

Building Healthy Communities: The Process

"The healthy social life is found when in the individual the whole community is reflected and when in the community the virtue of each individual is living".
- Rudolf Steiner

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INTRODUCTION

"Home is where your heart is".

Community organizing is more vital now than it has ever been. We are living in dangerous times. Our social institutions are not working. Schools are not teaching people the skills they need for basics such as reading and writing. Prisons are not deterring crime or rehabilitating criminals, hospitals can barely keep pace with basic emergency care. Newspapers report their owner's opinions and distort the news. Families and children are living under bridges and food bank line-ups are growing by alarming rates. While our physical structures are somewhat better cared for than our social structures they are also decaying. Roads are in poor conditions and bridges are needed yet not built, government buildings are being downsized and decentralized and the integrity of materials used in pipelines and hydroelectric dams is compromised over time.

If community organizing is indeed the organizing of resources to meet community needs then we will have to work very smart to organize and build community capacity because the age of abundance is over. Staying healthy with limited resources, ever decreasing downsizing and depleted services will become a task that requires us to look at health from not only a personal perspective but more importantly from a global perspective that addresses the health of whole populations.

What are Population Health and Health Promotions?

There is some confusion among the various sectors of our communities about the differences or similarities between the terms health promotions and population health. While we generally define health promotions as the process for enabling people and communities to become engaged in and effect the improvement of their health, population health is an approach that attempts to address the entire range of factors that determine health and in doing so affect the overall health of the countries population. These two terms are not unrelated; they are in fact, interrelated and represent a shift in thinking to concepts and principles that are inclusive of the many factors and dimension of health in our communities.

In 1996, Nancy Hamilton and Tariq Bhatti wrote a document entitled *Population Health Promotion* in which they combine the two concepts into an integrated model of Population Health and Health Promotion, which allows for operationalizing a population health promotion approach. In it they explore health determinants and demonstrate that a population health approach can be implemented through action on a full range of health determinants by means of utilizing health promotion strategies. So, we address the health of the whole population by dealing with the factors that determine health, using strategies specific to promotion of a healthy population, thus the term Population Health Promotion seems apt.

Recently at a Health Promotions Conference in Victoria (Spring 2002) the participants addressed the

concept that the area of health no longer belonged solely to the medical professionals and other health sectors. Instead the responsibility for health has widened to include other parts of our communities. Governments, social service agencies, community workers, decision makers, practitioners and researchers are challenged to work together in collaborative partnerships to "create new knowledge and facilitate health and social change".

In developing these "collaborative relationships" it is vital to examine the principles and approaches that our partners are working with and the view of health they believe in. Sharing understanding and experiences alone is not enough. We must ensure that the activities of our seemingly unrelated health work are linked and recognized. We must develop frameworks and guidelines for assisting the various sectors of our communities to "play together". Without these guidelines and frameworks we will be reduced to territoriality and power brokering that leave a community disabled and powerless.

The principals of population health promotion are principals of good values and respectful ethics. They are humane principles that reconnect us with ourselves, with our fellow humans and most importantly with the reality of this world and it's ever growing need for attention. Population health promotion requires that we work for empowerment, not the outcome but the process, wherein people find both meaningful participation and their own power with-in. This work demands that we ensure and promote self-determination as the strength and right of a community. To be healthy and promote health we must support the people who live the reality, to gain and maintain control of the process of change.

We can build capacity by providing essential elements for healthy communities. These include developing a shared vision, ensuring meaningful participation and shared ownership of the process, as well as working on the development of leadership and the mobilization of resources. In maintaining momentum in this work we must also spend extra time and energy to build relationships, take time to reflect on what we have learned and what we now know and find ways to revitalize the whole process with new energy.

One of the most important things to keep in mind about working towards population health promotions is that individualizing the issue will never address the root causes nor will it empower communities to change. Work that addresses the root causes is upstream work. We need to build connections not destroy them. These connections are essential for every one in every society yet more and more they are formed less and less. At no other time in our community's history have we been challenged to quite the depth as we have been by the forces of free market economy of our current governments.

