



# Strategic Planning

## Summary Report

Friday, October 16, and Friday, October 23, 2020

# Strategic Planning - Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre, October 2020

## Introduction

Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre (the Center) is located in Southeast London, Ontario. It is non profit, neighbourhood-based, organization that offers a wide range of programs and services in the Glen Cairn/Pond Mills community in southeast London. Staff work with people of all ages to strengthen community by providing resources, family support, adult, and children & youth programs and a range of volunteer opportunities. In order to reach as many community members as possible, programs are offered at several community locations in addition to our main Centre at 244 Adelaide St. S. The Centre has been in place with a Board and Executive Director since 1987.

Recently, the Centre has undergone significant change in Board membership and has put in place a new Board Chair and Co-Chair. A new Executive Director had also been appointed to lead the day to day direction. As a result of these changes and the age of the previous Strategic Plan, in early 2020, the Board and Executive Director decided it was time to renew the Centre's Strategic Plan and initiated the process. The previous plan was created approximately 5 years ago (see Appendix 1 for a copy of the Mission, Vision, Values and Goals.)

From the beginning it was established that the Strategic Planning process would be collaborative and include various perspectives and input from those who are impacted by or have the ability to impact the Centre's work and direction. The Strategic Planning process consisted of the following elements:

- Interviews with 15 participants that reflect a range of perspectives including:
  - Board (3)
  - Staff (3)
  - Volunteers (3)
  - Youth (2)
  - Partners (2)
  - Funders (2)
- Meeting with Board Executive to review results messages of the interviews.
- Design of the agenda with Executive Director and confirmed by Board based on interviews
- Survey of availability of participants for Online sessions
- Distribution of workshop materials in advance
- Hosting 2, one day Online sessions, one week apart
- Summary Report

## Strategic Planning - Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre, October 2020

The following is an overview of the results of the interviews and the 2 day planning session.

## Strategic Planning - Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre, October 2020

### Preparation for the Sessions

#### Summary of Interviews

The purpose of the interviews was to gain a better understanding of how to design the Strategic Planning session. What are the hopes and expectations of the participants for the Strategic Planning process? What needs to be known in designing the agenda and the planning for the session? A number of questions were drafted and used as the basis for the interviews. Questions were circulated to the interviewees in advance.

## Strategic Planning - Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre, October 2020

The following diagram is an overview of the results of the interviews.



Participants identified information that would be useful to know in advance. The following were provided in advance of the session through email or a package.

- Agenda and questions in the form of a workbook were distributed in advance
- Summary of interviews in a graphic form was provided at the first session. Board Executives, the Executive Director and Accountant were provided with a brief of the interview (unattributed highlights/messages).
- Current Strategic Plan was circulated with the workbook in advance of the session.
- Summary of Services and Programs was distributed in an email in advance of the session.

## Strategic Planning - Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre, October 2020

- Who GCCRC Serves – summary provided in advance of session
- Demographics of the area – provided in advance of the session based on the City data and census data
- Specific technology needed for the session – participants were advised in advance that Zoom would be used.

Participants requested that the agenda be strength based and that there be a way to acknowledge the difficulties experienced in the past. However, there was a desire to focus on relationship building and moving forward in a positive way. There are several new Board members and there is an interest in getting to know each, staff members and other participants. They liked the idea of using graphics to engage conversation and document the conversations. They felt that the approach to have good questions, small group dialogue and sharing was a good process.

The participants also acknowledged several major topics that they wanted to cover including:

- Partnerships and collaboration
- Support for the Board, Executive Director and staff in having the knowledge and skills to move forward. Several people talked about the need to address governance and legal requirements to ensure that the Board and E.D. are aware of requirements, funding reports and timing.
- The need to talk more about what is needed to support families and in particular youth.
- Community profile – this is about the need to increase the presence of GCCRC in the community so that youth and family are aware of the Centre and what it is able to do to support the community. Communications and social media presence were also mentioned.

