

The Promise and Potential of a  
Community Response Network  
in Greater Victoria

By

Hope Hart

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## **Defense Committee**

**Client:** Diana Gibson, Executive Director

Community Social Planning  
Council of Greater Victoria

**Supervisor:** Dr. Tamara Krawchenko

School of Public Administration, University of Victoria

**Second Reader:** Dr. Sarah Marie Wiebe

School of Public Administration, University of Victoria

**Chair:** Dr. Astrid Vanessa Pérez Piñán

School of Public Administration, University of Victoria

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It is imperative to acknowledge the complex harm, and systemic issues university institutions and academic research have created due to their settler-colonial structures and the negative impact these have had on racialized and marginalized communities, Indigenous land, and the persisting power dynamics within current institutions and equity-denied groups. Therefore, this researcher recognizes these truths, names the project's interactions in these systems, and is open to gaps in knowledge, experience, and the need for intersectionality as a third-generation Okinawan Canadian settler on these lands.

Finally, the researcher would acknowledge the invaluable support of this researcher from their advisor, Dr. Tamara Krawchenko, and the client Diana Gibson during this capstone project.

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

This capstone project for the Victoria-based organization, Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria, researches, assesses, and recommends the viability of a Community Response Network (CRN) in the Greater Victoria region. Community Response Networks convene diverse groups to provide wraparound support, advocacy and service provision for vulnerable individuals and populations. This project focuses on collaboration, community development, and crisis response within the non-profit and social services field. The research goal identifies whether the CRN model will be effective in the Greater Victoria region for collaboration, advocacy, and response to community needs. The capstone completed three significant deliverables: i) a literature review, ii) a needs assessment, and iii) recommendations for the client's first stages of implementation if a CRN is deemed an asset to the community. The literature review demonstrates the breadth of research and resources on community collectives and response networks. The types of sources discovered are three-fold in their themes and focus: i) community-based sources, ii) academic and formal analysis, and iii) periphery themes and topics that support the functioning of a Community Response Network. The needs assessment uses a descriptive research approach by asking questions about the need or capacity for a CRN model among stakeholders in the community. The project works to elaborate on the theoretical aspects of community work while gathering qualitative data through interviews with local non-profit and organizational leaders in the region. The third deliverable of options to consider takes the compounding findings and research to analyze the leading practices for a Greater Victoria CRN and provide recommendations for the next actionable steps. The methodology and principles of Community Based Research are used when connecting with community organizations. Thematic analysis and other methods translate the qualitative data into a needs assessment and recommendations for the Community Social Planning Council's future planning and application use.

### Methodology and Methods

This project draws on a conceptual framework identified in the themes from the literature review. This framework includes themes of social change, leadership, and the identification of current leading collaborative practices, which all impact the viability of a Community Response Network in the region. This framework guides the thematic analysis of the data collected using a mixed methods approach with open-ended interviews of thirteen participants and quantitative data in mapping the current networks in the region. Principles of Community Based Research were used when analyzing the information gathered. Three principles that were implemented were identifying the power dynamics in collaborative practices and current networks, focusing on recommendations that builds off the strengths, capacities and resources already working in the region, and aligning this research with other efforts to support long term sustainable solutions in coordinated response. In the needs and assets findings section, thematic analysis and deep reading helped identify the

viability of a CRN in the region. In addition, coded themes were established from the participants' interviews that informed the final findings and recommendations.

## Key Findings

Key findings are derived from the analysis of data in interviews and the completed needs assessment which is reinforced by the literature review. There are five key findings aligned with the data collection from interviewing thirteen non-profit and organizational professionals from multiple organizations in the Greater Victoria Region. These five findings include – 1) the current assets within the region, including the types of networks and collaborative spaces that groups find to be impactful and effective 2) system change activities required for sustainable and transformational coordinated community responses 3) the importance of community-led solutions and citizen participation, specifically those with lived or living experiences or other equity-denied groups 4) Identifying leading practices in collaboration and community response 5) An understanding of diversity, inclusion, and community and their impact on collaboration and need in a Community Response Network. Specifically, by identifying how to uphold Indigenous resurgence efforts, decolonizing tools, and promoting equitable approaches to social change.

The literature review reinforces these findings through examining the existing literature on the themes, including theories on social change and collaboration, leadership in collaborative networks, and community networks' leading practices. The findings are aligned with the five findings including the foundational ideas of collaboration, identifying the interconnection between networks and collaboration with the importance of systems change thinking, collective impact, and incorporating decolonizing and resurgent principles into these theories for a more equitable mindset. The review also presented findings on leadership practices, emphasizing system change leadership and the use of a bottom-up philosophy to promote transformational leadership and community capacity building. Finally, the conclusions in the literature review demonstrate the importance of community-led solutions in coordinated response, identified at multiple levels of engagement for citizen participation in collaborative spaces. In answering the research question, the result of a CRN being non-viable currently in the region is critical to ensure leading practices in the future. All these key findings have been identified and summarized in three primary options to consider for the client's next actionable steps, alongside smaller recommendations to improve collaboration efforts in the Greater Victoria Region.

## Options to Consider and Recommendations

The needs analysis provides options for the client to consider as possible outcomes and actionable steps. The three possibilities advised include:

- i. Supporting further research on coordinated emergency and crisis preparedness to develop a plan for the CRD region of Victoria and specific neighbourhood response;

- ii. Creating space for relationship building and dialogue across non-profit groups and communities to combat conflict concerns;
- iii. Expanding on the work of the Community Social Planning Council, CRD Community Health Networks and UVIC's past research in organizing network information and continue gathering resources and knowledge to streamline activities and outcomes of each network.

Additional recommendations based on the thematic analysis of the data include recommendations for current networks; to implement systems change activities; to promote community-led solutions; to implement collaborative practices and to promote diversity, inclusion, and community in collaborative spaces to encourage transformational social change.

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## Introduction

This Capstone Project explores the viability and potential need for a CRN in the Greater Victoria region. This research has been completed for the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria –it was developed in collaboration with the researcher and client and responds to current gaps on collaborative practices in these cities. Specifically, it explores the complexity of collaboration and what capacity building is needed for success. The foundation of this research is in response to the two and half years of non-profits, organizations, governments, and community’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the multiple crisis’s that impact marginalized communities. Non-profit leaders and organizations learned a lot over this period including lessons on coordinated response, working in partnership with groups they had not before and where there are continued gaps in supports for working together. This research aims to bring clarity to the theories of social change and collaboration while simultaneously evaluating the current ecosystem of cooperation and mutually beneficial relationship within the region of Greater Victoria. The first section of this Capstone defines the problem and background, including an in-depth definition of a Community Response Network, followed by a profile of the client, and the scope, outcomes, objectives, and deliverables of the report.

## Defining the Problem & Background

Victoria's non-profit organizations were hit hard during Covid-19. The need for organizations to quickly adapt their program policies and funding resulted in an overworked sector lacking support and collaboration. According to a report authored by the Vantage Point, Vancouver Foundation, and Victoria Foundation called, *Unraveling*, 64% of organizations have decreased their ability to deliver services during this time, with the need for services increasing by 58% (2020, p. 2). Emergency funding became available, and the resiliency of non-profits was evident with many shifting programming to the most needed spaces, including sanitation, food security, housing, local economic development, and outdoor respite. Yet, there remains a lack of coordinated responses to crisis and other social issues in the community. The pandemic has illuminated the constant need for non-profits from all sectors to collaborate and communicate in their services, funding, and leading practices to coordinate proper responses to community needs beyond Covid-19.

This research assesses the viability of a Community Response Network for the Greater Victoria Region. This project outlines the parameters that make up a Community Response Network, shares examples, and places these into the context of Greater Victoria. CRNs, as a concept and defined term, are rooted in responses to abuse and neglect in vulnerable populations. They convene diverse groups—including non-profits, community members, community groups, and businesses—to support, advocate, and coordinate a collective approach to responding to an issue usually focused on the neglect of a vulnerable senior or individual (BC Association of Community Response Networks, n.d.). Using this wraparound model as a template, we can see how the use of a CRN for an individual can be expanded and effective in a broader community context. The Coordinated

Community Response Network (CCRN) in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, BC has recently adopted this rapid response model. This network was established out of the need for coordination and communication between non-profits, businesses, and community groups during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hollingdale 2021, p. 2). The group comprises diverse stakeholders who meet on a regular weekly basis for information sharing, peer funding, advocacy work, and coordinated communication about the needs facing the neighbourhood that week. The experiences and example of the CCRN and other groups like this will be drawn on to inform the adoption of such an approach in Greater Victoria.

Multi-organizational communication and collaboration have historically promoted more comprehensive and practical approaches to social change (Harper, Kuperminc, Weaver, Emshoff, and Erickson 2014, p. 1). Funding organizations are also beginning to see the importance of these groups for peer funding and communication opportunities. Within the City of Victoria, formal and informal networks practice these patterns of information sharing and collaboration. The identification of the current networks in place and their activities will be evaluated to determine if there are gaps within the region and a need for a new collaborative space like a Community Response Network.



Figure 1 Overview of a CRN

## Project Client

The Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria supports communities by providing information and engagement to promote social well-being in community development. The Council is active in community-based research and regional planning (Community Social Planning Council, Vision Mission, and Values section, 2021). With 85 years of experience in the non-profit sector and poverty reduction, they have a deep history in the community and a long-standing reputation for the implementation of programs (Our History Section, 2021). The Community Social Planning Council's current services include the Greater Victoria Housing Security and Rent Bank Program, Transit Assistance, and Community Engagement activities like workshops and events (Transit Assistance Section, 2021). The Transit Assistance program is an excellent example of collaboration and participation from diverse stakeholders to support critical on-the-ground services of providing affordable transit passes and tickets for low-income individuals (2021). Acting as the program partner, the Council is the bridge between BC Transit and participating organizations. This successful program shows the Community Council's connections to the Greater Victoria area, with over 70 non-profits and community partners involved in the initiative (2021). Ultimately the Council has a well-respected presence in the city and the dexterity to respond to the community's needs in various ways, including research, programming, or funding. They are a prime client to be leading the Community Response Network Capstone project.

The Community Social Planning Council is well poised as an organization to support the research, planning, and possible implementation of a Community Response Network. The Council connects to multiple Greater Victoria non-profits, businesses, and community partners. It has umbrella programs that support intersecting issues in the city, including housing research, collaborative community engagement, climate change, sustainability planning, and community development (2020, p. 6). As a critical facilitator in multiple sectors of the community, the Council has the agency and capital to support the development of a CRN that brings numerous organizations to a table to collaborate, amplify the voices of the vulnerable, and find innovative responses to community concerns (Community Social Planning Council, 2020, p. 2).

## Research Question

**Research Question:** Is a Community Response Network viable and needed in the Greater Victoria Region for organizations to collaborate, advocate, and respond effectively to the needs in the community?

## Scope, Project Objectives & Deliverables

**1. To conduct a literature review on current leading practices in collaborative networks and**  
[12]

**community response theories.**

**2. To conduct an assets/needs-based assessment with organizations in the community and recommend opportunities for collaboration as a part of exploring the development of community a response network.**

- Conduct interviews to understand the assets current collaborative practices are providing to the community network. Use an online open discussion interview to gain feedback from organization or and non-profit professionals.
- Understand the crossover between groups in the thirteen municipalities that make up the Greater Victoria Region and what a CRN would focus on as its purpose or guiding principles, its structure, and its activities.
- To gather current leading practices of collaboration, understand from research participants perspectives what they value from networks and collaborative spaces. What are the assets of gathering as stakeholders, where is there needed capacity, and what are the gaps?

**3. To develop recommendations for the creation of a community response network in Victoria.**

- Translate all research, reports, and reviews to recommendations or options that the CSPC can implement and share as they deem fit.

## **Literature Review**

### **Executive Summary**

This literature review demonstrates the breadth of research and resources on community collectives and response networks, their structure, and the important values and practices of a Community Response Network. With the non-profit and charity sector continually growing in Canada, “with an estimated 170,000 organizations providing services and programs to communities and citizens” it is critical to understand how this sector is working together to promote community change (Weaver, 2016, p. 1). As these collaborative spaces are often based on grassroots organizing and development, the study and research on specific response networks are limited and informal. On the other hand, the model of community collaboration and theories of social change is well established in the literature. The ability for multi-sector organizations to gather and promote system change is an essential driver in new community development practices (Harper et al. 2014, p. 2) and vital to the future of social change literature. The types of sources discovered are three-fold in their themes and focus – community-based sources, academic and traditional research, and periphery themes and topics that support the functioning of a Community Response Network.

Evaluation reports, terms of references, and websites provide research information about the activities and approaches of specific response networks as seen in the case study section of this review. An important example source is an evaluation report completed by the Coordinated Community Response Network one year after its formation, which analyzes the effectiveness of the network and recommendations for the next steps (Hollingdale, 2021). The more traditional scholarly sources and the structure of the literature are based three major themes from the conceptual framework with multiple sub-themes as illustrated in the graphic below.

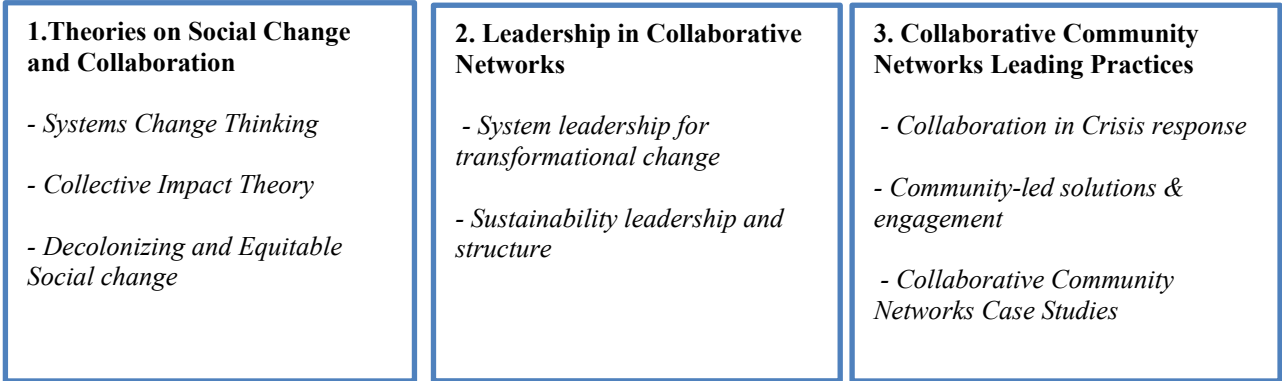


Figure 2 – Conceptual Framework

There is extensive literature on the ideas of systems change thinking and community impact that will be prominent in the research as it actively impacts the purpose and pursuit of a community collective. Two scholarly articles discuss the importance of these activities as an integral part of a collaboration and their success (Harper et al. 2014, p. 3) and the matter of who is a part of these collaborative networks with the role of citizen participation to support the activities of the groups (Silverman 2005, p. 36). The final form of sources is any research and study that discusses the periphery themes and concepts imperative to the function and effectiveness of coordinated community response. These themes include leadership styles for collaborative spaces, community-led strategies and solutions, and specific examples of community agencies' crisis response and advocacy work resources. The leadership structure of a CRN is critical in its effectiveness and studying the different constructions of leadership is imperative to the sustainability of a network. Certain discourses studied the effects of diversity in teams and the use of transformation and democratized leadership styles that emphasize collective identification and effectiveness in a community setting (Kearney and Gerbert, 2009, p. 77). Community-led solutions are also vital to collaborative spaces. Reports and guides put out by community development groups can be very helpful in the research and planning of a network. An example is a report that provides resources and ideas for the community-based Covid-19 recovery written by the Tamarack Institute (Attygalle and Born 2020). A vital focus and through line of the literature review will be to actively seek out inclusive and diverse research sources that practice decolonizing research and an intersectional understanding of the topic.

This three-pronged approach to a literature review will provide a well-rounded knowledge

of leading practices for collaborative response networks while also supporting the development of leadership structure and activities that support true collaboration and community-led response. The research of this capstone project and the literature review will provide in-depth information gathering and a summary of leading practices and lessons learned to inform the next steps of the viability of a Community Response Network in Victoria.

### Theories on Social Change & Collaboration

The literature on social change and systems thinking in collaborative networks focuses on identifying and analyzing different theories of community work that promote social change. In present-day community development work, these networks desire to promote systematic changes to current processes to be a part of more intersectional, relational, equitable, and collective spaces. System change thinking can be seen as a theory that informs these goals. The sources gathered concentrate on defining the theory in a network setting, identifies models of community collaboration, and provides reasonable leading practices to creating equitable and sustainable networks focused on systems change thinking. Current research provides a framework for social network structure and a critical critique on the impertinence of power dynamics that are embedded in these spaces. (Hansen, 2009, p. 5, 6). As many networks focus on disrupting current societal injustices, there is a need to use frameworks that see societal issues as intersectional, with multiple nested levels that incorporate all community partners and their functions in society as social networks and structures (Hansen, 2009, p. 7, 9). This is where systems theory can be an effective discourse in network settings to combat the societal inequalities that permeate communities and promote long-term systemic and sustainable social change.

