



HeartWood

Centre for Community Youth Development

Community Asset-Mapping



**What would the world look like if young people
were viewed by society
as competent community builders?**

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COMMUNITY ASSET-MAPPING

presented by the

HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development

In 1989 HeartWood began its work in youth leadership development, largely through individual participation in wilderness adventure experiences and environmental education programs. The trend in the 80's of youth serving agencies had been to focus on problems and crises; that is, the young person was typically viewed as a service recipient or, if they were problem-free and had potential, as a "future leader." We believed the prevailing focus was off-centre and misleading, and that young people could fill leadership roles now!

However, we discovered that when the youth returned home from our programs, inspired to take action with their enhanced skills and awareness, they were often stymied because of a lack of support and acknowledgement. Like many young people across North America, they felt unheard, stereotyped, and marginalized by adults and their organizations and institutions. In response to what we were hearing, HeartWood began working with youth and adults to move beyond isolated program delivery towards nurturing the meaningful, long-term engagement of youth in their own communities for the benefit of all.

We have learned that this new work empowers young people, while building a healthier, more vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable community. It involves adult/youth partnerships, meaningful contribution (i.e., being of service to others), social change, and long-term supportive relationships within the community. Somewhere along the way, we ourselves have been inspired by the emerging practices of asset-based community development, appreciative inquiry, and dialogue.

To incorporate youth leadership principles and methodology with an appreciative approach to community building, we now refer to our work as community youth development.

What would the world look like if young people were viewed by society as competent community builders?

COMMUNITY ASSET MAPPING CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

An **appreciative approach** is based on developmental processes that are positive in nature; that is, it focuses attention/thinking on strengths, potential, and possibilities. It increases capacity in individuals, organizations, and communities by identifying/tapping into resources/gifts they already have - including their own knowledge and life experience - and building on that. In a community development context, it means using local skills and existing resources to find/create solutions, rather than relying on outside “expertise” to fix problems.

In fact, an appreciative approach is quite different than traditional problem-solving methodology. Many of us have been conditioned to focus on the negative – what’s wrong, what’s not working, reasons why a new idea won’t work, etc. When we take that stance, we end up looking for someone to blame, people feel defensive, creativity is stifled, energy is drained, and we tend to stay stuck in the way we’ve always done things.

If, instead, we focus our attention on positive results, we put a spotlight on what is working, we look for and create possibility, we cultivate involvement, we generate energy and enthusiasm as we naturally move towards our goal, we create the best atmosphere for coming up with innovative solutions, and we tend to view obstacles in our path as opportunities for personal and organizational transformation. Clearly, this approach is more likely to nurture the pre-conditions for a healthy, strong, vitally active, inclusive, and sustainable community to grow and develop.

In the context of youth development, this approach means that we view young people not as dependents, service recipients, or problems, but as competent innovators who contribute to the community, and as energized participants/leaders in social change initiatives.

Taking an appreciative stance allows us to see our own community from a different perspective, in a sense with “new eyes.” The various tools described as follows provide processes so that everyone can see it as well.

Appreciative Inquiry is a methodology for positive intentional systemic change developed by David Cooperrider of Case Western Reserve University. The process - discovering, dreaming, designing, and delivering (i.e., taking action) – is one of gathering positive stories and images in an organization, system, or community – the very best of “what is” – while igniting the collective imagination of “what could be.” Participants in the process, who are inspired by these possibilities and dreams, organize themselves around a design of how it might work. They then take action to make it happen. The end result is a common understanding of what energizes the community (or system, organization) to translate images of possibility into reality and beliefs into practice. One wonderful success story of a community that used appreciative inquiry to revitalize its neighborhoods can be found at: <http://imaginechicago.org/>

Asset Building is one of several terms based on the work of John McKnight and John Kretzmann, both of Northwestern University. They, and their associates, researched hundreds of communities and neighborhoods to identify what were the success factors that helped create “good” community. What they discovered is that communities worked well when they were able to identify, acknowledge, connect, and use their available assets. They defined “assets” as anyone or anything that could be used to build community. Generally, we aren’t aware of our assets, or we tend to discount them. We frequently, for example, don’t attempt to involve people at the margins: seniors, youth, low-income families, minorities, persons with disabilities, etc. As well, we often overlook the power of networks in our communities – the interwoven net of relationships that, when mobilized, can accomplish seemingly impossible objectives. If we make better use of all our resources, not just some of them, then when we address our problems as a community, we can see more possibility for solutions from the diversity of perspectives, and we are able to leverage all our strength as, together, we work towards the resolution of the problem.

Asset Building, then, is simply how to build assets, how to increase capacity in the individual/organization/community.

Asset Mapping does not just refer to a geographical map, like a map of Halifax, or of natural landscapes. Maps can represent processes, concepts, timelines (what steps each of us took over the past month in order to arrive at this workshop today), power and decision-making structures, a train of thought, and many other things. In short, it creates a “map” of what items or components are contained in the area of inquiry (community, process, etc.), the relationship(s) that exists between these items, and what’s going on as they all interact.