Some observations of what was heard:

- Everyone interviewed is committed to making Glen Cairn Resource Centre a success
- The recent changes to a new Executive Director is seen as positive and the Centre is seen to be moving forward in an encouraging way.
- The new Board members are mostly unknown to the funders and partners so there may be some uncertainty as to their direction for the Centre.
- Historically, the ongoing operation of the Centre has created stress for staff and several valued staff members have left over time due to the leadership. There is a long history of dysfunctional relationships with funders and partners and this has created a lack of trust in the Centre. Funders historically have not been satisfied with the documentation provided to support grants and funds although they are seeing that this is changing. There is hope that this will not be an issue now

## Strategic Planning - Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre, October 2020

given the new appointments in leadership and the direction that the Centre has taken in the past year. Funders and partners have started to see this shift taking place.

- The volunteers strongly believe in the value of the Centre. The community has stepped up during Covid-19 and there several additional volunteers at the Centre for the food distribution in particular.
- Since the onset of Covid-19, there has been an increase in partnering with other agencies for the provision of services especially in the delivery of food.
- Community members appreciate the programs and services offered online as this is timely, and efficient for them.
- Work is needed to strengthen the Board and support the Executive Director.
- Ongoing and transparent communication is needed with the Community, Funders and Partners to raise the profile of the Centre and rebuild relationships.
- The youth interviewees expressed many ideas for enhancing the Centre's offerings to youth in the community.
- Participants expressed a strong interest to host the session in person if at all possible.

Everyone wants to walk away from the Strategic Planning with a clear focus, priorities, and actionable, measurable processes in place. Although the intention was to hold a face to face session if possible, it became clear that this would not be possible. After sending out a poll on possible dates and half day sessions, it was necessary to host two one day virtual sessions.

### Designing the Agenda

The agenda distributed to the participants is included in Appendix 3. The agenda was designed to move the group through a series of conversations. Interviewees requested that the agenda include relationship-building so there were opportunities to get to know each other (Introductions and uncovering of gifts), and to develop shared values. Each part of the agenda was designed with small group discussions with different participants each time, and opportunities to share with each other as a group and understand each other's perspectives.

### Day 1 Laying the Foundation

Day 1 included exercises designed to:

- Get to know each other
- Develop shared values
- Create a History of the Centre
- Create a landscape of the current environment (strengths/successes, opportunities and possibilities)

## Strategic Planning - Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre, October 2020

### Day 2 Vision, Mission and Goals

Initially, the second day was designed to focus on Vision and Goals. There was the intention of the Board developing the Mission Statement separately from the session (either before or after). However, after Day 1, it was decided that the second day should provide for the development of a Mission Statement. In order to do that, the detailed discussion on Goals was removed from the agenda. The second day included the following:

- Review of Day 1
- Vision statement
- Strategic Directions/Priority Goals
- Mission Statement

### Creation of Documents

Participants were given a package for the 2-day session that included:

- A workbook and agenda
- Graphic templates for various exercises
- Overview of Strategic Planning process
- Background material requested prior to the session.

### Our Gifts

Participants worked in pairs/threes to introduce each other and ask a series of questions. They introduced each other and their gifts. The following diagram shows the gifts that are available at the Centre with the Board, staff, volunteers, partners and funders. There is experience working in not for profits, people with lived experience, with advocacy experience, and having an Indigenous perspective. Both staff and Board members are connected to other agencies, and have history with the organization, either as a volunteer, staff or Board member. Partners and funders have experience working with diversity and collaboration. They are big thinkers and visionaries. Community members have a good sense of what community means and are relatable. Staff indicated they have an understanding of community needs and are adaptable, nimble and creative.





### Our Shared Values

It's important for an organization to develop Values that will guide the Centre and that are developed and shared by the leadership, staff and others. Participants developed a list of values in small groups and then shared with each other. In summary the **Values** that were identified include:

- Compassion and empathy
- Ability to be adaptable, proactive, responsive, and forward thinking
- Inter-connectiveness and collaboration with the community and partners
- Inclusive – responding to needs rather than specific individuals
- Creative – the ability to do a lot with a little
- Fostering a sense of belonging and being welcoming by using kindness and humanity
- Use of a grassroots approach
- Building accountability and trust by doing what we say we will do.
- Integrity through listening and following through
- Shared learning including applying a community development approach and developing programs that are based on needs, empowerment of the community and valuing assets.



