

Working Together

Lessons Learned from the Coalitions Linking Action and Science for Prevention (CLASP) Initiative in Supporting Indigenous Health and Wellness

May 2017

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Introduction

Coalitions Linking Action and Science for Prevention (CLASP) was an initiative of the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer (CPAC) that aimed to improve the health of communities and of Canadians. CLASP initiatives brought together organizations from two or more provinces and territories, with research, practice, and policy experts forming coalitions to integrate cancer prevention with strategies to prevent other chronic diseases. CLASP responded to the fact that many aspects of healthy living and a healthy environment can reduce the risk not only of cancers but also of chronic diseases such as diabetes, lung disease and heart disease.

CPAC funded 12 large-scale knowledge-to-action cancer and chronic disease prevention projects between 2009 and 2016 through the CLASP initiative. The CLASP projects worked in a variety of settings and with diverse partners. Seven of the CLASP projects included work with Indigenous¹ communities² and organizations, including one project that

was led by a First Nations organization. Not every project engaged with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities. While there are many examples of where Inuit and Métis communities engaged with the CLASPs, the majority of the work described below – and thus the resulting lessons learned described later in the report – is in relation to First Nations.

CPAC is committed to working in a reconciliatory way and being an ambassador for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission³ of Canada's Calls to Action #22, #23, #24, and #71 in particular. In this spirit, the purpose of this report is to share the lessons learned from the seven projects described above so that individuals and organizations working to support Indigenous health and wellness can learn from the CLASP experience.

The seven projects and the Indigenous community involvement in each are described briefly below.

1. ACCELERATION

The focus of the ACCELERATION project was to develop and implement a 12-week prevention program focused on improving diet, physical activity and other cancer and chronic disease risk factors for individuals at high-risk of developing cancer or chronic disease. Part of the ACCELERATION initiative was adapted with First Nations communities and community leaders and implemented by the University of British Columbia for First Nations communities in British Columbia. In these communities, the initiative included a Health Beat screening program incorporating a Run-Walk program with a local program leader. Approximately 240 rural and urban communities and 10,000 people participated in an educational or event associated with this initiative in British Columbia First Nations, and 350 participants completed the Health Beat/Run-Walk program.

¹ First Nations, Inuit, and Métis

² In this report, the term "communities" is used to describe the diverse Indigenous populations and groups engaged with by CLASP projects, including: First Nations reserves and off-reserve First Nations urban and rural populations; Inuit settlements and urban and rural populations; and Métis settlements and urban and rural populations.

³ For more information about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the Calls to Action, please visit: <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=3>

2. Building on Existing Tools to Improve Chronic Disease Prevention and Screening in Primary Care (BETTER)

BETTER worked in collaboration with three Northwest Territories health centres in Tulita, Fort Smith and Fort Resolution. The project was implemented with the Government of Northwest Territories and community members to create prevention resources and messages for clinicians and patients in NWT to support conversations concerning lifestyle behaviour changes. Culturally relevant patient resources were developed, including healthy lifestyle videos featuring leaders and champions from the regions sharing their stories to inspire others.

3. Collaborative Action on Childhood Obesity (CACO)

CACO worked in collaboration with 17 communities including First Nations and Métis individuals and communities, across YK, NWT, BC, ON, and QC. CACO supported First Nations and Métis cancer and chronic disease prevention through the development of culturally-relevant approaches incorporating intergenerational knowledge sharing and community sustainability, to address issues such as food and nutrition, physical activity, and mental health. CACO

built on local food procurement and distribution strategies already in place, developing gardens, and supported a culturally appropriate dance-oriented physical activity intervention featuring local youth as trained leaders.

4. Health Empowerment for You (HEY!)

HEY! was led by the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations in partnership with 41 Manitoba First Nations communities. The HEY! project worked with First Nations health care providers and educational institutions to develop an evidence-based cancer and chronic disease prevention curriculum for First Nations youth that integrates First Nations culture and addresses primary and secondary prevention strategies. Alongside the curriculum, HEY! provided training to youth and health workers with rural and urban First Nations communities, enabling them to train other community members in a train the trainer model as well as deliver the curriculum programming to their communities in a tailored way. An Indigenous post-secondary educational institution certified a HEY! train the trainer course and offers credits for completion, and a partner First Nation community integrated the HEY! curriculum into their school lesson plans.