Community Asset Mapping, for example, is a process of identifying existing assets (people and material resources, networks of relationships) in the community for the purpose of:

- Leveraging existing resources around a common purpose or task.
- Creating connections between different segments of the community/system so that they may take joint action on a common purpose.
- Mobilizing the community's network(s) of relationships so that they may focus their collective resources and energies on the task.
- Discovering what needs to be – what can be – done to serve the community!

In Canada, the Environmental Youth Alliance in Vancouver, BC, has worked extensively with community asset mapping processes.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a qualitative research methodology that is appreciative in nature and is used as a tool for social change. It is based on the principle that those who will be impacted by the research should participate in its design, its delivery, and in the action(s) that result from the findings of the research. Various appreciative tools – like asset mapping, community mapping, and appreciative inquiry – are often used in PAR. The PAR is typically structured around a project, or an initiative, that has a specific outcome, purpose, or premise in mind, usually one that is important in the lives of the participants.

PAR re-frames the use and process of research in the following ways:

Participatory

- The research process is empowering for participants.
- Individuals and groups traditionally excluded from power in our society are key players throughout.

Research

- The information generated is thorough, reliable and accurate.

Action

- The research is used to make concrete improvements in the lives of participants and their communities.

PAR with young people is specifically defined by¹:

Power ~ youth are the decision makers in the research process.

Action ~ research identifies problems, solutions, and acts on knowledge.

Capacity ~ youth perspectives and strengths are recognized and valued.

* Some concepts and tools in the CAM were developed by Estair Van Wagner, Robynn Moody, and Camille Dumond in their preparation of the PAR Manual for HeartWood in April 2004.

¹ Based on Environmental Youth Alliance's experience. See Resources & Sources section for more information on EYA.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES of Community Asset Mapping with Young People

Participatory:

- Youth & community members are actively involved in all aspects of initiative.
- Focus on issues & conditions identified by young people & community members.
- Initiative uses fun, youth-directed, youth-engaging activities.

Empowering:

- Participants gain critical awareness about social, cultural, historical, & structural context of their communities.
- Participants use new perspectives to develop resources & strategies for social change in their communities.
- Participants develop skills to analyze community assets & organize around solutions that will make their communities better places to live.

Experiential:

- Based on the experiences, knowledge & analysis of participants.
- Participants empowered as self-learners.
- Experiential educational methods & tools are incorporated.

Creative:

- Knowledge generated guides action plans that are appropriate for the community.
- Action plans are unique to community context & draw on community resources.

Collaborative:

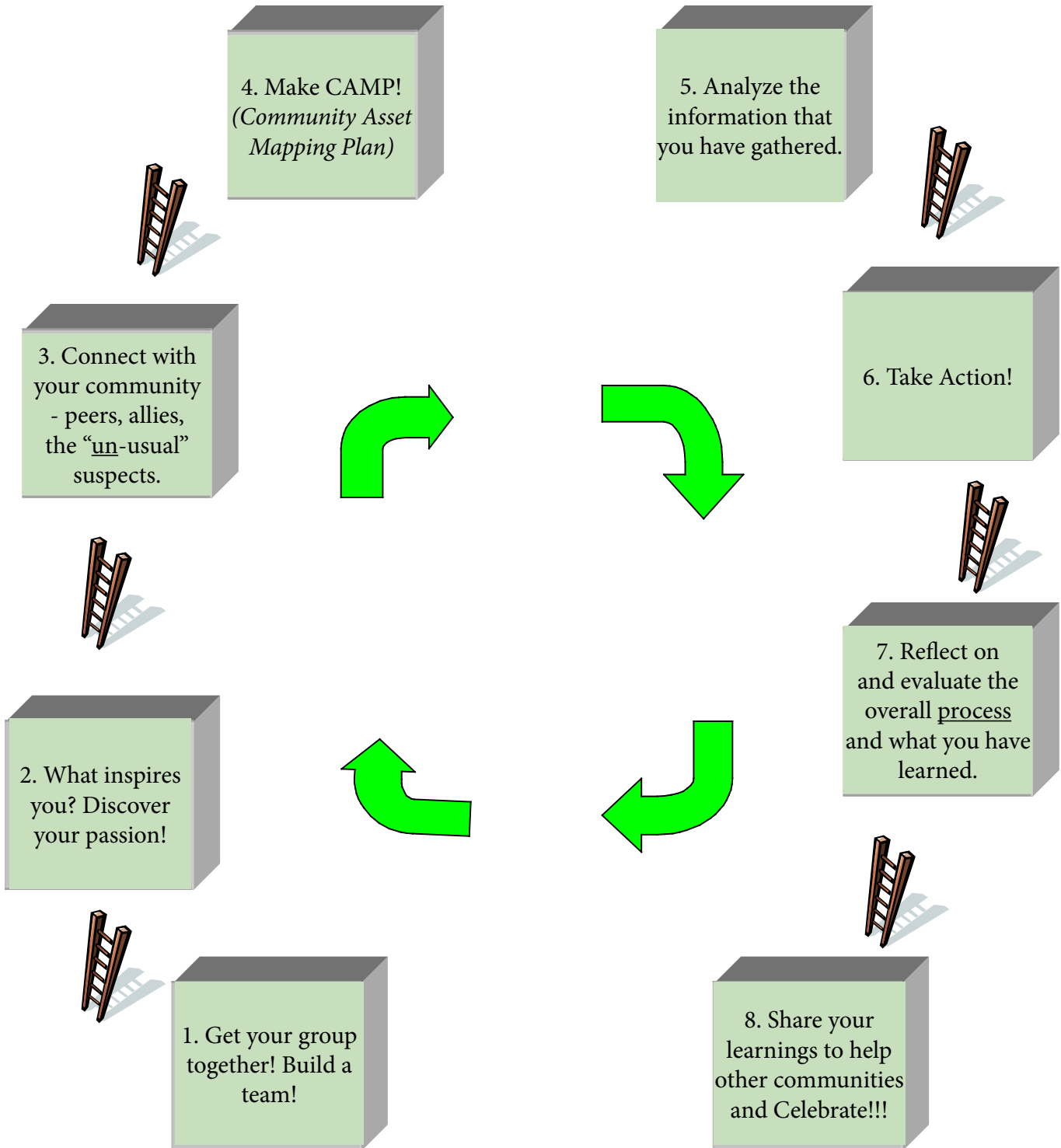
- Community members are involved in a cooperative effort.
- All groups contribute knowledge & experiences in identifying needs, planning, implementing & evaluating solutions.

