

innovation. insight. impact.

the lens

A PUBLICATION OF
GATEWAY ASSOCIATION
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SPRING 2017

A man in a light blue button-down shirt is smiling and clapping his hands. He is holding a large, dark, circular object with a colorful geometric pattern on its surface. In the background, other people are visible, some also clapping, suggesting a community event or celebration.

The power of working together

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Collaborative work paves way for greater impact on children, families

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Let's build our collective strength as change-makers in community

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the lens

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ON THE COVER
Photo by Leroy Schulz

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Sharing our blueprint key to true change



BY BROOKS HANEWICH
DIRECTOR, GATEWAY ASSOCIATION

When Gateway first envisioned *thelens*, we saw it as a tool to help us achieve our purpose: transformation of community. The lens we look through is disability, but our 42 years of supporting families, people with disabilities, schools, employers, and

government has touched all areas of community, and gives us rich insight beyond the disability field.

The barriers facing the people we support, and the challenges we face as a social service organization, are the same barriers and challenges faced by so many others trying to do the same work: to build support in communities for all people to be valued and accepted.

As we scan the landscape, we see so much impactful work being done, along with the opportunity to join forces and do so much more.

We see *thelens* as an instrument we can use to encourage and celebrate collaborative work in communities. In its pages you'll find innovation, leading practices, insight, expertise, and challenging ideas.

The concept for the first edition of *thelens* ties in to the reason we're doing it — we see this publication as a way for us to break down silos in community so we can all work better together.

This issue is all about the power of working together, something we are committed to, and fundamentally believe in as the only way to solve the increasingly complicated and complex issues facing the people we serve.

This edition is a collection of features from our partners and colleagues in community. The words in these pages represent a coming together and sharing of experience and resources — from organizations deploying collective impact to tackle barriers and



“We see *thelens* as an instrument we can use to encourage and celebrate collaborative work in communities.”

support one another, to the recognition by municipal governments that we must address poverty by working together. We hope each story captures a different element of how groups are working together to put power behind their goals.

Collective action is not easy. While countless articles abound on the merits and methods behind collective action, there is an equally growing body of critiques and examinations of its failures.

So, how do we work together when personal and systemic factors keep us from sharing and developing true

collective approaches to problem solving? Perhaps we would do best to overcome our hesitations by looking to inspirations such as Elon Musk, the brains behind Tesla — an electric carmaker and pioneer in the development of sustainable technology.

In 2014 Tesla Motors became an open-source company — they opened their patents to everyone, for the good of community. Musk, in a 2014 *Forbes Magazine* article, said Tesla, “will not initiate patent lawsuits against anyone who, in good faith, wants to use our technology.”

What, on the surface, looked to be a foolish proposal to give away secrets to their products, was actually a calculated action with a powerful message. Musk realized that to truly increase the rate of adoption of electric cars, others needed to be involved in building the infrastructure. Tesla could not go it alone. By sharing, and by having faith in their products, Musk knew any improvements or growth would help Tesla reach their mission as a company.

We take this message to heart. We want to use *thelens* and its reach to encourage the sharing of our blueprints as organizations, because we know it will build our collective strength as influencers and change-makers in community. A rising tide raises all ships.

We hope this issue holds the kind of blueprints our readers can take with them, toward growth, sharing, and success. ●



Families dance together at a welcome event for newcomers and refugees, hosted in part by C5 agencies Edmonton Mennonite Centre and Bent Arrow, at the Alberta Art Gallery in November 2016.

Support, to the power of five

BY CORINNE SAAD
DIRECTOR, C5

Candace is the young mother of a two-year-old son. She struggles with cocaine use and has for more than 10 years. When she gave birth to her son something changed. Candace fell in love with her new baby. She decided to deal with her drug use to keep from losing her son to social services. Candace was referred to a new program, called Ubuntu, for support.

