What does a Connected Communites project look like in Toronto?

Wellesley Institute Labs

Wellesley Institute
advancing urban health

The Wellesley Institute works to improve health equity in the Greater Toronto Area through action on the social determinants of health.

About This Report
This report was written by Farah Mawani, sourced from the conversation by participants during a Wellesley Institute Lab with Camille Orridge on what a connected communities project would look like in the GTA. Notes were taken by Seong-gee Um, Rebecca Cheff, Jessica Carriere, and Jane Wang. The lab was facilitated by Jo Snyder and Emma Ware. The lab was designed by Jo Snyder, Emma Ware, and Brenda Roche with consultation from Wellesley Institute Senior Fellow Camille Orridge.

About Wellesley Institute Labs
Wellesley Institute Labs bring together groups of stakeholders, experts and community to push, stretch, and test research ideas that impact the social determinants of health and health equity. Wellesley Institute works in the GTA and beyond to ask how we can improve health and health equity for all. Wellesley Institute Labs use a combination of group facilitation methods, systems thinking, and creative thinking tools to bring out the complementary expertise in the room to generate new thinking and build new collaborations.

Copies of this report can be downloaded from www.wellesleyinstitute.com.

Wellesley
Institute
advancing urban health

Introduction

On Wednesday March 2, 2016 Wellesley Institute invited partners, collaborators and colleagues to participate in a Wellesley Institute Lab. The objective of this exercise was to create the foundation for building a Toronto-based project, initiated by Wellesley Institute Senior Fellow Camille Orridge, that links services for people from birth to employment. This lab was also the first in an ongoing series of labs as this work unfolds. Our aim is to engage organizations, partners, and the public across the GTA in conversations about the Connected Communities work and what a Connected Communities project could look like in the GTA. Wellesley Institute works to improve health and health equity in the GTA and we believe that this can be done by building community capital and coordinating across sectors.

David Morris is a Professor of Mental Health, Inclusion and Community at the University of Central Lancashire and Director of the Centre for Citizenship and Community, a collaboration with the Royal Society for Arts involving also the Royal Society for Public Health and London School of Economics. On the heels of his work *Community Captial: The Value of Connected Communities*, he joined us for a week and participated in the lab.

What follows is the synthesis of the discsussion that arose from March 2. More information on Wellesley Institute Labs can be found at wellesleyinstitute.com/wellesley-institute-labs.

Wellesley Institute Labs, 2016

Project Overview

There are lots of initiatives in Toronto, but they are not connected. People need many pieces (initiatives funded by various funders) that need to link, but how do they link? And what's missing? How do we move from the current focus on individualized programs to addressing the collective need of community residents?

To date, there is limited strength-based work. We want to focus on the positive things that create success along the way and how to build them into communities in a connected way so children can succeed. If children are born healthy and get to good employment, they can direct their determinants of health. Getting to employment drives other health determinants and creates health throughout the lifecourse. Currently in Toronto, discontinuities exist between initiatives targeting different life stages.

We want to answer the questions:
- If each stage of the life course prepares children for the next, what does the pathway to a good job look like ?
- What are the pieces that need to exist in a community to make sure a child is born healthy, and stays healthy all the way to getting a good job.
- How do we provide and connect resources that are needed to move people forward on their pathway to a good job?

With health equity and employment as our goals, we want to develop common outcome measures that include long-term outcomes.

We want to learn from the Connected Communities work of David Morris and his colleagues at the Centre for Citizenship and Community, and the work happening in the US around these ideas (e.g. Harlem Children's Zone), and try this in a Toronto community. For practical reasons, we'll focus on the education pathway. It is important to remember that what is needed will change from community to community, but the outcomes will be the same. It seems overwhelming but it isn't. We need a deliberate plan for how we bring necessary pieces together.

The Lab

Our first activity of the day was to create a program-based systems map across the lifecourse stages. We also mapped potential problems and barriers that we want to address with this project.

