

Strategic Options Scoping Study 2013-2018

LIDLAW FOUNDATION

Prepared by James Stauch, 8th Rung
DRAFT Report - Nov. 28, 2012



INTRODUCTION

This document – currently in DRAFT form - outlines a menu of strategic options for consideration by the board and staff of the Laidlaw Foundation with respect to the Foundation’s 2013-2018 Strategic Plan. A refined version of this report will be prepared following the December 10 meeting of the board.

These strategic options are based on interviews over the past couple of weeks with forty two community leaders, who either have strong current or recent familiarity with Laidlaw’s work, or could be thought of as ‘thoughtleaders’, ‘mavens’ or ‘gadflies’ who have important insights related to Laidlaw’s values, interests and approach. A number of others are schedule to complete an interview in the time between this draft report being shared with the Foundation and the Board’s December 10 meeting, so the final number will be closer to fifty. A list of interviewees is included as APPENDIX A.

Also, an enormous volume of research exists with respect to philanthropic change strategies, foundation strategic planning or community investment for social change. A range of more recent entries into this oeuvre have been consulted, alongside key documents produced either by Laidlaw or colleagues in the field of youth engagement, or covering broader youth sector trends. A list of the documents consulted for this report is included as APPENDIX B.

This report first outlines the background context within which the interviews were conducted, then provides insight into what others are saying about Laidlaw and what other organizations are doing that could be instructive. Following this, a set of strategic options in the form of “themes” are outlined, based on both the interviews and the literature review. Some of these options would only demand incremental change, while others would require more profound structural or programmatic reform.

The interviews also serve as a reputational evaluation (though not, it must be emphasized, an impact evaluation). In brief, the interviews revealed a strong sense of admiration for Laidlaw’s commitment to focus, its risk-embracing ‘venture’ portfolio, and its authentically high-engagement grant-making style. Some, but not all, appreciate the focus on youth. There is a strong call to find a better balance between making grants and more purposeful, operational forms of investment. Specifically, interviewees urge Laidlaw to improve communications, to collaborate more deeply and effectively, to build bridges between youth and adults, and between youth and a wider array of institutions and opportunities, and to leverage its considerable knowledge and credibility into pushing for public policy change. There are also thematic areas identified that could benefit from a more robust Laidlaw presence and voice, such as on youth economic prospects and engaging Aboriginal youth.

One last note of introduction: Interviewees applauded the interest and efforts of the Foundation in reaching out to them in an open and curious way, suggesting there is a culture of learning within Laidlaw that too few foundations possess.



CONTEXT

THE CURRENT STRATEGIC PLAN (2007-2012)

In 2007, Laidlaw Foundation undertook its first 5-year strategic plan. This plan defined the current program streams - Youth Organizing (YO) and Youth Social Infrastructure (YSI) - and addressed operations and communications. The plan envisioned a mixed model involving a blend of grant-making and direct activity (convening, advocacy, research, etc.). The core of this plan was a concentration of effort on increasing opportunities for meaningful and inclusive youth engagement by:

- Supporting young people in taking action and enhancing organizational capacity of youth led groups;
- Influencing and supporting policy development that adopts a positive youth development approach;
- Strengthening infrastructure and intermediary supports;
- Supporting institutional shifts to better engage youth in decision making;
- Convening funders to develop strategic partnerships;
- Supporting networks to address or explore issues related to inclusive youth engagement; and
- Disseminating what it is learning.

THEORY OF CHANGE:

The Laidlaw Foundation was challenged in a 2010 formative evaluation to articulate a theory of change. Most foundations avoid exploring or expressing a theory of change. Yet such a theory – unstated though it may be – underpins a foundation’s entire operational and programmatic approach.

If there is something that approximates a Laidlaw theory of change – one that supports its current approach to philanthropy, it would surely be based on research by the late Russian-American child psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner, who held that society must afford children and youth with the opportunity to develop their capacities to the fullest, with each child having at least one significant adult in their lives who will be unconditionally crazy about them. This is important not just for the development of youth as individuals, but also to avoid societal “disorganization and demise.” As you will see in the comments that follow later in this report about youth transitioning from care, or about eroding trust in the institutions of government, Bronfenbrenner was clearly on to something.

But the question, as the board embarks on its strategic planning, is whether this theory of change still resonates. Does everyone – on the board and on staff - ‘buy in’? Does Laidlaw have a sense of shared values, which is a precondition for strategic alignment? Does it have a lucid sense, as one interviewer asked, of what is *wrong* in the community or in society, and of the change it wants to see?