First, it is important to explore the nature of Community Response Networks including the relationships, stakeholders, and forms of social capital that these spaces promote. Hansen shares two forms of broad networks - expressive and instrumental. Expressive or bonding networks are based in social supports, mobility, and the sharing of resources (Hansen, 2009, p. 10). In contrast, instrumental networks are organizations with shared agendas and goals, usually represented by staff in non-profits or organizations (Hansen, 2009, p. 10). CRNs would fit the category of instrumental networks and, therefore, it is important to identify network centrality, power relations, and social capital. Network centrality, Hansen defines as “closeness” of the direct or indirect connections between network stakeholders, shared resources, and which stakeholders have control in the structure of the specific network (Hansen, 2009, p. 11). This centrality inherently ties with the structure of leadership and authority and is dependent upon social capital built between network members and how these actors organize in a hierarchical or more decentralized system (Hansen 2009, p. 10). It is also dependent on the power and social dynamics between actors and the activities of a network to promote the building of trust, connection, and coordination while simultaneously empowering individuals to engage in this form of civil society, share resources and information to support social change (Hansen, 2009, p. 10,11). Limitations to this approach of network building include the lack of emphasis on individual actors and their values, beliefs, and

norms (Hansen, 2009, p. 14) and the complexity of relationship building and community decision-making (Hansen, 2009, p. 14, 15). Social network development theories help highlight the structure of a network, the importance of combating issues of inequality in collaboration and bring strategies of action through building social capital. Through promoting empowerment that actively addresses the issues of power imbalances and promotes collective goals, a network can be successful in systems change activities (2009, p. 15, 16). This definition of networks is critical when analyzing the role systems thinking theory, collective impact, and creating equitable community response in these collaborative spaces.

### *Systems Change Thinking*

David Peter Stroh, a well-known systems thinker scholar identifies the critical components and characteristics that make up systems thinking and its application in various community settings. Stroh defines the shift from conventional to systems thinking as viewing issues like homelessness, environmental concerns, and more as complex concepts with interconnected relationships, levels of engagement, and short or long-term solutions to the system (Strohn, 2015, p. 15). This definition of systems thinking is in line with other academics like Harper, Kuperminc, Weaver, Emshoff, and Erickson whose work supports and builds off theorists like Stroh. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of multiple factors in a social issue to transform and disrupt a system (Strohn, 2015, p. 16-17). The theory is in place to help make connections between stakeholders, see the bigger picture of the problem, and find leverage points of change by using theoretical tools to map the system. The mechanisms that structure this theory can be arduous but help ground the approach. Each element makes up feedback loops that help visualize a system and find leverage areas for change and transformation in the system (Strohn 2015, p. 17). He classifies the tangible practices of systems thinking by identifying variables, recognizing plot lines, and understanding the four stages change process helps build into systems mapping to find a solution and long-term systematic change (Strohn, 2015). Many have used this guide in mapping social change and found it helpful to disrupt the circular conversations and activities when discussing complex social change. His emphasis on moving beyond short-term outcomes to systematic change is key in the field of collaboration, specifically as non-profits and communities continue to be stuck in the same patterns of short-term solutions instead of needed long-term change (Vega 2015, p. 115).

As systems thinking has become more prevalent in community development literature it has permeated collaboratives of diverse organizations and actors as way to leverage resources for social change. Using the example of community health collaborations, the article “Leveraged Resources and Systems changes in community collaboration” by Harper, Kuperminc, Weaver, Emshoff, and Erickson focused on inter-organizational collaboration and how to use systems change activities to positively impact change in the community (2014, p. 39). Pivotal to discovering impactful practices in community response networks is to define systems change and the practical activities that go along with the framework in collaborative spaces with diverse partners. Systems change theories

“refer to the process and activities that promote improved functioning in the ways neighbourhoods, communities, and contexts interact or operate” (Foster-Fishman and Behrens 2007). These activities can improve or disrupt current systems or transform them into new ways of being by implementing policies, programs, and collaborative services (Harper et al., 2014, p. 349). The inherent collaborative nature of this theory and recognition of partnerships across sectors helps create an integrated approach to addressing challenges and concerns in a neighbourhood or community (Harper et al., 2014, p. 350). Key to the success of systems change activities, the authors, Harper et al., identify the critical relationship between collaboration, activities, and leveraging a network's resources to influence all levels of government and community (Harper et al., 2014, p. 355). This process is crucial to developing community networks in urban spaces, and it helps provide a framework of practical theory and embed systems thinking into collaboratives. According to these authors, the strategic vision for a network in development should be to strive towards resource sharing and leveraging activities by creating planning processes for sustainable systems change (Harper et al., 2014, p. 356). Systems change thinking combines social change theories that promote similar collaborative approaches to complex issues.

In comparison to traditional systems change research, it is also imperative to identify the gaps in the theory and how to make the practice of systems thinking more inclusive and accessible to all members of society when developing a planning process for a network. Systems change approach has evolved in this way to be more practical, intersectional, and relational. A group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars and systems thinkers co-created research and literature on the practices of awareness-based systems change, which focuses on respectfully incorporating diverse ways of knowing and creating ethical spaces (Goodchild, 2021, p. 81, 84). This relational and awareness-based system is defined by the author, Goodchild, as being a “process of co-inquiry into the deeper structures of the social systems to see, sense, presence, and shift them. Bringing back Ga'nigoi:yah (the Good Mind) is a core concept, the elders told me,” (Goodchild, 2021, p. 94). Literature on systems change and network development continues to evolve and address intersectional and complex communities. The need for more decolonized and equitable approaches to systems change vary in community development research. There is a need to understand how to build off the foundations of these theories while uphold research by those participating in these spaces is critical to the authentic promotion of collective community change with systems thinking.

### *Collective Impact Theory*

Collective Impact (CI) is an approach to social change researched and practiced in multiple sectors that positively impact a specific context or community. Identifying and reviewing five separate articles and academic journals on the theory, each shared the foundational definitions of collective impact and then provided critical commentary on its impact on social change activities. Collective impact has had a positive effect on community work. Still, there is a need to critically analyze its merit and identify the leading practices and lessons learned to properly use the framework for equitable community change. The framework of CI was created in 2011 by FSG

consultants in the Stanford Social Innovation Review, John Kania and Mark Kramer. They identified that the key to successful community work is finding the conditions that promote action and results. These conditions for impact include “a common agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support” (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016, p. 1). Another group of academics also identify the five conditions for CI and add that it is “an approach to achieving large-scale social change” (Kania & Kramer, 2013, para 6). A final researcher identifies that the CI framework is imperative to systemic change activities. It requires participation and integration across sectors to commit to shared goals that leverage each actor's assets (Gallagher, 2014, p. 3). CI results in the community development sector have helped guide projects from small to large multi-state programs (Ennis & Tofa, 2019, p. 33). The original theorist of the collective impact framework argued that most impact initiatives in organizations only created specific and isolated social change and are lacking the fundamentals of CI. Through collaboration in networks and use of CI, coalitions, and groups, complex issues resolve to promote authentic systemic changes. (Kania & Kramer, 2011, p.38, 39).

The theory of collective impact for social change has provided an excellent framework for community work. However, it still needs a critical analysis to understand the areas for improvement. Many in community development work and academics value the framework of CI but identify areas of improvement and critic. Using a critical lens, the author Crotty deems an analysis of CI includes “directing a spotlight on power relationships within society to expose the forces of hegemony and injustice” (Crotty, 1998, p. 157). The first analysis is from Ennis and Tofa, who explored the framework from a critical social work lens (2020). The significant examination centers on four specifics including: “(1) power and equity; (2) existing community change knowledge; (3) a corporate, “top-down” focus; and (4) uncritical advocacy for collaboration.” (Ennis & Tofa, 2020, p. 35). In more detail, critics identify that the projects implemented usually prolong unequal power dynamics and do not directly address system issues within the framework. Instead, they engage with social change with people in more traditionally powerful positions like leaders in non-profits, businesses, governments (Ennis & Tofa, 2020, p. 35). They also specify the lack of CI using the experience and knowledge already based in the community and does not recognize these voices as experts in community work. Alongside this, the five conditions can be seen as a traditional business-like approach to change with shared agendas demonstrated through tangible outcomes that don't always capture the complex realities of community and social change (Ennis & Tofa, 2020, p. 35). Furthermore, the neoliberal focus of the framework can undermine the hopes for coordination and collaboration between all levels of stakeholders. Although critical of CI, researchers like Ennis and Tofa believe that the theory has sound foundational principles that can be used for social change if the work focuses on community-led collaboration and that it does not have to be the only solution to complex community problems (Ennis & Tofa, 2020, p. 36).

Several other academics and community development specialists have agreed with the critiques that Ennis and Tofa discuss. To combat this, they have worked to improve on the original principles of Collective Impact and have created new philosophies that support the development of

CI in community development academia and practice. When Kramer & Kania introduced the theory in 2011, many in the community change sector were excited about that their current work was developed into a framework and was used as a tangible operational framework for social change (Cabaj & Weber, 2016, p. 1). Yet, in application, there is a continued critique and need to evolve how CI implements in each community. Authors from the Tamarack Institute, Cabaj and Weber, outline an evolving CI framework that surfaced during a CI summit in Vancouver in 2015 with Canadian community partners (Cabaj & weber, 2016, p. 3). The event developed the ideas for a Collective Impact 3.0, with groups committed to the basic structure of the framework with intention to build off the structure and include their own experiences, diverse voices, and perspectives to support the continued evolution of CI (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016, p. 3). The first step to this evolution is re-evaluating the foundational conditions and shifting the language to movement-building ways. See the table here for the 3.0 series of CI’s conditions.

<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>
<b>The Leadership Paradigm</b>	
Management	Movement Building
<b>The Five Conditions</b>	
Common Agenda	Community Aspiration
Shared Measurement	Strategic Learning
Mutually Reinforcing Activities	High Leverage Activities
Continuous Communication	Inclusive Community Engagement
Backbone	Containers for Change

*Figure 3 (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016, p. 3)*

The first shift in the leadership paradigm emphasizes a movement-building approach encompassing systems change activities that would transform or reform this work. These collaborations and leaders bring diverse voices together in untraditional ways to build a better vision for the future with community aspirations that hope to create a new environment for community work and change (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016, p. 4). This shift in thinking allows for big transformational thinking that leads to innovative solutions. Although many leaders must take a managerial approach to their projects and support their organizations, this 3.0 version of Collective Impact allows for creative solutions to problems that gear towards more systems change that promote community transformation (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016, p. 5). One example from the report is the End Poverty Edmonton Initiative, which aims to end local poverty in a generation. With this lofty goal, they promoted transformational activities like “a six-point plan to support reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal People” (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016, p. 4). This plan was in place to combat one of the root causes of poverty, racism, which is a part of all other pieces of anti-poverty work. Another way the CI 3.0 version builds on the original conditions is the movement to

inclusive community engagement.

A significant criticism of the original theory is that it is not community-led, so the push for inclusion in CI is imperative to finding transformational solutions to complex social issues (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016, p. 5). Shifting to authentic and inclusive engagement promotes community-led change solutions and the participation of a diverse group of actors. Cabaj and Weaver then assess and offer new strategies for joint efforts in finding mutually reinforcing activities. They believe in the reformed 3.0 version of CI and that there needs to be a shift to finding collaboration and promoting “high leverage opportunities for change” (2016, p. 8). A commitment to systemic change in communities means that CI participants need to see beyond only identifying mutually beneficial agenda items and instead use the diverse knowledge, resources and experiences of the stakeholders and let those guide the best way forward that will create change (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016, p. 8). A final shift towards a more evolved Community Impact theory is shifting backbone support to the ideals of being a container for change. This practice is another form of saying that community work must be participant centred. The centering also must be backed by the appropriate resources of time, finances, and energy to support these long-term social change activities and impact (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016, p. 10). The evolving of the Community Impact framework is imperative to future practitioners who implement methods of social change collaboration and initiatives. The shift towards transforming systems means new ways of practices CI and a commitment from networks and collaboratives to make this happen. Examples of these shifts are depicted throughout community development literature with practical recommendations to community groups on how to implement CI in their neighbourhoods, cities, and countries.

### *Decolonizing & Equitable Social Change*

Current study in academic institutions, community development spaces and social change initiatives have not always centered on equitable and inclusive research, theories, and practices. That has resulted in years of colonial institutions further embedding specific values and ideals into the field that do not serve all members of society. Imperative to the literature review is valuing and implementing decolonizing practices, an equity lens, and an anti-racist approach to collaboration and community work. Literature on these concentrated topics in community development has become prominent in academia in the past several years. However, the shift towards equity and decolonizing research exposes where literature and practice must meet to promote equitable, inclusive, and sustainable social change in societies. This section of the literature will focus on journals, articles, and reports on the theories and lens of decolonization in non-profits, collectives, and within approaches like collective impact. First, the authors focus on breaking down the negative impacts of colonialism in community work and how the values and practices of colonialism have become embedded within non-profits and collaborative practices. Then the review will look at literature that gives tangible examples in the history of equitable approaches to community work and advocacy and how to use theories like collective impact and systems change

with a decolonized and equity lens. It is vital to identify that many of the research and ideas in this literature review have roots in foundational practices of Indigenous and racialized communities' inherent values and beliefs. When approaching the work as settlers, researchers must recognize these truths and honour this knowledge-sharing in community development spaces.

The term and practice of decolonizing has become prominent in the non-profit field and is an important aspect of any organization's mandate and mission. Literature on the topic comes from multiple sources, most of whom share the need for decolonizing practices for non-profits and other organizations to participate in equitable social change activities. Numerous definitions of decolonization appear in literature, including the standard dictionary definition, which, from a social science perspective, means to “change something such as a curriculum in a way that considers the cultural beliefs behind it” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). In addition, non-profits' inward examination of their institutions has become a prominent and necessary practice. This has manifested in advisors, like consulting firms, whose central practice is to embed anti-racist and decolonial tools into an organization and create more equitable and diverse organizational structures. Many consulting companies around North America focus on implementing these tools and have written reports and literature on how others can do the same. Each takes on an approach to decolonizing and equity that translates to transformational change.

With the shift towards decolonizing spaces, many are taking on theories of social change and finding ways to make them more equitable and inclusive. Frontline solutions and the Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions engage with this topic to examine the role of advocacy and organizing in collective impact to ensure “more equitable systems and policy outcomes” (2021, p. 2). Their interviewing of organizations across North America and research on collective impact concentrated on equity and advocacy explored new recommendations to evolve collective impact principles. Key to their proposals is the inherent need to use the assets and strengths of community organizing and advocacy to promote equitable spaces, and tangible systems change (Frontline Solutions et al., 2021, p. 6). The rebalancing of power includes implementing new principles of practice that will support the push towards equity in dismantling and reimagining systems of justice and equity (Frontline Solutions et al., 2021, p. 7). These include but are not limited to equity in planning; community-focused collaboration, co-creation and multiple sector partnerships, flexibility, and openness to learning, innovative leadership, systems thinking and locality strategy” (Frontline Solutions et. al., 2021, p. 7). These principles build into the vital work of focusing on power dynamics and promoting structural change. Other scholars, including the Equity Research Initiative, discuss that short-term solutions and actions do not make significant power shifts in the community. Instead, if the goal is systems change, community power-building must be at the forefront of a network's outcome (Frontline Solutions et. al., 2021, p. 11).

Other research on the decolonizing of collective action philosophizes the ideals of the process and sees a new vision of the future that rejects neoliberal theories of post-colonialism towards more equitable and transformational forms of solidarity (Rosario Acosta Lopez &

Quintero, 2018 p. 4). In a 2018 journal issue of *Diacritics* – “*Collective Temporalities: Decolonial Perspectives*,” a diverse group of researchers and academics share the impacts of promoting decolonial thinking in a global setting, specifically focused on Latin America. The interdisciplinary voice from this journal brings a high-level understanding of the decolonizing international movement. From a thought perspective, these theories focus on the shift from a colonial mindset to a decolonized one. It challenges Eurocentric ideas of linear time, social structure, and the concepts of colonial attachment to western economic thinking (Rosario Acosta Lopez & Quintero, 2018, p. 6). Practitioners assert the need to tackle the complex and long-term questions inherent to social change and community work to support these equitable outcomes. When establishing advocacy groups and collaborative spaces, having a set of guiding principles can be a step to reflecting on whether a process is truly equitable and focused on breaking down colonial practices. Frontline Solutions conclude their research by identifying questions to ask when organizing for advocacy and collective impact. These include but are not limited to reflections on who the organizers of a network are, which partners are missing, what historical and current strains are there between stakeholders, how will they build trust, what are the power dynamics, and how will we keep this organizing and group sustainable and equitable? (Frontline Solutions et al., 2021, p. 22).

