



Reflections on

Common Threads

APPROACHES & CONTEXTS FOR PLANNING EVERYDAY LIVES

A conference sponsored by The Ontario Independent Facilitation Network in partnership with
The Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario

April 2014

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with contributions by**

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Jack Pealer facilitated the conference

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the conference.

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The Ontario Independent Facilitation Network www.oifn.ca

The Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario www.individualizedfunding.ca

The conference composed portraits of person-centered work. Everyone who attended had the chance to expand their understanding by exploring different practices, hearing various accounts of history and lessons from application, and undertaking personal and small group reflections on the hopes and meanings attached to doing the work. The pictures that emerge express rich and interesting variety. Each person had her or his own opportunity to engage in conversation and personal reflection in order to make sense of that variety and identify common threads that show up throughout their particular picture.

These reflections express what showed up for me as I listened to friends and colleagues speak and engaged in conversation with fellow conference participants. What follows on the unsigned pages is my way of organizing my experience. It is not an attempt at a consensus statement or a declaration of how person-centered work should be understood and practiced or a complete discussion of person-centered approaches.* It is simply a record of how I have made sense of what I learned at the conference. It is a strength of the process that others were in different conversations and will have their own, different ideas of what the conference was about.

The pages that follow also include some of the speaker's notes. Each of these pages are signed by the contributor. Along with presentation notes, which have been only very lightly edited, there are profiles of ten approaches to person-centered planning and pointers to sources of more information.

The conference was one remarkably well organized and facilitated episode in a conversation that continues. To add your own reflections and responses to what is here, visit inclusionnetwork.ning.com.

–John O'Brien

* For a more comprehensive account, see these three collections of papers and interviews from practitioners. John O'Brien & Connie Lyle O'Brien (2000). *A Little Book About Person-Centered Planning*; (2002). *Implementing Person-Centered Planning: Voices of Experience*; John O'Brien & Carol Blessing (2011). *Conversations on Citizenship & Person Centered Work*. All from Inclusion Press inclusion.com/pkpersoncenteredpack.html

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Conference Outline

We listened together to a series of short talks organized around four questions. Talks provided starting places for a sequence of small group conversations and person-to-person story telling. Conversation continued over meals and was energized into the night by a poetry slam. From the threads of these talks and conversations, each of the more than 200 participants wove her or his own conference

What was the original vision and intent behind each approach and how did each approach evolve?

Individual Design Sessions –Jack Pealer

Personal Futures Planning –John O’Brien

24-Hour Planning –Mary Kovacs

MAPS –Jack Pearpoint

Essential Lifestyle Planning –Michael Smull

Planning Together –Susannah Joyce

Keeping Your Dreams Alive –Richard Ruston

PATH –Jack Pearpoint & Lynda Kahn

LifePath Planning –Judith McGill

Person-Centred Thinking; One-page Profiles –Julie Malette

Pathfinders –Connie Lyle O’Brien

How do we help people discover and share the common threads woven into the stories of their lives?

Discovering my gifts by telling my story among others –Richard Ruston

What it means to have Facilitation and Planning Support: People Listen to Me –Julia Niimi

The power of witnessing another’s story –Connie Lyle O’Brien

Collective meaning making: Having others join me in telling and making sense of my story –Judith McGill

Listening for gifts and noticing messages from story –Lynda Kahn

Using graphic imagery in capturing story –Jack Pearpoint

Poetry Slam

Patrick Walters • Rabbit Richards • David Delisca • Host: Judith McGill

Dreaming and Relationships –Judith Snow

Cautionary Tales: What takes us away from the heart and soul of planning/facilitation?

How we get trapped by our assumptions –Michael Smull

Creating plans as bureaucratic necessity –Julie Malette

How planning gets taken over by others –Richard Ruston

Not broken: Seeing people as fully whole –Mary Kovacs

What do we need to move forward powerfully?

Widening and deepening our circle of relationships –Connie Lyle O’Brien

Setting the stage so that there is energy and enthusiasm for moving into action –Michael Smull

Are we doing what we say we are doing? Being answerable first and foremost to the person –Susannah Joyce

What would help families move forward? –Michelle Friesen

Reflections

Marlyn Shervill & John O’Brien

A Time to Gather and Reflect

Person-centered planning in its many and varied forms, if approached in a thoughtful, sincere, and indeed, a moral manner, can help us. It can help us to listen, to understand, and most importantly, to act.

While person-centered planning is regarded as a new idea, it springs from our basic humanity, our eternal capacity for love, and our common desire to create a world that is safe and welcoming for everyone of us.

–Nancy Thayler (1992)

As she welcomed conference participants on behalf of the Ontario Independent Facilitation Network, Susannah Joyce shared her inspiration for the conference. In 1992 the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare gathered people who practiced a variety of approaches to explore the contribution that person-centered planning could make to the Department's system change initiative, titled *Everyday Lives*.^{*} For many of its participants, including Susannah and me, this gathering clarified and deepened understanding of what different approaches hold in common and where there are differences that matter. The working group that planned this conference decided that it is time to gather and consider again, in a way that fits the mix of hopeful and troubling trends that define this time and place.

Families and self-advocates continue to organize to offer mutual support for resourceful action, create stronger ties to community life and develop supports tailored to their own circumstances while they work on their agendas to influence policy and service practice. [For a fine example of this, read Julia Niimi's talk to the conference, [page 18](#)]

* The record of this conference, which is the source of Nancy Thayler's quotation – John O'Brien & Herbert Lovett (1992). *Finding a Way Toward Everyday Lives: The Contribution of Person-Centered Planning*. Harrisburg, PA: Department of Public Welfare—can be downloaded free from www.inclusion.com/everyday_lives.pdf

Direct funding has become more widely available. Independent facilitation has emerged as a resource to support people and families to direct their own lives and participate, with the individualized support they need, in the roles, responsibilities and relationships of community life as equal, empowered and contributing citizens. A growing number of practitioners, engaged in a variety of person-centered approaches to planning, relationship and community network building, and supports design, have created communities of practice to support their work. Practitioners have created innovative approaches and shared refinements of their work and the thinking that informs it.

Ontario's system of services to people with developmental disabilities has marked the most recent chapter in its multi-year transformation process by publishing the *Person-Directed Planning and Facilitation Guide*^{**} and announcing the Government's intention to invest an additional \$810 million over the next three years to increase funds available to people waiting for residential services and direct funding.

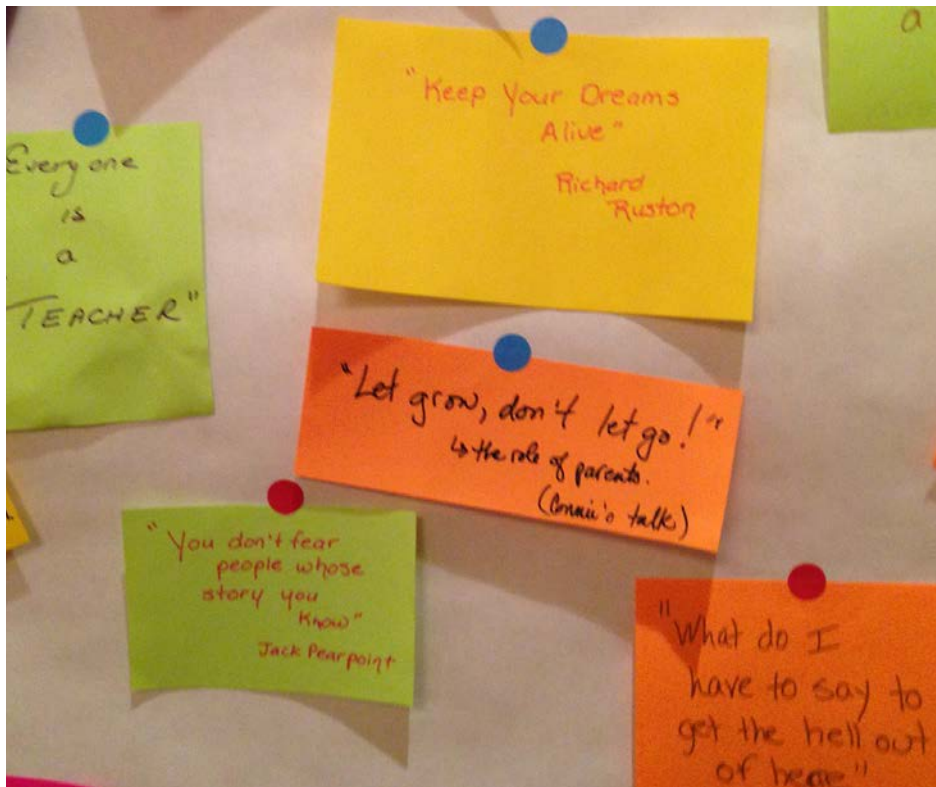
Along with these developments there are significant difficulties [Jack Pearpoint's exposition of contemporary threats to equal justice and solidarity and their effects of person-centered practices, written just before the conference, develops this in depth, [page 20](#)]

- There is great uncertainty about the sufficiency of government resources to meet foreseeable demand. There is no firm universal foundation on which to plan for parental incapacity and death; people and families wait a long time for even relatively small amounts of funding; allocation methods are stressful, difficult for many to understand and do not reliably result in timely access to sufficient funds or desired services. There is a fear among families that some people may have to become homeless before the system responds and that

** Ministry of Community and Social Services (November 2013). mcss.gov.on.ca/documents/en/mcss/publications/developmental/Person_DirectedPlanning.pdf

emergency responses are unlikely to result in supports that match individual circumstances.

- Despite the Government's apology for the abuse endemic in now closed provincial institutions and agreement to compensate institution survivors, Long Term Care Homes appear to be treated as if they are an acceptable living arrangement, at least for those people with developmental disabilities, regardless of age, who require assistance because of additional impairments.
- In many places, school inclusion continues to be a struggle for students with developmental disabilities and their families and transition from school to supports for an adult life is often unreasonably difficult.



- Assessing the situation from the point of view of Michael Smull's advice [page 35] on what to do to make real system change shows significant gaps between the values of self-direction and community inclusion and what the system funds, requires and inspects.
- System change has not yet assured access to individualized supports. Group living and congregate day services are still widely seen as legitimate options and account for a significant share of available resources.
- Funding arrangements and associated Ministry requirements for independent brokerage and planning remain uncertain.
- Ministry efforts to organize their system for efficiency have disrupted some deeply-rooted ways that families and people with developmental disabilities have organized for their own benefit.

These persistent difficulties make it even more important for people with developmental disabilities and their families to organize circles and networks of support, take responsibility for charting their course to a good life, and mobilize the resources to navigate that course. It is equally important that the nearly \$2 billion of public investment in Ontario's developmental services delivers supports that are responsive to individual differences, focused on community inclusion and the development of people's gifts, and open to people's and families' direction.

The Evolution of Person-Centered Practices

Ontario provides a fertile environment for the evolution of person-centered practices. Direct funding has been available in some form for many years and this has encouraged families and people with disabilities to figure out and manage their own systems of support, sometimes with assistance from new forms of service organization. Families have had good assistance to develop circles of support and organize family groups. A number of service providers have invested in quality initiatives aimed at promoting person-centered practices, sometimes with an investment from the Trillium Foundation. There are strong links to international sources of knowledge and deeper understanding of the moral dimensions of the work: particularly the SRV (Social Role Valorization) training network, l'Arche and other expressions of person-alism in the work of Wolf Wolfensberger, The Learning Community for Person Centered Practices and networks linking people committed to Asset Based Community Development, individualized supports, self-direction, individual budgeting and positive behavior support.

People with disabilities, families and committed practitioners in the province have co-created distinctive approaches to bringing people and families together to create pathways to an enviable community life.* A group of practitioners committed to realizing a New Story about the relationship between people with disabilities and our communities through the practice of Independent Facilitation have re-set person-centered planning firmly in the context of serving community

* See Judith McGill's story how LifePath Planning developed [page 26](#) and Susannah Joyce's account of Planning Together [page 34](#). Also learn about the Deohaeko Support Network, one expression of the work of a Family Group www.deohaeko.com and the accomplishments of families supported by the Windsor Essex Brokerage for Personal Supports, *My Life, My Choice: Personal Stories, Struggles and Successes with Person Directed Living*. DVD, Toronto: Inclusion Press www.inclusion.com/dvd-mylife.html

engagement, and developed practices for building networks of community roles and relationships.**

'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean –neither more nor less.'

'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean so many different things.'

'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master –that's all.'

Alice was too much puzzled to say anything; so after a minute Humpty Dumpty began again. 'They've a temper, some of them –particularly verbs: they're the proudest– adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs...'

–Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking Glass

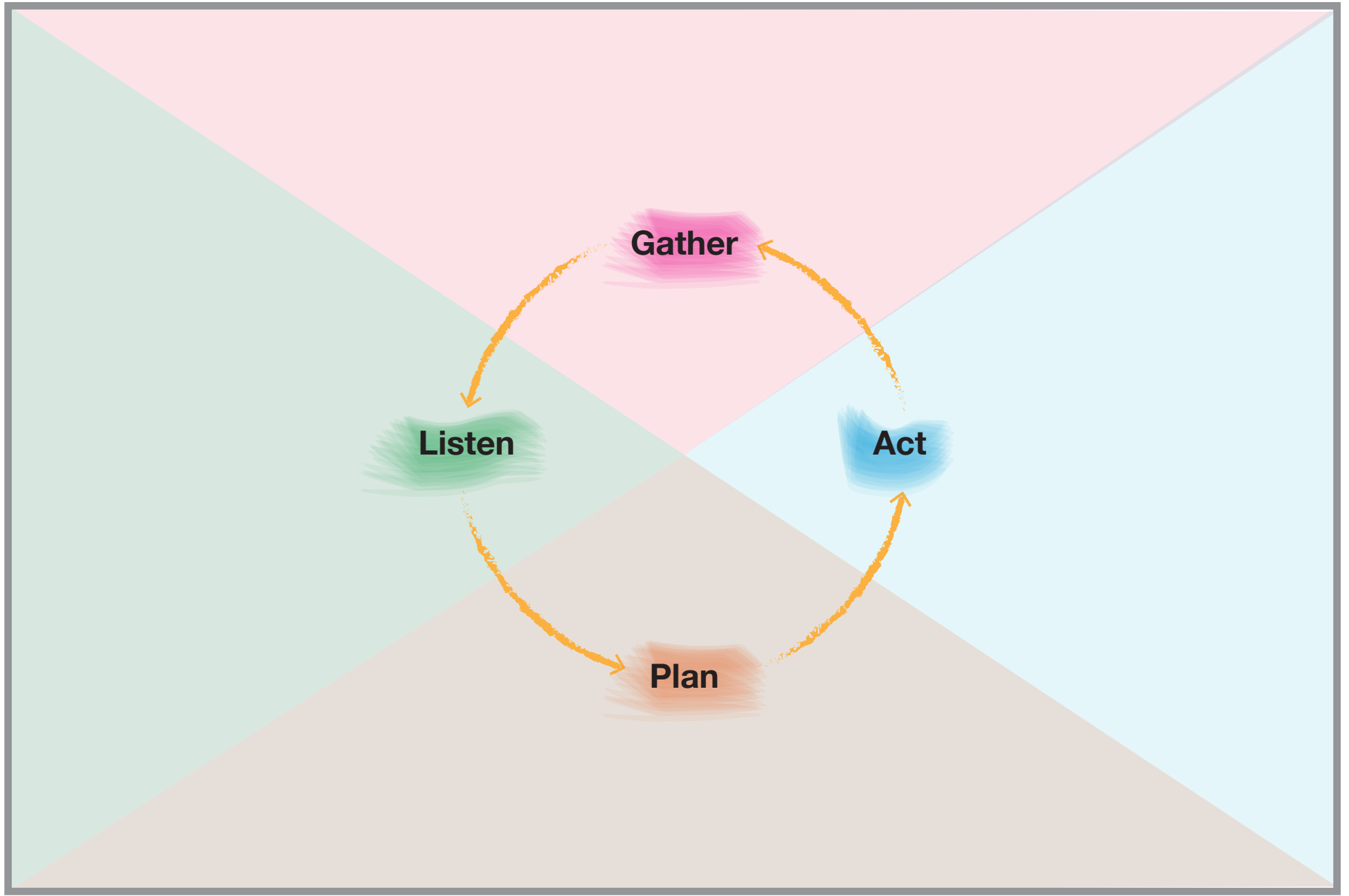


Maintaining authenticity

At the same time as these encouraging grass roots efforts are benefiting more and more people, “person centered” has become a sort of all purpose mark of good quality. It is getting hard to find a service anywhere in the English speaking world that does not claim to be person-centered in all of its operations. Sometimes this reflects a genuine struggle to recognize people’s dignity, their right to participate in co-creating their life and their potential for contributing citizenship. Sometimes it seems more like a superficial brush stroke applied to a web page by a passing marketing intern.

We may feel a bit like Alice and wonder how these words can modify the names of so many very different things and still make sense. It’s also possible to sympathize with Humpty Dumpty and demand the

** John Lord, Barbara Levitt & Charlotte Dingwall (2013). *Facilitating an Everyday Life: Independent Facilitation and What Really Matters in a New Story*. Toronto: Inclusion Press. www.inclusion.com/bkfacilitating.html and Peggy Hutchison, John Lord & Karen Lord (2012), *Friends & Inclusion: Five Approaches to Building Relationships*. Toronto: Inclusion Press. www.inclusion.com/bkfriendsandinclusion.html



prerogative to decide what is “really” person-centered and what is counterfeit. As it is unlikely that anyone will be anointed definer-in-chief we need other ways to avoid confusion that allows escape from the struggles that accompany genuine person-centered work.

Humpty Dumpty provides two clues to help us keep our bearings. First, stay clear about who is master of resources. In some settings a person can effectively direct no more than exactly what staff are willing to allow. The strings attached to direct funding may offer very little freedom of movement without a fight. When methods of funding, regulating and inspecting do not open easily to creative negotiation, very little of what a person or family member says has effective force. Calling a service structure person-centered or person-directed when a provider organization defines what’s available to people or an administering system regulates funds and the supply of assistance in ways that determine most of a person’s options seems less than accurate.

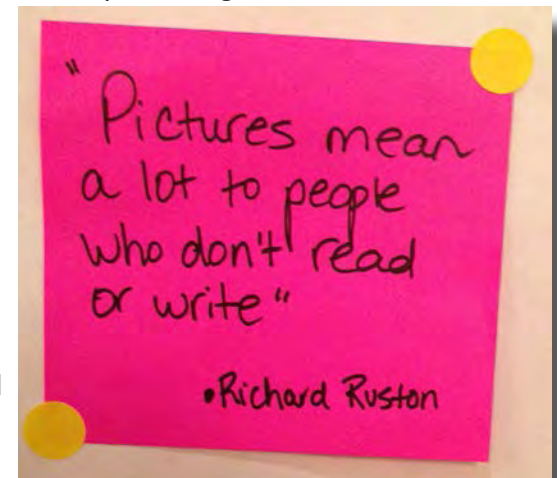
Second, pay attention to the verbs. “Adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs.” What can people say they do as a result of person-centered practices: “I’m using my new communication device to take on more responsibility at my job.” “I decided to learn to read.” “Now I open the front door to my own place with my own key.” “I go almost every week to *Choir! Choir! Choir!*” “I’m saving to buy an engagement ring.” “I had to fire a staff person I liked because he just couldn’t get here on time.” “I’m self-managing my diabetes.” These statements are expressions of agency, the exercise of freedom to engage in things that have meaning for a person.

Another set of verbs express the co-creative heart of person-centered practices. They are the simple words on the facing diagram: gather, listen, plan, act. Each entails the others in a process that repeats though time. The amount of effort these verbs demand depends on the nature of the change desired. Changes that make life better without stretching rules or routines too much, creating big disagreements or requiring new resources will usually demand less than changes that develop new

capacities, stretch people outside their comfort zones and demand negotiation of emotionally charged differences among key people.

Gather. No one makes her life alone. A reasonable balance between what is important to a person and what is important for him, the confidence that hopeful action matters, the power to imagine better, the connections that open doors, the social models who demonstrate possibilities, the support to be resilient to disappointment or loss, all are the fruit of relationships with trusted people. When people occupy a devalued social status and have experienced exclusion, co-creation is all the more vital because they are vulnerable to a diminished, negative and hardened story about who they are and who they might become. [Read Judith McGill’s notes on standing with people in ways that allow change to emerge on [page 28](#)]

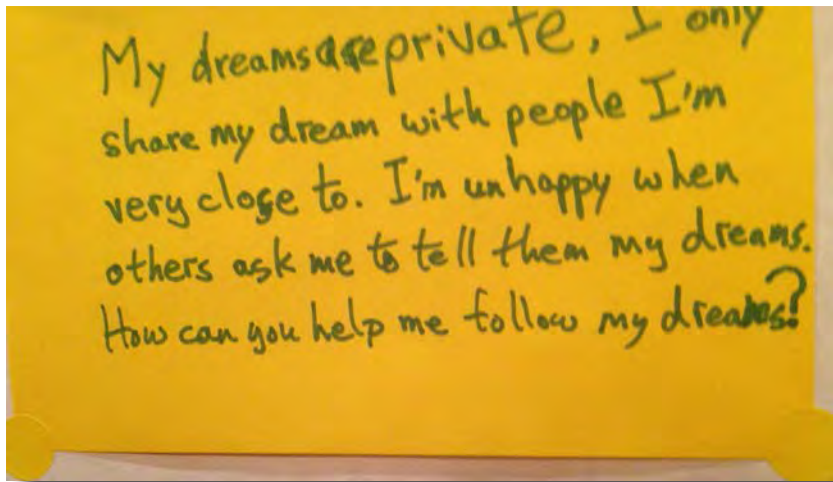
Sometimes it’s hard to face how few people there are to gather with a person or how sure a person or family has become that no one else could have a genuine interest in their future. It’s tempting to dodge this by just having a meeting and calling it person-centered. It’s better to face the issue in a creative way. Richard Ruston inspired the conference by describing his response to people who had no one to gather with. As a leading self-advocate, he pulled together the resources he needed to offer workshops in which people with developmental disabilities became one another’s support group. The groups considered video of Wayne Gretzky and other public figures as models for goal setting and persistent effort, shared the ways they had exercised choice in their lives, practiced picturing and sharing



their dreams and coached one another to take agreed next steps in a positive direction.

Listen. Many practitioners use the metaphor of depth to distinguish the forms that listening can take. Listening can be a matter of getting down the words or images necessary to fill up a template, maybe in a rush to get to the familiar ground of an action plan or in a hurry to beat the clock running on the annually required person-centered planning meeting. Deeper listening supports a person to draw more of the threads of her story together and feel a greater clarity about what is possible and desirable. It also tends to increase trust, draw people closer and align their energies. Deeper listening creates a space in which more authentic dreams can emerge and be shared. More than a step toward change, this form of listening itself can develop capacity. [Read Judith McGill's notes on creating a space for people's stories on [page 30](#)]

Plan. Planning is the form of conversation that gathers up what a group has discovered about a person's purpose and the capacities available to him, sets direction, sketches at least a first approximation of the way a desired change can happen, and encourages group members to commit themselves to specific actions. If the way to what is



desired is well known and the resources necessary are available, a plan can look like a blueprint. When the way is less familiar and capacities and resources must be developed, a plan will indicate a direction into new territory. When people have good individualized support there will be very frequent back-of-a-napkin plans that guide a week's explorations or make adjustments that increase the chances of a good day.

Act. This is the time when conversation flows into trying new things in new ways. If the intention is to make a significant change, it is a time of risk taking and boundary crossing, of victories and disappointments, of commitments honored and defaulted. Prototypes are designed, tested and revised.

Authentic person-centered practices will invest time and creative energy in gathering people, opening a listening space that allows appreciation of an important part of person's story and emergence of ideas about a better future, making a plan for moving into that better future, and generating action that results in new capacities. As a result, people will experience greater effective control over their lives and do more as valued members of their community.

Another use of the term person-centered has grown common. It might be called "adapting person-centered practices to doing the system's business." Since the early 1970's, North American service systems have implemented a variety of forms of case management and individual planning. More and more, these required individual plans are called "person-centered plans" or "person-directed plans." The aspirations that this system usage represents is undoubtedly positive. And anyway, no one owns the right to dictate how others use the words.

The system's use of person centered practices happens in a more constrained environment than the approaches represented in the conference and so the results frequently differ. Often, service-coordination includes responsibility for determining eligibility and gathering information that informs rationing decisions (priority for scarce services and allocations of funds) as well as preparing required individual plans

on a schedule set by regulation. Frequently service coordinators have a significant workload and limited time even to develop relationships with those for whom they are assigned to plan and coordinate assistance. As public investment falls behind need, news from the system's planning meetings is less and less likely to be that the system will offer what a person or family needs in a timely way. When this message of scarcity is combined with advice to "look for natural supports", disillusionment with person-centered planning is likely.

This poses at least two challenges to the practitioners of person-centered approaches represented at the conference. First, some people and families will have experiences that lead them to conclude that "we tried person-centered planning and it doesn't help." Second, those who control public expenditures may have difficulty understanding the substantial and valuable difference between making system required plans and facilitating processes that grow from people coming together on their own initiative to generate solutions that suit them.

Members of The Ontario Independent Facilitation Network and The Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario have an important role in maintaining the legitimacy of the diversity of authentic forms of person-centered practices available to people and families in the province. When things are uncertain, people can be tempted to frame the situation as if it were a competition and seek to promote the one true form of person-centered practice. This is a temptation worth resisting. What is alive and authentic in the work of encouraging positive change has given rise to many different ways that people can benefit. That diversity is to be prized and safeguarded.

