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# HOW DO YOU BUILD A COMMUNITY? DEVELOPING COMMUNITY CAPACITY AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN AN URBAN ABORIGINAL SETTING

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## ABSTRACT

Previous literature has identified social capital as an important resource for successful community development activities, and there have been some attempts to adapt the concepts of social capital to the particular context of First Nations. However, little information is available about how social capital itself might be developed or improved in Aboriginal communities. Moreover, urban Aboriginal communities are different from rural First Nations, Inuit or Métis communities in structure, composition, activities, and diversity, and deserve specific attention and their own models of community development. This paper presents a framework to guide development initiatives in urban Aboriginal contexts that is drawn from Aboriginal cultural principles and connected to the academic literature on development and social capital. Intended to provide practical advice to community leaders and practitioners, the framework includes five “tenets”: strategic planning; Elders and children; prayers and medicines; responsibility and ownership; and mentoring and role modelling.

**Keywords:** Community development, First Nations, Aboriginal, urban institutions, social capital

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, community-based approaches to the delivery of social and health services have become very important in social work, public health, and related fields of practice and academic disciplines. These approaches seek to not only include local views and perspectives in the development of programs and delivery of services, but also to increase the ability of communities to serve their own members and to address local issues. This can be seen in the volumes devoted to community empowerment (e.g. Fawcett et al., 1995) and community development (e.g. Bopp and Bopp, 2011; Wharf and Clague, 1997) and in the interest among researchers and practitioners in the role of community characteristics, such as social capital or social cohesion, in producing positive outcomes.

Social capital has been a particularly important element in the recent community development literature, and is generally taken to include well-functioning social networks and the norms of trust and reciprocity that characterize them (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). Whether conceptualized as a property of communities or of the individuals who compose them, social capital is seen as a reflection of the capacity of those communities to undertake concerted action and access resources. Despite academic disagreements about how social capital is best defined or measured, improving these networks and trust relationships has become a focus for various community development schemes, with the idea that communities with higher degrees of social capital are better able to undertake particular

projects or initiatives that respond to community-defined needs, including improving access to various services and economic development initiatives. Furthermore, successful community projects may foster a process of empowerment for the members of the community, strengthening the community's ability to undertake development initiatives. Indeed, this may be a greater outcome than specific projects themselves (Silver et al., 2006).

An important area of community-based research and practice is the delivery of services to Aboriginal peoples. Despite the high level of interest in Aboriginal community development and particularly in community-based approaches (eg., Absolon and Herbert, 1997; Deane et al., 2004; Goodfellow-Baikie and English, 2006; Lee, 1992) there are some important gaps in our understanding of how improving "community capacity" in Aboriginal communities is best achieved. There has been a focus on what have been called the "technical" elements of community development, including training and organizational structures, and a lack of attention to how the social resources important for community-led development, such as social capital, can themselves be developed (Chataway, 2002, p. 77). There have been efforts to define and measure social capital, and the sometimes related terms "resiliency" and "social cohesion" in Aboriginal communities (Chataway, 2002; Mignone and O'Neil, 2005), and to relate these constructs to various outcomes (Hutchinson, 2006). However, not much has been done to connect this academic literature to practical actions that might be taken by those who are working in community development, to help them build these social resources (Bopp and Bopp, 2011).

There is also a lack of literature specifically related to the development of Aboriginal communities in urban areas, which may be quite different from rural communities or First Nations. Urban communities are diverse, with permeable boundaries and complex networks (Silver et al., 2006), and this may make developing some types of social capital more difficult. One key feature of urban Aboriginal communities is the importance of local institutions, such as Friendship Centres or local Aboriginal centres, which often serve as hubs of local networks,

as well as centres of community development actions (Newhouse, 2003; Spence and White, 2010). Building social capital in an urban Aboriginal community is most likely done through the activities of these organizations, which face a variety of challenges in developing and delivering programs and services in an urban context (Spence and White, 2010).

The goal of this paper is, therefore, to develop a framework for community development that connects an urban Aboriginal perspective and experience to the academic literature regarding the development of social capital and community capacity in Aboriginal communities. We first review the existing literature on social capital and community development in Aboriginal communities. We then propose five "tenets" of community development in this context, that we have developed based on one of the author's years of experience as a community organizer and leader in an urban Aboriginal setting. These are practical guidelines, grounded in experience and Aboriginal cultural understanding, aimed at helping practitioners working in and leading urban Aboriginal organizations approach community development projects in a way that will contribute to the social capital of their communities, beyond the concrete goals of any particular project. We relate these practical tenets to specific aspects of social capital, as identified from the existing literature. For each component of our framework, we identify the aspects of community social capital most directly affected. Lastly, some suggestions for the future application and testing of the framework are offered.

