

# Network Conversation Series

Summary of key topics on networks and intersectoral action  
to support an eco-social wellbeing movement in Canada

May 2025

PROJECT / PROJET  
Becoming a Network-of-Networks  
April 2024 - May 2025

HEALTH  
PROMOTION  
CANADA



PROMOTION  
DE LA SANTÉ  
CANADA



CANADIAN  
PUBLIC HEALTH  
ASSOCIATION

ASSOCIATION  
CANADIENNE DE  
SANTÉ PUBLIQUE



National Collaborating Centre  
for Determinants of Health

Centre de collaboration nationale  
des déterminants de la santé



**RÉFIPS**  
RÉSEAU FRANCOPHONE INTERNATIONAL  
POUR LA PROMOTION DE LA SANTÉ

# Network Conversation Series

- A 3-part virtual and bilingual discussion (February, March, April 2025)
- Focused on building a network-of-networks to support intersectoral action to nurture an eco-social wellbeing movement in Canada

See the [Health Promotion Canada](#) website for more project information

## **Hosted by:**

- Health Promotion Canada (HPC)
- National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health (NCCDH)
- Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA)
- Réseau francophone international pour la promotion de la santé (RÉFIPS), région des Amériques

## **Funded by:**

- Intersectoral Action Fund, Public Health Agency of Canada

# SECTION 1

Summary of each session

# Sessions

## Session #1: February 20, 2025

**Topic:** The network role in collaborative change making and learning

## Session #2: March 27, 2025

**Topic:** Network implementation from an Indigenous perspective

## Session #3: April 17, 2025

**Topic:** Resourcing a sustainable network

- Topics of interest to the network were identified in phase 1 of the project.
- Guest speakers were invited as inspiration for small group discussions during each session.

## **Session 1:**

The network role in collaborative  
change making and learning

# Session 1

## Guiding questions:

- How can a network of networks contribute to collaborative change making and learning?
- How does this relate to creating a wellbeing society as a shared purpose?
- How do we bridge from local to national and back to local? How do we incorporate this into our theory of change?

## Speakers:



Joël Nadeau  
Projet Collectif  
[joel@projetcollectif.ca](mailto:joel@projetcollectif.ca)



Jorge Garza  
Tamarack Institute  
[jorge@tamarackcommunity.ca](mailto:jorge@tamarackcommunity.ca)

# Presentation 1: Projet Collectif

- [Projet Collectif](#) is based in Quebec and has a mission to facilitate access to knowledge and promote exchanges between people and organizations that create a more equitable and ecological society.
- The presentation was made by Joël Nadeau, the cofounder, in French and shared information on governance structure and membership
- Their hypothesis is that strengthening key capacities (collaboration, knowledge and collective action) is at the core of how to transform practices and generate systemic transformations for an equitable society.