Different intentions, different authentic forms

Over more than thirty years, person-centered practices have evolved in different contexts as people with different gifts and intentions have refined what works for them. This evolution in different environments

has resulted in the rich variety of authentic person-centered practices shared at the conference.

Different approaches have developed in response to different life circumstances.

- Assuring that helpers and professionals appreciate the person's value and know what accommodations and assistance the person needs in order to have a productive interaction or a good day
- Going to school in an inclusive way
- Making a transition from school into young adulthood
- Finding and succeeding in a job or civic role
- Supporting families to develop their particular answer to the question, "What will happen for my son or daughter when we are no longer able to be in his or her life?"
- Moving from the family home into a home of one's own
- Feeling it's time for a change, sensing a turning point, a desire for something better
- Moving from an institution
- Being served by an organization or system engaged in a change that involves the adoption of person-centered practices
- Experiencing breakdowns in assistance that lead family or service staff to acknowledge that current arrangements are not working and there is great risk without substantial change

Approaches have differentiated as people gather to support change in different ways. Some practices match the structure of service organizations; others emerge from the self-organization of families and people with developmental disabilities. Some gatherings are ad-hoc and others have lasted for years.

- Influencing the way teams of service providers think about and offer assistance by providing tools and practices to guide team performance

- Gathering around a person who challenges his support system beyond its current limits
- Coming together as self-advocates to support one another in reaching for new goals and opportunities
- Meeting as a planning circle with a person who is on an important threshold in her life
- Gathering to guide a continuing circle of support for a person (some prefer to call this a personal network or support network)
- Gathering as a circle of circles or Family Group to offer mutual support and organize collective responses to members' concerns

Each of these ways of gathering creates a different locus of power. People who belong to a Family Group of strong and diverse circles have more capacity for action than people whose future is primarily determined within the service system, by the disposition of system resources. When people and families depend primarily on developmental disability services, their influence depends on what the system grants in the way of direct funding, the flexibility and competence with which service organizations choose to individualize supports, and the willingness of system decision makers, including direct support workers, to heed their voices. Practitioners of person-centered approaches have found ways to do good work in any distribution of power.

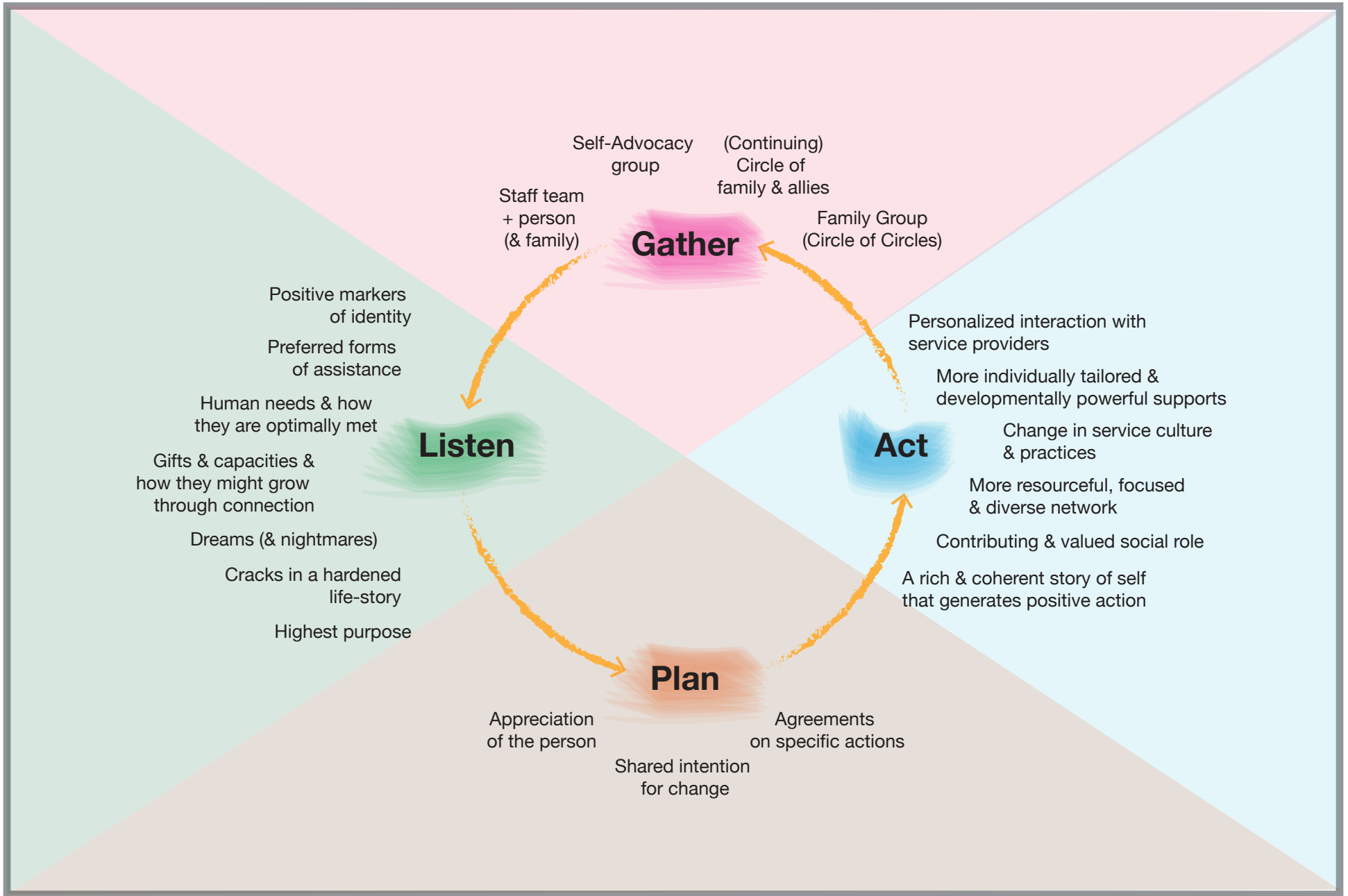
Broadly common values link different approaches: people with developmental disabilities should enjoy the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and exercise choice; services should honor people's preferences about how they want to be assisted and support them to accomplish goals that have meaning for them; people should be accorded the dignity of risk; a variety of friendships and relationships are important to well being and engagement in activities that encourage relationships deserve active support; people should be included in community life in ways that matter to them; people should have the assistance necessary to develop to the full extent of their potential. These values shape action that resists the pressure to impoverish the lives

of people with developmental disabilities by confining them in service provider controlled, segregated settings preoccupied with avoiding risk and liability and busy assuring compliance with the demands of bureaucracies that presume to know best what is good for people.

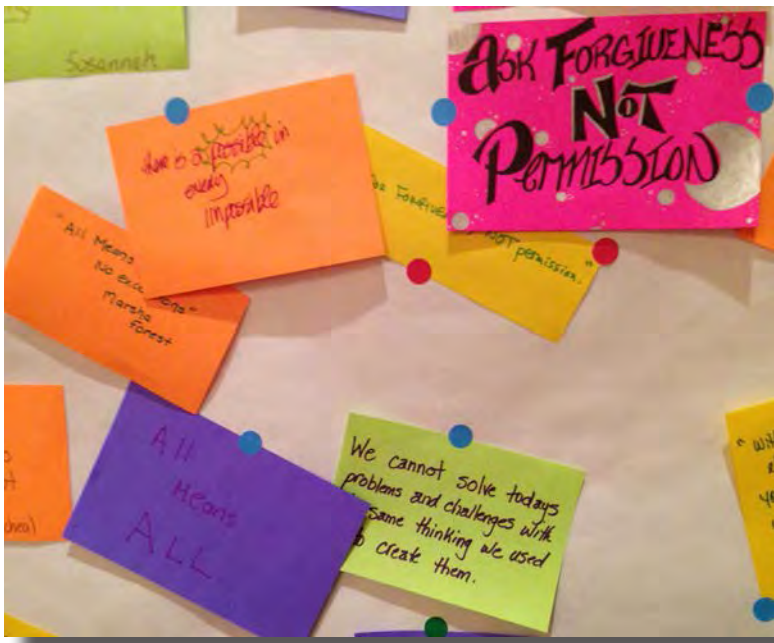
These values find different expressions among practitioners. The various forms of person-centered practice emphasize distinct inquiries, shaped by the kinds of action their designers particularly want to invite. For example...

- ...to give people and families a tool that will personalize their interactions, focus on positive markers of the person's identity and what others should know about what works best to assure the person's success
- ...to make sure that professional interventions and technology have real relevance, to be specific about what the intervention will enable a person to do in valued roles in community settings
- ...to change the culture and practices of service organizations, encourage careful consideration of a person's human needs and how they are optimally met or train the whole organization in the use of person centered thinking tools as part of an organization or system development initiative
- ...to assist people's active participation in valued social roles and act from a rich and coherent story of oneself as resourceful; inventory capacities, imagine and reach out to make the social connections through which they can develop; make a space for people to tell and re-tell their story and listen for cracks in stories that have become hardened around diminished expectations; encourage expression of dreams and nightmares and identification of gifts; support the person to clarify a sense of highest purpose

Approaches also reflect practitioners' interests and gifts. Some practitioners are deeply committed to people who have no one to count on but service workers; others want to organize families or self-advocates. Some frame person-centered practices as a form of community orga-



nizing; others set them in the context of service system reform. Some are interested in systematically improving the broad mainstream of service provision; others want to work at the very edge of innovation; still others want to support people to thrive with only the necessary minimum of service involvement. Some want to create tools that are easily accessible so many people can benefit; others offer practices that demand that facilitators commit to substantial personal development. Some find rational change management models helpful; others are attracted to non-linear ways of hosting emergent development. Some inquire and record in straightforward ways; others work in narrative, image and metaphor through graphic and artistic media. Some draw on well elaborated theories of disability to measure progress; others look to straightforward expressions of participant satisfaction to validate their efforts.



Person-direction

Ontario's public commitment to Person-Directed Planning and Facilitation opens a field for learning that is worth protecting. Officials listened to self-advocates, led by conference speaker Richard Ruston, who demanded that the process be directed by the person. Their experience of too many meetings called person-centered was of being told what to do by service workers. "Center" was like being at the center of a target for staff to fire demands at. Re-naming the process Person-Directed emphasizes the power shift necessary if people with developmental disabilities are to experience the respect and support for their own agency that is due them. Their call is for effective control of services that actively support their preferences and purposes. Good measures of person-direction include how easily a person can make a change in the services they rely on and how big a change they can make on their own initiative.

The power shift necessary to achieve person-direction challenges settled ways of working and making decisions that keep the current system stable. Because of the deep challenge it poses, there will be pressures to dampen the effect of the call for person-direction. It is important to safeguard the spirit of this reform by calling-out and resisting efforts to degrade person-direction, whether they are intentional or not.

- Lack of investment in multiple ways to strengthen people's capacity to imagine better: connection to people who model possibilities; learning events that assist people to clarify what matters to them and encourage them to reach for it; opportunities to choose a prelude to negotiating a support plan by engaging in forms of planning that clarify a person's purposes, gifts, and calling; access to pathways to reconciliation and positive support when a person has become estranged from or locked in too narrow a family story of disability.
- Failure to develop and fund the capacity to assist people and families to form relationships with independent representatives and organize circles of support or personal networks and family groups that

will provide support with decision making, practical help, encouragement and back a person's claims on proper assistance.

- Encouraging a cut-off between people and their families. There can be significant conflicts between people and other family members, and some families may struggle to respect people's autonomy. But people are almost always stronger with good support from their families. Person-directed planning is far more effective when it assists people and families to work through these conflicts together than when it becomes an excuse for leaving family members out.
- Confusing person-direction with where a person sits at a table when plans are made. The purpose of person-directed planning is to increase the odds that a person will live in a way that reflects her interests and preferences. Controlling the planning process –deciding who attends, setting the agenda, chairing the meeting– by no means guarantees effective control of the supports a person needs. In fact it could disadvantage the person. Usually it makes more sense for the person to select a trusted, independent facilitator, identify on the most important decisions the meeting needs to make and be an active voice in the process than it does for her to run the meeting.
- Mystifying the decision making process. The more people rely on established, publicly funded services the more service planning is a negotiation with a constrained partner. Group living arrangements or day programs have far less flexibility than individualized and self-directed supports do. This offers less room to create personally tailored supports and imposes limits on person-direction. They may have reasons to choose settings where most of what is available is fixed in place, but people and their allies need to be skilled and tenacious negotiators there to get services that reflect what matters to them.

Committed people with differing gifts and styles, different invitations to action within common values, different modes of inquiry and mobilizing action have offered assistance at different points in life and co-created many person-centered practices with people and families

gathered in different ways. The call for person-direction provides both an important opportunity to support self-direction and an obligation to safeguard the integrity of the work.

