

The Canadian CED Network

# **Place-Based Poverty Reduction Literature Review**

June 2007

## **PURPOSE**

**This literature review is a basic reading guide for those involved in the Place-Based Poverty Reduction project with the Canadian CED Network. It links the PBPR project to related concepts, practice and policy from Canada, the US and the UK. By no means comprehensive, the literature listed herein hopes to provide a framework for debate and discussion that readers are welcome to use as they deem necessary.**

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211-620 View St., Victoria, BC V8W 1J6  
Telephone: (250) 386-9980 Toll free: (877) 202-2268  
Fax: (250) 386-9984 Website: <http://www.ccednet-rcdec.ca>

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## **1.0 Place Based Poverty Reduction**

### **1.1 Importance of “Place” in Poverty Reduction**

There is growing awareness in Canada of the importance of “place” in poverty reduction. Research shows that place matters in the quality of life for all citizens and the prosperity of nations. Place is important because it provides infrastructure, facilities, goods and services for its residents and shapes its members’ experiences and well-being. Communities are an important source of cultural, social and civic identity. Their small-scale allows residents to participate in decision-making.<sup>1</sup> Place can be our neighbourhood, our community, our municipality. However, more important than population size or geography is that a group of people shares a sense of working together for a common good. The Advisory Committee on Cities stressed the importance of place in its 2006 report: “Our communities are transformative places that create opportunities and have to be made resilient for change; they need the capacities, institutions and attitudes that will best connect them to national progress.”<sup>2</sup> This focus on place is crucial for social and economic reasons. Sherri Torjman, a leading Canadian expert on community-based work in Canada says that “quality of place affects the well-being and success of individuals and families. It influences local economic health and competitiveness which have a direct impact on the availability and quality of employment which determines poverty in each community. Individual communities face specific issues so a focus on place is required.” In the Action for Neighbourhood Change Neighbourhood Vitality Framework, the authors note that “neighbourhoods are well-suited to support long-term planning and community asset-building processes. Decision-making and priority setting are seen as legitimate at this level; social, economic, cultural and environmental realities are experienced; networks and social capital are found; the

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<sup>1</sup> A. Kubisch, P. Auspos, P. Brown, R. Chaskin, K. Fullbright-Anderson, R. Hamilton, “Voices from the Field II. Reflections on Comprehensive Community Change” Washington: The Aspen Institute, 2002....

<sup>2</sup> External Advisory Committee on Cities, “From Restless Communities to Resilient Places: Building a Stronger Future for All Canadians.” Ottawa: Infrastructure Canada, 2006.

capacity to support citizens in developing a critical mass of assets is located; and problem-solving capacity and innovation are fostered”.<sup>3</sup>

Place based poverty reduction looks at the deeper causes of poverty than traditional approaches and communities are beginning to lead the way in determining strategies to improve their own economic, social and environmental well-being. These initiatives are driving change at higher levels of government. At the same time, place based poverty reduction complements the traditional government approach of programs and services which alleviate the symptoms of poverty but never pulls people out of it. Communities recognize that services are essential, so their approach aims to enhance individual employability, create employment opportunities and ensure affordable housing is made available. On another level, those involved in these initiatives work to encourage employers to pay a decent wage, and make sure that income security programs deliver appropriate benefits and that those eligible are made aware of them.

## **1.2 Social Inclusion**

Place based poverty reduction is part of a wider “social inclusion” framework that is about the individual participating as a valued member of society. Social inclusion reflects a growing international recognition that investments in human and civic assets are core foundations to economic prosperity and social well-being.<sup>4</sup> The Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNET) has conducted research on this concept and has identified two main factors that need to be addressed to ensure social inclusion: social capital and determinants of health.

Social capital is the ability of the community to pursue its chosen purpose and course of action. This perspective recognizes that poverty is caused by exclusion from

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<sup>3 3</sup> Michael Bulthuis, Cheryl Gorman, Sean Meagher and Pat Steenberg. “ANC Neighbourhood Vitality and Framework Index” United Way of Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>4</sup> S. Coté, “The Well-Being of Nations, The Role of Human and Social Capital.” Paris: OECD, 2001.

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public, private and civic institutions but marginalized groups can use their social resources to overcome that exclusion and gain access to them.<sup>5</sup> By supporting the formation and activation of social capital, community-based organizations can contribute to the creation of a socially inclusive society.

