But we are not alone. May we, together, find the answers that are within us, around us, and between us. They lie deep under the surface of what we can easily and comfortably see, think, feel, and do. May enough of us be willing to explore those frontiers, to chart new paths and courses into a brave new world of true, vibrant, dynamic, living community, and help others on their journey to be the change they wish to see.

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Appendices:

Appendix A: The Story of Us: Understanding Each Other as Stakeholders

In this section we will use the information, feedback and experiences we have gleaned through the Momentum Project to paint a picture and share a bit of the “story” of the stakeholders in this work. It may not be completely comprehensive, there will be parts you recognize and parts you don’t identify with. You will have your own information to add to this. But it will hopefully provide enough insight and perspective for you to be able to see with different eyes, as a community, the components of your community that are available to use in solution making.

The Story of Us.

Addressing homelessness and its contributing factors requires an entire community. There are many players in this story. Some are aware of their roles and importance to the story, and others are not so obviously connected and don’t realize their part. There are those that are front and centre, and others that work behind the scenes. This section has been divided into “chapters.” Each contains some information on the various sectors and groups represented in our communities. Hopefully, they will offer a cohesive understanding of how each impacts and is impacted within the homelessness picture. There will be those that you know well, or think you do, and if so, feel free just to browse.

These are not exhaustive descriptions and you will be able to add your own information to what has been gathered here. The main point of this section is to support the foundational piece of systems thinking application to the problem through increasing awareness and understanding between each stakeholder group. This is an amalgamation of what is known, provided through research, direct dialogue, observation, and personal experience, about the people who can, do, and will make a difference to what it will take to “end” homelessness in every community. This is the story of us.

Chapter 1.) Lived experience

Every community is going to have a different Lived Experience landscape. This “chapter” in *The Story of Us* provides some general overviews of who these folks are. In our work within the Momentum Project, we met a number of people who were asking for more information about the people they could see as needing help. They shared that there are a number of stigma and assumptions that create barriers for people who could assist in some way. As well,

not knowing what the best use of what they had to offer, or not seeing how what they had to offer could help, created reticence for joining in the work of community care.

Knowledge about the people we are trying to help out of homelessness, and the dynamics surrounding their experience as it relates, or not, to yours, may be something you are disconnected from in your particular sector, field and focus. Understanding what combination of each of these demographics you have in your community, and what that means for your community, is something each community will have to do as part of your foundation work for systems change and community action. It should be noted that there needs to be a balance between highlighting specific vulnerable populations in order to provide appropriate sensitivity in care and unwittingly perpetuating discrimination and disempowerment through a different kind of isolation and silo creating, and even enabling and entitlement. At the core, we are all human beings with more similarities than differences. When we focus too much on the differences it can lead to the systemic ostracization that Gabor Mate talks about.

Who are we?

Lived Experience within the context of Homelessness means people who are experiencing or periodically have experienced homelessness or risk of homelessness. They are our neighbours, no matter where they live or don't live. Demographically this really fills a broad spectrum, along with the particular "cocktail" of circumstances and reasons for being homeless or at risk of becoming so for each population group and individual.

This is why we see that housing programs work quickly for some, but not others and why many interventions fail to achieve expected outcomes. This is why available accommodations are sometimes not a good fit and why we see homelessness even in a community that seems to have plenty of vacancies. In some cases, the reasons for this last situation have more to do with community capacity, perceptions, and assumptions, than the circumstances and needs of the people themselves.

And this is why a one-size-fits all approach to assist those in crisis can never work. It requires a community, including those with lived experience to humbly assess and strive to understand all the parts of itself, and the environments within which it sits (physical, social, economic, political, cultural, even mental and emotional) before it can hope to effectively tackle a social challenge such as homelessness. But there is hope, and there are some universal principles and ways of being that can create a situation in which people can get the help they need, when they need it, and at the pace that works for them.

- Understanding and awareness are key in being able to do things differently and achieve positive outcomes.
- There is both visible and invisible homelessness.

- Assumptions and perceptions play a big role in what homelessness “looks like” verses the real-world experience and what it actually means for people who are.
- At the core every homeless person is a human being, with strengths, weaknesses, dreams, hopes, fears, and world view coming from a challenging set of circumstances that needs belonging, safety, meaning, accountability, and to be seen and valued as someone who can contribute to community. Just like all of us.
- Systems “tragedies” occur constantly, sapping the effectiveness of resources and interventions that could produce significantly better outcomes with a little more collective effort and big picture thought put into it.

As a community we can often see that there are organizations and processes in play, funded through government programs. And because that funding is reliant on achieving outcomes, it is tempting and often common practice, to work very hard to justify the outcomes and over-inflate the actual effectiveness or scope of the intervention. But the reality is that while there are good things happening and pockets of collaboration, the resources and services in most communities are frequently disconnected, sometimes competing, feel inadequate to the need, and are often difficult to navigate for those with lived experience as well as those who are trying to help them.

Seniors: Seniors are a growing group of both visible and invisible homeless. There are seniors, whose mental health challenges, including addiction, are creating problems for them to fit into mainstream seniors housing options. But there are still an increasing number of seniors who are at risk of homelessness due to a lack of affordable units, available spaces close to home and family, facilities that can address the separate needs of some seniors couples, or not qualifying for government support programs even if they can address these challenges. It should be unconscionable to any community that people who have been together for decades are no longer able to live together due to their differing support needs and the inability of many facilities to be able to support that, especially affordably. But this is often the case, and it is due to current systems. Seniors who need increasing amounts of support are living with their adult children who are shouldering a growing load exacerbated by the disconnect of systems designed to support their parents. Terms like ‘sandwich generation” and “compassion fatigue” not to mention the economic fallout lead into a whole other discussion of domino-ing elements that are taking their toll on communities.

Another complicating factor for seniors is the tendency for them to be “put out to pasture,” not seen for the life wisdom, both professionally and personally, that they hold, and thus an often-untapped resource in a community. Many still have a lot of miles left in their tanks, but lack of engagement and feeling useful can sap their viability and lead to deterioration of well-being and all aspects of health. This puts further strain on community resources for a population that could be adding so much to community at this point in their lives, given the right support to do so.

The good news is that the opposite of this scenario can be true and meaning and value can breathe new life and health into senior community members, and thus the community.

Mothers and children escaping domestic violence: In this group, we are dealing with numerous compromising factors that can include poverty, unemployment, underemployment, mental health challenges including addiction and trauma. There are safety factors that also need to be considered. They are often fragile, terrified, and easily motivated to return to unsafe relationships in order to have the stability they need. This is why they can number among our invisible homeless. Helping them move as quickly as possible into self-reliance, or at least not having to rely on their dangerous partner is an important and urgent imperative. For some, with intervention and supported hard work, families can find a way to work through their challenges and heal. For others, this is not going to be the case. For all, their safety and well-being are the most important thing to be considered. The societal fall-out that is being experienced due to families in this situation not being properly supported and resourced is tremendous. Assisting to break the cycles that stem from this scenario will garner massive savings in community resources.

Many housing options are not equipped to deal with the complexity involved with housing this group. That being said, it is imperative that solutions are found in order to create the stability that will aid healing and activate and support resilience that can break the cycles leading to homelessness contributors. These women are often highly motivated due to the needs of their children. The description of this group and its challenges bleeds into that of the following group.

Families in poverty and/or other dysfunction: Whether a family is taxed economically or in other ways, the experience and its ramifications end up being very holistic. This means that poverty, mental health challenges, unemployment or underemployment, family relationship struggles, discrimination and lack of opportunities can all interplay and influence each other. Socio-economic elements play a role in the welfare of families and breaking cycles of poverty between generations should be an important work for any community that would like to see important social changes. Poverty stunts education in many ways including disrupting learning but also limiting opportunities for education and training that could increase marketable skills and thus income. Mental health challenges, including addiction and trauma contribute to the dysfunction and disruption that puts housing at risk. All of this dynamic creates a vicious cycle. People in this demographic are often stressed, and compromised in other ways including emotionally, physically and spiritually. It is difficult for people in crisis to navigate our “helping” systems.

Youth at risk: This group of vulnerable community members are getting to the point of aging out of Child Services, already have, or are not connected to any service. For various reasons, many of them distressing and tragic, including mental illness, addiction, or trauma (their own or that of parental figures), changing family dynamics, abuse, poverty,

exploitation, they are unable to live at home. The ramifications surrounding LGBTQ youth are well documented and observed in our communities. Certainly, their mental, emotional and spiritual and often physical health is compromised by their situation. Youth in crisis may be defiant and have difficulty trusting anyone. But some will be needy and easily bond with someone who helps them feel seen and heard. This can be an asset in intervention, but also creates vulnerabilities where safe and healthy supports are not available.

Ages 16 to 25 are often considered in this category although this number is fluid. We see drug and sex trade activity within this group, they are often very vulnerable to community predators and illicit business folks. They are also resilient, enterprising, and clever. Behaviourally, as with most humans, they will either externally process their angst, leading to safety issues in the community, or they will internalize it, leading to safety issues for themselves that spill over into the lives of those around them.

Youth tend to navigate toward peers for support and social connection. For this group, this can put pressures on those peers that they may not be able to manage, causing a ripple effect of increased need, which, left unsupported leads to continued, ever enlarging spirals of dysfunction. In this group as well, are many promising, bright human beings that are fighting hard to break the chains and move forward in their life. They will be working one or more jobs, going to school, and trying to survive day to day without a place to call home. There are a number of invisible homeless in this population as they move between family members or friends for shelter. Unfortunately, this potentially puts them at further risk.

Persons with Developmental Disabilities: This population comes with or without complex needs including mental health or addiction issues. FASD, brain injury, and trauma. Because of intellectual or physical deficits, and sometimes behavioural challenges they are often undervalued as community contributors, and quite vulnerable. But they usually possess many strengths and potentials they may or may not have yet had the opportunity to discover or demonstrate. Many come with supports to help them. It has often been said that these folks can make some of the best workers. Individuals in this population are as varied in their strengths and liabilities, diagnoses, interests, and personalities as anyone else on the planet. Because of their “different abilities” they require some individualization in planning for their needs but, like all of us, there are some universal principles that apply.

LGBTQ+ This demographic element may exist in any of the other populations described here. Indeed, many of these demographics overlap. These are folks that, on top of anything else that is going on with them that has put them at risk of homelessness or in crisis, are also experiencing gender and sexuality-based complexities. Social attitudes and mores are not always on par with changing laws and policy, which can lead to discrimination and persecution. There can be difficulty finding safe spaces. LGBTQ+ youth may be estranged from their families.

People with mobility issues: Folks in this category can also be in any of the other demographic categories. From needing a wheelchair or walker, to health and physical disability challenges that make it difficult for them to move normally, or without pain, accessibility and distance between services is an important consideration. The requirement for mobility accommodation can diminish the number of viable housing options for this group and exacerbate the length of time a person is homeless. Mobility challenges can keep people in isolation and prevent them from engaging in healthy ways in their community. Whether youth or seniors, newcomers or Indigenous, add other challenges to this and you are seeing a recipe for additional and seemingly insurmountable difficulty. It can often be hard for others to see past the disability to the person and the strengths and ability to contribute that they have.

Single Men who are unemployed (or employed but not making enough to afford housing): Sometimes because they are away from the home they are already paying for, but also because they are not making enough money to afford a home in the community in which they are working. For these, an affordable, safe home is all the answer they need to move forward, and what this looks like is varied. For others, employment is required. Some are experiencing brain injury from a previous injury that has decimated their life as they knew it and they need help to rebuild in different directions. Sometimes their homelessness is due to mental health challenges including, addiction and trauma which compromises their ability to remain employed. But not always. Sometimes those issues are simply exacerbated by their homelessness, which means that finding the right fit for housing will assist them to thrive.

A number of these folks are vulnerable within the community. This group can possess many learned “skills” and traits that have enabled them to cope and survive. These guys would be good friends to have in an apocalypse. But often these coping mechanisms and learned survival “skills” are what get them into trouble in “mainstream” situations and need to be reframed as part of their road back into inclusion. This group makes up the majority of chronically homeless individuals in many communities. Their disconnect from community is a serious deficit and needs to be addressed. They often come with baggage from their past lives that comes with them into housing and supports programs and must be addressed. But they also have often had past lives of productivity and come with skills and experience that, in a supported situation, they can tap into for gainful employment and to make a contribution. In fact, doing so is something that is helpful for healing and recovery and reconnecting to community.

Single Women: There are many reasons for women to be homeless or at risk of being so, including those mentioned for single men. Abusive relationships, mental health challenges including addiction and trauma compromise their well-being and employment are among them. Some are involved in and desiring to leave the sex trade. They may be in the sex trade due to their history of homelessness and falling through community gaps previously. A number of women will identify that they may not qualify for services because they live with a partner, but for many, that living

situation is fraught with danger, risk and exploitation. They are stuck between a rock and a hard place and end up staying with a partner, predator, or ill-equipped friend because there is not a viable choice for them. So, they don't necessarily show up on homeless counts, but they still need to be counted, and provided for. There are a number of this group for whom it is mostly, if not simply, an economic circumstance that could be remedied quickly with the right resources applied in a concerted community effort.

Previously incarcerated or recently released: This demographic includes people who have been incarcerated previously and those that are transitioning from incarceration. As much as there are some successes for this population, they are plagued by stigma and systemic challenges. Inconsistencies in practice based on location or the human factor in the justice system can create gaps. Individuals coming out of prison either return to their home communities or are released into urban areas, sometimes with well thought out discharge planning in place, and sometimes not, either through a refusal to work with parole officers on discharge, or a disconnect between the institution, parole officer and community organizations.