The notion of being “unconditionally crazy” about young people for some interviewees is admirable, but esoteric - a fuzzy sentiment-cum-totem. For others, though, it still resonates. As one interviewee



noted, many of the most effective organizations are implementing ideas that are over three decades old, but it's taken this long for the mainstream to catch up to what was then radical thinking.

WORKING ASSUMPTIONS:

The following fixed parameters were clarified upfront with the Foundation's Executive Director and President:

- Laidlaw will continue to utilize grant-making *and* direct programming, with an emphasis on the former.
- The Foundation will continue in the near term to spend roughly 5% of assets annually.
- The geographic focus will remain in Ontario, with continued emphasis on the GTA/Golden Horseshoe.
- The general focus on youth will remain, with a strong (at least partial) emphasis on supporting youth directly
- Board and staff remain motivated by a general vision of “an inclusive society that values and supports its young people in becoming fully engaged in the civic, social, economic and cultural life of diverse and environmentally healthy communities”.
- A positive, asset-based, non-pathologizing frame will continue for all programming.
- Particular interest will remain with respect to issues of identity – race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, etc.



WHAT ARE OTHERS SAYING?

Interviewees were refreshingly candid in their responses. Most of these themes will not be new to the Foundation, having emerged in the recent evaluations, or referenced in the Foundation's own *Pipelines and Foundations* report from 2010. Themes are organized into three sections: What is Laidlaw doing well? What are potential areas for improvement or innovation? And what are some major new themes that others are suggesting Laidlaw consider, building on its youth engagement focus? For a list of interviewees, refer to APPENDIX A.

KEY THEMES - WHAT'S WORKING

The following major themes emerged, each mentioned by numerous interviewees:

- Pioneers in youth-engaged philanthropy in Canada:** Virtually all interviewees agreed that the Foundation is operating in a 'space' that virtually no others occupy. The Laidlaw Foundation's approach to youth-driven philanthropy is a rare example of a risk-embracing, deeply citizen-oriented style of philanthropy. It models the principles embodied in the human rights of self-organization and self-representation, and it acknowledges that those closest to an issue are best suited to address it. It values lived experience as a form of expertise and it reaches diverse communities who are in many ways still part of the periphery of the city. One interviewee admired its propensity to "get messy", while another liked that Laidlaw avoids funding demonstrably successful 'blue-chip' organizations, noting "it's easy to push on an open door." As the Funders Collaboration on Youth Organizing has observed, such an approach "builds a sense of control, agency and optimism among young people who often bear the brunt of toxic public policy." One interviewee observed that in the broader society "young people feel like they don't have permission to have impact", and that Laidlaw supports an ecosystem of groups that seek to change this. Specific innovations cited by multiple interviewees familiar enough with Laidlaw's work include the *ArtReach Toronto* collaborative – mentioned by many – and the *Pipelines and Foundations* publication – which "nailed it", as one person put it. Many also applauded the effort to build a social infrastructure to support youth initiatives, noting that this space is a challenging milieu to work in, partly because of its intent to support the spaces *in between* organizations, which is more difficult than simply building the capacities of organizations. A number of interviewees pleaded to not abandon the youth focus.
- Positive, asset-based approach:** Mainstream institutions, from the media to public funding agencies to large portions of the non-profit sector, tend to pathologize youth. "Adults, by and large, don't really care for youth", as one adult interviewee observed. The problem is even more acute in rural areas. Laidlaw Foundation, in sharp contrast, believes that youth – even those who are 'street-involved' or in conflict with the law – have assets and talents. Laidlaw not only listens intently to young people that few others give the time of day to; it believes in



the inherent capacity of all youth and supports them at a critical stage of identity formation. As one study commissioned by another local foundation wrote “The great neurological task of adolescence is to find identity and meaning. It’s as important to their brains as eating, drinking and sleeping are to their bodies...”¹ One interviewee observed that when you have opportunity to consciously map the assets that are around the table at any Laidlaw convening, you can’t help but think “Jesus, we can do anything!”

