

# COMMUNITY BUILDING

## A Field Guide

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge that this document has been produced on unceded indigenous territories. We strive to know and respect the Elders, languages, teachings, and rights of the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island. This educational tool has been produced with the support of the Government of Canada's Department of Canadian Heritage.

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This field guide was written and edited by Stephane Pressault and Rizwan Mohammad.

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## ABOUT THE CCMW

Our mission at the Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW) is to affirm our identities as Canadian Muslim women and promote an understanding of our lived experiences through community engagement, research, public policy, and working together for positive change. Our guiding principles include the following:

1. We are guided by the Quranic message of God's mercy and justice, and of the equality of all persons, and that each person is directly answerable to God.
2. We value a pluralistic society and foster the goal of strength and diversity within a unifying vision and the values of Canada. Our identities of being Muslim women and of diverse ethnicities and races is integral to being Canadian.
3. As Canadians, we abide by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the law of Canada.
4. We believe in the universality of human rights, which means equality and social justice, with no restrictions or discrimination based on gender or race.
5. We are vigilant in safeguarding and enhancing our identities and our rights to make informed choices.
6. We acknowledge that CCMW is one voice amongst many who speak on behalf of Muslim women and that there are others who may represent differing perspectives.

We aim to reflect the principles and spirit of the Canadian Charter of Rights of Freedoms, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. To learn more visit [www.ccmw.com](http://www.ccmw.com).



Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW)  
Le conseil canadien des femmes musulmanes (CCFM)

Canada

# CONTENTS

## 6 COMMUNITY BUILDING

The CCMW has been building community in many different ways since its founding in 1982. In this section, we clarify some key community building principles.

## 7 SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Service is what inspires us. We believe that the essence of a good leader is in their ability to serve others. We are inspired by a Muslim tradition which roots leadership in service.

## 8 RACISM

According to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., racism is the first of the “Three Evils” that must be opposed. We discuss our approach to addressing racism in this section.

## 12 POVERTY

According to Dr. King, poverty is the second of the “Three Evils” that must be opposed. We discuss our approach to addressing poverty in this section.

## 17 MILITARISM

According to Dr. King, militarism is the third of the “Three Evils” that must be opposed. We discuss our approach to addressing militarism in this section.

## 20 TOWARDS A BELOVED COMMUNITY

Taking inspiration from Dr. King, we outline an approach to work towards a “Beloved Community.”



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X meet at the U.S. Senate on March 26, 1964, after a hearing on the 1964 Civil Rights Act. (The Library of Congress)

# COMMUNITY BUILDING



Above: Young people in Montreal hold a town hall on community building.

Increasingly, communities are being politically polarized and many leaders are struggling to find the appropriate tools to sustain meaningful dialogue on issues regarding racism, poverty, and militarism. The CCMW's field guide for community building is meant to be a resource to provide ideas, tips, and tools to guide Canadian youth in their practice of building community.

We are inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's 1967 speech "America's Chief Moral Dilemma." Dr. King highlights three major evils in the world: racism, poverty, and militarism. By drawing inspiration from Dr. King, we hope to provide some suggestions for treating these evils in our communities and locating our work within an existing tradition of inter-faith inter-cultural social justice work established by our elders.

Building communities is necessarily a collaborative endeavour. We have seen in communities across Canada that community building requires immense effort, persistence, and faith. People need to believe that the faults of others can be forgiven and that people can grow. One of the biggest challenges of our times is how to treat people with whom we sharply disagree. How can we find common ground with such people? With increasing social polarization as we experience rapid technological, environmental, and political changes, many people have forgotten what it is like to live in communities with people who have genuinely different beliefs and practices from themselves. How do we build community with people who are genuinely different from ourselves? In our experience, we have found that an essential priority is to focus on service. Service entails empathy. It entails recognizing the needs of everyone and working to fulfill them.

Below: Young people in Ottawa prepare food to distribute to people experiencing homelessness.