### SOCIAL CAPITAL AND URBAN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

"Building community" involves activities that increase the capacity of community members and institutions to deliver the programs and services required by the community. In the case of an urban Aboriginal community in Canada, this includes activities such as identifying community needs; planning, implementing and evaluating programs and projects; generating funding; and hiring and nur-

ture the development of managers and staff from within the community.

Social capital is one of the social resources that can aid in these activities, and which currently occupies an important space in the community health, social, and economic development literature. The definition and measurement of social capital is an area of some debate, but it can be generally thought of as the networks of relationships and norms of trust and reciprocity that facilitate social action in pursuit of particular goals (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). For some, these networks are resources held by individuals who are connected to one another, and who can use these connections to access information, opportunities, or other resources. For others, social capital is a characteristic of the communities in which these networks and norms exist. From this "ecological" perspective, the presence or absence of social capital may be a key to understanding the differences in average social and health outcomes between communities. Socially cohesive communities, in which members have trusting relationships to each other as well as to individuals and institutions beyond the community, may be better able to access and mobilize the various resources needed to undertake community development projects or to respond to crises.

There have been some attempts to define and measure social capital specifically for Aboriginal communities. To Mignone and O'Neil (2005), social capital is a characteristic of communities, and following Woolcock and Narayan (2000), these authors identify three types of social capital that are important for development in a First Nations community. *Bonding* social capital refers to connections among community members, or local community cohesion. This type of social capital can improve the ability of community members to work together for a common purpose. It may also be characterized as a community's ability and willingness to address internal conflict and factiousness, rather than to suppress it (Chataway, 2002). *Bridging* social capital describes the horizontal connections between communities, which may help them access outside resources. *Linking* social capital refers to the connections between communities and external formal

institutions, which may help communities access financial or information resources. In the case of Aboriginal community development, links to provincial and federal bodies are particularly important in this respect (Hutchinson, 2006; Mignone and O'Neil, 2005).

Mignone and O'Neil (2005) also describe dimensions to be considered when assessing the amount and quality of social capital in a community. These types of social capital — bonding, bridging and linking — are characterized by the resources they can help access, the qualities of the networks that form the connections, and the cultures that sustain them. *Socially invested resources* are the resources that may be accessed by a community member, or used to their benefit, including physical, financial, and human capital. In addition to these more commonly identified community resources, the authors include "symbolic capital," or the mainly intangible resources that are related to the identity of the community (p. 14). Particularly important in the case of Aboriginal communities may be "natural" capital, which includes resources provided by nature (Mignone and O'Neil, 2005, p. 14). *Networks* are the connections among community members and institutions, and have several characteristics that may affect their contribution to social capital. Communities with "diverse" networks which can interact are more likely to be able to use them to accomplish particular actions. "Flexible" networks are those that are able to adapt to new requirements, for example, to mobilize to respond to new needs, to add new members (Mignone and O'Neil, 2005), or respond to ever-changing funding formulae.

Communities' social capital is also affected by local culture, and particularly by the norms of reciprocity and trust that characterize social relationships. Notably, Mignone and O'Neil are clear that they do not refer to Aboriginal cultures or spirituality in this definition, but to more generic qualities of local relationships. However, others point out that the strength of Aboriginal culture may be very important to social capital in Aboriginal communities (Chataway, 2002; Ledogar and Fleming, 2008). In particular, Ledogar and Fleming (2008) refer to research suggesting the importance of "cultural resili-

ence” for communities’ ability to control their own development.

An important but sometimes forgotten aspect of social capital is that its effects are not always positive for community development. Local cultures can include high degrees of trust and reciprocity, but also norms of behaviour that are unhelpful or destructive (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000, p. 226). Social capital can also be concentrated in exclusive or isolated networks (Chataway, 2002), reflecting a high degree of bonding, but not much bridging or linking. Social networks also need to be activated to be useful for building community capacity. Collective efficacy is a task-specific concept (Ledogar and Fleming, 2008, p. 31), and social capital is built and strengthened through collective action. Community projects, therefore, provide an opportunity to strengthen and improve community social capital, in addition to addressing their more tangible needs.