- **Transparency and inclusivity:** The Foundation is one of very few private foundations who think seriously about their accountability to the community. As one grantee interviewee commented, “clarity leads to understanding, which leads to respect, which builds trust.” It is also self-aware about the inherent power dynamic between grantee and grantor. Many interviewees even mistake it for a public foundation, with some noting that for many years, it was more like a community foundation than even the Toronto Community Foundation (TCF). Those involved in social finance are pleasantly surprised to see that the foundation publishes a quarterly list of the securities it holds, while those in the community sector appreciated how it “puts its money where its mouth is” with respect to involving young people on the board and on advisory committees. Some, however, wonder whether the additional layers of structure built into the organization in the name of transparency and inclusivity may actually be an encumbrance to innovation, or at minimum, impede its ability to act nimbly.
- **Interactive grant-making approach:** Foundation program staff model textbook examples of what’s known in the field as “interactive grant-making”. This means they don’t merely listen to, understand and empathize with grantee ideas and perspectives, all done with professionalism and poise. It also means they build a relationship of trust and reciprocity over time with each and every grantee (and even those who are not grantees, but nonetheless are steered by program staff in helpful directions). Laidlaw connects grantees to other opportunities and to each other. It even provides training, where appropriate (such as convening an Art of Hosting facilitation training event for grantees). The non-profit sector, from the youth perspective, often appears professionalized and clinical, a number of people remarked. Laidlaw staff, in contrast, bring “humanity” to their work and to these relationships. Indeed, philanthropy’s root word is the Greek *philanthropia* - “love of humanity”. Violetta and Ana’s work in this respect, not surprisingly, receives accolades from grantee partners, one summing it up pithily with the phrase “they give a shit”; What’s especially telling is that this quality is also recognized as one of the core assets of the Foundation from outside, non-grantee interviewees.

¹ Mitchell, Alanna. Brains: The Secret to Better Schooling. Atkinson Series (Fellowship in Public Policy). Atkinson Foundation, 2008, p. 33.



KEY THEMES – WHERE IS THERE ROOM TO IMPROVE AND INNOVATE?

The following major themes emerged, each mentioned by numerous interviewees:

- **Laidlaw, to many, is a ‘black box’:** Some interviewees had only the vaguest inkling of what Laidlaw Foundation does. Most interviewees only had a dim sense of the foundation’s community investment approach and its portfolio of grantees and collaborations, and even those who praised the social infrastructure work admitted they had difficulty explaining why, exactly. Knowledge of Laidlaw’s approach outside of the orbit of its grantee and Advisor communities, in particular knowledge of its level of innovation and effectiveness is, on the whole, very poor. This is true even with the GTA, but especially in other parts of Canada. A lot of the interviewees have fond memories of Laidlaw’s former program areas. There were specific stories of some of the ground-breaking Laidlaw grants and interventions in the arts, children’s environmental health, sustainability and social inclusion fields. A number of people said that a decade ago, Laidlaw was spoken of in the same breath as Maytree and Metcalf, a triumvirate of pioneer grant-making and strategic philanthropy. Those who are plugged into the broader civic infrastructure in Toronto generally say that both the United Way and Toronto Community Foundation appear to be doing more on youth issues, but admit that it may be simply because their work is more *visible*, with savvy communications helping push their stories out. Which brings us to the next point...
- **Re-energize communications:** Most of the interviewees felt that there were multiple avenues available to enhance communications, in particular to develop a social media presence. Others noted that Laidlaw’s latest published communications have a prosaic appearance and a plodding prose, although some noted that the *Pipelines* document is an exception. It is true that most Canadian foundations – particularly private foundations - seldom possess a public outreach strategy, and many that do still have a sad social media presence. However, a youth-led foundation with the kind of public presence Laidlaw desires could greatly leverage its interests by being more current and high energy in how it approaches social media and technology. It should be leading the pack, but it has a ways to go: Although it continues to regularly update its Facebook page, the latest posting on Laidlawfdn.org is from July, and while Youtube videos are posted on the site (again, to be fair, something most foundations don’t do), they are not terribly engaging. The impact of these supposed great grant stories remains, by and large, opaque. While Maytree has cultivated close to 5,000 followers with nearly 15,000 tweets, Laidlaw – as of late November, 2012 - has tweeted 120 times to 87 followers. It also screens who follows the Foundation on Twitter, such that only permitted followers have access to @laidlawfdn’s tweets and complete profile. This is an unusually ‘clubby’ practise



which says to the public – “We’ll decide whether you’re worthy enough to follow us.” One interviewee asked “Where can I download the Laidlaw app for my phone?” A brand design revamp is also needed, including the logo. A note as well here on language: progressive foundations can easily get mired in politically-correct but emotionally vacant language. Foundations working in the community services milieu suffer the double curse of ‘philanthro-speak’ and obscure labels culled from child psychology and social work. This has an unintended consequence: Ostensibly “grassroots” organizations – groups that one would expect to be speaking in plain language - seem to absorb and reflect back this lexicon within funding proposals, reports and even in promotional videos.