In a free market economy there is an expectation that people will simply move to the jobs and closing down whole communities is just "the way progress has to be". In living like this we become more and more dislocated and disconnected from our families, our roots, history and supports. We develop instead superficial connections and lifestyles that substitute relationships for excessive habits. (Roots of Addiction in Free Market Society, Bruce Alexander, 2001). Many of these "habits" are manifested in substance misuse, gambling, overspending, violence, insecurities and mental health problems.

The only power we have against this condition of disconnection is to build strong communities. Communities help us to experience a deeper sense of our world and what it means to be a resident of this global community.

The many dimensions of Community Development

- CD creates human community. It articulates those voices that have been silenced.
- CD implies a democratic process of equal voice and equal participation.
- CD has a double purpose: to produce a community that is healthy and to empower the

- people in the community.
- CD is action oriented; it is a living process of growth, progress and expansion.
 - CD challenges the privilege of those with the power. (a collective of people is one of the three most effective sources of power).
 - CD is a political necessity. We are supposed to have the right to gather and live in community and to ensure safety and health in those communities that we create.
 - CD develops knowledge. Over time of being together and working through issues, people develop a capacity to see their world differently.
 - CD has an ecological dimension; as we build communities to harmonize with nature and reconnect with the energy that is vital within us, we build kinship with other life on this planet.
 - CD has a spiritual dimension. In our quest to understand what the purpose and meaning of our existence is, we come together and articulate what is sacred in the world. We begin to comprehend the web of life that holds us all, equally, in its strands.
 - CD is sustainable. It builds knowledge that leads to action and the creation of change, which is every moving.

More important than getting CD right or wrong is the principle of learning and risk taking. Only through creating our own knowledge in our own interest will we develop the capacity for action towards change.

Parable "Going Upstream"

A public Health Parable adapted by L. Wallack, September 1992

Excerpt from the Marin Institute Policy Training 1992

Three people were standing alongside a river on a brisk fall afternoon. Suddenly there was a cry for help from a person who was floating down the river desperately trying to stay above water. One of the people along the riverbank started yelling at the drowning person, "What's the wrong with you, why don't you know how to swim?" The second person on the bank offered the drowning person discount coupons for swimming lessons. Fortunately, one of the people on the bank was a public health worker who jumped in the water and pulled the drowning person out.

Over time more and more people came floating down the river in need of help and this all created quite a commotion. This commotion attracted more people. Researchers showed up and started counting how many people make it part of the way out of the river, all of the way out, how many fell back in, and collected other kinds of information. Survivors return and start to talk with other survivors and their families. More community people get interested and they stop by to cheer everybody on and sometimes castigate the poor swimmers and complain about how much all of this costs. It gets so busy at the river that fast food restaurants start to appear and nutrition advocacy groups get involved.

It is difficult at the river because more and more people come floating down crying out for help and it isn't possible to pull them all out. It's expensive and some of the ones who get pulled out end up back in the river. The fact of the matter is that pulling people out of the river is necessary but will never be sufficient to reduce the problem. Too many people keep falling in!

As time goes on more victims, more researchers, more community people, and more public health professionals are hanging around the river. All these people start sharing their

perspectives and the more different perspectives are discussed, the more insight develops. Finally, a critical mass develops and a bunch of people decide to get together and head upstream to see what is causing so many people to fall into the river. They find signs urging people to "Go for it", "Just do it." Letting them know that drugs "Won't slow you down," and telling them that "It doesn't get any better than this." All around are cleverly constructed signs that associate friends, success, sex, self-esteem and the good life with life in the river. As this small group of people look around a bit more, they find that children are particularly transfixed by all these colorful signs with sexy men and women, sports stars, sophisticated people, and the charismatic role models. They find a few warning signs but generally the barriers to falling in the river are overwhelmed by the almost magic inducements promoting its potentially dangerous waters.