Ubuntu is a program of C5 — a collaboration of five community groups: Boyle Street Community Services, Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, Norwood Child and Family Resource Centre, and Terra Centre for Teen Parents.

The collaborative works closely with Child and Family Services to wrap the necessary supports around families so children can stay in their homes. For Candace, this means she is able to go to one place, build a relationship with her support worker, and access the full spectrum of supports she needs to get her life back on track. It sounds like a simple concept, but the reality of bringing community agencies and government departments together to address each family's needs on an individual basis is innovative. Innovative, and successful. More than 80 per cent of Ubuntu families remain intact, with the children living at home, rather than having them taken into care.

Ubuntu demonstrates the extraordinary results collaborative work brings to children and families. It's just one of C5's programs on the ground. Relentless Connector is another, bringing all the necessary government and community players together to offer

a comprehensive system of care for families, and to help them build natural supports, using the wraparound principles. C5 is also establishing a community hub in Edmonton's north-east, which will offer all community members a place to connect and, if necessary, access services.

C5 investment in change is ambitious. Changing the way we work with children and families is one part of the work. The other is tackling broader systemic change, taking our learnings to the systems level. Complex social

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"Ubuntu demonstrates the extraordinary results collaborative work brings to children and families."

issues, common to all of the 30,000 people the C5 agencies serve, include: access to safe, affordable housing; locating mental-health supports; dealing with transportation and transit issues; and ensuring the latest research on the brain science is embedded in early childhood development and care. The C5 partners believe that, by bringing our collective weight to decision-making tables, ensuring the voices of

community members are heard, social policy will begin to shift to truly reflect people's hopes and aspirations.

Working differently also means embedding collaboration throughout the C5 organizations. The executive directors began the collaborative; staff now come together to work on specific initiatives such as Ubuntu and Relentless Connector; but the goal is to have all staff and board members feeling part of, and invested in, the collaborative work. Sharing ideas and expertise is valuable, and results in better outcomes for children and families.

A seminal moment for C5, when we realized just how effective our relationships had become, happened in May 2016. Evacuees from the Fort MacMurray fire were arriving at the University of Alberta's Lister Hall, many of them recent arrivals in Canada with absolutely no supports. Within 24 hours of getting the call, C5 mobilized a collective response, providing child minding for parents and an array of supports to help them figure out their next steps. Other agencies were invited to join the effort as needs were identified. Over May and June, C5 served more than 1,500 Fort MacMurray evacuees.

What makes C5 different than other collaboratives? Usually organizations come together to tackle a specific social issue or because a funder requires it. C5 came together because our values align, the agencies had existing relationships, and because of a deep-seated conviction that together we could work more effectively for children and families, that a collective commitment to tackling the roots of the issues that hold families back is necessary to affect community-wide impact. Breaking intergenerational cycles of trauma and poverty is complex, daunting work that requires a collective response.

Collaborative work is not easy — each agency has different priorities, culture, and language. It cannot be done off the side of participants' desks. Deciding collaboration is a priority means a deliberate commitment of time and resources. C5's success rests on relationships of trust; an expectation that each agency will bring what it can to the table, when it can; that although the contribution won't be equal at any given point of time, it will even out over the long term. The principle really is one of "equitable" rather than "equal."

Bound by a common goal, to work more effectively for children and fam-

THE FIVE GROUPS BEHIND C5'S COLLABORATIVE WORK:

BOYLE STREET COMMUNITY SERVICES
boylestreet.org

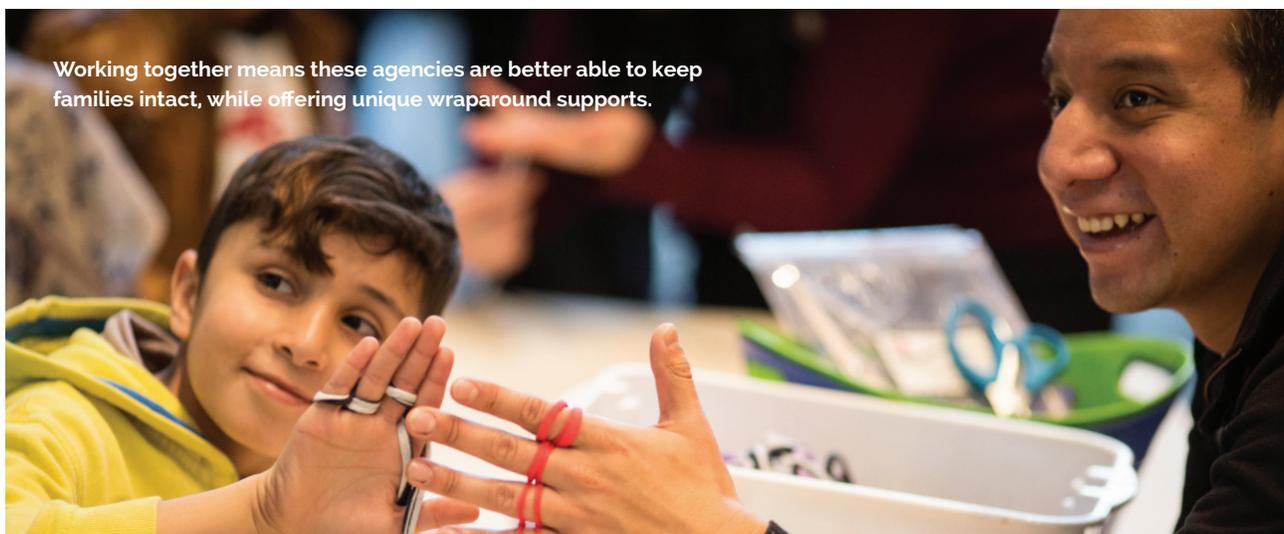
BENT ARROW TRADITIONAL HEALING SOCIETY
bentarrow.ca

EDMONTON MENNONITE CENTRE FOR NEWCOMERS
emcn.ab.ca

NORWOOD CHILD AND FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE
norwoodcentre.com

TERRA CENTRE FOR TEEN PARENTS
terracentre.ca

ilies, we have found we can overcome hurdles and create the kind of change needed to support children and families to thrive. ●



Working together means these agencies are better able to keep families intact, while offering unique wraparound supports.



PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Tackling stigma takes strength of many

BY AMY A. PARK

Working together is a key part of change, not only to gain support for important issues, but also to help find creative ways to instigate that change. No matter what we want to change, no matter what our dreams look like, we are always stronger at tackling those dreams together.

During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s Martin Luther King Jr. had an amazing dream. He wanted his children to live in a free world where hate and discrimination did not exist. He wanted everyone to love each other, no matter their differences. He spoke out against discrimination and prejudice of African-Americans. Hundreds of thousands of people heard him and stood behind him. Due to that outpouring of support, things started to change for millions of African-Americans.

Like Martin Luther King Jr., I also have a dream.

I dream of ending the stigma around mental health and disability rights. My work as a self advocate, and as the learning and planning coordinator at the Self Advocacy Federation, has given me the ability to network with many people involved with advocacy in marginalized communities.

My hope is to work with groups who represent those who struggle with mental health; people who live with a disability; those in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) community; and any com-

munity of people who face barriers, to help others understand the adversity in their lives.

I'm planning to go to school to study film and hopefully work with other students to build a group to write, film, direct, and produce documentaries that shine a light on marginalization in our community.

By working with others, I can work to fulfil my dreams.

But along the way, I know there will be obstacles.