- **Leverage your networks to influence public policy:** It has been suggested by some that the goal of strategic philanthropy is to create useful ideas that could influence public policy. A number of the interviewees went as far as saying that foundations that develop such a deep and profound level of knowledge about a sector or an issue – in Laidlaw’s case, youth engagement - have a moral responsibility to society to act on this knowledge to influence the formation of supportive public policy – i.e. government strategies, laws, regulations, administrative practices and spending priorities. In this context, knowing how and when to engage government is critical, and it requires the development of a concerted change strategy and operational enhancements. Sitting at other institutions’ tables is a necessary part of this, and Laidlaw certainly does this, but it is not sufficient: Laidlaw must convene and influence strategically if it wants to move a youth engagement agenda forward. Laidlaw’s advocacy, convening and proactive granting efforts with respect to youth transitioning from care were cited by a number of interviewees as a success to build on.
- **Apply a systems approach and build the field:** Most of the interviewees described how, despite a seemingly cutting-edge portfolio of grantees and projects, there was no clear sense of what Laidlaw’s investments are “driving towards”. Many encouraged the Foundation to develop a systems lens to its work, a challenge to philanthropy echoed in many recent publications in the field. One interviewee went as far as saying “there is no single better opportunity in philanthropy than young people involved in systems change.” The Foundation’s *Pipelines and Foundations* report certainly did articulate many aspects of a systems approach, but others are not seeing the application of this on the ground. The US-based Robert Wood Johnson Foundation recently produced a fascinating reflection of their work supporting a new approach to palliative care which provides one potential blueprint for foundations interested in “building a field”. This is much more than the social infrastructure within the non-profit milieu. It includes nurturing a cadre of leaders. It involves the strategic dissemination of applied knowledge, challenging or partnering with post-secondary institutions, think tanks, other foundations and government to generate their own research and action. It requires the emergence of a network of practitioners, underpinned by strong platforms, that buy into the same approach, and who share a name for what they are doing. Perhaps most importantly, it involves reframing an issue or an approach in the public mind.



- **Deepen the commitment to training and leadership development:** Laidlaw staff believe they are investing in people, as much, or more so, than investing in organizations. But investing in the *organizations* created by emerging community leaders is only a vicarious investment in those people. Laidlaw has engaged many of these individuals in learning and training opportunities from time to time, or even on the Advisory and governance structure of the Foundation itself. But many interviewees noted that there is considerable room to both deepen and formalize this commitment to individuals, many of whom, it must be recognized, “carry the weight of the world on their shoulders.” Such support could come in the form of more regular training opportunities, a leadership development or fellowship program, or through coaching.
- **Create a clear vision for the strategic plan, and build evaluation into it:** It is very difficult to evaluate if you don’t know what success looks like. What is the change the organization wants to see? And how will you recognize it? It is both easier and more effective to build in outcome metrics and markers of success at this front-end strategic planning stage, than to try and figure out what to evaluate at the end of the process. The two Laidlaw program evaluations conducted recently, while of anecdotal use, and acknowledging that storytelling is a powerful tool in philanthropy, were of limited use as impact evaluation per se. In fact, the second of these evaluations outlined these limitations well. Building an evaluation framework into the strategic plan allows you to evaluate as you go, and course-correct as needed, rather than wait until the end of the planning period, at which time shifting priorities may the results of an evaluation obsolete anyway. A couple of months ago, the US-based Forum for Youth Investment, along with Ready By 21, a national collaborative, published a *Common Outcomes and Indicators* framework for investing in youth. The UK-based Young Foundation has also published a number of incredibly comprehensive tools around the notion of a *Framework of Outcomes for Young People*. Meanwhile, the United Way, with Laidlaw as a partner is working toward a provincial *Youth Outcomes Framework*.
- **Understand where you may be failing, and learn from it:** Increasingly, foundations recognize that if you are not taking risks, you are not innovating. But taking risks means failing, which means that the most innovative foundations fail often. As mentioned, virtually every interview respondent admired the Foundation for taking risks in investing deeply in youth-driven work with often fledgling, untested and unproven organizations. But this is risky at both ends: The non-profit sector has unrealistically high expectations for such venture philanthropy. To some, Laidlaw has passed a rubicon where the inevitable failure-rate of venture philanthropy might be overshadowing the “great grant stories”, especially if these great stories are not compellingly communicated or adequately leveraged into broader change. Most venture capitalists expect an investment failure rate of well over 50%, more typically 70%. In contrast, much of the general public, including the broader community of high net worth donors and foundations, have nineteenth century expectations for how the non-profit sector should deliver value: The wrong outputs are measured in unrealistic timeframes and often irrelevant



ratios and assumptions are applied. Laidlaw Foundation has already made great strides in moving past a gamed system where NGOs and foundations put veneer ahead of content: There is safety enough to be vulnerable, share responsibility, and move to solutions. However, it could do more to describe to the outside world the necessity of funders taking risk and, it follows, of admitting and understanding failure. The widely-admired Engineers Without Borders, which has almost single-handedly shaken up and re-energized the international development milieu, publishes an annual *Failure Report*. Inspired by this, McConnell Foundation helped one of its investees - YouthScape – highlight what it has learned from “failure”. Moreover, a review of McConnell’s ten multi-year youth engagement grants revealed significant failings in nine of ten initiatives. This has not made McConnell leave the youth milieu. Rather, it has propelled them into new and ever-more interesting directions.