Founded by Outsiders

As those who developed the first generation of approaches to person-centered planning spoke,^{*} I noticed that, like many others who came into the field in the 1970's, they came from a variety of active engagements in work for social justice outside disability services: CUSO and the Peace Corps, literacy, public health, education reform, the struggle for racial and economic justice, feminism, organizing for peace, prison reform. They found their way to work with people with developmental disabilities by accident, through personal relationships, and strongly felt the connection between just responses to the situation of people with developmental disabilities and their other engagements. Some acquired formal specialist training after they became involved, but no one came up from within the professions or sub-professions identified with the developmental disabilities field.

This has two implications worth thinking about. Person-centered practices are most closely aligned with their foundations when their practitioners listen and act from an outsider's perspective, a point of view that makes what is familiar to insiders strange and questionable. Assertions that claim, "This is the just the way it is", becomes testable propositions. "Who says she can't write a book? Who do we know that can help us figure out how it might be done." And person-centered work is nourished when its practitioners recognize that it is not only about disability services, it is about joining other hopeful actors in the civic project of building more just and inclusive communities.

^{*} Read more in the set of interviews with some of the founders of different approaches to person-centered planning collected in John O'Brien & Carol Blessing (2011). *Conversations on Citizenship and Person-Centered Work*. Toronto: Inclusion Press. inclusion.com/bkcitizenship.html

A Personal Reflection on Common Threads

The Thread

*There's a thread you follow. It goes among
things that change. But it doesn't change.
People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.
While you hold it you can't get lost.
Tragedies happen; people get hurt
Or die; and you suffer and get old.
Nothing you can do can stop time's unfolding.
You don't ever let go of the thread.*

–William Stafford

As practitioners, we have the privilege to gather with people who want to weave their experiences into a meaningful story—a story with an account of the past that offers ways to understand who we are now and an opening to a future in which we can flourish. We search together for possibilities for meaningful contribution to family and community life. We encourage forms of listening that make sense of what is happening in a person's life and allow moments that break open new possibilities. When we are successful, we strengthen alliances and align them for action that generates new ways to a good life and a better community. Like anyone else who sticks with the intention to build more just communities, those of us whose repertoire include person-centered practices need to discover and hold onto the thread that gives coherence to what we do as things change around us and difficulties and disappointments accumulate alongside some progress. Each of us will have our own felt sense of the thread and our own terms for explaining about it from our own history and gifts. Other's expressions may resonate or they may sound weird. This section expresses my sense of the

thread, awakened in response to the words and feelings of the conference. Every thread is spun from strands of fiber; this one has four.

The first strand **recognizes the dignity of vulnerable humanity**. People whose differences call for mindful and sustained accommodation and assistance are liable to relegation to a devalued status. Devaluation is expressed in social exclusion, low expectations and limited investment in development, and imposed control on a person's body. Gifts and capacities are obscured and go unseen. When practitioners are at their best, person-centered work enables simple and direct perception of a person's dignity and capacities. This plain, felt realization of dignity and capacity, once experienced never completely lost, does not deny the person's need for assistance or diminish the accumulated scars of occupying a devalued social status. It simply grounds recognition of the gifts, personal passions and higher purpose that can open the way to flourishing if people act together with purpose and creativity.

The second strand has been named **ubuntu** by Peter Dill and his friends, who have played a critical role in the development of per-

son-centered practices, especially in convening support circles and organizing family groups. As they interpret it, following Archbishop Tutu, *ubuntu* means “*I am because you are.*” It expresses the interdependency that is fundamental to humanity.

Ubuntu is the essence of being a person. It means that we are people through other people. We can't be fully human alone. We are made for interdependence, we are made for family. Indeed, my humanity is caught up in your humanity, and when your humanity is enhanced mine is enhanced as well. Likewise, when you are dehumanized, inexorably, I am dehumanized as well. As an individual, when you have Ubuntu, you embrace others. You are generous, compassionate. If the world had more Ubuntu, we would not have war. We would not have this huge gap between the rich and the poor. You are rich so that you can make up what is lacking for others. You are powerful so that you can help the weak. This is God's dream.

—Desmond Tutu*

Because their survival so obviously depends on *ubuntu*, many people with developmental disabilities have the gift of recruiting others into relationship. This runs against the grain of a dominant North American culture that values individualism, independence, and making it on your own. The lives of most people with developmental disabilities set these values in a frame that is uncomfortable because they bring interdependence to the foreground. People with developmental disabilities can make choices about their lives, grow in their ability to do things for themselves and contribute to family and community life, but only with thoughtful interdependent support. This necessary support arises only from the active cultivation of interdependent, intentional relationships. It cannot be a business transaction or a matter of correct procedure. This makes person-centered work a search for more resourceful relationships among an increasingly diverse network. In this search people will benefit from occasions to express gratitude and ask for and receive forgiveness.

* www.drfranklipman.com/archbishop-desmond-tutu/

Archbishop Tutu knows as well as many people with developmental disabilities that the possibility for creative interdependence exists along with human potentials for dominance, greed, dehumanization and evil. The third strand recognizes **hunger for justice**. Establishing rights in legislation and enforcing them in court does not fully satisfy this hunger. Legal rights and the apparatus of rules and regulations that serve them in the bureaucracies that people with developmental disabilities rely on help most when they avoid choking the intentional relationships essential to *ubuntu* and create structures designed to give people and families effective control of sufficient funds to meet the extra costs associated with life with disability. Person-centered practices are small ways to build a society that makes inclusive friendships and contributing citizenship less and less difficult. These practices can assist people to exercise their freedom to be in friendship and act in community associations that need their gifts.

Cultural pressures to devalue people who obviously need extra assistance, deny the necessity of cultivating creative interdependence among people and with nature, and withdraw from the struggle for community into individualistic consumerism make **intentional resistance** necessary. This means approaching person-centered practice as one means of gathering people who will support one another to see whole situations clearly and act with courage. This means escaping the administrative illusion that a good life could result from compliance with externally imposed and inspected rules and systems. It means facing the real and deep vulnerability that can blight and even destroy the lives of people with developmental disabilities and acting to support development of their freedom and their gifts with full awareness of that reality. It means creating mutually supportive networks that confer the strength to push through the denial, cynicism and fear that discourages many citizens from acting adaptively in a complex and rapidly changing world.

What It Means to Have Facilitation and Planning Support

Julia Niimi

Seven years ago my parents and I joined an organization called Families for a Secure Future. My mother began going to monthly meetings to talk about the ups and downs of trying to get the support I need to get me out into the community. She met other families that were going through the same process for their sons and daughters. She wanted to figure out what it would look like for me to get individualized funding. She wanted me to have choices that I could make on my own.

I was just finishing high school at the time. I was worried that my future might look dull and that I wouldn't get a choice to be heard. I was relieved that my mother joined the group because I didn't want to leave school and have to experience the pain of being left out and not included. I found high school and elementary school not a nice educational experience for me. I felt targeted a lot by bullies and people that would gang up on me.

I first met Judith from Families for a Secure Future when she came to my house. I ended up being shy and did other things to keep my mind off of meeting her. You never know who to trust. It ended up taking some time to get used to someone new. Later, I met Joanna Goode our local Facilitator and got to know her.

After a while, we decided to ask people to come over and plan out what I see in my future. Joanna helped me decide who to invite. I wanted to have people that were young to come and see me blossom. Joanna and Judith came and explained to me what the plans were for the day and the length of time it would take. That day, I had my planning with 12 people. My mother cooked a fancy meal.

It felt like I spoke my mind and gave my heart into it that day. I wanted to show those people who wanted to help me what I see myself doing. I wanted to give them what I see as my own interesting dream. We made a visual picture on the wall. It took 9 hours. People were

saying positive things about me. Some things were not easy to accept because it was the first time I have been on the spot. A lot that was in me came out that day. People were there because they wanted to hear what I see in my future. I realized that no one is perfect and that we all have our strengths and weaknesses. That day helped me get used to being in the spotlight. Everyone seemed to get what I visualized myself. I can't believe that everyone was listening because sometimes they were too busy to hear before. It was surprising how open they were to accept me.

After the planning day I kept meeting with my Facilitator and getting the notes into a report for PASSPORT funding. I was put on a waiting list for a long time, two years.

Judith and Joanna offered to come and help me face the fears I talked about at the planning day and talk to my parents. It was about the fear of being alone when they are no longer around. I needed to talk about it in a way that I could figure out how to know what they want when they die and how I will remember them. I did not want to have to go through all the decisions right when they die and you don't know what is expected. I wanted to know how I will remember them and where they want their ashes. After the conversation I didn't have to worry about that burden any more. The plans are almost finalized.

I wanted to get a support circle going so that I would be able to get support on decisions that weren't easy. I wanted to share with people the good and bad news that happened to me between circle meetings. Joanna helped me to invite people who I wanted to be a part of it. I picked people that would be wanting to hear about me and how I am who I am. I needed help to ask them to come to the circle meeting in a positive way. I also wanted to get the support of the people that are in reach of me when very difficult times happen. I wanted people that

would hang out with me outside of the circle. When people agreed to come it felt that they heard my story and they wanted to be a part of it. It felt like they wanted to see the way I communicate and have conversations at meal times. They wanted to give me feedback about what I could see about my future.

My support circle has been together now for almost three years. I appreciate their feedback and their comments about the topics I have chosen for discussion. When we get together we always have an agenda to follow. Judith or Joanna meet with me to decide what we should talk about at the circle. I write ideas down for the agenda before they get to my house and then we talk about them. Sometimes the topics are harder than I think because you don't know if anyone will agree or disagree with them. At the end of the meeting I know the topic is already out and it has been heard and others have time to process the topic.

Decision making can be a handful, more than you think. A lot of ideas pop up and it can be a handful to process. When people disagree I tell them why I need it talked about in a positive way so they understand my approach and my vision. When they hear from me they say, "Oh that is why you are saying that". The group helps me to make breakthroughs in a way I can understand it. I can see the decision and I can see how to do it. We explain how things could happen. For example, they help me to think about getting a permanent job that pays me. I was afraid that it could be the wrong choice and that the adjustments in my schedule would not work. The circle helped me to weigh it out. They helped me to decide what activities I want to say I am committed to and what activities to put aside.

My support circle members help me to communicate through the hard times. They get me to talk when I am down or not myself. Sometimes I lean on some members of my support circle. Sometimes I need to shed tears on someone's shoulder. My Circle believes in me and makes it easier for me to work towards my goals.

My Facilitator helped me deal with my feelings of not having any friends my own age. We began talking about it and telling the circle members how I feel and getting ideas. I am learning how to invite others for parties and gatherings. I have started making dinner for the circle.

I have now got PASSPORT funding and so I have a Support Worker who helps me in the community. My mother and I had help hiring the Support Worker. Judith and Joanna mentor her on a regular basis and help her to focus on the proper goals for me.

I am grateful to have a Facilitator that could be a lifelong friend. The Facilitator helps me to become confident in talking to circle members. Before having a circle, I used to not be willing to speak out so much. At times it felt like I was in a nightmare because I couldn't talk about things outside my comfort zone. Now it is a complete change. Now I know that it is ok to trust people. I know that the circle is there to listen and that it is safe to talk.

Families for a Secure Future helps me to become more of an advocate speaking out for people with disabilities who do not have a voice. It helps me to become more aware about people who cannot have the strength to communicate to people outside of their comfort zone.

Getting Facilitation and Planning support changed me because it made me more aware of what is around me. It helped me to advocate for myself to make the changes I can make. It helped me to see that I could help out and make changes for the world and my community. In May, I will be receiving the Turning Point award from the YMCA in Guelph for overcoming challenges in my life. I am proud of how far I have come and am thankful for the support I have received.

Person-Centered Planning & Systems Change Permutations and Opportunities

Jack Pearpoint

It is very simple.* Well done, and with a solid values base, the family of Person-Centered Planning approaches can and do assist to create some remarkable, almost unimaginable futures for people who have traditionally been written off and institutionalized. It can be a core element in a systems change strategy. So the possibilities and power of Person-Centered planning and facilitation have only just begun, and are brimming with enormous promise.

However, simultaneously, there is a serious challenge to this potential as large system accountability requirements thin the soup of possibility into a gruel that can barely sustain life. The pressure to deliver more with less and do it faster means that the very core of Person-Centered Planning is often gutted because there is no time to be person centered. In fact, in North America, with economic cutbacks, there is a frightening recovery and reinvestment in larger-group mini-institutions and institutions. After three decades of struggle to close institutions, budgets are gradually shifting to large group service systems – often privatized and more committed to the budget bottom line than to supporting people to have full and contributing lives.

This is not cynicism. But to move forward, it is vital that we acknowledge the landscape for this work. In North America and around the world, there are spectacular achievements post deinstitutionalization with innumerable and remarkable examples of individuals being acknowledged as full and contributing citizens in communities. All this

is at risk. Several almost invisible dangers lurk in the background and must be publicly challenged so they can be reversed.