Most have received correctional programming to mitigate the risk of reoffending, but if their environment doesn't change, re offence is likely. Complex factors including mental illness, addiction, FAS and trauma require a more intense level of support to improve integration and decrease recidivism. Stigma plays a considerable role for some offenders. Usually this is not an issue in urban centres, though in exceptional circumstances it can drive offenders away from supportive environments. For example, the sex offender who served twelve years seeking help to move forward after release. A well-meaning community worker researched his history then disclosed his past offences, leading to a concerning conversation among agencies about future provision of services to this person.

Discrimination and ostracization, can lead to isolation and disconnect from services and opportunities that would mitigate deficits and improve integration, increasing connection with community (a factor known to improve mental health, social outcomes and prevent addiction and recidivism). Stigma often plays a bigger role in reserve communities. These communities are tight-knit and lateral violence is extensive. For this reason, some offenders from reserve communities prefer release to an urban centre. Others may decide to move to urban centres after being released to their home communities. Either way, these offenders often lack the resources or supports to be successful.

Correctional Service of Canada implemented a continuum of care model in the early 2000's. Implementation of this model does not work very well. There are issues of communication and follow through between the releasing institution, the community parole office, and community organizations. Sometimes this is a result of the offender not following through, too.

Refugee and other Newcomer individuals and families: There is an often politically charged perception that refugees and newcomers receive a lot of support to settle in their new communities. And for many, this is the case. It needs to be recognized that newcomers are not the same as refugees and those supports are not necessarily the same for both. But mental health challenges arise from trauma, as well as culture shock, displacement and disconnection from cultural and traditional elements. Language barriers and waiting lists for ESL courses can compromise employment, not to mention the need for requalifying professional skills. Whatever the reason for coming, the ones who need support and experience barriers but don't find the help they need, are at risk.

There may be services but often services can be inadequate for the demand, or navigating them is difficult or impossible due to language barriers or for compromised and traumatized humans, especially when there are language barriers. Cultural and linguistic competence in many services is lacking. Even when there are interpreter services, staff may not be aware of them (a product of organizational siloism between organizational departments). For numerous refugees, their occupation was farming or subsistence living, and unless they are able to move into a similar opportunity, there is the need for retraining and integration that challenges economic situations and tries even the most resilient spirit. There is also fear of deportation which creates a reticence to ask for assistance so as not to draw attention to the fact that things are not going well.

Not all newcomers have a traumatic history behind their move, but language, and certification issues, and discrimination, can lead to underemployment and poverty, which, coupled with cultural barriers, different ways of being and world views can create overwhelming needs that might lead to homelessness or risk of homelessness.

Indigenous individuals and families: With some similarities to the challenges faced by refugees and newcomers and including all of the demographics listed in this section, Indigenous community members can be a significant stakeholder group in homelessness and its contributing factors in some communities. Due to the scope of the Indigenous experience and perspective as it relates to homelessness and its contributing factors, and the fact that this was an important focus of the funding mandate of the Momentum Project, we have given this community their own "chapter" in this section. Please refer to Chapter 2: Indigenous Community.

How we connect into the Community of Care

At the risk of sounding "preachy," it is important to remember that we are homeless for a number of reasons, many of which you might not see when you look at us. We know we are judged by a lot of people. We get to expect it and sometimes our behaviour reflects that assumption. It seems like people make judgements based from their own experience and perspective and none of us can know what the experience of another human being is without

“walking a mile in their shoes.” It is important for you to know that the vast majority of us do not want to be homeless.

There are the homeless you see and there are those that you don’t. It’s the ones that everyone sees that paint the picture for most people. And it is not as accurate a picture as you might like to think. Most of us are not drug dealers, thugs, prostitutes, criminals, or gang members, although you will see some of this activity among us. There are those that do these things for survival or to feed an addiction. But this is not who we are. We are being victimized. There are predators among us, who take advantage of our vulnerability and work to keep those of us who are in addiction using, because it helps them with their business. Many of the “career” criminal element you see and mistake for us, actually have homes to go to at night.

A lot of us are angry, defensive, or fearful and some express those emotions in ways that cause you problems, inconvenience, even fear. But that is not all of us. There are reasons for the behaviours you see, and for most of us, when we have a safe, stable, space to call home and are supported to work on our personal challenges, we will make amazing changes. Those personal challenges may have gotten us to this situation, or may be a symptom of the disruption and instability that being homeless creates. It is hard not to have a safe place to go, to rest, to shut out the world. For some of us, your streets and community areas are our living room, bedroom, kitchen, or bathroom. Yes, there are those among our number who are living the “free” life, taking handouts and no responsibility. They have their reasons for this, which the rest of us can never fully know or understand. But given a choice, like everyone else, most of us would rather have stability, safety, shelter, and a better life. A number of us just want to peacefully camp, and try to find out of the way places. But bureaucracy doesn’t allow us to do this and our camps are destroyed, leaving us nowhere to be.

It might be easier to compassionately see the refugees from other countries, fleeing violence, war, traumatic events, escaping impossible political, physical, and economic situations and trying to build a new situation for themselves and their families. Although, this is beginning to shift with current political tides. But there are many of us who are local refugees. We can be victims of elements in our environment over which we have had no control that have impacted us on a number of levels. We have been displaced and disconnected from our places of origin, from our personal and community “sacred spaces” due to economics, politics, violence, and other traumatic events. We live in stressful, uncomfortable, and sometimes dangerous situations and are forced far outside of our comfort zones to survive.

No matter the background or origins of each human being in front of you, or the reasons we are currently experiencing crisis, it is important to take each one of us on our own merit. Generalizing populations is dangerous and problematic. It’s true that this works both ways. How we see people who cross our paths has an impact on the

next steps in our journey together. We, for our part, are uncertain, or stressed beyond imagining and cannot always see that you might be too, in your own way. We all look at the world through our own lenses, after all. We have such a hard time navigating all the places and people, the appointments and information that is thrown at us. We will often either miss things we are told, not understand what you mean, or just say what we think you want us to hear so we can get any kind of help. We may be terrified, or hardened, depending on our particular personalities, and the depth and length of experience in homelessness and what got us here in the first place. We have a hard time trusting and are easily spooked. We may have been burned or disappointed so many times before this.

But we know a lot about ourselves and our experience and can be a great team member in the work that is being done on our account. We can be experts in our own support and care, and have insights about what directions will work for us and what won't, what we are ready to take on and what we cannot. Complications with mental illness and addiction can create ups and downs in our progress, but be patient with us.

You might have a hard time believing it, and we do too, sometimes, but we have great resilience. You can see this in the fact that every day we keep on trying to make it in spite of the mountain of pain and negative circumstances that would bring others to their knees in defeat, stacked up in our way. Given the right elements and resources present in our environment, (not the least of which is trusting relationships,) and when negative elements are removed or mitigated, you will see movement forward. But it will not be in a straight line, we have ups and downs and detours.

Understanding this, when you see a lack of movement or see continual re-cycling, it makes sense to look at what is happening or not happening in the environment surrounding us, and what could be happening in our inner environment that we need to process in order to move forward. This is really the same for every human being. What you are understanding, doing, or not doing, in your roles as facilitators, advocates, and coaches, is as important as what we are understanding, doing, or not doing in our roles as service users. We can help each other.

What we have to offer the community:

Every human being, even those of us in crisis, at a lower socioeconomic level, dealing with mental, emotional, or physical health issues, has something to offer their community. Research and experience have shown that people in poverty are often more generous than those who have more. We have had to learn to be creative in problem solving, adapting and coping with what is thrown our way. We have learned to use what we have. Sometimes these survival skills cause us problems as we use them with you, our way, in your world, and we both have to learn to see them as the strengths they can be, and redirect them.

With all of this, we have things to give, to contribute. We have skills that we need to reconnect with in order to reconnect with our best selves and push past the trauma and despair that can get in the way of our progress. We

love to be valued, have meaningful things to do. We can help. We can also share our stories to increase understanding for the rest of the community and help advocate for what is needed. And we know what works and what doesn't work, in your systems of care, and can help you transform them.

We can help each other. If we are surrounded by supports and moving forward in good directions, it can be beneficial for us to have peer support options. We can be participants in our own solutions but also in the solutions of others, thus stretching resources and increasing the "team" or "partnership" nature of this process rather than the "Helpee/Helper" nature that tends to be experienced within support systems.

What is important to, and for us?

- Belonging, being valued, being seen for who we are and what we can contribute, not as problems to be fixed
- Being empowered rather than enabled, or allowed to become entitled
- Understanding, compassion and patience for the definition
- Being able to maintain or reconnect with our cultural values and practices
- Connection to the community in which we live
- Safety, security and stability
- Knowing what is available for help and being able to navigate those helps
- Being productive, having a contribution to make, and enough income to thrive, just like most humans
- Input, accountability and responsibility in our own solutions
- Choices, and resources available to help us make those choices
- Time and support to work through what needs to be worked through at each stage of our journey in order for us to move on.
- Cultural and contextual awareness, culturally sensitive and trauma-informed approaches
- A movement toward self-reliance, with clear pathways and help along the way
- The ability to share our experiences, and help others, in order to solidify our own gains
- Hope for a better tomorrow

What helps us to be successful in engaging in a continuum of care?

- Safe spaces to be ourselves and just experience the plain old every day.
- Getting reconnected to past skills and knowledge, experiencing play, re-creating an ideal and healthy family dynamic (which can be created within community).
- Assistance to "renovate" personal support systems and create healthy social networks, intentional opportunities to contribute, in the ways we can, to others, to be valuable and valued within the community.

- A strengths-based approach that sees who we are and what we personally have to work with as part of our individual plan for success.
- Recognition that things like stress, trauma, nutritional deficits, have compromised our ability to focus, keep on task, and that there is healing work that needs to be done while we are in the process of putting other aspects of our lives together. Indeed, the one helps the other and vice-versa. And continuous informing and education, at the level of our individual understanding, about these things and how they are impacting our process and experience.
- Trusting relationships as a foundation upon which to build our success journey. Workers that show up and services that are welcoming and ready to work patiently but persistently with us. We have been burned so many times, disappointed and betrayed consistently. We need to know we can count on someone.
- An integrated, connected, community network, that knows each of us and cares about each of us, provides a strong relational foundation upon which to build new, more positive experiences.
- Not being re-traumatized by having to share our stories multiple times. We need a single-entry point and an information sharing process so that the community is one system of support, rather than broken up into segments that we have to navigate and inform, over and over, often on our own. As vulnerable and compromised human beings, weren't in the position to be able to do that.
- Our whole picture being taken into account. There are areas we are strong in and areas we need support with. There are things we can do to help others and things that we need others to help us with. Creating an environment that is geared to our success by having programs that build capacity in our neighbourhoods, in the workplace, and in other areas of community life to foster inclusion, decrease judgement, correct misconceptions, change assumptions, and support the unique needs we will initially have due to some of our current vulnerabilities.

What isn't working?

- Being treated as someone with limited or no ability to help themselves
- Rigid criteria around funding and support that doesn't make sense. (E.g. needing a doctor's note to get a bus pass to go to the doctor...) or not having the circumstances of our housing be considered in the definition of homelessness. (E.g. living in a dangerous relationship to keep a roof overhead being seen as adequately housed.)
- The only thing worse than this is inconsistencies throughout the systems based on the personalities and whims of the humans who work within them, or the differences among siloed organizations.
- Being lumped together with people with complex problems who may be at a different point on their journey of change, with no safe places to work our own recovery, or next steps when we are ready.

- Enabling, “band aid” solutions that take away our power to make decisions, work for and advocate for ourselves. Consider this: rather than providing meals with no requirements, set it up so we can cook for and clean up after ourselves, or have to do something in trade that benefits the community or others in the community. Yes, there are some challenges to that, but overcoming those challenges together will create more value in the service and help lead all of us to next steps. Instead of constantly offering new supplies, help us to be able to adequately store and/or take care of what supplies we have. For example, for some of us it is easier to throw away a perfectly good clothing item and get a new handout, rather than do laundry. And trying to work on employment when we are concerned about losing our possessions stalls our progress. Safe storage of belongings for people who are participating in programs, will alleviate worry, open up more opportunities, and improve success rates.
- Services being siloed. This creates massive difficulties for us in navigation, knowing what is available, and depending on one organization for a need that another organization could fill, but none of us know about. It also leaves a lot of loopholes for clever and manipulating individuals to take full advantage of limited resources while others, who have more integrity, suffer with the lack.
- Not being held accountable for what we can do, while being supported with elements in our environment to make up for deficits. Let’s face it, there are those that would like to coast and those that could do more. Those that like to coast are not helped by being enabled to continue to coast. And those who can do more are not helped by the lack of opportunity to do so. In both cases a learned helplessness wastes time, opportunities, and ties up finite resources.
- Not being considered as an individual with individual needs and abilities, requiring some tailoring of the “program” and processes to help us be more successful.
- Hard time limits. This journey is not linear, and it is not the same for each of us. It can take a long time to undo years of damage in a life.
- Workers and services not living up to their end of the deal, paying lip service to the program but not putting in the effort to follow through. E.g. meaningful and consistent home visits often do not happen, even though that is part of the “contract” for service, that they be accepted. We may not like it, but hold us to our agreements and keep yours.

What is our responsibility?

- Understand and accept that some of the emotional and mental “barriers” we are experiencing come from a place of trauma, stress, or exhaustion, and try to push past it whenever and however we can.
- Try to get informed about and understand our own contributing factors. Knowing how we got here can help inform the way out.

- To meet the program where it's at- It might not be perfect but we can take what is there and do something with it, and provide respectful feedback to help improve things. Helping our service providers focus on what is really helpful and trim the rest of it back.
- Have a desire to succeed and believe in our own ability to do so
- Don't rely solely on our service team, if at all possible, but also look around and find peers and mentors that can help us on our journey. (It helps when there are ways and means to meet them)
- Be honest about what we need and what is not working for us, bringing potential solutions and ideas rather than disengaging.
- Take responsibility for our part of the solution- be humble enough to acknowledge our own roles in the success or failures of what has been tried. This is what we are asking from everyone else, so it should be something we are willing to do. But be patient with us, please!
- Understand and accept that supports are temporary and prioritize the action needed to get ourselves to where we need to be when the "program" ends.
- Don't leave the supporting up to the "workers". Be part of the team, the expert in our own needs, potentials, and abilities, and someone who is willing to take on their pieces of the puzzle.