Developing social capital in Aboriginal communities may be particularly challenging because of the history of colonization. Some First Nations may suffer from factionalism and low community bonding, linking, and bridging capitals as a result of the imposition of colonial governance through band elections and the undermining of traditional lines of authority (Chataway, 2002). Colonialism and its effects on colonized subjects (Kirmayer et al., 2003; Ravensbergen and VanderPlaat, 2010) also have implications for social capital in urban communities, as members of urban Aboriginal communities may be resistant to participation in development processes. This may be true even for projects with Aboriginal peoples as the target beneficiaries, and delivered by Aboriginal agencies or service workers (Deane et al., 2004). Moreover, the life experiences of some community members may have left them with challenges to their own health and wellness that limit their time and energy to contribute to the well-being of the wider community.

Chataway (2002) proposes three elements of development processes that build social cohesion and social capital in Aboriginal communities. First, she argues that projects should be grounded in Aboriginal cultural values, and reviews research literature that suggests strongly that development pro-

jects based on cultural values are more likely to gain the support and participation of community members (pp. 79–80). This is similar to the suggestion of Lee (1992) that community development in First Nations communities requires “organizations that are rooted in the culture of First Nations communities,” to ensure cultural congruence and relevance. Urban Aboriginal institutions should, therefore, be organized around principles that are shared by community members, and grounded in traditional ways of organizing and caring for the community (Deane et al., 2004; Lee, 1992).

This means that the hard work of relearning what it means to be Cree or Anishnaabe or Haida or Inuit also applies to organizations. They must undertake a process of discovery to develop an Aboriginal form of helping. In fact, the task may be broader than simple service delivery. Aboriginal social development may require building culturally-based institutions in the urban neighbourhood setting. (Deane et al., 2004, p. 245)

Chataway suggests, as her second principle, that community development projects should prioritize working relationships. In a community in which trust and communication have broken down, community development projects should start with attempts to establish or strengthen relationships among members (Chataway, 2002, p. 81).

Chataway’s third principal for developing social capital and social cohesion in community development initiatives is “active inclusivity,” and the engagement of community members (Chataway, 2002, pp. 81–82). This goes beyond “token” engagement, such as the holding of community meetings, to include attempts to genuinely empower community members, including those who may not feel comfortable in public meetings (Chataway, 2002, p. 82). This is similar to other suggestions in the urban community development literature that members of disempowered segments of the population should be engaged in innovative ways, with a focus on building their trust in the process (Deane et al., 2004; Ravensbergen and VanderPlaat, 2010; Robinson, 1995).

Chataway’s three principles for the development of social cohesion or social capital can be extended

to urban Aboriginal communities, of which urban Aboriginal service organizations are critical components (Newhouse, 2003). Urban organizations often serve as “social anchors” for a community and hubs of social networks (Clopton and Finch, 2011), in addition to providing services. The development of programs and services in these institutions therefore provides an opportunity to engage community members and to develop these social resources.

There are, however, unique aspects of urban communities that need to be considered. An urban community may be more diverse and include people from a wide variety of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis cultural backgrounds; newcomers to the city from other urban and rural Aboriginal communities; those who have lived in the city for years (or for generations); and those who have made multiple moves between Aboriginal communities and cities (Cooke and Bélanger, 2006; Lévesque, 2003; Sookraj et al., 2010). Some will have close connections to home communities, both nearby and distant, while others will have more urban-based social networks. In addition to cultural diversity, the complicated set of legal definitions, including “status” and band or community membership rules, has led to a fracturing of Aboriginal populations on various dimensions (Guimond et al., 2004; Sookraj et al., 2010).

The complexity of urban Aboriginal communities presents a challenge for the delivery of programs, as well as the development of social capital or community cohesion (Sookraj et al., 2010). Other challenges include limited financial resources, conflicts between local needs and the requirements of government funding programs, and a lack of well-trained staff (Sookraj et al., 2010; Spence and White, 2010).