5. Nourishing School Communities

Nourishing School Communities worked with a British Columbia First Nation community and three First Nations communities in Saskatchewan. The project supported healthy eating through school gardens that were developed and maintained by school children and community members and through local food partnerships. Sustainability of some of the project work was supported through a greenhouse and a community pantry for preserving and food sharing. In British Columbia, Learning Circles with school children, community members, and elders were an important way to share traditional healthy eating and nutrition knowledge.

6. POWER Up!

POWER Up! was implemented in collaboration with all 33 communities in Northwest Territories. Through close engagement with community leaders, POWER Up! developed 15 exemplary healthy policies and 16 Smart Management Practices tailored to the rural, remote, and Indigenous context of Northwest Territories related to physical activity, healthy eating and the built environment.

7. Working on Wellness

Working on Wellness collaborated with primary industry in Northwest Territories and the Council of Yukon First Nations.

The project supported the health and wellness of employees in primary industry worksites, as well as Council of Yukon First Nations employees, through the implementation of program modules

designed to change workplace policies and employee behaviours in specific cancer and chronic disease risk factors areas (i.e., nutrition, physical activity, alcohol use, sleep, stress, etc.).

Method

‘Working Together: CLASP Lessons Learned’ Project

A qualitative analysis involving a review of thirty-three knowledge products and nine key informant interviews was conducted to learn from these seven CLASP projects about ways of working respectfully to support health and wellness with Indigenous communities.

This project had two data collection phases, plus a validation phase:

- **Data Collection Phase 1:** A thorough review of CLASP knowledge products and final reports to identify and understand ways of working on cancer and chronic disease prevention with Indigenous communities was conducted. Thirty-three relevant knowledge products were developed by the seven CLASP projects that worked in collaboration with Indigenous communities. Once key themes had been drawn from the knowledge products, a draft ‘Lessons Learned’ document was shared with Indigenous and non-Indigenous advisors from two cancer agencies (representing CPAC’s Continuity of Care projects) and from Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Métis National Council to seek guidance from perspectives outside of the CLASP initiative. Their feedback was incorporated into the presentation of the findings from the document review.
- **Data Collection Phase 2:** Interviews were conducted with project leads and key collaborators in Indigenous communities and organizations to hear their experiences and what they learned from these projects about working towards Indigenous health and wellness. Nine key informants were interviewed, with representation of people involved in all seven related CLASP projects. Some key informants had been involved in more than one CLASP. Informants were members of, and represented perspectives from: Indigenous communities, regional First Nation organizations, provincial/territorial organizations, NGOs, and/or universities.

The draft Lessons Learned themes were shared with key informants in advance of the interview. The following questions were explored with the key informants:

 - What ‘lessons learned’ emerged for you in the course of the CLASP initiative focused on Indigenous health and wellness?
- Did any particular ‘lessons learned’ theme pose significant challenges or prove beneficial in your CLASP experience?
- Is anything missing or unclear from the key lessons learned we’ve identified from knowledge products?
- What were the most important pieces of the CLASP collaboration between Indigenous communities/organizations and a non-Indigenous organization (CPAC and/or other project partners)? What would have further strengthened the CLASP collaboration?
- What were the important learnings around sustaining the project and the benefits of the CLASP initiative?
- **Validation Phase:** Through two engagements with project leads and others from First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities, the objective was to present the preliminary findings and hear other suggestions and comments about the best ways to share these lessons learned.

First Nations, Inuit and Métis Cancer Control Forum: Celebrating Partnerships and Progress January 25-26, 2017

The preliminary CLASP lessons learned were presented at a session “Lessons learned from the Coalitions Linking Action & Science for Prevention (CLASP) initiative in supporting Indigenous health and wellness” at CPAC’s First Nations, Inuit and Métis Cancer Control Forum in Calgary, Alberta. The session was attended by First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and non-Indigenous participants of the broader Cancer Control Forum. Following the presentation, participants were asked to participate in an interactive exercise that reflected on their own experiences and work in supporting Indigenous health and wellness and record their key lessons learned on one or more sticky notes. Participants were then asked to place their sticky notes on flip chart paper around the room – one flip chart paper for each of the six CLASP lesson learned themes (described in the next section) and

one additional flip chart paper for ‘new themes’ or stickies that did not align with the CLASP lessons learned themes.

No participant lessons learned were placed in the ‘new themes’ category. All participant feedback aligned with the CLASP lessons learned themes.