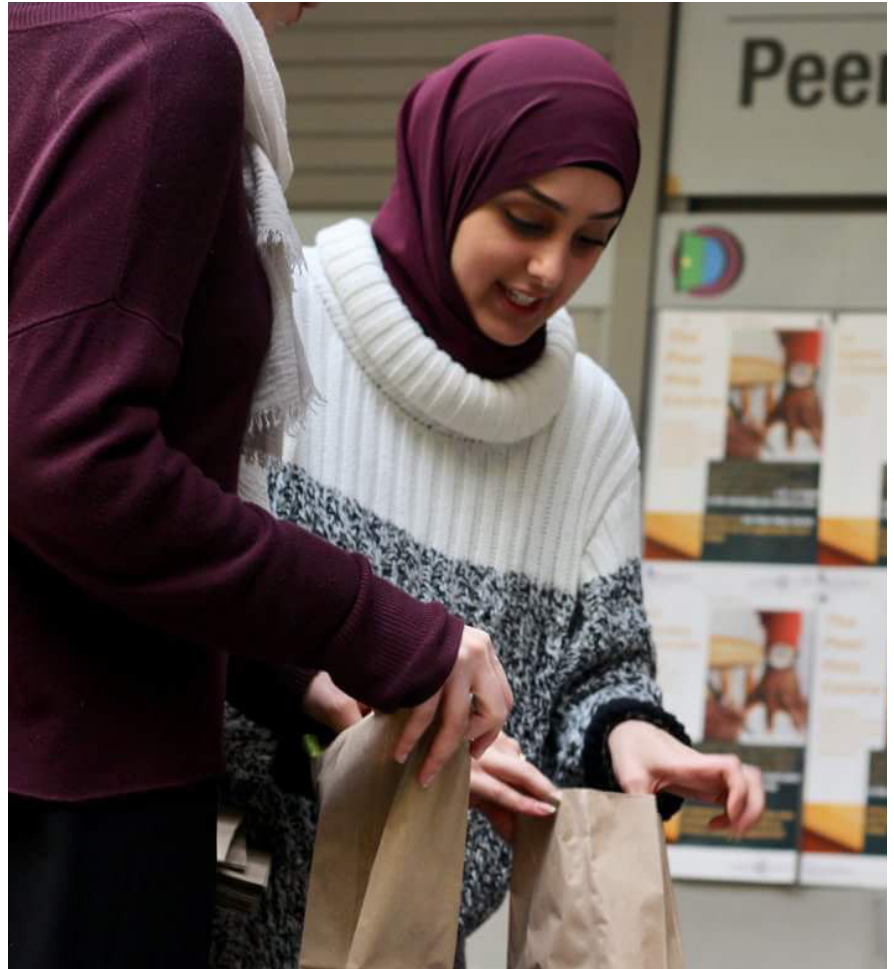
# SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Muslim tradition shows us that the essence of leadership is service. As a leader, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ conducted himself like a servant rather than a king. He was described as a person who was constantly in the service of others: with his time, his knowledge, his words, his body, and his wealth. This is how we understand the nature of leadership. To serve others sincerely and effectively requires humility. We need to strive to remain vigilant to not allow the desire for power or fame to overcome us as we work together to build community.

This is how we understand empowerment. A servant leader empowers others by recognizing their skills, sharing decision-making and other responsibilities, as well as fostering community resilience. In our experience, addressing racism, poverty and militarism is best accomplished with that kind of servant leadership mindset.

In our contemporary society, leaders are celebrated, even treated as celebrities. Films, novels, and other forms of popular art glorify the heroic. We believe that buying into that view of the leader as celebrity is a mistake for building communities characterized by service to one another.

In a world that assumes every kind of relationship in terms of a power dynamic, we have found that servant leadership can disrupt and reframe the false binaries of leader vs. follower or master vs. servant. What we have seen in our work is that leadership does not entail subordination. Rather it entails stewardship. Servant leaders steward people, communities, lands, and all creatures. This is essential to understand to adopt a servant leader mindset. To understand servant leadership in more detail, see Robert Greenleaf's 1970 essay "[The Servant as Leader](#)".



In J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, the friendship between Frodo Baggins and Samwise Gamgee is worth reflecting on in this context. Throughout the story, Sam is entrusted with serving Frodo. He must ensure that Frodo destroys the One Ring. Ultimately the One Ring is destroyed, but it is not destroyed solely through Frodo's power. It is brought to Mordor by Sam's faithful support and Frodo's willingness to trust others and share responsibility. If they did not work together, Frodo and Sam and the Fellowship of the Ring could not have accomplished their goal.

Around many well-known activists and community builders, there are countless unseen and unsung heroes. These are the servant-leaders. These are the people who build a community. A community can only be built when it is sustained by many people. By those who don't get thrown into the public light. Rather by those who serve people to bring good to others, and to next generations.

*When God sent an angel from Heaven to ask the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ whether he wanted to be a king or a servant, the Prophet ﷺ chose to be a servant (Musnad Ahmad).*

# RACISM

*“The plant of freedom has grown only a bud and not yet a flower. And there is no area of our country that can boast of clean hands in the area of brotherhood.”*  
– Martin Luther King Jr.