The upstream group decided to try and gain better control of the environment which contributes to so many people falling in the river. It is rough, however, and they meet a lot of resistance. The marketers of the river say that they are just trying to do their job. The real problem, they argue, is that people are just not responsible enough. After all, if each person would just be more careful, treat the river with more respect, and learn how not to fall in then there would be no problem. It is argued that it is the responsibility of the family and the individual, not the manufacturer to make sure the river is used wisely. Many community people nod their heads in response to this argument. Isn't individual responsibility what it is all about? Some of the people decide to leave the group and focus more on developing family values and swimming curricula for the local schools.

The ones who continue on find that it is very hard work upstream. There is a lot of conflict but slowly victories are won. The "manufacturers of illness" are directly confronted and held accountable for their activities. Health warnings of alcoholic beverage containers, limits on advertising and availability of cigarettes, and regulations on food labeling and advertising start to evolve. In many communities, people of colour begin to resent that they are being constantly targeted for unhealthy promotions and organize to better control their local environment. Tobacco and alcohol products targeted directly to these groups such as PowerMaster malt liquor and Uptown cigarettes have been withdrawn from the market because of community opposition. Every victory results in more power for advocates and more firmly entrenches them upstream. The geography of prevention begins to change.

A small group of people begin to realize that there is still more territory upstream to be explored. Certainly exploitive marketing practices, misleading advertising, and general lack of responsibility of various corporate interests are important but there are more fundamental issues to be addressed. This small group heads further upstream and finds conditions that are conducive to huge parts of the population sliding in great masses in to the river. These are the conditions that allow one of every five children (12 million) to live in poverty and that contributes to a higher rate of infant death in the United States than that in 19 other countries despite the fact that we spend four times as much in health care as they do in Western Europe. Also up here are the conditions that make it possible for infants to be born addicted to drugs and with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. The families who work for minimum wage and fall below the poverty level live upstream.

Ultimately, poverty, racism, lack of education, and hopelessness are the source of public health problems. One of the most significant findings in public health research is that the social and economic environment in which people live is the primary determinant of health. In simple terms the level of economic and social resources people have is strongly correlated with their physical well being. It is this upstream source of problems that ultimately must be addressed. The key point here is that it is important to link what we observe downstream with upstream conditions, with the many environmental factors that are pushing people into

the river.

1. What is a healthy community?

A healthy community is more than simply a group of healthy individuals. A healthy community is constructed in a number of dimensions, which collectively work to ensure the well being of the individuals and the community as a whole.

Health Determinants are those factors that have been identified as contributing to the well being of communities and individuals. They have been identified in the document *Strategies for Population Health: Investing in the Health of Canadians* (1994) and they include:

- Income - people's perception of their health is linked to the level of their income. Simply stated, various reports have found that the higher your income level the longer you live.
- Social status - Similarly, the higher your social status the better your health. It would appear that social position and hierarchy provide a protection against disease or that lower status somehow weakens your defenses.
- Social support networks - Our ability to connect with others and develop healthy relationships with family, friends and community contributes in turn to our personal capacity in dealing with stress, conflict and change. Social relationships help in concrete, emotional, mental and spiritual ways of connecting us with our communities and ourselves.
- Education - Health status is improved with the level of education. By providing people with knowledge and skills, a sense of control and mastery over their lives, increase opportunities for jobs and job security, it improves people's ability to access information in keeping them healthy.
- Employment/Working Conditions - Individuals with more control over their work circumstances, with workplace supports, frequent and high quality interaction and lower stress related demands in the workplace are healthier. Unemployment is related to poor health and high levels of unemployment and economic instability result in increased mental health problems, and adverse effects on physical health.
- Safe and clean physical environment - Important aspects of the physical environment that directly impact health are safe housing, clean air and water and a safe community. There are complex and interrelated systems that must be considered when developing strategies for health.
- Biology and Genetic makeup - A Fundamental determinant of health is our body's basic biology and genetic makeup. How our body functions, what genetic we are born with and the process of development and aging all contribute to our overall health.
- Personal health practices and coping skills - Our choice of personal behaviors such as smoking, drinking, nutrition and physical activity affect our health and well-being. An often-overlooked determinant is that of coping skills, which are key to supporting healthy lifestyles. Coping skills are those behaviors that help us to interact effectively with the world around us, to deal with challenges and stresses and to be self-reliant, informed and capable of dealing with problems and conflict.
- Childhood development - Healthy prenatal and early childhood development establishes a powerful and long-lasting effect on our later health. The way children are cared for in early life determines their abilities to cope and adjust with respect to health practices later in life. Intervening at these critical life stages has the greatest potential for establishing later health and well being.
- Health services - Services that maintain and promote health and disease prevention are necessary to ensure health. Services that address early childhood health, educate children and adults about health choices and risk and that encourage everyone to undertake healthy living practices are crucial.