Working Together to Support Indigenous Health and Wellness: Sharing Lessons Learned March 28-29, 2017

The “Working Together to Support Indigenous Health and Wellness: Sharing Lessons Learned” meeting, held in Toronto, Ontario, was an opportunity for key CLASP project partners and other Indigenous CPAC colleagues to review the preliminary findings. Participants were First Nation leaders and community members from CLASP project sites; CLASP project leads, associated academics and participating organizations; Indigenous community members who did not have prior CLASP involvement but who could contribute to

an understanding of how the preliminary findings might be useful for other communities and organizations; and CPAC staff. The key findings were presented and each theme was discussed by the whole group, followed by a small group process in which participants could choose to discuss one or two themes in more depth. Notes were taken on all the feedback. A graphic recorder also kept a visual record of the key points from the meeting (see Figures 1 and 2). A wide variety of comments were contributed; the general themes that had been identified did not change, but some refinements to language were suggested as a way of best expressing all ideas. Revisions were made to the report to reflect the general consensus of the discussion, while maintaining consistency with the overall original findings.

Figure 1. Visual record from Working Together to Support Indigenous Health and Wellness validation meeting (March 28-29, 2017) illustrating key lessons learned from participants

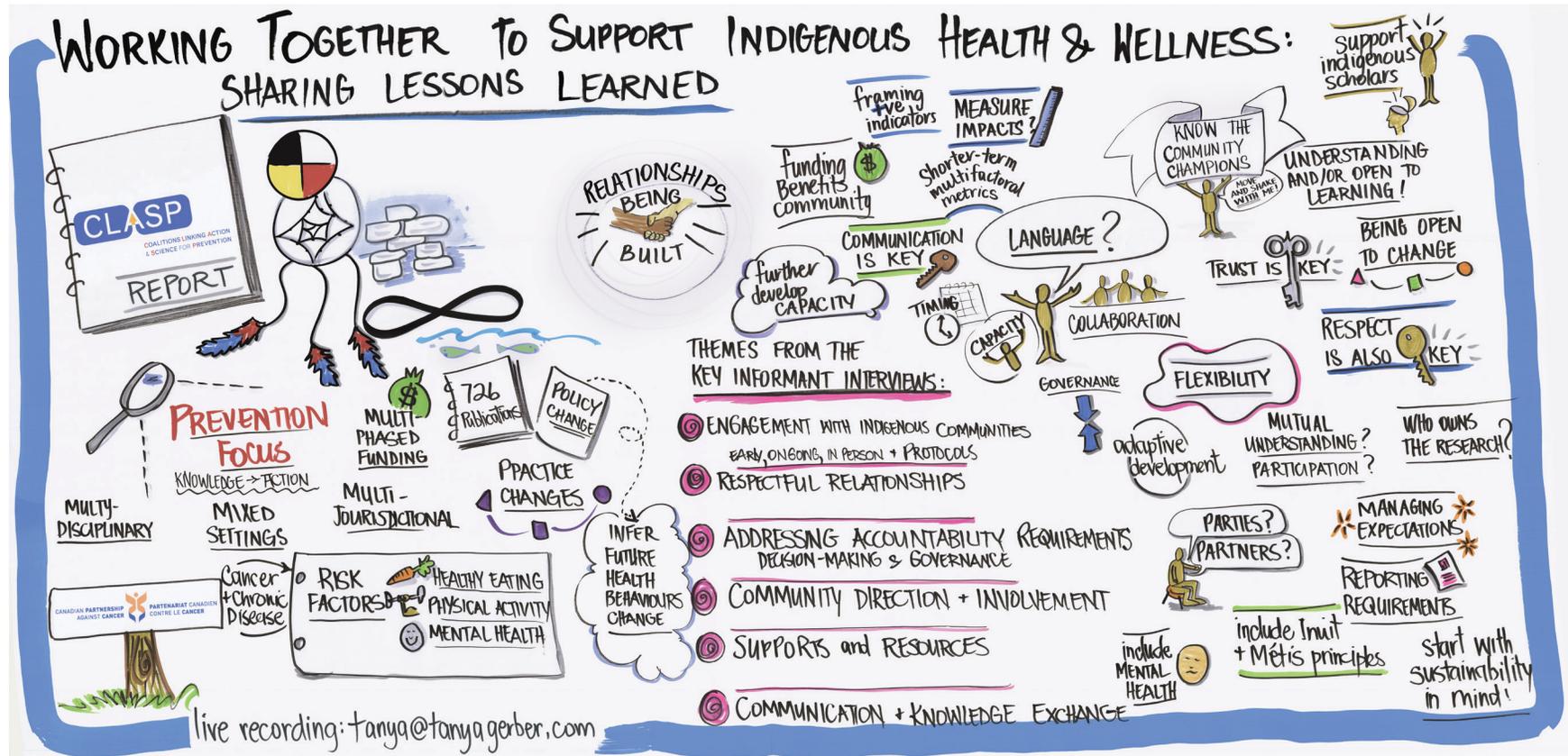
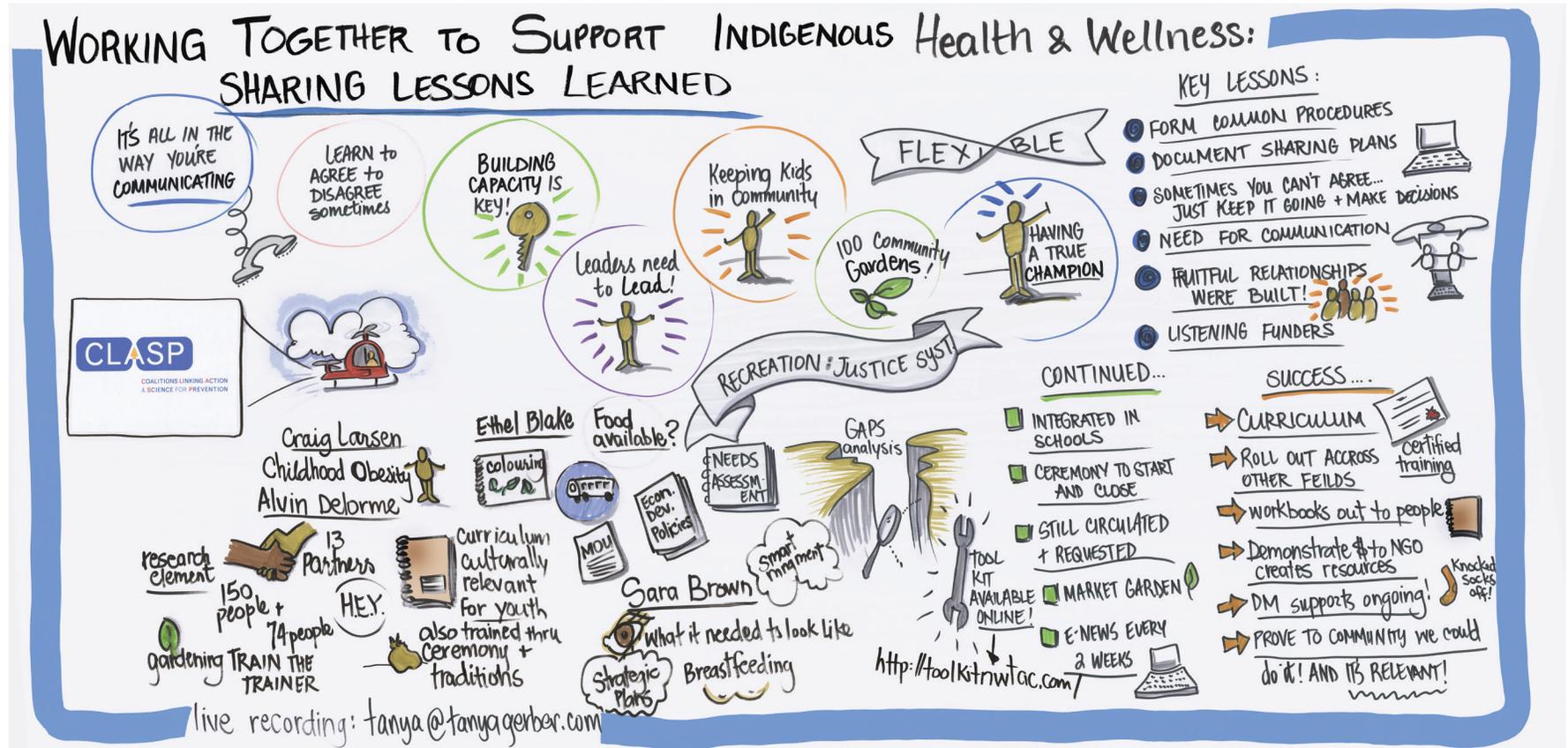


Figure 2. Visual record from Working Together to Support Indigenous Health and Wellness validation meeting (March 28-29, 2017) illustrating key lessons learned from participants



Key Lessons Learned from CLASP

Drawing from the knowledge product review and the key informant interviews, themes were identified that captured key lessons from the project processes. In interviews, informants emphasized certain aspects and amplified the themes with examples and stories that described the way these themes emerged in their CLASP initiatives. In some cases, there were factors that were thought to contribute to the success of the projects; in other cases, these were factors that, on reflection, were thought to be areas in which the projects could have improved.