“Canadians have a favourite pastime, and they don’t even realize it. They like to ask—they absolutely love to ask—where you are from if you don’t look convincingly white. They want to know it, they need to know it, simply must have that information. They just can’t relax until they have pin-pointed, to their satisfaction, your geographic and racial coordinates. They can go almost out of their minds with curiosity, as when driven by the need for food, water, or sex, but once they’ve finally managed to find out precisely where you were born, who your parents were, and what your racial makeup is, then, man, do they feel better. They can breathe easy and get back to the business of living.” —  
**An excerpt from Lawrence Hill’s *Black Berry, Sweet Juice: On Being Black and White in Canada***

Canadian author Lawrence Hill calls the “where are you really from?” question as “The Question”. The Question may not come from a place of overt and intentional prejudice, bigotry, or hate, but rather from a place of uncertainty; uncertainty about our identity as Canadians. Is Canada a post-national state? Is there no such thing as a uniting Canadian identity? We want to address the idea that not having a sense of home could reinforce the perception that newcomers have no place to call their new place “home.” If our home cannot be defined, how could we expect people to feel at home?

Based on our conversations with diverse

youth across Canada for CCMW’s Community Works project (2017-2019), many of them the children of immigrants, we have heard that cultivating respect and dignity are key starting points to working against racism. Confronting racism is challenging no doubt, and working across multiple intersections of identities is important, but when we seek to work with others who have genuine differences in beliefs and experiences, we found it helpful to account for differences in terminology and approaches.

We also found it helpful to reflect on how Dr. King described racism in his last book: “Racism is a philosophy based on a contempt for life. It is the arrogant assertion that one race is the center of value and object of devotion, before which other races must kneel in submission. It is the absurd dogma that one race is responsible for all the progress of history and alone can assure the progress of the future. Racism is total estrangement. It separates not only bodies, but minds and spirits. Inevitably it descends to inflicting spiritual and physical homicide upon the out-group” (“Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?” by Martin Luther King, Jr.; Boston: Beacon Press, 1967).

By prioritizing values of respect and dignity, we found ways to work with others who had different, sometimes significantly



different beliefs from our own. To clarify, in our experience, respecting others does not necessarily mean simply agreeing with others. This is a common misconception about respect. You can respect someone who does not agree with you. Just because someone does not agree with you about a religious belief, or a cultural practice, or a policy or a law does not mean that that person is your enemy. Yet there are some underlying principles that we all must abide by. The political philosopher Karl Popper said that the limits of an open society are in intolerance.

What is intolerance? Is it intolerant to believe that someone is morally wrong? We live in a pluralistic society with different values. There is a tension between traditional and progressive values. But this tension does not need to devolve into intolerance and social polarization.

It’s important to learn to work with difference. While tolerance might not be the ideal to aim for, it might be a necessary baseline to practice. We do not attempt to adequately discuss the concept of tolerance in this guide. Rather, we suggest using the idea of tolerance to begin different conversations about how to address racism in our society. Let us ask ourselves: what can we tolerate from others who are different from ourselves while maintaining our own integrity? How can we disagree with others with the kind of civility needed to maintain a healthy civil society? What can a journey from tolerance to respect look like? What can a journey from tolerance to love look like?

These ethical questions continue to demand our attention as our society experiences increasing, and sometimes violent, social polarization.

Left: Young people in Vancouver work together to promote inclusive civic engagement.



# CIVILITY IN AN AGE OF POLARIZATION



**Civility**  
*/səˈvɪlədē/*

Word origin: late Middle English, from Old French *civilite*, from Latin *civilitas*, from *civilis* ‘relating to citizens’. In early use the term denoted the state of being a citizen and hence good citizenship or orderly behaviour. The sense ‘politeness’ arose in the mid 16th century.

If we are going to start thinking of ourselves as being at “home” here and now, we need to explore what kind of responsibilities we have as citizens to our “home.” Being a citizen means that you have the rights of citizenship, but it also calls for a commitment to practice ethical responsibility. As noted above, civility underpins good citizenship. Yet this becomes much more complex when we live in a multicultural society, in which people have different histories, and ultimately come together to build and maintain a healthy society. Since there is so much difference between people, maintaining a healthy civil society becomes more challenging, and more necessary. People’s personal histories and perspectives will inevitably clash. If good citizenship is absent, confronting difficult ideas and disagreeable perspectives are at a higher risk of resulting in insult or even injury. Paraphrasing an observation that Dr. King made after the killing of Malcolm X in February

## *How do we learn the art of civility?*

of 1965, we must learn to disagree without becoming violently disagreeable. A community-based conversation is a great way to address issues, confront difficult ideas and disagreeable perspectives while learning the art of civility. It can be a great way to practice working with difference: expressing respect and treating others with dignity. Try communicating with others offline about local community issues that affect everyone. See what happens to the quality of your interactions when you meet face to face, slow down, listen to understand, respect differences of opinion, and discuss ideas grounded in verifiable facts.



Above: Young people in Vancouver work together to promote inclusive civic engagement.