- **How are we reaching the un-engaged?** A youth-led focus presupposes the existence of youth who are already engaged (or at least are well-positioned to engage) with each other and, to varying degrees, with the issues they care about. But a number of interviewees wondered about those who are beyond this orbit – the disengaged, the NEETS (“not in employment, education, or training”), what one interview termed “idle young males”, or who the Tunisians call the *hittistes* - “those who lean against the wall.” It may be legitimate to simply say this is not the group that Laidlaw intends to reach, but if it does, a youth-led approach may simply be inadequate.
- **Spend less energy on process.** A small number of outside interviewees felt that Laidlaw appears to spend too much time on internal process. While others laud its consultative approach, others believe the advisory committee structure seems cumbersome and more appropriate to a community foundation.
- **Look beyond Toronto:** One difficulty with a grassroots approach is that to be effective, you usually have to focus-in geographically. All the more so if a portion of the Foundation’s energies are devoted to municipal policy change. The vast majority of the Foundation’s grantees are in the City of Toronto, but it is not clear why, other than convenience and the ability to develop in-person relationships. Rural projects occasionally receive funding, but the programs have a strong urban lens – for example, 95% of grants in the YO program last year were for initiatives in Toronto proper. Yet youth in rural areas, it could easily be argued, are in many respects even more marginalized, and certainly less supported outside of the household, than in urban centres. One interviewee remarked that even Mississauga feels distant from the Toronto Laidlaw-grassroots nexus. If Laidlaw remains Toronto-focused, it must be clear why it has chosen to do so, both internally and to otherwise potential investees outside the region.



KEY THEMES – WHAT ISSUES ARE OTHERS ASKING LAIDLAW TO WORK ON?

- **Youth Economic Prospects:** Many of the interviewees cited youth unemployment as an issue ripe for Laidlaw to step in with a strong and credible voice. The youth unemployment rate in Canada has been hovering at about 14% for the past few years, and more like 18% in Toronto, although this is better than how youth are faring in most other OECD countries. But others noted the problem is bigger than just unemployment: There is a perfect storm brewing, or what some would characterize as a broken social contract. Baby boomers, on average, and thanks to such forces as economic globalization and union seniority preferences, have garnered substantially more income in real dollars than generations that have followed, at each stage of their respective lives and career trajectories. And this trend is getting worse. Meanwhile, the debt burden for young people is at an all-time high, as is the cost of housing, forcing many to return to living with their parents, or otherwise overly dependent on family patronage. The rising cost of post-secondary education is paradoxically yielding diminishing returns on that investment. And youth will carry the health care burden of the boomers while not knowing what a pension looks like, the luckier ones hoping in vain for their shrunken RRSPs to make up a reasonable portion of the difference. Cuts to student employment programs and other supports naturally exacerbate the problem. Community Foundations of Canada’s recently released *GenerationFlux* report sounds a similar alarm, noting that “the predictable trajectory that guided the lives of the current generation’s parents is gone. Canada’s youth are growing up in an era of complexity and uncertainty that has delayed, or even destroyed, the landmarks that once signaled a transition from one phase of life to another.” As one interview put it, somewhat more succinctly, “Hope is in short supply: It really sucks!” All the more vexing when one considers that youth crave socially meaningful and fulfilling work. While the scale of the issue is huge, a strategic intervention from Laidlaw could help “shift the curve of inevitability” in Canada. One potential avenue is in the emerging realm of what some are calling the “civic economy”, a reimagining of the economy to adapt more readily, fairly and sustainably to the massive global changes afoot such as climate change, resource depletion and inequality.
- **Youth Democratic Engagement:** A number of interviewees are troubled by the phenomenon of young Canadians removing themselves from the formal democratic system, wondering whether Laidlaw might be interested in this puzzle as well. Only about one third of Canadian youth 18-24 vote, and less than half of youth over 24 do. Youth voter participation rates have been declining for two decades at all levels of government. More troubling, there no longer appears to be a link between civic engagement (in the sense of voluntarism, activism or community participation) and engagement with the formal political system; Even people who care don’t vote anymore. Though the reasons are complex, and no doubt connected in part to the aforementioned issue of economic prospects, the main issue appears to be erosion of trust in the institutions of governance. Young people also perceive that they have fewer opportunities to ‘touch the state’. The opportunity to help youth do exactly that is highlighted later in this report.