The key lessons learned are presented in six themed groupings. However, in practice, the themes clearly intersect, overlap and depend on one another. The presentation in separate themes is done to facilitate understanding of each component and how it was experienced in the CLASPs. However, the experiences of the key informants emphasized that good ways of working do not exist in isolation. In the discussion of each theme, important connections to other themes are identified.

Overall, key informants and advisors agreed with and supported the themes

identified from the CLASP knowledge products. Some advisors and key informants talked about learning from these experiences in the context of reconciliation. It was felt that working toward greater understanding and increased knowledge of Indigenous culture for non-Indigenous people was an important endeavour. They strongly supported the sharing of these lessons broadly as a contribution to strengthening relationships, knowledge exchange and learning from experience.

These lessons learned represent a spectrum of experiences from Indigenous-led projects to non-Indigenous led projects working with Indigenous communities and organizations in varying degrees of collaboration and partnership. The learnings from these CLASP initiatives in collaboration with Indigenous communities will help to inform CPAC's future cancer prevention initiatives. It is hoped that these learnings will be beneficial to non-Indigenous individuals and organizations working in collaboration with Indigenous communities and to Indigenous communities leading and participating in initiatives to promote health and wellness.



1. Respectful Relationships

Respect was a cornerstone of all the themes and cuts across all others. There are examples of respectful relationships of CLASP project personnel with organizations (schools, recreation departments, etc.) as well as with individuals (principals, teachers, youth workers, Elders, community members, etc.)

Local Protocols and Processes:

Respect includes making space for local processes and protocols for engagement, administration, and evaluation, even if these take longer than established timelines. A first step is taking care to ask and understand what community-specific processes and protocols exist and how best to follow them. Especially with the relatively broad scale of some CLASP projects, engagement with multiple groups and individuals within communities was important, and these processes take time. For example, an umbrella organization may need to have endorsement from community leadership, health directors, boards of health, and other structures. Although local processes

may not be well understood, flexibility and openness to working within these processes can build trust and support for the project over the longer term. Sustainability, discussed further below, may also be enhanced if the proper protocols are observed from the beginning.

Openness to Learning: One way that respect was seen in CLASPs was a general openness to learning by all involved. This was described as a key factor, for example, in terms of learning about cancer prevention at the community level, or learning about culture for participants from outside Indigenous communities.

Established Relationships: It is notable that several key informants talked about their CLASP work as connected to, and building on, relationships that they had had for several years. It seems likely that a factor in the success of these CLASPs was pre-established relationships. For some of these projects, their CLASP renewal involved extensions of their work to communities where they did not have pre-existing relationships, and these required considerable investment in relationship building, with a concomitant adjustment to the pace at which programs could be put into place. Time spent on developing a good relationship was a necessary precursor to starting programs and interventions.

Informants discussed the importance of reaching out to Indigenous communities through established channels and relationships; for new connections, having the relationship be facilitated by someone who already knows the community was valuable.

Cultural Competence: Cultural awareness and sensitivity to acknowledge and respect differences was important for non-Indigenous individuals working with Indigenous individuals and communities. Formalized cultural competence training to develop skills and knowledge was not reported as essential, but could be valuable for non-Indigenous individuals working with Indigenous health and wellness. In many cases, the people involved in CLASP initiatives brought with them a history of respectful experience working with Indigenous communities and an approach that emphasized empowerment of, and building upon the strength within, communities.



2. Engagement with Indigenous Communities

A key theme that emerged from the CLASP knowledge products and interviews was related to engagement. Engagement required open communication, discussion with and direction from communities. As part of

engagement, informants emphasized meaningful discussion in and with communities about priorities, and willingness to listen and align with those priorities. Engagement is related to other themes: for example, although the importance of listening to advice and local feedback is presented as part of engagement, it is also a critical part of showing respect and interacting in a respectful way.

Early and Ongoing: Engagement from the beginning, and ongoing, was seen as a critical step for the success of projects. This early engagement was followed with sustained and ongoing engagement, as many projects found that priorities changed throughout the project lifespan and it was important to stay connected to those changes. Relationship building in a community is an ongoing process and is often influenced by change in leadership, staff turnover, competing community priorities, etc. The need for engagement to happen in person was emphasized – the implications for travel budgets and time allocations are discussed further under Supports and Resources.