Politically Active:

- Initiative explicitly aims to alter existing power relations by increasing the access of community members and young people to knowledge and skills typically monopolized by researchers and decision-makers.

A FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY ASSET-MAPPING

THE BUILDING BLOCKS



A FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY ASSET-MAPPING

*Discover → Connect → Dream → Act*²

Start with what they know, build with what they have.

Lao Tzu 700 BC

*Appreciative Perspective: this perspective allows us to see the community with “new eyes;” i.e., in terms of what is going well, rather than what is wrong; what we want to have happen, rather than what we want to avoid; what we want to create, rather than what we need to “fix;” what could happen, rather than all the reasons – historical and current – why a new or different idea won’t work; what we can actually **do**, rather than just talking about it!*

BUILDING BLOCK 1. **Get your group together! Build a team!**

*Appreciative Perspective: everyone has a gift to contribute, so how can we make sure we are using **all** our assets to their **full** potential?*

- Who might be interested in this initiative? Your network of friends, neighbours, school and/or work mates...
- Ask yourself who should be involved? Who might say “Yes!” if they were only asked?
- What can you each contribute?
 - ~ Your personal assets (*skills, gifts, interests, energy, commitment...*)
 - ~ What talents can you see in others that they may not be aware of?
- At your first meeting, or conversation, about being a group, talk a little about group standards, or ground rules. **How** do you want to work together? Make decisions? Appreciate each other’s viewpoint and feelings? Deal with differences? Support one another?

²This process is adapted from the appreciative inquiry model developed by David Cooperrider, of Case Western Reserve University, which involves the components of discovering, dreaming, designing, and delivering (i.e., taking action).

BUILDING BLOCK 2. What inspires you? Discover your passion!

*Appreciative Perspective: this is a process of discovering what we already have/already know **and** dreaming of more and greater possibilities!! People are naturally inclined to imagine what could be!*

- What do you like about your community? What's already happening here that you think is cool and good for young people?
- What do you wish was different? What *could* your community be like if you and others initiated some change?
- What do you care about? What inspires you?
- Where can you make a difference?
- What, in your view, would be the purpose (*the opportunity, desire, need, demand*) for creating change at this time?
- What is the specific issue that your team chooses to address at this time?

BUILDING BLOCK 3. Connect with your community.

Appreciative Perspective: asset mapping has the potential of “re-wiring” the community; i.e., connecting/involving people who might not usually participate in such a process or action, as well as strengthening the network(s) of relationships that already exist.

- Who are your adult allies?
 - ~ Names and their roles in the community.
 - ~ What do you hope you will gain/learn with their participation?
 - ~ How will **they** benefit? What, specifically, would inspire them to get involved?
 - ~ How best to invite them to join?
 - ~ Who else can they connect you to?
- Who could you contact/involve who might not normally be asked to participate in a project like this? Ask yourself: who is not here that needs/wants to be? Who are these “un-usual suspects” (*i.e., your **unknown** allies!*)?
- Share what your interest is in this initiative, find out theirs, identify your common ground, define and agree on your collective purpose. Share with them your “group standards” so they know how you’ve organized yourselves as a team.
- Don’t forget your own peers!!! Who else can you invite who is not yet involved?
- What about community organizations that might support your efforts? Are there informal groups of people who may share your interest/concern?

BUILDING BLOCK **4. Make CAMP!** (Community Asset Mapping Plan) **and then do it!**

Some Asset-Mapping Tools

*Appreciative Perspective: Conversations are a powerful tool for learning, creating social change, and renewing our organizations and communities, **and** it's so simple that everyone can do it!!!! (Note: the art of good conversation is a key ingredient in each of the following tools*

• **Photo mapping**

Using either a Polaroid or a digital camera, the “mappers” identify images in their community that show a bit of the context, or story, about the issue they've chosen to address. They sometimes use a cardboard frame (*about 12” X 12”*) in the photo – usually held in place by a member of the team – to focus attention on a particular part of the image. Later, these images are arranged on a “story board” with written captions to explain their significance to the issue.