2. What do communities need to be healthy?

Currently in British Columbia in 2002, our government has a free market economy agenda. What this translates to be is that uneconomic communities are disappearing and this is being proposed as a "fact of life". We are told that this is inevitable and that we must move forward. The government does not want to put resources into saving small rural communities, instead they suggest we look at helping people move to where the economic opportunities are, usually urban centers.

What that means to those of us trying to build sustainable communities is that people and places are now thought of as expendable objects in a global economy and that economy is more important than people, local culture and history. The unsettling thing is, the agenda for this new free market global economy is determined by the global corporations and their agendas, which are always money based.

When did it happen that our direction became determined by big corporations instead of being determined by our own communities? What good are economics if they destroy people and communities? Is the purpose of human life to serve the needs of this global corporate economy or is the global economy there to serve the needs of human life and the needs of belonging to community?

Simply stated we are in an economic, social and environmental crisis today but it isn't from lack of knowledge, resources or our ability to solve problems. It is because we are not addressing the right issues. We do not lack resources; we have enough material and non-material resources to meet everyone's needs on the planet. In British Columbia, 36% of personal wealth is in the hands of 3% of the population. At least 432,000 people in B.C. live in poverty and 131,000 of them are children (Northwest Environment Watch, 2002).

What we lack are the human and ecological values and desire to meet communities' needs. Therefore, the basis of our community development must be in the direction of a return to values based on humanity and the earth as the most important, not the economy. To do this we must ensure that our communities have the ability to develop key elements of their existence. (The following key concepts are adapted from Marcia Nozick's, *No Place Like Home: Building Sustainable Communities*. 1992).

The 5 Key Elements that a Community Needs:

Self Reliance

A self-reliant community is one that uses its own resources and inner strengths to meet its needs. Every community has "wealth" and the ability to generate more. The work of a community is to discover these resources, use them to their best advantage, in the best interest of the community and in some cases to regain control over lost resources that have belonged to the community but were taken over by outside groups. Some of the strategies that communities will need include recycling money, instead of importing resources, learning to make do with something else that is created in the community and which will revitalize the local economy. This not only addresses the economics of a community but also is a political act of regaining control of their self-sufficiency and independence. Perhaps the most important benefits of self-reliance are cultural. Community identity, relationships and a sense of belonging are re-established. This may mean establishing community based businesses or reviving lost skills to restore cultural identity and community connectedness.

In a small Northern Ontario town, 80% of the wages of that community were being spent at the local Hudson Bay store and all of that money was leaving the community. By working together and offering

to buy the store, the community was trying to establish their self-reliance. It was not until the community threatened to open its own store that the Hudson Bay sold the store to the community, which led to a series of economic initiatives. A Laundromat, houses, vehicles, a share in a local airline and shares in a petroleum company are all the result of the revenues from the initial purchase of the store.

Harmonization with Nature

We have an anthropocentric view of the world. That means that we believe we are the center of everything and that everything exists to serve our needs. This view asserts that the natural world has no rights. We believe in suicide, homicide and genocide but we do not believe in biocide or genocide, the killing of the life systems on the earth and the killing of the earth itself (Berry, 1996). We separate the human community from the sacred community of the Universe and in doing so we devalue and destroy the earth that gives us life. If the earth stops breathing then we stop breathing; yet, we continue to put ourselves as central and fail to accept that humans are an integral component of a total earth community.