The first danger is captured by George Orwell: *“Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give the appearance of solidarity to pure wind.”*

In our field, our very language has been colonized and the concepts and words we created to be clear, have been repurposed into jargon-speak. Systems chime with warm sounding phrases that in many cases, are intentionally misleading. Examples: The Canadian government just completed a national ad campaign for a Youth Job Creation program that did not exist; the “No Child Left Behind” program in United States imposed standards that were devastating to the poor. Countless examples abound in every sector. Our words are not what they seem. We must look underneath and examine actions to discover the actual meanings.

The second undercurrent is the very quiet resurgence of eugenics – without using the words. These sentiments have been repressed in recent decades, but a movement that originated in North America has never been forgotten – just in hibernation. When one combines economic pressures with the ethic of high performance, the slippery slope into too costly to maintain with the hidden undertone of not fully human is profoundly dangerous to all of us.

We are choosing to paint this frightening portrait precisely because our societies are going to be making choices, and without awareness and action, the spirit of eugenics and the capacities of modern testing are already slipping into a hidden policy of gradual elimination for those of us who are not perfect.

* Jack wrote this paper two weeks before the conference as a contribution to a book on person-centered practices being edited by German friends. It captures and expands what he spoke about at the conference and I wanted people to have opportunity to think carefully about the issues he raises. –JOB

This tension is not inherent in Person-Centered approaches. Rather, it is that the values of the people implementing such processes predetermine the outcomes. Those who deeply believe in possibility and capacity will discover it. But others who may have been overwhelmed and sometimes numbed by system pressures, and the endless struggle to cope with reporting demands, quickly lose sight of possibility. When we add the pressures of the risk-averse insurance-claim frame of reference, concerns about safety quickly trump living a life, let alone a full life. Such pressures close the windows of opportunity and compress the courage to leap into possibility.

Even with these environmental threats, we believe Person-Centered planning and quality facilitation remain full of promise. But we must be constantly vigilant so that we are not colonized by system-speak and tick-box timed requirements. We must not allow our good ideas to be transformed into disappointing and even harmful illusions.

Excellence in communication skills (outputs and inputs) are vital, but these days are more easily sidetracked by the speed, pressure and inundation of information enabled by chip technology. While our capacity to communicate has grown exponentially, our listening skills have often atrophied. We no longer have the time to listen at the very time when listening may be the key capacity to growing our future!

Diversity is fundamental to our very survival. Thus, we find hope in the stories where people imbued with strong values can take Person-Centered approaches to people, places and possibilities that we can hardly imagine. These stories reaffirm that there are possibilities that include all people –people with disability labels and citizens of every diversity– into powerful creators of the futures they choose, rather than the futures they are given.

Crisis or Opportunity; Possibility or Despair

We live in interesting & challenging times; times that demand courage and action. We can choose our focus: Crisis or Opportunity; Possibili-

ty or Despair. Our decision is to scan the landscape, find the fledgling seedlings of possibility and nurture them.

We live in a time when for the first time in Canadian Social Policy History – the right of people living with challenges are being acknowledged and actual policies have principled clauses about full citizenship, full participation, employment, housing, health. Civil rights and citizen rights for full inclusion in education, work, health, housing, citizenship, have made enormous headway. We see people with disabilities in school, at work, shopping, partying, travelling, and leading us into the adventure of full citizenship and participation for all. There are thousands of advocacy groups that continue to push for full participation for all. These are profoundly positive developments that suggest full lives for all are just around the corner.

We also live in an era when we have seen (the tense is important) the closure of most of the big institutions, and even apologies for the abuse and pain that was too often inflicted there. (The Premier of Ontario delivered an elegant and sincere apology to the institution survivors on Dec. 9, 2013. We believe this to be a first.) (http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/developmental/Premier_Apology.aspx)

Simultaneously, we are acutely aware that there are incredible fiscal restraints that are hammering individuals, families, and service organizations with exponential increases in euphemistic accountability paper wars, endless cycles of testing and assessments, financial cutbacks, and technocratic bureaucracy creep. We live in the era of privatization, where care organizations, nursing homes, prisons, and institutional care of all varieties are shifting to profit making corporations with shareholders.

Just Another Fad or Historical Revisionism?

We are deeply concerned by emerging rumors that frame Person-Centred Planning and the related family of approaches are passé – just another passing fad. The truth is that Person-Centred Planning is a

vital part of our history. Labeling critical value based initiatives as passé has a 1984 (George Orwell) feel – when we just airbrush our history so some things disappear .

We call this historical revisionism – historical denial. It is profoundly dangerous in policy and in thought. We are gravely concerned because historical revisionism was a key strategy in creating the holocaust and holocaust denial. Most will react saying that is overly dramatic. However, the experience of First Nations (Aboriginal peoples) everywhere is a powerful parallel case.

In Canada, after well over a century of oppressive policies, one of the key elements of suppression is finally being revealed. Indian children (from as young as age 3) were stolen from their families and put in residential schools operated by the government and churches. An estimated 150,000 children were institutionalized away from their families, punished for using their languages, and often abused physically and sexually. Some records suggest 30,000 children died! Currently in Canada, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (on Residential Schools) (<http://www.trc.ca>) is nearing the end of its five year mandate, and still, even after Supreme Court decisions mandating full access, survivors have been unable to free up the archival documents that tell the actual records from the residential schools. The relentless obstructionism continues. We highlight this example because as the Court Settlements for institutions for the developmentally disabled are now being implemented, and in spite of an apology from the Premier of Ontario, the bureaucracy manages to constrain access to records in precisely the same way. The parallels are one to one. Our federal government is deeply engaged in historical revisionism – denial that this happened. And by stalling for another generation, the awkwardness of this truth will avoid some of the court challenges, and more insidiously, allow future Canadians to adopt the perspective “it never happened”.

In the disability sector the same historical revisionism is also active. Institutions, group homes, day (wasting) centres and a litany of other

innovations are part of our history. Regardless of the intent, the implementation was and is rife with horror stories. Institutions, organizations and individuals thinned the values and principles into a meaningless broth that has done enormous harm to many. The current court settlements with the survivors of Huronia (and other Ontario institutions) reaffirm the depth of our concern. The fact that many files cannot be located is yet another nail in the historical revisionism coffin. Stall tactics once again: we could not find the files; it never happened. Apologies and Meaning well are simply not good enough in the face of the enormous pain that has been inflicted on individuals and families. We must put a finger in the dike of denial. We must not relegate our values and principles to the historical dustbin because some people mutilated them in implementation. We must not forget that families created group homes as an alternative to institutions because they were a dramatic improvement over institutional abuse. Person-Centred Planning is part of this continuing evolution, and while some would say this is merely semantics, I am gravely concerned that simply declaring it passé is dancing on the razor of justifying death making.

If we deny our own history, we are part of the justification for the profoundly dangerous economic and political decisions that many of us feel are already in the ether. Some people are looking for how to and who to cut – who to excise from our society. Non-productive citizens , those who cannot speak for themselves, and inconvenient people are quickly relabeled as non-humans , thus expendable because they are not worth the investment in tight economic times. If we are not careful, Person-Centred planning will be abused to choose who is worthy of life or elimination.

In short, we live in scary times. The deeply held values underpinning the origins of much of this human rights struggle (to include Everyone in full citizenship) are simultaneously being heralded internationally at the United Nations, and while wonderful phrases are featured in banner

headlines, basic rights are being set aside, trivialized, mechanized, and even replaced.

What do we do? What can we do, in these confusing times? Collapse in despair, or rally to the opportunity for incredible change? We opt for creating change, since the historical systems we have created and live within are unquestionably well beyond their best buy date . We need to create the futures we want. And as has been said: “It is tragic, but we are the people we’ve been waiting for.” Why us? – Because we are all we have...

And there is good news, we are not alone. We have allies... all over the world. The 1% of the ruling class are doing very well, but the majority of people, the 99% (including ourselves) are potential allies. And the further down the poverty and exclusion roster, the more powerful the potential alliances. People with only the future to gain (and nothing to lose) have unlimited energy and creativity. When we ally with them, the fiscal and grant control systems that twist our lives in knots are incidental to their world picture. It is time that we take charge.

Why now... because the bureaucratic rape of morals, language and meaning is extremely dangerous. The systems so many of us have worked for and with have not-so-hidden roots in eugenics. That never died, it just went into hibernation. Eugenicists are waking up again and are making highly successful bureaucratic decisions to regain control. They have a clear ethical framework and crisp measurement standards: “dollaromics”. Everyone can be commodified and given a dollar value. And only one millimeter further, everyone can be commodified and assigned a cost/benefit ratio. Take a moments pause: If you were assigned to assess people who need assistance as commodities, how would they do? And then what policies would you create? Look around slowly and soberly and you will realize that the Eugenics movement that designed the very systems we live within are rapidly regaining control and setting up the infrastructure to put away , eliminate and dispense with commodities that are too expensive , not cost effective,

useless. We can reinstitutionalize such people who are inconvenient truths . Better yet, we can make them disappear genetically by enforcing genetic testing. In short, big brother is not only watching, but is already engrossed in his chosen work. And remember: eugenics is a moral perspective – just a very different one than so many of us espouse. We believe in people first. Many others see commodities , and some commodities just aren’t a good investment.

Where to begin...

All of this is seriously sobering. So some of us flee to distractions in despair. But some of us, and we hope you will join us, see this challenge to our very being as an invitation to create the future WE want. We have little to lose, and a universe of possibilities to claim.

I have described a complex and enormously frustrating big picture reality because it is vital to have a clear understanding of our landscape. But there is wonderful news. The key to inventing the future is entirely in our hands in the small daily relationships we build and nurture. Life is about relationships. And if we choose, regardless of all the bureaucratic regulatory frameworks, we can choose to be humane with each other. That is the starting point. And we can begin now, nurture what already is, and build more, today. No budget required. No systemic permission needed. We can choose to build (and rebuild) relationships around ourselves and with the people we know and care about.

When Systems claim and mutate our carefully crafted concepts, we can decide to ignore and disagree with their redefinitions. We (not the system) created a whole family of approaches to planning and support that had a very simple and elegant foundation. They were created to collaborate with people to be a full and contributing citizens, living and participating IN their communities. The fact that Systems have mutated terms like “Person Centered Planning” into techno-driven brands that ignore the foundations built on relationships, does not mean that systems are right. The system did not create Person-Centered Planning.

They do not own it. It is OURS. WE can use our terms carefully and with the deep respect that was and is still intended by the many creators. So when systems colonize our language, we need to recognize and to name it as a colonial abstraction and continue to work to implement the deeper moral commitment that came from a deep engagement with civil and human rights for ALL.

How do we do this...by treating people as people. And that means ALL people: people we employ, people we work for and people we work with.

It is a daunting challenge to work to create more humane policies, viable support structures and welcoming neighborhoods. But, we can reclaim neighborhoods, rich in diversity, with thriving associations, networks of friendships, community gardens, markets, music, coffee houses, art parks, where a spirit of hospitality permeates the air.

Happily, there are simple ways to assess if we are on track. They are not fancy top down statistical models and surveys implemented with huge budgets and regulatory systems. Rather, over coffee or tea, we can ask each other, how is it going? If we begin with and maintain a clear focus on a person and listen to gain clarity on how their life works... we will discover daily adjustments and possibilities to begin creating the future we want. This will involve a lot of coffee, tea, perhaps a few beers, and occasionally creating a poster on the wall. But all these are simply listening aids to help us listen deeply to everyone, and then to strive to take small daily steps in the direction of the better life we envision together.

This gentle, relentless, mass movement to give full lives to all is entirely doable. All we have to do is do it. We can Choose. We can have tea, plant a garden, listen to music, take a bike ride, join a book club, drop a person at a worship services with new friends you have helped to identify. We can work to reduce dependency and build relationships. We can move Beyond and outside of systems space and invade the

personal loneliness of millions of citizens with new connections and friendships that will be the life blood of the future we want.

A tipping point is not far away. Systems technologies and budgets are out of control and unsustainable. We all know it. So our task is to begin building the new world where everyone belongs, no one's gifts are unappreciated –where loneliness is a memory because we have remembered how to support each other in blood families and water families that are beyond the reach of bureaucratic systems and controls. When Kofi comes to dinner, he is my guest, my friend –not a client, a billable minute, or an expendable commodity.

Can this be done? My friends and I have personally walked out and walked on from systems land and survived. Some of us will do that. But not everyone needs to, or is in a position to walk out. But each of us can walk on starting today. We can reach out, start or renew, strengthen a relationship, create an opening for friendship. Invite someone for coffee. Invite someone to dinner. Go to a game or a movie with a new buddy. But most important –don't wait.

If we don't act now, the accelerating growth of the industrialized machine will drive over us and we will be discarded long before the system implodes. So do it now, because our collective momentum to invent alternative futures will create a tipping point –and these choices will create the futures we want.

Look around...

There are some remarkable and inspiring developments everywhere – but usually – on the margins where people are driven and choose to push the boundaries of possibility. In Alaska, the school system is using Person-centered planning with primary school students, to minimize dropping out and ultimately to reduce the suicide rate! A parallel in Nunavut on the other side of the Arctic in Canada, the school system is injecting PATH planning into schools where older students will be mentoring younger students in their plans, and the plans are revisited

at intervals throughout their high school careers. At a student's transition from high school, not only fellow students, but also their families are included in the planning.

