


Asset Based Community Development
 It's not business as usual
 Ottawa Community Economic Development Network
 Conference 2004

**Innovation and CED
 Reducing Poverty in Canada**




By Paul Born



Innovation

... while innovation does refer to the creation of new ideas, it also involves the application of existing ideas in unique ways or to different fields.

Innovation and CED – What they can learn from each other (January 2003, commissioned by CEDTAP by Sherri Torjman and Eric Leviten-Reid).



My journey, learning about innovation...

From Service Provider...

- Breaking the barrier... to low paying jobs
- Job placement (more than 5,000)
- Self Employment – first of 6 delivers in Ontario based on WEDCO model (more than 1,200 starts with 80% survival rate)
- Plant Closure Team – 100% placement guarantee

To learning about systems change...

- Opportunities Planning – decentralized employment services to 12 low income neighborhoods
- Community planning and Our Common Future – City of Cambridge
- Overall effectiveness and cost benefit
- CODA & Lutherwood - an \$8 million merger - grown to \$15 million

What was our innovation system?

The Journey – seeking higher impact

How do we make substantial progress in ensuring that everyone in our community enjoys a decent quality of life?

How do we dramatically expand the scope and depth of our impact in reducing poverty?

How do we create environments and organizations where a broad mix of the community can work together to understand (learning) and explore (meaning making) the root causes of poverty and marginalization and change the systems that contribute to it?

How do we venture into the complex?

My Journey continues

Seeking Higher Impacts...

- Opportunities 2000
- Tamarack - An Institute for Community Engagement
- Vibrant Communities





Vibrant COMMUNITIES

www.vibrantcommunities.ca



- 15 communities learning with each other how to build their communities and reduce poverty.
- 5 communities will launch community wide initiatives.
- National supports include:
 - Coaching and learning forums
 - Policy and research development
 - Tool development
 - Evaluation – local learning support
 - Funders forum

We are at a crossroad



If we truly want to make a difference we must begin to make a shift from building capacity to using the capacity we've created to substantially reduce poverty.

Poverty's on the increase

- The number of people living under the Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Off line has jumped from 4.3 to 4.7 million people over the last decade.
- The lowest 10% of income earners have an average income of approximately \$10,340 per year.
- The wealthiest 10% of the population experienced a 15% increase in income over the last decade, the bottom 10% only a 1% increase.



Canadians want solutions



52% of Canadians believe that there is no excuse for poverty and that we could eliminate poverty if we really wanted to.

- Centre for Research and Information on Canada (CRI C), Portraits of Canada 2002



CED has solutions...

- CED marries social and economic solutions
- CED works in communities and engages citizens to become active in the design of their economic and social future. It works close to the bone!
- CED practitioners are learning rapidly and we now have a body of practice and systems of learning
- CED builds on local assets and introduces assets
- CED is building credibility as the "other" economic development department in which a deliberate community wide response – strategy is necessary to enable all citizens to participate in and contribute to community life.

Our challenge is to use the capacity we have built to have new conversations, to learn like never before, to make bold and calculated mistakes, to step out with confidence and say YES!



CED innovating for

A **C**anada **E**veryone **D**esires



Stay in Touch

- ✓ **E-letter** – keep informed about Vibrant Communities.
- ✓ **Eunoia** – we scan thousand of sources every month and bring you the best and latest in community engagement thinking.
- ✓ **Updates** – we will update you as to new happenings at Tamarack.



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The Journey – seeking higher impact

“The majority of current CED related efforts to reduce poverty revolve around key programs and services: micro-loan funds, skills training programs, affordable housing initiatives, joint ventures with businesses, job search and career counseling, and asset building services, such as Individual Development Accounts

These are important - we need these type of responses. They are practical and relevant to marginalized residents and communities. Many of them -though certainly not all - are effective and are good investments. There is a growing body of evidence (agreement) and knowledge (clarity) to support this work.

However, if we want to make substantial progress in ensuring that everyone in our community enjoys a decent quality of life, to dramatically expand the scope and depth of our impact in reducing poverty, we in the CED movement need more than this – the simple responses will get us at best incremental improvements. We need to venture into the complex.

We need to create environments and organizations where a broad mix of the community can get together to understand (learning) and work together (meaning making) on the root causes of poverty and marginalization - to change the systems that contribute to it.

This is a complex task - poverty is complicated and there is no agreement or clarity on how to address it - yet it is one in which we must lead if we really are going to move beyond marginal impact in our work.”

The Stacey Matrix by Ralph Stacey

CLARITY

Far

Near

COMPLICATED

Simple

Complicated

Complex

Near

AGREEMENT

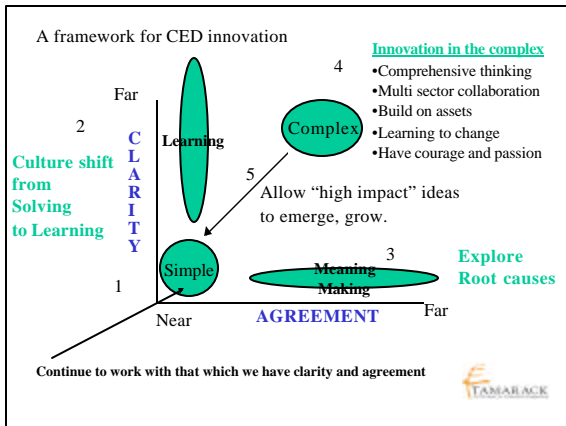
Far

New ways of working

- Systems thinking
- Getting close to the issue
- Rapid learning through action
- Experiment – innovate
- Fuelled by passion and hope

Capture the learning from the complex and translate

Learning to work in the zone of complexity
(as interpreted by Brenda Zimmerman - York University and explained by Frances Westley - McGill University)



How does one then innovate in the complex

- **Learning** nationally, provincially and in our communities
 - CEDNet and CEDTAP systems of learning and Ottawa CED network
- **Meaning making:** Meaning engages our creativity – asking questions and entering into conversation about higher-level impacts in our communities.
- **People:** Depend on Diversity, Involve everyone who cares, Diversity is the path to Unity, Allow people to surprise us and rely on human goodness.
- **Courage and hunger:** He who makes the most mistakes wins.