We focused on programs that are important to our vision for this project, to improve our ability to maintain good health and health equity throughout the life-course, and to improve employment outcomes in young adulthood.

The aim was to create a visual to serve as a tool to stimulate discussion and set the stage for thinking about what this project will look like. We wanted participants to think beyond what exists, and create a map of what ought to be, to give us a vision to work with.

The lifecourse stages we used to create our map included prenatal, infancy, early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence and young adulthood. We also had an All Ages section for programs.

We mapped four elements:

Element 1: Foundational programs

Foundational programs are envisioned as those that are critical to supporting individuals (and facilities) during different life stages.

Element 2: Linking programs

Linking programs are those that are designed to get individuals moving from one stage to the next. Linking programs prepare the individual for the next stage and links them to the programs they need to be successful in that stage.

Element 3: Breakdowns

Breakdowns represent barriers or setbacks that cause people to fall off course from an ideal/optimal pathway through the life stages.

Element 4: Looping programs

Looping programs are critical when a breakdown occurs; these programs are designed to get the individual back to an ideal/ optimal pathway through the life course.

Discussion Highlights

Overall Approach

The rich discussion during the mapping activity included questions and reflections on the overall approach we use in the activity and project as a whole. Participants raised the question of whether we should take a systems, rather than program approach. Participants highlighted the importance of including enabling factors and levers for connecting work.

The discussion also covered the need to focus on people vs. programs, highlighting that particularly from middle childhood to adolescence, success can depend on the people who connect and support youth rather than the specific content of programs. **The importance of thinking of programs within a policy context, including** barriers to a healthy environment, and the role of policy change in this work, was raised. The discussion highlighted the need to link different city and provincial government departments, rather than just programs. A participant suggested we think about individual and community resilience and what policy levers drive or block them, stating that they would find it useful for this work to provide a framework around this. The framework could outline what resiliency looks like, and what are we hoping for and trying to build at each of life stage for individuals and communities. Other participants recommended that we consider critiques of resilience, and ensure our use of it is not interpreted as taking away from government responsibility for policy, resources, and programs that reduce inequities.

Programs

Participants raised important points to consider about programs. One was the discrepancy in extent of programming for different life stages. For example, there are many after school programs for middle school students, but not for high school students. This was highlighted as a significant gap, especially

© Wellesley Institute Labs 2016
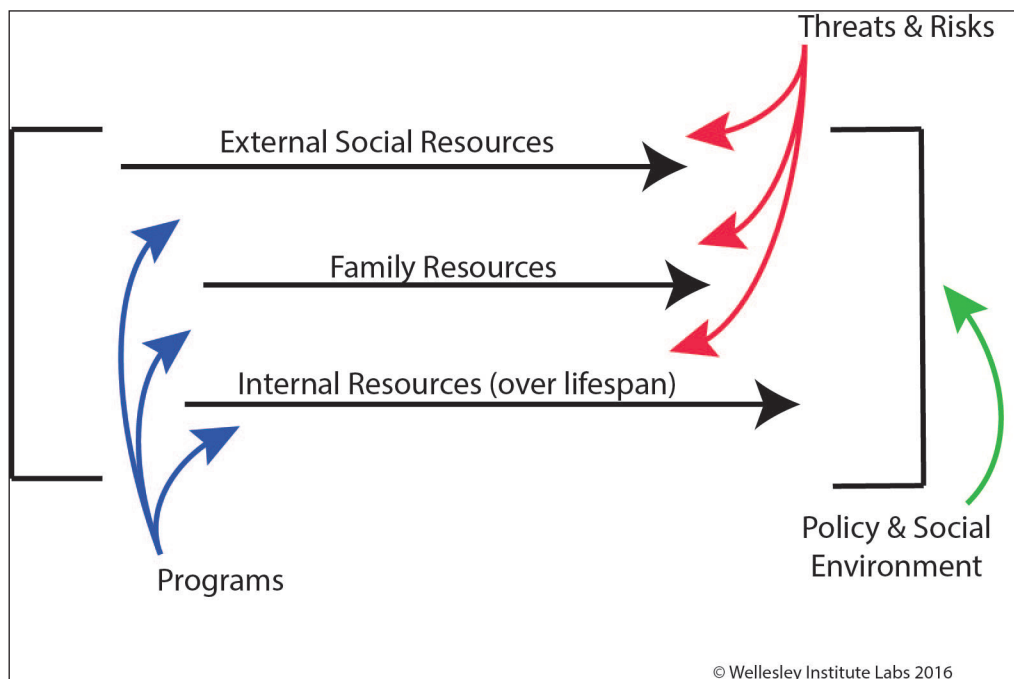
when programs work very differently at different life stages. In addition, some foundational programs are also linking programs (e.g. leadership training from adolescence to young adulthood).