“ I’ve always wanted to organize a young men’s meetup group. I had noticed a need in my community. I would meet young men; newly married, new fathers or bachelors, lacking meaningful relationships with other men. I do a lot of community engagement and organizing, and men are most often disengaged. They don’t volunteer or they don’t even attend community events. In my work, I often sit on community committees that are 90% women.

I wanted to find a way to get men involved in community life. My first step was to think of my friends. How do I get them to come out?

I knew that a community conversation, if marketed like that, would not be successful. So I spoke to two good friends. They both lamented how they would love to read stuff together. They wanted an opportunity to read classic literature and to chat about it. So I took that as a hint and set up a book club. A very simple monthly meeting with a reading list. This was the opportunity: to get some friends to read, to commit to a monthly gathering, and through that process to build relationships between the participants.

Our gathering has lasted 6 months and has grown to a group of seven young men who

commit to meeting once a month. It may sound like a small number, but a commitment is a huge thing. I get the sense that people have committed to the group more than what we read.

We use this as an opportunity to speak about community issues like racism and poverty, and to learn to engage politically around certain issues that matter to us. The group is ethnically and religiously diverse which makes for a rich conversation. ”

- The Lotus Community Corner (Ottawa)





# WORKING WITH DIFFERENCE

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We have found that a key challenge in working with difference is coming to common objectives. Why are we working together? What vision of community can we share? Often, we communicate in abstractions. This is especially true when our newsfeeds on social media further polarize our positions. We need to look up from our phones, meet our neighbours, and learn about their needs and wants. As community builders, our priorities involve meeting people where they are at and communicating directly to discover common objectives. This is often best done by starting at the local level. Imagine that you want to work on a particular issue in your neighbourhood or your community. Avoiding the pitfalls of tokenism, convene a meeting with people who have different views and experiences than your own. Attempt to identify common ground by “moral reframing” tactics, i.e. persuading others by appealing to their core values rather than your own. What challenges do you encounter?

*Attempt to identify common ground by using moral reframing tactics.*

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Do any of the principles below help in winning an opponent to friendship?

1. Refrain from violence\* and hostility.
2. Attempt to earn others’ trust through truthfulness, openness about intentions, and practicing civility without compromising your core principles.
3. Refrain from humiliating others. Respect others and yourself.
4. Make sacrifices for your objectives visible. Ideally, make the suffering of those most oppressed visible.
5. Carry on constructive work. Address parts of the problem you can address. Make improvements where you can. Participate in activities regarded by everyone as benefiting everyone.
6. Maintain communication with the other
7. Demonstrate trust in others.
8. Practice empathy, goodwill, mercy, and patience toward others.

Adapted from “Gandhi’s Methods for Converting an Opponent” in the Citizen’s Handbook: <http://www.citizenshandbook.org/gandhi.html>.

\*See also Dr. King’s principles of nonviolence below.

Left: Young people in Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Vancouver work together to build community.

# POVERTY

*“[We] now have the resources, we now have the skills, we now have the techniques to get rid of poverty. And the question is whether our nation has the will ...”*  
– Martin Luther King Jr.

How do we develop the social and political will to eradicate poverty? If we have the resources, the skills, and the techniques, there is a breakdown happening between what we know and what we can do. One approach to address developing the socio-political will to address poverty is to mobilize our knowledge. This is easier said than done, but based on our work across Canada, we have found three tactics to be especially helpful in developing educational programming to address poverty: (1) questioning assumptions, (2) listening campaigns, and (3) working with mentors.

## 1. Questioning Assumptions:

We need to begin by knowing what we are addressing. We always begin projects with underlying assumptions that feed into our work. We make assumptions about ourselves (e.g. I am not qualified enough to do such work) or about others (e.g. they need this particular service that I have to offer). When working with people, it is important to make sure we know what kind of baggage we are coming to the work with and what others really need.

## 2. Listening Campaigns:

Instead of a needs assessment approach, we have found more benefit in community asset/resource mapping methods. To maximize impact, it has been important for us to listen carefully to others through conducting listening campaigns. Listening campaigns can help not only identify but also verify assets/resources. Information gathering is also the first step in Dr. King's six steps of nonviolent social change.

## 3. Working with Mentors:

Through relationships with experienced mentors, we can gain support and guidance from others who have effectively worked for the kind of change that we wish to see in our communities.

“When we first proposed the idea of an anthology featuring emerging young creative writers reimagining poverty to the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, we thought it would be easy enough to find writers and artists to participate. After all, artists and writers know better than anyone the effect of a shrinking middle class on

our quality of life.

Submissions filled up our inboxes. We didn't make it a requirement to submit and work on poverty because we wanted selected participants to take workshops together, and collaborate to address a range of subtopics. But we were excited about the art and writing samples sent to us, anxious to find out what our participants would do with reimagining poverty. Then the trouble started.