In many First Nations Aboriginal communities throughout Canada, creative PATH type plans are being made by students, agencies, community planning, and elders.

Similarly, and perhaps most dramatically, the Maori (First Nations) community in New Zealand are utilizing PATH planning for individuals, families, credit counseling, village planning, Women's rights, the quit smoking campaign, Abuse prevention, hip hop competition teams, and on, and on and on. Critical to its very dramatic success has been that most of the planning is done in the Maori language and the graphic recording uses Maori myth and imagery (search facebook for PATH Facilitators Aotearoa NZ). In India, Adapt India, a leading agency leading the struggle for full inclusion in India, Person-Centered approaches are being used to create incredible opportunities.

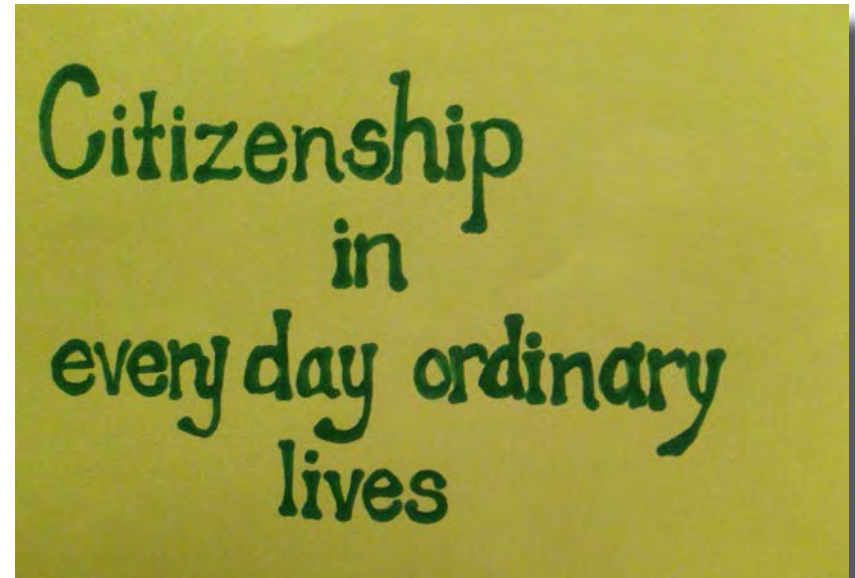
In Toronto, two remarkable variants are particularly noteworthy. SKETCH is an arts development program for street involved youth. PATH is often a component in assisting youth to discover their capacities and create new futures. (<http://sketch.ca>)

Similarly, the Toronto Newsgirls Boxing Club (www.torontonewsgirls.com) trains women to box. The majority of the boxers have endured sexual discrimination and/or abuse. One of the components in the training regimen is the opportunity to create a new PATH for your life.

Person-Centered approaches are being developed, adapted and implemented with creativity, deep values and enormous skill all over the world. The tipping point is approaching. But in the systems push to implement faster, with less, and document it to death, there are an array of perversions that strip our words of meaning and are insulting and dangerous to the fundamental integrity of the Person-Centered family of approaches.

There are wonderful examples of excellence blossoming every day. Find them; publicize and celebrate them; learn from them, join them. And beware the false gods of fast-footed claims of miraculous cures , and instant solutions. Person-Centered planning approaches have always been about relationships – and have a foundation of integrity based on a personal relationship with each person. It is not easy, simple or quick. But it is essential and a core component in the way to build a future for us all.

Together we are better! All means all!



Origins of LifePath Planning

Judith McGill

When I was a young girl, I was given the opportunity to be a peer tutor in the classroom way down the hall on the other side of the school called the "trainably mentally retarded" class. I was given a pocket full of jelly beans to motivate a young boy who had autism. This experience shaped the rest of my life. I learned that relationships meant a whole lot more than jelly beans.

In the early eighties, while I was still in university I had two particular coop placements that cracked me wide open.

I worked in two large institutions. One was built for people with developmental disabilities. I was drawn to those who were placed in the back wards of that institution. The other was built for those they then called juvenile delinquents. I was told on my first day that these kids were the worst of the worst and the bottom of the barrel. They were between 12 years of age and 16. Many of them have been on the street since they were 10 and found themselves in correctional services at the age of 12. This was a place where they formed deep identities of being criminals.

I found both of these institutions dehumanizing places for those that lived there and for the staff. I witnessed people feeling abandoned, their stories were hardened into labels and dead ends.

The children who were released from the correctional center conspired to commit another crime so that they could return back. The prison had become home. Their identity relied on staying in prison.

Then I was hired at Ceci's Homes, an initiative that had set about to bring children who had spent the first part of their lives in a children's institution to a place they can call home.

All of these children had complex labels, most considered medically fragile. I learned mostly that people want to belong and that the longing

is for relationships. It helped them to understand that change emanates from that desire.

In 1983 when I graduated from university I was hired by the National Institute on Mental retardation (NIMR) which became the G. Allan Roeher Institute (GARI) to promote a book written by John Lord, entitled Participation: supporting people with severe disabilities in community.

Only 10 days later I was given the opportunity to attend a 10 day course led by Wolf Wolfensberger. Wolfensberger altered the course of my life. Wolfensberger began the course by giving an elaborate critique of the wounds that people who have a disability are typically exposed to. He was singing my song – that is all I can say. His analysis rang true. I had been living it all my life. First as a child with a life threatening illness that made it difficult for me to walk. And secondly as a sister whose brother was born with cerebral palsy.

Wolfensberger helped me to more deeply understand why my brother had begged me to take him home when we arrived mid-session to the summer camp for the family visit. His disorientation and confusion rattled me. Judith, why am I here? What is wrong with me? What is wrong with them? Who do I have to get them dressed? Why am I the only one in my cabin that can walk?

At the age of 9 he was struggling with the incongruity of roles and the injustice of walking between two worlds. One where he was valued and pretty much accepted in a regular class and another where he was sent off to a segregated camp with others who had one thing in common with him- his cerebral palsy.

I was 21 at the time. I realized that he was trying to put together a coherent picture of who he was. He was searching not only for his identity but also for his own story. As a family we had taken that from him by telling his story for him.

This Wolfensberger course on Personal Moral Coherency set a course for the rest of my life. I became taken up with how we form and reform our personal identity, our sense of self. What gives us access to the good things in life and what keeps us from being marginalized.

At the GARI, I did a lot of PASSING assessments and appreciated the depth of the striving to come to know folks through their life experience. I began writing about the power of leisure identities for people to find their place in community.

After leaving the GARI I worked for 8 years with the People First movement. This dramatically influenced how I came to listen and support folks.

I became aware that what was really missing in peoples lives were initiation rites. Coming of age gatherings that help us make meaning that help us re-story our lives. That help us see the progress we are making and give us collective acknowledgment of key milestones and thresholds in our lives.

This is why the formal part of LifePath planning helps create initiatory experiences that provide a turning point in peoples lives. A moment that signals “that was then and this is now, and you were all here when a change began.”

I realized that those people who inspired me most had a felt sense that “I can do it.” They would tell me that they know this to be true because they had someone who believed in them. I realized then that it only took one other person who told a different story about who I was and what I was capable of to embolden me to carry the same story even when it is at odds with the story told about me by everyone else.

I became committed to formal planning events where the alternative story gets told and heard. Where Champions can stand by the person and deepen their connection and commitment and consider if they want to be part of a longer standing support circle. LifePath planning

events model what a support circle would be like and then scaffold the group to consider forming a support circle.

I have learned that we can excite people and whet their appetite for taking charge of their life. However if there are others who carry the decisions in their life, they need to be engaged and on board or sabotage can occur. We change together.

In 2000 I co-founded Families for a Secure Future and realized that people needed to find ways to be heard and balance out the negative storylines people were telling about them. I started to help people find ways to:

- Contend with their will and how crushed their will forces were. Re-activate their will and their willingness to risk once again.
- Have models for change
- Co-inspire one another to act differently
- To develop a broader scope of action by practicing change
- To develop a context for supported decision making having others help them consider things differently
- Feel they can trust again
- Create a story space where there was enough time to develop a story and be heard. A space where voice emerges
- Time to piece together what happened to me since I was labeled to make the silences draw forth story
- Take thin, meager stories and develop some richness- thickness
- Have others witness my life, my story
- To work against the narcissistic viewpoint that since I have the disability it is all about me. To hear as well my parents’ and siblings’ stories and other’s stories so that I can understand my own in the context of their stories and learn to hold other peoples’ dreams as well as my own.

LifePath planning is directed at doing just that.

Standing Alongside People As They Change

Judith McGill

Please raise your hand if you have undertaken a major change in your life over the past year, that didn't concern a major purchase. We sometimes mistakenly treat acquisition and consumptive behavior as change. It is not real change, it is only a change in our material circumstances.

Real change is about reimagining what is possible in our lives, redefining ourselves, our relationships and our identity. It is about realigning our priorities and most of all about acting differently.

As independent facilitators and planners of any kind, we can lose our way if we want to be seen as the instrument of change; seen as the person whose task it is to bring about change— help set a course, define the goals—draw forth a vision/dream of what is possible.

We lose our way if we judge our worth by the changes we are privileged to witness and be part of. We are lost if we insist on change. We cannot insist that people change so there is something to write about in the second quarter report.

Change does not operate that way. Change is grueling. It takes initiative. It takes deliberate action. It requires something of us on a daily basis. It entails pushing past our fears and engaging our will. Moving forward.

My feet are my only carriage. My feet are my only carriage. My feet are my only carriage.

Even making little changes requires tremendous effort—sustaining effort. We all know that. There is always the risk that we revert and go back to the way it was.

As independent facilitators and planners the system may want us to sell change—bring about change—work for change—enumerate certain changes but we must resist the temptation to expect change.

Change is a conscious decision to take a risk, to leave something behind and step into something new. It often means stepping into a new role/embracing a new identity or way of being in the world. For that to happen, for that to be rewarding and worthwhile something new needs to be activated not only within ourselves but also among the persons that love and care about us.

I worked for a long time within the People First movement. I witnessed some tremendous changes in people's lives over time, transformative changes. I experienced it as ripening into change, that when people were inwardly prepared to act differently they did so. When their will got activated, they acted. This was sometimes with the support of others and sometimes alone. It was sometimes with others blessings and sometimes against all odds.

For this change to be possible inwardly they needed to be emboldened, inspired by others. They needed to be witness to change and have people who acted as models for change. They needed someone, at least one person that believed wholeheartedly in them.

I came away from the People First movement believing that we need to be careful to honour this process of ripening into change and not try to push or cajole people into change for the sake of change. We can not change on behalf of another, it takes them to will it; to decide it for themselves.

There is a careful balance in the role of facilitator.

We need to be a stand for change...

...for people declaring what they need and want

...for people stating what has become unmanageable in their lives

...for thinking differently

...for choosing to pursue a different storyline about what is possible

We need to be a stand for others to remain open to discovering something new about themselves and finding their unique voice.

At the same time, we need to recognize that change has its own time. That people need many opportunities for trying change on –the new situation, the new role, the new relationship– to see if it fits with who they are. To experiment with whether they will be able to sustain it.

People need time and support for adjusting their lives while working toward the new possibility.

As story beings, we need to carefully construct a new story about ourselves over time, in such a way that we feel transformed from the inside out. That we own the new story.

We need to recognize that personal change requires us to consider others, engage others. My change always necessitates that those around me change, adapt, reorder their pictures of what is possible, and ultimately stretch their imagination of who I am.

I need people to be there for me when I stumble or if I fall. To sustain change I need to know that people are behind me, that they have my back. Each of us asks the same questions when we take on change. Who will be there for me? Where is the safe place for me to fall back into? Who believes in me?

When we formed Families for a Secure Future, an independent facilitation organization, we worked on the premise that for individuals to take on and fully embrace change, their families would also need to change. Their families would also need to embrace and take part in that change. That the wellbeing of the individuals and their families/ loved ones were intricately and intimately linked.

We created family groups so that parents and siblings and those that took on a family-like relationship could come together to learn and grow with one another over time. So that in joining together they could co-inspire one another and hold the impulse for positive change among

one another. We began helping people create support circles for the same reason. To be a place for change.

We understood from the outset that there is a kind of reciprocity in change. As you change, I also change.

For change to be sustainable it needs to arise out of relationship. Trusting relationships, where we know each other's stories and how it has evolved over time. Relationships where we tenderly hold each others dreams and vulnerabilities while choosing to act differently.

For this to be possible, we need to acknowledge who is taking the risk to bring about change and who bears the consequences of the change. We need to ask who defines the pace and nature of change.

As independent facilitators, we have the privilege to stand alongside people as they change, the change that they have willfully chosen.

We bear witness to these changes. We see how these changes bring about changes in everyone who is woven into that persons' life.

We help people adjust to the newfound expectations and demands brought about by these changes and help them to consider their next steps day by day. This takes a great deal of humility on our part, to be present to this kind of ripening, ripening into change.