As a determinant of health, adequate income is essential for individuals to secure food, clothing and shelter. It also contributes to their health and security. Some impacts of inadequate income are lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality and higher rates of serious illness than average.<sup>6</sup> These factors lead to social exclusion.

The solution to social exclusion is to have a socially inclusive society which is characterized by a “widely shared social experience and active participation, by a broad equality of opportunities and life chances for individuals and by the achievement of a basic level of well-being for citizens” (Canadian Council on Social Development). Social inclusion is a comprehensive, proactive vision which holds government and institutions accountable for their policies. It removes barriers to participation in society by all. It is at all levels of society: from the individual and family to institutions, communities and governments.<sup>7</sup>

### **1.3 Place Based Poverty Reduction in Social Inclusion**

The economic dimension is an essential component of social inclusion. Individuals who are economically self-sufficient are also more able to participate and contribute to change in their own life and their community. By focusing poverty reduction initiatives at the place level, individuals will benefit and have the opportunity to become part of a socially inclusive society.

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<sup>5</sup> M. Toye and J. Infanti, “Social Inclusion and Community Economic Development: Literature Review” Toronto: The Canadian CED Network, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> IBID

<sup>7</sup> IBID

## **1.4 The Place Based Poverty Reduction Approach**

Place based poverty reduction initiatives supplement and complement the public policy infrastructure. They also need the support and collaboration of governments and institutions to be successful. Since each place has its own specific issues, a focus on individual communities is required to develop appropriate solutions. With strong local leadership, the agenda for community change can drive change at other levels, including government.

This approach grew out of the comprehensive community initiatives that began in Canada in the late 1990s. These initiatives were a response to the cancellation of several social programs by the federal government, followed by downloading of programs by the provincial government, especially Ontario. The socially inclusive sense of society that had developed in the 1960s and 1970s had given way to the needs of the market and the imperative of the economy, so when the social network failed people living in poverty, many “grassroots” type of organizations began to take up the challenge. The goal of this new approach is to engage disadvantaged populations and neighbourhoods to participate in local governance and human resource development. These initiatives build on the ideas and strengths of individuals and recognize their capabilities.<sup>8</sup>

There are a number of similar approaches used by community building organizations in their efforts to reduce poverty and they vary according to their perspective. In the United States, this approach has come to be known as community change and is based on two core principals of comprehensiveness and community building. Non governmental organizations play a critical role in catalyzing, funding, supporting, implementing and evaluating social policy initiatives. The United Kingdom government is committed to evidence-based policy in combination with strong central policy leadership around equity and community regeneration. The government plays a

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<sup>8</sup> John Sewell, “Working for the Poor and Disadvantaged: Reflections at the End of the 1990s”, 1998: Ottawa: The Caledon Institute for Social Policy.

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strong role in setting and implementing social welfare policy and related research.<sup>9</sup> In Canada, two innovative initiatives are well underway. The United Way of Canada is supporting Action for Neighbourhood Change which is locally driven neighbourhood revitalization in five communities with the objective of enhancing the capacity of individuals and families to pursue comprehensive change, and build and sustain strong communities. The Tamarack Institute for Social Engagement with assistance from the J. W. McConnell Family Foundation and the Caledon Institute on Social Policy has initiated the Vibrant Communities Trail Builders where six communities across Canada are developing multi-faceted, multi-year poverty reduction initiatives in their own settings based on the key themes of poverty reduction versus alleviation, comprehensive thinking and action, multi-sectoral collaboration, community asset building, and community learning and change. More detail on these approaches can be found in section 2.6: Innovative Initiatives in Canada. Meanwhile, several member organizations of CCEDNET have initiated community driven collaborative approaches to poverty reduction.

#### **1.4.1 Learning**

Although each organization has an individual approach, all are focused on poverty in communities and taking a comprehensive approach to reduce it. As well, every group is committed to learning from these initiatives and applying lessons learned as they progress. Sharing of information and lessons learned is another important goal, so that all groups concerned with poverty can apply new knowledge that will lead to concrete progress in reducing poverty in communities. By working collaboratively, the goal of reducing poverty will be attained much sooner.

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<sup>9</sup> P. Auspos and A. Kubisch, “Building Knowledge about Community Change: Moving Beyond Evaluations”, Washington: The Aspen Institute, 2004.

## **1.4.2 Some Learning Networks**

### **CCEDNET**

The Pan-Canadian Community Development Learning Network (PCCDLN) was a two and a half year project of CCEDNET that examined and promoted learning about how comprehensive, community-based initiatives contribute to social inclusion. Running from October 2003 to March 2006, the project facilitated peer learning and developed evidence-based research to strengthen integrated models of service delivery that build assets, skills, learning, social and economic development opportunities relevant to local community conditions. The project was funded by Social Development Canada.