It started like writer's block, but soon many of our original contributors started leaving the project and had to be replaced with others. Some were apologetic, some were frustrated. One poet claimed that reimagining poverty felt like “encouraging” it. He struggled to grasp the themes; they struggled to like the theme.

If we're honest with each other, there are only two real responses to poverty that make long-term sense: a redistribution of wealth and/or adding societal value to living with less.

The first is generally what we cling to as a necessary evil with the most potential. But since the solution relies on proxies and third-parties, it's also more vulnerable to sketchy ethical practices and the whims of elected officials.

The second is incomprehensible to people who envision success as a measure of worth. It involves changing attitudes, which, believe it or not, is a lot harder to do. But, done right, it can actually empower those who live with less instead of condescending to them.

Our anthology is by no means making a case for one solution over the other, but the majority of voices included do have the experience with poverty, and the way they choose to write about it may disturb your preconceived notions if you don't ... or provide some support for you if you do.

It's important to remember that the “eradication” of poverty would first require the eradication of wealth. And if this is not something we're prepared to do (either to preserve freedom of choice for the wealthy or protect our own assets/ambitions, whichever), we're going to have to learn to make more of less.

-Words, Rhymes & Life (Toronto)

Right: Young people in Ottawa prepare food to distribute to people at a local shelter before learning that a gourmet chef prepares meals there.



# LISTENING CAMPAIGNS

The Green Room's 2019 listening campaign has been a series of one-on-one 1-hour long interviews with youth to capture issues, needs, and themes relevant to youth in Edmonton. This process sought to make The Green Room even better and ensure we stayed relevant and reached youth who need us.

“ The listening campaign began in December 2018 with an invitation to youth, community leaders, and programming experts in Edmonton to form a steering committee that would brainstorm the questions we want to ask youth. After this workshop session, The Green Room staff then narrowed down a list of roughly 45 questions to fall under 7 overarching themes. From the steering committee, individuals volunteered to be listeners that would individually reach out to youth over the month of January. At the end of the month, a plenary of listeners was held to dissect youth responses and narrow 3-4 themes that were gleaned. Based on these themes, The Green Room created a program plan in February that was presented to the steering committee and our funders at the City of Edmonton. This program plan formed the basis for The Green Room's programming in 2019.

## Importance

By listening to youth directly and understanding their lived experiences, we ensured that our programming was based on the actual needs of youth, rather than our assumptions or perceptions. Youth responses informed the decisions we made going forward. We are committed to making this a regular practice so that we consistently respond to the most relevant issues, needs, and themes.

## Challenges

The main assumptions of the listening campaign were that listeners would be committed to conducting interviews with youth, and that youth would respond to the 7 questions that we brainstormed.



As the lead of the listening campaign, part of my role was to maintain regular check-ins and open lines of communication with the listeners so that we met the goals of this process. If we found that youth were not responding well to the questions, we would rework our approach in the plenary of listeners.



- The Green Room (Edmonton)

## SEVEN THEMES:

### 1. DEMOGRAPHICS

E.g. How would you describe what you do?

### 2. SELF-EXPRESSION

E.g. How does what you share online express who you are?

### 3. COMMUNITY

E.g. If your community was a hockey game or a movie production, what would be your role? A

player? An actor? A coach? A director? Managing equipment? Managing the set? Selling food? Relaxing by yourself outside?

### 4. RELATIONSHIPS

E.g. What is the most meaningful relationship you have? What makes it so important?

### 5. WELLBEING

E.g. What do you do to take care of yourself?

### 6. GROWTH

E.g. How do you challenge yourself? What is never, ever discussed in the places you go to that bothers you?

### 7. ADVICE

E.g. What other questions would you have liked us to ask you? What do you wish your community could do for you that it isn't doing right now?

# WORKING WITH MENTORS



A mentor is an experienced trusted advisor and guide. We have found mentorship to be essential to sustain effective community building. While a person might be a good human being, knowledgeable, skilled, and effective in their profession, how can we know that they will make a good mentor in the context of empowering youth to build community? Here are some things to consider:

## 1. Service

Does your prospective mentor have a track record of serving youth? What does their service to youth look like? Are they controlling or supportive? Do they put what is in your best interests ahead of their own? Would working together be mutually beneficial?

## 2. Age

Sometimes we might think a mentor needs to be much older and much more knowledgeable than ourselves but that does not always need to be the case. We have found it important for a mentor to have more experience even if they are close to our age or even younger than ourselves. Be careful of ageism towards those younger than you! A mentor also does not always have to have more knowledge than you if they have different knowledge from you that helps you build community more effectively

together. Be prepared to go outside of your comfort zone to work effectively with people who are of a different generation than you.

## 3. Purpose

Do you and your prospective mentor share a vision for community? Do you share common principles and values? It is important to know what your larger vision, purpose, and guiding principles are in your community building work so that when you communicate with prospective mentors, partners, and allies, you can seek and find common ground while respecting and learning from each others' differences.