Prevalent and required in a Canadian context is the need to acknowledge and embed tools of decolonization and reconciliation into a community network that understands the country's colonial history and upholds an Indigenous experience and knowledge. Indigenous academics thought leaders and activists have been leaders in decolonizing systems while promoting Indigenous resurgence in all sectors of society. Essential scholars of this work include Jeff Corntassel, Alfred Taiaiake and Michael Elliot. They discuss the reclaiming of Indigenous ways in a colonial world and finding “everyday acts of resurgence to reveal how harmful colonial structures can at times be” (Corntassel, 2012, p. 86). This resurgence centers on approaches that focus on the performativity of rights and actively recognize and engage in self-determination. Corntassel often speaks to his Indigenous community when sharing the theories with acts of resurgence and truth-telling. He engages with acts of resistance that uphold the cultural practices of one’s Indigenous community and ancestors (Corntassel, 2012 p, 93). To these scholars, the decolonizing praxis is all about shifts in power and recognizing the limitations colonial institutions and groups have in developing authentic decolonial practices and reconciliation. Instead, Corntassel suggests that settlers and institutions participate in the “revitalization and resurgence of Indigenous communities” (2012, p. 97). This can only be done with Indigenous persons at the forefront and leading in confronting who should be funding decolonizing efforts, the linguistic genocide, creating a vision for resurgence, and re-establishing and recognizing treaty and government mechanisms (Corntassel, 2012, p. 97-98). The everyday acts of decolonization and resurgence from settlers mean actively committing to an anti-colonial mindset and constantly questioning the status quo within our personal, work, and school activities (Corntassel, 2012, p. 89). Moving beyond the symbolic and performative practices in our personal lives and the institutions we are a part of to fully embrace and advocate for the ideals of resurgence and actively promote systems change (Corntassel 2012, p. 89).

The intellectual and political movement of resurgence from other academics like Gerald Taiaiake Alfred also shares the critiques of current practices in reconciliation and call for individuals, groups, and institutions to combat the colonial mindset and the Indigenous reliance and dependency on the state in Canada (Albert, 2009, p. 54). Like Cornstassel, he supports the regeneration of First nations culture and practices and puts this at the forefront of the healing process (Albert, 2009, p. 54). He provides a history of colonialism and state dependency and the impacts on First Nations communities including, “the loss of land, consequent dissolution of community and culture, and the harms suffered as a result of government policies of assimilation – are clear” (Albert, 2009, p. 54). Reconstructing and Indigenizing means promoting the role of activism to expose the oppressive systems and structures while also creating ties between the community and collective action (Albert, 2009, p. 57). Key to this restructuring for Indigenous communities is returning to the land, promoting traditional economies and ways of being, and finding pathways in policies, law, and community advocacy to “re-assert Indigenous presence on the land” (Albert, 2009, p. 57). This connection to the land is critical in one’s understanding of decolonizing for Indigenous people and to practitioners and citizens that support the decolonizing movement in collaborative spaces.

Along the same lines, scholars like Elliot share the proponents of the resurgence movement and provide clarity on the critiques of the movement and push for resurgence to focus on dialogue around decolonization, recognition, and mutual reciprocity (Elliot, 2018, p. 2). First, he addresses the critiques of resurgence, concentrates on the disengagement of colonial practices and institutions. He highlights five key areas like Taiaiake Alfred that are imperative in the restructuring of ideas in settler society including, “(1) the active nature of settler colonialism; (2) sovereignty, (3) land and ecosystem, (4) political economy and (5) language,” (Elliot 2018, p. 3). His purpose is not to reject the ideals of resurgence but to focus the conversation so Canadian society can see resurgence as practical and not conceptual to recognize its actions as critical to decolonizing. A crucial point that Elliot introduces is the presence of colonial liberal thought and recognition politics can be hurting and not helping the resurgence movement for Indigenous communities (2018, p. 5). Critical to this point is that it reinforces a hierarchical relationship of colonial systems and only pushes for incremental and not transformational change. The argument is that this liberal paradigm can only take Indigenous sovereignty and recognition so far without completely centering Indigeneity (Elliot, 2018 p. 6). The role of resurgence in decolonizing practices is the continued practices of engagement and disengagement in settler institutions and society (Elliot, 2018, p. 17). Elliot emphasizes the principles of decolonization cannot only be philosophical or generally based on the betterment of humanity but instead embeds spaces with specific political, historical, and material changes in Canadian society, including land back, self-determination, and Indigenous political and legal authority (Elliot, 2018, p. 17).

Settlers and collaborative networks can play a role in supporting decolonizing approaches and reorienting themselves to practice truth and reconciliation actively. Although there is various

literature on reconciliation, there are few practical examples of the dichotomy between Indigenous resurgence and settler action. The current activities of liberal recognition and rights-based discourse miss the mark in genuinely participating in decolonizing and transforming the state of colonialism (Elliot, 2018, p. 6). Elliot identifies that in the practice of resurgence, Indigeneity must be centred, and settlers can be invited in as guests to a space, as resurgence is about truth-telling and Indigenous authority; therefore, guests adapt their behaviour to the lead of Indigenous communities (Elliot, 2018 p. 10-11). One article by Deanne Aline Marie Leblanc from UBC, “The Roles of Settler Canadians within Decolonization: Re-evaluating Invitation, Belonging and Rights” (2021), also agrees with this sentiment in the uncentering of settler citizens. She uses the term “colonial denizens” to propose that non-Indigenous people “consider themselves “foreigners” in need of invitations to Indigenous lands and that as *colonial denizens*, non-Indigenous Canadians take up an ethos that encourages them to re-evaluate their lives and relations with Indigenous peoples, Indigenous lands, and the settler state,” (Leblanc 2021, p. 356). The theories and practices of equity and decolonization need to be embedded into the network and collaborative structures to promote an anti-colonial and anti-racist approach to collective impact and systems change thinking. The pathway forward in literature and academia is a continued shift in how Indigenous resurgence provides new ways of being in these settings and upholds Indigenous sovereignty and promotes equity in collaboration and community work.

## Leadership in Collaborative Networks

### *System Leadership for transformational change*

There is extensive research, schools of thought, and theories on leadership in community development. This review will not be able to touch on all leadership theories and practices but will focus on the high-level knowledge, definitions, and implementation of two specific types of leaders – system and sustainable leadership. Although separate in identification, these forms of leadership complement each other and can be impactful and practical leadership theories for a crisis community response network. To support transformational community work, there is a need to understand how leadership is a critical element in systems changes. When practicing systems leadership, a network leader or team can comprehend and observe the complexity of a situation, the context, and the diverse perspectives of engaging with the issue or system (Senge et al, 2015, p. 32). Tamarack Institute has done extensive work on this theory to support communities in Canada towards transformational change, and Weaver presents how system leadership shifts leadership from an individual to the system (2015, p. 32). She relies on authors Peter Sange, Hal Hamilton, and John Kania, who define three significant characteristics of systems leaders including viewing the system you are a part of from a macro viewpoint, cultivating reflective discussion and promoting collective impact and community-created problem solving (Senge, Hamilton, Kania 2015 in Weaver, 2015, p. 32). The emphasis on a multi-leader and perspectives approach is what systems thinkers believe brings about transformational social change to promote spaces that look

beyond the current structures in society. They dismantle systems that do not currently work for all in society (Senge et. al, 2015, p. 32). Other types of organizing and community building identify similar leadership structures to promote transformational change. A report focused on community power-building organizations and their leadership or self-governing experiences finds solutions to promote transformative ways of leading (Bamdad, Misra and Winegar 2020, p. 1). They share the ideals of Weaver where leadership is about a collective structure of skills and knowledge with relationship building and social capital as vital in sustaining networks (Bamdad et al., 2020 p. 52). The construction of community power is reliant on these systems of relationships that are “mutually supportive, mutually accountable, and highly equitable.” (Bamdad et al., 2020, p. 52). To uphold these ideals, these forms of leadership need to embed in the structure collective leadership, guiding principles and core operating outcomes.

Critical to leadership theory is the practice of deconstructing its current ideals and using an essential lens to reconstruct leadership values that recognize how power dynamics, top-down principles, and what author Dugan calls “a willful blindness” of sticking to the status quo is prevalent in social change movements (Dugan, 2017). The reconstruction of values puts emphasis on community practices of social capital and relationship building. A series of links and partnerships connect leaders, community members, and organizations beyond the bounds of usual sticking points and inequality, including race, social status, organization, and location (Meehan & Reinelt, 2012, p. 2). When leaders center on these goals, the research suggests that the outcome will be better community engagement and equitable action. According to a report, “Leadership for a New Era Series,” by Meehan and Reinelt, the mainstream leadership structures that many non-profits and organizations continue to get stuck in are preventing authentic forms of collaboration to actively work on complex and adaptive social change (2012, p. 6). The mindset of the non-profit industry is still prevalent on a singular leader who manages, delegates, and plans with a hierarchal top-down process (Meehan & Reinelt, 2012, p. 6). The authors give tangible examples of fostering a new mindset that promotes a systems approach, including looking beyond short-term goals, allowing space for conversation and reflection, engaging with periphery groups, and promoting coordination and cooperation (2012, p. 6). Tangible examples of these forms of bottom-up and collective system leadership are seen throughout the history of community organizing. A prime example of this type of leader is Ella Baker, a prominent NAACP organizer starting in the 1940s. She believed in grassroots movements and participatory democracy to promote black liberation in the United States (Crass, 2013, p. 153). Baker’s main argument of leadership in civil society is to keep all stakeholders informed and empowerment by promoting self-governing and organizing to emphasize “mutual aid and solidarity” (Crass, 2013, p. 153). Working in the NAACP, Baker began to create regional community groups and encourage participatory democracy with a specific call of direct action for sustainable social change (Crass, 2013, p. 154). She was also a prominent proponent of group-centred leadership which means, “that leaders form in groups and are committed to building collective power and struggling for collective goals.” (Crass, 2013, p. 154). Ella Baker’s commitment to grassroots community organizing, bottom-up approaches to leadership, and group empowerment show the power of collaborative spaces with good leaders and

collective structures to promote transformational social and systems change (Crass, 2013, p. 154).

### *Sustainability Leadership & Structure*

Network sustainability is the desired outcome for all groups that gather to promote social change. Research on collectives, coalitions and networks provides tangible frameworks and literature on their development, structure, and leading practices. Yet, there is a lack of discussion on how to embed sustainable practices to ensure the success of these collaboratives beyond the first couple of years. Creating sustainable networks means understanding how structure impacts the long-term functioning of a group. Much discussion on leadership styles and organizational designs promotes planning and implementing change using organizational change management and business development research. Many collaborative networks are based on a decentralized approach, as they bring together multiple stakeholders in a coordinated space to build relationships and promote community change. Much of the literature provided in this section focuses on promoting bottom-up approaches to leadership and structure. Yet, this does not mean there isn't a need for top-down hierarchal processes in systems thinking and collaboration. Research on managing change by Margaret Tam shows the intersection of using both centralized and decentralized approaches to promote a well-rounded, effective, and equitable structure. Tam identifies the need for leaders to “consider both the strategic side and human side of change” and tries to answer the question of “how change can be managed in a decentralized organization” (2017, p. 2). Using the well-known structure research of Henry Mintzberg, academic Tam summarizes Mintzberg's five organizational structures, including simple structure, machine bureaucracy, professional bureaucracy, divisionalized form, and adhocracy, to help understand how a structure is related to centralization or decentralization of a group (2017, p. 10). Collaborative networks could identify features in each type of structure as the characteristics. Yet, due to the collaborative nature of the groups, they would be structured on the spectrum of attributes between professional bureaucracy, divisionalized form, and adhocracy.

- **Professional Bureaucracy** – Mintzberg defines this structure as a group of workers considered independent professionals with a decentralized approach, yet tethered into a hierarchal bureaucratic system (Tam, 2017, p. 10). CRNs sometimes reflect this structure as they are a group of professionals meeting that are implementing practices like their organization's structures, which can hinder collaboration.
- **Divisionalized Form** – This structure is majority identified in large organizations; the divisionalized form is about managing multiple spaces where activities occur. Each group that oversees specific outcomes makes their own decisions and implementation (Tam, 2017, p. 10). CRNs practice this structure when creating sub-groups or committees that focus on specific social change issues or crisis responses.

- **Adhocracy** – This structure is where most collaborative networks land in an adaptive framework that is loosely structured and flexible based on the current needs and project. It moves between centralized hierarchal authority and horizontal, decentralized group authority (Tam, 2017 p. 10).

Key to the literature of organizational structure, Tam summarizes how centralization and decentralization play a role in sustaining groups. In creating collaborative networks, structuring one's groups connects to the outcomes and sustainability-based in community work and social change. Much of the theories that promote sustainable and collaborative practices identify that structure needs to be non-hierarchical and promote empowerment at all levels of an organization (Tam, 2017, p. 11). Tam cites anarchists' philosophy and theorists like Paskewich, Peter Drucker, and Colin Ward to discuss the concepts of decentralization, self-governance and how to "flatten the pyramids into networks build a non-hierarchal organization "(Tam, 2017, p.11).

Not only is structure and organization key to promoting sustainability in a network, but literature also defines and discusses the function of networks in promoting sustainable and network leadership. As discussed above, networks identify as relationships and connections between people. Claire Reinhelt, an evaluation consultant in network and leadership development for systems change, provides a framework that includes questions a group can ask to understand their level of connection, leadership style, and network development (2016, p. 1). She cites how certain leadership characteristics are critical to promoting systems change mindset that cultivates successful outcomes. These essential identifiers are "cultivating shared responsibility and mutual support; growing diverse leadership and encouraging truth to take root; ensuring there are multiple avenues for people to connect and share information; helping to develop the capacity to listen and learn collectively; and rewarding experiments," (Reinhelt, 2016, p. 4). Also cited in Reinhelt's evaluation is the group TCC. They have put together a list of four capacities critical to non-profit organizations and coalitions to be effective in social change. In speaking to coalitions, the TCC group authors share the need for groups to have leadership capacity, adaptive capacity, management capacity, and technical capacity (Raynor, 2011, p. 15). Each brings needed core indicators to network development and evaluation and brings tangible tools to promote sustainable long-term collaboration. Specific to these capacity groups is an adaptive capacity that directly relates to sustainability. It enables work that Reinhelt cites from Tanya Beer as practices things like consistent forms of assessments and evaluation, regularly identifying new partners, and seeking out diverse and new voices to bring into the space (Reinhelt, 2016, p. 7). All the tools, theories, and frameworks identified can be critical to the foundational structures of a community response network and helps bring capacity to make sustainable collaborative networks that promote system change and leadership.

## Collaborative Community Networks Leading Practices

Collaboration and coordination among non-profits, businesses, and individuals is critical to the backbone of community work since the interim of the field of study. However, research on collaboration in networks varies in its form. The more traditional scholarly sources are based around systems change thinking and collective impact, as seen in the theories section of the review. To comprehend the leading practices of these cooperative networks, the research will focus on the principles of collaboration in crisis response, the central concept of community-led solutions, and expand on this into civil engagement in collectives. Once there is an understanding of these practices, the review will summarize three case studies from networks in Canada that are practicing collaboration and coordination as stakeholders in community development projects.

### *Collaboration in Crisis Response*

Community responses to crises entail collaboration between affected stakeholders, inter-organizational groups, and citizens. This coordination is challenging, and the research and practical solutions to collaboration in community networks have been crucial to discovering effective practices. An article, “Crisis response team decision-making as a bureau-political process” by the Department of Management in the Netherlands, provides some tangible examples of leading practices in network centred approach to crisis response. Although focused on large-scale economic crisis concerns, this study shows the need for specific organizational structures and techniques to support a positive wraparound crisis response, emphasizing the need for liaisons between groups to support decision-making. The first practice is to focus on a network approach instead of top-down power dynamics and center on collaboration, planning, knowledge sharing, and practical consensus-making tools (Kalkman, J. et al., 2018, p. 480).

This study explores how to collaborate in network settings when common ground in crisis scenarios is not inherently prevalent and how “inter-organizational crisis response teams negotiate collective decisions” (Kalkman et al., 2018, p. 481). It demonstrates that organizations hold differing views of crisis response embedded in their organizational culture and values that directly contrast with other stakeholders when collaborating in crisis (Kalkman et al., 2018, p. 481). As a result of these critical differences, there are no obvious or straightforward shared principles to action and effectiveness (Kalkman et al., 2018, p. 481). Yet, liaisons of networks can put some practices in place to promote collective decision-making and action when a crisis occurs. It is critical to “build a response system that can reach across boundaries and bring together available capacities in an effective and timely manner” (Ansell et al., 2010, p. 200). Two specific impactful practices have emerged from the above study to promote network decision-making and response in a crisis in two ways. The first is that a liaison or organizational lead makes executive decisions in crisis response, and other stakeholders follow suit, or the network enters a collaborative decision-making structure (Kalkman et al., 2018, p. 484). It is key to balance the decision-making between

these two-process dependent upon the specific network, crisis, timeline of response, and the collaborative need of the decision. The study shows evidence of the need to “balance between fast decision-making and deliberation in crisis response decision” (Kalkman et al., 2018, p. 488).