## THE FIVE TENETS OF BUILDING COMMUNITY

For community developers in urban Aboriginal organizations faced with these challenges, the planning and implementation of projects and programs can often be difficult enough. If these projects are to result in the improvement of social capital and community capacity, attention needs to be paid to the processes by which development projects proceed,

as Chataway (2002) has suggested. However, despite the academic attempts to identify the important elements of social capital and the processes that help to build them that we have reviewed above, there has been a lack of specific advice for practitioners. Moreover, that which exists has mainly been developed in relation to First Nations or other discrete Aboriginal communities, rather than urban ones.

We propose five tenets of community building in an urban Aboriginal context, as practical advice for conducting program development activities that also build the social capital of the community. The result, we believe, will be urban Aboriginal communities with more sustainable, permanent institutions and which are better able to control their own development and healing processes. These tenets include: the strategic planning circle; Elders and children; prayers and medicines; responsibility and ownership; and mentoring and role modelling.

These tenets have been developed through the personal experiences of one of the authors, an Anishnaabe scholar who has served, in various roles collectively for more than ten years, as Executive Director and Chair and President of the Board of Directors for an urban Aboriginal employment training and social services agency, as well as in leadership roles in other not-for-profit organizations serving urban populations. These experiences include working with communities to develop and realize visions including large capital projects, social programs, policies, and events. The main elements of the framework were developed over several years, from observation of the barriers facing urban Aboriginal communities and the success and failures of various projects and approaches to community development. They were further articulated and refined through discussion with the second author, who assisted with contextualizing them and connecting them to existing ideas in the community development literature.

The resulting five tenets are suggested as elements that can be incorporated into community development initiatives to help practitioners follow a development process based in Aboriginal cultural understandings, and considering the unique cultural, historical, and political context of urban

Aboriginal communities. We relate the framework to the literature regarding social capital development in Indigenous communities. In Table 1, we connect the five tenets to the types of social capital that they most clearly can help activate, including bonding, bridging and linking capitals, and also to other aspects of social capital identified in the literature reviewed above. This includes the types of socially invested resources that they can help mobilise, including symbolic and human capitals, and network characteristics that they promote, including diversity, flexibility and trust (Mignone and O'Neil 2005). We also connect our proposed tenets to Chataway's (2002) characteristics of positive development processes that help build social capital in Aboriginal communities in positive ways, avoiding some of the more negative possibilities of social capital. These include active inclusivity, cultural groundedness and prioritizing working relationships.

As shown in Table 1, not all of the proposed tenets can be claimed to directly affect an aspect of social capital, and we have tried to be conservative in identifying the connections between our proposed tenets and the academic social capital literature. In the following sections, we describe these five tenets, their importance in the community development process, and their relationships to social capital.

## THE STRATEGIC PLANNING CIRCLE

The first tenet we propose is *strategic planning*. The building of community requires a vision of the fu-

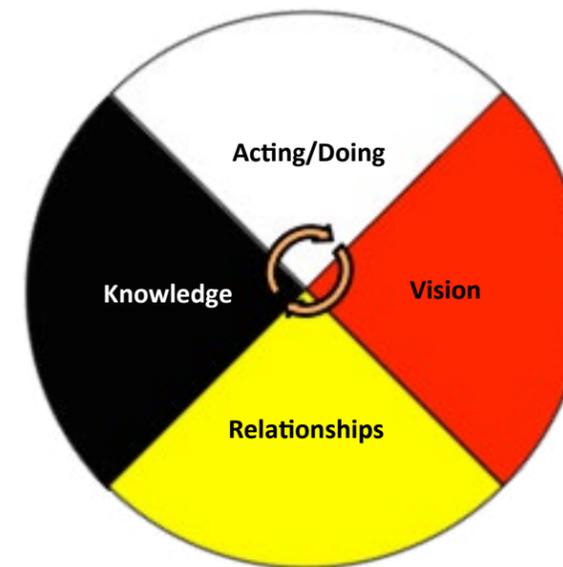
ture — a clear idea of *what* the community would like to develop. In this case, we mean a process by which the needs of the community are turned into actions by the community organization. By including strategic planning as a tenet of community development, we can better guarantee that the actions of community organizations will focus on the production of sustainable and observable outcomes, rather than becoming preoccupied with short-term operational concerns.

Others have indicated the importance of using culturally specific metaphors for development processes with Indigenous peoples (Khavarpour and Grootjans, 2000). This helps ground the activities associated with community development in local culture. We employ a Medicine Wheel model to demonstrate both a culturally congruent and socially inclusive process of community engagement, and that community processes are ongoing (Bopp and Bopp, 2011). The medicine wheel serves an important function of representing the integration of various spheres of life (e.g. Verniest, 2006). In our model, strategic planning has four components: *vision, relationships, knowledge, and action/doing* (Figure 1).