## 4. Communication

Does your prospective mentor communicate disrespectfully with you? Are they unclear or dishonest with you? Do they make jokes at your expense? Do they try to manipulate you emotionally? Do they casually threaten to quit working with you if you do not agree with them? Do they pressure you to remunerate them in ways that are not budget-feasible for you? Do they not return your messages within reasonable timeframes? If your prospective mentor communicates in any of these ways with you, keep looking for other mentors.

Above: Alia Hogben (pictured left), former Executive Director of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, has been an outstanding mentor to generations of young Canadians.

## 5. Trust

Building trust with a mentor can take a lot of time. You might need to work with them on multiple projects or for a few years before you achieve the kind of trust that is most needed to build community beautifully. Building trust can be done through many tactics, including but not limited to the following: listening with an open mind, taking advice given, following up on action items, being responsible with money, acknowledging mistakes, and finishing what you start. Sometimes, you need to treat your relationship like an improv game. Say “yes, and” even when you sometimes feel like saying “no” because it is taking you out of your comfort zone. That said, you should not accept pressure to do anything that would be harmful to your wellbeing.

Throughout your relationships with mentors who support your community building work, be committed to being flexible, cooperative, and pragmatic. Be open to changing not just your communities, but in working together, changing each other.



Above: Rizwan Mohammad (back row, far left) pictured with Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale (front row, centre) and members of Public Safety Canada's National Expert Committee on Countering Radicalization to Violence.

**SIX STEPS OF NONVIOLENT SOCIAL CHANGE**

(From a summary by The King Center: <http://thekingcenter.org/king-philosophy>)

The Six Steps for Nonviolent Social Change are based on Dr. King's nonviolent campaigns and teachings that emphasize love in action. Dr. King's philosophy of nonviolence, as reviewed in the Six Principles of Nonviolence (see opposite page), guide these steps or phases or cycles for social and interpersonal change.

**INFORMATION GATHERING:** To understand and articulate an issue, problem or injustice facing a person, community, or institution you must do research. You must investigate and gather all vital information from all sides of the argument or issue so as to increase your understanding of the problem. You must become an expert on your opponent's position.

**EDUCATION:** It is essential to inform others, including your opposition, about your issue. This minimizes misunderstandings and gains you support and sympathy.

**PERSONAL COMMITMENT:** Daily check and affirm your faith in the philosophy and methods of nonviolence. Eliminate hidden motives and prepare yourself to accept suffering, if necessary, in your work for justice.

**DISCUSSION/NEGOTIATION:** Using grace, humor and intelligence, confront the other party with a list of injustices and a plan for addressing and resolving these injustices. Look for what is positive in every action and statement the opposition makes. Do not seek to humiliate the opponent but to call forth the good in the opponent.

**DIRECT ACTION:** These are actions taken when the opponent is unwilling to enter into, or remain in, discussion/negotiation. These actions impose a "creative tension" into the conflict, supplying moral pressure on your opponent to work with you in resolving the injustice.

**RECONCILIATION:** Nonviolence seeks friendship and understanding with the opponent. Nonviolence does not seek to defeat the opponent. Nonviolence is directed against evil systems, forces, oppressive policies, unjust acts, but not against persons. Through reasoned compromise, both sides resolve the injustice with a plan of action. Each act of reconciliation is one step closer to the 'Beloved Community.'

Based on Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" in *Why We Can't Wait* (1963).

Militarism is not a philosophy of self-defense. It is the belief that a group, usually a nation or any large organization of people, should build and maintain a strong military and be prepared to use it aggressively. Militarism is about conquering, not defending. Militarization can be a process that takes different forms. In a sense, civilians who are radicalized to violence are militarized. This can be seen in many examples of far-right wing extremist violence. Institutions of the nation state like police services can also be militarized. You can learn more about that by reading Radley Balko's book "The Rise of the Warrior Cop: the Militarization of America's Police Forces" (2014). Militarism, when embraced by governments, can also lead.



# MILITARISM

*“...when a nation becomes obsessed with the guns of war, social programs inevitably suffer. People become insensitive to pain and agony in their own midst ...”*

*– Martin Luther King Jr.*

Dr. King argued that “A true revolution of values will lay hands on the world order and say of war- ‘This way of settling differences is not just.’ This way of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation’s homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into the veins of peoples normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.” (“Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?” by Martin Luther King, Jr.; Boston: Beacon Press, 1967).

One of the outcomes of community building is community safety. This cannot be achieved if violence goes unchecked. If violence is encountered, people are within their rights to engage in self-defense.