Chapter 2: Indigenous Community

The Indigenous community has been given its own "chapter" due to the social and political largeness attached to it, as well as the fact that it was a particular focus in the mandate of the Momentum Project. To be clear, the meaning of indigenous is: originating or occurring naturally in a particular place; native. There is indigenous knowledge, tradition, and wisdom in all of our cultures, that we all have inherited, ignored, or lost touch with depending on how far removed we are from our ancestral origin. In our developed, shared cultures as co-occupiers in any given region or space, we have developed some form of indigenous or "native" (to the area) ways of being, doing, knowing, and thinking. In the context of this work, innovative solutions to homelessness in Canada, when we speak of Indigenous communities, we are referring to our First Nations, Metis, and Inuit neighbours.

94 recommendations from Truth and Reconciliation can be reviewed and used to cross-check community systems work, especially in a multi-sectoral collaboration to enhance community collective impact:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/truth-and-reconciliation-94-calls-to-action-1.3362258>

As with all information in this work, what you find in this "chapter" is gleaned from our direct experience with historical and regional documentation, direct conversation and dialogue, and observation within Alberta. Some

insights are universally applicable, others may be more regional or subjective. Your community will have Indigenous communities, individuals and families, and organizations that are representing and advocating for the local needs of Indigenous individuals and families in your area. This material can serve as an insightful “jumping off” point. But it is important that you take the initiative to find out what people in your area are experiencing and what recommendations they have or would like to give to your region and community. Respectful, compassionate, authentic inquiry will go a long way toward establishing strong relationships, open communication, and communal, collective impact. If there are any glaring discrepancies in what we present and the reality of Indigenous community members, we would like to hear your feedback.

Who are we?

The story of Indigenous individuals and communities takes on the flavour of Charles Dickens’ “A Tale of Two Cities.” Not just because of the distinctions between urban, off-reserve, and reserve living, although these are distinctive factors with their own implications. Whether we are service users or service providers, like every human, Indigenous people are also on various points in a healing journey. But unlike many others, for many of us in your communities or regions, our journeys began in a complicated, extremely negative and disrupting place. We can span a spectrum from completely broken and dysfunctional, physically, emotionally, mentally and economically, due to things like systems, community and generational fall-out from residential schools, and cultural disconnect. But we also have leading-out generations that are breaking cycles, and reconnecting and strengthening culture. Some reserve communities are well off with industry and business, while some are in poverty, with basic human needs like housing, water, food security and safety not adequately met. But even within those differing communities, you will find that same mix of broken and healing.

All reserve communities are subject to the inequities and power imbalances of broken colonial-based systems and their descended iterations. Off-reserve and urban Indigenous people are subject to racism, discrimination, and sometimes lateral violence from their home communities. On reserve, the government owns housing and land. This leads to barriers to moving forward economically with no equity ownership. In poverty, many families are forced to choose between survival and maintaining aging, often poorly built, homes.

While there is sometimes an assumption that Indigenous people get money and tax breaks from the government, money provided to Indigenous communities through various programs often does not find its way into the community pockets it is intended for, or at least to its fully intended extent. Our communities have been struggling for well over than a century and a half of colonialism. Often artificially imposed community systems play a role in the distribution of these funds, which leads to inconsistencies within and between Indigenous communities.

And to be fair, even if everything worked as it should, what might sound like impressive amounts of money doesn't necessarily go far, per capita, especially when needs and deficits are so high.

Indigenous teachings vary among nations, and communities, as well. While there are some universal concepts, and philosophies, they can be subject to the local or regional interpretation or iteration. It is important to find out specifics about the region in which you are located.

How we connect into the Community of Care- actuals and potentials:

Even without poverty added to the mix, Indigenous individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness are often dealing with a spectrum of elements related to intergenerational trauma, disconnection and displacement from close communities, and sometimes escaping dysfunctional communities, and families, with damaging dynamics. We are likely also dealing with challenges of physical and/or mental health, addiction or substance abuse, lack of education or marketable skills, discrimination, prejudice and different ways of seeing the world and functioning that often don't fit in with "western" or mainstream systems. We need a spectrum of interventions and wrap-around care that include cultural sensitivity, but that also acknowledges our differing levels of engagement and interest in our culture.

Many of us have been raised with, or identify more with a circular, rather than linear way of operating which creates challenges in a linear oriented system. Indigenous land-based culture and traditions, where community is a strong factor and experienced much differently, often clash with "mainstream," individualistic perspectives and systems, and represent the colonization which has produced existing trauma. Housing is particularly challenging because, if an individual or family comes from a communal culture, or way of being, family members (street, community, as well as biological) can find their way into rented units, creating challenges for landlords and other neighbours that can threaten tenancy. Whether Indigenous or not, those that are experiencing the disruption and fall out of substance abuse, trauma, and mental health challenges can be ill-equipped to manage basic tenancy responsibilities and navigate needed services. We operate in extremes from a dis-empowering over-reliance on and blind trust in services with a buy in to power inequalities, to a disruptive deep mistrust which keeps us from engaging, or produces arrogance or defiance. Both of these extremes can create their own sets of problems. As for many others, a lack of resources and opportunity is what keeps us in this situation. Given the right elements in our environment and we are built to thrive.

Socially inherited guilt and shame on the part of "settler" populations can lead to overcompensation, disempowerment and unintended further colonization if not checked at the gate. Nikki Sanchez, an Indigenous Canadian filmmaker and public educator is not alone in suggesting that the work of decolonization is for everyone.

“Historical bystander trauma” needs to be recognized along with intergenerational trauma and the healing work includes all people (Sanchez, 2019). The authentic community and culture many of us come from holds important solutions. But many have also been disconnected from that culture as a result of colonialism, residential schools, and other, intentional or otherwise, forms of cultural genocide.

What we have to offer the community-

Even though there are Indigenous people and communities that are struggling and dysfunctional, Indigenous teachings and traditional ways of being are holistic and universally applicable for healthy, sustainable systems. Indigenous history is full of stories and insights of systems tragedies and their consequences to help us see where we can and should do things differently. We know, so intimately, the ways in which we are disconnected from those “smart” ways of being, doing, thinking, and seeing, and the fall-out of that. Our way of being is different than mainstream “western” ways. It is a communal, sustainable way of seeing, thinking, feeling, and doing. Because of this, we make great partners to move forward in healing and systems change as individuals, organizations, and communities, rebuilding systems in better ways. We come to the table with solutions, if our non-Indigenous neighbours will see, hear, and be humble enough to validate and apply them.

Land-based wisdom and learning has a number of levels of application and ways of understanding that can greatly improve the human experience and sustainability in our relationship with Mother Earth. The natural laws and lessons found in land-based learning can inform and impact all areas and domains of our lives. How nature operates holds many patterns we would do well to observe and emulate for balance and sustainability. The holistic nature of understanding and supporting ourselves and each other to survive, grow, interact within our environment and with each other, and to thrive is found in the Indigenous ways and wisdoms that permeate our traditional culture. Connecting with and developing your understanding of them will help you to connect with the Indigenous ways of our own backgrounds and places of origin. The idea that no one is left behind, that every decision as a community and nation should consider the effects on succeeding generations, that we take what we need and leave the rest and other communal and community accountability and sustainability concepts, have transformative power in the change we all wish to see.

The Indigenous community, for the most part, is ready and willing to partner with you to move past the mistakes of your predecessors and forge a new path of community, rather than re-colonization and re-traumatization. As with all of our first fathers, we are willing to welcome you into our space (you are here anyway), show you the best way to move within it, and learn from you the best that you have to offer from your own journeys to this point. In this way, we all can learn and grow together in a good way, and have the best life possible, indefinitely, for our children and grandchildren who follow us.

What is important to us, and for us?

- You will hear numerous comments from Indigenous people centered around stopping the blame game and moving forward in healing, lasting change in our ways of being together, and sustainable solutions for us all.
- We don't, for the most part, go into the community and be loud. There is still that mentality of turning to white leaders (E.g. executive directors of agencies), and asking them to speak for us. But we need to advocate for our own needs and the needs of community. In our way, respecting our way, with you believing the information as it is offered, and acting on it.
- Brokenness is a fact of life, when dealing with Aboriginal community members. As in any situation with any human being, you can generally tell who acknowledges their brokenness and is working on it, from those who do not acknowledge it. People who are on the healing path come from a place of care and collaboration, rather than a place of trying to take or keep power. Acknowledging that we are all broken in some way is a fair assessment. Don't come from a place of superiority. We are all walking on a journey together and need to recognize we are all victims of systems, beliefs, actions and processes that in some ways have oppressed and broken all of us.
- Our land, our sacred space, and respect for our place in this country, that it is our right, that it is ours since before others came here.
- Communities and the powers that be need to operate from a stance of "nothing about us without us" and acknowledging that the wisdom holders in Aboriginal communities know we need and have a good idea of how to get there. Having the right resources and more self-governance, rather than colonially imposed systems, goes a long way toward not leaving us feeling re-colonized or retraumatized.
- Cooperative research, sensitive to and mitigative of unequal power relations, based in the perspective that knowledge is a dynamic process. Traditional philosophies, ways of being, land-based understanding is something to be brought into use rather than something to just be described. This means that for things like natural resource management and supporting vulnerable populations, honour us with honest and authentic negotiation for determining and sharing responsibilities.
- Natural supports need to be developed- any program needs to support this. So, funding needs to support this. And this might look different in an aboriginally supporting program compared to a mainstream white supporting program, and then to a program supporting a mixed group and urban aboriginal folks.

What helps us to be successful in engaging in a continuum of care?

- Respect, as a human being with the ability and wisdom to be a partner in solutions, to be consulted, not acted upon.

- If sensitivity to Indigenous culture is important to you, learn about it and be sensitive to it, and how it impacts and is impacted by the care and solutions you are offering.
- Be honest- acknowledging our brokenness- allowing us to mutually share that we are self-aware. Don't come from a place of denying your own brokenness or trying to take power.
- It is how we are with each other that is more important than what we do. A way of being approach will go a lot farther than an outcomes approach. Because with the right way of being, the outcomes will follow. The right outcomes will follow.
- We want to make the decisions. This is our life. Make room for us to tell you what is needful in our way.
- Social agencies may find that they have to reframe an assessment or evaluation activity as a simple conversation- a "consultation" might be required by funders, but it just amounts to a meal and a visit, community style, to get what we need. A process might be required or recommended from a western, and dare we say, bureaucratic perspective that is long and involved, when the information can be gained from a storytelling or sharing circle.
- Ask about what community looks like to us, what are the natural roles and responsibilities of community members? How to help a community equates to how can we help people return to their natural roles, and support them in that. Just sitting down and talking to people equates with research, because that is how it is done traditionally, through stories.
- In housing development or even program development shows us how you are changing things, how this is different from before. Show that you are committed to the process and want to do things in the right way. It might result in the same outcomes- especially if you understand what is needed going into the situation. But it is important to our community to be asked, and invited to engage in the planning and visioning process.
- When engaging communities in interventions say, and show, "I care about this community and all communities. I need your help to do this right and in a good way."

What isn't working?

- Barriers to engaging Indigenous Organizations:
 - Lack of trust and rapport
 - Secrecy/program hoarding
 - Competing interests
 - Concerns of jurisdictional issues
 - Fears of marginalization
 - High staff turnover

- Political intervening (typically unique to on-reserve agencies from their respective FN band administrations)
- Disparity between how different Aboriginal groups interact or are interacted with in communities
- Western perspective tends to be analytical, logical, straight lines, but in the aboriginal community especially, and for most people in general, this is not the case.
- Numbers (E.g. of people using services, of people with specific needs) are not as important as what our communities need. In real life, for us and for anyone, there is real complexity at play. This is emerging as a best practice- working within the complexity of a human life rather than just attacking individual symptoms. This best practice is doubly important with Indigenous people.
- Continually being promised change and then not seeing it- in what is happening, in how help is being offered, in how we are approached.
- When what is shared as important, when instructions are asked for and given but then not followed it creates a reticence to engage (example; appropriate spaces in housing development- spaces for ceremony, gathering, culturally informed spaces, discussed during architectural consultation but not translated into design)
- Long, drawn out processes to get action started. “When the community has told us what to do, a non-profit can do it within weeks. The bureaucrats need to get on the ship with us and sail.”

What is our responsibility?

- Continue to advocate for what is needed and how it should be enacted
- Teach community partners about what is important to us socially, culturally, traditionally
- Provide respectful feedback and either trust in or insist on (where necessary) partnership that takes the best of what each has to offer and uses it to make good things happen.
- Understand the extent of systemic colonization and what it means for non-Aboriginal community members.
- Recognize that we are all victims of the same broken systems, and that others come from traumatic backgrounds and may be experiencing inter-generational trauma, even if for different reasons.
- Share stories and information to help others develop a picture of real and ideal Aboriginal community life and ways of being.
- Continue to participate in conversations regarding how systemic colonization has impacted the natural Aboriginal community and how those systems are keeping us all from moving forward in a good way, together.

Indigenous organizations:

Defining or identifying Indigenous organizations is difficult due to the differing opinions, within and outside of the Indigenous community as to who has a right to claim that status. For our purposes here, this group includes any organization that has been created to support our FNMI populations. In our conversations and research of historical documents, there are a number of elements that were communicated and that need to be considered. There is high frustration in this community when being “engaged” in solution making. There is still a sense that they are being required to fit their round pegs into square holes, just being consulted as to how to do this. Even seemingly progressive actions such as the Truth and Reconciliation Fund and activities therein, seem like re-trauma and can be co-opted often by the agendas of others.