Cross-sector networks that bridge diverse stakeholders to respond to issues of need are generally not a new subject in research, and there is a shift towards more literature being created to discuss this field. Yet, there still lacks specific data, theories, and methods that specifically review the effectiveness of these collaborative spaces. In addition, there seems to be a gap in the literature on networks due to the multiplicity of issues and sectors the groups overlap with, including health networks, national security, local community, poverty, or social services (Hogg & Varda, 2016, p. 2014). Yet, there continues to be evidence of the multiple benefits that these networks acquire when they work to solve complex issues. Finding insights in literature and data collection can help bring the field of study for collaborative networks out of anecdotal evidence towards more theory and complex data (Hogg & Varda, 2016, p. 2015). One piece of literature attempting to fill this gap is a study that intends to provide insights into community health networks by analyzing data from 7,816 organizations part of 260 networks from 2008-2015 (Hogg & Varda, 2016, p. 2014). Although not explicitly focused on response networks in a community development and social planning setting, the results from this research help add to one’s knowledge of the makeup of a network, the purpose for gathering, what resources a group contributes, and the ability for an organization to collaborate (Hogg & Varda, 2016, p. 2014). The detail of the study mainly gathers data surrounding community health activities. Still, the results share similar principles to the makeup and actions of a community collective or collaborative network. The results show that the bridging of sectors including non-profit, private, and the public are active in the United States, and many bring resources to the groups. A key challenge to these networks is finding the motivating factors to keep all partners engaged and active within these groups and keep people on the same page for goals and their perceptions of success (Hogg & Varda, 2016, p. 2018). Tools in community development can help support the discovery of motivating factors towards social change. A key strategy is to engage with communities of concern to promote community-led solutions.

### *Community-Led Solutions & Engagement*

As community development work has evolved through the years, the concept of community-led approaches to social change is becoming more prominent in literature and practice. The push towards community control in evolution-making spaces is imperative to the future of authentic community work. As identified in Attygale’s article, “Understanding Community-led Approaches to Community Change,” there has been a noticeable shift in this field. Groups like Idle No More and Black Lives Matter have set important precedents in leading the community (2020, p. 1). The concern is that there is no shared definition of what “Community-Led” is identified and whether a group stating they are community-led truly is in action and practice. Attygalle points out that often

the term is used as rhetoric and isn't encompassing the intersectionality realities of a community. Organizations are making assumptions about the needs of community members (Attygale, 2020, p. 1). Identifying a spectrum of community engagement approaches including the risks and benefits of each allows groups to understand their impact on citizens. The leading approach from the community led to community change (Attygale, 2020, p. 2). The chart below shows the spectrum of approaches identified by Attygale.



Figure 4 (Attygale, 2020, p. 2)

It is vital to define the term ‘community-led’ within this context and how it manifests in a collaborative setting. This approach “uses practices of empowerment, mutual learning and consensus building to create bottom-up citizen-driven change” (Koloso, 2020). An important factor to include is the power dynamics between communities and organizations. This power spectrum is inherently connected to community-led approaches. It reflects that those with more power are usually farther away from the immediate realities of the issue, and those who are the most involved wield the least power (Attygale, 2020, p. 3). The principles of community-led approaches focus on grassroots processes concentrated on the individual community and their specific needs and action. Attygale provides a condensed list of principles based on a report by the Caledon Institute of Social Policy and the Child Resilience Alliance, who use Community-Led theory in their work (Attygale, 2020, p. 3). The list includes the building of relationships as a foundation, centering community voices and leaders, and using asset-based tools in the co-creating of collective action and work (Attygale, 2020 p. 3; Torjman, 2012; Wessells, 2018).

Examining the spectrum and principles above helps define where opportunities can be leveraged to promote change compared to current and past projects on this spectrum. On the

community-owned side of the spectrum, majority initiatives are local and neighbourhood-based with limited supports or resources. Examples of these include co-ops or neighbourhood response networks (Attygale, 2020, p. 4). Community-driven projects are created in collaboration with members and organizations, relying heavily on social capital and trust that has been built between groups to be sustainable (Attygale, 2020, p. 7). When residents provide information and support for social change, but within the scope of an organization's goals, this can be seen as community shaped (Attygale, 2020, p. 7). The end of the spectrum is community informed, which promotes initiatives created through community consultation and is more heavily tilted towards an organization taking the lead. This approach is usually within already made structures and systems like the multiple levels of government or mental health system (Attygale, 2020, p. 6,7). The intersection of these ideals around community projects on this spectrum helps us analyze which approach is appropriate depending on an initiative. The key to this research, alongside other information surrounding community-led projects, is that there is not one single way principle or approach that works. Collaboration, the expansion of one's viewpoint, and the interconnected nature of issues communities take on are all a part of the process of developing community solutions (Attygale,2020, p. 9).

Moving from academic and theory-specific sources into more valuable documents of community-led solutions in crisis settings is the civil societies response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This event required a high need for collaborative spaces and solutions to respond quickly to the ever-evolving crisis in Canada. The pandemic was a levelling field that required organizations, community members, and other stakeholders to come together in collectives to build up a process of response and capacity to combat the multiple challenges that Covid created in communities. The reports and studies that have been produced since the beginning of the pandemic focus on the impact it has had on non-profits and their responses to support their constituents and the leading practices and learning that has come out of this time in society. Locally in British Columbia, the group's Vantage Point, Victoria Foundation, and Vancouver Foundation completed two surveys at the beginning of the pandemic and eight months in to understand how it was impacting organizations in BC and providing a takeaway as organizations continue to implement their programming, collaborating, and supporting community (Attygale,2020, p. 1). Nationally, the Tamarack Institute and researchers Lisa Attygale and Paul Born put together a guide of leading practices and case studies for community-based covid recovery and collective communities that promote equitable recovery (Attygale & Born, 2020, p. 5). The takeaways of both these studies share similar results, including seeing the pandemic as a catalyst for non-profits to unite and collaborate. To bring capacity and assets to collaborative spaces like networks to promote social change and impact (Attygale & Born, 2020 p. 10) (Vantage Point et al., 2020, p. 38). Also, they build onto each other as Vantage Point focuses each stakeholder's role on collective change from governments, foundations, and funders to businesses, volunteers, donors, networks, and the public and Tamarack provides tools of how to engage with these stakeholders in dialogue, planning, and action (Vantage Point et al. 2020, p. 37,38) (Attygale & Born, 2020, p. 10-19). More of the research results and leading practices will be shared in the case study section of the literature

review to bring tangible examples and practical takeaways to this academic research review.

When discussing community-led solutions in the literature, another focus is how collaboration engages citizens. In line with the community approaches is how citizens participate to support creating space in networks for citizens to share their ideas and promote action (Attygale & Born, 2020, p. 13). Critical to social change and community-led solutions is identifying and acting on the recommendations shared by the community. It is imperative to move beyond the statement of being “community-led” to seeing it in literature and implementing community changes. Examples of these documents can include the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action from 2014, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls to Justice. These community-led evaluations and projects prove the importance of this approach to collaboration and social change. It also shows the hard work community activists and people with lived experiences do to lead social change initiatives and bring forward tangible recommendations. Yet, even when community-led projects will be supported by the highest levels of social change agents, like the federal government, we see that these community-led solutions are not consistently being implemented, perpetuating a continuous cycle of distrust and a silencing of grassroots organizing and activism.

An article by Robert Silverman, “Caught in the Middle: Community Development Corporations (CDCs) and the Conflict between Grassroots and Instrumental Forms of Citizen Participation,” focuses on the continued dilemma that community organizations are in when it comes to participation from the citizens in grassroots organizing and activism and the need to balance the everyday projects and programs of the organizations and networks (Silverman, 2005, p. 35). Based on organizations in Detroit and interviews with Executive Directors, the article researches the “Citizen participation continuum.” It helps identify grassroots activities that a community-based group or network could implement at specific continuum levels, from grassroots participation formed by citizens to instrumental involvement based on projects and programs from organizations (Silverman, 2005, p. 36). The key is to discover where Community networks can be on this spectrum and participation to promote authentic community-led solutions to systems change in communities. Citizen participation is key in collaborative research to gain insight and analysis of types of involvement that can be used to promote change. Going into more depth in the analysis, other theorists, including Alinsky and Arnstein, have researched citizen participation and argue that “true participation stems from the development of Indigenous leadership, community-led initiatives and confrontational tactics.” Alinsky expands on the Arnstein ladder of involvement by identifying the type of engagement an organization does with citizens and how the public informs a community development group's agenda, projects, and programs (Silverman, 2005, p. 38). Alinsky's participation instruments that work alongside the continuum include:

“Citizen control of the agenda, Delegation of Power to Citizens, Partnership with Citizens, Citizens Advisory Role in Decision- Making, Placation of Citizens, Consulting Citizens, Therapy to Citizens, Manipulation to Citizens” (Silverman, 2005, p. 38-39).

These instruments alongside the continuum can be tools in the discovery of leading practices in a community response network as the assets a non-profit organization holds can promote bottom-up and collaborative approaches with grassroots participation towards change in local policies, urban renewal, and other community-development projects (Silverman,2005, p. 39). This promotion of citizen participation is dependent on the goals of individual organizations and as a collective or network of organizations and individuals. As discussed in the article, executive directors are crucial to the inclusion of citizen participation and to the implementation of procedures that involve community engagement (Silverman, 2005, p. 44). From the interviews completed with Detroit organizations, ED's current practices of citizen participation mainly identify as the intermediate point in the continuum focused on consulting citizens through focus groups, charettes, and public meetings (Silverman, 2005, p. 44). Being more on the instrumental side of the continuum allows organizations to move forward with projects in the community but lacks some authentic grassroots engagement and participation that could potentially promote systemic change to neighbourhoods. As described in the article, much of the citizen involvement came after creating programs to encourage instrumental activities like getting community buy-in for housing projects or ad-hoc organizing to advise on a planning project (Silverman, 2005, p. 44).

Another way to employ citizen participation within non-profits is to mix instrumental and grassroots participation goals. Examples of this would include community development organizations helping plan social engagement events like neighbourhood block parties or community dinners to engage with groups before transitioning to participate in activist-focused activities (Silverman 2005, p. 45). This hybrid is impactful in bridging the gap between organization and citizen. Still, it lacks the in-depth resources and approach to promote profound, systematic change for everyone to “band together” against a community's ongoing issues (Silverman, 2005, p. 46). Another concern when organizations begin to bring instrumental and grassroots groups together is being caught in the middle of multiple parties and a lack of shared principles that promote similar action among all stakeholders (Silverman, 2005, p. 47). Stepping into this middleman position to mitigate conflict between parties is critical for social change yet perpetuates systems that don't promote the authentic expansion of grassroots participation. Although community engagement has become more citizen-centred, there is still room to move more on the continuum towards grassroots participation in research and in civil society. The hopes for the future of community networks and coalitions are to have more citizen participation which is key to radical change and innovative solutions to systems change for the “wicked problems” that continue to occur (Silverman,2005, p. 49) and the need to identify collaborative agendas for change between non-profits, community networks, and citizens.

### Collaborative Community Networks Case Studies

Combining all the themes from community response literature, we can evaluate specific case

studies within Canada that show multiple ways of organizing networks that respond to needs and crises in their communities. Focusing on three groups across Canada, the case studies summarize the main goals and activities of the network and identify leading practices. These three case studies provide an overarching understanding of practical projects in response networks.

*DTES Coordinated Community Response Network (CCRN), Vancouver, BC.*

The Downtown Eastside Coordinated Community Response Network brings together a diverse group of stakeholders and community partners in the Downtown Eastside region of Vancouver, known as one of the poorest postal codes in Canada. The group aims to collectively coordinate and address the intersecting and various crises that face the neighbourhood. Established as an ad-hoc collaboration of community partners to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, the network has been meeting weekly for the past two years to continue its work as a network (Hollingdale, 2020, p. 5). The CCRN provides a space for over fifty organizations across sectors to virtually meet, share information, and collaborate on emergency response. Actively combatting the typically siloed DTES organizations. In an evaluation report done ten months into the network, researcher Holly Hollingdale cites that 86% of CCRN members identify feeling more connected to other partners in the community (2020, p. 7). Some of the tangible outcomes of the grassroots organizing of the CCRN include promoting food security, peer work funding, outdoor respite sites, and shared advocacy. Utilizing the strength of collaboration, the CCRN acted as a hub for emergency funding from the City of Vancouver and created an innovative funding distribution model (Hollingdale, 2020, p. 9). The CCRN administratively held the funds. Each organization participated in an open conversation on how to distribute the funding democratically and what the immediate needs on the ground were for peer workers; DTES community members with lived experiences are employed (Hollingdale, 2020, p. 10). The model helps employ hundreds of peer workers who support the needed community-led solutions in the neighbourhood, including food security activities, working in women-focused services as support workers, harm reduction services, and ensuring Covid-safety protocols in social service spaces (Hollingdale, 2020, p. 10).

The progress of this ad-hoc grassroots network is due to the group's focus on combating the well-known barriers that prevent individuals, businesses, and organizations from collaborating in the neighbourhood. The CCRN's immediate formation for emergency response brought together stakeholders who usually do not communicate due to the siloed nature of the area, the competition for funding in its current structure, and the lack of trust between collaborators (Hollingdale, 2020, p. 12-15). As a result, Covid became a levelling ground for groups to put aside past concerns and gather. The CCRN cultivates a space where authentic relationships and social capital builds and diverse voices and experiences identify as assets. The leadership focuses on transformation and collective action, and advocacy for the needs of the DTES (Hollingdale, 2020, p. 25). Through an evaluation report completed by Hollingdale there was a recommendation for the CCRN to continue beyond the pandemic and to foster the grassroots environment and bring some sustainable

structure, governance, and capacity to the group to begin to form structure to make the network sustainable in the long term (2020, p. 24). Recently the network funded a coordinator to bring capacity to their short-term activities and crisis response. While simultaneously working with the network to utilize their assets and strength to develop a more sustainable structure, including the establishment of guiding principles, priorities, and outcomes. The network wants to continue to build off the success of the CCRN during the emergency response of Covid and acknowledge the gaps and lessons learned through the process. To establish a network that is people-centred, collaborative and focused on decolonizing and democratizing their practices to promote community-led solutions and outcomes that respond to an immediate crisis with short term activities and advocate for long-term systems change and collective impact (CCRN Guiding Principles, 2021).

*Peel's Regional Community Response Table, Peel, ON.*

Attygale and Born's report, "10- A Guide for a Community-Based Covid-19 Recovery," identifies multiple examples of groups throughout Canada that practice community response in various forms. One type of group is the Peel, Ontario's Regional Community Response Table, which has brought together 160 community partners to help connect residents and provide support throughout the Covid-19 pandemic (Attygale & Born, 2020, p. 28). The Community Response Table (CRT), like the DTES CCRN, provides a space to help local organizations to support marginalized populations and define and respond to the concerns and needs of local communities (Attygale & Born, 2020, p. 28). This virtual space of participants has multiple levels of engagement from local partners, including city staff, social services, school boards, and health groups (Attygale & Born, 2020, p. 28). The group's activities at the beginning of gathering a regional survey to understand the pandemics' impact on Peel and the findings revealed the CRT's agenda. The purpose of the gathering is for a coordinated response, connection, and information sharing between community stakeholders and to support the current pandemic and participate in the covid recovery. Through this plan and collaboration, the CRT's work also played a critical role in the Peel Poverty Reduction Committee (Attygale & Born, 2020, p. 29). The PPRC is attempting an innovative new governance structure of action tables that focus on specific needs in the community to create a strategy for poverty reduction. The plan from 2018-2028 names three significant priorities to collaborate with stakeholders on systems and social change: Income Security, Economic Opportunity, and Well-being and Social Inclusion (Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2018, p. 3). The Regional CRT in Peel brought effective practices of collaboration and coordination to the city. The coordination is done together, and quick, flexible response during a global pandemic showed cross-sector community groups and sectors to gather and leverage this space to advocate, implement crisis response, and participate in long-term systems change in reducing poverty (Attygale and Born, 2020, p. 29).

Living Saint John, New Brunswick, is the province's Community Inclusion Network created in 2014 to end generational poverty in the city. They identify themselves as a multi-led and diverse stakeholder group of approximately one hundred partners. "Living SJ is the shared vision and community action plan that will transform low-income neighbourhoods, close the education achievement gap, improve the wellbeing of our citizens and invest in our workforce; ultimately breaking the cycle of generational poverty" (Living SJ, 2020, para 3). The network has brought together cross-sector groups like the other case study networks. It has implemented a collective impact framework to promote long-term social and economic change (Living SJ, 2020, para 4). The partnerships span businesses, municipal, provincial, and federal government, education groups, non-profits, and community organizations (Living SJ, 2020). They aim to support local plans in line with New Brunswick's poverty reduction strategy (Attygale and Born, 2020, p. 26). The group has established a governance structure that allows for collective leadership and action while also successfully bringing needed capacity to the activities they chose to focus on as a part of their shared agenda. Living SJ has implemented the CI framework to promote sustainable practices and strategies as a group. They first began in 2013 with a leadership team, 2014 with research and focused groups on hearing from the community to discover their priorities, completed analysis on focus groups and brought together a stakeholder group to present strategy and hear feedback. In 2015 the group created four collective impact teams to have community action plans based on their priorities (Living SJ, 2020). They continued to meet regularly and work in their team. As they move forward, they have implemented multiple research and evaluation methods to track and understand their work and progress to ensure sustainable practices and appropriate response that equals maximum impact (Living SJ, 2020, para 5).