World leaders from Thomas Berry, a Catholic monk and eco-theologian to Starhawk, a Wiccan peace activist, speak powerfully of the need for our rediscovery of what is sacred in this universe and thus in ourselves. By separating ourselves out from the whole and specializing various functions of the whole into different parts, we set up a system of more deserving and less deserving, a system that allows and even encourages control over and superiority of some members above others. Differences are discouraged and placed low in the social order. On the bottom are the animals, nature, women, and those less worthy who can all be disposed of by those higher up in the hierarchy. This kind of attitude leads to power and control, exclusion and disempowerment, all conditions we are trying to eliminate in community development.

Sharing Power and Community Collaboration

We are proposing that the key point in doing effective health promotions for community development is to building sustainable, grassroots participation in the creation of knowledge, resources and relationships. We have found in our work that authentic knowledge is the knowledge created by the group for which it can do the most good. We have found that power over equals destruction, power-with equals community and power-within equals empowerment.

Power -Over

Because of this belief that humans are more important than any other species, we come to believe that power is about how much you can control others and the world around us. (Health promotions is often referred to as the "ability of people to control their health" as if health were a force outside of ourselves.)

Most spiritual organizations are based on a pyramid of power with a god at the top, the 'priest' or holier ones next and the rest of the population arranged in diminishing order. In the business world it is a Premier at the top, Minister's and bureaucrats next and the secret order of policy makers and administrators who take care of things by telling others who should do what and the masses on the bottom. This form of patriarchy is how our world becomes divided into deserving and undeserving. Those with money are most deserving while those without are less. It is an arbitrary line we draw that includes or excludes people from our privilege of power. Why if someone tries to make the welfare system work for them is this considered fraud yet if they were in business this manipulation of the

circumstances would be considered "good entrepreneurial initiative"?

If we can not learn to flatten, share or be respectful of the power we have then we are doomed to destroy ourselves with addictions, decimate our communities with FASD, disease, dysfunction and demolish our earth who gives us life and abundance.

Sharing Power

The root meaning of the word *power* is from the Latin, *podere*: to be able. Ability is a power that comes from within ourselves. It isn't given to us nor can somebody take it unless we give it to them. Ability is the power we feel when we build our capacity to live in this world.

Power is not an entity. It is only and ever will be a connection, a relationship or affiliation (Kuyek and Labonte, 1995). In the natural world, it is a relationship with the earth, that living-breathing organism of which humans are just one part. In our communities and societies, it is a web of relationships that can oppress or take advantage of us, nurture us or set us free.

In our communities, our relationships are based on our cultures understanding or dominant belief about power. For example even though the First Nations beliefs historically do not reflect a power-over way of being in the world, the structures that they now live with, Chief and Council, Band Managers, etc. reflect a power-over view of the world, which many have learned to live with and adapt to.

The sharing of power to develop power-with each other is the only way to ensure a move towards power-within ourselves. By encouraging non-hierarchical structures in our communities we allow for maximum meaningful participation in decision-making and in the development process by community members.

In *Creating Solutions* (2001), the participatory action research members were all disadvantaged, marginalized women with limited education, many were First Nation's culture and all suffered low self-esteem and being labeled "alcoholic". These women not only successfully designed, implemented and analyzed their own research but they also took on the academics of a Northern University for the right to interpret their own "truth". Over a two year period women developed the knowledge and ability to reflect on this knowledge that lead to their ability to take action and have a voice in changing how service providers "give" services to women. They have now presented their work in major communities from Vancouver, B.C. to Toronto, Ontario. They have developed and implemented Community Action Circles in small communities like T'lazten, northwest of Ft. St. James in remote Northern B.C. to Whitehorse in the Yukon. In the past two years they have presented at 16 different venues with delegates from National, Regional and local areas. Many of these women who had never had the opportunity to travel far from their home communities or to even fly in a jet before, now believe they are capable of just about anything!.