The Significance of Story and Narrative

Judith McGill

We are story beings. We are meaning makers. We long for meaning, internally and among others.

We're learning from neuroscience that we are wired for making meaning, making connections.

We tell stories to make meaning of our lives, to sort and sift the events of our lives.

We're always asking ourselves inwardly, how much weight do I give this event in my life?

We tell each other stories so we can better understand our lives and relationships.

Stories are all we have to make meaning.

The problem is we often experience our lives as a series of disconnected events happening one at a time. It takes a lot of conversation and reflection to make meaningful linkages between events so that we can create a coherent whole, a consistent story of who we are.

Our stories get backed up like logjams in our minds and we don't always take the time that is needed to reflect and talk about them so that we can understand them.

Some people are alienated from their own stories. Others decide what stories are told about their lives. There are big chunks of their lives that they have no memory of. Their lives are storied by others on their behalf.

This leads to people feeling de-storied. Their stories become information bytes. The *Coles Notes* version.

It leads to people having weak stories that don't say much about them, about who they are.

It leads to thin stories without much detail or color to give people a sense of personal identity or history.

When there are only a few stories that you use to say something about yourself it is easy to get stuck on a single story, whether it is positive or negative.

Our task, each and every one of us, is to create story spaces for making meaning together. We need to figure out how to intentionally create story spaces. We need to help people to explore the Coles notes versions, the meager stories they have to tell about their lives and help people deepen and thicken their stories –enrich their stories with color and detail.

We need to inspire people to take an interest in their own biography. To understand that they have a story, and that they are living their own story and it is meant to be heard by others.

We need to help people find other possible interpretations, other story lines, alternative narratives about their lives.

We need to:

- Create a space for re-remembering, re-collecting one's story.
- Help people search for coherence, linkages, some kind of truth about their identity, their gifts, their vulnerabilities.
- Help people find their stories among others who care and are willing to witness the telling and the retelling of their stories.
- Create rich story spaces that are large enough to hold the pain, the confusion and the brilliance of each of our stories; story spaces that help people explore the many different fragments of memory in order to make sense of their lives and to build a new story.
- Create story spaces that are reciprocal and open. Spaces that are imaginative and full of images of what was and what can be.

None of us story our lives alone. We need story spaces where others can “listen us into being”. Where others can draw the story forth through their relationship to us. The most powerful witnesses and allies in our lives are those that stand by us over time and are there to see and hear our stories transform.

It is always a process of discovering how we are part of someone else’s life and they part of ours.

My involvement in Families for a Secure Future and the People First movement taught me so much about how the very experience of being witnessed as we share a story shifts something in us.

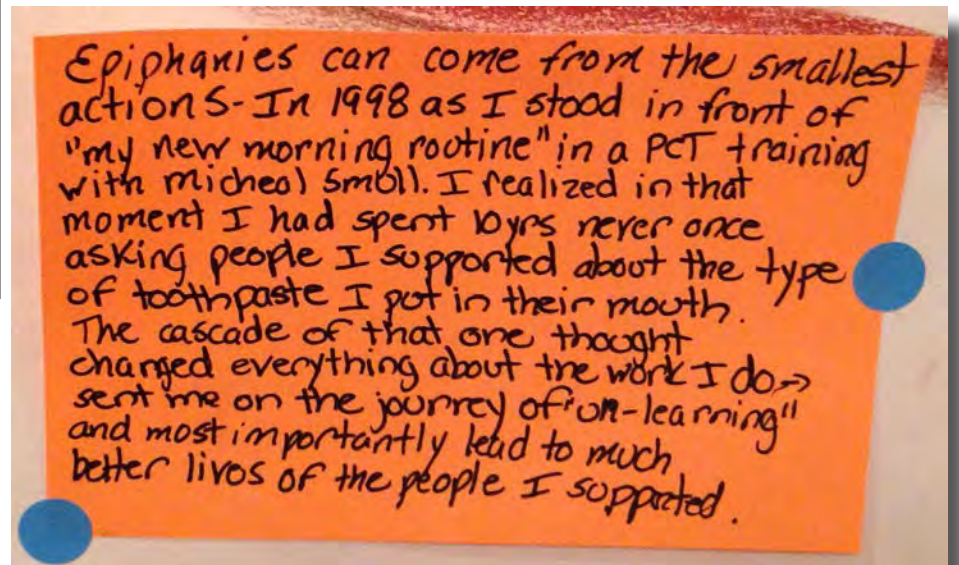
We need each other to embolden us, to give us courage to speak and explore our truth, our vulnerability and our uncertainties.

We need each other to be a mirror. To reflect back what we hear so that it can become more real. So that in our own speaking we can hear more about what our commitments and priorities are.

We need others to inspire us to act differently and choose another story. To pick another story line and to help us get unstuck.

It is by experiencing what lives between us in the silent spaces of our lives that we can understand more about who we are. It is in seeing how we fit into others’ stories that we get a sense of belonging and meaning.

Our role as witnesses and allies is to help people carry the questions of their lives. It is to help draw out the stories of their lives through silence and speech. It is to honor the mystery behind people’s passions and dreams. To help awaken peoples will to activate their will in order to act for themselves with others.



Individual Design Sessions

Jack Pealer

The style of person-centered planning known as the Individual Design Session (IDS) grew directly from the normalization teaching community in New England. Leaders and teachers in that community in the late 1970's and 1980's (especially Jack Yates and many of his New England colleagues) learned much from their experience using *Program Analysis of Service Systems (PASS 3)* by Wolf Wolfensberger and Linda Glenn. Specifically, those leaders became practiced at analyzing and commenting on the issue of the “fit” (*PASS 3* calls this “model coherency”) between a) the life-experiences and needs of people who use the services of a human service program and b) what actually happens to/for those people within the program. When *PASS 3* leaders and teachers worked and thought hard about coherency—or “fit”—between a person's life and what programs delivered, they nearly always found coherency's absence. Most human service programs responded only tangentially (if at all) to the important experiences and life needs of the people they served. A part of the method of *PASS 3* leaders used in teams' analysis was speculation about this question:

Having learned about the lives of the people using this program, what would be responses that would work for them, at this point in their lives? What might an “ideal” program look like?

So, *PASS 3* leaders and teams of *PASS 3* users found themselves involved in planning exercises (although rudimentary ones) aimed at holding up possibilities for better lives by the people using a program under assessment. Jack Yates and others guessed that the questions posed during a *PASS 3* assessment could be extrapolated from the *PASS 3* context and used in planning sessions by those concerned with a particular program — e.g., service users, staff members, board members, etc.— to attempt a re-design of their own human service program. Straightforwardly calling such opportunities “Program Design Sessions,” Jack Yates and his colleagues began to lead such sessions for interested programs, mostly in New England.

It was just a small step from “Program” design to “Individual” design. An Individual Design Session (IDS) involves someone who is the focus of planning, and those others who are most deeply engaged in that person's life, in an intense (5 or 6 hours) exploration of: a) influencing patterns in the person's past and current life situation, b) the most important needs inferred by the person's history and current experience, and c) the best conceivable responses to those needs. The questions addressed by a group during and IDS are:

1. **Who is this person?** Answers are sought in great detail, so that planners approach (as closely as possible) a direct experience of the life of the focus person. A search for the answers to this first question takes the group into the focus person's history, relationships, dreams or ambitions. Fully considering this question takes about half of the time allotted for the IDS.
2. **What does she/he need?** This is a quick list of the “needs” inferred from the previous detailed study of the focus person's life.
3. **What will it take to meet those needs?** Considering this question involves the design group in visioning about responses-that-fit and that might be brought into action. The group then hones in on those ideas they are most serious about or committed to. They detail as much as they can about how to enact each agreed-upon idea, and they enlist commitments from group members for future action, as the IDS comes to an end.

Jack Yates has facilitated more than 200 Individual Design Sessions; Herb Lovett made these sessions an important part of his work with people who have disabilities. Through this work—through the intense attention to the life-experiences of people who were at the center of these sessions—families, agency staff members, and other members of people's circles gained a deeper appreciation of the difficult lives the focus people had led. Better plans for better experiences have grown from that appreciation.

24 Hour Planning

Mary Kovacs

24 Hour Planning is based on the principles of Normalization & PASS, as well as Free Operant.

The understanding of Normalization enabled us to answer two questions.

- HOW are we going to interact with the person?
- WHAT are we going to do with the person?

Wolf Wolfensberger's definition from 1970 describes normalization as *The utilization of means which are as culturally normative as possible in order to establish, enable, or support behaviours and appearances which are as culturally normative as possible*. These values enabled us to look at what people needed if the ties to their families were cut or weakened. We learned to understand what supports were needed to be in place if the person was lonely, or had few opportunities to develop friendships with persons who were neither disabled or paid to be in their lives. We learned to ask questions e.g. "What will it take for this person to go to the store vs. what pre-requisite skills should the person have before he can go to the store?" We learned that PRE meant never, meant a dead end.

When planning for persons with challenging physical needs we needed to demystify the clinical management of the person across many environments, and understand values as we went along. For example, we assisted people to eat vs. feeding them. We needed to position them so that the food did not go into the bronchi or lungs, and we removed many g-tubes. This is where the understanding of free operant came to the fore. The environment to support the person had to be such that the person could make choice, express his/her needs and learn to have control over his/her environment.

We chose the word 24-hr. Planning to enable the person, families, staff and agencies to visualize what life could/would look like in different settings and with different supports. We looked at how many different doors the person entered, with whom he/she interacted, what was the normal rhythm of the day, week, year, etc. We challenged the medical system to re-evaluate seizure medications, and to provide surgeries to decrease deformities if that was the only option.

What I have observed in some settings today is that persons with complex needs live in the community but are not challenged, and the institutional mentality prevails. Now with the availability of iPods and other electronic devices, communication is only hampered by the lack of belief, values and imagination.

Personal Futures Planning

John O'Brien

The purpose of Personal Futures Planning is to generate and guide intentional action to improve the chances that a person will have valued life experiences. These experiences include: belonging with family, friends, and a growing and diverse network of in-person social connections in community; the respect attracted by having valued social roles (for example, civic activist, worker, householder, association member); the freedom to share ordinary places in the same ways that other citizens do; the opportunity to develop and contribute their capacities and unfold their gifts in action; the responsibility to exercise choice.

The process assists a person to gather their allies and encourages a capacity view of present and future from the perspective of the valued life experiences. The intent is to appreciate and amplify the possibilities for satisfying participation in community life, move outside current boundaries to discover opportunities to engage the person, and enrich and deepen the vision of a desirable future based on the results of action in the person's neighborhood. There is a rhythm of gathering to set and refine direction and allow the person and allies to assume responsibility for taking next steps, taking action, and repeating, often through a number of cycles over the course of a year or two.

When people rely on service providing organizations it is typically necessary to negotiate adjustments in agency practice. Some agencies have adopted Personal Futures Planning to develop their capacity to individualize their offerings and support people in individualized employment, learning and leisure, civic activism, or their own homes.

For an account of Personal Futures Planning in the context of organizational transformation, see Hanns Meissner (2013) *Creating Blue Space*. <http://inclusion.com/bkcreatingbluespace.html>. Others have adopted Personal Futures Planning in a learning process for direct support workers and their managers (see *Make a Difference* <http://inclusion.com/bkmakeadifference.html>)

Beth Mount and some of her friends have developed and refined Personal Futures Planning since the early 1980s. She currently uses the process described in *Make a Difference* as a guide. See her talk, *Beautiful Justice*, her art, and other resources at <http://www.capacityworks2.com>.

PATHFINDERS: Group Personal Futures Planning

Connie Lyle O'Brien

PATHFINDERS is a planning process that grew out of work that Beth Mount and I did in New York City from 1996 – 2002. The work there was with school systems and adult services working with students in transition from high school to adult life. The process has evolved since then and continues to change as experience grows. So what is it?

PATHFINDERS is an opportunity for a person with a disability, their family, friends, allies, service providers to design a future in which the person becomes a more competent and contributing member of his or her community. But instead of each person and their circle doing a plan individually, five to eight people do their plans at the same time in the same space. Each group will work on a focus person's plan going through steps of personal futures planning and then each group will have the opportunity to share what it was like to do that step, what did they learn with the entire group. The process usually occurs over 2 days and takes approximately 10 hours. Each group leaves with a future's poster summarizing the work that has been done and with a few action steps to get started. The person with a disability who is the focus person must be present. The person may choose not to remain with their group for the whole time, but their actual physical presence is necessary.

The meeting should be planned for the convenience of the person, family, friends, and community members. Service providers are invited and welcomed to attend and the meetings go better when they do, but the meetings should not be planned around their schedules or regular working hours because that will usually result in fewer community members attending.

In considering a Pathfinders Project, plan for it to go for a minimum of one year and three if possible. Each year there should be a minimum of 4 meetings. First, a ten hour planning meeting held over two days followed by a minimum of three follow-up sessions where people come back together to share what's happened so far and to come up with next steps toward the person's dream of a desirable future. When there is more than one year, new focus people can be added each year, and those who wish to continue from the original year are welcomed to do so. Each year will start with the 10-hour planning session followed by a minimum of three follow-up meetings.