- Building a Liveable, Creative, Vibrant and Democratic City:** Laidlaw’s recent Learning Report, *Youth-Led Community Organizing: Strategies and Tools*, declares “as counterintuitive as it may seem, the work of the Foundation is not about ‘youth’... [Its] strategies place the knowledge of young people and their communities at the core of broader social and community change efforts.” Indeed, youth seldom become organized around the amorphous notion of “youth empowerment.” Rather, they organize because they want to make their community, or world, better, and in a very particular way. In a similar vein, interviewees uttered variations on the phrase “the problem with a youth focus, is that youth grow up.” Typically, they would follow this with some variation on the suggestion that, while youth are expressing a desire for more creative, humane and democratic approaches, once they turn into adults too many simply give up on these goals, pursuing economic and family security and having few if any outlets to continue building the kind of community and world they desire. Some have noted that when youth demand “youth-friendly” institutions and communities, they are demanding things that adults with a strong sense of justice and humanity demand as well – more humane, democratic, supportive and creative spaces. As John Eger noted in a recent address to *ArtsSmarts*, “young people need a place to work, and they need a community that nurtures their creative instincts; they need to live and work and play in a community that itself is creative.” The US-based *Ready by 21* initiative says that to “change the landscape of communities and the supports they provide, we must first change the way we, as leaders, do business.” Laidlaw has relevant experience to draw from here: *Vital Signs*, pioneered by the Toronto Community Foundation, and now replicated at a national level and in many other Canadian cities, was an idea that came of the Laidlaw Foundation, working in partnership with Maytree. Some years later Laidlaw was instrumental in pioneering the “youth-friendly” certification of municipalities in Ontario. A number of interviewees added that most meaningful change happens at the neighbourhood scale, or in small communities at the municipal scale. Some within the Foundation remark with pride that Laidlaw has moved past the arts, environment and social inclusion realms as “silos” of yesteryear. But many in the community lament Laidlaw’s decision to drop out of these realms. And youth-engagement, make no mistake, is still a “silo.” If Laidlaw truly rejects a siloed approach, it needs to follow what youth are actually desiring and demanding of their community. It needs to be at the tables – neighbourhood, municipal and otherwise – that are potential loci for broader community change.
- Build the Field of Public Space:** Amid the din of recent attention around “local” (mainly with respect to local food systems), an emerging milieu that has received very little, if any, attention from foundations is the creation of, and conversation around, citizen-centred public space. As Laidlaw knows from its portfolio of youth-driven initiatives, young urban Canadians are very interested in reclaiming urban space for humane, artistic and equitable purposes. This used to be the realm of planners and architects, but young people from many walks of life want to be part of the creative enterprise of city-building. Local innovations such as Spacing Magazine



and the Toronto Public Space Committee are part of a growing movement activating citizens and grassroots at the neighbourhood level. A couple of interviewees suggested that a strategic collaboration with groups working to link youth and public space could be ground-breaking.

- **Re-imagine Education in Canada:** A couple of interviewees wondered whether there might be an interest in helping re-imagining what an education system appropriate to the 21st Century ought to look like. We know tremendously more about how people learn and how brains develop, yet we apply century-old education models. The education system – far too frequently - is a milieu that lowers expectations and is designed to produce conforming drones. We ask youth and adults alike “to be innovative, creative and collaborative”, when schools generally fail to produce people who think this way. Too often, youth with promise succeed in spite of, not because of, the education system. Perhaps only superceded by the challenge of reforming health care, this field is dotted with landmines of vested interests and frozen ideology. But then again, there are few foundations better positioned to enter this fray. If the Foundation really enjoys “getting messy”, then what better way than diving into this milieu? One potential way to begin is initiating a consultation process akin to YouthTruth in the US. YouthTruth, a project of the Centre for Effective Philanthropy, is a national survey project that collects feedback from students about what’s working and not working in high schools around the country (so far over 100,000 students have been polled). The most fruitful opportunity for innovation may actually be in the Aboriginal context: A policy window exists, jurisdiction is federal, national aboriginal leadership is focused here, unions are not significant players, and there are already nodes of innovation that could be documented and scaled up.

WHAT ARE OTHERS DOING?

With respect to other foundations, the Laidlaw Foundation is interested in looking at what strategies other foundations are using, including but not necessarily limited to Canadian foundations working on youth-engagement. In particular, how do foundations that are widely admired operate?