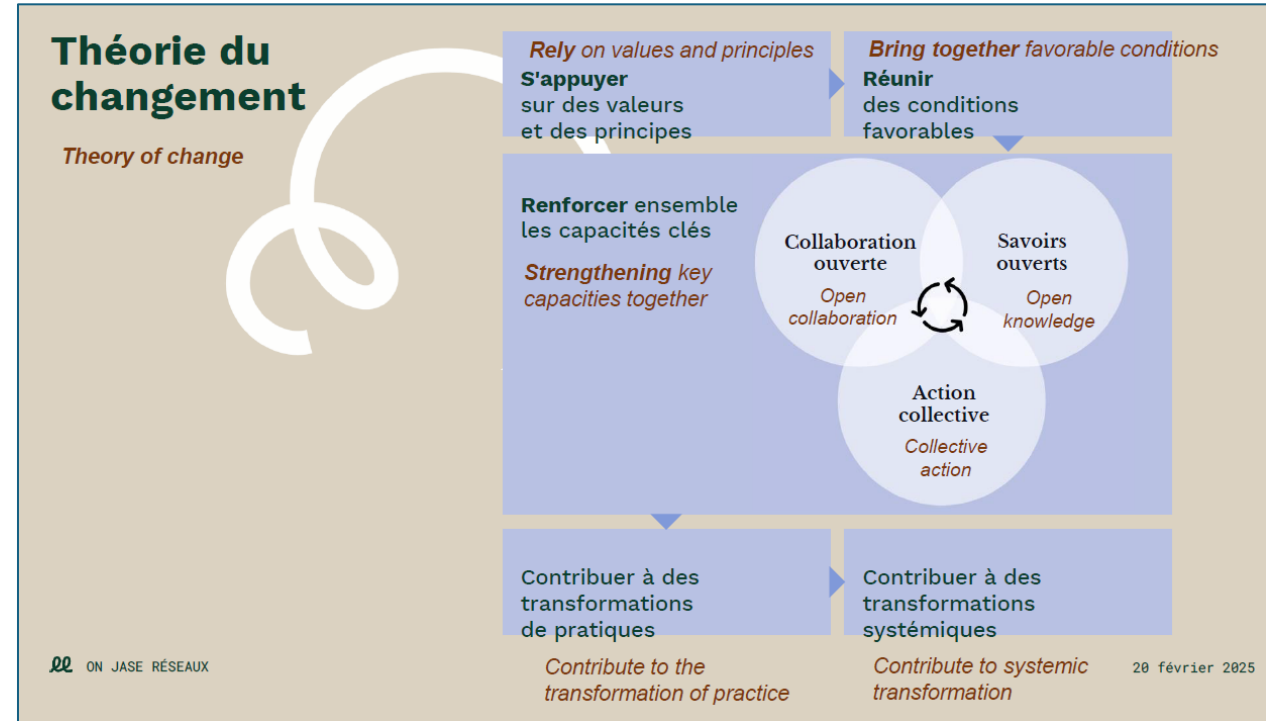


Figure: Draft theory of change (with translation)

# Projet Collectif (continued)

## **Examples of activities:**

- host open knowledge days
- support a community of practice
- partner with organizations
- evaluate based on learning

## **Key challenges they continue to explore and respond to:**

- The need for aligned action to create favorable conditions
- Growing a shared systemic vision and connections
- The importance of hyperlocal connection
- Ensuring perpetuation and sustainability
- Ensuring support for promising initiatives
- Supporting new forms of organization
- Continuing to build relevance, meaning and coherence



# Projet Collectif (continued)

## Key Tool: En commun

- Online platform open to everyone
- Includes ways to share knowledge, meet in communities of interest, and promote activities

**☒ En commun**  
Les plateformes En commun connectent les savoirs et les personnes, pour une société plus collaborative et ouverte.

*Common Space*  
The 'En commun' platforms connect knowledge and people, for a more collaborative and open society.

**■ Praxis**  
*Practice*  
A platform for discovery and sharing of knowledge for a more collaborative and open society.

Une plateforme de découverte et de mise en commun des savoirs pour une société plus collaborative et ouverte.

**■ Passerelles**  
*Bridges*  
A meeting and exchange space for communities committed to a more equitable and ecological society.

Un espace de rencontre et d'échanges pour les communautés engagées pour une société plus équitable et écologique.

ON JASE RÉSEAUX

20 février 2025

Join our project in **En Commun**, including our [Notebook](#) and our [Community](#) to help build an intersectoral network-of-networks to promote a wellbeing society in Canada.

# Presentation 2: Tamarack Institute

- The focus was on the [Communities Building Belonging](#) initiative of the Tamarack Institute
- Jorge Garza, the project director, presented in English and situated the project within the four Networks for Change (including: Climate Transitions, Ending Poverty and Youth Futures).
- The initiative has 50 collaboratives, 2 cohorts (Circle of Action; Pathways for Change), and 4 communities of practices (Strategy for Belonging; Community Safety; Emergency Preparedness; Neighbourhood Learning).
- They have over 8,000 learners who have participated and over 1,150 supporters signed on to the [Belonging Pledge](#)

## About Tamarack's Work on Belonging

Communities Building Belonging is an asset-based movement. We support municipalities, institutions, and individuals to develop strategies and interventions focused on making belonging a policy priority and outcome.

