

Building Community Resilience

A summary of findings
from 2017-21



Partners:

Adventure 4 Change
African Family Revival Organization
Bridges to Belonging
Canadian Aweil Youth Association
Canadian Somali Association
Eritrean Islamic Association
Family and Children's Services
House of Friendship
Hummingbird Centre for Hope
Kidsability
Kitchener Waterloo Art Gallery
Levant
Muslim Social Services
Women's Crisis Services

Funded by:

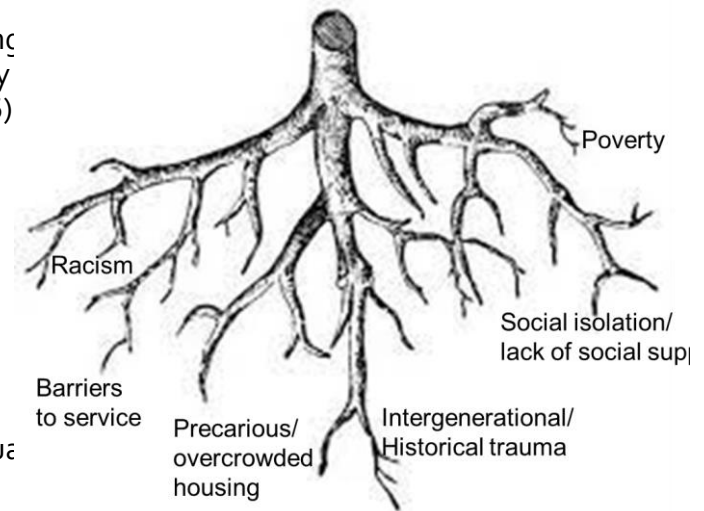
Lyle S Hallman

Root Causes

Knowing well that the gateway to any individual's ability to thrive is a connection to their community since 2017, Resilience Project Partners have been working together using collective impact approach to reduce barriers in receiving services and support to promote resilience in the Waterloo Region. Starting from a place of wanting to heal from, and prevent, child abuse and neglect, we looked to the research occurring around the globe that tells us that many factors that contribute to family stress often result from systemic inequities (Stoddart, Trocme, Fallon & Fluke, 2016)

- **Social Isolation****
- Poverty
- Unstable/overcrowded housing
- Child functioning concerns (emotional/mental and cognitive/physical)

Many of these inequities have been illuminated for all society to see during the pandemic. It does not make sense then to try to solve these inequities with individual solutions. We have been exploring how we can come together as a community to neutralize some of the stressors that impact families, and how our work together can have positive impacts on us all as individuals, organizations and communities.





*When a flower
doesn't bloom
you fix the
environment in
which it grows,
not the flower*

*-Alexander Den
Heijer*

To define or not resilience?