In CCEDNET's Place Based Poverty Reduction Initiative, one of its objectives is "to increase understanding of effective collaborative practices in comprehensive community development to reduce poverty in different typologies of population and setting by producing a tool box and report on impacts of individuals in poverty, and a peer learning program for stakeholders." Tele-learning and in-person workshops will be part of this process. (<http://www.ccednet-rdec.ca/en/pages/learningnetwork.asp>)

### **Action for Neighbourhood Change**

One of the partners in Action for Neighbourhood Change is the Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement. Its role is to facilitate learning between the communities involved by providing training, coaching, strategic consulting, and developing useful tools. Tamarack maintains a website that acts as a living archive of activities and learning. It will also produce and support on-line learning tools such as discussion groups and workshops.

Action for Neighbourhood Change coordinated a National Symposium on Neighbourhood Level Indicators in March 2007. Participants agreed to form a National Neighbourhoods Network that will facilitate sharing experience and comparing research findings on place based neighbourhood work. This is intended to enable community

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development practitioners, municipal planners, researchers and service providers to work toward a body of knowledge and practice that will significantly improve their capacity to improve neighbourhood well-being. The objective will be to combine the voices of many different sectors and organizations to develop a coherent collective “neighbourhood agenda” and make the case for long term investment by all levels of government.

([http://www.anccommunity.ca/whats\\_new.html#1](http://www.anccommunity.ca/whats_new.html#1))

### **Vibrant Communities Trail Builders**

A Learning and Evaluation Working Group has been formed to guide the Trail Builder learning and evaluation process. The Working Group will provide a forum where participants can: shape together the overall approach to the Trail Builder learning and evaluation work; periodically review and adjust this strategy; support one another in solving problems related to local learning and evaluation efforts; and share insights and lessons gained about learning and evaluation for comprehensive, multi-sectoral poverty reduction initiatives. The experiences of Trail Builders are discussed by the Pan-Canadian Learning Community who comes together on a monthly basis to share ideas, resources and strategies on local solutions to reduce poverty.

(<http://tamarackcommunity.ca/g2s3.html>)

### **The Aspen Institute**

The Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change has established a website called the Community Building Resource Exchange. This web site provides a broad array of resources and information about innovative community building efforts to revitalize poor neighborhoods and improve the life circumstances of residents and their families.

(<http://www.commbuild.org/index.html>)

### **1.4.3 Framework**

The framework for place based poverty reduction, as developed by the Caledon Institute of Social Policy is based on the assumption that poverty can be reduced through four interventions: meeting basic needs, removing barriers, building skills, and promoting

economic development. First, basic needs must be met. These include physical security and health/mental health. Barriers that prevent participation in training and the labour market must be removed by such things as ensuring access to dependable child care, offsetting work-related and health costs, obstacles to persons with disabilities, recognition of new Canadians' skills, and transportation. Skill building can range from basic life skill training, language, literacy and numeracy skill training, to job search training and academic upgrading and job training. Economic development includes job creation and retention, access to capital and technical assistance.<sup>10</sup> Building on this assumption, the Action for Neighbourhood Change approach stresses that interventions connect residents with one another and links them with supporting organizations. These interventions should develop and build collective organizational skills; create a shared vision and mission; engage and mobilize new champions and resources and act collectively to improve the social, cultural, physical and economic assets of a neighbourhood.<sup>11</sup>

Lessons learned by the Roundtable on Community Change of the Aspen Institute would add the following advice for initiatives to be successful. Participants need to address the external relationships and structural factors operating outside communities. It is necessary to first broaden the analysis of the problem. External structures can enhance or constrain the success of place-based initiatives so the approach has to link policy, politics and place on a broader level around the goal of expanding opportunities for poor people. The challenge is to balance and align the local and external levels. To do so, communities have to identify the causes of the problems they are experiencing. That means considering the historical, institutional and structural origins of problems that will put current problems into context. Then they must identify sources of power outside the neighbourhood that can help the community. With the results of those activities, participants can develop strategies for addressing fundamental issues. These can include finding powerful allies, working with the public and private sectors, and re-examining the

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<sup>10</sup> S. Torjman, "Community-based Poverty Reduction", Ottawa: The Caledon Institute for Social Policy, Ottawa, 1998.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Bulthuis, Cheryl Gorman, Sean Meagher and Pat Steenberg. "ANC Neighbourhood Vitality and Framework Index" United Way of Canada, Ottawa.