Militarism is not a philosophy of self-defense. It is the belief that a group, usually a nation or any large organization of people, should build and maintain a strong military and be prepared to use it aggressively. Militarism is about conquering, not defending. Militarization can be a process that takes different forms. In a sense, civilians who are radicalized to violence are militarized. This can be seen in many examples of far-right wing extremist violence.

Institutions of the nation state like police services can also be militarized. You can learn more about that by reading Radley Balko’s book “The Rise of the Warrior Cop: the Militarization of America’s Police Forces” (2014). Militarism, when embraced by governments, can also lead to aggressive and unjust wars. All of these kinds of militarism need to be opposed to build safe and peaceful communities.

Public Safety Canada’s National Strategy on Countering Radicalization to Violence defines two key terms we are concerned with when we think about addressing the kind of social polarization that can feed militarism in a society:

1. Radicalization to violence is the process by which individuals and groups adopt an ideology and/or belief system that justifies the use of violence in order to advance their cause.
2. Violent extremism is a term describing the beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve extreme ideological, religious or political goals.

Mitigating violence in a civil society is difficult work that requires cooperation from government, law enforcement, and civilians. It can often feel like we are regressing as a society and becoming more violent. When you are confronted by racism, when you witness police brutality, when you see injustice in our courts, it can be tempting to conclude that the system is broken and that violence against your political opponents is justifiable. But that is the way of despair. If you have ever felt that way, consider Dr. King’s philosophy of nonviolence as a method for achieving social change (see opposite page).

## SIX PRINCIPLES OF NONVIOLENCE

(From a summary by The King Center:  
<http://thekingcenter.org/king-philosophy/>)

Fundamental tenets of Dr. King’s philosophy of nonviolence are described in his first book, *Stride Toward Freedom* (1958). The six principles include:

**PRINCIPLE ONE:** Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people. It is active nonviolent resistance to evil. It is aggressive spiritually, mentally and emotionally.

**PRINCIPLE TWO:** Nonviolence seeks to win friendship and understanding. The end



Above: Rizwan Mohammad (left) speaking in Toronto with police officers about community-based tactics to prevent radicalization to violence.

result of nonviolence is redemption and reconciliation. The purpose of nonviolence is the creation of the Beloved Community.

**PRINCIPLE THREE:** Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice not people. Nonviolence recognizes that evildoers are also victims and are not evil people. The nonviolent resister seeks to defeat evil not people.

**PRINCIPLE FOUR:** Nonviolence holds that suffering can educate and transform. Nonviolence accepts suffering without retaliation. Unearned suffering is redemptive and has tremendous educational and transforming possibilities.

**PRINCIPLE FIVE:** Nonviolence chooses love instead of hate. Nonviolence resists violence of the spirit as well as the body. Nonviolent love is spontaneous, unmotivated, unselfish and creative.

**PRINCIPLE SIX:** Nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice. The nonviolent resister has deep faith that justice will eventually win. Nonviolence believes that God is a God of justice.

Addressing militarism requires listening with an open mind, being pragmatic, and working for gradual change that most benefits those who suffer the most harm from violence. We have to critically engage decision-makers in our society to mitigate the harms of state-sanctioned forms of violence. We have to find nonviolent ways to work together if we are to build a beloved community.

# FOSTERING CIVIC PRIDE LOCALLY

We would like to challenge folks to address militarism through fostering civic pride locally. Dr. King argued that the three evils of racism, poverty, and militarism were intimately connected, and we believe he was right. But we also need to set realistic expectations when we are attempting to address the three evils. That is why we encourage you to think and act locally.

The purpose of this activity is to discover and empower your neighbourhood assets and instill a sense of civic pride in yourself and your neighbours.

1. With a group of family members, friends and/or neighbours, draw a map of your neighbourhood with some clear boundaries.
2. Identify places that people use: coffee shops, parks, community centres, malls, streets, sidewalks, stores, religious spaces, libraries, etc. Be creative; some neighbourhoods have an abundance of these while others, unfortunately, are underserved. If that is the case though, find places that people tend to gather.
3. Call these places/spaces your “civic assets” and reflect on them. Does your group use them? If not, why not? Why don't you use them? What would encourage you to use them? Write all these down and note them.
4. Title another sheet of paper “civic commons” and ask your group what would make you become a caretaker or a steward of this place. What actions can you commit to, to encourage you to take care of one of these spaces?
5. Encourage a small group to become



Above: Sunday Pedestrian Day at Kensington Market, Toronto.

stewards of one of the commons and identify three opportunities in the next three months that you will use to transform your community “civic asset” to a community “civic commons.”