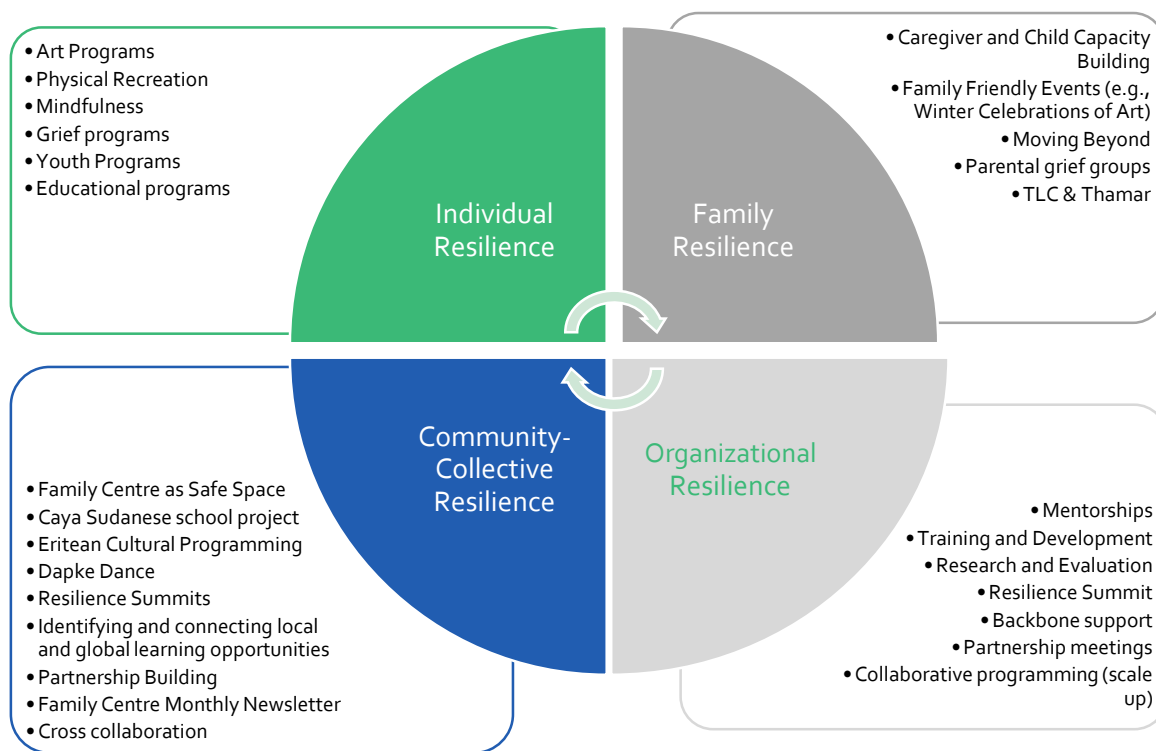
- The most well know definition of resilience centers resilience within the individual:

"the ability to overcome adversities (traumatic events or conditions, hardships or suffering). People and communities who have developed resilience can...resist the effects of hardship or bounce back and return to, or even excel, level of functioning."

- As we began our work together back in 2014 we started with the most common western definitions of Resilience. These definitions frame resilience as an interaction between individual characteristics or traits along with external factors that influence families and communities (the environment around an individual) that work together to help people "overcome adversity". While it is clear to us that there is an element of individual resilience needed for a person to move forward, it has become abundantly clear that there is more to recovery than what meets the eye...

- For instance, the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (citation) laid the foundation for understanding of adversities and their impact on adult outcomes. While thinking about Adverse Childhood Experiences was helpful when we started our work we have moved beyond this and our understanding of resilience has also grown. Grown from framing resilience as individual recovery from adversity to understanding resilience as the strength of a collective community.

Framing collective resilience



- We've come to understand collective resilience as a community dynamic that occurs when connection and nourishment provide the foundation for reflection/awareness on adversities faced by others, an interconnectedness awareness of the local to global issues, the generational strength and the potential that has for healing, and how this supports us to grow together with a shared vision, healing through stories and awareness, mobilizing into global action. This is not simple. Collective resilience moves communities into a collective resistance against oppression and inequities.

- As we explore the continuum from individual to collective resilience, we define and continuously re-define resilience as a form of mandala with four quadrants, each one of them representing a unique and interrelated aspect of resilience. To foster resilience, our collaborative partnership initiative must hold together all four aspects in equal importance so that there can be resilience in the forms of balance, justice, and growth in the face of adversities, injustice, and inequities at local, regional, national, and global levels. We see collective resilience as the ability for communities, organizations, systems, and families to address root causes of systemic barriers and inequities rather than symptoms of the problem. People and communities who have developed collective resilience can develop critical consciousness in connecting personal and individualized problems to larger structures and systems

Programs Designed to Promote Resilience

(Masten, 2010; Search Institute, 2018; Stoddart & Wilson 2016; Ungar, 2018)

Provide opportunities for power and control

Hope and life purpose

Encourage sense of culture and historical roots

Strengthen relationships

- positive attachment bonds with caregivers
- Positive relationships with other nurturing adults
- Friends/positive peer relationships

Encouraging powerful identities

- Self-esteem
- Self-efficacy (mastery)
- Self-regulation
- Skill development

Strengthen sense of belonging

- Family
- Community
- Schools/organizations
- Culture

Promote social justice

- Service to others
- Responsibility for others
- Equity
- Empathy



Collective Impact Approach



Using previous research we provide programs designed to promote relationships through strengthening relationships, encouraging powerful identities, strengthening sense of belonging, promoting social justice, hope, and life, as well encouraging sense of culture and historical roots. The key to engaging in promoting resilience is ordinary magic, and one's own community is at the centre of that magic. The Resilience Project relates to multiple grassroots organizations with global lived experiences that support their capacity to engage diverse communities. We focus on all the ways we are interconnected – not just focus on the individual children and youth we work with. We are all interconnected and interconnected with the land around us .