Living SJ is a case study that demonstrates sustainability beyond initial connection and collaboration. They embedded frameworks and tools at the beginning of their network, especially by identifying themselves as a collective impact group. This immediately established a framework that promotes systems change thinking and sustainable practices after establishment and connection. An example of the impact of this sustained effort is the network's response to the Covid-19 pandemic in Saint John. Due to the past work of relationship building, coordination, and collaboration Living SJ was able to act swiftly and use the social capital cultivated to support vulnerable populations and residents during this critical time (Attygale and Born, 2020, p. 26). They leaned on partnerships with the provincial government to complete an assessment of community strengths, needs, and gaps. One of the gaps was the need for a collective impact response focused on food security. Groups that first connected through SJ living came together to create the Greater Saint John Emergency Food Program, which utilized community partners to provide food to neighbourhoods, families, school systems, and organizations (Attygale & Born, 2020, p. 26). As the authors conclude Living SJ and the Emergency food response show, "skill of Saint John's grassroots organizations and what can be accomplished when neighbourhoods have the connections, skills, and tools to employ Collective Impact Response (Attygale and Born, 2020,

p. 27).

## Conclusion

The analysis from this literature review demonstrates the breadth of research and resources on community collaboration and network building. The existing bodies of literature which encompass traditional scholarly articles and community-based sources coalesce along three themes: i) theories on social change and collaboration, ii) leadership in collaborative networks, and iii) community networks leading practices. The discourse of collaboration in community development provides theoretical expertise that inform practical tools and frameworks of community organizing and collaboration.

The review on theories of social change including systems change, collective impact and decolonizing equitable approaches to community provide a comprehensive high-level examination of current research. Identifying critical foundational definitions of community collaboration and networks with Hansen's work on social networks establishes how systems change thinking is an effective theory to promote positive community change. Stroh, a prominent system thinker provides discourse on the theoretical frameworks of systems change thinking and its emphasis on the interconnectedness of multiple factors in a social issue to transform and disrupt a system (2015, p. 16-17). Other scholars, including Harper, Kuperminc, Weaver, Emshoff and Erickson identify the collaborative nature of systems thinking and the importance of relationship building and resource sharing as a tool where change occurs (2014, p. 356). Less prominent and newer to the body of literature of systems change is analyzing how this theory can evolve to be more intersectional and respectful of diverse schools of thoughts, experiences, and Indigenous practices (Goodchild, 2021, p. 81, 84). The literature demonstrates how systems thinking literature builds into other important tools and frameworks that promote network structures that promote positive change.

Collective Impact theory, originally created by Kania and Kramer, is identified in the literature review as impactful to community work. CI can be used as an effective framework in collaborative networks and brings structure and common conditions to community work. Yet, the literature also includes critiques and evolving bodies of work on innovations of Collective Impact theory. Academics like Crotty, Ennis, and Tofa critique the development of the theory as its foundations are top-down and do not account for power dynamics and the lack of community empowerment (Crotty, 1998, p. 157) (Ennis & Tofa 2020, p. 35). The final analysis of literature in this section is the research collected on decolonizing community development and finding equitable practices for social change. The interdisciplinary and intersectional research on decolonizing brings out themes for community practitioners promoting equity, rejecting colonial thinking, and promoting Indigenous resurgence. Indigenous academics, Corntassel, Taiaiake, and Elliot share about the resurgence movement and the centering of Indigenous ways in a colonial world (Corntassel, 2012, p. 86). These intellectual and political movements are critical in

collaborative spaces and non-Indigenous academics also share how settlers can participate actively and appropriately in decolonizing movements. Although this theme emerges more in literature, there is still gaps in existing knowledge on the practice of decolonization and equity. This is not to say it, they do not exist, moreover that traditional academia may not be the best space to gain this knowledge and understanding. Much of the critique that these concepts point out are regarding colonial thought and inherit power dynamics in the sharing of knowledge beyond institutional spaces. These shifts in academia demonstrate movement towards upholding Indigenous sovereignty and leadership and promoting equity in community collaboration.

The second section of the review gathered literature on leadership in collaborative networks, highlighting theories of system and sustainable leadership that promote transformational system change. The study of leadership is expansive, and this literature review provides an overview of two types of identified leadership forms: i) Sustainable leadership and ii) System leadership, a subject very prominent with research groups like the Tamarack Institute and author Weaver, who identify a multi-leader perspective that values collective impact through relationship building that promotes systems change activities (Weaver 2015). Dungan, Meehan, and Reinhelt are all critical of leadership theories and participate in the deconstruction and reconstructing of leadership values that emphasis bottom-up community practices. The authors give tangible examples of fostering a new mindset that promotes a systems approach, including looking beyond short-term goals, allowing space for conversation and reflection, engaging with periphery groups, and promoting coordination and cooperation (Meehan and Reinhelt, 2012, p. 6). Examining network sustainability, the review concentrates on understanding how structure is related to transformative and sustainable leadership and the tangible tools required in long-term collaboration. Tam summarizes the make-up of centralized and decentralized structure and encapsulates organizational theorists, like Mintzberg's organization structures and how it plays a role in sustaining networks (Tam, 2017, p. 10). Reinhelt and other researchers like Raynor identify tangible characteristics sustainable leaders can have including the diversity, learning, and reflecting together, and having systems change mindset (Reinhelt, 2016, p. 4) and promote capacity building in leadership, adaptive, management, and technical capacities (Raynor, 2011, p. 15).

The final theme focuses on leading practices for community networks identified by specific researchers, community groups, and practitioners. This section identifies leading practices in collaboration during crisis response, community-led solutions, and engagement. Research on crisis response in the body of literature show the prevalent practice of collaboration as a leading practice (Kalkman et al., 2018, p. 480). As discussed in the review cross-sector networks responding to issues is not new, yet more empirical and quantitative data needs to exist to share the insights and tangible outcomes of these groups during crisis response (Hogg & Varda, 2016, p. 2015). A key strategy is to implement community-led solutions and engagement with citizens to promote intersectional and holistic collaboration. Community researchers, Attygalle and the Tamarack Institute provide a spectrum of approaches to identify the multiple forms of community engagement approaches (2020, p. 2). Key to this spectrum and research is the importance of

context in community development. Using the example of the Covid pandemic as a catalyst for collaboration and engages community partners across multiple sectors shows the permanence of these spaces for finding solutions to community needs (Attygale & Born, 2020 p. 10) (Vantage Point et al., 2020, p. 38).

Community-led solutions literature focusses on strategies and theories for engaging citizens in these collaborative spaces. Silverman uses a tangible example of community development projects in Detroit and the role of citizen participation has in collaborative spaces and the continued challenges of grassroots groups and other non-profits to find coordination (2005, p. 35). The literature on community engagement and response demonstrates more shifts towards bottom-up community approaches being mainstreamed, yet there are still gaps in knowledge of how to bridge trust and relationship in collaborative spaces where much disagreement and lack of shared agenda can stifle participating in transformational systems change efforts. The final study of this section was the presentation of three collaborative networks across Canada that are actively implementing the literature review's work. The first two cases of the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver's CCRN and the Peel Community Response Table both show how the pandemic was a catalyst for collaboration. The third case of Living SJ in New Brunswick is an example of a longer-term collaborative group that has implemented collective impact frameworks and structures that has resulted in a sustainable multi-sector collaborative community inclusion network.

## **Methodology and Methods**

The next section of the capstone provides an overview of the methodology and methods used to conduct the data collection section of the report. It presents the researcher's process to ensure ethical protocol was upheld, proper steps were taken, and the identification of strengths and limitations in the data collection process. The methodology ultimately informs a final needs and assets assessment report that answers the research question and provides options to consider for future steps in the research application. This Capstone Project required HREB approval; certificate of approval's ethical protocol number is 21-0138.

### **Methodology**

With the establishment of a conceptual framework in the literature review structure (see Figure 2), the research objective is in line with the themes of the study, including social change and collaboration, leadership in collaborative networks, and community network leading practices. These three main themes guide the data collection and how a thematic analysis will code and translate the data. These three variables are also connected to the sub-sect of themes identified in the literature review. The research strategy for this project uses a mixed methods approach to find a strategic balance between quantitative and qualitative data collection tools that combine the epistemological and methodological ways of analyzing information. This approach supports discovering the most viable and sustainable options for the Community Response Network (Saldana 2011, p. 10). The methodology is based on principles of community-based research with a significant emphasis on participation, collaboration, and relationality in this specific project (Finley, 2008, p. 97). Although CBR principles focus more on the subjective and consider intersecting factors within research with people, including positionality, power dynamics, and forms of capital, it is imperative to engage with these practices to promote inclusive and sustainable community connection strategies. (Finley, 2008, p. 98).

### **Methods**

This project employs qualitative approaches and uses the tools of a literature review, semi-structured interviews for data collection, and an asset/needs-based assessment. These tools build onto each other to support the discovery of whether a Community Response Network is viable in Greater Victoria. The data collected is based on evidence of research in other cities. For example, the literature review collected and examined the current published data and analysis regarding community collectives, crisis response networks, and their overarching themes of collaboration, leadership, and non-profit advocacy.

The literature is retrieved from the UVIC library database, the researcher's connections to non-profits in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and the extensive research done in that neighbourhood. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with various stakeholders from

multiple non-profits and organizations in the Greater Victoria Region connected to the client. This group was identified alongside the client, who created an initial group of five critical stakeholders to understand the current situation in Victoria. Then a list of 28 potential participants was established, comprised of a diverse group of non-profits, business associations, and non-profit professionals. Ultimately 13 various participants met with the researcher for an online recorded zoom interview for between 30-60 mins. The interviews focus on discovery and listening to determine the assets and needs in Victoria's non-profit sector and are designed to promote open conversation and less structured data collection. The interview is divided into two sections. The first section asks general questions about the participant's identified organization, including their role, the organization's mandate, and the sector of work. The second section is network-specific which prompts conversation around collaboration needed in the community, social issues and challenges, and the organization's interest in a CRN in the city. All the interviews were completed virtually using zoom, with each one being recorded and transcribed. If a participant could not complete an interview but still wished to participate, they were sent a survey with the same questions to fill out in their own time. However, none of the participants chose to complete a survey. Therefore, all participants are anonymous in the research, although their organizations' names, unless requested otherwise, will be used when discussing general findings. The quantitative methods of analysis included mapping the networks and collective spaces participants are a part of currently to comprehend the current landscape of the region. This comprehensive data was then analyzed using thematic analysis, compiled into a needs/asset-based assessment report and implementation strategy, and presented to the client.

## Data Analysis

The interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. This form of research focuses on "...identifying, analysing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The framework summarizes themes found and consolidates them into a structured approach of extracting major themes into the formalized findings and recommendations (Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules, 2017, p. 2). The analysis followed the structure of six phases and identify tools to promote trustworthiness at each stage, based on Braun and Clarke's method that allow for a linear structure while also focusing on the nuance and reflective process needed in qualitative research and analysis (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 3). The phases include the researcher familiarizing oneself with the data, finding initial codes, manually searching for themes from the data, reviewing them and defining them, and finally producing the report (Nowell et al. 2017, p.3). These steps aren't always linear, and in this qualitative format, they are correlated throughout the data collection, analysis and report writing phase (Creswell, 2001, p. 3). Using an inductive approach to the data, the thematic analysis and practices of deep reading identified key themes to guide the report. The researcher approached the data in the following way-- first re-listened to each interview to familiarize herself with the data and took anecdotal/summarized notes. Then using the NVivo program, uploaded transcripts and did the first read-through while recording reflective journaling notes. Afterwards, the researcher completed a second formal read while generating

initial codes. The researcher also coded participants so their names would be anonymous, numbering from Participants 1 to 13. Once all interviews went through these steps, a list of twenty initial codes was established, and the researcher completed a thematic map (see figure 5) to finalize and determine five main themes. Each was given names and definitions to help guide the structuring of the needs and assessment findings.



Figure 5- Thematic Analysis codes and themes

**Reliability and Validity: Establishing Credibility**

The data analysis upholds the importance of reliability and validity in the researcher's approach to collecting, researching, and reporting the information to ensure credibility for the project. Using a relationist perspective to construct validity, data is contained in open-ended interviews where the researcher asked participants questions and observed the concepts that emerged from these interviews. These operationalized concepts were identified using the tools and practice of the thematic analysis, which promotes reliability as it accounts for personal biases and provides steps for ongoing reflections and data triangulation. The research also enabled the evaluation of the approach to data collection. She ensured good record keeping with multiple mtg notes, zoom recording, transcripts, and reflective journals of a participant's interview. The analysis anonymizes the participants except categorizes them into different sectors to help present the data

in a transparent matter that also represents the participant's experiences in the community. Once a conclusion was made, the researcher identified limitations to the study and implications to ensure that the gaps in knowledge, unconscious bias, and critiques of methods were addressed. These tools for reliability and viability promote the credibility of this research to ensure the data collected and analyzed correctly support answering the research question of the viability of a Community Response Network in the Greater Victoria Region.

## Strengths and Limitations

**Limitations** – The condition beyond the researcher's control in the Community Response Network project is three-pronged – researcher's positionality, location, and timeline. First, I must acknowledge my positionality as a researcher and the lack of trust and social capital I have when connecting with organizations and individuals. At the same time, the researcher recognized the space they uphold as an academic, settler, and cis female. Second, a considerable limitation is the researcher's location in Vancouver, BC. The network project is based in Victoria, which means all the connections occurred virtually with in-person connections lessened. Third and finally, as a new academic researcher in the Victoria region with non-profits, there lacks a genuine relationship and social capital with stakeholders, which is crucial in community-based research.

**Strengths** – The methodological approach allows precise data collection tools appropriate for gaining qualitative responses that are fulsome. The open-ended interviews always allow flexibility in how participants want to engage and more in-depth conversations regarding collaboration and community response. Another strength of this project is using thematic analysis and deep reading to promote in-depth reflection on the data to find impactful and valuable themes for the client. A final strength is the researchers experience in coordinating and participating in a Community Response Network in the City of Vancouver.

## Needs & Assets Assessment Findings

### Executive Summary

The Needs and Assets Assessment Finding section provides an overview of the project's data collection phase to determine the context and analysis of current collaborative practices within the Capital Region District. The data obtained and analyzed provide insight to the researcher in answering whether a Community Response Network is viable in the Region of Greater Victoria. Participants of the research are identified as non-profit or organizational professionals working in the region in collaborative settings that respond to multiple community issues. Thirteen interviews were conducted from various recognized organizations with interviewees being anonymized, numbered, and titled as Participants 1 to 13. The organizations named in the research include:

- ◆ Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness
- ◆ Vancouver Island Health Authority
- ◆ United Way of Greater Victoria
- ◆ Our Place Society
- ◆ Portland Hotel Society
- ◆ Downtown Victoria Business Association
- ◆ Greater Victoria Chambers of Commerce
- ◆ Inter-cultural Association of Victoria (ICA)
- ◆ North Park Neighbourhood Association
- ◆ Capital Regional District (CRD)
- ◆ Good Food Network

The below sections of this report use thematic analysis to lay out five separate themes discovered during participant interviews that share similar aspects to the literature review framework. These themes include—1. Types of networks in the region; 2. Systems change, 3. Community-led solutions, 4. Collaborative practices, 5. Inclusion, diversity, and community. These topics guide the report to demonstrate and analyze the information shared to inform the research. Each theme presents data on the realities of collaboration between non-profits, organizations, and communities in responding to crises like Covid-19 and other forms of cooperation in networks, working groups, and meetings. The analysis provides findings that summarize leading practices in line with those discussed in the literature review and points of gaps currently hindering collaborative spaces in the region. This gathering informs the research question and supports the client in providing options to consider and recommendations for actionable steps beyond this report. For example, the information gathered was impactful in answering the research question by ultimately finding there is currently no need for a new Community Response Network. Instead, the research should shift to providing other options for implementation. These options stem from the assets already in the community, including endorsing opportunities to hold dialogue-focused events on bridging relationship gaps, creating a formal coordinated emergency response, and expanding or resource gathering efforts for networks in the region.