Indigenous Leadership: Inclusion of Indigenous leadership in community-based projects was highly recommended by key informants. Some informants commented that they had been connected to the CLASP initiative,

or a portion of it, but that the project had not been led by Indigenous people or organizations, and this reduced their sense that the project had been truly engaged with Indigenous communities. Capacity limitations were discussed as a possible barrier to Indigenous-led projects, as people in communities may be over-extended and pulled in many directions. Supports for capacity, such as funding for proposal development and writing, and secure funding for project development positions would be helpful in building upon existing capacity for community-engaged project leadership. One informant suggested that help in writing grants, in finding out about grants, and in developing project concepts could be accomplished through a mentorship approach. Capacity is further discussed under the Supports and Resources theme.

Align with Community Priorities:

In many cases, the CLASP projects were tailored according to community priorities and also to local culture through the incorporation of local traditional practices. One informant described this process as “design with community in mind”. Respectful interaction and observing local protocols, were important parts of making the CLASP projects work in Indigenous communities. Following from alignment with priorities is that approaches must be tailored to local communities – there must

not be an assumption that all communities are the same. Engagement as part of the CLASP was described by one informant as “giving voice for addressing identified needs in the communities”. As an example of alignment to local priorities, one CLASP built their work on existing community plans, ensuring that community priorities came first when determining directions for the CLASP project.

Points of Engagement: Multiple points of engagement are required to ensure buy-in of a community project and it cannot be assumed that engagement with one individual or organization in a community will automatically extend beyond. Opportunities to engage broadly should be taken where possible. For example, engagement should be considered with different entities at the same time where appropriate: a tribal council or a similar type of governing body at the NGO level, community departments and portfolios, community champions/leaders, etc. This multi-faceted engagement also has implications for decision-making and for sustainability, discussed further below. Local champions were also important in meaningful engagement, and their role is discussed more fully under the Community Direction and Involvement theme.



3. Addressing Accountability Requirements, Decision-Making, and Governance

In any funded project, accountability, decision-making and governance structures will be needed. In the CLASP initiatives that involved Indigenous communities, these factors were addressed in a way that respected community protocols and traditions.

Support for Reporting: Many informants commented that the reporting requirements for CLASP were more intensive than what they were used to, and in some cases, meeting these requirements proved to be a challenge. With respect to engagement, it was noted that accountability and evaluation requirements may act as a deterrent to involvement from communities in funded projects because of the increased burden on people who are already busy. The need for a dedicated role within the team, often from within the Indigenous community or organization, to manage the reporting requirements was felt to be an important facilitator for CLASP projects.

Decision-Making Processes: In some cases, challenges were experienced when different ideas about the direction of the initiative emerged. Sometimes these difficulties were a result of incomplete communication or different expectations about roles and responsibilities. As with any complex process, the CLASP interactions required attention to the decision-making and governance structures that would guide the project. It was also important to create space for resolving issues where decision-making processes broke down. The norms for decision-making within Indigenous communities may be complex and multi-faceted; awareness and discussion of community norms and expectations is helpful for successful project development and implementation.

Managed Expectations: Some informants reflected that in a funding stream that involves a competitive process, there is a tendency to be overly ambitious in describing what will result from the work. Furthermore, the high expectations for quick outcomes may prove disappointing in the context of time needed for engagement, mobilizing, and moving toward sustainability. There is a need for managed expectations from projects that may require time for relationship building,

engagement, capacity building and overcoming barriers. Although there is a temptation to work in communities where capacity already exists, this may mean that communities with greater needs, and perhaps greater potential to benefit, may not be able to develop and sustain successful funded proposals, creating the basis for inequitable access to funding. Having explicit expectations and objectives related to processes, such as engagement, discussion, or relationship building may be helpful for projects that are carving out time in project timelines for these important steps to occur.

Community-Oriented Evaluation: Evaluation approaches centred on processes and outcomes that are valued in the communities were important. One informant described the evaluation approach as starting from “Let’s show it works” and then determining what measures would demonstrate the value of the work being done, as distinct from starting from an established set of indicators. Another informant commented that “metrics are less important than meaning” when considering ways to design evaluation. Survey methods, although used successfully in some projects, were generally not considered the most effective methods for evaluating project work. Some

projects described better success using circles, storytelling and other community-appropriate ways of learning.