### VISION

As shown in Figure 1 *vision* is situated in the eastern direction of the circle. This is the beginning point: in some First Nations cultures, communities are oriented so that their entrances are in the east. The importance of vision is that a shared conception of

Figure 1: Medicine Wheel Strategic Planning Model



the goal is the appropriate starting point for a community development project. The creation of a vision is a lengthy, foundational process that must be built on consensus, respect, and honesty. The vision is about the goals and aspirations of the community, but its scope should not be set out in advance by process facilitators.

As we have described, one of the difficulties of creating a strategic vision for community development is that some community members may be inadvertently silenced by the nature of the consensus or consultation process. This stifling of community members' participation is often the result of external pressures such as a lack of time or funding for a consultative process. Simply put, one or two days of meetings is not long enough to flesh out a well-developed vision for a community; it is a process that requires a great deal of time, often months and sometimes years, to develop.

In terms of the social capital literature, the vision component of strategic planning can contribute to the development of trust as a characteristic of local networks (Table 1). By including the views of community members from across the urban Aboriginal community, one can improve the trust that members have in the urban Aboriginal organization and in the leaders of their local institutions. "Active inclusivity" in creating the vision for a development project can involve facilitation techniques that en-

courage an honest discussion of members' ideas and needs while providing an opportunity for creative expression.

Practically, there are a number of ways that community members can be actively included in this stage of the planning cycle. Useful contributions can be made in the form of pictures, artwork, poems, songs, as well as text. Facilitators may provide opportunities to submit anonymous comments, through a drop box or other means. There are many ways to promote participation, but the main idea is that the facilitators need to ensure as much opportunity for stakeholder contributions as possible, and to be creative in overcoming barriers to this participation.

### RELATIONSHIPS

Moving clockwise, *relationships* occupy the southern quadrant of the medicine wheel (Figure 1). These represent the fabric of the community and its political, personal, and spiritual connections. If these urban "anchor institutions" are to effectively serve as bases for social capital, they need to foster the formation, repair, and maintenance of relationships, as suggested by Chataway (2002). By actively considering relationships among community members, as well as those between the community and organizations and institutions outside the community, community developers can guide the strategic planning process to improve bonding, bridging, and linking social capital (Table 1).

In social capital terms, strengthening these relationships also changes the nature of the networks that characterize these connections, potentially increasing the diversity within the networks and trust between members (Table 1). Although this is rarely acknowledged, one of the challenges facing community developers can be community members who seek to undermine various community initiatives, for political, personal, or other reasons. A traditional Ojibwe teaching about relationships told to one of the authors is that for healing and/or development to occur, some will need to be severed while others will need to be mended or redefined, and still others will need to be newly created. Balancing this requirement with the active inclusion of a variety of views is an important challenge for community development practitioners.

Table 1: Five Tenets of Aboriginal Community-Building and the Aspects of Social Capital Primarily Influenced.

Tenet	Types of Social Capital Primarily Activated	Socially Invested Resources Primarily Affected (Mignone and O'Neil, 2005)	Network Characteristics Primarily Improved (Mignone and O'Neil 2005)	Development Process Elements Invoked (Chataway, 2002)
<b>1. Strategic Planning Circle</b>				
Vision			Trust	Active inclusivity
Relationships	Bonding Bridging Linking		Diversity Flexibility Trust	Prioritize working relationships
Knowledge		Human capital		
Acting/Doing			Trust	Active inclusivity
<b>2. Elders and Children</b>				
	Bonding	Symbolic capital	Diversity	Active inclusivity Cultural groundedness
<b>3. Prayers and Medicines</b>				
		Symbolic capital		Cultural groundedness
<b>4. Responsibility and Ownership</b>				
	Bonding		Trust	
<b>5. Mentoring and Role Modelling</b>				
	Bonding	Human capital	Flexibility Trust	Prioritize working relationships

The external relationships that should be actively cultivated include the bridging and linking connections between community members and other communities, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, that may help access resources, as well as relationships to other institutional structures, such as governments or provincial or national organizations. Despite the danger that external agendas might overtake the needs of the community in importance, developing equal and mutually respectful relationships with other institutions that honour the community's vision can provide opportunities for collaborations and alliances that can serve the community's interests, if carefully managed.