### Our History

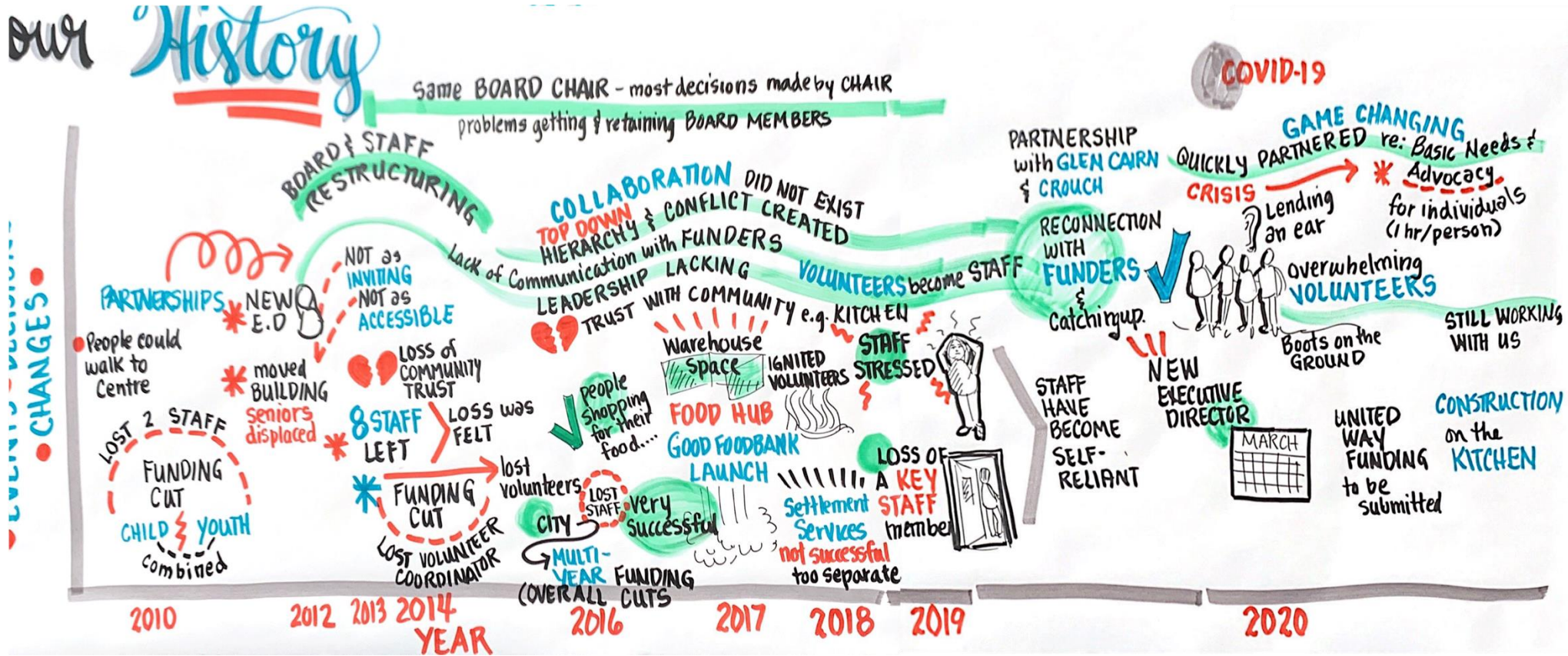
This part of the agenda focused on developing a shared understanding of the history of the organization. Although the Centre has been operation since 1987, the participants have various years of experience from a few months to a decade. The participants openly shared their knowledge and understanding of the organization during the years from 2010 to present. What these conversations revealed is a difficult history that started with funding cuts resulting in loss of staff and the combining of the child and youth programs. The building had been located from a location that was easily accessible especially for seniors who could walk to it. The building was moved around 2011/12 to its current location and this has resulted in the seniors being displaced and a space that was not as welcoming nor as accessible as it previously was. Around the same time, a new Executive Director was retained. Throughout the tenure of this Executive Director there was a restructuring of the Board and staff. This resulted in a decline in the morale of staff and 8 staff members left in 2012. In addition, there were additional funding cuts and the Volunteer Coordinator left. The following years resulted in an unstable Board, with problems getting and retaining Board members. The Board Chair made most of the decisions.