Indigenous peoples generally agree that they already have all the answers they need for their own healthy, successful communities. But they have been separated from so many of the elements needed in their environment to be able to do this. Indigenous led solutions need to be supported and resourced. Administration is often identified as a weak area; you may see them hire “whites” to help run their organizations. So, the tendency might be to want to take over and have them in a consultant role. But, as in a strengths-based model with individuals, we would do better to insert supports to increase capacity in areas of deficit, and leave them to run in the areas of their strengths, just providing resources and opportunities for them to achieve their vision of success.

The beauty of Indigenous solutions is that they are good for everyone, are inclusive of everyone, because at some level, we all, as human beings, have deep roots in community, the land, the natural laws that permeate what we call “Indigenous” culture. In truth, every single human being on the planet is a victim of unnatural systems, invented to make things better (for some or all), that have become all-encompassing influencers and shapers of our world, and that have separated us from the natural and organic ways of being human together. The people we term Indigenous, the First Peoples of this continent, are in reality the least removed from those natural, holistic ways of being that are increasingly recognized as needing to be reintroduced into the human experience. This is a community coming to terms with colonization, systemic abuse, institutionalized ostracization, the resulting trauma, and learned helplessness, and are in the process of healing by re-establishing their connection to those ways of being. They can teach the rest of us a lot of fundamentals that can underpin a better, more effective way of supporting the thrive-ability of community members and the common good.

While the “Western” mode of operation is to do miles of research and inquiry before moving forward, and there are certain criteria, and ways and means of doing this which can become time consuming and tedious, Indigenous communities don’t necessarily operate in the same way. To paraphrase a respondent in our research, “a community supper and some conversation can give you all the “data” you need to justify a program or project.” But while there

is a more holistic and action-oriented mind-set, there is also a learned helplessness and systems created barriers to moving forward that often need to be considered and overcome.

Community and workplace dynamics, are created from a mish-mash of elements from politically imposed western-oriented governance models and systemically induced community dysfunctions, to human beings who are in various stages of trauma and healing, themselves, to environmental and policy complexities, and bring their own challenges. This is the case not only for those in the “white” community working with them, but also within and among their own interactions. But while it might make sense to want to overcompensate by essentially retaining too much control and thus creating a power imbalance, perhaps a better approach would be to provide resources, within some parameters that can help protect them from their systemic challenges while giving them room to be the leaders in their own solutions.

Face to face meeting, establishing relationships outside of any agendas, is a good start to improving a working relationship with Indigenous organizations and communities. There are often artificially created systems challenges within these communities that need to be addressed, and the right people need to be given the right resources, and the space, within those communities, to help work within or overcome those challenges. In the meantime, capacity building within our Indigenous communities needs to continue to be supported, so that historic, systemic ways of dealing with this community can shift and the tipping point for healthy self-governing and self-reliance for community care can happen sooner than later.

What helps us engage:

- Respect, as human beings with wisdom and ability to partners in solutions, and to be consulted and not acted upon.
- If you are unsure, just ask us what the right words to describe Indigenous communities and community members are, what terms we feel comfortable with, how we want to be addressed. To be fair, some of the terminology has been artificially applied by colonial organizations
- Some communities or organizations stand more on ceremony and protocol than others. Giving gifts to Elders is a sign of respect and appreciation and in many instances expected. Honorariums for time or travel, tobacco, an item that might be useful or needed, are some of the things to consider having ready to provide to someone who is participating in community activity. Be mindful that the person who is participating may come from a situation of poverty or at least experiencing a financial burden to participate. When in doubt, ask if a gift is required and get suggestions as to what that could be. When a gift is offered to you, accept it. If you don't need it, acknowledge the gift for what it means to the giver and ask if you can pass it on to someone who is in need of it. Take the time, ahead of time to know what the protocols and expectations

might be for the Indigenous communities in your region. Across the country and within your region, while there are some fundamental similarities in teachings and traditions, there may be differences in prioritization, structure and ceremony surrounding those traditions.

- As with any organization, heads want to be treated as the leaders and decision makers they are. Engage an Indigenous organization as you would any government organization; level-to-level. Going outside of this structure will likely promote an impression of disrespect. If you wish to meet with an ED, or equivalent, you could start with lower channels to establish the initial connection, but it would be better to attempt direct communication with the ED first. Never meet with their staff members unless directed or granted by the ED; respect for their chain of command is important. Even when granted, send an equivalent from your organization to meet with their organization. For example, send your program manager to meet with their program manager, etc. However, be hesitant to send a non-decision maker from your organization to meet with a decision maker from an Aboriginal organization due to accountability issues. This creates an environment of equality with the Indigenous organization.
- Trust is an inherent issue with many Aboriginal organizations and communities. It will take time to build trust. A great start is to shake every staff member's hand when you walk into an organization's building; at least the staff members you are introduced to or meet as you come into the building. This small act has a large impact on the people working for the organization. It is advised this become routine; each new day you see these people is a good practice. Honour them.
- If you find yourself on a step, or raised platform, or behind a barrier (of some sort), it is necessary to step down from the raised step or platform or come from behind the desk or podium, etc.... to shake hands. This may seem silly, but it does so much to break barriers. When a person engages an Aboriginal organization or decision maker in a way which puts them above others, the receiver will shut down and withdraw from further contact. Never assume you know better than the other. Even if you are better versed in a particular subject matter, collaboration is more effective than lecturing or leading. Remember, trust and respect go a long way.
- It is invaluable to research the organization with which you wish to engage. This will give you an understanding of perspective, challenges, or potential hot-button issues. When a person discusses a concern, treat it as important. It may not align with the agenda or goal(s) of your meeting, but it is important to the person discussing. Dismissing items or concerns will derail your schedule and set back relations with the organization. In most cases, the organization is not looking for a saviour, or someone to solve their problems. Rather, they are seeking to be treated as equals and collaborators. A program of collaborative problem-solving would be a good fit for working with most Indigenous organizations. Treading gently, authentically, and patiently becomes important.

- “Dropping in” is really just what it sounds like. Often, dropping in and visiting is important and welcomed. Scheduling a meeting and having an agenda are not usually required to sit and meet with an Indigenous organization. It is a welcome gesture to not just discuss business and leave, unless indicated otherwise at the start of the interaction. Let thoughtful common-sense be your guide. For example, call ahead of time and ask if your target person will be in. If so, drop in. If not, call back later and try again.
- If meeting with a First Nation Chief and Council, an agenda is always required and will be set by the Chief and Council. Your organization will usually be a line item on their agenda of one of their meetings. Chief and Council require formality as they are considered a government body.
- Flexibility in scheduling may be important. This is especially true when dealing with First Nations band offices or on-reserve organizations, but will be experienced with urban organizations as well. In reserve communities, a death or memorial could shut down the entire community. In urban communities, a death or memorial or illness of a family member could result in a person leaving for their home community with little or no notice. Sometimes, it is not known when the person will return from their community. While this level of unknowing sounds alarming, patience is required, and understanding will likely be rewarded with increased trust and rapport.
- Meaningful compassion is important. This requires an understanding of the organization’s history, challenges, and goals. It also requires a basic understanding of the many issues which have plagued Aboriginal people for generations. Sometimes the people you meet with share personal anecdotes or current personal issues. These become just as important to listen to and acknowledge as you work through the agenda at hand. In most cases, the person just wants to feel heard rather than have their problems solved. Aboriginal people can be storytellers, especially if they are comfortable with you. Be cautious of debating or arguing history, politics, or intention. This will work against you. Understanding their perspective will put you in a good position.

Arbinger Institute puts out some wonderful literature and training on the outward mindset and ways of being that foster good relations and safe “out of the boxes we carry” spaces that can help us understand how the assumptions and attitudes that we bring into a situation can impact our experience. Look for “The Anatomy of Peace.” Their philosophies and material resonate with the Indigenous way of being.

Refer also to the Safe Conversations material of Hunt and Henrix, whose work has been beneficial in cross-cultural communication and problem-solving.

Chapter 3.) Social sector

Who are we? This is not an exhaustive listing or description. It is meant to provide some brief explanation for those not familiar with this sector. The Social Sector is generally comprised of non-profit, social benefit, non-governmental (though still often funded at least in part by government) grass-roots organizations that have emerged to provide community-based care, advocate, or increase access to more formal supports. This sector has emerged to meet needs that are not seen as being met adequately. It is a sector that has a foundation of capacity building and self-reliance for community members.

Indigenous organizations:

Defining or identifying Indigenous organizations is difficult due to the differing opinions, within and outside of the Indigenous community as to who has a right to claim that status. For our purposes here, this group includes any organization that has been created to support our FNMI populations. In our conversations and research of historical documents, there are a number of elements that were communicated and that need to be considered. The nature of the Indigenous situation in Canada, as well as the fact that it was a specific focus within the mandate of the Momentum Project, warrants its own chapter in this section. Please refer to Chapter 2: Indigenous Communities for more detailed information.

Mental Health and Addiction supports:

Generally formed to provide grass-roots, community-based, but sometimes professional supports and services for those dealing with mental health or addiction challenges, that institutional public sector organizations are unable to provide adequately. They may be private for profits, or not for profits (with or without charity status). They operate through grants, contracts, some private billing, usually on a sliding scale, or through insurance, and fundraising.

Developmental Disabilities supports:

These can be for-profit or not-for-profit organizations. They generally operate contracts with the ministry of Community and Social Services to provide residential, supported independent living, employment prep, employment, community access supports for persons with developmental disabilities. They are always looking for ways to help integrate their clients and provide community opportunities for them. Housing may or may not be something they provide, and if not, they are always looking for good options and potential partnerships. Their clients come with a spectrum of supports that could be good fits for some community landlords.

Affordable Housing organizations:

Sometimes set up as regional authorities managing provincial or municipal properties, with some of their own developed along the way, and sometimes as private not for profit companies or charities, these organizations provide lower priced housing. They operate through government funding, revenue generation from their properties, and sometimes philanthropic donation and support. Affordable housing generally requires constant subsidy and input from government for its upkeep and maintenance and sometimes its actual operations. Some are now utilizing mixed use, mixed income approaches to create sustainability and self-reliance.

Needs based organizations:

These are often not-for-profit societies or charities created from a need that is seen by their founders as being unmet in the community. Sometimes their inception is as a direct result of siloism making it difficult for community members to discern just what services are being provided for their specific area of concern. Sometimes they form to help meet a need that an established institution or entity is unable to fulfill due to tight mandates. They can be formed as operational organizations which supply a specific service or set of services, or they can be foundations which raise funds to apply to social needs. They can be registered as charities, or not for profit companies or societies. They may be funded by the government, or public institutions through grants or contracts. They also solicit private donations, or Foundation support.

Service Clubs or Volunteer Organizations:

This type of organization can be formed around a specific community need or general philanthropy. These organizations do everything from supplying volunteer support to raising funds to support other organizations, locally or internationally. They are created and designed to provide self-actualization, networking, and capacity building for their members while they do good in the world. They can be full-fledged charities, informal clubs or organized not-for-profit societies. Their funding generally comes from private donations, and fundraising activities.

Neighbourhoods and neighbourhood associations:

Neighbourhoods and their associations have powerful potential in community continuums of care. Where people live is the first frontier of community connection and care. Isolationism, discrimination and distrust, are the killers of the kinds of healthy, supportive networks that can happen in neighbourhoods which can help prevent and alleviate core causes and contributors to crisis. The neighbourhood associations we connected with in the Momentum project all expressed a downturn in participation, aging memberships, and a frustration with how to engage new members in their association, as well as engage the residents in their neighbourhoods.

Each neighbourhood is unique, based on their physical locations, and the socio-economic levels of their residents in their experience with homelessness, its contributing factors and its community fall-out. Where there is more homelessness “traffic,” there are high levels of frustration and concern. While there is compassion for the plight of people in crisis, there also can be a sense of injustice that some people seem to be allowed to burden the rest of the community with seemingly no responsibility for themselves. The kinds of assumptions being made and levels of knowledge about homelessness correlate with levels of compassion. But at the end of the day, residents require respect for their property.

Neighbourhood associations generally are given a few thousand dollars per year from the municipality to assist their operation, which is fairly strictly mandated. Some receive dues from the residents and some will fundraise. They can have limited options for community grants. Some associations are only focused on improving or increasing amenities in the neighbourhood, such as parks, athletics spaces, road maintenance, or building community centers, and ensuring the area maintains a certain standard. Others recognize the social, economic, and safety needs in their neighbourhood and are advocating and engaging in these areas. This can reflect the level of needs in a community but also the interests and focus of association members. There is a recognition that while some residents are self-contained and self-sufficient, there may be some who need more support. Knowing how to identify, engage, and resource neighbours in need is something that can have important impact within neighbourhoods and in helping people access the helps that exist in a community.

Capacity building for leadership as well as community care was of interest, but as with everyone, time spent in any kind of engagement needed to bear meaningful fruit. As every community member is connected in some way to one or more sectors, with varied knowledge, expertise, skills and talents to bring to bear, our neighbourhoods can be natural “microcosms” of multi-sector connection, alignment, and collective impact. Neighbourhoods that are informed, resourced, and connected can have great potential for welcoming and supporting new neighbours who are leaving homelessness. Something that can be considered and consulted for when planning for affordable housing development is what added value and resources could be brought to a neighbourhood that would help residents be more on-side and less NIMBY.