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assumptions and biases embedded in the community-building approach. Change can come if people think broadly, act more politically and proactively than in the past, and form non-traditional alliances across sectors.<sup>12</sup>

In its capacity as one of the developers of Vibrant Communities, the Caledon Institute is addressing some of these points. As a national policy institute, staff work on policies related to employment and income security that seek to reduce the overall burden of disadvantage by tackling structural sources of inequality. Caledon has produced a series of documents which document the need for appropriate income support, adequate minimum wages and educational and employment programs to reduce poverty. As well Caledon seeks to identify and reduce policy barriers rooted in federal or provincial policies and practices. Another part of their work with Vibrant Communities was to initiate a policy dialogue involving the 15 communities and 10 government departments that are members of the Pan-Canadian Learning Community.<sup>13</sup>

#### **1.4.4 The Process**

A process for community based poverty reduction developed by S. Torjman consists of five steps;

1. Start with community mapping of current and potential resources to identify strategic points of intervention;
2. Develop a strategic plan with clear targets for desired results and indicators of progress on strategic priorities;
3. Create opportunities in a holistic sense by mobilizing various sectors to undertake activities that create economic and social opportunities for low-income households. Focus on an area that a given organization does well and use that work as a springboard from which to promote opportunities for economic development and social well-being;

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<sup>12</sup> A. Kubisch, P. Auspos, P. Brown, R. Chaskin K. Fullbright-Anderson, R. Hamilton, “Voices from the Field II. Reflections on Comprehensive Community Change” Washington: The Aspen Institute, 2002.

<sup>13</sup> [www.caledoninst.org/Special\\_Projects](http://www.caledoninst.org/Special_Projects)

4. Develop partnerships: two or more groups contribute more and better combined resources than one. They can develop creative solutions and send the message that poverty reduction and job creation are concerns of the entire community.
5. Make selective interventions. The Aspen Institute has identified several economically disadvantaged groups that could benefit from place based poverty reduction: the working poor, the unemployed, the persistently unemployed, the dependent poor, and the indigent. Although there is movement between the groups, these categories help determine the best strategies for a given population.<sup>14</sup>

#### **1.4.5 Key Features**

Place based poverty reduction consists of several key features. It is comprehensive, strategic, long-term, holistic, participatory, multi-sectoral, synergistic, developmental, inclusive, and evidence-based. It is concerned with process and outcome.

Comprehensive: Based on the understanding that individuals, families and community circumstances are linked, initiatives address a range of areas. They can work simultaneously across a wide spectrum of social, economic and physical community development strategies or they can focus on a “strategic driver” that is consistent with the community’s interests and capable of inspiring support and investment. The experience of practitioners in the U.S. shows that stronger and long-lasting results come from building incrementally from a modest but firm foundation. They recommend beginning with projects that show tangible, short-term results, while keeping the broader vision in mind.<sup>15</sup>

Strategic: Instead of fragmented services and programs that merely alleviate poverty and often don’t reach their targets, a strategic approach builds on these programs by creating

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<sup>14</sup> S. Torjman, “Community-based Poverty Reduction”, Ottawa: The Caledon Institute for Social Policy, Ottawa, 1998

<sup>15</sup> A. Kubisch, P. Auspos, P. Brown, R. Chaskin K. Fullbright-Anderson, R. Hamilton, “Voices from the Field II. Reflections on Comprehensive Community Change” Washington: The Aspen Institute, 2002

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a strategic plan with clear targets for desired results and indicators of progress on strategic priorities.

Long-term: Solutions to poverty don't work overnight and cannot be tied to artificial boundaries. Some initiatives have a life span of 20 years (Core Neighbourhood Development Council, Saskatoon). The Trail Builders initiative was originally planned for three years, but obtained funding for another five years, until 2011.

Participatory: Residents are a neighbourhood's most important resource and all stakeholders must have a say in activities that impact their lives. From identifying the problem to devising a solution, local stakeholders' skill levels can be developed with the result that they will take on more leadership roles in their community. Place based initiatives lead to empowerment of individuals and contribute to a more democratic society. In its initiative, ANC takes a participatory or "strategic action" approach (Plan – Act – Reflect). This brings together local resources in new ways to produce creative, locally-based strategies for sustainable neighbourhood revitalization.