Satisfying individual and collective needs

People themselves are our greatest community resource and the reason why we develop communities yet our current society is not meeting the individual needs of people in our communities. Increasingly, people are not being given the safety and protection they require, we are failing to provide the basic security we need to improve our lives and we fall short of ensuring that opportunity exist for everyone to develop the capacity to enhance their lives.

People need a number of things in order to thrive. From basic universal needs such as food, shelter and clothes to developmental, environmental, cultural and relationship needs. Primary among these

is the need for autonomy and connection. The need for autonomy includes concepts like self-esteem, identity, meaning; personal freedom, self-expression and creativity. Needs for connection include the need to belong and participate with others, the need to connect with something greater than ourselves and the need to give and receive affection.

Our goal in community development is to ensure that these needs are being met. Often times there will be barriers to people's ability to meet these needs. Reducing physical, mental and social barriers then becomes an important task if we truly wish for people to participate fully in their lives.

Building a Community Culture

Each community has unique traditions and values that come from it's own history and meaning of place. Community development should proceed as a manifestation of that particular culture and history in the community. Developing that which is special and unique in a community is what produces community identity. Identity connects the community in a more powerful way than politics or money ever can. Culture is a way of life that becomes the "soul" of that place. Communities develop values, perceptions, language, history, spirituality, art and social norms based on that collective and authentic culture. Without culture communities do not survive.

Because social change happens from the inside out, we need to remember that if the individuals in our communities have not had the opportunity to meet their needs, they will be incapable of helping to build a strong community. As community developers we will need to encourage the transformation of the individual members of the community at the same time as building the strength of the collective community. We must stop looking upward and out ward for the solutions to our problems. This only contributes to our sense of powerlessness and dependence, keeping us separate from others and disconnected. We must seek alternatives that encourage community autonomy, community connection and the meeting of needs basic to our survival. Looking inward and into the core of who we are is what leads to a sense of groundedness and connection.

We must begin to ask more questions? What really matters? What is life about? According to the report *This place on Earth: Measuring What Matters*, British Columbians value most; human welfare, the strength of communities and the health of both the economy and the ecosystems on which human economy depends, yet the political agenda of our province does not share these values and workers are being forced to rethink how they will help people to sustain their communities and their ability to develop health for themselves and their families.

3. How do we facilitate building a healthy community?

To facilitate people's ability to meet their needs we must build community capacity. What is Community capacity? Community capacity is the ability of people and communities to work towards addressing health determinants by addressing 7 key elements. Healthy communities do not just happen. They require mindful diligence in attending to not only the 'little things' but also the 'big picture'. Healthy communities require a belief in their ability to transform and healthy individuals who are willing to give support to that transformation.

The 7 elements essential to healthy communities and questions to ponder

1. A shared vision

Definition: An agreed on picture of your community that details what you want it to look and be like.

- Shared vision is created with the full ownership of the people it affects.
- It encourages community members to engage in the process of making their community healthier and happier.
- It includes a dialogue of and commitment to principles and values that guide the process towards better working relationships and better outcomes.
- It is full of elements that provoke our imagination and our "soul" to aspire and take action for change.

Questions??????????

What processes have taken place in your community that engages the whole community in creating a picture of the future?

Is this picture "do-able"?

Did everyone agree it on?

Is the vision motivating and do you take pride in sharing it with others?

Do you all interpret the vision the same and are you all consistent with describing it?

Have you developed a set of guiding principles that talk about how people will work together, the values you share and the beliefs that are agreed on for working together?

2. Meaningful participation and shared ownership

Definition: the active involvement of the hearts, minds and spirits of the community members where individuals feel included in the process, that the process is equitably shared, they are valued and have a purpose in being there.