OCAP® Principles⁴, Inuit Research Principles, and Métis Research Protocols: The application of OCAP® principles in the context of these CLASP projects was discussed by some informants⁵. These principles were explicitly part of most projects, particularly in terms of evaluation data; however, in some cases it was felt that, for the products coming out of CLASP, the application of OCAP® principles such as ownership by Indigenous communities should have been more clearly established in advance. CPAC recognizes that Inuit and Métis guidelines for research and evaluation ethics exist; however, they were not specifically referenced by CLASP documents or key informants.



4. Community Direction

Having Indigenous project leads, community leads and students all contributed to the potential of CLASPS to engage with communities and ensure that resources were used for the benefit of Indigenous people. The involvement of community members in program development or leadership

⁴ OCAP® is a registered trademark of the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC). For more information, visit: <http://fnigc.ca/ocap.html>.

⁵ CPAC recognizes that Inuit principles (<http://www.inuitknowledge.ca/content/negotiating-research-relationships-inuit-communities-guide-researchers>) and Métis protocols (available regionally) for research and evaluation ethics exist; however they were not specifically referenced by CLASP documents or key informants.

supported uptake. This factor was distinct from involvement of community leadership or community workers, although these were also helpful features.

Champions: Identifying and supporting community champions was a feature of most projects, and one that was emphasized as important for success. In many cases, the uptake of the CLASP initiative was influenced by a community champion who was able to speak about community needs and play a role in incorporating CLASP activities into the fabric of the community. Particularly with respect to sustainability, the community champion played an important role in carrying the activities forward beyond the life of the funded project. The champions brought knowledge and enthusiasm for the initiative, and were often highly respected people within their communities.

Child/youth Involvement: In some cases, a focus on working with children and youth in program development or leadership, and as participants, had particular value for the projects, perhaps because this emphasis aligned with community priorities more generally.

Meaningful Engagement of Elders and Knowledge Keepers: The engagement of specific community members, such as Elders, knowledge

keepers, and others, contributed to the relevance of the program for participants. It was important that existing knowledge and practices not be displaced by any new approaches brought through CLASP, but that the existing knowledge and practices of community members be incorporated and given a central place in the CLASP work. For example, some projects drew on the experiences of Elders and knowledge keepers to support child and youth engagement with gardens or local food harvesting in the context of intergenerational knowledge sharing.

Meaningful Engagement with Indigenous Organizations: It proved helpful to engage with organizations that work with and for Indigenous communities, because they have the pre-existing relationships and knowledge that allows them to translate and adapt content to make it relevant for communities.

Students: Some projects were able to involve Indigenous students, building capacity for research and community-building related to chronic disease prevention through opportunities to learn and be involved in these projects.



5. Supports and Resources

Funding: The CLASP initiatives provided

supports and financial resources for the health and well-being work in communities. In many cases, funds were used to support a community-based coordinator or program lead. Flowing funds directly to communities was considered important, as a way of supporting local project leadership and capacity building. As mentioned under Engagement, these funds need to be available early in the project to support the development stages. Along with the funding comes accountability, and the need for support related to the documentation and reporting, through funded positions.

Existing Resources: When physical resources were already available in a community, such as space (for instance a community centre or gym) or individuals available to participate in and lead training sessions, the projects were able to leverage existing resources to accelerate work or expand activities. In some cases, the needed physical or human resources were not present or not available for the project purposes. This was a barrier or led to interruptions in the project activities.

Local Resource Sharing: Sharing of resources in communities was a key part of responding to community direction and needs: It was important for the projects to generate benefit for the communities in tangible ways such as providing a sound system to the community for a dance/-physical activity program, sharing food that was generated through local food procurement project activities, or creating a pantry for storage and sharing of local foods.

Build on Capacity: The need for building on existing capacity within communities was identified as a key factor, and it was also noted that capacity building and training will be an ongoing need because people change roles and move on to other projects. However, if the capacity stays within the community, even if on different initiatives, there is still a positive impact of the training. It was important to work through community protocol to identify an individual with expertise and knowledge who can advance the objectives of the project, sees the value of the project work and the positive impact it will have on their community. For some communities, participation in research was new, and support to build understanding of OCAP© principles and research ethics was an important foundational step. Capacity building involving training of community members and staff was part of community involvement in most CLASPs, although

the community members were also contributing capacity to the project through their knowledge, effort and support. Thus, capacity building was not one-directional.