## Main Themes

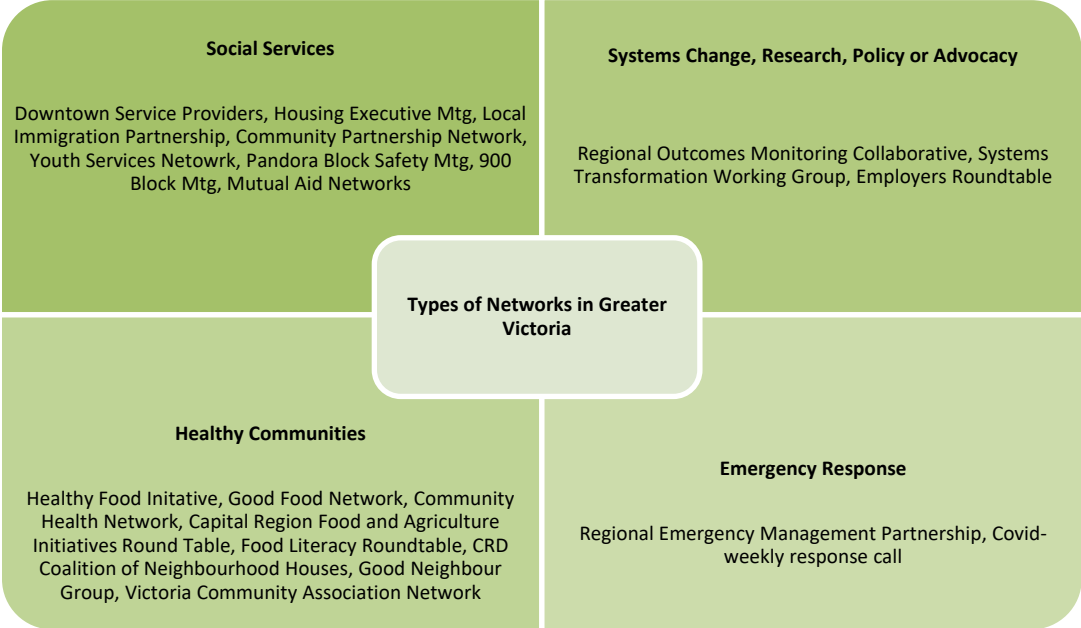
With a thematic analysis the themes of these findings were narrowed down from twenty initial nodes to five main codes. These five identified themes are based on the conceptual framework established in the literature review and focus on similar topics and definitions that are fundamental to coordinated efforts in social change. There is no hierarchical order, and each theme discusses, and analysis' the data gathered from the thirteen participants who were a part of interviews with the researcher.

- 1. Types of Networks in Greater Victoria:** A critical theme which provides an initial evaluation of the network's research participants are already a part of and what assets these spaces employ. Broken down into different sub-sections the types of networks will be identified in their activities, coordination, and issues that need coordinated response efforts.
- 2. Systems Change:** This theme targets the long-term discussions and focused subject areas networks, and organizations are tackling to participate in systems change activities within the Greater Victoria Region. Participants of the study shared their experiences in community work to promote systems change activities towards the reoccurring systemic issues in the region. Specific attention is paid to crisis response and the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 3. Community-Led Solutions:** The third theme engages in how community is involved in typical networks and collaboration and where there are needs for capacity building, community engagement, and actively building space for community in these settings.
- 4. Collaborative Practices:** A vital theme to answering the research question, this section analyzes the data of evaluating collaboration tools that are currently used in networks and organizations. It also identifies the leading practices, gaps in collaboration, issues faced during collaboration, and the type of leadership needed in collaborative networks.
- 5. Inclusion, Diversity and Community:** The final theme classifies how organizations and individuals are defining and engaging in inclusive networks, promoting decolonizing practices, Indigenous leadership and finding inclusive and diverse ways to collaborate and coordinate.

**Discussion and Analysis**

**Theme 1: Types of Networks in Greater Victoria**

Within the Greater Victoria Region there are numerous collaborative networks that meet on a regular basis to respond to a multitude of needs in their communities. These networks are diverse in make-up, mission, level of response, and area they serve. Limited to the knowledge of the participants and the use of available resources and research, the findings evaluate the types of networks organizations are involved in and how these spaces are promoting social change. Based off the 13 interviews from 11 different organizations and 2 non-profit professionals the figure 6 below displays a list of the networks the participants discussed divided into general type similarities. These networks are the ones that a participant has either had a significant role in or was mentioned at a minimum twice in all data analysis. The researcher is also aware of other sources like the Community Network Database that provides a curated list of 33 networks in the area, their target population, region, contact person, a synopsis, and their website (n.d.). From this large list of groups, the data was then analyzed to five main networks or organizations who are most in line with the work and mission of a Community Response Network in figure 7.



*Figure 6- Networks Identified by Research Participants*

Network Name	Leading Group	Activities of the Network	Evidence in data	Excerpt from Interviewees
<b>Downtown Service Providers (DSP)</b>	Greater Victoria's Coalition to End Homelessness	This is a monthly meeting made up of service providers, health agencies, city staff, businesses and more in Victoria. All individuals collaborate to respond to needs in the Downtown Victoria neighbourhood of those experiencing poverty with information sharing, monthly updates, and coordinated efforts.	8 participants	Participant 8 speaking on the DSP, "That's where most of our official community sharing happens. Particularly, I think people who are like sort of periphery social service providers really benefit. They can meet everybody in one stop."
<b>Community Health Networks &amp; Regional Outcomes Monitoring Collaborative</b>	Capital Regional District	A Community Health Network brings together multiple organizations, networks and alliances around specific subject areas that are focused on the determinants of health. Out of this large umbrella are small subgroups including the Regional Outcomes and Monitoring Collaborative. There are multiple CHN's in each area of the Capital Region District. Large group meets twice a year with smaller steering committees gathering once a month.	3 participants	Participant 1 shares, "We identify what data is available related to our different goal areas. And then we create knowledge translation tools and try and work on knowledge mobilization at the municipal level, but also within the organizations that are represented. And then the other kind of arm of what we do is focus a lot on relationship building and collaboration."
<b>Housing Providers Executive Director Group</b>	Our Place Society	A group of ED's since covid who have been meeting to help get individuals housed. Initiated by Our Place Society, eight members meet for informal relationship building and conversation around challenges, responses, and other items related to housing.	3 participants	Participant 5 speaking on the housing group, "that has been super helpful to us in terms of a helping us find, you know, venues to get people housed, which is hugely challenging here."
<b>Systems Transformation Working Group</b>	Greater Victoria's Coalition to End Homelessness	A brand-new space out of the Coalitions many working groups that focus on systems change and acting on community recommendations so when innovations present themselves in meeting they can be connected to previous work. The group reports directly to the health and housing steering committee which is also a part of the Coalition.	3 participants	Participant 13 stated the group is "made up of like frontline site supervisor level, peer agency level, people with lived experience community, so really trying to pull in the different layers of perspective in an organization,"
<b>Covid-19 Response Call</b>	Diverse group of non-profit professionals	A daily standing call that began at the beginning of covid, brought together by a few communities' workers/non-profit professionals to coordinate response and needs in the early days of the pandemic. Ended once it was no longer needed for coordinated response.	2 participants	The group created a format which Participant 7 states was, "What are you hearing? What do you need? What do you offer," with Indigenous groups going first? Then minutes and action items were recorded. Was a space for wayfinding during crisis and planning which went from daily to three times a week to once and then disbanded when no longer needed.

Figure 7- Five Main Networks Identified by research participants

## *Greater Victoria region Issues Addressed with Coordinated Response*

One of the guiding questions in the interview addressed the areas of community challenges or issues in Greater Victoria that would be appropriate to undertake in a coordinated response. This was asked to discern the common challenges stakeholders are experiencing in the community and then attach these issues to networks that are already in place, and where there could be gaps in response to certain challenges in the region of Greater Victoria. Each interviewee approached their answer differently, with some focusing on the outcomes and challenges that occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic past and present. While others answered in a general sense of the continued systemic issues society faces in the region of Greater Victoria.

Stakeholders from the business community identified the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and how this event has expanded already present concerns like homelessness, the drug toxicity crisis, and housing needs. Participant 2 recognized that business owners in the City of Victoria are experiencing some of the symptoms of these large issues in front of their locations like houseless individuals in their doorways, street disorder, cleanliness concerns and other complex issues. While frustration has built in these past two years among these groups, there is a recognition of bringing balance back to these issues and focusing response on the systems in place. Especially the need for specific services to be instated and not criminalizing the individuals experiencing these hardships. Participant 4 identified the pandemic's impact on businesses as being direct and indirect sharing tangible examples like the ones addressed above and the emphasis on the lack of safety felt by businesses, the snowballing of crisis's including things like the heat dome, new covid waves, the residential school burial sites, and the overworking of current services and resources like the 911 system.

Direct service providers identified multiple layers of issues and challenges in the Greater Victoria Region, including housing on various immediate and transitional housing levels to more permanent solutions. In addition, they identified the numerous organizations trying to tackle issues in different capacities like homelessness, the drug poisoning crisis, and the state of mental health support. One unique topic not being directly focused on by many organizations is that of climate change, brought up by participants as a crisis that envelopes all the other issues faced in the region.

Participants that lead collaborative spaces like networks or are umbrella organizations in the region also recognize multiple issues in the region that need a coordinated response. These networks identify problems like food insecurity and the need to transform local food systems, including how these systems respond to an emergency and the need for long-term sustainable solutions to the same crisis as discussed by other participants. Also discussed was the issue of finding innovative solutions to the cyclical problems the city faces. As well, Participant 9 brought up the challenge of there not being a long-term planning for the concentrated North Park neighbourhood. While Participant 5 identified the gaps and requirements to address racism in the community.

One issue that anchored all groups was participants identifying the need for better emergency response planning in the community. Especially as society continues to deal with overarching and acute crises in their neighbourhoods and cities. These can span from the need for community and non-profits to respond to multiple crisis like overdose needs, encampment support, food insecurity, and more.

## Theme 2: Systems Change

Analyzing the data from a lens of systems change thinking, this theme became evident as critical in any discussion on Community Response Networks as this is a pivotal function of the group. Participants identified this theme as well, and generally, when discussing the system's change ideals, they shared the sentiment for cultural shifts in collaboration, networks, and approaches to service delivery and social change. Five participants explicitly discussed the systems change ideas using common words like transformation, shifts, flexibility, and change. Some key points of how systems change activities are occurring in the Region of Victoria are displayed in this report.

### *The identification of systems changes activities*

- Participant 3 identifies that in current systems and services, organizations are siloed, and when new services are implemented, there can be replication that is specifically not helpful during emergency response. This statement identifies a shift in thinking from organizations to have better knowledge translation and open sharing from all levels of government, sectors, and residents can be impactful during a crisis and beyond.
- Participant 13 focused on tools of collaboration and collective impact to promote system transformation. Also, identifying that systems transformation work is dependent on people and relationships to promote authentic change. The participant, specifically discusses the need for intentionality across organizations, sectors, and individuals to,

“Build in time for your own humanity and your relationship. Yes, relationship building, and strategically, really digging into like that kind of like, inventory, and collaborative space.”

- Participant 6 discussed a network's willingness to find new structures and systems in the region and to be more flexible to promote change, “I think that is something maybe good that's come out of the pandemic is that we have that ability to be flexible a little bit more, and we recognize that change is constant.” Even citing the need not to stay stuck in what times groups meet and formal agendas, as these systems are what have gotten us into the situations and issues that plague cities now.

### *How Covid-19 response was a catalyze for systems change thinking*

- Participant 13 shared some of the positive shifts that occurred during pandemic responses that started to break down colonial structures to look for new approaches and perspectives.

An example of these steps towards systems changes was the rapidness in responding to encampments of hundreds of people, move outs, service delivery, and the need for resources during the pandemic,

“The unfolding of the services and resources was so rapid, and it’s kind of almost pushed people together to do this response in a way.”

- The rapidness in response from multiple sectors, spoken about often, was two-fold in its outcomes and push towards system change. It helped level power dynamics and brought diverse groups into one space that would not have connected for a multitude of reasons, but also due to this quickness there was not the time to build the needed social capital and trust. Described as a moment where cross sector groups, grassroots organizations, and people with lived experiences came together with a common agenda and response.
- Also, during the pandemic response, The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness used the collaboration between these groups to continue the shifting of how to gather and coordinate. This is how the systems transformation group became a space to bring diverse groups together, name the power dynamics or hierarchies in place and provide actionable innovations to specific priorities that community members have previously shared. Using tools of systems change like consensus-based decision making to flatten leadership structures.
- Other examples expressed by participants in systems change thinking include shifting thought and motivation when addressing systemic issues like food security. Participant 3 shares ideas on how we live in community and each other’s actions,

“And the way that I’m engaging with this community impacting at the center of this individual, this relative on this land, and vice versa? And what can we do together? To improve the situation, whatever that might be?”

Systems disruption suggestions identified in the data include practices like overarching goals connecting diverse networks and groups into common principles, streamlining meetings and spaces in a willingness to work together and avoid duplication. As well as reaching out and working with community partners and sectors that non-profits would usually not be in coordination with like businesses, grassroots advocacy groups, and mutual aid networks. The collaborative practices section will discuss this lack of engagement across all sectors and separation. Developing systems change thinking in collaborative practices, and coordinated response is critical when wanting to transform and disrupt systemic issues that take long-term discussions on focused areas of social change. As previously shared, multiple chronic systems need total reworking to promote sustainable change. From systems change lens, facing what is already in place and being willing to delete replication, shake up structures, and promote community-focused solutions is critical in

building sustainable communities against wicked problems. The data analyzed promises to answer the research question and the function of a community response network in Greater Victoria to work towards systems change.

### Theme 3: Community-Led Solutions

Community-led solutions are essential to any community development work or coordinated response. In analyzing how networks and organizations promote and support community-led solutions, the project participants shared examples of how this is happening in the region. Shifts need to occur at the community level in networks and how they participate in promoting more success. These practices align with Attygale's research on the spectrum of approaches in engagement with community members, from community-owned to the community informed (2020, p. 2).

Compared to the pandemic response literature, organizational representatives in Greater Victoria also recognize that this world event was a catalyst for collaboration and breaking down past silos and structures that created barriers to community involvement (Attygale & Born 2020, p. 10). Groups identify the need for more integrated citizen participation in working groups focused on social change compared to past practices focused only on consulting the community in focus groups or public meetings (Silverman, 2005, p. 44). Instead, supporting procedures that directly begin in the community. For example, two different participants mentioned the rise of mutual aid networks during Covid-19. One example by Participant 7 was a Facebook group that directly supported community by the community. This decentralized and direct community care that citizens established shows the success of citizen participation and community-led solutions. Participant 8 identifies other forms of collaboration by sharing the example of individuals who live at an encampment on Pandora that have begun to record a podcast to share the realities of their lives and the community.

Also, compared to what the participants reported, the research identifies the power dynamics factor between community and organizations; Kolosy points out the need to promote capacity building and empowerment for grassroots community change (Kolosy 2020). Some formalized networks are focused on supporting and creating spaces for community solutions, with the Greater Victoria Coalition providing folks with lived and living experiences in working groups to lead and collaborate with multiple stakeholders. Including the Systems Transformation Group, which has unhoused and under-housed individuals. Participant 11 also identified the importance of peers in collaboration with peer organizations like Solid Outreach which support health needs and services for drug use in the City of Victoria (Solid Outreach, n.d.). They work closely with larger organizations on frontline issues and bring their expertise to safe consumption and overdose prevention. A great example of community solutions.

Critical to the community's support and peer-based solutions is to have inherent practices, structures, and capacity-building spaces to support individuals actively and safely as part of

coordinated response networks. Also, the participant shares that if certain groups don't want to be in specific spaces and groups, be respectful and keep the door and relationship open for dialogue. Networks need to know how to do these authentic, collaborative practices well. Participant 13 shares, "how do we build in the space and capacity within our organizations to recognize that place where we are working shoulder to shoulder in the community or overlapping our working community, to both, you know, be combining resources where possible or combine efforts and align efforts?" and how to find the commonalities to build capacity together towards solutions that aren't relying on the status quo of typical colonial structures.

#### Theme 4: Collaborative Practices

The findings from the collaborative practices are divided into three sections as the data was analyzed. The first identifies some of the leading practices that participants shared from multiple perspectives of Covid-19 response, Victoria networks positive collaboration activities, and general leading practices they have experienced in collaborative spaces. The gaps in collaboration include certain lessons learned during the pandemic response as well as general collaborative gaps occurring in the region. Finally, the data touches on the importance of leadership in collaborative networks and the evidence of what different participants are looking for in a network leader.

##### *Covid-19 response leading practices*

As discussed in other sections of this report and within the literature review, covid was a catalyst for collaboration. A very difficult two years for all cities that exposed inequities and needs, yet there were some positive practices that emerged within the region of Victoria. Here are some non-exhaustive excerpts of examples:

- **Quick Housing Response:** Participant 3 shares that Covid was a "beautiful social experiment, this opportunity where the things that could not be even housing, we had our city I think purchased five hotels, for people who were unhoused," "we learned that in one year, a city could come up with instant housing."
- **Businesses Supporting each other:** Participant 2 and 4 both discussed how businesses supported each other during the pandemic, calling each other to help if someone's lights were on, needed support closing, and more. Bringing the community together and continuing these efforts between business and to promote action for coordinated economic recovery.
- **New Perspectives:** The Greater Coalition to End Homelessness shared the Covid-19 response experience has brought a new perspective on how they approach collaboration. Using the excellent work done during the pandemic of multiple groups collaborating the coalition continues to make intentional spaces for this work by using the recommendations made in the community and aligning it with a network that promotes action.