We help collaboratives achieve the following impacts:

1. Increasing a sense of belonging to place and people
2. Increasing social cohesion
3. Fostering equity and inclusion
4. Cultivating community regeneration by stewarding local ecologies and advancing disaster preparedness
5. Increasing a sense of safety
6. Increasing a sense of well-being
7. Enabling local economies and local food production

**RENEWING OUR  
COMMITMENT TO  
SHAPING A FUTURE THAT  
CELEBRATES BELONGING**

By Jorge Garza



**TAMARACK**  
INSTITUTE

# Communities Building Belonging (continued)

**Tamarack works at the community scale and uses 3 central concepts to support collaborative action:**

- Governments, organizations, and institutions have a role to play as facilitators, amplifiers, and connectors. In assuming these roles, it's critical to address power imbalances.
- Reaching our goals for equity and accessibility requires that we meet people where they are at, understanding that individuals have unique skills and talents to bring.
- We must find ways to inspire leadership in each other, to build partnerships that shift power, and to hold on to the vision of futures that are equitable, regenerative, and trust-centred.

**Tool to support this work:**

[Guide: Fighting Loneliness Through Conversations on Belonging](#) – how to host local conversations and call for a National Strategy for Belonging



# Communities Building Belonging (continued)

## **Jorge summarized the aspiration for a national Strategy for Belonging:**

1. Bring together cross-sector collaboration to share resources and expertise
2. Centre everyone's voices
3. Shift power to residents as co-creators of change
4. Enable population-level change by:
  - Encouraging municipalities to commit towards having a plan for building belonging
  - Increasing the reported sense of belonging among individuals

## **Recommended resources**

Westley, FR, Zimmerman, B. & Patton, M. (2006). Getting to Maybe: How the World is Changed.

Margaret J. Wheatley (2023). [Who do we choose to be?](#) Facing reality, claiming leadership, restoring sanity (2<sup>nd</sup> edition).

Plastrik, P, Taylor, M. & Cleveland, J. (2014). Connecting to change the world. Excerpt: [https://ssir.org/books/excerpts/entry/connecting networks for social impact](https://ssir.org/books/excerpts/entry/connecting-networks-for-social-impact)

Lesley-Ann Noel (2023). [Design social change:](#) Take Action, Work toward Equity, and Challenge the Status Quo.

# GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- 6 groups (4-5 people), 3 English, 3 French
- Each group was recorded and the transcript used to generate a summary using Chat GPT

## Questions to start the discussion:

1. What does it take to build a 'future ready' network? (i.e. ready for the next COVID-19 outbreak or impact of the US election)
2. What are the essential elements of a network for catalyzing collective action for a wellbeing society?

# SMALL GROUP THEMES

- Building a "future-ready network" involves **creating connections** at local, regional, and international levels, focusing on shared visions, trust, social cohesion, and flexibility, while leveraging technology and local connections for health and societal challenges.
- Emphasis was placed on **community-driven** approaches, empowering marginalized or First Nations communities to lead, develop internal capacities, and avoid dependency on external solutions.
- Catalyzing collective action requires addressing power imbalances, using accessible language, and focusing on community-specific needs, with **solutions coming from within the community** rather than imposed from outside.
- Shifting from charity-driven to **rights-based approaches** is essential for tackling systemic issues like poverty and stigma, while integrating disaster response strategies and mental health awareness into future-proofed networks.
- Successful networks need **authentic connections**, trust, and flexibility, with a focus on collaboration over competition, addressing limited resources, and fostering effective communication and civic participation.
- Public policies and funding programs should focus on **prevention and the determinants of health** rather than disease, while promoting collaboration and knowledge-sharing mechanisms to maximize the collective impact of local actions

# LARGE GROUP – COMMON MESSAGES

1. Community groups play a crucial role but face **ongoing challenges with inadequate funding**, despite being recognized for their importance in addressing societal issues.
2. Collaboration should focus on **complementing efforts** rather than competition at the local community level to maximize impact.
3. Building **authentic connections** based on trust, time, and common goals is essential for catalyzing collective action in networks.
4. Collaboration should be **prioritized**, and not seen as an extra task, with time and resources dedicated to establishing good collaboration habits.
5. Communities need to see themselves as the **leaders of change**, not passive recipients, with an emphasis on a shared vision and mutual respect.
6. Effective networks **require structure**, defined roles, and intentional leadership, with support and resources to empower local communities and foster collaboration.