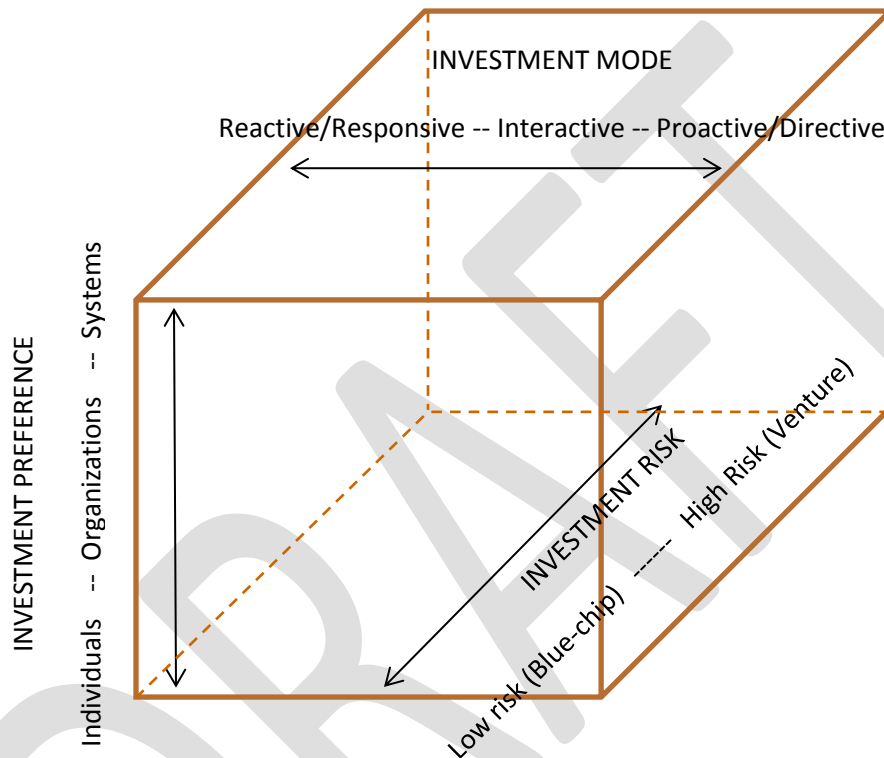
AN ‘ECOLOGY’ OF FOUNDATIONS

As the board embarks on strategic planning, and before looking at specific examples of foundations, it is important to first think about where Laidlaw prefers to situate itself in the ‘ecology’ of community investment, both in terms of issues and in terms of approach. In the US, you can pick virtually any issue – no matter how obscure – and there is at least one, and often many, philanthropic foundations funding work in that area. In Canada, in contrast, there are whole clusters of areas and whole geographies unattended and unaddressed by philanthropy. So much potential innovation is lost through the cracks and interstices between foundation silos. As such, Canadian foundations have a

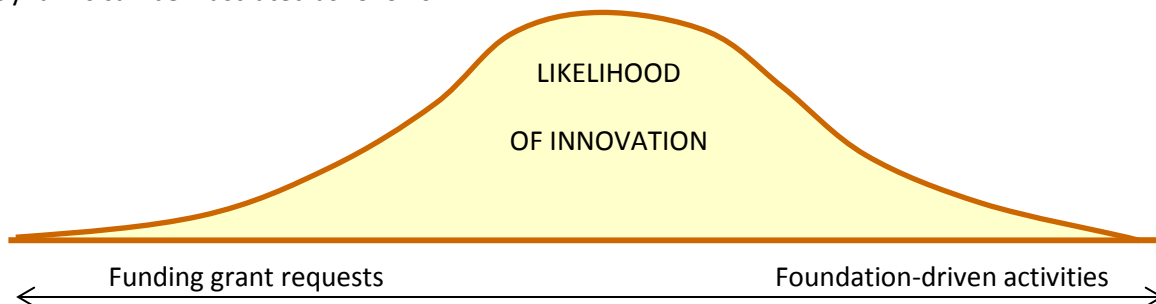


special responsibility to take notice of connections beyond their specific purview, and to reach across the many divides, collaborating and staying abreast on what’s important.

In terms of *approach*, the range available could be represented in three dimensional space, as illustrated, for example, by the cube below. This is one way to ‘map’ the common strategic debates held in foundation board rooms: “Do we invest in people or organizations?” “Are we reactive or proactive?” “Do we like to take risks?” in which zone of the cube does the Laidlaw Foundation prefer to operate in?