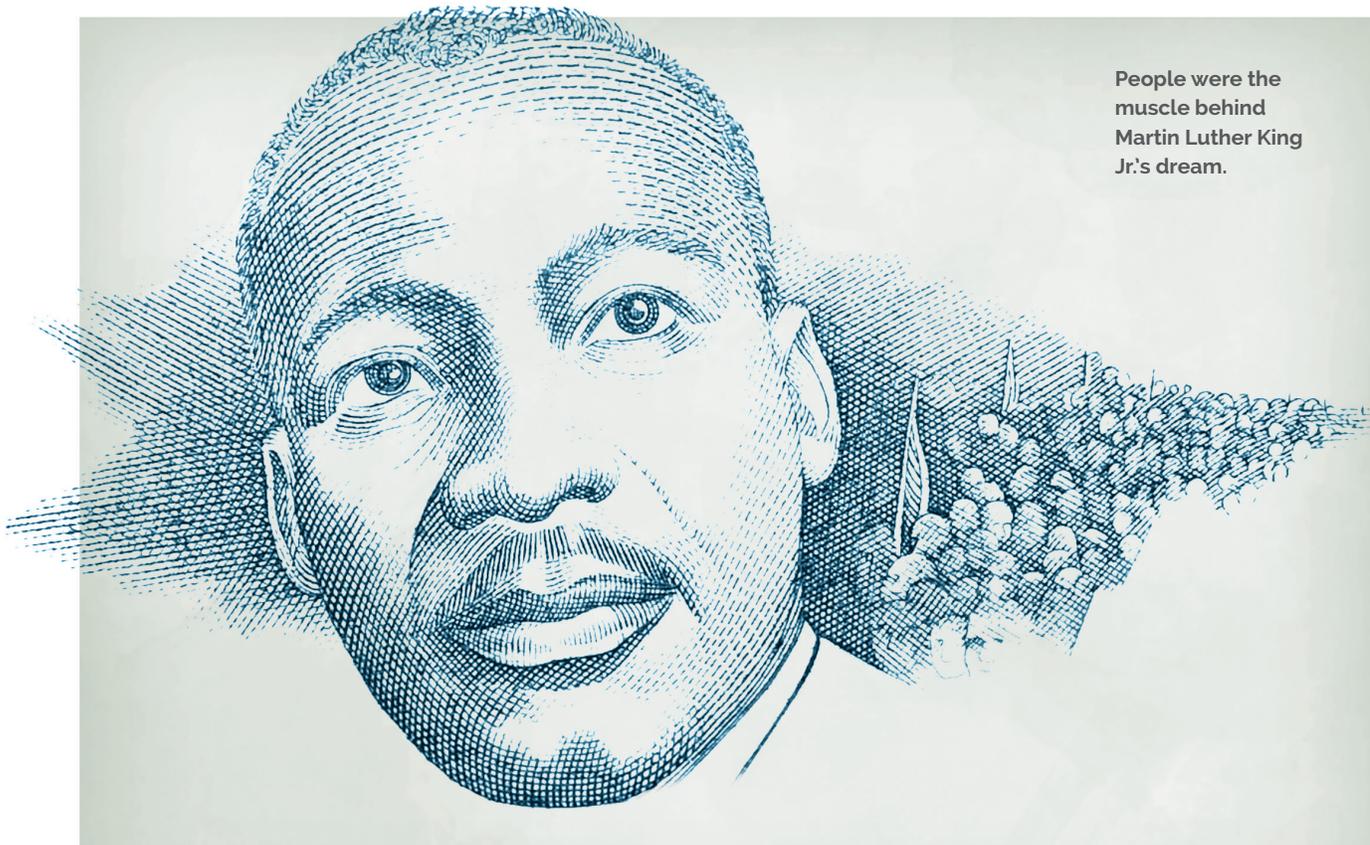
The biggest barrier to change is trying to change the minds of people who don't feel the same. We can yell at the tops of our lungs about things we are passionate about. We can scream from the mountaintops about how change can benefit our communities. If we scream and yell alone, our voices may not be heard. However, if we stand on that mountain while others stand with us, if we yell together, everyone will hear us. With more voices we are louder and stronger.

Change is powerful. Collaboration is key.