## **Session 2:**

Network implementation from an  
Indigenous perspective



# Session 2

## Guiding questions:

- What are Indigenous-focused networks learning (urban and rural) about how to create and sustain flourishing networks that make a difference?
- What network engagement tools are working and how might we strengthen relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous networks? (e.g. Two-Eyed Seeing approach)

## Speaker:

Alexandre Bacon,  
founding president,  
Ashukan Institute

[info@institutashukan.ca](mailto:info@institutashukan.ca)



# Presentation

- Alexandre Bacon, founder of the [Ashukan Institute](#), presented in French, focused on Indigenous realities and cultural safety
- Shared information about the diversity and distribution of Indigenous communities in Canada
- Traced the path of colonization and the intentional destructive impact on Indigenous peoples. Including: residential schools (1874-1996), abuse in hospitals, non-consensual scientific experiments, Indian hospitals and sanatoriums.

## Joyce's Principle

*"[G]uarantee all Indigenous peoples the right to equitable access, without discrimination, to all health and social services, as well as the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health."*

*Joyce's Principle requires recognition and respect for Indigenous traditional and living knowledge and understandings of health."*

# Presentation

The discussion of strategies and best-practices to ensure cultural safety at the level of individuals, organizations and society was grounded in four main steps (see figure)



Figure: Cultural Security – Four Main Steps (with translation)

# Presentation

## **Best Practices for a Partnership Approach to Cultural Safety:**

- Understanding the realities of the community(ies) (e.g., hunting seasons, major events)
- Distinguishing between EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) approaches and the promotion of Indigenization, decolonization, and reconciliation
- Considering Indigenous languages and everyday languages
- Consulting Indigenous experts or reference materials
- Using cultural safety processes
- Taking the necessary time -long-term approaches

# Additional resources

Gebhard, A, McLean, S, and St. Denis, V (2022).  
White Benevolence: Racism and Colonial Violence in  
the Helping Professions. Fernwood Publishing.

[Building networks for systemic impact](#) (2024). The  
Australian Centre for Social Innovation.



“Human beings are fundamentally decent. We don’t want to harm others, at our core we want relations and connections. Humans aren’t the problem in solving inequity - the way we are networked is.”

Jack Manning Bancroft,  
Indigenous systems thinker,  
CEO AIME

# GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- 4 groups (3-4 people), 2 English, 2 French

Questions to start the discussion:

1. Based on your experience and what you heard today, where are the opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous networks to be in relationship with each other 'in a good way'?
2. What tools or approaches could support these opportunities?

# DISCUSSION THEMES

Opportunities included strengthening relationships with current networks that seem to be doing well:

- Canadian Network for Health in All Policies, hosted by the [NCCHPP](#)
- Work being undertaken by the [United Way in BC](#) to decolonize their granting process
- '[Halifax is for Everyone](#)' initiative

## **There is a continuing need to:**

- Be explicit about the work you want to do together, and ensure sufficient time and resources
- Non-Indigenous need to do their own work deconstructing biases and considering impact of colonialism
- Organizations need to value building relationships and provide resources and time
- Organizations need to ensure cultural safety is a priority and provide training

*Networks can be helpful for sharing experiences and tools to support putting things into action.*

# CLOSING REFLECTIONS

Alexandre Bacon provided closing reflections on what he heard in the group discussion:

- It continues to be important to talk about how we can rebuild bridges with Indigenous people
- Language is both a help and a hinderance (e.g. the term 'decolonization' can trigger feelings of guilt and resistance, which can slow change)
- It is time to reframe the message to focus on how Indigenous peoples have important perspectives to share, which Canadian society urgently needs to hear (including on health, economy, environment and justice)



# **Session 3:**

## Resourcing a sustainable network

# Session 3

## Guiding questions:

- What does a sustainable network business plan look like?
- How are foundations, social entrepreneurs, and governments approaching the task of funding/supporting networks?

