



Learning Circles: ***A Tool for Moving from Social Service to Social Change***

C2D2 2009 Conference
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Facilitated by: Linda Campbell & Trish Tchume

Inspiring Activism in the Nonprofit

Speakers for Today

- **Helen Armstrong, St. Stephens House**
- **Nury Rugeles, Delta Family Resource Centre**
- **Beverly Scarlett, Delta Family Resource Centre**
- **Shelley Zuckerman, North York Community House**

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Goals for the Session

- Introduce the idea of incorporating social change work into social services
- Introduce Learning Circles as a tool for this process
- Opportunity to reflect on organization's work and work of peers

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Who We Are



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- Help US-based nonprofits build democracy and work for progressive social change
- Work with a team across the US
- Develop and disseminate info that supports nonprofit change

Assumptions that Guide Our Work

- Systemic and structural changes
- Inadequate resources to address unmet needs
- Growing and persistent inequality and disparities
- Service constituents play integral role in working for change in their communities

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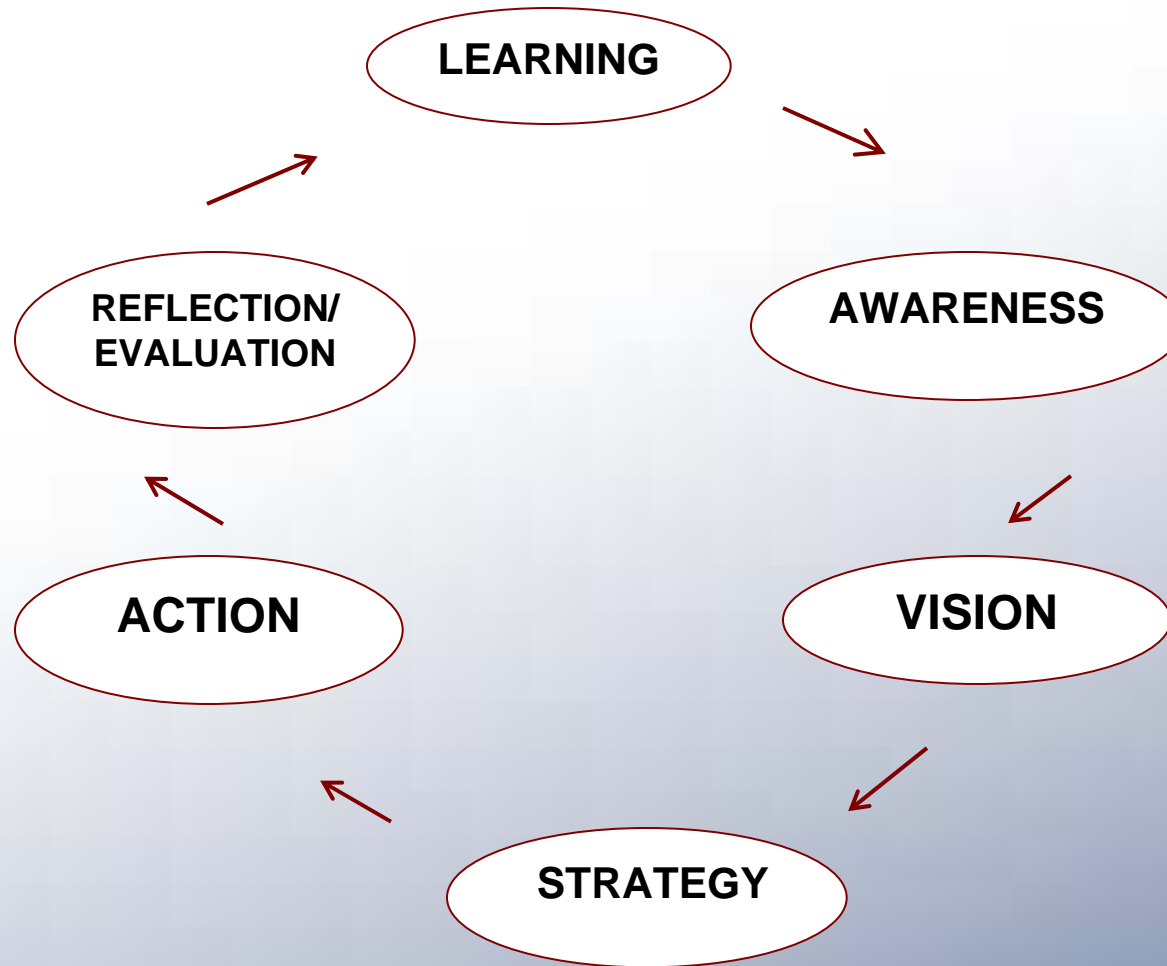
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Transformation Process

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*From *Social Service & Social Change: A Process Guide*, www.BuildingMovement.org

Learning as Part of Process

- Helps reframe the issue – focus shifts from behavior to systems
- New knowledge & a new *kind* of knowledge emerges – grows out of peoples lived experiences and dialogue
- Shifts the focus of the agency's work from internal to external
- Creates space/value for learning in the agency
- Different ownership – the people are the owners of the knowledge

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Assessing Readiness

- Is there enough of a trigger for change within the organization?
- These findings are usually the starting topics for learning circles

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- **Circle is usually formed following an assessment of agency interest/readiness in building capacity to do social change work.**
- **Circles may be made up of staff, constituents, or include both staff and constituents.**
- **Typically range from 1 to 1.5 hours and meet biweekly**
- **Begin small.**

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- **At first, designated person should assume responsibility for convening, recruiting, and setting an appropriate schedule.**
- **Safe space where either staff or constituents may give voice to important issues and concerns.**
- **Critical that staff recognize learning circle as part of building agency capacity for social change work.**

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Available Resources

Reports, Guides, & Tools available at:

www.BuildingMovement.org

Contact us:

Linda: lstewart22@aol.com

Trish: ttchume@demos.org

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Available Resources

Toronto Resources:

- **North York Community House**
Shelley Zuckerman
email: szuckerman@nych.ca
- **St. Stephens House**
Helen Armstrong
email: ahelen@ststephenshouse.com
- **Delta Family Resource Centre**
Rose Miller
email: rmiller@dfrc.ca

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Thank you!

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