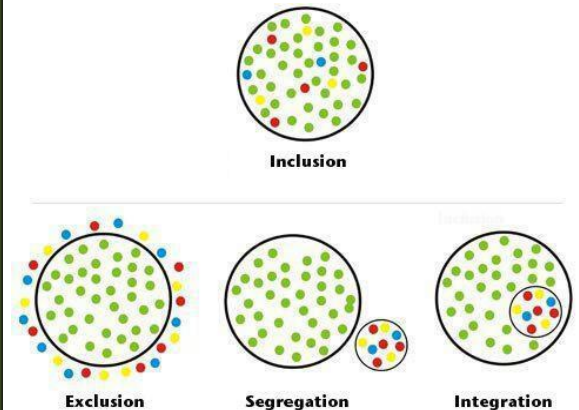




Reconciliation in Action: A Place-Based Approach

On June 21st 2014 residents and community partners in Vancouver's inner city gathered to celebrate the first annual **Where Change Happens: Reconciliation in Action**, showcasing the rewards and achievements being realized by building understanding, respecting, and working together to make positive changes; and shining a spotlight on the importance of **PLACE** in promoting reconciliation with the past, and to building relationships and healthy lives for the future.

Where Change Happens placed Reconciliation within the place-based frame because people live and work in places, are impacted by the realities of these places, and are more likely to contribute to the neighbourhoods and places where they live and work. Citizens, residents, organizations, and businesses working together in a defined **PLACE** can achieve collective impact and effect positive changes. They can bring new creativity, thinking and energy to make their **PLACE** an area where everyone thrives and is included. A Healthy City is achieved when it is made up of healthy places and people.



Acknowledgement is not inclusion...

Too often historical practices have resulted in the exclusion of many vulnerable populations from participation in mainstream institutions and organizations. The challenges inherent in achieving Reconciliation with Aboriginal peoples provide a case in point. Much has been made of ceremonies honouring Aboriginal traditions and ensuring that at least some programs and services reflect Aboriginal cultures. A number of Aboriginal-specific organizations have received funding. And yet on a neighbourhood level, many Aboriginal residents remain disengaged from and uninvolved with their local communities.

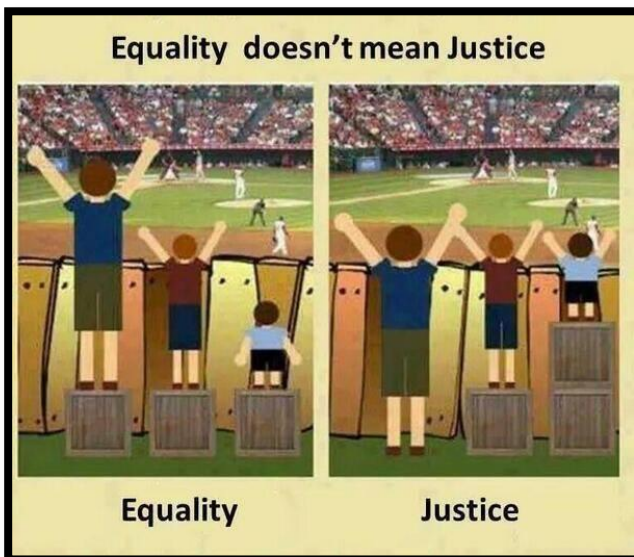
A Place-based approach begins by assessing and encompassing the needs and desires of all who live there, moving then to ensuring all feel welcome to participate and have the means and support to do so. True Reconciliation centres on moving forward together, not just acknowledging mistakes of the past.



The Importance of Place

Where we dwell – our community, our place – shapes our lives. It determines schooling options for our children, the availability of medical care, access to parks and recreation, where we shop, how we get from place to place, who our neighbours are, and the ease or challenges we face in meeting our needs. Although commonalities exist, communities or places differ one from another. No two are exactly the same.