Faith-based Organizations:

These can be churches or other not-for-profits created by churches or people of faith that have a spiritual or denominational component to their service. Some are more stringent in incorporating direct facets of their particular teachings in their engagement and ministry than others, but all are motivated into service by their faith. Like Neighbourhood associations, these groups are not fully tapped as a powerful resource in community continuums of care. These organizations can be volunteer or ministry based and led, although there is some faith based not-for-

profits that have grown to varying degrees of sizes, scopes, and revenue streams. Their funding is generally from donations from the members of the churches to which they belong, or solicited from the general public. They sometimes will apply for grants from the Government or philanthropic foundations, but it can be difficult for them to find grants that they are eligible for, simply because they are faith based. They may enter into service contracts. Within the homelessness spectrum, we will see meal provision, specialized housing, and community outreach, even counseling services all motivated from a faith-centred perspective. Church congregations, church “families” make a big difference in the lives of community members in building capacity for the prevention of, and working through, crisis. A church community can make up for the lack of connection in a neighbourhood, but not everyone goes to church. Church members, however, properly motivated and supported, can help build those important networks in their neighbourhoods.

Employment Services:

This group of organizations may be independent for-profits, privately funded not-for-profit, or funded by the government to provide training and retraining, job placement, workplace capacity building for the general public or for specific populations. Sometimes they are generalist and sometimes they are industry specific. In a collaborative community plan, they can be great bridges into some of the development work that can be done with the private sector.

Community Alliances and Coalitions:

Sometimes a group of organizations or a cross sector collaboration will organize an alliance or coalition which consists of memberships or participation in regular convenings from a number of other entities in a community. This could look like a Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Business Association, Cultural or Newcomer, Poverty, Mental Health, Child Advocacy or Homelessness Alliance, Builders or Landlords Association, for example. These have formed with the idea of power in numbers and the desire to combine efforts, advocate more powerfully, or make something specific happen in a community. Alliances and coalitions can play an important part in a framework to foster community alignment and enhanced collective impact. They are naturally, organically occurring convenings that can be given a purposeful, significant role in assessment, the gathering and dissemination of knowledge, input into community needs and the strategies to meet them, as well as the roll out of the requisite action and evaluation. The loose framework and practice these alliances form can be exploited to form a community Center of Excellence model that promotes and supports the ongoing learning required in community level change management.

How we connect into the Community of Care- actuals and potentials: As has been previously stated, due to siloism, many organizations and alliances are not as fully connected into the community of care as they could be. There are

gaps in awareness of each other that can leave us feeling alone and overwhelmed by demand. There are inefficiencies and inconsistencies that could be rectified with greater alignment and better communication. There are pockets of collaboration and integration in numerous communities, where good things are happening all the time. Sometimes big things, like advocacy and learning centres, and sportsplexes. But the general consensus is that there is still too much disconnect. Even the most effective interventions and community programs are hampered in their impact and limited in their potential by disconnected and unaligned community systems.

We are often the first layer of connection into the community continuum of care (aside from attentive and engaged neighbours). This layer is the place where community members can have help to build capacity, engage in peer support, and connect or bridge into more formal services. This is the space where social justice is advocated for, where community engagement allows for the assessing and meeting of needs, and links to more formal services can take place. We can be an entry point into solutions pathways, and can be part of the transition solution out of formal services and into community. Engagement with community members in this sector is a place where community opinions and assumptions can be gathered to inform other sectors, as well as influenced, to adjust community dynamics. Capacity building for the general community can also occur within our organizations

What we have to offer the community-

Social Service organizations offer something outside of institutional services (or the public sector). We tend to be more grass roots and locally centred, and thus more able to engage in what could be termed “guerilla welfare.” We exist, most often, to fill a need that is not being met by larger institutional services due to the nature or location of the need. The larger, public institutions tend to be more standardized and rigid, centralized, heavy on administration, with many criteria and policies. While designed to protect the system from liability, and preserve quality of service, this can result in institutions losing touch with the day to day, real world realities of individual communities, environments, and the people they may (or may not) have been developed to serve. Institutional services are often multi-faceted behemoths that move slowly, where we are less controlled, are smaller, often specific, and able to be targeted strategically, more cheaply, and more effectively for certain outcomes. Generally, we are more informal with less professional and more community-based services provided. We interact directly with communities and offer the best opportunity for community engagement and volunteering. We have the ability to increase the capacity of a community to manage general self-reliance while leaving the formal, professional care to the more heavily regulated, monitored, and resourced institutions.

What is important to us, and for us?

- Knowing what we are doing is making a difference

Momentum Project: Using Systems Thinking to Transform and Align Communities and Enhance Collective Impact

- Being heard, understood, and included in decisions that affect us and the people we serve. Being able to advocate for them based on a more holistic view of them.
- Safety, security, and sustainability. We would like to spend more of our time doing the work of our mandate and less time fundraising and hoop jumping in order to do it, and worried about being able to continue it.
- Feeling supported, having the right resources available for us to do the work we feel is important to do, and the tools we need to be as successful as possible
- A responsibility to and accountability for our mandates and the funding we receive to achieve them
- The causes that formed us in the first place, the injustices and inequities we want to correct
- Good relationships with others, including our clients and stakeholders in other sectors.
- That more people recognize the value of the work we do, and the ways our work effects or impacts them, so that they know they are actually stakeholders.
- Being able to create balance that mitigates burnout and increases effectiveness.
- Hope for a better tomorrow.

What helps us to be successful in engaging in a continuum of care?

- Clients who want to move forward
- Flexibility in funding to better move with the needs and bridge into next steps, or offer (or collaborate to create) them
- Good communication with other services and sectors
- Clear community vision, a knowledge of our place within that vision, with support and leadership provided
- A clear understanding of where we end and others begin and ways to interact across those parameters
- Consistent and clear criteria, outcomes expectations and reporting, with freedom to operationalize outcomes.
- A sense that there is enough funding and other resources to provide security and stability for our operations and human resources
- An interactive system, infrastructure or framework of support that makes sense (time and energy wise and through meaningful benefit to our organization and mandate) and in which we can operate authentically (e.g. safe conversations that can have positive impact)
- Informed boards with skills that help us work better and smarter, connections into other sectors and the ability to advocate for us, and make decisions in a timely manner.

What isn't working?

Momentum Project: Using Systems Thinking to Transform and Align Communities and Enhance Collective Impact

- Silos, and not enough communication and organization within a big picture, waste resources and burn out even the kindest of hearts. It also leaves room for some organizations to crowd out others. Duplication of services occurs often, and gaps in service exist.
- Funding being given to organizations that are not seeing the client traffic needed to justify that funding.
- Competition for funding, and sponsors, creates rifts between organizations
- Lack of clear leadership from where it makes sense accompanied by barriers to autonomy from those potential sources of leadership
- Application and reporting for funding that is annual, takes so much time and energy, and creates uncertainty each year
- Lack of cohesiveness and coordination between service organizations leaves gaps in service, makes it difficult to help people move to next steps, and creates opportunities for abuse of those services
- Disconnect from the Business Sector and other Sectors and service organizations creates situations where we are trying to be all things to all people
- Having to spend so much time fundraising and finding sponsors
- Front line worker burnout, and overwhelmed management.
- Often not enough resources for adequate administration
- Our services are not known in the community
- Not having enough funding to offer some of our services
- We are often not business oriented, which creates some challenges in being sustainable and staying viable in an environment in which funding is not certain and doesn't feel adequate.
- When our boards are inadequate, un-informed, and unconnected to the work we do or to outside resources.

What is our responsibility?

- Know what is going on in the community and put our efforts and resources toward the things that fit most closely with our vision
- Don't duplicate services. If someone else is doing it, promote and support them, rather than compete.
- Collaborate with other related entities to better utilize finite resources and provide something better for our clients and users.
- Get on boards or participate in alliances to provide influence and bring our networks to bear in a bigger way.
- Be smart with the resources we have.
- Demonstrate and report outcomes and use the funding we get within the specified parameters.
- Learn continuously and develop new practices and ways of doing things that will help us work smarter.
- Communicate to others about our work, our offerings, and our needs.

- Be humble and more willing to see how we might be contributing to the difficulties we see, and to “be the change we wish to see” in our community
- Be clear with our “asks,” providing a business case, showing meaningful benefits to donors and sponsors, and how we will sustain the project we are trying to get funded.
- Educate, first ourselves, and then other community sectors, about the people we serve, and the part of those sectors in that success.

Chapter 4.) Public Sector

Who are we?

The public sector is defined as the part of the economy controlled by the government. So, it includes any service or activity that is supported by government funding and aimed at public service, welfare and safety, as well as to provide or promote employment and increase economic opportunities. An exhaustive listing and description are not practical here but these are areas in which we will find publicly funded organizations acting in the interest of the government to support the needs of the society they govern.

- Healthcare
- Social Services
- Economic Development
- Trade
- Finance
- Housing
- Transportation
- Safety
- Infrastructure
- Municipal activities
- Agriculture
- Children
- Education
- Emergency Services
- Energy and Utilities
- Police Services
- Labour and Employment
- Environment

- Culture

The Provincial and Federal Governments have ministries assigned to oversee and support these and other areas of public service. And municipal governments have their own departments to deal with what is required to keep a community running well with balanced growth and productive citizens. And within each of these areas are still further subsets to manage, monitor, provide resources, and keep things moving along.

How we connect into the Community of Care- actuals and potentials

For our purposes, here, we are considering the community of care on its most powerful and holistic level. That means that it encompasses everything from prevention to intervention and all points in between. It includes health and wellness for community members as much as it includes economic development to provide jobs. It concerns itself with transitioning from prison, hospital care, childhood into adulthood. It includes education as much as it includes the safety of citizens. It includes utilities costs and policy making or legislation that can create bridges or barriers.

Because of this, we, in the public sector, have very significant connections or potential connections into the community of care from ensuring that the needs of the individual community member are taken care of and holding them accountable to the rest of society, to the needs and accountability of organizations from largest corporation to smallest not-for profit or neighbourhood group. We should be, within each of our areas of focus and scope, included, consulted, informed and engaged in activities that seek to tackle systems interplay. As paid organizations supported by taxpayer dollars, we should be seen and used as a resource for all community work.

John McKnight suggests that within the context of community capacity building, there are specific roles, especially in social support, although this occurs in other areas as well, that related institutions logically fit into. The lines can blur sometimes, and it is important to ensure communication and coordination so that public institutions are supporting community organizations to support the people. Formal human services, requiring professional care that are offered at no cost to the public belong in the realm of the public sector, or supported by that sector within community service hubs. Sometimes we are tempted to move to fill in perceived service gaps with programs, just as community service organizations emerge from perceived gaps. Without intentional and concerted coordination and communication between we can see overlap and wasted resources, and certainly see areas where instead of competing for funding or participants, entities in the social and public sectors could coordinate to provide a clearer spectrum of services. We don't necessarily like letting go of our money, but an honest assessment would also see places where public dollars could be better used and achieve more impact in social sector efforts, but are being spent on public sector budgets.

The main thing to understand is that because human thriving has such a holistic scope, to align and coordinate and make the most of available resources requires communication and connection with all public sector activities for a couple of reasons. First financial, and value or impact for dollar. And second, efficiency and best fit for the work. Large, standardized, heavily administrated systems don't have the ability to move gently and intentionally within a unique set of community needs. They do, however, have the ability to coordinate with and support those quicker, smaller, and more specific social sector organizations.

What we have to offer the community-

- Funding
- Education
- Capacity building assistance
- Employment opportunities
- Research and policy contribution and assistance
- Standards oversight and accountability enforcement.
- Influencing and incentivizing other entities
- Service on Boards that bring professional skills and public sector connection to community-based service organization
- Support for development
- Staff hours and service "portfolios" that are dedicated to certain tasks which link with and benefit community care and can help stretch community resources when used within a coordinated plan and framework.

What is important to us, and for us?

- Accountability for spending
- Communication and coordination with on-the-ground activities and services
- Policies and standards
- Keeping our budgets
- Trends in needs
- Political will and tides
- Sustainability

What helps us to be successful in engaging in a continuum of care?

- Communication between areas of focus and between public sector and social sector community level supports

- Recognition of the holistic nature of human care and thriving
- Clear roles and distinctions within local community service and support
- Guaranteed income (even though there may be fluctuations)
- Clients who want to move forward
- Strong links between areas of focus and other sectors
- Knowing needs
- A big picture views

What isn't working?

- Disconnect between areas of focus
- Lack of awareness, will and ways or opportunities to coordinate and flex budgets between ministries or departments for mutual benefit and greater effectiveness and efficiency
- Disconnect from the Business Sector and other Sectors and service organizations creates situations where we are trying to be all things to all people
- Lack of sustainability
- Systems intractability
- Unwieldy, ineffective, or top-heavy administration and management leading to less resources for the front-line human interface
- Overabundance of bureaucracy leading to a disconnect from the front line
- Lack of accountability
- The public's and other sectors' lack of knowledge about what we provide
- Changes in political will and tides

What is our responsibility?

- Be accountable for spending
- Work toward sustainability
- Each area of focus aware of other areas of focus and how to work better together
- Be coordinated and connected with community entities and efforts
- Help build capacity for communities to meet their own needs
- Provide specialized supports

Who are we?

The private sector includes all entities that are set up to make a profit. This includes everything from the largest private corporations to sole proprietorships and one-human home businesses. Some private sector organizations have a specific social benefit aspect, while others need to be nurtured, developing relationships and assisting them to see the ways they can contribute. Regardless of their nature and purpose, all private sector enterprises are manned by human beings who live in communities and at some scope and level interact with all other sectors. They are affected, in the communities in which they operate, by what is happening for the other sectors, and have their own impact on those other sectors and the communities they operate within.

How we connect into the Community of Care- actuals and potentials

Every member of the private sector holds at least one other position or role, and that is a member of his or her community. They each live and work in a community. So, we, as with all other sectors, for that matter, are inseparably connected to the grass-roots, community level activity and need. Activity in our sector affects and is affected by what is happening to and with community well-being. It is well researched that making contributions to the social welfare of its community creates benefits for a business. Healthier and happier employees, improved public opinion and loyalty lead to increased productivity and fiscal returns. Investing locally, then, is good for business. But many times, we don't know how. The social landscape of communities can be hard to navigate, and we can be pulled in multiple directions. With our business mindset, we want to see best value for dollar, efficiency and sustainability in the contributions we make.