In 2016 the collaborative efforts of

I DREAM OF

ENDING THE STIGMA AROUND MENTAL HEALTH AND DISABILITY RIGHTS. MY WORK AS A SELF ADVOCATE, AND AS THE LEARNING AND PLANNING COORDINATOR AT THE SELF ADVOCACY FEDERATION, HAS GIVEN ME THE ABILITY TO NETWORK WITH MANY PEOPLE INVOLVED WITH ADVOCACY IN MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES.



People were the muscle behind Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

many bolstered a movement started by one man.

At the start of his U.S. presidential political campaign, then 74-year-old Sen. Bernie Sanders, from Vermont, started a democratic revolution.

Sanders stood behind a podium and laid out a platform many people could believe in: free education; free health care; fair taxation of the wealthy; a higher minimum wage.

Sanders himself grew up in a rent-controlled apartment. His family was not rich. But Sanders had a dream for a better America, so he became an activist. He talked to people — lots of people. He worked hard to find collaborators in community who would support his efforts. He believed he could make a difference. The more supporters he drew toward him, the bigger his impact was.

Now, with millions of supporters behind him, Sanders's revolution is still going strong — a revolution that, without the support he built around himself, might never have gotten off the ground.



“By working with others, I can work to fulfil my dreams. But along the way, I know there will be obstacles.”

I stated Sanders's age and his family's economic status earlier to prove two points. First, change does not discriminate. It doesn't matter how much money you have, as long as you have a dream. Second, change takes time. It takes time to work with others to build support for ideas you believe in.

One of my inspirations is Harvey Milk who, in 1977, became the first openly

gay man to be elected into political office in California when he won a seat on San Francisco's Board of Supervisors.

In the beginning of his political career he did not make gay rights a part of his platform. He tried to keep his status a secret. He soon decided LGBTQ rights needed to be a priority.

Milk had major support behind him to help make his dream possible. Although he was assassinated a year after he was elected, he did change the world. He helped other members of the LGBTQ community realize they could do anything — that who they love should never hold them back from pursuing their dreams.

As a member of this community, I am incredibly thankful and inspired by Milk's courage and strength to never give up. ●



The EndPoverty team accepts the City Manager's Award of Excellence for Stewardship in January.

A bold, collective vision

The end of poverty

BY SAM SINGH
AND LUCENIA ORTIZ
ENDPOVERTY EDMONTON

Imagine a poverty-free Edmonton, where children don't go to bed hungry; where there is no homelessness; where all Edmontonians have the economic, social, and cultural resources to participate in community life; where we come to a shared understanding that it costs more to manage poverty than to end it.

It is common for municipal governments and nonprofit organizations to try to reduce poverty, or at best, manage it. But can something so systemic and deeply ingrained in society be ended outright? EndPoverty Edmonton (EPE) was established to do just that — eliminate poverty within a generation (roughly 30 years).

Current estimates show that more than 100,000 Edmontonians, or one in eight residents, live in poverty.

Ending poverty, "is a bold and unapologetically ambitious goal," says Bishop Jane Alexander, one of two co-chairs of EndPoverty Edmonton. Alexander and fellow co-chair, University of Alberta professor Jeffrey Bisanz, along with other members of the Stewardship Roundtable, lead a diverse community of stakeholders in achieving this generational vision.

EPE is a collective entity that brings together people impacted by poverty; community leaders from many sectors; and four levels of government — municipal, provincial, federal, and indigenous. The Stewardship Roundtable, along with the Stakeholder Forum, Indigenous Circle, Investment Collective, and Count Me In Network, are responsible for carrying out EPE's mission.

EndPoverty Edmonton emerged from the 2014 Mayor's Task Force on Poverty, chaired by Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson and Bishop Jane Alexander. For more than two years, the task force engaged more than 3,000 Edmontonians from diverse backgrounds, and sectors in various platforms, to produce a groundbreaking achievement: the unanimous commitment from

Edmonton City Council to the EndPoverty Edmonton Strategy and Road Map in December 2016.