Group person-centered planning is not a "training event". It is a process that creates a space for a person, his/her family, friends, and paid service workers to dream about a desirable future in community life where the person can make a contribution based on his/her interests, gifts and capacities that starts by designing a person-centered plan that results in Action Agreements.

Planning Together

Susannah Joyce

Roots : The comprehensiveness of Personal Futures Planning and the common sense of The Five Valued Experiences explored in Framework for Accomplishment: Choice; Respect, Relationships; Community Presence; Learning & Contributing... using aspects of MAPS, PATH, ELP where helpful

Branching Out

- Exploration of roles, helpful information and voice of the person planning, family and friends, facilitators and paid supports
- Intentional gathering of "tickets/clues to the future" from exploring the person's past and present with them
- Offering ways to be more specific in understanding what someone may want , including a greater sense of "the spirit behind the dream" and "the fear behind the resistance"
- Including, where sensible, deeper exploration of The Five Valued Experiences to raise awareness of "helpful help" (or not) in support
- Inviting people helping someone to plan to consider their experiences of dreaming and creating their own community maps as both a resource and to build capacity
- Creating "dream statements" to deepen understanding of what the person wants and to see it as more specific and concrete
- Including Three Brainstorming Questions: 1. What are all the ways the person could enjoy the Passion, share the Gift, realize the Dream? 2. Which of those ways are most likely to lead to connections and community? 3. Who do we know who has links to that aspect of community and/or Gifts to contribute?
- Including person centered ways for those who are planning to offer feedback on the process

Planting Seeds: Using person centered planning with people who have mental health issues... Focus Planning....additional explorations focused specifically on Friendships or Supporting People Labeled with Challenging Behaviour

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This is what we are about: we plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.

- Archbishop Oscar Romero

LifePath Planning Process

Judith McGill

The foundation of this process arose largely out of the work of Wolf Wolfensberger, who in the early seventies gave us profound insight into the wounding and devaluing experiences common to those who live with a disability. The process draws from his deep understanding of the need for establishing and maintaining valued social roles in order to build meaningful relationships and find a place in community.

The process incorporates formal and informal conversations that take place over time, that are aimed at strengthening the persons' voice, sense of self and willingness to engage with others in making changes and re-imagining their lives.

The story telling aspect of the formal process aims at inviting others into the persons' life as allies and witnesses so that they might help the person better sense his/her life purpose. As well, it focuses on creating a safe dialogue where others are able to build more abiding ties and identification with the person and deeper appreciation for his lived experiences and aspirations.

The process is based on several foundational assumptions, some of which are:

- Personal transformation happens over time as courage is fueled by action and a shifting sense of self
- It is essential for people to see themselves differently day by day so they will act differently
- To change how you see yourself there needs to be a real change in what you are taken up with day to day- in terms of investments, roles you assume, contributions you are helped to make, relationships, focus and direction...Changing self definition takes more than encouragement-it takes concrete changes in circumstance and others seeing you differently. It involves making meaning of your own story.
- Without using planning as a way to solidify and deepen relationships- having a written plan is meaningless. Without having people to stand by you as you take up a plan for moving forward- without ongoing facilitation and dialogue, the plan fails.

Judith McGill is an adult educator, an Independent Facilitator and Executive Director of a provincial Independent Facilitation organization named Families for a Secure Future. To contact her or learn more go to: www.familiesforsecurefuture.ca or LifePath Training and Consulting at www.lifepathtraining.ca or email her at jlmcgill@rogers.com

An Approach to Developing Person Centered Practices

Michael Smull

I have been asked to describe my approach to person centered planning. My answer is that I have learned to see planning as happening in a context and that for plans to be used and useful the context has to support development and implementation. For decades we have said we need to start with person centered planning. After all, the plan gives direction, is the blueprint. The actions that it details create accountability. But what we have found is that the plan is only one piece of what is required for people to have the lives that they want within their communities. Despite the requirements for the plan to be person centered, the other pressures on those who provide and those who manage the services have trumped the person centered part of the plan. Few required plans accurately reflect a future desired by the person or help the person move in that direction. Most plans support a status quo. Our learning says that person centered planning fulfills its promise only when the context in which planning is done supports truly listening to the person and acting on what is heard.

The challenge, and the open question, is can we do this for the many and not just for the few? It is clear that teaching person centered planning, making the structure of the required plan person centered, or inspecting against the "person centered" requirements will not have the desired results unless it is part of a larger change process. Creating more explicit requirements, providing technical assistance to meet them, and inspecting against them is essential but not sufficient. These efforts make a difference but not the degree of difference we are seeking.

We are not just looking for person centered planning; we are looking for person centered practices. We need the practices that support first the development of accurate plans and then support their implementation. We need plans that not only describe lives but point to the changes that are needed. Underlying the practices and planning are a set of skills and values. In the work that we have been doing we have embedded some of the key values in the skills to that can be taught and refer to them as person centered thinking skills. For more information go to: www.learningcommunity.us; and sdaus.com/resources.

This is not to suggest that training in person centered thinking skills is sufficient. Training, by itself, is the rock in the pond. The skills have to become habit for the intrinsic values to be actualized. Once embedded, the skills and values can create a foundation for the transformational change that is required. But more effort is required. We are seeking to change a system and

systems resist change. There has to be sufficient positive pressure for change to address the resistance. Our approach has to be one where we look at the whole system; including what is funded, required, and inspected.

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person-centred reviews and one-page profiles

A **person-centred review** is an effective way of helping people to listen, learn and engage with each other by facilitating good focused discussions, and clear, creative action planning.

The aim is to identify and discuss what people like and admire about the person; what is important to the person (now and for the future); and what help and support the person wants and needs. A **person-centred review** also focuses on what is working and not working from different perspectives and determines actions that will :

- support the person to get what is important to them now and for the future
- continue what is working and change what is not working
- build on person-centred information to develop or add to a person centred plan



person-centred reviews animate:

<http://bit.ly/1les2UO>

person-centred review webinar:

<http://bit.ly/1jqORjN>

A one-page profile:

- is for everyone and can be used in different situations or for different purposes.
- typically has three sections: an appreciation about the person; what is important to that person from their perspective; and how to support them well.
- can also be the beginning of a more detailed person-centred description. Once you have a **one-page profile**, each person-centred thinking tool used leads to actions and further information.



A **one-page profile** provides a summary of person-centred information and can be used as a quick way to get to know someone or to ensure that support is provided in a consistent manner and in the way that the person wants.

www.hsacanada.ca

introduction to one-page profiles:

<http://bit.ly/1dnneu7>

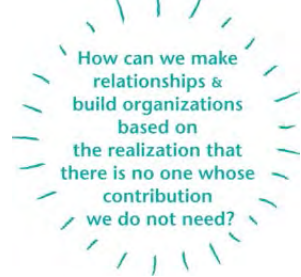
www.onepageprofiles.wordpress.com

www.miprofile.ca

Julie Malette - Helen Sanderson Associates Canada
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We have Deep Questions underneath Circles, MAPS and PATH

The Values were always there; we have made them more explicit.



MAPS

Don't just do something, sit there (and tell your story).

"MAPS is for threshold moments. These are times when life's changes call for new responses and it is good to re-tell focus people's story in order to affirm their gifts, clarify what is necessary for those gifts to be well received, and make action agreements that will lead to better opportunities.

Focus people have made MAPS when entering a new school, when graduating from school, when deciding about taking up new roles, when coping with a loss, when deciding about leaving a job, when dealing with a difficult turn in life, when assimilating a major victory or accomplishment, and when feeling lost or burned out."



PATH and MAPS can play an important part in organizing the work necessary to make social changes. How significant the change turns out to be depends on the intention of those involved and the resources available to them, especially the human resources of will to meaning and creativity. PATH and MAPS increase the chances of positive change by encouraging...

- strength and diversity of alliances
- belief in the capacity to move toward a desirable future
- a creative process

We began with Circles in the late 70's. We noticed that gathering the people in your network was the first step on the journey to becoming a full participating citizen in the community.

MAPS evolved as a counter weight to the enormous destructive impact of deficit model assessments. We believed (then & now) that every person has a story, and our gifts and capacities can be discovered in telling and seeing those stories. MAPS listens to 'the story' and discovers our gifts, explores ways to move forward, and concludes with tangible immediate action steps.

Valued Experiences of Inclusion



The purpose of a MAP

(from an article written in the late 1970's)

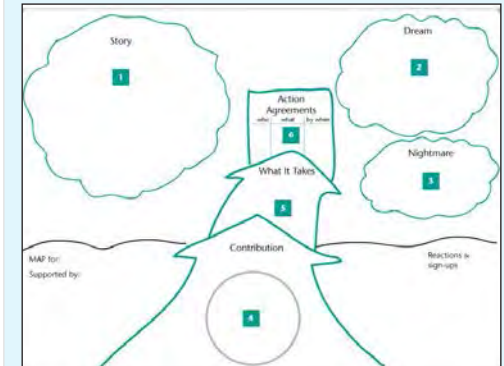
to welcome people of all ages into full life at home, school, work and play

- Marsha Forest & Jack Pearpoint

We don't fear people whose story we know.
-Margaret Wheatley

MAPS

Jack Pearpoint & Lynda Kahn



The current template for a MAP... We have tried other templates. We began with a mandala and it has evolved.



What about the MAPS name?

In the beginning, we thought that a university 'label' would be helpful. So Marsha Forest (namer of everything by acronym) called it: The McGill Action Planning System - MAPS. We left McGill and also realized that a MAP is simply a MAP. For us, it is no longer an acronym. A MAP is a MAP.

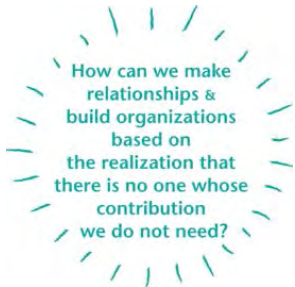


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We have Deep Questions underneath Circles, MAPS and PATH

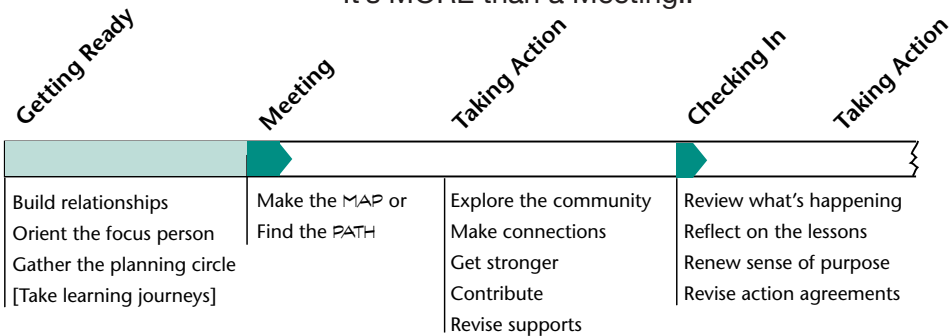
The Values were always there; we have made them more explicit.



It began with Circles... then MAPS... and then PATH

They have all crossed many boundaries of geography, language and culture in Canada and beyond.

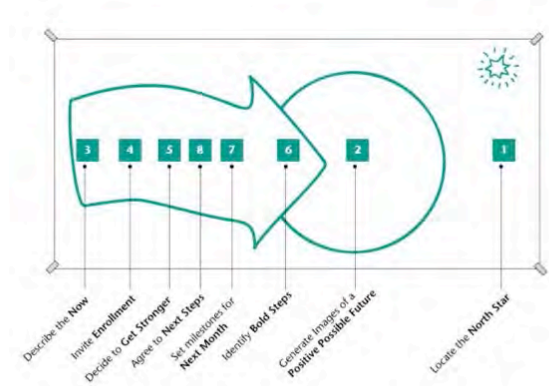
It's MORE than a Meeting!!



We plans, not me plans. PATH & MAPS gather people & invite them to organize & develop opportunities by creating or renewing human connections. They look for ways that the PATHfinder or MAPmaker can serve & in turn be served by those who matter to them. They bring interdependencies alive by refining understanding of who is needed to move toward a desirable future & challenging people to clearly ask for what is necessary to their contribution.

PATH

Jack Pearpoint & Lynda Kahn



PATH

Don't just sit there, do something!

PATH is for finding ways to a better life. It aims at action agreements to pursue strategies that move focus people toward futures that matter to them. It supports people to identify and commit to projects that require courageous, cooperative, creative effort.

Focus people have used PATH to find jobs that match their calling, move into homes of their own, plan businesses, resume their educations, organize moving out of institutions, develop sustainable community agriculture, design new organizations, renew school faculties, and create advocacy strategies.

-The PATH & MAPS Handbook: Person-Centered Ways to Build Community by John O'Brien, Jack Pearpoint & Lynda Kahn



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