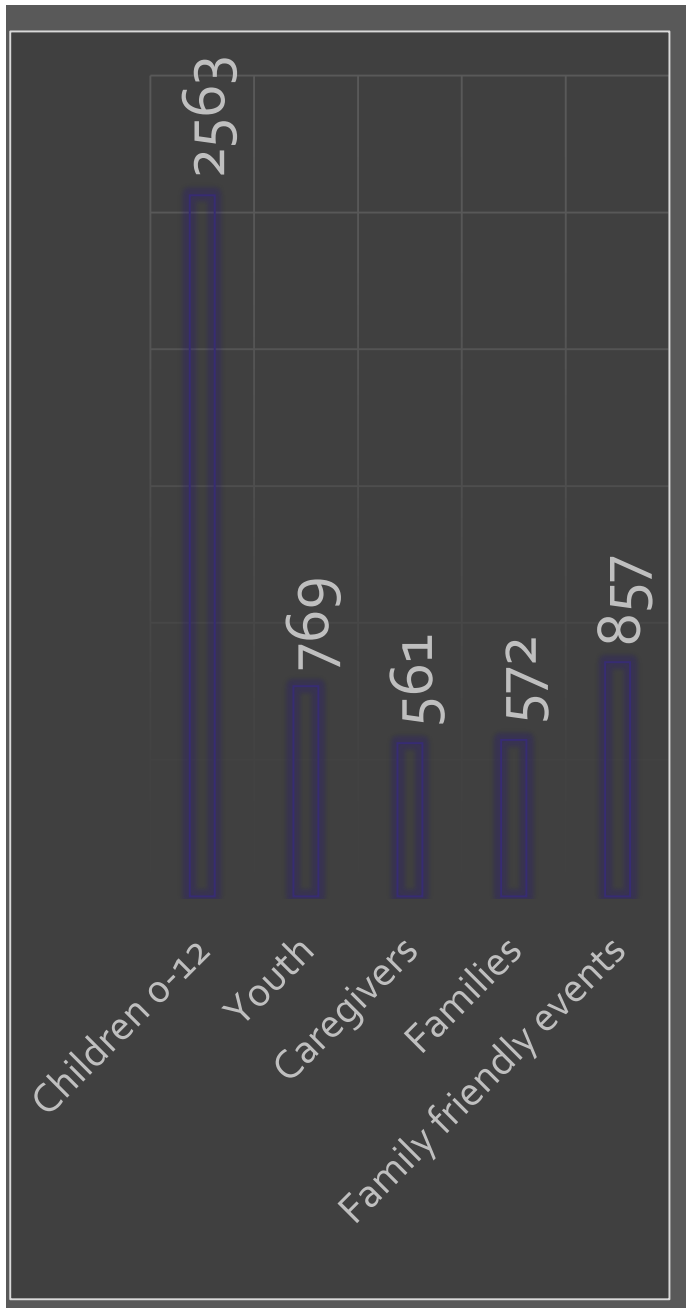
Resilience is Interconnected



Promoting Resilience in our Future

• PROGRAM FINDINGS

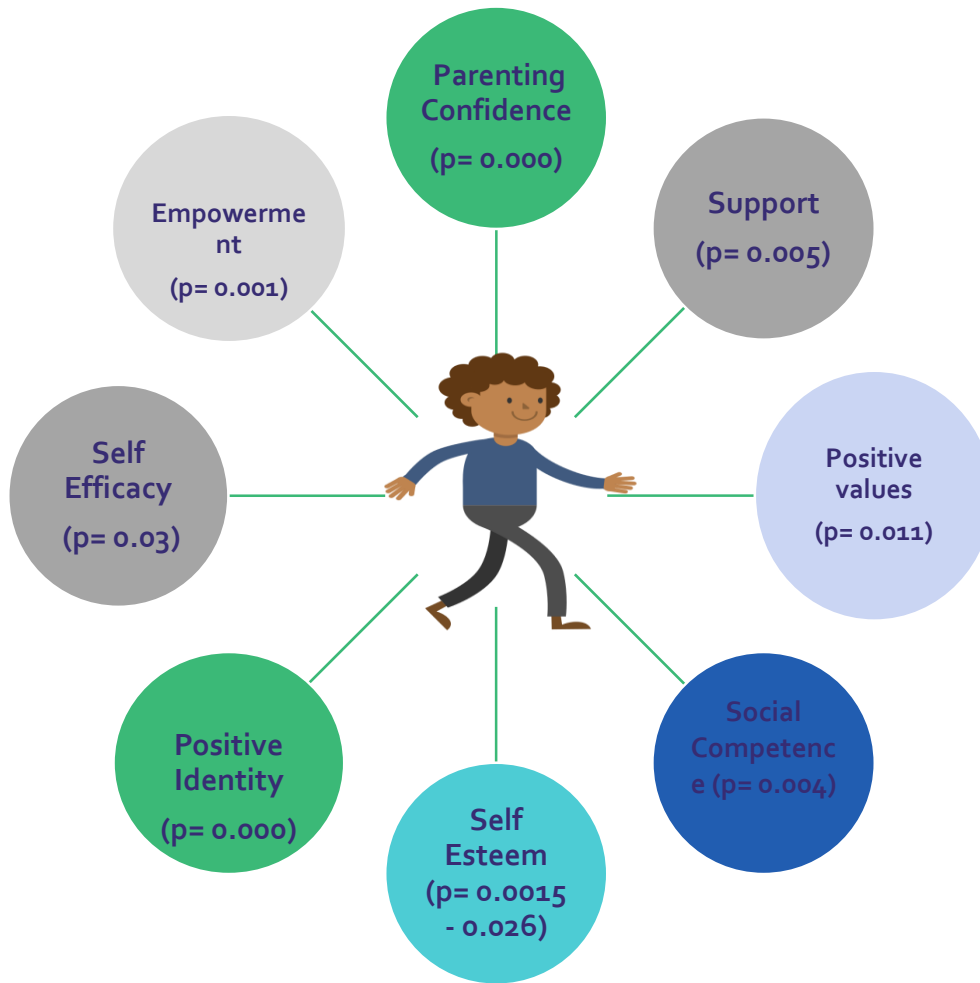
Number of People Served



PROGRAM FINDINGS

Resilience Program	Sample	Construct	P-Value	Mean Score difference
Creative Space	132	Self-efficacy	P= 0.03	+0.41
		Connection to Community	P=0.005	+1.43
Music Academy	129	Self-esteem	P= 0.015	+0.52
		Connection to Community	P= 0.011	+1.64
Players Theatre	71	Self-esteem	P= 0.026	+1.30
		Connection to Community	P= 0.014	+1.91
Kids Creating Change	97	Self-Esteem	P= 0.003	+1.50
		Positive values	P= 0.011	+2.25
Smiles	89	Social Competency (talking to others)	P= 0.004	+1.09
		Support (expressing yucky feelings)	P= 0.005	+1.33
		Positive Identity		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizing strength 	P= 0.005	+1.18
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good feelings about oneself 	P= 0.000	+1.25
		Constructive Use of Time (Ability to relax)	P= 0.000	+1.40
		Empowerment	p= 0.001	+1.49
Trusting Loving Connections	144	Perception of parenting stress	P= 0.000	-3.22
		Perception of child behaviour as difficult	P= 0.001	-2.79

PROGRAM FINDINGS



These findings were also supported by qualitative analysis of 52 interviews conducted with children, youth, caregivers, and facilitators of programs.