Another key discussion point was the need to consider programs for parents and families, to enable them to provide a supportive environment. A participant suggested we think of a child nested within circles of family, community/neighbourhood, and institutions. A socio ecological model developed for a previous Wellesley Institute Ideas Lab provides an illustration of this (see Appendix A).

There was further discussion about the need to integrate family resources, and internal resources into our thinking about the external resources needed for young people to succeed. In addition, it is important to consider the threats that exist at all these levels, and policy incentives and disincentives due to funding constraints, etc.

The Heckman Curve, which highlights the larger return on investment for action in early childhood, is significant to consider when reviewing the results of our mapping activity. Our map included fewer programs for infancy than they did for the later life stages, which doesn't reflect the larger return on investment for action in early years.

Success in infancy has a lot to do with family and parent support, so policies/programs focused on parental leave, housing, child-care, etc. are important. Family and parent support continues to be a key
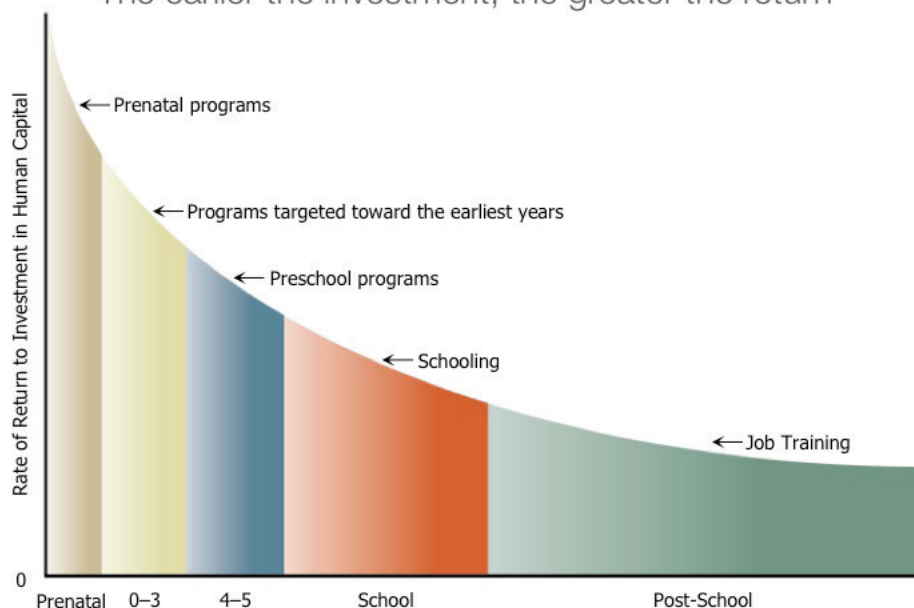
The Heckmen Curve. Source: http://heckmanequation.org/content/resource/heckman-curve

factor throughout childhood and early adulthood but relationships with families change as children grow and different factors kick in later.

