



TURNING THE TIDE  
AN INSPIRING COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

# TURNING THE TIDE: EVALUATION REPORT SUMMARY

JULY 2019

Turning the Tide is a local initiative, part of Inspiring Communities which is focused on building stronger communities across Nova Scotia. Learning and evaluation are fundamental aspects of this work. Inspiring Communities conducted this evaluation as part of its overall evaluation of the early work in all three of its geographic communities.

This evaluation is intended to help inform how Turning the Tide goes forward from here. It identifies achievements and key learnings, and it provides feedback on how relationships are developing among partners and how the initiative is implementing Collective Impact.

A small local evaluation working group of Turning the Tide (TtT) Insight Team members drew on the Inspiring Communities overall evaluation framework, and provided valuable context, advice, and guidance throughout the evaluation process.

## Thank you to:

**Dawn Thomas (Seniors Safety Program), Jennifer Lamrock (Public Health Services, NSHA), Jill Balser (TtT), Nina Barnaby (NSCC), Rhonda Fraser (Juniper House), Suzanne White (Juniper House)**

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## During January and February of this year we collected information through:

- **Interviews with Turning the Tide backbone team and Inspiring Communities staff**
- **Focus group with members of Turning the Tide Insight Team**
- **Surveys with Insight Team members and with community survey research assistants**
- **Background documents describing early days of the initiative.**

**This is a summary of the evaluation results; more information on Collective Impact is provided at the end of this summary, and the full report will soon be available on the Turning the Tide website.**

# FINDINGS

## Turning the Tide is...

### Putting community at the centre...

- For our community survey, 27 local area Research Assistants surveyed 805 people of diverse backgrounds, experiences, ages, genders, and communities
- At our community meeting to discuss survey results, close to 100 people provided insight into the key themes emerging from the community survey
- Their input identified three key themes among the issues of concern to communities:  
**Employment & Economy   Environment   Health Care**
- Community ambassadors will host local area events to help identify priorities for future work
- There are ongoing, intentional efforts to ensure that all community voices are heard

**“I am very proud of the effort made to include all the outskirted areas and age groups and cultures. Their voices are large and often not heard.”**

### Drawing on Collective Impact: working collaboratively to do things differently...

- Early work focuses on building trust and relationships: involving people directly is empowering, positive; it helps community members become engaged and feel heard
- People value the work and the efforts to reach those who are more difficult to reach; they see it as a new beginning – community driven with potential for exciting change
- Building a common agenda with communities: the community survey, community meeting, upcoming events are means of hearing from people on issues that matter to them
- We benefit from the experience of others in the Inspiring Communities network

### Guided by a motivated, diverse Insight Team...

- A core group of spirited people (residents, community organizations, government, education sector, from diverse cultural backgrounds) have been showing up consistently for a year to provide insight and guidance for the work
- Backbone staff are supporting the work of the Insight Team and the Turning the Tide initiative

**“There is real energy on the ground... there is energy for change, and energy to do stuff. There is a lot of talent and interest, excitement and connection to this area and this community... People [feel] connected to the community, the land and the ocean, the history and each other. There is a lot to build on.”**

# MOVING FORWARD

## Key Learnings...

- There is a positivity – a feeling that communities will participate in change
- The area is a really great place; people who live here want to do good things
- The issues here are complex and interrelated, but have great potential
- This work is an investment; it takes time, and the time is right
- Building/strengthening relationships is of critical importance to the work
- Every voice counts; the more voices we have, the clearer picture gets

## What do we need to think about as we move forward?

**Turning the Tide is quickly developing, exploring where it is going and how it will get there. This evaluation has identified several issues to think about as Turning the Tide moves forward.**

- **How to prioritize issues from the many topics/issues on the table**

People in our area identified a very wide range of topics and issues that are important to them and their communities. As we start to develop action plans, we need to decide how to narrow our focus and prioritize issues. What criteria and what process will we use to set priorities?

- **How to effectively reach, engage, and build relationships with all communities/cultures**

Our Research Assistants connected us with a large and diverse group of people in many communities, age groups and cultures; they helped us hear from voices that often are not heard. How can we continue and extend efforts to meaningfully engage people and communities?

- **How to improve our understanding of the variety of the micro-communities in the area**

We live in many small communities with their own history, culture, demographic make-up, geographical setting, assets, challenges and needs. How can we better understand these micro-communities? How can we build relationships with people who live in these micro-communities?

- **How to improve understanding of Collective Impact**

Collective Impact is new to many people. It differs from other approaches but can build on existing positive initiatives. How can we improve awareness of Collective Impact, to increase support for Turning the Tide, and improve understanding that this work takes time?

**“One thing I keep trying to remind myself of is to take our time; it is better to do things right than to do things fast. No matter how anxious we get and no matter how anxious the people in the community get of seeing results and taking action, we need to trust the process. It's too easy to make a mistake and then have to go three steps backward. Drip by drip doesn't make the crowd happy, but it does change things over time. I think we need to go drip by drip and occasionally say 'Are we doing too much at once, are we going too fast; did we exhaust the steps before we move to the next one?'”**

# ABOUT COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Inspiring Communities draws upon a Collective Impact approach to help build stronger communities across Nova Scotia. Collective Impact is a structured approach to addressing complex issues. It brings together residents, governments, community organizations, and businesses in a way that honours their unique perspectives and valuable contributions.

Collective Impact core conditions and values include...

- **Shared Agenda:** All participants have a shared vision for change, a common understanding of the problem, and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions
- **Continuous Communication:** Consistent and open communication across the many players is needed to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation
- **Backbone Function:** Dedicated, skilled staff are needed to coordinate participating organizations and agencies, and design and support good process and a learning culture
- **Mutually Reinforcing Activities:** Participant activities must be differentiated while still being coordinated through a mutually reinforcing plan of action
- **Shared Measurement System:** Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants ensures that efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable
- **Trust and Relationship Building:** Participants need to take the time to build trusting relationships so that they can work together differently and productively on a shared agenda.
- **Learning and Evaluation:** Dedicated resources are put in place to guide the process, capture and communicate what's working, to inform decision making
- **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:** The community's voice is the core of the work; ongoing efforts are made to ensure that all voices are heard

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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