Self-esteem

"Well, like I said, it's all about how they feel they've achieved something. And so at the end, after their classes, they always come out and they're like beaming... just big radiant smiles and they're always just being like... This is what we did. Oh my goodness, you have to listen to this song or you have to look at my new painting or look at what I created and they're just like, they're so excited to demonstrate something that they've done and that they've achieved. And they've never come out of it sad or disappointed with what They have created. It's always like they feel so much better. They stand taller... like they speak louder, like they are just excited"

[Caregiver]

Social competency

"people kept looking at me like they didn't like me...forgot after a few days and started making new friends."

[Participant]

Individual Resilience Promotion.

PROGRAM FINDINGS

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A had a lot of fun and friends and every time I'd say "I'm so excited Mommy, let's go quick." Cause I'm excited for my friends and stuff... Uhm, we [child and friends] got along really well. We all became good friends. And we asked our parents like sometimes like like can we have the phone number so we can like play together. We were always happy to see each other because we were having fun together.

[Participant]

"So that comes back around to that collective resilience piece. We're all striving, we're all helping each other in this group, you come in and have a bad day, we're all going to be there for you, we're all going to understand because we've all been there, right? You know, whether it's related to your family, whether it's related to the loss of a parent, or a friend or a partner, or whatever that looks like agency involvement, you know, worker giving you bad news, they've all been there, and they can all empathize. And so it just brings them into a room where this all happens, magically."

[Facilitator]

Um, I'd say it's helped in progressing her. Yeah, she's come a long way. She's been in my care for three years now, and even compared now to a year ago. There's a huge difference in [child]. Yeah, and I think a lot of these programs have helped not only herself but myself to have a better understanding of her, and how to help her"

[Caregiver]

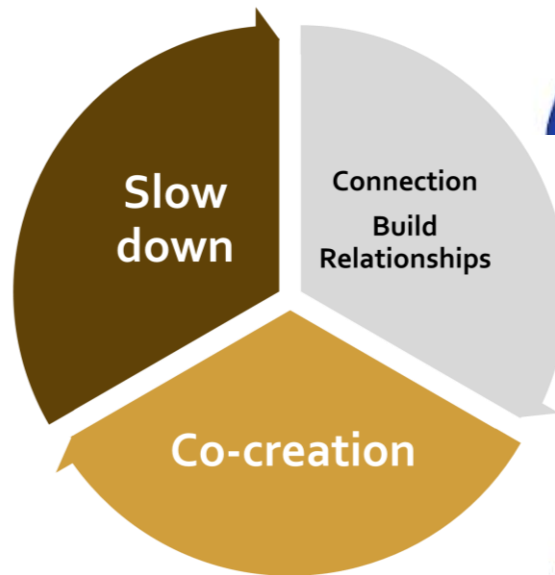


Collective Impact: Collective Resilience

2021 SUMMIT RESULTS

One goal of the Resilience Project is to learn and grow together. As part of that we just hosted our 2nd Resilience Summit in February. The purpose of the Summit was to share our learning with others and deepen our own understanding of the power of collective resilience. One goal of the Resilience Project is to learn and grow together. The purpose of the Summit was to share our learning with others and deepen our own understanding of the power of collective resilience. As part of that we just hosted our 2nd Resilience Summit in February 2021. We provide qualitative analysis of the discourses the summit ignited, as well as thematic analysis of jam boards that were used in the beginning and end of sessions meant to harvest knowledge.

The overall message from the summit when considering collective resilience is the importance of slowing down, connecting and building relationships, and co-creating



MOMENTUM

The Power of Collective Resilience



**“If you want to go fast, go
alone. If you want to go far,
go together.”**
African Proverb

Slow down

SUMMIT RESULTS

- The thought leaders in the :
Akinoonmage Inaakoneigewin
presentation, mentioned “Learning to
live in the rhythm of the land.” For the
project, we considered how we could
use this knowledge. In the Western
world productivity tends to be viewed
in a singular way, however, the
pandemic has flipped the way we see
this. For example, working from home
has become less stigmatized and even
praised, whereas pre-pandemic
discourse was not favorable.
- Taking this further into the land as the
presenters did, there is also power in
watching the plants grow around you,
when it is understood that one plant’s
growth supports another. Further, it
isn’t just watching the plants grow, but
allowing your own schedule to connect
with the growth seasons, because in
the end, each task we complete is
connected to another. The heartbeat of
El Salvador, as well Akinoonmage
Inaakoneigewin demonstrated the
impact of going against this truth, as
the land and people have been
exploited without consideration of
their growth seasons.