A family lens is very important in this work. In adolescence, there is also value of a focus on youth separate from family. Success Beyond Limits, which focuses on reducing the impact of external factors that negatively affect the educational success of youth in Jane-Finch, is seeing this in their outcomes.

A lot of programs kick in once children reach school age and contact with government and nonprofit service providers begins. So there is a big concentration of these programs in childhood, then they dwindle at adolescence. A large majority of families in Toronto are newcomers and particular intergenerational tensions arise between adolescents and their parents and families. Can we move from equality to equity, and add in tailored local action to address specific local needs (e.g. specific parenting programs for young Black fathers in Regent Park)? Policy is moving to equity.

A participant raised the question of whether the scale of interventions matches the scale of needs. A suggestion was made to look at how each of these components are linked with each other (e.g. which breakdowns are linked with which programs). Another suggestion was made to consider how we reach out to communities and get them to resources, taking into account safety and co-location of services in the face of transportation barriers. At the end of the mapping activity and discussion, participants felt that everything on the board made sense and was relevant. The challenge, however, is making progress when everything is on the board. Participants felt that we need a sharper understanding of the most important levers on this map for communities to improve their quality of life, and that it is hard to sharpen our focus without input of community members. Participants want to know what interventions matter to communities, based on a combination of research evidence and community input. Camille agreed and clarified that this Ideas Lab is a starting point to bring something to a community.

Community Selection

A participant asked if the project would focus on disadvantaged communities. Camille responded that the focus would be on disadvantaged communities, but on solutions that include Cities 1, 2, and 3. She added that we are looking to focus on a community that includes Cities 1-3 in the same geography.

We need to take a community (however defined) approach, work with community, build connections in community. We need a master map/plan of what ought to be, what exists and what are the gaps. We need to determine how we would select which community to start (e.g. don't go into communities where lots of work is done). Participants discussed the permeability of community in Toronto. There is high population mobility and social networks stretch beyond geographic areas. In the context of lots of movement within the city, a key criterion for selecting a community would be the presence of a strong community organization with connections on the ground and connections at the right levels of government. Participants suggested that we look at what the data tells us about where hotspots and needs are, and get buy in from organizations that provide data, then check with community about whether the map is true to their lives. Participants raised the question of whether we go into an area with greatest need or where we're most likely to be successful. Participants discussed the importance of knowing where the opportunity is as well as where the need is. Sometimes it's hard to implement changes in communities where there are successes. It can be easier to get buy in from communities with great need, where there are minimal programs and services.

A participant suggested that we look for communities where good things are happening and then match communities so learning can be shared.

Another participant suggested that there would be receptivity to us selecting a tower that is part of the City of Toronto's Tower Renewal program, working to facilitate building more connected communities. The program takes a community development approach and focuses on the social environment of towers in addition to quality. A participant working in Regent Park highlighted that though it is a community that is full of services, it is also going through a huge change, with fissures and cavities because of that change. Connectivity of services and programs is questionable. We need to learn about what connectivity is, what makes glue that connects services and programs, what fractures the glue, and what light comes through to shine on problems?

Despite all the resources being directed to Regent Park, youth are still being murdered, there is a huge unemployment rate, and there are gaping holes in services, such as mental health and trauma services where a high proportion of residents are from Syria, Somalia, Sri Lanka, etc. This is a profound time for Regent Park and the City of Toronto. A landscape of care is needed to keep glue for a community in transition, where everything is changing all the time.

Regent Park could be used as a model learning opportunity regarding the approach needed to connect services and programs within a community. Because of its transformation different levels of government are looking to it as model, and other communities (local and global) are looking to it as a model. For example municipal government officials recently stated that they were using the community consultation process for the new Regent Park Community Centre as a model for other communities.

We need to think around how we define community, are we defining it as neighbourhood?

Communities are not homogenous and there is isolation within communities, and varied inequities and access to services and programs within neighbourhoods and communities.