#### KNOWLEDGE

Continuing in a clockwise fashion to the western quadrant, community developers must also draw on the *knowledge* of the stakeholders in the community throughout the strategic planning process. In the terms of Mignone and O'Neil (2005), knowledge is "socially embedded" insofar as it is part of the human capital of the community and can be accessed through networks and relationships. Community developers certainly need to draw on their own knowledge and bring outside knowledge back to the community. However, they also need to remember community knowledge as a vital resource. Community members often know what they want and what their unmet needs are, although they might need help articulating that knowledge. They also carry the historical knowledge of the community; what has been tried in the past, what worked, and what did not. The knowledge that is created in the community through the process of a development project becomes vested in the community, adding to the resources that can be drawn upon in the future.

#### ACTING/DOING

The last part of the strategic planning circle, moving into the northern quadrant, is enacting the vision (*acting/doing*). Of course, plans must be put into action for a vision to be realized. Projects that do not result in outcomes that are tangible to the community erode the trust that the community has in its institutions and organizations, and their ability to mobilize for change in the future (Table 1). Many

projects start well, but become "stuck" in the early stages of the development cycle, for a variety of reasons. Unfortunately, for communities in which there are longstanding needs, unfinished projects can fuel a lack of confidence that things can be improved. It is therefore essential that developers who engage the community in a vision for change do what they can to ensure that community members feel that efforts are not in vain.

Strategic planning is central to community development and this medicine wheel model is intended to remind community developers that the process begins with a vision, requires the development of relationships and the use of community knowledge, and must culminate in action, or some tangible benefit to the community. We have used the medicine wheel because of its cultural significance (eg., Verniest, 2006), but also to signify that the process should be continual, with new goals and visions for the community arising out of previous activities. By considering the elements of the strategic planning circle, we hope that community developers are better able to engage in strategic planning in a way that improves community capacity and social capital.

#### ELDERS AND CHILDREN

The inclusion of Elders and children is the second tenet of community building that we propose. Although Canadian society often seems to exclude the old and the young from public participation, this is unhealthy for communities. As an Elder told one of the authors,

Pay close attention to the Elders because their actions and their words are the wisdom of our ancestors, but keep an eye on the young ones because their gifts and their power is yet to unfold and they will be the leaders of our community. (D. Morriseau, personal communication, May 1997)

In addition to utilizing their accumulated knowledge, the inclusion of Elders in decision making represents the strengthening of traditional lines of authority, which are often undermined by colonialism and bureaucratic structures. Similarly, the focus on youth reaffirms their worth and value to the community, as well as to themselves.

By conscientiously including youth and Elders, we are including the community as a whole in the development process, as well as strengthening present and future community leaders. In this sense, it contributes to bonding links within the community, and makes the community networks more diverse (Table 1).

There are challenges to the inclusion of Elders and children in development in urban contexts. Unlike First Nations or other Aboriginal communities, the diversity of an urban community means that it may be unclear which Elders should be included, and how they should be identified. Community members need to be actively consulted, to avoid damaging relationships or trust with particular segments of the community. Whereas the presence of children may be a part of life in many Aboriginal communities, in urban contexts, special opportunities for their inclusion may need to be created.

#### PRAYERS AND MEDICINES

Community developers should also pay attention to the use of prayers, ceremony, and medicines in their community development process. According to Mignone and O'Neil (2005), these represent a form of symbolic capital or a representation of the identity of the community that is socially invested, typically in Elders and other community teachers and healers (Table 1). Their inclusion is a practical way of grounding the process in Aboriginal culture (Chataway, 2002).

There are two reasons that we have chosen to include ceremony and medicine as tenets of community development. Community members may be more willing to engage in a process that they see as guided by the values of traditional spirituality. The use of prayers and medicines can help to ensure that the process proceeds in a positive and healthy way, and to reassure them about the facilitator's intentions. Valuing traditional knowledge and practices can help to restore pride in Aboriginal culture and identity, which is central to the project of decolonization (Verniest, 2006). By giving a prominent place to ceremony and spirituality in public and project meetings, and other forums, we strengthen community members' beliefs in the values of their trad-

itions and, therefore, of their own importance and capacity (Verniest, 2006).