Learn to live in the rhythm of the land

Story Telling

Maple Syrup

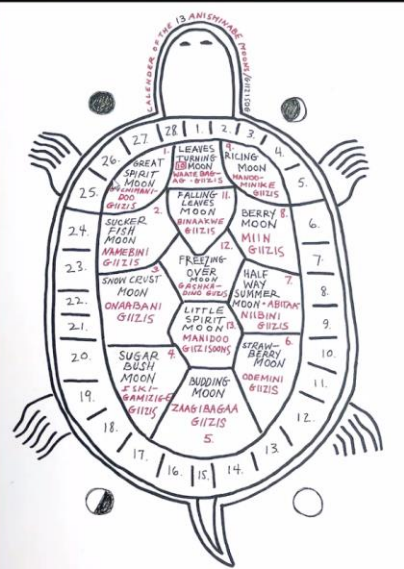
Gathering

Gardening

Hunting, Trapping & Fishing

13 Moons of the Anishinaabe Calendar

1. GICHIMANIDOO-GIIZIS / Great Spirit Moon-*January*
2. NAMEBINI-GIIZIS / Suckerfish Moon-*February*
3. ONAABANI-GIIZIS / Snow Crust Moon-*March*
4. ISKIGAMIZIGE-GIIZIS / Sugarbush Moon-*April*
5. AAGIBAGAA-GIIZIS/ Budding Moon-*May*
6. ODEMINI-GIIZIS / Strawberry Moon-*June*
7. ABITAA-NIIBINI-GIIZIS / Halfway Summer Moon-*July*
8. MIIN-GIIZIS / Berry Moon-*August*
9. MANOOMINKE-GIIZIS / (Wild) Ricing Moon-*September*
10. WAATEBAGAG-GIIZIS / Leaves-Turning-Moon-*Late September*
11. BINAAKWE-GIIZIS / Falling-Leaves-Moon-*October*
12. GASHKADINO-GIIZIS / Freezing Over Moon-*November*
13. MANIDOO-GIIZISOONS / Little Spirit Moon-*December*



Slow down

SUMMIT RESULTS

- It takes time and patience to place adversities faced around the globe into their own historical and current contexts. We saw this when considering the Akinoonmage Inaakoneigewin, Generational Knowledge, Heartbeats of El Salvador, and Youth on Collective
- Resilience as the space was opened for different stories of adversities to be explained. As participants sat through these sessions, the Jamboards demonstrated a theme of Healing Through Stories (historical and current). In one of the sessions this moved to participants to engage in global action. There is power in understanding the adversities other's have face, when the themes of systemic inequities are similar, yet geographically the adversities faced are far removed from one another. We need to slow down and listen to what others are experiencing, whether that is locally in the Waterloo Region or globally. Truth and Reconciliation needs this for the calls to action to be met. Black, racialized, and LGBTQ2S+ peoples need this for oppression and inequities to halt.

Connection & Building Relationships

SUMMIT RESULTS



- From the beginning of the project, we have been aware of the importance of connection and building relationships with one another as partners. Across each presentation connection and building relationships was front and center. In fact, it seems there is no collective resilience if connections or relationships are not established.
- The power of interconnectedness also came to our attention. Whether working together to create a mural, understanding how our histories connect us, and what this means for community services. The summit highlighted the impact of Art in all its forms on building resilience and helping with healing. I think. The process of creating art together and exploring our pain and hope together.

Connection & Building Relationships

- In order to foster collective resilience, we need to enter genuine reciprocal relationships, conversation, which requires intentionally slowing down and nurturing our relationships with one another. During the Resilience Summit, this process became evident in the moment when the racialized immigrants and refugees acknowledged their deep connection with the Salvadoran presenters who traced their history of colonization, civil war and post-war challenges. This makes it clear that we live in a global community and global issues need to be examined through interconnections of local and global.
- Racialized minorities living in this region need to examine the impact of their own and their ancestor's histories on their native land which they left behind. Similarly, the white settlers need to do the same in terms of the impact of their ancestors' colonizing ways of being. Now, we find the colonized and colonizers on this land appropriated from the Indigenous people. This truly makes me embrace the futurities that includes us all.