• **Focus groups**

This is a small gathering of people who have been chosen/ invited to the session because they have thoughts, feelings, and ideas about the issue. The session is facilitated by a member of the team, who uses a set of open-ended questions to stimulate/ guide the participants' thinking and the flow of dialogue. Usually another team member records what is said. Typically, the session is short (e.g., one to two hours) and it has a very specific purpose; for example, it may be to get the input of High School students on how the Youth Health Centre can better serve the school and can connect to the outer community. the input of High School students on how the Youth Health Centre can better serve the school and can connect to the community.

Tips for Good Photo Mapping:

- Remember to frame up the space or object that you want to bring attention to.
- As you go, write down what each picture is of and why you took it.
- Stick with the issue you are focused on.
- Take pictures that will help other people clearly understand. Think about: What do you want others to understand? What perspective are you taking the pictures from? Who is your target audience?
- Remember: this tool can be used to address any issue or question.
- Get a diversity of people to take pictures and keep track of who takes which picture.
- Try getting some people to take pictures from outside your group or community for an interesting ~ possibly different ~ perspective

Some tips and reminders for surveys:

- Decide what you want to learn & whom you will ask.
- Design the questions to be clear & to the point. Avoid fancy language.
- Test the questions beforehand with the people you would like to gather information from to make sure the survey makes sense to those people.
- Find out on the survey what the person's gender, age, role in the community, or other factors are. That way you can determine if different groups of people have different patterns or responses; for example, do high school students want to do different physical activities outdoors than junior high students?
- Nice graphics can make it more *fun!*
- Think about how you will encourage people to return the survey: for example, will you enter their names in a draw for a cool prize?

• Story-telling

Listen, stories go in circles. They don't go in straight lines. So, it helps if you listen in circles because there are stories inside and stories between stories and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home. And part of the finding is the getting lost. And when you're lost, you really start to open up and listen.

{Coming from a Great Distance, Fischer, et al. 1980}

This may be a small or larger group in which several individuals "tell their stories" about their experience with the issue. Usually, these experiences inspire a great deal of reflection and deeper dialogue, which is then facilitated by team members and the comments recorded. Young adults who have been in the care of the child welfare system, for example, may tell their stories in a group setting, or through a youth-directed magazine.

Good storytelling is a two-way process. Stories have value for both the teller and the receiver. Telling a story helps clarify one's thinking. The act of recounting a story often helps the storyteller see patterns and connections more holistically. Receivers benefit both from the shared learnings and from the opportunity to offer their own reflections. There are always multiple points of view, lenses, and mental models that can be applied to a collection of events. Good storytellers are, therefore, never defensive about their stories and their interpretations; rather, they encourage dialogue and welcome the reflections of others.

{Note: source unknown}

• Surveys

Surveys can be designed to get information from many people at once.

• Interviews/conversations

Usually, these are arranged and conducted by one or two team member(s) with one or two interviewees. If two, then one can ask the questions while the other takes notes. These are informal processes and could take place over coffee, sitting on a park bench, etc. Although the interviewer may have specific questions in mind, the conversational tone of the process means that the topic may wander – sometimes into interesting and rewarding side issues

When we are working with people to help them learn/acquire these skills, we usually provide them with opportunities to practice on each other. We will get them into triads and ask that they identify themselves as A, B, or C. Then, A is asked to interview B on some topic related to the initiative, while C observes. After 10 minutes or so, A says how she/he thought it went, B gives A feedback, and so does C. On the next round, they all switch roles. After 3 rounds each member of the triad has had experience interviewing and being coached by peers. Also, they have found out more about each other and about the topic at hand.

• World Café

The World Café is a dialogue process that can be used with large groups of people. It is the creation of a US organization (check their web site at: www.theworldcafe.com/index.html) and is now used all over the planet. It is particularly effective with young people, partly because it can involve meaningful conversations, meeting others, food, artistic expression, a pleasant atmosphere, and so on. HeartWood's additions include fun, moving around, and some open space at the end to ask, "So what do we do now?" If you go to the above web site, you can freely download their Café To Go, which is a pretty good guide to this dynamic process.

Tips for Good Interviews:

- Make eye contact.
- Speak clearly.
- Ask open-ended questions instead of 'yes' or 'no' questions.
- Ask one question at a time.
- Try to remain as neutral as possible - don't show strong emotional reactions to responses.
- Make sure you are really LISTENING to the person's story.
- Encourage responses with occasional nods of the head, "uh huh, etc, or encouraging them to pursue a line of thought. "The part about xxx is interesting. Could you say more about that?" Or, "Can you give me an example of that?"
- Try to summarize the person's ideas to see if you really understood what he or she was saying. "So what your saying is ..." "So your major point is that ..." "Let me see if I can summarize what you've said..."

Tips for Facilitating a Good Mapping Session:

- Understand the basics of your issue.
- Develop clear questions.
- Get the right people there:
 - a. Include people of similar life experience in the same group, i.e. students, teachers etc.
 - b. Get the people that care about the issue and want to be there.
- Prepare the materials you need. This may seem obvious, but the fact is that often little but important details get overlooked.
- ‘Guide’, don’t lead your participants through the workshop. Ask questions instead of giving your own ideas. Remember that you’re there to hear their ideas, and not really to share your own.
- If pictures are unclear write short explanations beside them to explain what they are, or ask the participant to write down what the pictures mean.