We are at various stages of accepting and incorporating the concepts of social benefit into our bottom lines. Something we might not be particularly aware of, in general, is that almost every homeless person was once a member of the workforce. This illustrates the reality that this could be the situation for anyone, no matter where they may presently be on the spectrum from crisis to thriving. Some are just one paycheck away from being destitute. Others are dealing with substance use and even addiction, or mental health challenges, that with a simple change in circumstance could hurtle them into dysfunction. While many of us in this sector have had a practice of contributing to social needs, we are learning, as a sector about the importance of addressing these things within our operational scope.

From another perspective, community members that are thriving contribute to the ebb and flow of market demand, which is good for business. So, it makes sense for us to be invested in helping our fellow community members move into a place of engagement and contribution to the local economy, rather than in a state of drain and demand on local resources. It makes sense then that doing our part in growing future reliable customers and stable, loyal

employees should be part of every business's bottom line. With this in mind there are numerous ways that the private sector can and do connect into efforts to develop a community of care.

What we have to offer the community

- Funding
- Manpower: Staff hours can be dedicated to certain tasks which can benefit community care and help stretch resources if used within a coordinated plan and framework. Or staff groups can participate in service days or projects as part of team building and meaning making in a workplace.
- Goods and services. Sometimes this can be creatively explored, and is a better option than defaulting to asking for dollars.
- Influencing and incentivizing other entities
- Support for development
- Service on Boards that bring professional skills and private sector connection to community-based service organizations.
- Employment pathways potentials
- Business and administrative mentorship to community-based service organizations

What is important to us, and for us?

- Accountability for spending and use of resources, ours and the organizations we help
- Communication and coordination with on the ground activities and services
- Policies and standards
- Keeping to our budgets
- Maintaining or expanding our revenues and activities.
- Trends and market changes
- Political will and tides
- Productive and Loyal employees
- Sustainability, ours and for the programs or projects we are being asked to contribute to

What helps us to be successful in engaging in a continuum of care?

- Communication with public sector and social sector community level supports
- Recognition of the holistic nature of human care and thriving
- Clear opportunities and roles within the big picture of community need and dynamics

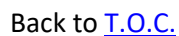
- Clear information about what area a contribution is being asked for (local communities are first preference, generally), how it will be used, and what portion will go directly to service provision.
- Comprehensively planned strategies and programs with consultation from numerous sources to ensure best practices, best effect, and best use of contributions
- Employees and management that want to be involved meaningfully in community
- Emotional pull of “cause”
- Find out how we like to be approached. Some like email, others prefer personal contact and face to face meetings
- Seeing strong links between our areas of focus and values and the causes we are supporting, or being asked to support.
- Knowing needs: specific asks
- Being able to see clear benefits for us for the engagement with community care
- A big picture views

What isn't working?

- Our lack of understanding or knowledge of community needs and social complexities
- Disconnect between business/fiscal needs and activities, and community needs
- Not knowing where we can help, where our help is needed and what that help might be
- Staff turnover and loss of productivity due to high stress, mental health, well-being issues
- Social challenges manifesting on our “doorsteps,” literally and figuratively
- Unpredictability of markets
- Forgetting that we are community members as well as businesses

What is our responsibility?

- Be accountable for spending
- Work toward sustainability and maintenance of returns
- Stay relevant and expand markets
- The well-being of the people who work for us
- The well-being of the communities and environments in which we operate
- The bottom line should include people



Appendix C 4 Directions Spreadsheet (As separate Excel file)

Appendix D Questions to Ask:

- Why, after we have been working on ending homelessness for so long, does it still exist?
- What areas are we falling short, individually and as a community?
- What were our honest motivations and “pay-offs” for being involved in this work?
- What aspects did we feel “called to?”
- What were we prepared to give up or share control of in order to see success in this area?
- What underlying assumptions and world views do we have regarding people who are homeless, or at risk of it; about other entities and stakeholders in our community; about root causes, accountability, responsibilities and roles?
- What do we see as the core contributions to the current crisis?
- What part, if any do we, within our sectors, organizations and as community members, through policy. perspective or practice, play in perpetuating the core contributors to homelessness? Or the current condition of siloism?
- What activities are working well and helping people, and how can we scale them up, given the resources we have available?
- What other layers of value can we add to our activities through collaboration?
- What are we doing, or could we do within our sectors and as a community to be the change we wish to see?

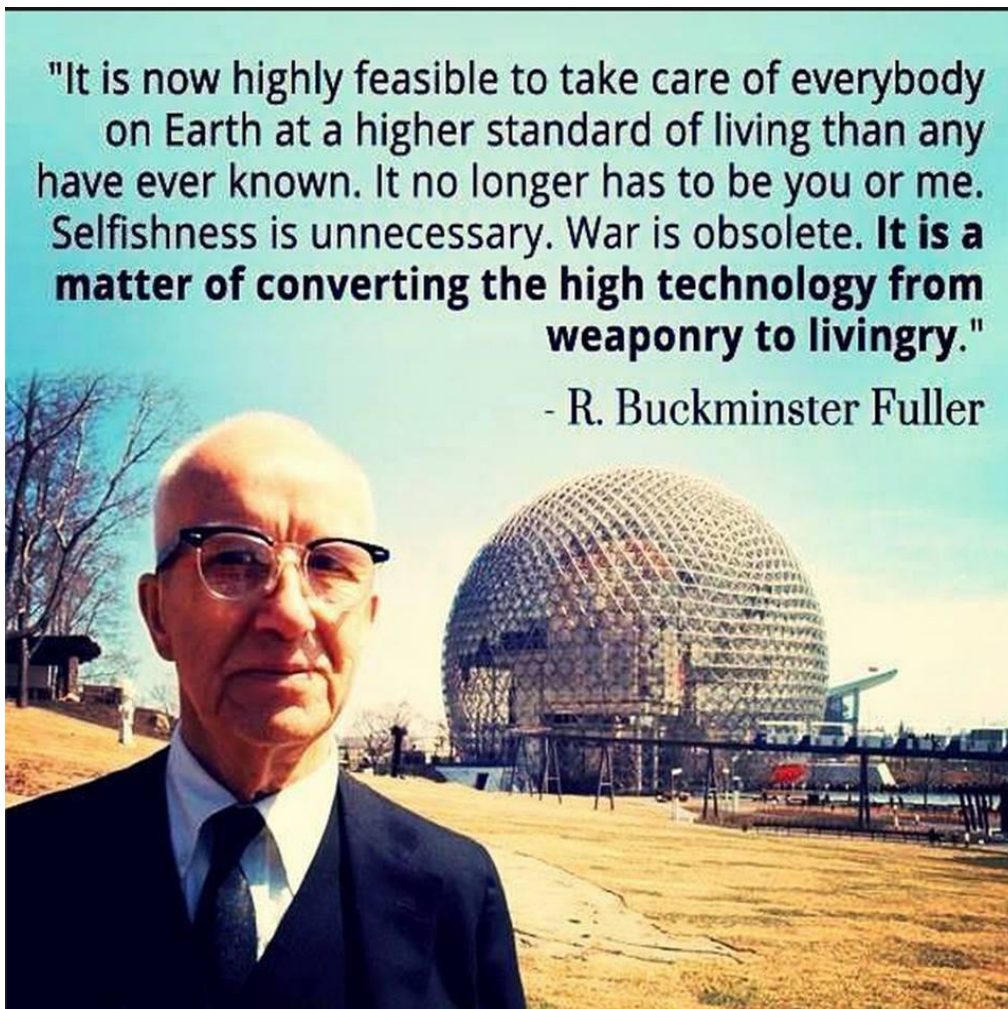
What if we don’t try to solve homelessness at all? What if we go beyond that and look at how we can create a community that can work collectively to solve, or at least alleviate, some of the contributing factors to homelessness (and any identified issue), and help every member thrive?

- What would a community that is able to support people to thrive look like?
- What deficits would need to be removed and what assets would need to be introduced or scaled up in order to break the cycles that were leading people into a situation of homelessness, or being at risk of it?
- What resources (existing and potential) do we have present in the community, when we expand our view to multiple sectors and get creative?
- How would we need to integrate and interlink those resources in order to decrease gaps and ensure that people could navigate the resources and opportunities?
- What organizations and sectors are currently engaged in ending homelessness and its contributing factors?
- What are the dynamics and interactions between organizations or sectors and their results?
- How we might be getting in each other’s ways?
- What important resources were missing to help end-users move out of crisis?
- Where were the missed opportunities and inefficiencies?
- Who else do we need at the table?
- What potential resources could we have if all sectors were connected in a shared vision?

Does your community have any other questions you would like to have answered, and that could lead you to the change you wish to see?

Back to [T.O.C.](#)

Appendix E- Some Mind Opening Visuals and Food for Thought:



- <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10160661025090652>
 - The danger of a single story, there are so many pieces of the puzzle still floating around, undiscovered, or at least unassigned to the context of homelessness
 - "That is how to create a single story- show a people as one thing and one thing only, over and over again, and that is what they become."
- https://ceres.org.au/?fbclid=IwAR25bmSCR8txX9MKjNNNmwwLrA2FjDtv1Q6bdXiC_AAxpPrIwTg7ZePeGb0
 - people are doing it, just add housing! There are spaces in almost every community that could be used for this, in varying combinations and scope. Imagine every neighbourhood as a learning station for sustainability!
- <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=800383373489534>
 - more community solutions that can save money for housing and boost community economies
- <https://www.facebook.com/ABCNews/videos/728055904263637/?t=0>
 - An inspiring look at a simple, no-cost thing one business is doing to help build capacity in their community, and help their own bottom line.
- <http://www.greenenergyfutures.ca/episode/geothermals-promise-of-endless-heat-for-agriculture?fbclid=IwAR03PgTa97Tqw1Dv8YYdOryQ9sl1L77jcpqQN9GI3phfTsiAw-EVAMtjos8>

- another idea for using what is already present but not yet considered, and a testament to the need for multi-sector communication and collaboration. This has food security and social enterprise implications for poverty reduction but could have direct sustainable affordable housing application.
- Whether it can happen or not, it is an example of how creativity and opportunity is enhanced when we break out of our silos and explore possibilities.
- <https://www.facebook.com/cnn/videos/2320166888266638/UzpfSTExOTU1NTQxMzI6MTAyMTkwMzYzOTU1OTk1NzA/>
 - A designer who saw an opportunity in the wasted spaces between what others were doing.
 - “I cried in the bathroom because I felt like I was part of a (systemic) problem.”
- <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1681409515227834>
 - one city’s “leap of faith” solution-
 - There are other jobs and assignments that people who are on social assistance, or need to connect into the workforce incrementally can do.
 - If we get our heads together as communities we can find viable and meaningful solutions that work for everyone.
- <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2027383067280809>
 - An example of meeting needs through meeting needs (social need being met by an environmental solution), and a community being willing to figure out how to make something that makes sense work.
- <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2027383067280809>
 - Another example of meeting needs through meeting needs, finding and using opportunities that help bring a community closer together.
- https://themindunleashed.com/2019/03/a-detroit-church-is-paying-homeless-people-to-clean-up-the-city.html?fbclid=IwAR14_Kf0sqzHA4Yqq2Tk1PDLH-kOCmgOdcntP5RclV4u8fqlu0XkEmcVBKY
 - and again.
- http://yupthatexists.com/pestalotiopsis-microspora-plastic-eating-mushroom/?fbclid=IwAR0kB6N3zQUzZ29SP9tEekQNGdh-Y_bPIQ4weBx7nTHMFVJbKBgl0bHcFks
 - This is a bit of stretch as a metaphor, but here is an example of letting nature lead the way to solutions. Our human nature, our humanity, the very core, fundamental parts that are the same in all of us, and connected to natural laws, hold the keys we are seeking.
- <https://fox13now.com/2019/02/02/a-5th-graders-boredom-while-visiting-her-moms-job-led-to-70000-for-the-elderly-in-need/?fbclid=IwAR03hwU6VjoAWBh9vO5E0XJ5pRPWFvWf9WDwYjlpGHRD758ywImYbZaykcl>
 - that thing one child, (who was out of the systems box) did, that engaged a bunch of other community members and is making a huge difference in the lives of some seniors in her town.
- <https://medium.com/s/story/if-connection-is-our-core-human-need-then-why-are-we-so-bad-at-it-a904ae486a48?fbclid=IwAR2KWZINnYMwdZofa7AtPK1T306NtoipdtW-h8xR-pi5mMbXqcuwOfPndas>
 - An article about connection and the importance of relationships

Some hopefully inspiring quotes to warm us up and help fuel our enthusiasm:

“Do not be dismayed by the brokenness of the world. All things break. And all things can be mended. Not with time, as they say, but with intention. So go. Love intentionally, extravagantly, unconditionally. The broken world waits in darkness for the light that is you.” L.R. Knost- award-winning author, feminist, and social justice activist.

“Strengthening families (and neighbourhoods, and communities, which are like families) helps decelerate the pernicious effects of poverty and bolsters the economic health of the city.” Regine Montoya -Chair, Mayor Mike Rawling’s Task Force on Poverty, (parentheses added).

“What we want for the future is not going to come from great legislation, it’s not going to come from business... It’s going to come from relationships. “Senior Pastor Richie Butler, St. Paul United Methodist Church, Dallas, re: Mayor Mike Rawling’s Task Force on Poverty

“Safe conversations can be applied between husband and wife, parents and children, but more than that, it can be brought between your peers and our workplace, between your neighbours, between your community and other communities.” Dr. Hind Jarrah, Texas Women’s Muslim Foundation re: Relationships First, Safe Conversations project.

“When you think about relationships, you can start at a micro level, looking at families and couples and children and that relationship there. And it goes all the way up to a very wide community level and how we converse with each other across different sectors.” Susan Hoff, United Way-Dallas.