Multi-Sectoral: All sectors in a community are affected by local poverty. A multi-sectoral approach encourages partnering and collaborative efforts to reduce it. In a collaborative approach, all sectors take responsibility for a problem and build a community-wide vision to address the challenge. Collaboration adds additional resources, insights, and expertise to the initiative.

Synergistic: Elements of an initiative can be reinforcing. If an initiative simultaneously operates a variety of programs addressing a range of issues, the combined results will produce larger impacts than the programs would have independently.

Developmental: The process strengthens the ability of neighbourhood residents, organizations and institutions to foster and sustain change with a focus on the assets and resources already in the community. The goal of this ongoing process is to put in place

the will, resources and capacity needed to sustain local improvement beyond the life of an initiative.

Inclusive: Diverse sectors and groups are included in the initiative. Local leadership plays an important role in convening different segments of a community. Low income residents are ensured an opportunity to participate in shaping solutions to their problems. This approach expands and strengthens informal ties among residents within a community and also links them with supportive individuals, organizations and resources outside the neighbourhood.

Evidence-based: Indicators and measurement methodologies are part of this approach which will support decisions related to neighbourhood change strategies and will measure impacts.

Concerned with Process and Outcomes: To achieve long-term results, initiatives must set clear goals, track their work and endeavor to reach their targets. By establishing effective structures, initiatives can enable communities to reduce poverty, change policy and introduce innovation. In addition to seeking improvements in the lives of individuals and in neighbourhoods, place based poverty initiatives place value upon the process of change and on ensuring that capacity building occurs at the same time as program initiatives.<sup>16</sup>

## **1.5 Experiences in the U.K. and the U.S.**

The history of neighbourhood revitalization in both the United States and the United Kingdom is longer than in Canada. They have different approaches and experiences in this area.

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<sup>16</sup> S. Torjman and E. Levitan-Reid, "Comprehensive Community Initiatives" Ottawa: The Caledon Institute for Social Policy", 2003.

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### **1.5.1 Neighbourhood Renewal in Britain**

Beginning in 2000, the government of the UK has put into place a framework of ideas, policies and resources to support creative renewal policies as a central part of the mainstream of government activity. Before that programs were largely palliative. This change in policy came as a response to local efforts to make programs integrated, strategic, partnership-oriented and community driven. The local perspective emphasized how place and space matter in social and economic development. The new Labour government recognized that neighbourhood problems could be seen as long-term economic opportunities. Developed by the Social Exclusion Unit of the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (NSNR) was introduced to address the issues of poverty and social exclusion by giving communities the capacities to capture market opportunities and mainstream public service more effectively and to sustain renewal. With support from other mainstream policies, the NSNR is comprised of different elements including a Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, the development of Local Strategic Partnerships to facilitate multi-sector and multi-level efforts to improve service provision and economic opportunities in the poorest places, a program to support community capacity building and choices, programs to promote neighbourhood security, and, in 2005, the Stronger Safer Communities Fund.

The Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are key for changing local service delivery in disadvantaged areas and are the main delivery vehicle for the NSNR. The program is targeted at the poorest 20 percent of municipalities in England and focuses on public services aiming to cut crime, improve health, make homes and places more livable, help children and adults to learn and get more people into work through reviving local economies.

The overall experience has shown that neighbourhood renewal is a cumulative and long-term process. A decade of sustained effort is often required to community-led renewal of disadvantaged places. Since the NSNR is still in the early years, it is much too

soon for any definitive evaluation of the outcomes of the policy. The lessons learned that are relevant to this analysis of place based poverty reduction are:

- Develop frameworks so that the management structures for renewal are inclusive but also business-like;
- Use informed models of local change and better neighbourhood statistics and research so that strategies and evaluation can be evidence based;
- Audit community capacities and organizational competencies within areas before starting programs;
- Raise community capacities to make real decisions and to own assets;
- Integrated service planning and raised community capacity lead to better mainstream service delivery;
- Enhance local capacity to compete in the wider labour market and to encourage local entrepreneurship and social economy action.<sup>17</sup>

Some initiatives at the local level include the Sure Start Initiative, the New Deal for Communities and the Health Action Zone. For more information on the U.K. approach, go to <http://www.renewal.net/> which reviews what works in neighbourhood renewal in that country.