Community readiness is important, not just the readiness of service providers. Communities with lots of violence will be preoccupied with this rather than community networking. They will be focused on getting from A to B safely. We will have to find community leaders who are willing to be champions. In East Scarborough, one of the successes is that the East Scarborough Storefront, which uses the power of collaboration to support people and build community in the inner suburban neighbourhood of Kingston Galloway/ Orton Park (KGO), was built from the ground up. It was created by community and service providers. An existing organization would need to reorganize to be a community backbone organization. This work needs to be ground up to be a success in the long term.

We need to consider whether we can really do everything within a local geography or whether we also have to look at broader geography where we can affect change on the issue of employment.

Recommendations from David Morris

David Morris gave a presentation about what he and his team have learned from their Connected Communities work. He highlighted that connections and the capacity to connect assets should be harnessed, appreciated, protected, and cultivated. He emphasized that the approach programs take, not just what the programs focus on, is important. Solutions that rely upon and foster agency among citizen are of higher value than those that treat citizens as mere service consumers or clients. The role of public servants

transforms to that of a weaver, enabler, who realizes assets, and manages risks along side communities. Connected Communities depend hugely on the quality of people implementing programs and services, and the relationships they are able to build within the context they are working in.
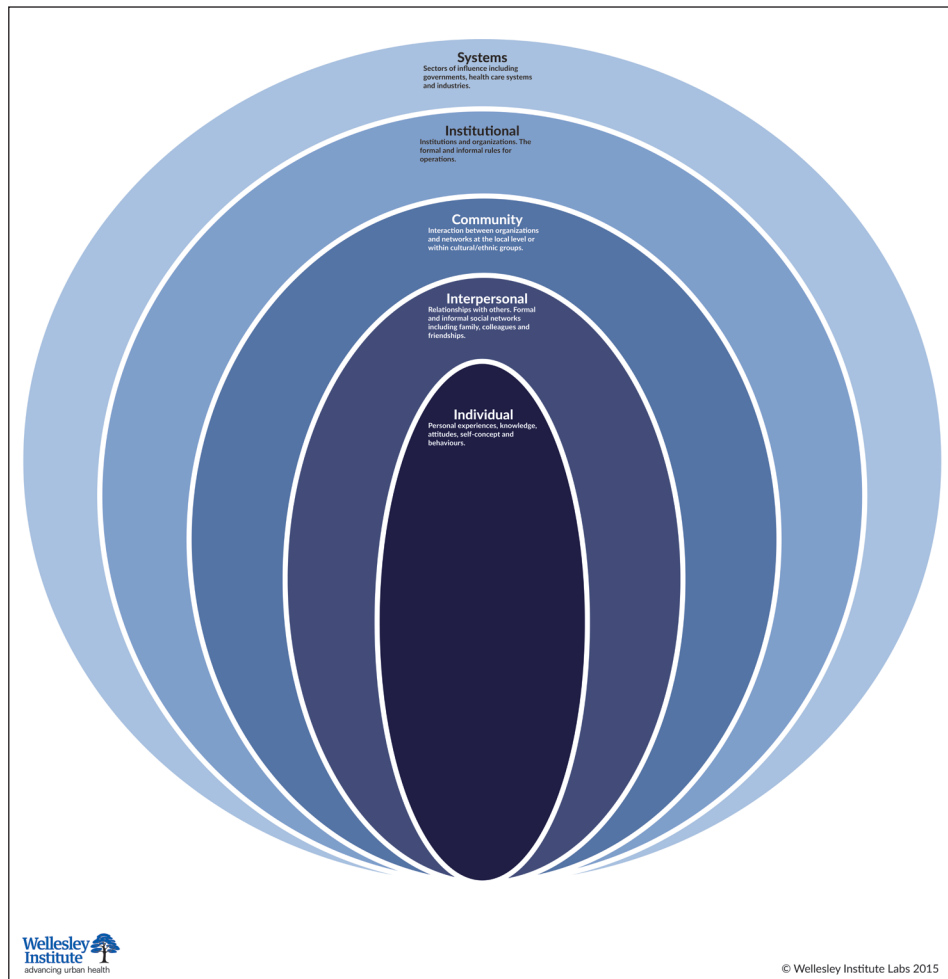
He recommended the following for transferring a Connected Communities approach to Toronto:

- Approach that is replicable
- Availability of well regarded umbrella organization - contributes an "operating system" to optimize program value
- Amplify further the value and profile of existing community initiatives
- Add value to existing, diverse processes and programs for community organizing
- Add legitimacy value to calls on public investment
- Show the economic case for unlocking community capital
- Meeting the community engagement learning needs of service delivery organizations and their professionals towards cultural transformation (asking questions about social networks of clients, knowing why this matters)
- Support the case that tangible achievements are demonstrable within timescales that are necessarily not short term

Next Steps

- Summarize discussion and share with participants
- Follow up with participants about core values/guiding principles for project.
- Develop criteria for community selection
- Develop goals for each life stage, and map what is needed to achieve those goals (based on what suggested in Ideas Lab)

Appendix A

Systems
Sectors of influence including governments, health care systems and industries.

Institutional
Institutions and organizations. The formal and informal rules for operations.

Community
Interaction between organizations and networks at the local level or within cultural/ethnic groups.

Interpersonal
Relationships with others. Formal and informal social networks including family, colleagues and friendships.

Individual
Personal experiences, knowledge, attitudes, self-concept and behaviours.

Wellesley
Institute
advancing urban health

© Wellesley Institute Labs 2015

Appendix B - Notes from Activity 1

Prenatal

Foundational	Linking	Breakdown	Looping
Support and adequate nutrition during pregnancy -Prenatal care -Pre-natal care/nutrition (healthy moms) -Better beginnings, better features (program name) -Pre-natal mental health programs -Prenatal health edu. and screening - parenting programs - primary care		Poverty	

Infancy

Foundational	Linking	Breakdown	Looping
-Parenting programs -Early ID for child development - Accessible quality daycare -Infant mental health - Early "flags" (population-based) - Immunization	Prenatal to Infancy Programs/ services: - Public health nurse visits -Parenting support groups -Mothers healthy eating during pregnancy to healthy eating in young child -Gen Practitioners - Public Health Programs (e.g HARP) - Prenatal classes	- Affordable infant health supplies (diapers, food, toys, etc) - Poor quality childcare	Children mental health centres for infants and parents

Early Childhood

Foundational	Linking	Breakdown	Looping
-Family resource centres - Parents for better beginnings -Peer support/learn & play groups -Daycare -Head-start -Sex ed -Black Daddies program -Public education -Affordable childcare so parents can work -Early childhood education -Targeted supports on keeping boys interested/engaged from Kindergarten on	Infancy to Early Childhood Programs: Parent and baby to parent and toddler to etc. type programming (informal to formal) Understanding school – preparation and orientation Childcare centres Preschool programs School readiness programs and supports Family support programs (ie. DEYCs/OEYCs???) Continuity in childcare	- Unidentified learning disabilities - Falling through cracks in early childhood - physical illness (ie. Childhood cancer or ill parents/caregiver) - lack of parent role models - Childhood abuse	-High quality early childhood ed -Social issues screening in primary care -intervention for young kids exposed violence at home -Mentorship programs

Middle Childhood

Foundational	Linking	Breakdown	Looping
Before and after school programs Breakfast programs Programs for social skills, Autonomy and competency in youth 11-17 After school programs School age childcare Transition support, credit and skills Tutoring services Social and emotional education Promotion of healthy relationship in middle childhood and teen years Cultural opportunities Community based participation in policing decisions Dedicated government funding to programs that support employment	Early to Middle Childhood Physical activity promotion Early intervention at elementary stage Limited services funding Early years school readiness Play-based or high quality kindergarten L.I.T. city of Toronto Family of schools transition support Peer to peer networking and mentoring College bridging	Streaming Low school achievement Transfer student Identified special mental health Death of a parent or family member Undiagnosed learning difficulty	De-streaming Transfer student supports Sponsorship programs for rec equipment Tutoring Educational supports Supports and accommodation for school age children with learning difficulties Mentorship programs for kids falling behind Peer support Mentorship programs PTSD mental health awareness programs Healthy self esteem programs Recreation and sports Breakfast programs Anti bullying