The result of this top down and hierarchical leadership during this time was loss of community trust, decreased staff morale, and loss of partnership opportunities. During this time the Centre started a settlement services program but it was not successful. In 2016, the funding from the City changed and it became multi-year. On a positive note, the food programs started in the mid 2010s were successful and ignited a renewal of volunteer interest. The warehouse became a food hub and people were able to shop for their food and choose their own foods.

The Centre started to turn around in 2019. The Executive Director was on an extended leave. Staff had become self-reliant. Although a key staff person left in 2019, the acting Executive Director began to change the direction of the Centre. Partnerships began to be rebuilt and the Centre reconnected with funders. The acting Executive Director was appointed to the position in early 2020. When Covid-19 hit the community in March, 2020, the Centre stepped up and initiated food distribution programs and online programs in partnership with other community based organizations. There was an overwhelming volunteer response during this time which has continued through the pandemic.

Talking about the history of the Centre was extremely difficult and emotional for those who shared and those who listened. However, the ability to tell the stories of what has happened and to have others listen and give understanding to what was experienced was the beginning of healing for everyone. Although painful, there was agreement that this was an important process to go through.

# Strategic Planning - Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre, October 2020



## The Current Landscape

The current landscape includes the following elements:

- Successes/Strengths of the Centre
- Trends that are influencing or have the ability to influence the work of the Centre
- Opportunities that are available now and can be taken, and
- Possibilities for the Centre and its' work

## Successes/Strengths

Overall, one of the biggest successes has been the food program including the food box program and the Thanksgiving dinner. The online ZOOM programs have done well especially during this time of the pandemic and it has broken down barriers so more people can participate. The community has become more aware of the Centre and the Centre has reached more people, especially youth. There has been more staff stability and the existing staff are small in number and nimble. There are emerging partnerships between agencies to collaboratively share spaces and deliver programs and services.

## Trends

- Covid has resulted in working virtually at the beginning. There is now a combination of virtual programs and staff directed programs (when this is possible).
- It's now okay to talk about mental health, especially for youth.
- Funding allocations are changing and there is some uncertainty over this.
- There has been more of an exploration of partnerships and agencies/organizations working together.
- The demographics of the neighbourhood is changing and there is more need for settlement services.
- There is an increase in the community of those who identify as Indigenous (an increase of 53%)

## Opportunities

- Bring back settlement services and advocacy work, and the Centre could be a space to teach English and language skills
- Make the Centre a space that is welcoming. It could be a social space and a place for mentoring in the community.
- The kitchen could be used for industrial purposes, for food for seniors, and for training food skills.
- Explore the City's Employment Areas and Early Years programs.
- Connect with the Ontario Works program and connect with the Getting Ahead and Circles programs.
- Develop a fundraising plan led by the Board

## Strategic Planning - Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre, October 2020

- Alter the Centre's space and programs to welcome Indigenous community members
- Tell stories to engage differently, especially with families.

### Possibilities

- Partnerships with:
  - Settlement Services
  - Mental health supports to connect clients to programs
  - Parenting and family programming
- Use of the warehouse for food processing and as a secondary food hub
- Funding:
  - Diversity funding
  - Develop better relationships with funders
- Engage with the community in different way
  - A shift to longer term programming
- An opportunity to restart the work of the Centre and to heal

# Strategic Planning - Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre, October 2020





## Reflections on Day 1

The following diagram reflects the thoughts of the group at the end of Day 1. There was an appreciation of the history of the Centre and what the Centre is all about but also an appreciation of what staff have experienced over the years. Board Director Joe Antoine shared a teaching about healing and talked about the new growth that happens after decomposition. Participants talked about the importance of communication, listening to each other and understanding. There was an appreciation of different perspectives and of having community members, funders and partners at the session.