SUMMIT RESULTS

Co-Creation



SUMMIT RESULTS

- Coming together to develop a common understanding of our history and vision of the future is another central piece to collective resilience. The concept of ubuntu says “I am because we are,” tells us we are not one without others, to co-create we need to slow down, build relationships, need to invite everyone in the community to be part of the solution.
- The concept of nothing about us without us. Throughout the Resilience Project, as well as the Thought Leaders’ discourses, or program, activates, services that we are doing are attempts to help that we are not doing to we are doing with. It is important for individuals needing support to have a voice in the solution.
- The community, including youth from the Thought Leaders speakers, cautioned the importance of hearing their voice, and really removing barriers for youth to led. Including providing mentorship, questioning if there are shared resource that are possible “do we have more than we need?”, and being intentional about meaningful opportunities for co-collaboration and co-creation.

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A background image showing several pairs of hands of different skin tones gently holding small green seedlings with soil. The hands are arranged in a circular pattern, symbolizing collective care and growth.

Conclusion

The Resilience Project started from a place of wanting to heal from, and prevent, child abuse and neglect. Using a collective impact approach we are taking a collaborative stance to address political, economic, and social inequities that exist in our society.

We are only in the beginning of witnessing the power of collective resilience. We have begun to experience healing through stories of adversity and resilience to mobilize into action. We will continue to grow together into the future.

Thoughts on measuring resilience

Measuring resilience has been complicated:

- Community setting:
 - children, youth, and caregivers are just looking to get settled into their activity.
 - Participants can get questionnaire fatigue
- Organizational resilience
 - Up until date there is no clear definition or measurement of organizational resilience. This notwithstanding, researchers have used the concept to explicate how organizations can survive and thrive during adversity or turbulence. Lengnick-Hall and colleagues (2011), for instance, defined organizational resilience as an organization's ability to effectively absorb, develop situation-specific responses to, and eventually engage in transformative activities to make the most of disruptive situations that potentially threaten organizational survival. Annarelli and Nonino (2016) also defined the concept as the capacity to face disruptions and unexpected events in advance due to the strategic awareness and the effective management of internal and external shocks. In current discourse, this concept is promising for its ability to capture and address the issue of organizational vulnerability, particularly in these precarious times.
 - In our resilience work, we recognize the important role of grassroots organizations in fostering resilience within vulnerable individuals and communities. To ensure that these organizations are well-positioned to support their communities, we promote organizational resilience using a collaborative model that ensures that organizations connect and work together, rather than compete for, limited resources. This approach to organizational resilience has led to a shared vision within the region to collectively promote outcomes for vulnerable persons, while fostering organizational resilience against systemic risks.

Qualitative vs quantitatively or the dance of the mix?

- Interviews capture the nuances of resilience best but are resource intensive and require a good working relationship between the researcher and participants.
- Giving photovoice, emergent learning, and other ways of knowing knowledge and analysis a spotlight is important if we really want to decolonize how we measure impact. This is especially important when considering that not all organizations, programs, services, activities are best geared to quantitative analysis.



Thoughts on collaboration

By raising awareness of social inequities, the Resilience Project connects local to global adversity and resilience experiences. The project involves program planning and implementation, and research and knowledge dissemination components. The Resilience Project continues to take part on the global stage as the project partners implement programs in different countries and share learnings with one another. The Resilience Team breaks down barriers and provides collective learning on a larger scale that paves the way for new services and systems that the partner organizations can develop.

However, as mentioned earlier, this takes time, respect, reciprocal relationship building, and resources.

We can only move at the speed of trust.

In our world we believe in the phrase – growing together... Overtime our interconnectedness has strengthened our resolve to build and blossom together, a process that is best reflected by the rooting system found underneath any garden.



Growing Together.

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