Adolescence

Foundational	Linking	Breakdown	Looping
Connections with adult allies Leadership training Mentorship and youth peer support Youth space Youth employment Youth to youth mentorship Stay in school support programs Teen drop in Youth recreation programs Career mentoring Leadership programs	Talking circle Intro to college and university programs for youth Communication skills Programs for young people leaving care Human rights training Mental health support for post secondary transition *Non-comprehensive employment supports (IPI, police run) Job readiness program Post secondary education prep Referral to own primary care provider Co-ops Guidance counsellors Transition year program Pathways to education Rites of passage	Discrimination Domestic abuse Family abuse Teen pregnancy Failure at school Lazy referral systems Suspension and expulsion Lack of resources to participate Carding Job availability	Trauma informed environments Youth space Reintegration programs and section 23 De-streaming Youth outreach workers Pre-charge diversion Transfer student supports Tutors and coaches Appropriate youth counselling Restorative justice Mental health support for young parents and children Recreation centres Peer support Coop programs in high school

Young Adulthood

Foundational	Linking	Breakdown	Looping
Life skills training and support Health education (pregnancy, std's, sex-ed) Postsecondary employment training Mental health supports Settlement programs Employment supports (job search resume writing) Volunteer opportunities Diversion programs for youth in the criminal justice system Scholarships Decent jobs Post-secondary transition	Linking program College bridging programs Co-ops Guidance counsellors Peer to peer networking and mentoring	Fired from employment Addictions Truancy Cyclical underemployment Need to find work	Online Learning options Academic bridging Attachment to caring adults Workplace advocacy Linking organizations Community Evaluation of young offenders programs Deputation training Support for education programs Housing

All Ages

Foundational	Linking	Breakdown	Looping
-Arts programs - Ways to contribute to community - Sports programs - Housing - Healthy nutrition (food security) Recreation programs -Early childhood education and care - Access to green space - Active recreation (all ages) - Affordable housing -Public health care -Ability to practice faith of choice - Health Care - Place to go to find resources - Sport & rec - Legal support - Places to meet - Opportunities for creative expression - Ways to influence schools etc. -A health environment - Peer support groups - Food services - Opportunities &supports to learn - Pre-employment programs -Access to education - Living wage -Access to transition	-Information/file transfer -Community backbone organization	- Abuse - Loss of family income - Loss of housing - Family violence - Illness or death in family - mental health issues - Unhealthy social context - Exclusion - Social isolation - Cumulative effects of discrimination - Loss of employment (poverty) - Unstable housing - Domestic Violence - Racism/discrimination - Job loss (Family) - Family illness or death - Parental unemployment and precious employment or other labour market stressors - Poor educational opportunities - Parents unemployed - Family poverty - Poverty - Lack of connectivity amongst organizations - Bullying - Losing friends or family to violence	-Mentorship programs -affordable family counselling -strong peer support - primary care linked to community support programs - Mentorship - Skills building programs - Support to redress human rights abuses - Financial support programs - Crisis intervention - Programs focused on inclusion - Opportunities for success (agency) - Grief/bereavement counselling (individual and group programs) - Immigrant/refugee support/ESL programs - Housing support and placements - Raising awareness about mental health issues - Mental health supports - Addictions services (from harm reduction to full recovery oriented programs) - Assessment and educational supports - A positive place to belong-trust - Child protection services - Cultural sensitivity training for healthcare workers, teachers, volunteers