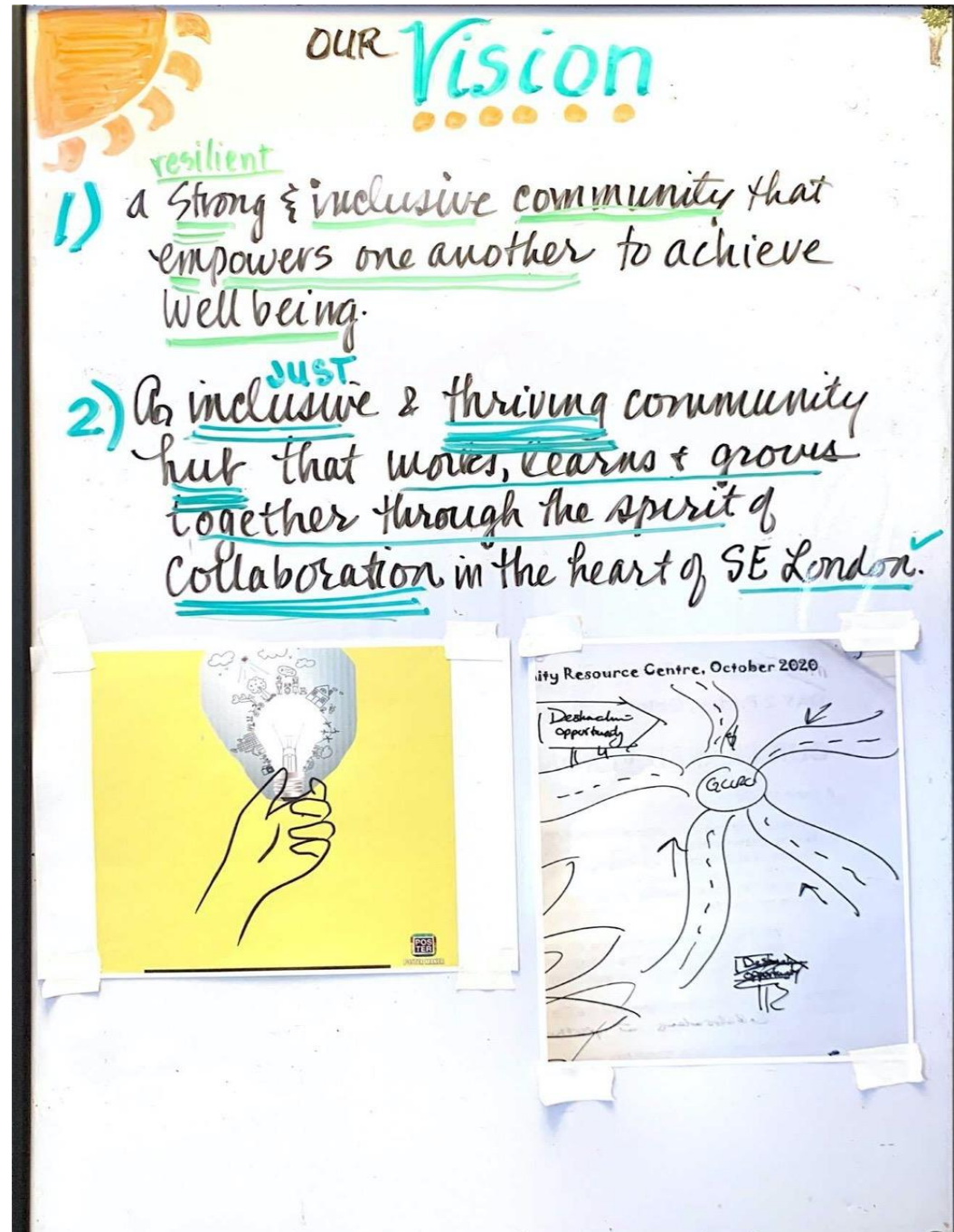
## Our Shared Vision

Participants worked in small groups to develop two sets of Vision statements and diagrams. Those statements and diagrams are shown below. Three participants met over lunch to create a consolidated Vision statement. After lunch the group as a whole looked at this statement and developed several variations. The last two variations are:

- A strong and inclusive community that empowers one another to achieve wellbeing
- An inclusive and thriving community hub that works, learns and grows together through the spirit of collaboration in the heart of Southeast London

One of the questions raised during the discussion on the Vision was what should the Vision be for? A Vision for the Centre or a Vision that reflects the impact of the work on the community? In finalizing the Vision, the Board and Staff considered this.