The EndPoverty Edmonton Strategy recognizes eliminating poverty is about so much more than economics. It starts with acknowledging that access to basic needs and the ability to live decently are fundamental human rights. Ending poverty is the embodiment of human rights.

EPE believes ending poverty is a profound act of reconciliation with indigenous people. Honouring the Treaty spirit acknowledges that Edmonton is in Treaty 6 lands. This guides the work of, and tackles the intergenerational roots of, poverty among indigenous peoples. It restores traditional values and relationships of trust that will build a community that breathes and lives the Treaty spirit.

The EndPoverty Edmonton Road Map is a community plan that outlines 35 sequenced actions to take place from 2017 to 2021; potential partners; and the investment needed to advance our community-wide focus on ending



Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson is looking to build up the end-poverty movement with each action from the road map.



ONE IN EIGHT EDMONTONIANS LIVES IN POVERTY.

THE ENDPoVERTY EDMONTON ROAD MAP IS A COMMUNITY PLAN THAT OUTLINES 35 SEQUENCED ACTIONS TO TAKE PLACE FROM 2017 TO 2021



poverty in a generation. The actions in the road map — aimed at lifting 10,000 people out of poverty — will address the immediate issues faced by people struggling with poverty; implement initiatives to prevent poverty, especially for our community's most vulnerable people; and advocate for policies to reduce systemic barriers.

Building a collective movement that starts with people who are impacted by poverty is essential. EPE's approach acknowledges people in poverty are the experts of their own lives, and that this initiative should be based around the concept of "nothing for us, without us."

This movement is fueled by the energy, innovation, and creativity of Edmontonians committed to achieving a great

vision through coordinated action. One such building block of the end-poverty movement is the Count Me In Network, spearheaded by the Edmonton

EndPoverty Edmonton emerged from the 2014 Mayor's Task Force on Poverty, chaired by Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson and Bishop Jane Alexander.

Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, along with more than 50 organizations representing a cross-section of community efforts strategically aligned with EPE. Count Me In was designed to change the conversation or, as Mayor Iveson says, "We have attempted from the very beginning to see this as movement building."

Leading research and best practices indicate some of the most successful poverty-reduction strategies depend on collaboration between partners and de-siloing efforts. Indeed, this is a part of the very DNA of EndPoverty Edmonton. EPE employs the collective-impact approach, which calls for a common agenda; shared measurements; reinforcing activities; continuous communication; and a central backbone organization between all partners.

Going forward in 2017, EPE is moving quickly, with a new executive director to lead the EPE secretariat at the United Way offices. A number of community meetings and public events are planned for this spring and beyond. ●



Richelle Serink, of Stantec's diversity and inclusion team, is excited about the company's role as part of the Pan Disability Connection.

Partners in diversity

BY SHAUNA McCALLUM **The Pan Disability Connection is a collective impact initiative led by eight organizations in Edmonton, working together to identify and eliminate systemic barriers to employment for people who live with disabilities.**

The PDC was initially started because more employers wanted to become inclusive, but there were challenges with collaboration between employers and agencies. Nonprofit organizations are the primary employment channel for people with disabilities, all using different approaches, messaging, and methods with employers. Our PDC mission is to provide coordinated employment services, supports, and research among pan-disability organizations, employers, and the Self Advocacy Federation, using a collective-impact approach.

The PDC began in 2015 and was funded for one year by the Edmonton Community Foundation. With the

funding from ECF, we were able to hire a partnership broker for the project.

Over the first year, the PDC steering committee mapped out the systemic barriers to employment from the perspective of nonprofit organizations that serve individuals, employers who are committed to creating inclusive workplaces, and the provincial funder for our sector, Disability Services.