“If we keep playing by the old rules, we will never change the game.” Abby Wambach, soccer legend and author of *Wolfpack*

“I think what we need to come to is a realization that it’s not just fixing an economic or political system, but it’s a basic worldview, a basic understanding of who we are that’s at stake.” David Loy, Philosopher, regarding the Overview or Big Picture effect (seeing the Earth in its entirety from space, and the perspective it can give us)

“You can’t go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending.” C.S. Lewis

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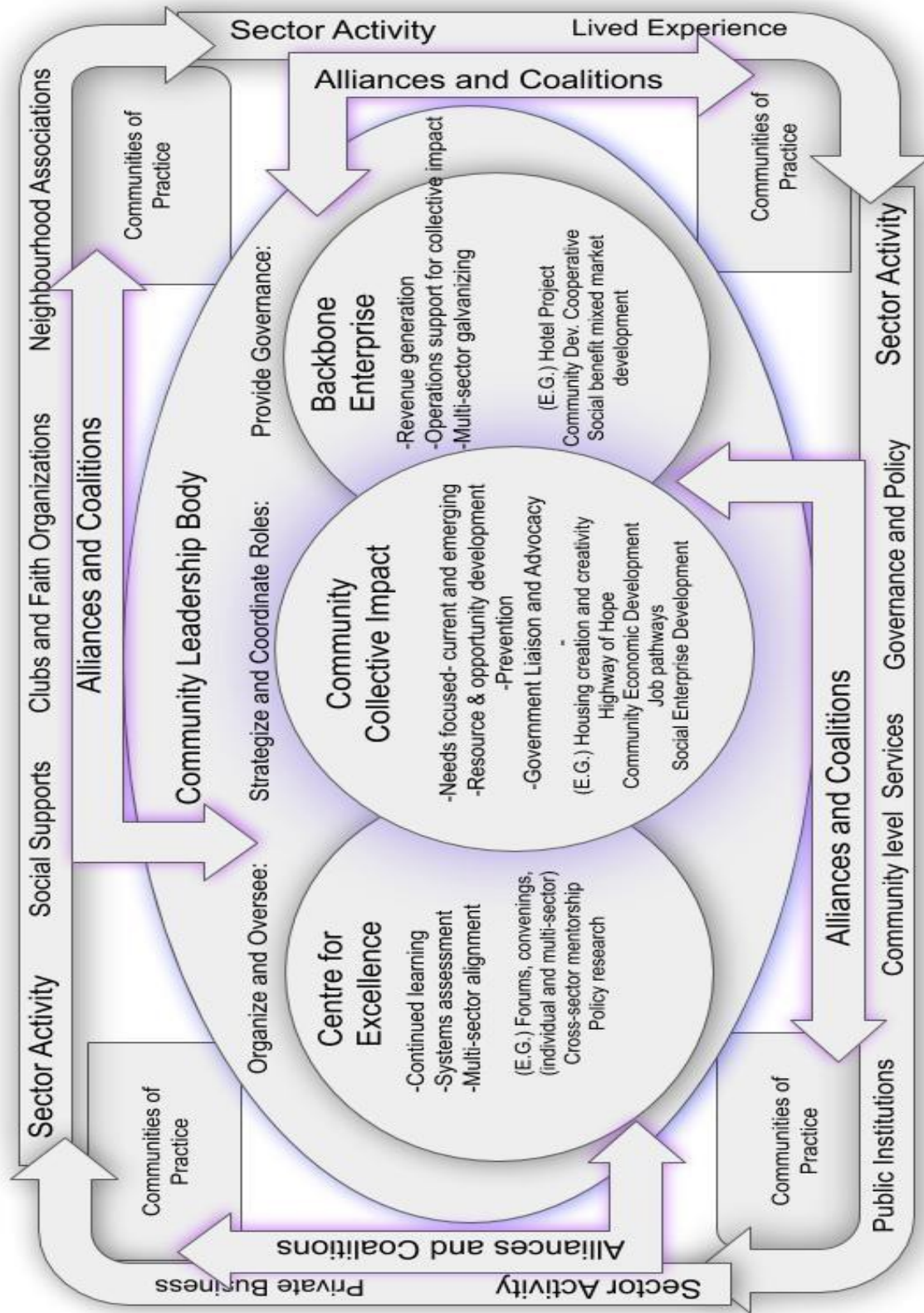
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Appendix G: Sample Model for a Multi-sector Alignment and Collective Impact Framework Visual



Explanation of Visual

Sector Activity- Every individual, organization or business belongs to a particular sector with sector related activity and mandates. We have included examples here as well as included Lived Experience to demonstrate their accountability and contribution to their own solutions within a collaborative community environment. Indigenous, different ethnic and cultural, and special needs individuals and groups are included within these broad categories in the full spirit of inclusion.

Alliances and Coalitions- These are naturally occurring in any community when related or connected entities create a collaborative group for some purpose. Whatever those purposes are, we can add enhanced collective impact to them in order to connect them into a multi-sector effort toward a shared vision.

Communities of Practice- Within each sector or alliance, there are groups that learn and grow together through various activities. These can be connected into a community Center of Excellence.

Community Leadership Body- Whether it is an existing entity or something that is uniquely created by a community, it consists of representation from every sector, through those alliances. It's responsibilities are:

- A. Organize and oversee the Community **Centre of Excellence** which:
 - Takes in information from the sector activity through the alliances (consultation)
 - Leads systems assessment and advises change management as part of that continued learning and growing for the sectors (evaluation/assessment)
 - Creates learning opportunities for best practice, determining outcomes and their measurement, and disseminates information back to the sector alliances (intervention)

This would be done through:

- Forums and convenings, both individual and multi-sector depending on the subject matter
- Cross-sector mentoring
- Best Practices and Policy Research.

- B. Provide Governance for a **Backbone Enterprise** (or Enterprises) which will supply:

- Revenue Generation to support Community Development from a Social Benefit Perspective
- Operation and Administrative Support for Community Collective Impact
- Opportunities for multi-sector engagement to help galvanize community attention and activity to increase and enhance Collective Impact potential

○

This could potentially consist of:

- A Hotel/Housing project, a Manufacturing business or other local business that could be dedicated to social benefit.
- Community Development Cooperative
- Social Benefit, Mixed Market Enterprise Development

- C. Strategize and Coordinate **Community Collective Impact** which would consist of:

- Needs focused activity- based on sector input and accountability for local needs- be it social, economic, or otherwise
- Resource and Opportunity Development to help fill those identified needs and build and maintain community resilience, capacity, integration, sustainability and self-reliance

- Provide a unified voice to communicate with external entities such as Government, Philanthropic organizations, Corporations and Economic entities interested in or beneficial to local activity and growth.

This would be done through:

- Processing Big Picture information provided from community sector representatives from the work of their alliances regarding current and emerging needs and trends
- Considering as a multi-sector body with feedback and mandates for decision making provided from their respective sectors, the holistic impact and imperatives for the community
- Developing strategies to solve for determined needs or outcomes
- Using the Center of Excellence and Backbone Enterprise to help support the activity required
- Make assignments and assign roles with recommendations within those strategies and send out to Alliances/Coalitions to operationalize on a community level
- Receive feedback and evaluate progress
-

(Consider this pattern: Consultation, Evaluation/Assessment, Intervention)

This would support:

- Housing creation and creativity in utilizing existing housing stock through collaborative work among community partners, including landlords, developers, trades, and other services
- Community Economic Development to enhance local resources, and opportunities
- Job Pathways through collaboration and best practices to help people who have barriers find ways to be self-reliant and contribute to the local economy (and their own)
- Cross-sector mentorship to “cross-pollinate” ideas, concepts, practices in order to enrich perspectives and increase capacity
- Social Enterprise Development to assist local support organizations in sustainability while providing flexible work experience and career entry for participants.

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Appendix H: Highway of Hope Concept Visual

Introduction:

There is always room for improvement and increased resources in support of “ending” homelessness, but there are still things that can be done now, or that are in place but just need to be better coordinated. Needed resources and opportunities may already exist, which we are not aware of. Some collective attention to this will improve outcomes while we wait for increased affordable housing. And can help us get people into existing housing opportunities.

We have heard from Lived Experience peeps that it becomes easier to fall back onto lifestyle habits they are trying to escape when there are not enough alternative options. Just having safe, clean, substance-free spaces to socialize, have some quiet time, engage in art, music, or other forms of expression, healing, personal interest and soul-building, has an impact on getting their feet back under them and starting the rebuilding process. When they are ready to tackle next steps, they already have trusting relationships and a healthy, supportive “community” in place. An intentional effort to provide for this, can help them get to that point sooner! This is an important part of the story of those who have been successful in moving forward from homelessness. They have found those opportunities. We can formally organize them.

Proposal: Coordinate as agencies, entities, and individuals in this community and bring what we have to the circle of care. Then, with some help from other community sectors and entities, provide for and map an organized and intentional spectrum of meaningful daily activity, enhanced support and opportunities for people while waiting for housing, and to help them maintain momentum in housing.

Outcomes:

- A better collective picture of what exists already to support vulnerable and at-risk community members
- A clearer idea of what is needed so we can make better plans and strategies for the future (housing, employment pathways, community capacity building)
- Increased engagement of more community members, entities, and sectors than ever before with a cohesive plan and vision for them to identify with and that fits with what they can do to help
- Increased safe and more effective engagement points for vulnerable community members, that lead into a connected, cohesive system of help, care and support, when they are ready
- While people are waiting for larger needs to be met, they will have more opportunities to engage in activities that will help them move along the continuum from crisis to thriving.
- Pathways into next steps for housing, employment, health and well-being, engagement and inclusion are more accessible, trusted, and coordinated to make the best use of available resources
- Better relationships with the people we are trying to help and greater ability to advocate for them in housing “match-making”, wellness care, employment, and other areas of focus as required
- Decrease in vagrancy and visible risky activities, and more opportunities for safe spaces where people can feel free from “predators” and supported to leave behind unhealthy and risky alternative coping

activities, even if it is just for a while.

- People will have more resources around them to help them when they are ready to commit to the next steps on their journey. The support will be there at the “cross roads” moments.
- Improved understanding for the greater community, of the stories, situations and needs as well as strengths and potential contributions of our vulnerable neighbours
- More opportunities for our vulnerable neighbours to shine, be included in the regular everyday of being human, in order to escape their current reality for a while, in healthy ways, and find some steps and ways out of it.
- The current sense of antagonism will begin to change into mutual respect and moving forward together as stigmas lift and the reasons for them disappear

(see visual on page 147)

Appendix H (continued): Highway of Hope Visual



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Momentum Project: Using Systems Thinking to Transform and Align Communities
and Enhance Collective Impact

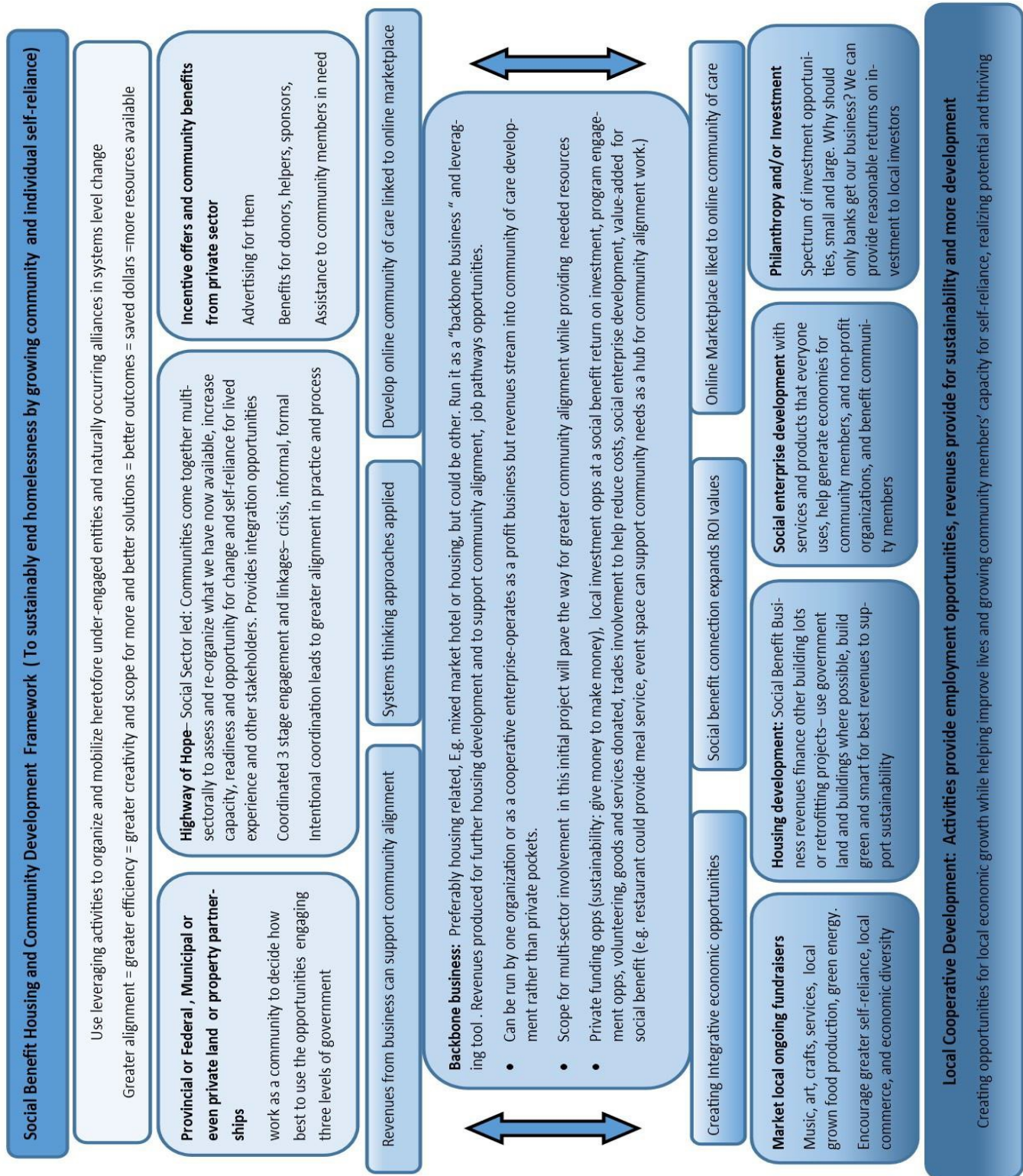
Highway of Hope Development Template (to adapt or use as inspiration)