## Speakers:



Jean-Marc Chouinard,  
Consultant

[chouinardjm@pm.me](mailto:chouinardjm@pm.me)



Kerstin Tebbe,  
Founder/CEO,  
Collective Mind

[kerstin@collectivemindglobal.org](mailto:kerstin@collectivemindglobal.org)

# Presentation 1: Philanthropy

Jean-Marc Chouinard presented in French, sharing his experience working with community based-organizations and foundations (including [Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon](#))

Networks can be valuable to a philanthropic organization as they can:

- Increase the quality and depth of mobilization around a cause
- Build capacity and develop the members (and organizations) of the network at different scales and forms of collaboration (e.g. communities of practice)
- Give voice to a diversity of perspectives, especially on questions of public policy

# Philanthropy (continued)

- Sustainability can be viewed through the lens of how long a network lasts (and related projects, tools/skills), but it can also be understood from the perspective of impact over time.
- Some philanthropic organizations consider themselves the financial system of the civil society sector.
- If a foundation is confident in the leadership and governance structure of an organization, they will often take the risk to invest.

There are many kinds and shapes for philanthropic organizations:

- Thousands in Canada, most are small
- Majority found in BC, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec
- Tend to focus on education, health and social service sectors
- All recognize that building relationships through dialogue and discussion are critical

# Recommended Resources

- [PourRallier](#) - Quebec-based communication organization with a mission is to develop, integrate and share influence communication skills among local, regional and national partners
- Article: Francois Largarde (2020). [A Practical Guide for Rallying Stakeholders Through Advocacy](#). The Philanthropist Journal.

# Presentation 2: Network Business Models

Kerstin Tebbe, Founder and CEO of [Collective Mind](#), presented in English, sharing her experience supporting large and small networks.

*“The key element of sustainability is impact”*

## Business Model

High level framework about how the network creates, delivers and captures value

3 components:

- **Shared purpose and value proposition** – clarity around why individuals and organizations are a members and what they get in return
- **Key partners/interested parties** – not necessarily members but important to the business model
- **Revenues and resource flows** – critical for funding the work

# Network Business Models (continued)

## Business Plan

- Translates the business model into something that can be operationized with goals, strategies, operational structure and financial projections
- Positions the network in the broader ecosystem
- Describes activities and governance structure (including membership model)

## Methods for Funding

- Range of revenue streams aligned with the shared purpose and membership
- Hybrid approach (fees, in-kind supports, grants)
- Partnerships with other organizations are helpful (e.g. backbone structure, collective fundraising)
- Resource development is also about enabling connectivity and collaboration, always rooted in shared purpose

# Resources

## Recommended Resources

- [Participatory Research on Donor Funding to Networks](#) (18 case studies – 9 from funders, 9 from networks)
- [How to Manage Networks](#)
- Article: [A new operating model for funding networks](#) (Alliance Magazine)
- Blog: [Analyzing network membership fees](#)
- Blog: [Generating revenue for networks](#)
- Blog: [Inside philanthropy and networks](#)
- Tool: [Collective Fundraising DIY Guide and Case Studies](#) (Institute for Nonprofit News)

## Additional Resource Links

- Overview: The Pan-Canadian Health Promoter Competencies (2015). Health Promotion Canada. [https://www.cpha.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/about/hpc/toolkit\\_e/Tool-17-HPCompetenciesCommunication\\_v2.pptx](https://www.cpha.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/about/hpc/toolkit_e/Tool-17-HPCompetenciesCommunication_v2.pptx)
- White Paper on the Value of Local Health Promotion (2023). Health Promotion Ontario. <https://www.allianceon.org/resource/White-Paper-Value-Local-Health-Promotion>



# GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- 5 groups (3-4 people), 3 English, 2 French

## Questions to start the discussion:

1. What are some concrete examples of achievements a 'health and wellbeing promotion network' might achieve in 3 years from now, that you couldn't have done individually or as part of another collaborative infrastructure?
2. If sustainable networks are impactful, what are the impacts / accomplishments that make them worth funding? Why do you think this way? How do we tell the 'impact' story?