6. In three months, meet with your group and report back.

## Compare notes with your group:

1. What were the challenges you encountered in organizing family members? Friends? Neighbours?
2. Did you all agree on what the map of your neighbourhood looked like? What were some differences between you? How did you address your different points of view?
3. Did you all agree on what constituted civic assets? Were you all proud of the same civic assets? Why or why not?
4. What were some of the challenges you encountered in determining what actions to commit to in taking care of civic commons?
5. Over the course of three months, what challenges did volunteer stewards of their respective civic commons encounter?
6. What will help you foster civic pride locally in the long term?

# LOCAL ACTION, GLOBAL CONCERN

“ Canadian society is diverse. Finding unity in diversity is a challenge that we have seen in our work. People live together, work together and play together in our cities. But we have heard that people feel like our society is becoming increasingly polarized. Is diversity fragmenting our society?

We want to say no. But that may not be the case. A healthy society, or to bring it down a notch, a healthy community, requires local

## *Starting small is key.*

participation. A cohesive, resilient and thriving diverse society is one that prioritizes local action, but holds deep global concern.

When we first started building CityHive, we had a few focus groups with different groups of youth in the city. We went through our ideas for projects, a mission, vision etc., and one of the elements that we went through and established together were values. By values, we mean what are the underlying guidelines within all of our work and projects? One of our core values that was established then was inclusion - to make sure our work wasn't serving a select few [who perhaps already have access to opportunities], but was truly inclusive. In addition, we made sure that when we were establishing the goals of a project or initiative or making assumptions, we were building those goals together with partner organizations and individuals who knew best.

More concretely, when we are working on building a project, program or initiative from scratch, we typically do a full scan of who's already doing the work or who is this relevant to, and either convene a conversation together or have one on one conversations. When we recruit participants for a program, same thing - we make a full list of organizations and networks (most of whom we aim to have preexisting relationships with) that represent diverse groups of youth in the city that we then reach out to (e.g. organizations that are Indigenous-led, that work with refugee youth, or youth-in-care, for example).

- CityHive (Vancouver)

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Left: Young people explore opportunities for greater local civic engagement in Vancouver.



# TOWARDS A BELOVED COMMUNITY

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*“The aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the beloved community. The aftermath of nonviolence is redemption. The aftermath of nonviolence is reconciliation. The aftermath of violence are emptiness and bitterness. This is the thing I’m concerned about. Let us fight passionately and unrelentingly for the goals of justice and peace. But let’s be sure that our hands are clean in this struggle. Let us never fight with falsehood and violence and hate and malice, but always fight with love...”*

*– Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

This field guide is a starting point towards realizing a beloved community. We hope that community builders can take inspiration from it, in the same way that we drew inspiration from the folks we worked with across Canada and beyond. It is a starting point because the path towards a Beloved Community is a long one. But we persist with hope as we follow in the footsteps of those who have walked this path before us.

Dr. King calls us to “fight passionately and unrelentingly for the goals of justice and peace.” That for certain is clear. What we have shared in this field guide to community building includes suggestions, ideas, and recommendations based on our experiences to guide community builders to eradicate the three evils that Dr. King warned about: racism, poverty, and militarism. Throughout this guide, we hope that you find ideas to help you work for justice and peace. However, we also want to make it clear that, as Dr. King stated, “let’s be sure that our hands are clean in this struggle.” We cannot fight evil with evil. As Dr. King argued: “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

It seems today that many people have forgotten how to fight with love. It pains us to see sincere young people throughout Canada start off with good intentions and end up filled with anger and cynicism. We understand that the world at times is bleak. But bleakness, cynicism, and despair cannot be the foundation on which to build a healthy community.

A community’s foundation needs to be something else: something real that binds us together, something true, good, and beautiful that can be experienced by everyone. We contend that to build a community that is peaceful and just, it needs to be built with love.

If you believe in the wellbeing of your fellow citizens, then seek the wellbeing of your neighbour. If you care about climate change, then strive to live sustainably. If you are concerned about social isolation, then visit your local seniors home or volunteer to offer homework help to children struggling in school. These are all tangible expressions of the Beloved Community that you can engage in through taking personal responsibility. In our experience, when we have taken personal responsibility to act on a small scale locally, we have found ourselves engaging with other like-minded individuals, and consequently, it has been easier for us to work collectively for change.

According to The King Center (est. 1968), “The Beloved Community” is a term that was first coined in the early 20th Century by the philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce. Dr. King “popularized the term and invested it with a deeper meaning which has captured the imagination of people of goodwill all over the world.” The Beloved Community is not an abstract theory. It has existed before in many places and can exist again. The Three Evils fragment and erode our communities but we can build them again. We can do better. We must.

This guide is only a starting point. It is our starting point and you are welcome to make it your starting point. Reach out to us and we will try to help as best we can. No matter where you are, know that there are people nearby (maybe closer than you think) who are working towards building a beloved community every day.

We can join them. We can inherit from our elders. We can reconcile. Strangers can become friends. To realize this takes work, patience, and ultimately, it takes love.