- **New Relationships formed:** A leading practice out of Covid-19 was the relationships developed and conversations that we're able to occur that would not have before; Participant 13 states it was amazing but messy and hard at times, quoting the numerous organizations with diverse mandates and beliefs were able to collaborate in one space in a way that couldn't have happened in other times or in more established structures.
- **Coordinated responses across sectors:** The weekly Covid-19 call shared by Participant 7 at the beginning of the pandemic held tangible examples of impactful practices. These practices include the network only being in place until the need was over, it encompassed multiple sectors involved in the call (farmers markets, neighbourhood houses, social services) and had more traditionally hierarchal groups like provincial representatives or funders there to listen to the folks who were dealing with issues on the ground. It also gave the power to these groups to share the realities on the ground. Other leading practices included ensuring Indigenous groups went first on the call and creating a space for rapid emergency funding and resource connection.
- **Mutual Aid:** As shared in a previous section, participants 7 and 8 identified mutual aid networks that have emerged in Victoria as excellent at directly connecting people in need's requests with tangible support like money for rent, groceries, and more. The way these groups start, and run-in community allow for consistent collaboration and focus on individuals.

### *Leading Practices in Networks*

Beyond Covid responses, groups in the region have collaborated for many years. These participants have identified general leading practices that are either already well established and functioning or other concepts to consider from interviewees.

- **Organic Communication:** Participant 11 shares how open communication is effective in the community due to its smallness as a city. Sharing that all non-profits are working together a lot already is a natural opportunity to make connections, talk, and organically collaborate. They identify that these open lines of communication between several groups are working well in addressing issues around replication of services and mutual support.
- **Networks relationship with Community:** From an individual and relationship-based point of view, the shifting of how networks look at relationships with community. Identifying how we all are impacted by actions of groups and the shift in thinking to more collective community impact to improve situations is critical when participating in collaborative spaces. Participant 3 shares some ideas for practices, including how groups can communicate better and connect resources. Stating that, at times, groups and funders will start new projects and programs when they think there is a gap in services. Instead, there should be space and time to evaluate what is already happening and which groups are doing it and then directly engage and connect with them, instead of starting your project if it is not necessary or needed. This is also relevant to looking at issues and response in a holistic manner. Engaging conversation beyond the focused area you are responding to and

understanding how it is connected to other foundational problems like how the food system is not just related to food issues but also mental health or poverty.

- **Collective Impact & Common Agenda:** Participant 13 identifies Collective Impact as a leading practice for collaboration—echoing the academic literature on the subject. Finding a shared issue and goal and how it connects to other groups, so action won't happen in isolation and instead impact the community collectively. Also suggested as a critical practice is having a common vision or purpose that brings everyone together across networks. Participant 8 states an example of using the UN sustainability goals as a common platform item.
- **Relationships & Building Trust:** Also shared in other sections of the report, embedding relational practices into spaces is critical, Participant 13 states, "it's really, it's really challenging to do work, that needs to be relational really needs to honor that perspective and space that people are coming from in a colonial structure where it's very key, you know, performance indicators and timelines and fiscal cycles and reporting requirements and things. And knowing that to be effectively prepared next time, a global pandemic, thing comes out, we can step into that space having been able to move through some of those differing points we have in approaches? I think there's been some real gains like residual gains in that perspective as well."
- **Openness to Innovation:** Participant 7 identified some impactful practices like being open to trial and error when collaborating, flexibility, and openness to change. Ensure groups are not stuck in the same routines, structures, and agendas. Instead, they are exploring together outside of these systems that have created the issues today, learning how to step outside of them, and being willing to "blow up those systems and structures and find a new way forward." Other examples of work with participants include finding innovations to respond to needs like North Park exploring Community Benefits Agreements, groups working together on social enterprise development and businesses engaging with non-profits in community response.
- **Strength in Diversity:** Participant 7 shares the importance of seeing the strength in a diversity of skills and understanding how to mobilize this as a leading practice for future emergency response. Using diverse skills to implement a shadow network, "that is, you know, they have the mobilizing skills, they have the resources, they have the mailing list and like, their job is like to hit the call list, the call tree, you know, and set up the structures to be truly response and to makes sure that they don't you know, devolve into the entrenched ways, but they get those people out of the silos bring together to make sure they do that thing, advocate for the system change, and then go on to the next"

### *Gaps or Challenges in Collaborating*

Analyzing the data collected one also discovers the gaps or challenges there are to collaboration in coordinated response. The gaps are found in numerous types of ways. Some of this is anchored around how different non-profits, networks or businesses approach specific issues is where there can be gaps in coordinated response and collaboration.

- **Intentional and Inclusive spaces:** Participant 13 identifies a gap of how to support and invite others into a space that is effective and empowering to everyone to participate. For example, creating more intentional and inclusive spaces in understanding where underrepresented groups are meeting and where they are not. This gap is also discussed in the next section of theme 6.
- **Disagreement or Conflict:** There an identified gap between different organizations and sectors in how to approach social change. This disagreement and conflict can be a challenge when wanting to promote coordinated impact. For example, A few groups have a specific call for the need for complex secure care and better community safety as a need to respond to certain individuals and situations in the community. In contrast, other advocates and non-profit groups promote robust housing first models and harm reduction, including safe supply and a variety of different approaches. This disconnect can bring about tension between stakeholders and make it difficult to find the common agendas to create actionable and sustainable coordinated response. This is also prevalent within networks in the City of Victoria, as some interviewees identify a gap between non-profit or service providers and the small grassroots and advocacy groups.
- **Mobilizing and responding effectively:** Participant 5 identifies the need for coordination on specific issues as we are missing opportunities on long term permanent solutions. This can be inherent in the non-profit institution of finding quick short-term needed solutions, then putting resources to that, and focusing on that and not enough on the systems change solutions. Participant 7 shared a similar sentiment in seeing the importance and need for response networks only if they are truly responding and mobilizing effectively and appropriately.
- **Lack of Dialogue and Trust:** Like the challenges of conflict, there are inherent power dynamics in any collaborative space, whether spoken or not. If not addressed, these dynamics can bring about a lack of trust and relationship between members. Participant 2 shares ideas of social connectivity and the need to discuss and have dialogue in one space. When there is conflict in meetings, sometimes groups don't return, and there is deep tension and division on specific hot-button topics. There is a need a space for all types of dialogue and deep listening that isn't hate-filled but brings voices to a neutral space that is facilitated well.
- **Structure of Networks:** Other identified gaps or challenges are directly within how collaborative spaces are structured. These challenges include the large number of meetings already in the region and the repetitive nature of specific conversations or issues that don't bring about action. The gaps of who is these networks and who isn't is two-fold with community members missing and high-level groups like government and city officials. Recent gaps also include the barriers and fatigue of technology that impacts groups without the capacity to attend virtually and the current covid and other crisis response that many have felt in the past couple of years.

## *Leadership in Collaboration*

The final sub-section of the collaborative theme is leadership, which is critical to the success or failure of community response networks. Nine of the participants specifically mentioned leadership as a part of their interview and its importance in collaboration spaces. In addition, leaders were a part of social change, and the interviewees exposed similar themes out of the data.

- **Leaders from Community:** Discussed in more depth in Theme 5, the importance of having individuals with lived experience in network and collaborative spaces is critical and providing leadership opportunities shifts with the citizen participation spectrum. Participant 13 identified "the key need for leadership and role of people with lived and living experiences in this. And that has been an apart of the process."
- **The personality of the Leader:** Participant 7 shares that leadership personality is a massive part of bringing people together, building trust and rapport with groups and pulling everything together for a sustainable about of time. Participant 4 shared that during emergency response and crisis, there is a need to find a spokesperson and leader that can articulate issues quickly and that there is support for this individual.
- **Strong Facilitator:** Described above as a challenge is the need to have an open dialogue between groups where there could be conflict. In identifying this gap, it is also essential to recognize the need for a leader of a network to be a strong facilitator to guide these types of conversations. While at the same time being aware of the power dynamics and safety a space may or may not have. Using the power of listening as an essential tool in collaboration and social change. Two participants specifically mentioned Diana Gibson of CSPC as a great leader in the community to be able to do this type of work.

## *Theme 5: Inclusion, Diversity, and Community*

Inclusion and diversity are part of decolonizing and equitable social change—ultimately leading to systems change in collaborative networks. Seven out of the thirteen participants of the research reflected on these critical priorities in network development and coordinated response. First, it was important for the assessment to understand what groups, individuals, and sectors participants feel are not adequately a part of collaborative spaces. Based on their responses, these groups include:

- The community voice & people with lived and living experience
- LGBTQ refugees, immigrants, and refugee representation at the appropriate networks
- Grassroots, advocacy, and mutual aid groups

- First Nations, Metis, and Indigenous groups.
- Other marginalized and racialized communities

Not having many of these groups apart of collaborative and coordinated action can result in inauthentic or ineffectiveness and not align with other ideals and practices identified in the report, including promoting community-led solutions and systems change thinking. Although these groups are a part of several of the functioning networks in Greater Victoria, sometimes the issue becomes how they are involved and identifying these power dynamics inherent in any collaborative space. These dynamics are articulated in the other four themes, but here we see how they can continue to uphold systems of white supremacy. As Participant 7 states, "whiteness relies on us not naming the actual power dynamics." Therefore, it is imperative for the function of multiple organizations and communities to work together in a coordinated fashion for each individual person and organization is participating in reconciling their practices with race and equity, which is always a part of collaboration.

These groups bring essential perspectives to coordinated community response that cannot be overlooked. Immigrant and refugee organizations have identified that having immigrants and refugees' part of this group is vital. Yet, the extra steps needed are not always considered, like the language barrier and the need for education for refugees and immigrants coming to the country with a different perspective that may not have the same understanding of Indigenous histories and experiences in reconciliation. Another vast deficit in this research is the lack of Indigenous perspective and knowledge in coordinated response networks. The following section addresses the need for Indigenous-led collaborative spaces and the creation of appropriate spaces and capacity for Indigenous groups' meaningful involvement in current networks. Finally, is the need for more participation from peers, community, residents, and people with lived or living experiences. These groups include more grassroots advocacy and mutual aid groups. Identified in the collaboration section is the need to have appropriate structures and spaces to promote participation and critical dialogue that fosters collaboration. Finally, is the detected the conflict in current networks. Yet, in any social and community response work, it is imperative to understand this perspective, as participant 13 shares when discussing who is missing in these spaces, why, and some tangible solutions to promoting more collaboration.

"I think more participation from grassroots, you know, marginalized populations, absolutely. in ways that are effective and safe. And, and honoring when, yeah, like, when people don't want to come to the table, it just like, okay, but the doors always open. So that was that's one thing provided, you know, it's a place where we can come together in a way that, you know, just as mutually respect. Um, I think Indigenous groups are, we do our best to ensure are represented, but they're often underrepresented by virtue of capacity. And so, I would like to see more supports, is like funding, I don't know, core funding and otherwise and spaces to be able to see more representation in in the many spaces that are convened. And again, how do we convene spaces in a way that people want to come and that their voices are reflected in whatever the

output is?”

Aligned with the literature review’s focus of bringing an intersectional lens to collaboration that promotes equity-informed practices in coordinated response, this theme identifies the practical analysis of how to embed intersectionality into collective space. As shared in this section, it is vital to acknowledge and practice the multiple identities, experiences, and mechanisms of oppression that are interacting on different levels in collaboration. This can practically be implemented in identifying where networks need to promote hand in hand practice of leadership with racialized and lived experience communities. Participants shared how this intersectionality is currently being experienced in networks, and the need to push for more of this lens in all aspects of coordinated response.

### Answering the Research Question

Non-profits and civil society groups are in a critical time within the field of how to define and practice collaboration and community response. As explored throughout this report, the Covid-19 pandemic was a catalyst that created more open cooperation opportunities than in the past. It also emphasized society's many issues and challenges by quickly exposing the continued inequality in cities and the gaps institutions, systems, and individuals have in crisis response. The research question asks if a Community Response Network was viable in the Greater Victoria region when approaching this work. What was established quickly during the data collection phase was the immense number of networks and meetings in Greater Victoria that are working on collaborating with multiple stakeholders and responding to issues in the region. Each of the organizations apart of or leading these networks has assets that they bring to these groups and excellent and impactful outcomes for the community. These networks and outcomes vary in types and issue-based agendas like emergency response, long-term systems change, advocacy, and frontline social service collaboration. As identified in the data analysis themes, participants have responded to inform the research on the viability of a new network that focused on community response.

Based on the analysis of each theme and response from participants of the need for a network in the form of a formal Community Response Network, the limitations of the study, and other data gathered, the researcher concludes *it is not a viable option at this time*. Defined in Figure 1, this type of network aims to bring together a diverse group of organizations, businesses, and individuals to respond to crises within a community and collectively coordinate to address the intersecting and multiple challenges in the chosen neighbourhood. A CRN is a versatile and action-orientated communication, collaboration, and response hub. A network meets weekly to discuss neighbourhood updates. It provides a space for organizations to share information, collaborate, advocate, and support each other in their work towards the betterment of communities. Ambitious in intention when comparing this definition to the current networks and collaborative spaces, multiple groups embody aspects of a Community Response Network. The report upholds systems thinking ideals that promote community assets and find areas in the system to leverage change.

Therefore, the research report shifted its intention towards assessing collaborative spaces and coordinated community response in the region. The key findings were discovered with evaluation of the reports themes which established critical recommendations and options to consider for the client.

What is viable in the Greater Victoria Region is evaluating the leading practices and gaps in collaboration between groups in the community and discovering innovations and opportunities to continue to build off coordinated response work done during covid-19. The critical perspectives of Greater Victoria's non-profit, business, and organizational participants are well established in the five themes, including tangible recommendations to consider to further coordinated response and collaboration in the region. Two critical pieces of data analysis have brought the research to this conclusion. The first includes participants responding to the question of who in the community is already doing the work of a community response network. The second focuses on ideas brought up by participants for focused priorities or recommendations on community response next steps.

When identifying what organizations are already doing similar work to a Community Response Network, 6 out of the 13 participants perceived The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness or "The Coalition" are running and promoting similar ideals to a CRN, including the networks, and working groups they coordinate like the Downtown Service Providers and the Systems Transformation Working Group. They are known in the community to coordinate, facilitate, advocate, and communicate information across their networks and in the region. Participant 8 observes the Coalition as a great addition to the city, stating they are "where the rubber meets the road here, they are literally the connective tissue." They can be seen as one of the first calls during emergency response, which was the case during the Covid-19 pandemic as they were directly involved in the supporting of crisis response, rehousing, and creating spaces for groups to collaborate and meet. They also have identified vital priorities that focus on similar themes identified as leading practices in the data, including providing space for community solutions, systems change and encompassing underrepresented groups in their collaborative spaces. Participants demonstrating the Coalition's activities, value, and practices confirms the answer to the research question. There is work being done in the community that replicates a CRN as identified here and instead of creating an entirely new network there is a need to find innovative and actionable ways to support the already functioning spaces.

Other confirming data analyzed brought recommendations for what action is needed instead of creating a new network space. These will be detailed more in the Options for Consider and recommendations section below but provide a summary here. These leverages for change include educating groups on what networks, responses and resources are already taking place. Finding common agendas and guiding principles between all the functioning networks, focusing on a specific neighbourhood and localized response instead of an expansive regional response, and streamlining services and networks to ensure there aren't repetitive services and activities are rather orientated towards action and effectiveness. Explicitly thinking about emergency coordinated

community response, there is a need to understand lessons learned from Covid-19 to build a plan for the next crisis. Finally, it emphasizes decolonizing spaces and promoting community solutions like mutual aid in crisis response and Indigenous and racialized communities' equitable leadership and participation in collaboration. The research question has been answered for all these reasons by discovering what is happening in the region and the non-viability of a newly created collaborative space like the Community Response Network.

## New Themes and Ideas

There were three significant unexpected findings during the data analysis and information gathering section of this project. First, in discussion with CSPC during the planning stage of the project, we identified the variable of the Greater Victoria Region being thirteen municipalities could be a potential barrier to the success of a Community Response Network. This was due to the complexity of collaborating amongst a region that has various approaches, programs, and municipal systems. Although still a concern in answering the research question it did not pose to be such a barrier to participants of the project. Some did express this opinion, but also identified that the community knows how to work within the parameters of the region, and many of the networks that are very effective are more localized within on municipality. This unexpected outcome was mainly due to the variables lack impact in answering the research question and in discussion of leading practices or gaps in collaboration.

The second significant new theme out of the study was discovered in interviewing participants and them sharing resources and documents that the researcher did not have initial access to in their process. Two major documents come directly from community that the project was unable to directly interact with prior to interviews that became critical to the analysis. This limitation of not interacting directly with certain groups provided a gap in understanding and knowledge of specific work already in process with the region. The first, was a report completed by the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness Society regarding core services in Victoria for Indigenous Wellness. The survey engaged 125 Indigenous community members on questions about gaps in services and how organizations can support their wellness (2021). Out of this report the ACEH Society identified four ways to address the gap with the first be to form a collaborative response network as a solution. This is critical to this research to understand the recommendations of a coordinated response already exist in the region, specifically from an Indigenous perspective. It identifies that there is a gap in collaboration from Indigenous community members who feel like this is a need in the region. This discovery was unexpected based of off other interactions with participants, but critical in understanding the limitations of this study and the need for continued engagement with community in comprehending collaborative practices and spaces in the region. While also representing where Indigenous groups can lead these forms of collectives. A similar example of an unintentional finding was an interview participant providing the researcher with a community document called The Victoria Declaration. Created in collaboration with community as a part of the Home in the City Project and The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness is a

vital document in listening to the Downtown Victoria community on guiding principles that should be practiced for governance in housing and support services (2020). Two critical commitments identified in the declaration that mimic discoveries in the research include a commitment to, “Creating safe spaces and common ground for the benefit of all involved.” And “Building the capacity to have dialogue that helps us make decisions together across differences.” (Home in the City Project, 2020).