• **Community mapping**

{{Note: the following is an excerpt from a mapping workshop with a high school group – J.L. Ilsley in Halifax – who were using a mapping process to create a “greener” (i.e., more natural and environmentally friendly) school community.}}

“When we think of a map we often think of a geographical map, like a map of Halifax, or of natural landscapes; but, maps can represent things like timelines, power and decision-making structures, a train of thought, and many other things. We also tend to think that map-making should be left to the experts, but we’re going to make a map ourselves right now. This map is a geographical map. We’re going to add to this map I’ve drawn of your school and all your school property.” (Get a map from the school or school board weeks in advance, and then trace the main components of the property and school).

(Visualization) “Individually, I’d like you to imagine J.L. Ilsley High School’s property. Outside, the places you go, the places that you don’t tend to go. Take a minute to trace the whole property around in your mind. Look at what you like, what has ‘potential’ and also the areas that you don’t tend to like or spend time in. (1 min.) Now, I’d like you think about this question: ‘What would a greener J.L. Ilsley look like?’ Now, draw some of your ideas, if two of you have different ideas for the same area, just make room for both. Use your imagination!” (6 min)

(To encourage conversation look at the map and see if there are areas where no one has put anything - either existing structures or potential additions. Ask the group what is in a particular area of the site. Or ask what its like to be there, if anyone hangs out there. Ask questions to find out where people do/do not hang out and why).

...and so many more techniques and processes – some of which you will invent as you go along! (for more resources and sources, see appendices)

Whether you facilitate a focus group, interview someone, convene a World Café dialogue session – the essential activity in these asset-mapping tools is that you are engaging in a meaningful conversation with another person(s). The basic components of a good conversation are attentive listening and asking good questions.

Listening tips and reminders:

- Enter the conversation with the goal of learning from the other person and understanding their point of view.
- Give your full attention (rather than “half-listening” while you think about what you are going to say as soon as they shut up).
- Ensure everyone has a say ~ share the airtime.
- Focus on what matters.
- Link and build on ideas – yours and theirs.
- Look for and connect differences.
- Contribute your thinking and encourage others.
- Have fun!!!

Asking Good Questions that:

- Are simple and clear, thought provoking, and open-ended.
- Challenge assumptions.
- Generate energy while focusing inquiry and reflection on what matters.
- Touch a deeper meaning.
- Open new possibilities!!

Make your plan (a CAMP)

Appreciative Perspective: you have to put yourself out there! You can't create social change by sitting in a meeting room and just talking about it!

WHAT are you going to do? Focus group, dialogue, interview...etc.

- Make up questions that you will use for the interviews, focus groups... Ask powerful/provocative questions, like:
 - ~ With respect to this initiative, where is energy/innovation happening?
 - ~ Who/what is making that happen?
 - ~ What would it be like if things really changed for the better?
 - ~ What would need to happen to start some movement, create some energy?
- Figure out how you are going to capture the information, for example:
 - ~ Working in teams, one of you can ask the questions, tune in to the conversation, and listen attentively, etc., while the other takes notes. Make sure you switch roles on the next interview so everyone gets a turn. Also, the note-taker can give you feedback on your listening and questioning skills so you keep improving your ability.
 - ~ Find a tape recorder or Dictaphone. Make sure the person(s) you are interviewing is OK with being recorded.
 - ~ Borrow a camera for the photo mapping. If it's a Polaroid, make sure you have film. If it's a digital camera, make sure it has battery power!!

WHO are you going to interview, survey...?

- Choose the area of the community where you want to focus your research.
- Promote the focus group(s) or dialogue sessions:
 - ~ Either create an invitation list and make sure that people know when it is, what it is, and that their participation is really needed and valued. Remember to send them a Thank You! card or Email after the session.
 - ~ Or, if the focus group or dialogue session is a public event, advertise to let people know what you are doing and where you are going to be at what time so you get a good turnout.
 - ~ Use the informal networks – especially with youth – to get word-of-mouth energy happening!!!

WHAT do you need to make it happen? Book room, order pizza, get the camera...

WHO is responsible for what? I'll do this if you do that...

WHEN? Or by when?

Make sure you are having fun while you are doing it

Get the CAMP going! Do it!!!

Appreciative Perspective: making the link between collecting information in an appreciative manner → generating energy, connection, and relationship → taking action!!

- Carry out your CAMP as planned, but if you need to make adjustments as you go along, be innovative and flexible!
- Make sure you take some time following each interview or session to de-brief what happened. If you were doing it with a partner leave some time before you go your separate ways to talk. If you can make immediate improvements in how you used the tool (*interview, survey, etc.*), do so by all means!

Reflect on the process ~ how you organized/carried out tasks.

Appreciative Perspective: this process aligns somewhat with the experiential learning cycle; i.e., act → reflect → transfer learning to other times/situations → more action/more learning.