It is the facilitator's role to respectfully engage those who are seen as carrying these traditions and to invite their contributions to the process. However, traditions and practices will vary within urban Aboriginal communities, and community members may have different degrees of attachment to particular practices. It is therefore crucial that community developers take direction from community members about how they should be included in development activities.

#### RESPONSIBILITY AND OWNERSHIP

As a tenet of community development, responsibility and ownership mean that the sense of responsibility for the success of a project or program is shared amongst participating members of the development project team, including the organization leaders and facilitators, community members, and Elders and youth. Aboriginal communities are typically based on sets of reciprocal obligations between members and the collective. Those responsibilities are set out by each community and are directly tied to traditional and historical contexts (Morrisseau, 1998), so we cannot articulate specific responsibilities here. In general, though, community members must acknowledge their responsibilities and then be willing to act in their roles as community members for development to occur (Chaskin, 2001). A well-functioning and healthy community is one in which members feel responsible for the community's overall well-being, and are empowered to act to promote it.

A community development project therefore provides an opportunity to develop this sense of responsibility among members. In social capital terms it reflects an increased level of trust within social networks, as individuals come to see themselves as responsible for the well-being of the community. Empowering individuals in the development process can also provide a sense of ownership in the particular project. This commitment to the goals and processes of the project can be invaluable to its success.

## MENTORING AND ROLE MODELLING

Throughout the development process, community development facilitators should take the role of mentor to model leadership while engaging potential leaders within the community. This is sometimes a difficult task when dealing with a challenging project. However, it is important for community developers to keep in mind that they are being observed by other community members, particularly younger ones, who will model their own community-oriented behaviours after them. Facilitators will also have opportunities to mentor particular community members, to directly help them assume leadership positions.

Including community members in implementation helps to ensure that the success or failure of the vision is owned by the community members themselves, and improves the degree of trust in the process and in the community institutions. It also builds human capital, or skills and knowledge, as resources embedded in the community (Table 1).

Community developers need to maintain their focus on improving the capacity of the community to engage in further actions and development, which means making room for others to perform central tasks. In some ways, role modelling and mentoring form the backbone of community development. Despite hundreds of years of colonization, there is a great deal of capacity within Aboriginal communities. That capacity needs to be nurtured and developed through positive experiences, regardless of the success of any particular community development project.

## CONCLUSION

Building community capacity means undertaking particular projects in such a way that they not only provide a particular outcome, such as a new community centre, but that the process itself improves the ability of the community and its members to face other challenges.

Community capacity is the interaction of human capital, organizational resources, and social capital existing within a given community that can be

leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of a given community. (Chaskin, 2001, p. 295)

We also view the building of this capacity as an opportunity to bridge Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations through the transfer of knowledge and power. Whereas non-Indigenous individuals and organizations typically have resources and expertise that are useful for Aboriginal communities, we hope that a community development process would lead to more of these being located within the communities themselves.

With this vision we have provided these five tenets as a guide to those who are working as organization leaders or project facilitators in urban Aboriginal communities, which is a different context both from other urban communities and from First Nations or other Aboriginal communities. These tenets — strategic planning, Elders and children, prayers and medicines, responsibility and ownership, and mentoring and role modelling — can provide the framework for a kind of empowerment-based community development that has the community's best interests at the heart of the vision. Although we have derived them from personal experiences, we believe they are well grounded in cultural understanding and the reality of urban communities, and we have explicitly connected them to the academic literature on social capital or community capacity.

We recognize that the implementation of these principles is far from straightforward. The characteristics of urban Aboriginal communities that we have mentioned, including socio-demographic and cultural diversity and the effects of colonialism on members' sense of efficacy and self-worth, are not easily overcome. The lack of easily defined community membership and representation in urban communities makes identifying a community vision and ensuring the legitimacy of the development process more difficult than in other contexts.

We present this model in the hope that these principles can be used by community developers in urban Aboriginal communities, and that they will then use their experiences to evaluate its appropriateness and efficacy. Rather than focus on the concrete application of these principles, we have

described their cultural, theoretical, and practical underpinnings, and have attempted to ground them in an understanding of the context of development in urban Aboriginal communities. However, further research is necessary to provide practical examples of these principles in real development processes, and to evaluate their effectiveness. Moreover, the application of the tenets presented here will vary greatly between communities and particular development projects. Understanding these variations, as well as the conditions under which the model components may be more or less appropriate, will be necessary to fully realize what we think is the promise in this approach.

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