As residents, we constantly navigate the complex interactions between our community's assets and disadvantages, and the parameters of our daily lives. Doing so is by no means easy. Issues faced by already vulnerable groups, including Aboriginal peoples, immigrants, single-parent families and the elderly, are compounded in communities with pervasive social exclusion, poverty, and poor health. Too often we find that the programs and services we need are not designed to take into account our unique circumstances. A *one-size-fits-all* system can ultimately mean that people who should be able to participate in fact do not fit.



Inclusion vs. equal access...

Often initiatives confuse inclusion with the concept of equal access. An equal access approach tends to assume all individuals have the same or similar capacity to participate, or will be able to participate in the same way. This is rarely the case. For example, opening up team sports to all children on an equal basis in fact excludes families who cannot afford equipment or do not have the ability to transport children to games. Equitable access on the other hand begins with the assumption that all do not begin from the same point and works to provide the supports necessary, place by place, to enable equal participation. Equitable access entails place-based thinking.

Place-based approaches work to remove barriers, and promote people-centered, participatory service delivery. This is a strengths-based model, valuing and drawing on the diverse skills and gifts of each 'place' to create comprehensive, holistic, and integrated solutions which meet both individual and broader community needs.



What is place-based?

Placed-based thinking involves two key elements: it incorporates a strategy that deals with all related components of any issue, and it is specific to a particular place. This approach recognizes communities as spaces where the potential exists to reorganize existing systems in a manner that better accounts for the particular social, political, cultural, and ecological variables of 'place'. The Place-based approach is an effective tool for developing strategies that mobilize and coordinate resources and capacities to be responsive to local needs and aspirations.

Place-based strategies which embrace partnerships, research, and evaluation are able to support and engage communities more successfully, responding to their needs in a holistic fashion through the creation of informed planning and action. Working in a community-centred context is effective in addressing the conditions under which challenges and problems occur as well as in dealing with the issues themselves. The continued focus on engaging community members in participatory and leadership roles also builds the capacity of communities to take responsibility and ownership for their own issues over time.

Together We Can Make Change Happen...

The complex nature of community realities calls for an approach to planning and development that takes that complexity into account. Government agencies and other funders currently focus primarily on isolated interventions by individual organizations to address complex social problems. This approach continues to fail society because complex problems require comprehensive solutions beyond the capacity, skills or resources of single organizations. To achieve success, neighborhoods need an entire community working together, with strong local citizen leadership and connected voices influencing the decisions that impact them, leading to a community-based, quality continuum of services, good practice approaches, and opportunities that are seamless and accessible. This approach is termed *Collective Impact*.



What is Collective Impact?

Collective Impact is a framework for social change that was first described by John Kania and Mark Kramer in the [Stanford Social Innovation Review in 2011](#). This approach is premised on the belief that no single policy, government department, organization, or program can tackle or solve the increasingly complex social problems we face as a society. The framework provides a structured approach to solving complex and deeply entrenched social issues – one which calls for multiple community partners, including residents, to abandon their own agenda in favour of a common agenda, shared measurement, and alignment of effort.



A Place-Based Approach to Building the Future

The early environmental movement adopted the phrase *'Think globally -- Act locally'* as a paradigm for action. The framework is apt for moving forward in a place-based way. As a society we share aspirations for all our citizens. We believe in equality and fairness. We aim for full participation by all residents in the benefits offered in our cities, provinces, and the country at large. We affirm the value of reconciling with the past as we move into the future.

Developing a true Place-based strategy involves being open to listening, learning, critical self-examination, and change. Inclusion means removing barriers and realigning practice to the realities of excluded populations. It means making a real commitment, one that goes beyond the comfort zone of engaging people and expecting them to fit into how and what is already happening.

When residents see that they can have an influence on their daily realities and immediate environments they are more likely to contribute. Residents, organizations, and businesses working together in a defined Place can achieve collective impact and effect positive changes. They can bring new creativity, thinking and energy to make their Place an area where everyone thrives and is included.

Our places are *Where Change Happens*

Place-based thinking is our best approach to achieving the future we want.