- For you, what were the highlights of this process?
- What worked well? What are you pleased about?
- What surprised you?
- What did not work well? What were the challenges? What did you learn from this part of the experience?
- What about your teamwork as a group – how did that go?
- If you were doing this again next week, what would you do differently? In fact, this has been the “dress rehearsal” for the real thing – the action stage that follows later!
- What conclusions, or “ah-hahs,” can you make at this time?

BUILDING BLOCK **5. Analyze the information that you have gathered.**

Appreciative Perspective: Asset mapping moves people from talk to action! Map analysis creates a larger context of social change and building healthy communities - with a focus on the role that youth can take through individual and group action.

- Analyze the info gathered from the asset mapping:
 - ~ What stands out as most important to you? What do you think would be most important to the community?
 - ~ What are the themes, or patterns, that seem to be emerging from all this info? What is the info telling us?
 - ~ What are the ah-hahs in this info? What's going on here? What are the root causes, or, how does this connect to a larger issue?
 - ~ What questions does this info ask of us?
 - ~ What info is not here and should be? How can we get that?

- Imagine what the possibilities are:
 - ~ What *could* come of all this?
 - ~ What dreams/ideas does this info suggest?

- Identify actions; i.e., what needs to happen as a result of this info?
 - ~ Important to take *some* action so that people involved – and those witnessing the process – see/feel/experience the transition from talk to action and to know that this is possible!!!
 - ~ Choose small actions that can be taken right away using existing resources – including your time, energy, etc. This may just mean a simple change in *how* you do something, so as to get better results.
 - ~ The actions you choose should be *energy attractors*, that is, they energize people as they are happening, and they draw more energy to them so that a momentum builds.
 - ~ Partly a function of energy, they serve to connect to other actions, which in turn leverages and mobilizes other resources *and* networks of relationships in the community.
 - ~ *Taking action* may also mean giving up, or letting go, of some activities that drain energy and are not a priority at this time.
 - ~ If the desired action is a BIG one, then it is important to either apply the above strategies to start something happening, or to just hold it as an intention at this point and begin having conversations about its possibility, which will cause tiny footholds to appear along a path.

- Develop a plan for the action stage:
 - ~ What can youth do? Your team? Your extended network of friends, school and work mates?
 - ~ In what ways can adult allies support youth in taking these actions?
 - ~ Some actions that youth desire may fall outside the mandate or capability of the adults, but these could be referred to other adults in the community. Which actions and what adults?
 - ~ How can community organizations support youth? How can the community's informal groups and associations be involved? What about your new allies? (those "un-likely suspects")
 - ~ What can you do with others that will build relationships, "re-wire" the community's networks, and create new knowledge/resources that are not possible acting alone?

BUILDING BLOCK **6. Take action!!!**

Appreciative Perspective: once people see the results of taking action on questions that matter to them, they will want to do more, which in turn will build their capacity to act, all the while contributing to the community.

- Just like the CAMP, be flexible and innovative as you go along, making improvements wherever you can.
- Action begets more actions and learning! So, be on the lookout for opportunities to act and make sure you give yourself time to reflect on what happens so you can capture your ah-hahs.

BUILDING BLOCK 7. Reflect on and evaluate the overall process and what you have learned.

- For you, what were the highlights of this process?
- What worked well? What are you pleased about?
- What surprised you?
- What did not work well? What were the challenges? What did you learn from this part of the experience?
- What about your teamwork as a group – how did that go?
- If you were doing this again next week, what would you do differently?
- What conclusions, or “ah-hahs,” can you make at this time?
- What other questions can you ask yourselves at this time that would help maximize your learning from this experience?

BUILDING BLOCK 8. Share your learning to help other communities and Celebrate!!!!!!

- How will you make it fun as you come to the end?
- There are lots of other youth and community groups who want to make a difference in their communities and could benefit from your knowledge and experience. How will you spread the word of your great work?
- Now it's time to celebrate and recognize all the amazing work you have done, which has made a difference to your community and helped to make it a better place to live. Congratulations!

OUR LEARNING AS WE'VE USED THESE TOOLS/PROCESSES...

As we have used and explored various mapping tools over the last few years, we at HeartWood have learned that there needs to be certain supports and pre-conditions in place so that these tools and processes have the best chance of success.

We almost always start with the personal assets (*gifts, talents, what they are good at, interests, networks, passions*) of the individuals involved – the group of youth, the adult support persons. To find out what these are, we present and facilitate experiential group activities so that participants:

- Learn more about each other, which has the added benefit of raising the trust level and of focusing people's attention on the task at hand.
- Begin to build the team (*i.e., their strengths, resources, limitations*) that will be working together on this initiative.
- Discover/realize their own interests that may come into play as we go along.

When we map the assets in the organization, community, or system that we are working with in this initiative, we want to find out what's working well (*relevant to this initiative*), how, specifically, are we/others making it work so well, what do we have going for us, what *more* could we be doing on this? On the one hand, this tells us where potential resources can be found, and on the other, the process generates energy, excitement, and creativity.

When we do a community mapping process, there may be various reasons/purposes for doing so:

- Helping the participants figure out who is out there that they should be talking and connecting with.
- Identifying the networks of relationships in the community that could be mobilized to support this initiative.
- Finding out what other people – not just us in this group/team - want for their community, what is possible, what needs to be done that would make a real difference, what would excite/energize them to get involved and lend a hand.