Indigenous Scholars: The opportunity of funding initiatives like CLASP to further support the development of Indigenous scholars, whether as leads, partners, or students was mentioned by some key informants as a way of increasing the impact and the legacy of CLASPs beyond the end of the project funding.

Cost of Engagement: The financial cost of engagement, particularly when developing new relationships and when working with remote communities, is significant – and yet the value of this engagement cannot be overstated. Travel expenses formed a large part of the costs of doing much of the project work, given the need for face-to-face engagement, and accommodating high travel costs within budgets was necessary to support learning about the suitability of projects to smaller, rural and remote communities.

Sustainability: Sustainability can be thought of in two ways:

1. Finding additional funding to carry on the project; or
2. Laying the groundwork for project work

to continue as part of existing community activities.

In the case of sustaining project efforts through continued funding, establishing new funding sources is an important enabler, but can be difficult and unreliable. Projects that required ongoing staffing were considered difficult to sustain when funding streams end.

On the other hand, projects that involved skill development, policy change, resource development and/or curriculum implementation were more likely to be sustained because these aspects were easily woven into pre-existing programs and activities and drew upon existing community capacity. Often, sustainability for projects with defined funding timelines (as seen with CLASP) relies on project-generated knowledge being embedded in the community. Thus, engagement, community involvement and capacity building are linked to sustainability. In this way, the importance of local champions for sustainability cannot be underestimated. Community member participation in the project implementation, and particularly the participation of Elders, created greater buy-in to the project and therefore greater opportunity for sustainability in the longer term. Although not identified in the data collection process, it is recognized that Elders and knowledge keeps should also be engaged in the development of an initiative where appropriate.

In some cases, it was possible to build a program or activity into existing structures such as curricula, community activities, or community policy. Generally, it is leadership (Band Council or other governing bodies of Tribal Councils, etc.) that passes policies or institutes a certain practice as a routine or part of regular business. Staff are involved in executing and supporting those decisions, but the support at the governance level appears to be important for sustainability, particularly when staff turnover happens. With respect to the impact of policy for long-term sustainability of initiatives, some CLASP projects set out from the beginning to establish policies with the goal of creating long-term sustainable changes. Other projects did not set out to establish policies, but as the success of the projects began to be realized, they pursued the incorporation of project activities into policies, curricula and community plans as a way of sustaining the projects.



6. Communication and Knowledge Exchange

Knowledge Sharing:

Communication is a significant part of what makes coalition projects work, and sharing knowledge within and among communities was an important part of the CLASP Initiative. There was an interest in learning from other communities and organizations about practices they had used and found successful and sharing information between projects was an important part of CLASP. Informants were generally positive about the linking of action and research knowledge that was the foundation of CLASP. The specific nature of CLASP involved some more research-oriented activity and knowledge exchange, which was felt by some to be somewhat theoretical and not as relevant to building on practices and programs in communities.

Community-Relevant Strategies:

Communication is community-specific and different communication strategies were appropriate depending on the community and setting they were used in. It was important to understand the preferred ways of communicating for any given

community, and to find the appropriate messengers (e.g., local radio, respected people within communities). Some common ways of communicating project learnings and successes within communities, among communities and beyond CLASP included: infographics, videos, YouTube, Facebook and culturally appropriate product designs. The use of these strategies extended the impact of the initiative to reach those who were not directly involved in the program. Another example of communication strategies were sharing circles with community members, which were an in-person method of engagement and ongoing learning/evaluation that were employed by several CLASP projects in Indigenous communities. Attending health fairs was found to be a good strategy for distribution of information and resources to communities.

Limitations

This analysis drew on existing documents. CLASP reports and knowledge products were not specifically designed to document approaches that led to effective ways of working, so some factors may have been missed.

The extent to which findings from one community or one project can be generalized to other communities is not known, although key informants felt that the general themes resonated for their

projects and would resonate in contexts outside of CLASP.

Conclusions

The CLASP projects that included a focus on Indigenous health and wellness made a significant contribution to knowledge related to chronic disease prevention. In addition, significant learnings about what made the projects work were identified through this qualitative exploration. The learnings have application for CPAC's future cancer prevention initiatives and

perhaps more broadly for collaborative projects related to Indigenous health. Key informants and advisors strongly supported the sharing of these lessons so that future work can move forward informed by experience. It is hoped that these lessons from the CLASP experience will be useful for non-Indigenous

organizations and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities and organizations to work together in a good way and support Indigenous health and wellness.

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