### **1.5.2 Neighbourhood Renewal in the United States**

In the United States, there is no single large-scale comprehensive regeneration or revitalization program as there is in Britain. There is an array of funding vehicles that provide support for locally designed comprehensive renewal. A few key federal programs,( in particular, the Community Development Block Grant) have been in place for more than 30 years and this continual source of funding and program support has been critical in sustaining growth of community leadership, capacity and expertise. As well, the voluntary sector plays a significant role in building, supporting and mobilizing

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<sup>17</sup> D. McLennan, “Remaking Neighbourhood Renewal: Towards Creative Neighbourhood Renewal Policies for Britain”, Ottawa: The Caledon Institute of Social Policy, 2006.

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local capacity and community leadership. In addition, the promotion of tax exempt financial vehicles has engaged the financial services sector with the result that there is a higher level of private equity investment and private financing that there is in the U.K. or Canada.

Lessons learned from the U.S. experience indicate that two critical elements crucial for achieving success are strong community leadership and capacity, and sufficient financing.<sup>18</sup>

Some initiatives are the Jobs Initiative and the New Futures Initiative funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Neighbourhood Strategies Project funded by the Ford Foundation.. There are many more initiatives described in the Community Building Resource Exchange (<http://www.commbuild.org/index.html>).

## **1.6 Two Innovative Initiatives in Canada**

There are two national level initiatives that are being implemented at the local level in Canada. Their goal is to reduce poverty and both are test cases for learning and sharing knowledge with others.

### **1.6.1 Vibrant Communities Trail Builders**

Vibrant Communities, which is supported by the J. W. McConnell Family Foundation, the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, and Tamarack – an Institute for Community Engagement, is a community driven approach to reduce poverty in Canada by creating partnerships among people, organizations, businesses and governments. This approach allows communities to learn from and help each other. Communities across Canada are linked together in a collective effort to test the most effective ways to reduce

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<sup>18</sup> S. Pomeroy, “Rethinking Neighbourhood Renewal: Review of the US Experience and Possible Lessons for Canada”, Ottawa: The Caledon Institute of Social Policy, 2006.

poverty at the grassroots level. The four key approaches in Vibrant Communities are comprehensive local initiatives, grassroots collaboration, identifying community assets and putting them to good use, and a commitment to learning. The Pan-Canadian Learning Community (PCLC), discussed earlier in this report is the heart of Vibrant Communities. It includes representatives from member communities and national sponsors and it meets regularly to discuss local efforts to reduce poverty and develop solutions by learning from each other's experiences. Six of the communities involved in the PCLC are Trail Builders, located in Calgary, Edmonton, Montreal, Niagara Region, St. John, and Victoria. They are engaged in the development and implementation of comprehensive community-wide initiatives to reduce poverty. The Trail Builders have implemented strategic, well-planned poverty-reduction initiatives over a four-year period, from 2002 to 2006. This period has recently been extended to 2011 to allow a fourth year of operation plus three years of support focusing specifically on the sustainability of the local efforts. In each Trail Builder community, a lead organization: acts as local contact on PCLC; plans and implements a local community plan for poverty reduction, administers McConnell grant funds and Tamarack coaching resources; works with project evaluators and sponsors to track outcomes; document lessons learned and share experiences with Learning Community members. By December 2006, Trail Builders had reduced poverty for over 32,000 people.

(<http://tamarackcommunity.ca/g2s1.html#update>.)

### **1.6.2 Action for Neighbourhood Change**

Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC) was a unique 2-year learning initiative that has been exploring and assessing approaches to locally-driven neighbourhood revitalization with the objective of enhancing the capacity of individuals and families to pursue comprehensive change and build and sustain strong, healthy communities. ANC works with local residents, non-profit agencies, public and private sector partners to develop creative solutions for sustainable community development and neighbourhood revitalization. Five communities (Surrey, Regina, Thunder Bay, Toronto and Halifax)

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were chosen by the United Way in consultation with local stakeholders. Partners in this project are the United Way of Canada, the Caledon Institute on Social Policy, Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement, and the National Film Board. The local United Way in the five communities act as enablers of the projects, and the initiative is supported by HRSD Canada, Health Canada, and Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada.

ANC undertakes strategic action research (Plan – Action – Reflect) to learn to facilitate improved living conditions for individuals and families. Key elements that are being pursued are to build the capacity of individuals, families and neighbourhoods, and to strengthen the responsiveness and coordination of policy and program strategies while addressing issues such as personal security, substance abuse, health, housing stability, learning and skills development, and literacy. This initiative combines resources in new ways, enhancing their effectiveness in addressing the complex challenges within distressed neighbourhoods. ( <http://www.anccommunity.ca/AboutANC.html>. )

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