Building trust and a shared understanding of the problem took time, along with difficult conversations around best practices, transparency, and commitment. Some members chose to leave the steering committee, and other members requested to be a part of it. Our steering committee now consists

of four nonprofit organizations (Gateway Association, Chrysalis, Employabilities, and Prospect); three employer organizations (Stantec, Enbridge, and Dynalife); and one representative from the Self Advocacy Federation.

After receiving funding from ECF for a second year, the committee began testing pilot projects to eliminate some of the barriers people with disabilities face when seeking employment. The PDC hosted two Ask the Recruiter Sessions, where prospective employees could sit face-to-face with some of Edmonton's largest employers in an informal, roundtable style. These sessions allowed more than 100 people to connect directly with employers, ask questions, and receive information on topics such as networking, interview skills, resume building, and how to stand out. It was also an opportunity for employers to connect with other employers.



PHOTO BY JOHN LUCAS FOR GATEWAY ASSOCIATION

Our systems map showed many of the challenges for job developers. In an increasingly competitive sector, the committee determined that a Job Developer Partnership would be a great opportunity to build trust among partners. Job developers from all of the PDC groups were invited for a lunch and interactive session facilitated by some steering committee members. Job developers connected

and learned from their peers, and shared successes and challenges they face. Job developers were partnered up with a job developer from different organizations, and were encouraged to continue to connect and collaborate. The steering committee will be bringing the job developers back together for a similar event to discuss next steps.

More recently, PDC has outlined two clearly defined goals we are aiming to achieve over the next year: build

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“PDC has outlined two clearly defined goals we are aiming to achieve over the next year: build a Business Champions Network and build a resource library.”

a Business Champions Network and build a resource library. We will create a network of inclusive employers from different industries to provide a community of practice.

The PDC has partnered with MacEwan University research students who will help us conduct surveys with various employers to learn about their organizational cultures; practices related to employing people with disabilities; and concerns or barriers they perceive and experience. Our research findings will principally be used to inform PDC efforts to develop products, services, and support to address the concerns and barriers.

The Pan Disability Connection is connecting with other employment networks and gaining more community awareness. In February, some members of the PDC steering committee attended a full-day Multi-Network Symposium in Red Deer, hosted by Cosmos and Calgary Employment First Network. This was a great opportunity to connect, collaborate, and share resources. This was the beginning of what we see as a great partnership.

The PDC also presented at this year’s Alberta Council of Disability Services Spring Conference April 26. PDC steering

committee members led participants through an interactive exploration of opportunities and challenges facing collective-impact initiatives. The PDC shared its progress and invited input into shaping our knowledge and strategy around this challenge.

What the PDC is trying to accomplish is complex and will take time. The PDC

has made a lot of progress over the last couple of years, but there is still a long way to go. The PDC will continue to advocate, provide support, and work collaboratively to create actions to help eliminate systemic barriers and ultimately lead to employment opportunities for people who live with disabilities. ●

COLLECTIVE IMPACT

The commitment of a group of actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem, using a structured form of collaboration.

There are FIVE CRITICAL COMPONENTS for establishing collective impact

1. COMMON AGENDA

Coming together to collectively define the problem and creating a shared vision toward solving it.

2. SHARED MEASUREMENT

Agreeing to track progress in the same way, which allows for continuous improvement.

3. MUTUALLY REINFORCING ACTIVITIES

Coordinating collective efforts to maximize the end result.

4. CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION

Building trust and relationships among all participants.

5. BACKBONE SUPPORT

Having a person or team dedicated to orchestrating the work of the group.

OUR VALUES
PERSISTENCE
INTEGRITY
AUTHENTICITY
PASSION
ADVOCACY
OPENNESS
COMPASSION
INNOVATION
FUN
COURAGE
IMPACT



Gateway's work is driven by our desire to transform community.

Through the lens of disability, our nonprofit — with a 42-year history in Edmonton and its surrounding areas — has empowered many people; families; schools; employers; and government to accept and see the value in all people.

We will continue, as influencers, innovators, and change-makers, to build strength and capacity in our community.