# DISCUSSION THEMES

## **Examples of collaborative action:**

- 1. Wellbeing framework and common language** – by definition, a wellbeing framework needs to be inclusive of a diversity of sectors and the many possible solutions, due to the complexity of the issues. At the same time, we need to recognize the value, and challenge, of uniting the diversity of frameworks that currently exist. As one participant noted, “Frameworks are like toothbrushes, everyone has one, but nobody wants to use anyone else’s!”.
- 2. Advocacy** – is important but requires the cross fertilization of expertise and resources to avoid duplication and drive change. This could leverage the different sectors so that each is able to contribute their voice in a powerful ways (including the powerful voice of health workers) to achieve effective public policy.
- 3. Data and information** – to demonstrate impact and contribute to the evidence for effective action we need to work together, due to the complexity of what we are trying to achieve with a wellbeing society.

# CLOSING REFLECTIONS

## **The discussion identified the impacts and outcomes of a strong network approach:**

- Better use of resources, especially starting with small collaborative projects and building capacity and learning.
- Strengthening a sense of shared purpose and solidarity, with a link between national, regional and local action
- An approach to building relationships based on trust and managing conflict effectively, that ensures strong, inclusive and collaborative leadership for the network

## **Closing reflections:**

- Kerstin reinforced the importance of starting with concrete action to build together.
- Jean-Marc emphasized the importance of focusing on shared skills that are not individual but collective.
- Both encouraged this fledgling network to stay focused on a shared purpose and take the leap of faith together!

## **SECTION 2**

Summary of the engagement process

# Engagement Activities

- **Promotion** – by the 4 partner organizations through their networks/tools
- **Registration** – supported by the NCCDH webinar system
- **Virtual Meetings** – via [Zoom](#), closed captioning by [Wordly](#), translated slides, feedback via [Slido](#) polls
- **Facilitation** – 2 facilitators (1 English, 1 French/bilingual)
- **Agenda Template**
  - 10 min. – introductions
  - 20 min. – guest speakers
  - 15-20 min. – small group discussions (English or French)
  - 20-30 min. – summary for the large group, discussion
  - 5-10 min. – guest speaker reflections
  - 5 min. – feedback and wrap up

# Participants

- **Registration and Attendance** – over 100 for the entire series  
Attendance:
  - Session 1 = 34
  - Session 2 = 26
  - Session 3 = 25
- **Regional representation** – over representation from Quebec and New Brunswick (francophone participants)
- **Language participation:**
  - English 58%
  - French 30%
  - No preference 13%

## Self-identified roles:

- Health promoter, Community developer, Program manager (12-16 each)
- Consultant, director, educator (7-9 each)
- Knowledge translator, policy analyst, researcher (2 each)
- Environmental public health, epidemiologist, nutritionist, program consultant (1 each)
- Other – were described by 8 registrants as:
  - Academic/university faculty--retired
  - Agente de planification, programmation et de recherche en santé publique
  - Community Health Specialist
  - Conseillère scientifique
  - Front Line social worker
  - Link Worker
  - Retired from community services including health
  - Social worker

# Feedback

- [Wordly](#) was an effective closed captioning software for English and French
- Participants appreciated the balance between abstract ideas and practical experience
- The small group discussions may not always be directly linked to the work setting of participants
- There is a general sense that an intersectoral pan-Canadian network could be helpful

# Questions or Comments

**Please be in touch with your questions and comments!**

Lesley Dyck, Project Coordinator and Co-Chair, Executive Committee, Health Promotion Canada (HPC)

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Sarah Chaput, Director, RÉFIPS, région des Amériques

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## Also ...

Join our project in **En Commun**, including our [Notebook](#) and our [Community](#) to help build an intersectoral network-of-networks to promote a wellbeing society in Canada.