The Vision should be future oriented i.e. not be reflective of what is being done today but what is possible if there are no barriers. In the workbook, the participants were asked to consider:



## Strategic Planning - Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre, October 2020



- What is the outcome that you will see as a result of the Centre working towards this vision?
- What is unique about this outcome? What makes this your Vision?
- Who will benefit from this outcome?

The staff met after the session to have more discussion on the Vision and they created the Vision below and shared it with the Board:



*Everybody's  
community - Growing  
today for a better  
tomorrow*

### Strategic Directions/Goal

The Vision defines the future state that the Centre is working towards. The Strategic Directions or Goals are the specific areas that the Centre sees as a priority to take actions on in the next few years so that there is movement towards the Vision.

In small groups, the participants developed a long list of goals and then selected their top 3-4 goals. The diagram below shows the goals that will lead to the Vision and organizes them into the following 4 Areas:

#### I. Governance

This is the area of internal development of the Board, staff and volunteers and includes:

1. Developing a healthy, sustainable organization
2. Board recruitment, retention and diversity
3. Retention and fostering growth and well-being of staff
4. Recruitment, retention and training of community volunteers

#### II. Operational Growth

1. Moving from creating dependency to agency.
2. Hearing the voice of community and be knowledgeable of its wants and assets.
3. Intentional integration of participants into program development, design and leadership (grassroots and community development framework).
4. Integrating effective outcome and process evaluation of services and programs

#### III. Collaboration & Partnerships

1. Fostering growth and leveraging new and existing partnerships with funders, other agencies and the community.

#### IV. Communication

1. Developing ongoing information sharing about Centre's activities with community, partners and funders.
2. Creating strategies for more effective internal communication.

## Strategic Priorities and Action Steps

### STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1

#### Governance

**Goal Statement:** Develop a healthy, sustainable organization

**Strategy #1:**

Board recruitment, retention and diversity

**Strategy #2:**

Establishment of priority committees with board members, staff and the community members

**Strategy #3:**

Achieve financial sustainability through fiscal management and enhanced fundraising

**Strategy #4:**

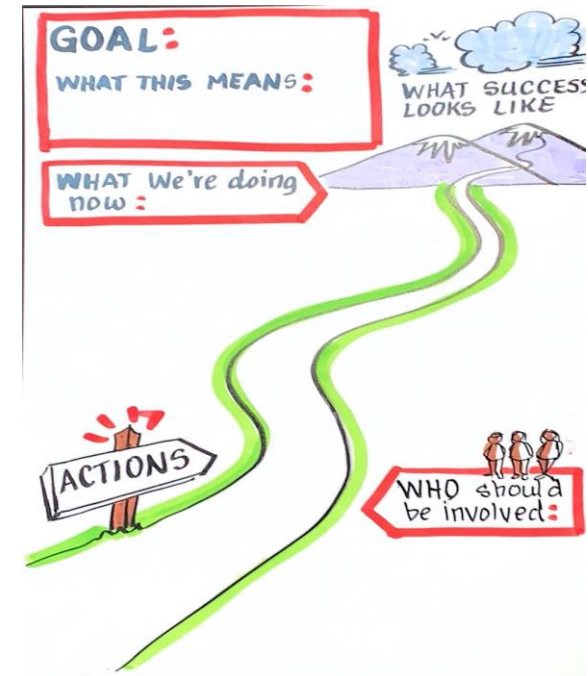
Retention and fostering growth and wellbeing of staff.

**Strategy #5:**

Recruitment, retention and training of community volunteers

**Action steps:**

1. Generate interest and recruit Board members from diverse backgrounds representing the needs of the agency and community.
2. Create an on-going Board development program.
3. Create opportunities for staff growth, learning opportunities to optimize everyone's talents and create healthy workplace.
4. Network with like organizations to learn best practices.
5. Recognize and celebrate the successes and contributions of staff.
6. Implement and develop on new Centre annual fundraiser.



## Strategic Planning - Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre, October 2020

7. Create a funding database, potential donor database and hire a fundraiser/grantwriter if funds permit.
8. Develop an overall Centre Fundraising Strategy.