- We are supposed to have the rights and freedom to participate
- It is a democratic process.
- Participation ensures knowledge and knowledge is power.
- Participation connects us to each other and to the earth.
- It creates human community.
- It has a spiritual place in our lives- gives meaning to our existence, based in reverence and supports social justice.
- Participation is "just a lovely idea", it is pleasing.

Questions??????????????

Is there a forum for community members to recognize problems and actively participate in making changes to those problems?

Do they feel that their contributions matter?

Are the barriers to everyone participating addressed?

Do you discuss all along the way the participation of all members?

Have you considered the power that some people have over others that prevents their involvement?

3. Leadership Development

Communities have both formal and informal leaders. Leadership is not always "bestowed" or elected, it is also the champions in your community who have earned respect and high regard.

- Leaders recognize the value and "gifts" in everyone and work to involve everyone and create

- a place where voices can be heard.
- Leaders facilitate collaboration, power-sharing, risk taking, decision making by others, the emergence of new leaders.
- They are able to keep the big picture in mind and role model by making the path and walking it.

Questions??????????

Do your leaders work hard to create a place where everyone's voice is heard?
 Do they encourage, support, and help tackle difficult issues?
 Do they act as role models?
 Do they mentor new leaders?
 Do they share leadership and power?

4. Resource mobilization

Resources include the skills, knowledge, human talents and gifts as well as concrete objects that the community uses to improve their health.

- You will need to be able to identify and access these resources
- You will need to recognize the unique gifts and talents your own community possesses.
- You will need to make decision about how they are shared and distributed.
- You will have to identify gaps in these resources
- You will need to find new resources
- Bring people together with resources to problem solve and take action.

Questions??????????

Do you know all the resources your community has?
 Do you know how to access them?
 Do you know how to effectively manage those resources?
 Do all members have equal access to resources?
 Do we bring people with different resources together to share with us?

5. Relationship Building

Building relationships is essential to developing a cohesive sense of community. It is the quality of human relationships that make it possible for people to live together in a healthy way.

- Relationships need to be built on trust, collaboration, shared beliefs and a sense of connectedness.
- Relationships should acknowledge power differences and share power when and wherever possible. When power cannot be shared it should be used respectfully and responsibly.
- Relationships need to ensure a sense of respect for diversity and marginalization and work towards change of the variables that create that disadvantage.
- Relationships need to acknowledge the disparity of knowledge others and mentor and support people to ask questions and continue to learn.

Questions??????????

Has the community identified who the community is?
 Is there a sense of community?

Is there a sense of unity and togetherness in your community?
Are relationships built on trust, cooperation, shared values?
Is the climate encouraging, forgiving, open and welcoming?
Do community members feel they have a voice?
Can they contribute to the well being of the whole community?
Is there a shared sense of commitment to improving the community?
Does your community know how to deal with conflicts and cope with crisis?

6. Reflection

Reflection is the process of reflecting on what has been learned, what has gone on in the project and community and then using that knowledge to further explore how to be effective or to take action. This leads to greater self-awareness and community understanding.

Questions?????????

Do you have a process in place to reflect on your learnings, together and alone?
Is your community open to new ideas or ways of doing things?
Do you listen to the critics and the supporters?
Do you have a means to communicate what you have learned?
Can you put those learnings into actions?

7. New energy/revitalization

By continually involving new members and giving renewed hope and concrete results to old members it fosters sustained community change.

Questions ???????

Do you inspire and motivate community members to actively participate in making the community a healthier place?
Is the vision revisited to keep people informed and changes realistic?
Have conditions improved?
Do you have concrete outcomes that can be communicated to the community and celebrated?

Conclusion

We can choose to see problems in our communities or we can focus instead on our capacity. One destroys and the others empowers. Each of us brings special gifts to our involvement in community. If we learn to respect and honor each of these gifts and to look for the ability in everyone, we will have resources aplenty.

We must also learn to act now in our own communities to effect change and to look for possibilities of what we can do now, with what we do have. Small efforts are important and intentional action will help us to connect not just in our own communities but also with other communities. Perhaps the greatest failing is in doing nothing for fear that it is not enough.

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