Sometimes we find that the community mapping process is difficult if we have people from *all over*, because this typically presents a wide diversity of goals, needs, and interests. It is easier to do mapping in small rural communities, or in distinct urban neighborhoods, or in a particular system, like municipal recreation. So, we sometimes have to spend time to define the common ground on which we hope to create some positive change.

Sometimes we map the community not for the purpose of social change, but to familiarize the individual participants with resources that they may want to tap for their own personal needs - potential employment, for example. We still do this in a group, but there is no expectation of group action as one of the outcomes.

When we do Asset-Mapping or Community Mapping, we may not have a specific outcome in mind. In a sense, we want to see what will happen, what will emerge from the process. PAR is a bit different.

When we do PAR it is usually a more structured, time-limited process, very much like a project. So, we spend a lot of time with the participants, identifying/forming objectives and action plans, as well as introducing them to the tools and making sure they have enough skill to proceed. As the PAR is being carried out, we schedule check-ins and opportunities for coaching and further skill development. The process itself is energizing and empowering for the participants as a great deal of learning takes place. So, the check-ins are partly about the PAR process to guide it along, but more importantly, it provides time and space for participants to reflect upon their experience and to share their learning and excitement.

Not only do these tools/processes create benefits for the youth team and the community it serves, they are also learning experiences in which the young people develop their personal and leadership skills and abilities. Not only *that*, but adults have the same opportunity. On a “professional” level, they will learn more about engaging and supporting young people as they undertake action. More importantly, on a *personal* level they, too, see their community with new eyes and can experience their own growth and development in the process. We have found that our “coaching/mentoring” relationships with young people are reciprocal in nature; i.e., we almost always learn as much, if not more, from the youth as they do from us.

One fascinating feature we have noticed in using these tools with young people is that the process is often messy, creative, and somewhat chaotic in which it is perfectly OK to get lost and ask questions to find our way again. However, youth seem to be more comfortable with this ambiguity than are adults, so it is helpful to meet halfway by having a *minimal*-structure for the project, an *emerging* plan to guide the way, and a *good-enough* vision of where we are going. Our best guide, however, is our sense of being a team, having healthy and respectful adult-youth relationships, and clarity and commitment to our principles, values, and standards – *why* we are doing this and *how* we want to work together and treat each other.

One of our core values at HeartWood is to assist young people – and supportive adults – to take individual and group action so as to build healthy communities. So, asset mapping, and the other tools, is great fun and good ways to build teams, familiarize

people with their own communities, feel good about themselves and the strengths they have – but for us, it all needs to go one step farther.

Our hope is that action will result. This is also our challenge because most people/ groups have a tendency to resist this (*because it is usually more comfortable to stay in the talking stage, or there is an apprehension that change will cause loss of benefits, stir things up, and so on*). So, we sometimes find ourselves putting it out there – as an invitation, a hope, a challenge – for the group to take action and create change in their community/system.

One thing that helps is to meet people where they are at, which partly means recognizing *how much* change they are ready for at this time. For a young person, this may mean that she/he does *not* undertake “meaningful community action,” instead it may be a big enough first step to just talk with her/his parents in a meaningful way about their learning experience. This is a personal action and it serves as a pretty good building block for other “actions” down the road.

For the adults, we have to explain at the outset that HeartWood has a dual responsibility in this initiative; i.e., that we will coach you in your support of the youth and we will support the youth in their desire for real and substantive change. The adults, in turn, have to be upfront with the youth as to the parameters of their job or their role in this initiative.

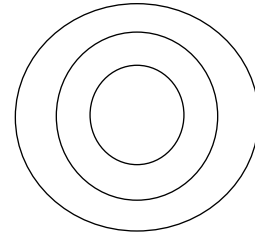
So imagine what happens when the youth come back to the adults and say we want to do this and we want to do that, and the adult thinks, “My heavens, I can’t possibly do *that!!*”

First of all, what’s going on here?

The youth – energized and exploring *all* possibilities – have come back with a range of actions. Some of these fit the adult’s concept of what they can and should do, while others are *way out there!* What to do?

Here’s a foolproof way of supporting youth creativity and energy without getting overwhelmed – *and* without saying, “No. You can’t do that!” or, “Yes, but...”

Imagine 3 concentric circles that represent all the possible ideas that young people could propose to you, asking for your approval, support, and direct involvement.



The inner circle encompasses your particular mandate in the organization or community – what you are supposed to do. So, if a young person suggests something that falls into that circle, your correct response is to say, “Great. That’s exactly what my job is all about. I will work with you on that.”

The next circle of possibility is beyond your mandate but it is familiar ground nevertheless – you know from your networks in the community whose mandate it is. So, your response goes something like, “That idea goes beyond my capability, but I know exactly who can help you with that, so let’s give him/her a call.” Your role is to act as a bridge, or connector, to the resources in the community that may be unknown to the young person, but are known to you. {Note: sometimes the young person may lack the skill or self-confidence to approach a stranger and articulate their ideas/needs. So, you may have to be present at the first contact, being careful not to take the lead}

The third and outermost ring includes ideas that no one has yet encountered – the great unknown, no one’s mandate, the edge! So, what can you do? Easy – you can listen, act as a sounding board, ask questions that will help the young people discover their own resources and solutions to figure it out for themselves. In short, you serve them by being supportive, without taking over the process, or taking a role that is way beyond your areas of responsibility.