The final unexpected theme that came out of the data collection was the response from multiple participants of needing to find coordinated efforts and response to climate change and environmental issues in the city. Participants identified this as a critical conversation that needed to be addressed if groups are going to be able to fight any other systemic issue as they are all connected and dependent on the climate crisis. There is an integral need to create change in environmental issues that create emergencies is crucial to the coordinated efforts of civil society.

### **Strategic or Research Implications**

The implications of the project's findings focus on collaboration and community response practices specific to the Capital Region of Victoria. The conclusions are based on the study's parameters and limitations that need to be considered when presenting the findings. The first parameter is the researcher's positionality of someone who is not actively involved in the non-profit community within Greater Victoria and therefore does not have tangible experience beyond this project on the everyday structures, systems, and realities of the collaborative spaces being examined. Second, the data collection was a limited timeline. Therefore, research participants are missing voices and experiences, including a lack of an Indigenous perspective, equity-denied groups, and individuals with lived or living experiences. Finally, it is needed to identify the inherent power dynamics in participating in this research as interviewees were non-profit or organizational professionals with access to technology and the capacity and comfortability for participation. These are discussed in more detail in the following section.

As identified in the study, the research implications highlight that the current networks and collaborative spaces in place are sufficient for the time. Yet, there can still be new practices and innovations to support these groups' transformation, effectiveness, and action for better collective community response.

The findings are based upon the participant's experiences and current or past research on Victoria's non-profit collaboration practices. Each theme represented is anchored by established research on the topic that this project either compares, confirms, or builds upon. First, the evaluation of the types of networks within the region builds off work completed by the University of Victoria in partnership with CRD Community Health Networks and supported by CSPC in their creation of The Community Database, which streamlines resources and provides a one-stop resource hub to engage with networks in the area (UVIC, n.d.). This study builds on this research [61]

by identifying which groups are most focused on coordinated and collaborative responses and how participants interact with these networks. The next theme of systems change thinking is supported by the research expressed in the literature review that anchors the theory while also building off non-profits in the region participating in systems change activities. An example of this includes the CRD and the Greater Victoria's Coalition to End Homelessness Community Plan to End Homelessness in the Capital Region 2019-2024. This theory, alongside work identified in the previous section, like the Victoria Declaration, also feeds into the implications of the need for community-led solutions in community response networks. The implications made of the gaps, leading practices and leadership needs in a collaborative space provide tangible experiences and examples for civil society when participating in social change efforts. Specific to Covid-19, the identification of impactful practices from Covid-19 response is anchored by other reports completed on the impacts of the crisis on non-profits, including Vantage Point, Vancouver Foundation, and Victoria Foundations reporting completed that provided a snapshot of non-profits response and delivery of services during the pandemic (2021, p. 1). Finally, the analysis of diversity and inclusion in these spaces finds its foundation in research by BIPOC academics to support the retroact of their research identifies, including intersectional collective impact and the role of Indigenous resurgence and leadership in collaborative settings which is critical in promoting equity informed policy and practice in social change.

### **Limitations of Analysis and Areas for Further Research**

In examining the overall interpretation of the results of this study, it is imperative to distinguish which limitations have relative importance to the comprehensive understanding of the results of the non-viability at this time of a CRN in Greater Victoria. Introduced in the above section, the considerable limitations of the analysis are three-fold:

1. Create more equitable opportunities for participation from equity-denied groups, including engagement activities and in-person or group interviews.
2. Identifying the gaps in the interview questions, including adding a question regarding work being done specifically to support reconciliation, Indigenous livelihoods, and other BIPOC-focused questions. As well as promoting an intersectional and gender lens to the data collection.
3. Improve Community Engagement & involvement in the research to further analyze networks' effectiveness in the CRD and uphold the principles of Community Based Research.

The researcher suggests the need for further research on this topic due to the limitations identified in this project. The hope is that this report's review of current networks and their activities can provide non-profits with tools and understanding of how they interact in these collaborative spaces, find leverage points for change, and implement or build into current practices. The need for more research would be to understand how other organizations, sectors, and

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individuals are experiencing community response. This perspective is critical in the functioning of collective space and needed before making any decisions on creating a new network. Another key research area would be identifying and analyzing emergency response practices amongst non-profits to find areas for collaboration and action. This is especially relevant post Covid-19 response and in preparation for other global or local crisis events. The ideas for further research are expanded upon in the Options to Consider and Recommendations.

## **Summary and Revisiting the Conceptual Framework**

In re-evaluating and summarizing the conceptual framework of this project, we see the central themes and interactions throughout the literature, analysis, and conclusions. The connecting themes identified in Figure 2 are critical variables that make up a Community Response Network and are imperative to collaborative efforts between non-profits, organizations, and the community. In the discussion and analysis of the data, five themes emerged that directly connected to the framework's variables, including systems change, inclusion and decolonizing collaborative leading practices, and collective leadership. The parallel between the literature and the data was straightforward, with theory and practice complementing each other in most themes. This can be seen in the identification of systems change thinking as critical to coordinated response, supported by academics of Harper et al., who state the inherently collaborative nature of systems vary theory is the recognition of partnership across sectors to help create an integrated approach to addressing challenges in the community (2014, p. 350). This directly connects to participants sharing how participation from multiple groups, building relationships, and using tools like collective impact help prompt system transformation. Another example clarifying the framework is the connection between the community-led solutions literature in the context of collaboration and how this is practiced in network settings. Using the examples of Covid-19 response from the Tamarack Institutes Attygale & Born's guide of best practices for community-based covid recovery and the identification of Covid response best practices in the Capital Region district of Victoria (Attygale & Born, 2020, p. 5). There are gaps between theory and practice in analyzing a localized area like Victoria, which has inherent power dynamics, ecosystem, and experiences. Yet, this gap helps enhance the conceptual framework that these variables hold in community dynamics.

## **Options to Consider and Recommendations**

### **Introduction**

The needs/assets assessment study has gathered and analyzed data on the current functions of networks and collaborative spaces in the Greater Victoria region. Participants from thirteen

different organizations identified multiple factors interacting with the capacity, effectiveness, and sustainability of coordinated response amongst non-profits and other groups. Based on the interviews with key stakeholders and literature review, the report offers three options for consideration that anchor the possible opportunities for the next steps alongside several additional recommendations for the client and non-profits in the region to implement as a part of any collaborative space or network in a coordinated response. The research finds that a new Community Response Network is not needed in the Greater Victoria area and as such, this study does not include recommendations for an implementation phase. Also, there is an awareness that leading practices and assets of a CRN could be implemented in existing spaces to further the coordinated efforts of current spaces.

## Options to Consider

**OPTION 1-** Support further research on coordinated emergency and crisis preparedness to develop a plan for the CRD region of Victoria and specific neighbourhoods. Complete this research in coordination with community members, non-profits, and other sectors to understand the need for emergency response planning.

**OPTION 2-** Create space for relationship building and dialogue across non-profit groups and communities to combat conflict concerns. Opportunities like full-day workshops or gathering spaces which only focus on relationship and trust-building to ensure collaboration is equitable and power dynamics are being addressed. Also, to establish practices for conflict resolution and consensus making. Find a neutral or supportive group that can facilitate these conversations effectively, whether it is the Community Social Planning Council or another influential group in the community.

**OPTION 3 -** Expand upon the work of the Community Social Planning Council, CRD Community Health Networks and UVIC in organizing network information from their Network Database by evaluating the specific priorities, activities, and outcomes of each network to identify replication, opportunities for collaboration, and areas for streamlining.

## Recommendations

### *Recommendations for Networks:*

1. Create a time for network and collaborative leaders to come together and discover areas for collective impact, common agendas, and coordinated response. Can specifically focus on a common agenda of creating an emergency response plan as suggested in option one or other overarching challenges that are overarching like climate change response.

2. Promote and recognize the ideals of mutual aid and peer-to-peer communication that many identified as very impactful within the region, not needing to over formalize organic communication into another network, working group, or meeting.

#### *Recommendations for Systems Change Activities:*

1. Promote innovation and inventiveness in collaborative spaces. Be willing to re-evaluate current network practices and structures and their effectiveness, inclusion, and impact.
2. Work with other networks to break down silos and build off the positive system change activities from Covid response, including continued advocacy for the government's rapid response to systemic issues and collaboration across sectors for a coordinated response.

#### *Recommendations to promote Community-Led solutions:*

1. Have networks support and use community documents like The Victoria Declaration as a guide for engaging and partnering with the community on long-term solutions. Engage with individuals with lived and living experiences, including people who use drugs, unhoused individuals, sex workers, and other marginalized groups, to understand their experiences in collaborative spaces to promote community solutions.
2. Support the structuring of networks and collaborative spaces that build safe and supportive practices for the community, non-profits, and other sectors. This includes activities that promote relationship and trust, capacity building, and decentralized governance and activities.

#### *Recommendations to Implement Collaborative Practices:*

1. Identify assets, replications, and effectiveness of activities of each collaborative space to promote holistic mobilization of resources and streamlining of meetings or groups.
2. In support of option 2 for consideration, find a neutral organization or facilitator to coordinate intentional space to develop relationships with the community and organizations to create a set of communication guiding principles, framing tools or agreements upheld in collaborative spaces when conflict or disagreement occurs.

### *Recommendations to promote Diversity, Inclusion, and Community:*

1. Engage with Indigenous, Black, and other racialized communities on their experiences in networks and collaborative spaces to obtain an equitable and holistic view of the current ecosystem within the region.
2. Promote and uphold Indigenous leadership and resurgence practices in collaborative space. Build-in practices and structures that name current power dynamics in organizations and networks to deconstruct the colonial mindset.

### **Conclusion**

This project has explored the viability and need for a new collaborative space of a Community Response Network across the Greater Victoria Region. It has identified the multiple factors and variables that are imperative in the sustainability and effectiveness of collaboration amongst non-profits, from theory to the practical context with the communities around the district. First, by describing the variables critical to teamwork and coordinated response, the literature review demonstrates the need to evolve in the construction of networks and collaborative spaces to uphold the emerging theories and practices in the field. These models build off already established theories of systems change thinking, collective impact, and decolonizing or equitable approaches to social change. What is challenged in this research is the need to promote the continued evolution of these theories and identify where there have been missteps. Academics like Goodchild address new ideas on systems thinking that are imperative to fold into practical solutions like the evolution of a more intersectional approach to complex community, which includes creating ethical and diverse spaces (2021, p. 94). Like the Collective Impact approach, the literature review identifies the continued need to adapt these practices to promote that these frameworks must come from a community voice and focus on community-led collaboration, as Ennis and Tofa discuss (2020, p. 36). They have shifted the language of theory into actionable conditions and paradigms that focus on transformation and accurate systems change, as identified in figure 3 of the review (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016, p. 3). The study also recognizes the need for actionable steps supporting decolonizing and equitable approaches in research and collaborative practice. The naming of power dynamics in these collective spaces and implementation of critical equitable tools will allow for shifts in systems in the promotion and amplification of equity-denied groups. Recognizing the harm of colonial structures and the continued neo-colonial forms in place in current community networks is required to move forward in a good way. Essential scholars of the work of decolonizing and supporting Indigenous resurgence include Jeff Corntassel, Alfred Taiiake and Michael Elliot. They emphasize the everyday acts of resistance Indigenous communities can do to uphold their values and begin to shift the praxis of power (Corntassel, 2012, p. 93). Recognizing the failure of certain collaborative spaces to participate in reconciliation movements actively and

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continue to uphold colonial ways provides practitioners with a need to respond by actively and intentionally structuring collaborative networks to promote the ideals of Indigenous resurgence inclusion intersectional mindset. Sustainable systems change frameworks to break down the hierarchal structures in place.

Leadership theory is also identified within the research as critical to the success or failure of collaborative spaces. Essential to a collaborative network is leadership development that promotes relationships and connections between people. Having systems change mindset that supports mutual support, diverse leadership, and listening are cited by Reinhelt as binding capacities for non-profit coalitions for social change (2016, p. 4). Finally, within the review, this capstone project displays the critical collaborative practices that promote coordinated crisis response, community solutions, and tangible practices of these theories. The research argues that crisis response cannot always promote a common ground amongst diverse community partners. There is a need to build response systems that overarch these differences to enable effective response (Ansell et al., 2010, p. 200). As discovered later in the capstone project, within the context of Victoria, this has been established in some ways through Covid-19 response, yet gaps still exist. One interval includes what is discussed in the literature on promoting community-led solutions in collaborative settings. Again, identifying the need for networks in practice to recognize the power dynamics in place in collective arenas and the use of tools for co-creation of collective action and work (Attygale, 2020, p. 3; Torjman, 2012; Wessells, 2018). Three examples of coordinated, collaborative networks throughout Canada were identified to support the practical tools of what these spaces have the potential to look like in action, including Downtown Eastside of Vancouver's CCRN group, Peel's Community Response Table, and Saint John's Community Inclusion Network.

With the foundational understanding of the theories and academic research for collaborative practice, the capstone shifted to fill a gap in knowledge and focus on what this looks like in practice in the Greater Victoria Region to identify if there is a need for a Community Response Network in the area. Using Community-Based Research principles, the thirteen participants from a diverse group of non-profits and organizations were interviewed and analyzed to discover five main themes that define the current collaborative spaces within the region. The findings are parallel to themes in the conceptual framework identified in the literature review and the findings that evolved out of the needs/assets report including types of networks, systems change, community-led solutions, collaborative practices, diversity, inclusion, and community. Key findings from these themes uphold theories established in the literature review, including implementing systems change thinking in collaborative settings and the practical activities that promote this theory, like Greater Victoria's Coalition to End Homelessness system transformation group. Identifying the types of networks already functioning in the region and the issues they are responding to allow the researcher to determine the current assets in the community and where there are gaps in collaboration. This is especially true in discovering that networks are willing to evaluate their structure, rework priorities, and delete replication to participate in authentic and sustainable systems change. Other findings directly connected to the research include the focus on community-

led solutions and the success this has had in a decentralized, direct community care network during the Covid-19 response. Collaborative practices during Covid-19 were a catalyst for systems change activities and coordinated response which brought about opportunities for new relationships, community partnerships, and innovations in thought and practice. The region experienced these new tools and established some leading practices that can be rolled into sustainable long-term networks. These practices include identifying common agendas to promote Collective Impact ideals or recognizing the strength in a diversity of voices, experiences, and opinions in a coordinated response. Significant gaps were also found in the analysis that the region and its organizations and community need to address to move forward in collaboration. The main gaps include the lack of dialogue and trust in conflict situations and the apparent disconnect between certain groups in the region. And compounded on this is the need to directly focus on expanding inclusion, diversity, and community in already functioning spaces and identifying where power dynamics are in these spaces to create space for key leadership and voices. Specifically identifying where this work has already been done, including groups like the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness' call for a response network or the Victoria Declaration, which guides protocols for listening and engaging with residents in the region.

Ultimately, these key findings within the literature review and needs/assets report hold essential perspectives on the current collaborative practices in the Greater Victoria region. The multiplicity of networks, meetings, and working groups supports the final research answer that the need for a new Community Response Network is not required at this time. Instead, it provided a comprehensive overview of the current collaborative spaces and where there are opportunities for further research, improvement, or evaluation. The project filled a gap in understanding the impacts the Covid-19 response had on collaboration between community partners in the region and where these networks are in a critical next stage post the height of the pandemic and into the recovery of this crisis while responding to the various other emergencies. The findings have their limitations, and further intersectional research and engagement are required to provide a fulsome understanding of the effectiveness, inclusion, and response of collaborative spaces from the perspectives of community residents, equity-seeking groups, and other network leaders. Yet, three main options identified out of the data became prevalent through analysis which focuses on using the lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic response and applying them to an overarching coordinated emergency and crisis preparedness plan for neighbourhoods in the region. The second focus of creating space for dialogue, relationship building, and trust between community partners is an imperative need within the community as social issues continue to expand. This is an opportune time to highlight this need and create space to work off the relationships built over the pandemic and find common agendas and conflict resolution tools to push past disagreements into productive dialogue promoting coordinated action. Finally, the findings provide options to build upon research that the CRD Health networks and UVIC have already completed by gathering network information and activities to streamline further and build capacity for these spaces to thrive. Although only providing a snapshot of experiences and data on the current collaborative practices within the region, the capstone project identifies critical themes and opportunities for change that

could directly impact the effectiveness of these collective spaces in coordinating together to respond to social change issues and promote healthier, safer, and more holistic approaches to community care and response in the Greater Victoria Region.

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