### **STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2**

#### ***Operational Growth***

**Goal Statement:** Moving away from dependency to agency

**Strategy #1:**

Hearing voices of community and be knowledgeable of its wants and assets

**Strategy #2:**

Intentional integration of participants into program development, design and leadership (focusing on asset-based community development framework)

**Strategy #3:**

Focusing on asset-based community development framework

**Strategy #4:**

Integrating effective outcome and evaluation strategies for services and programs

**Action steps:**

1. Evaluate on-going methods of service delivery to ensure quality and effectiveness is relevant.
2. Develop services and programs based on needs researched from the community
3. Create an Annual Maintenance Plan to be review and maintain annually.
4. Maintain open, honest communication between partners, funders and staff.
5. Create a user-friendly reception area where everyone feels welcome
6. Create a food processing facility in the warehouse
7. Develop a service plan between the Centre and community dental clinic

### ***STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3***

#### ***Collaboration and Partnerships***

**Goal Statement:** Fostering growth and leveraging new and existing partnerships with funders, other agencies and the community

**Strategy #1:**

Develop new areas of growth fully utilizing Centre's space and assets

**Strategy #2:**

Embrace the culture of collaboration in the ways we serve our community

**Action steps:**

1. Create partnerships in order to fully develop Centre's space
2. Intentionally moving existing and new partnerships towards collaboration models in order to ensure greater impact
3. Intentionally plan new and existing services together with new and existing partners

### ***STRATEGIC PRIORITY #4***

#### ***Communication and Branding***

**Goal statement:** Build a Centre that is recognizable in the community and the City

**Strategy #1:**

Develop ongoing information sharing about the Centre's activities with community, partners and funders

**Strategy #2:**

Build recognizable brand highlighting programs and services that Glen Cairn CRC is offering to the community and the City

## Strategic Planning - Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre, October 2020

### Strategy #3:

Create a strategy for more effective internal communication

#### Action goals

1. Create a strong social media strategy.
2. Create a story video for the website of who we are.
3. Share community stories and celebrate success.
4. Designate/hire someone to monitor and maintain all social media.
5. Craft a tagline to help brand the centre.
6. Create new promotional material/brochures to share with community, stakeholders, and business.
7. Establish a Marketing and Communications Plan for staff to use.
8. Create a GCCRC promotional toolbox for community events.
9. Develop and distribute a new Neighbourhood Resource Guide.

This kind of guided discussion can then be developed into an action plan with more specific actions, timeframes, indicators of success and responsibility.



Mission Statement

FINAL MISSION STATEMENT



The following mission statement was developed from the discussion above:

The GCCRC is an innovative community hub that creates opportunities to learn, grow and work together.

### Reflections on Day 2

In general, the remaining participants felt that it was a useful session. In particular, it was expressed on both days that it was helpful to have the Board, staff, partners, funders and volunteers participate in the Strategic Planning and to hear all of these perspectives. It provided an opportunity to build relationships and come to a shared understanding of the organization and its intentions moving forward. Also the two days were an opportunity to begin healing the organization and move forward in a positive way.

Considering that these were all day virtual sessions, the participation was high and participants were engaged throughout. This was, in part, due to the ability to have small group discussions, breaks and energizers and to see the results of discussions expressed in a visual and graphic way.

### Summary and Next Steps

The two days were productive and insightful and have begun a process of healing from past pain to development of constructive relationships and partnerships in the community and with funders and other organizations. This was a very useful beginning to the development of a Strategic Plan for the Centre. The ability to bring all perspectives together proved to be very insightful and useful. By being inclusive, open and transparent and by sharing experiences and stories, this has truly been a community effort. Unfortunately, the youth representatives could not attend the sessions due to changes in school schedules. Their perspective is an important one to include in future events and opportunities for engagement. Likewise, Indigenous voices, seniors and other demographics in the community can also provide key insights and advice for future programming and planning. Ways to engage the community, share results, and obtain missing viewpoints should be explored as the Strategic Planning moves forward.

The Centre should take the following next steps in the near future to complete the Strategic Planning process:

- Share the results of the Strategic Planning with the community, partners and funders.
- Continue to engage the Board and Staff in developing an action plan, monitoring and ongoing evaluation of the Strategic Plan.