Adults are often challenged to restrain themselves from “taking over.” The concept here is that as youth step up to take on more of a leadership role, the adults naturally step back to give them room. That means biting your tongue, even if you know the answer, and not taking responsibility for getting that particular task done, even if you’ve done it a hundred times before and can do it so much quicker. Every time you step back, a young person has the opportunity to try something new and to learn from the experience. Just make sure you don’t step so far back that you are no longer providing support and guidance when it is needed.

In short, our hope for the adults – and part of what we say to them at the outset – is that they will support youth action as best they can (recognizing that there will always be roadblocks put up by the organization or the community) and that our role is to help them do that.

More specifically, some of the many ways that adults can support youth as they take action include:

- Nurturing healthy and productive group dynamics, which in turn will create an empowering team culture.
- Being honest in answering the young people's provocative questions and staying connected – and open – to their input.
- Legitimize, clear the way, and support their process in the community. This happens, partly, by connecting them to community resources, especially others who are doing youth-inclusive and energy-generating work.
- Help them see the bigger picture, or the deeper issue, and at the same time, bite off do-able chunks. Sometimes, first steps, i.e., small local actions that add up to a larger shift, are much more effective than the all-out, all-together grand action.
- Although the task – the action to create change – is important, equally so is the goal to create genuinely safe/empowering processes and containers for youth to learn how to take action, and to feel good about themselves as they do it!
- One of the shifts that an appreciative approach has caused in our thinking is to focus our attention away from “programs” and on to relationships. That is, the program is just the vehicle, or container, for the relationship to happen. We believe it is essential for youth undertaking these kinds of change initiatives to have at least one adult who is strong and un-conditional in her/his support. Relationship building is the real goal of this work – and it takes time!

RESOURCES AND SOURCES

As you map the assets in your community, you will find many resources - people, organizations, web sites, books, publications, equipment, physical facilities - and many others that will help your group reach its vision. The following are some ideas to get you started.

- David Cooperrider, Case Western Reserve University
(*Developed the appreciative inquiry methodology*)
See: <http://ai.cwru.edu/>
- Building Communities From The Inside Out: A Path Towards Finding and Mobilizing A Community's Assets by John P. Kretzmann & John L. McKnight
(*Published by the Asset-Based Community Development Institute, Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University*)
See: www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd.html
- For many years the Search Institute has been creating and publishing resources to facilitate child and youth growth and development. Their *Framework of 40 Developmental Assets* is an excellent tool for community groups, government agencies, and schools to use as a guide in their own work.
See: www.search-institute.org/
- One of the community networks that have based their work on Developmental Assets is located in the Waterloo Region of Ontario, Canada. They've produced a wonderful resource, called Neighbor to Neighbor, which can be found at www.neighbourtoneighbour.ca/
- The Canadian partner of the Search Institute is Thrive - The Canadian Centre for Positive Youth Development.
See: <http://www.thrivecanada.ca/>
- The World Café
(*Strategic dialogue and meaningful conversations*) For a free download of Café to Go, see: www.theworldcafe.com/
- Madii Institute
(*Builds on the work of asset mapping and appreciative inquiry, and adds in cultural asset mapping*)
See: www.madii.org
- Enlightened Leadership, Ed Oakley & Doug Krug, Stone Tree Publishing, Denver, 1991.
(*This book was one of the first to introduce solution-oriented thinking to the corporate world*)

- Your local community directory is a gold mine of people and organizations that can help you! Examples include: the “Handy Dandy Resource Directory” for Halifax at: nspirg@is2.dal.ca
- Environmental Youth Alliance from Vancouver
(A variety of on-line resources about asset mapping, youth environmental activism, youth in policy development, etc. etc.)
For example, see: Youth Community Asset Mapping Initiative Report
<http://www.eya.ca/youthmappers/docs/YCAMReport.pdf>
- The Community Tool-Box
(A great site for problem solving!)
<http://ctb.ku.edu/>
- Canadian Rural Partnership Asset Mapping: A handbook
www.rural.gc.ca/conference/documents/mapping_e.phtml
- Realizing Every Community Asset – Asset Mapping Tests
www.tcfm.org/mapping/
- Firestarter Youth Power Curriculum.
(An amazing site that works to empower young people to create solutions to serious social problems.)
<http://www.freechild.org/Firestarter/guidebook.htm>
- Adults as Allies Workbook
(An excellent article to give to adults you want to work with!)
<http://www.wkkf.org/pubs/YouthED/Pub564.pdf>
- Public Achievement
www.publicachievement.org
- Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (Y.E.L.L.)
John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University
<http://gardnercenter.stanford.edu>
- HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development
5663 Cornwallis St., suite 100, Halifax, NS (902) 444-5885
E-mail: home-place@heartwood.ns.ca
(Works throughout Nova Scotia and – increasingly – in other parts of Canada)
Go to: <http://www.heartwood.ns.ca/tools.shtml> for a free download of the Participatory Action Research Manual, as well as other sharable tools for engaging young people.