Please take the time, with your team, to fill in this table from your perspective. We will then correlate the information we receive to inform an action plan to link/enhance/create and map a series of engagement opportunities for the vulnerable folks we are trying to support, using the opportunities and resources that are available. We will also approach other community sectors and entities to help fill in the resource gap. Please return your completed table to _____ at:

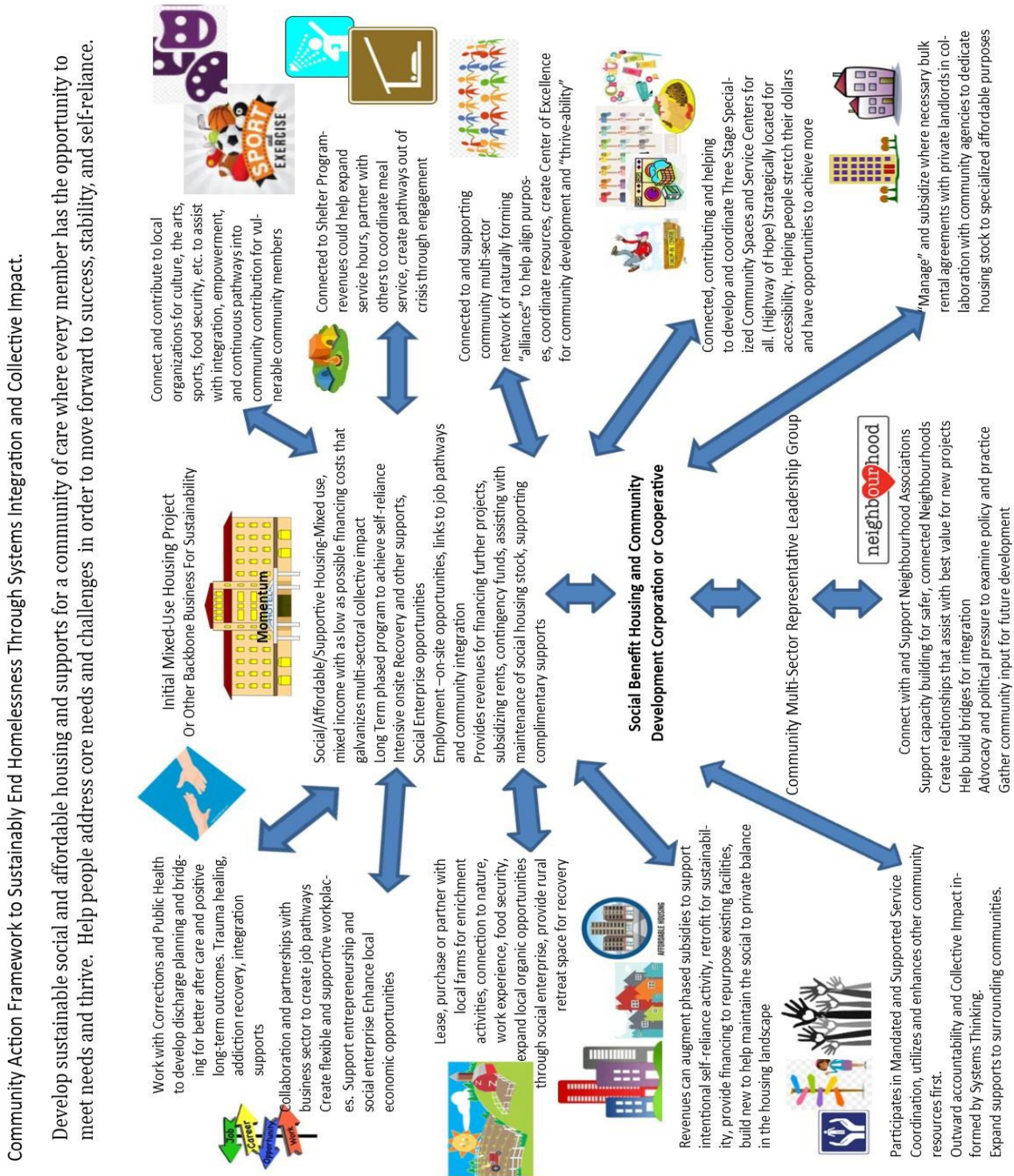
Existing Activity	Where and when is it happening?	Who is it meant to engage? (demographic? harm reduction or situational sobriety required)? Is it well utilized?	What are your challenges?	What could make it better or more utilized?
Needed Activity	What kind of space is required?	Who is it meant to engage? (demographic? harm reduction or situational sobriety required?) urgency?	What is needed to make it possible? What pieces might your organization have?	When should it happen?

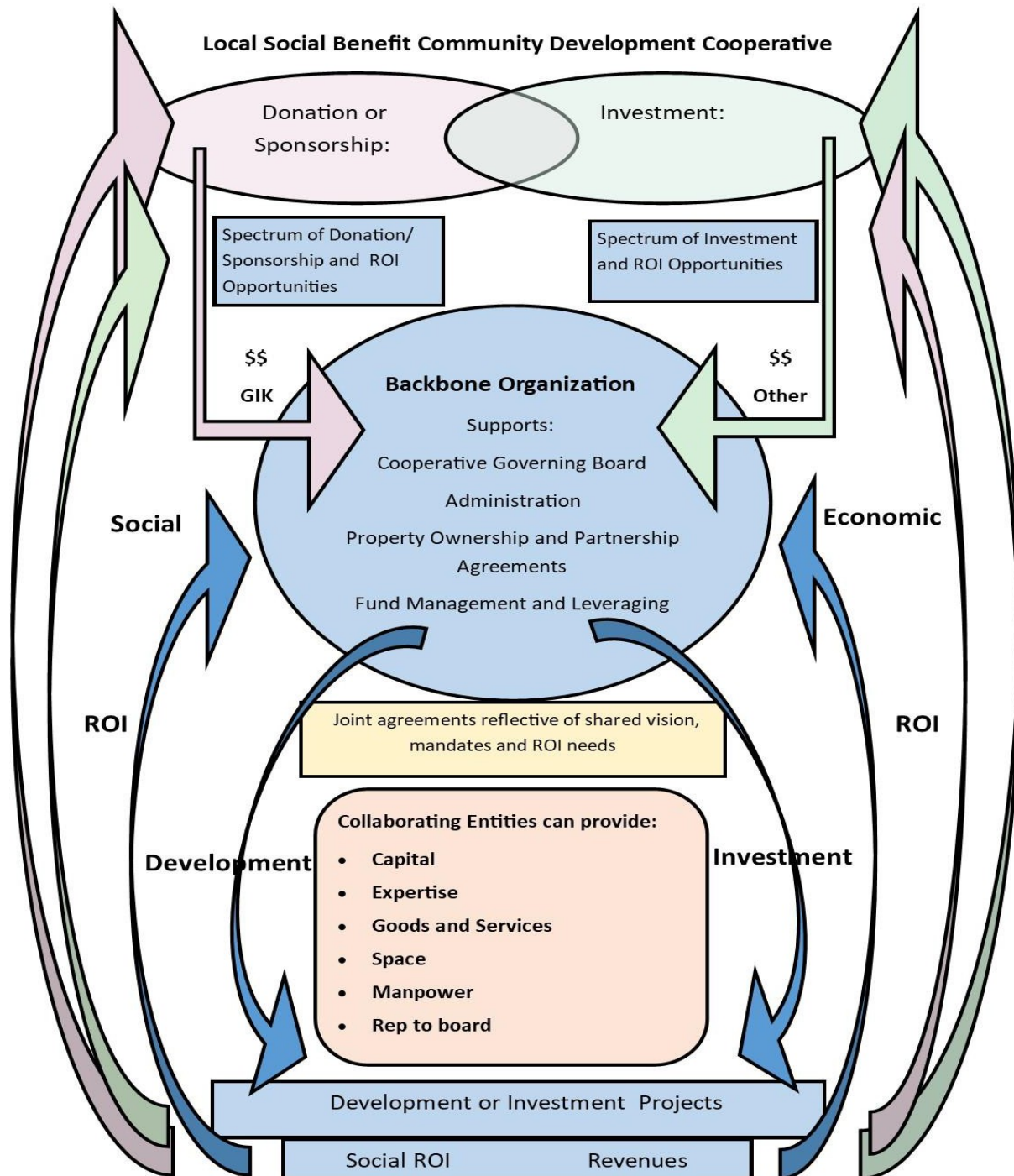
Appendix J: Social Benefit Housing and Community Development Framework Visual

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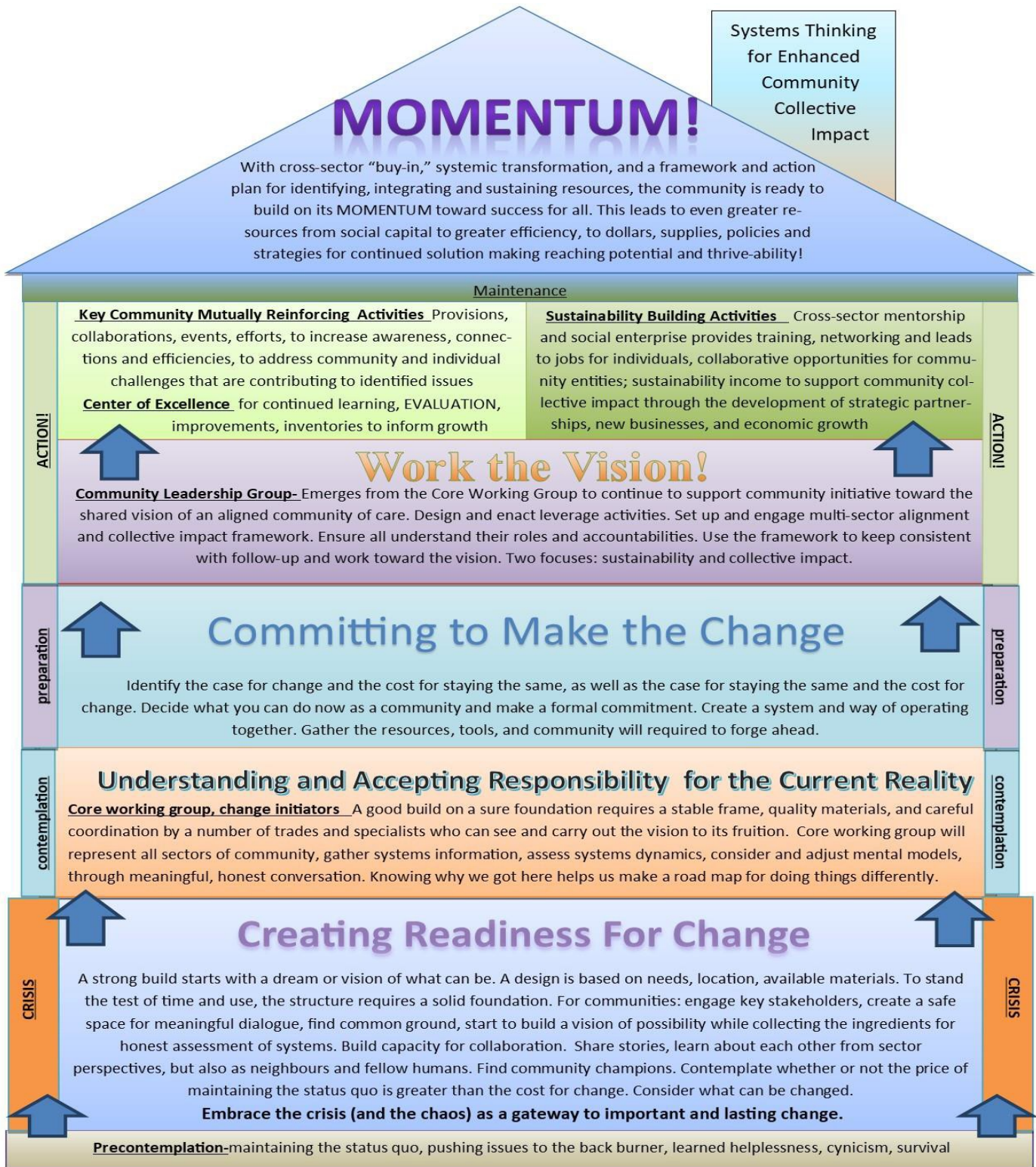


Appendix K: Another View: Community Homefulness Action Framework (End homelessness by focusing on building a community of care, sustainable support and thrive-ability) Back to [T.O.C.](#)





Appendix M: Systems Thinking Framework for Enhanced Community Collective Impact- Visual (Includes
reference to the Stages of Change) Back to [T.O.C.](#)



Appendix N: Acknowledgements (for assistance and input)

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- Adele Poratto
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- David Fletcher
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- HeARTh Social Profit Company
- Heidy Panemeno
- Hope Mission
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- Morris Flewelling
- Mustard Seed
- Piper Creek Foundation
- Red Deer CMHA
- Red Deer Chamber of Commerce
- Red Deer Downtown Business Association
- Red Deer Housing Authority
- Red Deer Local Immigrant Partnership
- Red Deer Native Friendship Centre
- Red Deer Neighbourhood Associations
- Red Deer Soup Kitchen
- ReThink Red Deer
- Rick Abma
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- Safe Harbour Society
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