Where is the locus of innovation in such an ecology? It depends. As one of Violetta’s articles in the *Philanthropist* urges, youth-engaged foundations should convene, commission and collaborate, but at the same time have an open, highly nimble and responsive portfolio. In fact, this could be said for all foundations working to effect real change on any issue. It is only possible to have an impact with a ‘proactive’ approach, when your ear is close to the ground. Otherwise, it’s just hubris. But on the other hand you will not affect systemic change if all you are doing is responsive, one-year grants. This dynamic can be illustrated as follows:





As well, as the examples below illustrate well, innovation is increasingly emerging out of networks and collaboratives. Good networks that extend tentacles across this space, often relying on a platform or on a ‘backbone’ organization (a role that a foundation can play), can both innovate *and* scale up.

OTHER FOUNDATIONS WE CAN LEARNING FROM

Interviewees were remarkably consistent on the question of which foundations they most admire. Virtually every single Canadian interviewee cited at least two of three foundations, colloquially be referred to as the “3Ms” – Maytree, McConnell and Metcalf. Although a number of others were mentioned by one or two respondents, the 3Ms appear to be in a league of their own, viewed from the perspective of social innovation, savvy communications, public influence and coherent focus.

These foundations are outlined below, alongside a small number of others who are doing pioneering work in youth-engaged philanthropy.

Maytree: Maytree is the most often-cited innovator in Canadian philanthropy. People have immense respect for its clarity of focus on immigrant, refugee and diversity issues. Maytree’s multi-pronged approach to tackling these issues is in many respects a model of effective philanthropy, combining grants, leadership and training initiatives, dogged public policy work, and skilled public communications (including their previously cited social media prowess). It has birthed and incubated such valued local initiatives as the DiverCity Fellows (with CivicAction), the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) and the Maytree Leadership Network. Maytree’s annual expenditures are larger than Laidlaw’s, although it is under a board directive to get spending down to \$3 million per annum. One interviewee wondered whether “Laidlaw is to youth issues what Maytree is to immigration and diversity issues.” Despite the nearly-universal accolades for Maytree, one interviewee noted with respect to its main population, it does not reach out to the “hardest to reach.”

Metcalf Foundation: Metcalf Foundation was cited almost as often as Maytree, and – although it has triple the assets of Laidlaw – it is viewed by many as the closest comparator to Laidlaw. It has well-regarded program siloes in the performing arts, the environment and inclusive local economies. Those who have worked with Metcalf have almost universal praise for its “tenacious”, “clear” and “focused” programming. Metcalf appears both strategic and pragmatic to many, picking an issue they can have some measurable impact on in a reasonable amount of time. It convenes memorable multi-interest conversations, and then acts upon these dialogues, engaging government in the process. Metcalf also runs an arts internship program, discussed elsewhere in this report, and more recently have offered Innovation Fellowships. The Innovation Fellowship provides up to \$30,000 for individuals of vision and creativity, people with outstanding talent and originality, to pursue powerful ideas, models, or novel practices with respect to creating healthy and resilient communities in Ontario. In the past three years in particular, Metcalf has stepped up its public communications and government relations efforts,



leveraging their influence as a grant-maker into a serious and respected player in the public policy realms it seeks to influence.

J.W. McConnell Family Foundation: Next to Maytree, the innovator most often cited is the Montreal-based McConnell Foundation. McConnell applies a “social innovation” lens to all of its work, including a large, well-regarded youth engagement program that supports a range of campus-based organizations, youth leaders with “powerful ideas”, and YouthScape, a Canada-wide initiative to engage young people in creating long-term change (and rooted in the notion of social inclusion, first pioneered in Canadian philanthropy by the Laidlaw Foundation). Roughly half of McConnell’s youth engagement portfolio is in the form of grants to youth-led organizations, while the remainder is to youth-focused but adult-led initiatives. Many of its grantees are led by nationally-renowned social entrepreneurs. Although it does not engage in grassroots-level funding in the same way Laidlaw does, it does occasionally “cherry-pick” certain star Laidlaw grantees and invest heavily in them (well into the hundreds of thousands or even millions of dollars for individual grantees) and over many years (3-5 years for new investees, 10-15 years for proven investees). While McConnell’s endowment and annual expenditures are more than ten times the size of Laidlaw, its mandate is Canada-wide. As previously cited, an analysis of McConnell’s youth engagement grants, which – it is fair to say – are more ‘blue chip’ investments than the average Laidlaw grantee, still revealed significant missteps. Other vulnerabilities include the esoteric framing of some of its priorities and the difficulty it has “reading local patterns” with a nationwide focus and a small staff. However, because McConnell – like Laidlaw - is working in a relational, high-trust way, it can more easily course-correct and retool in partnership with most of these organizations.

Toronto Community Foundation (TCF): Vital Youth is the name of one of TCF’s three discretionary grant streams, (the others being Vital Ideas and Vital People). Vital Youth grants support high-quality recreation activities including structured sports, fitness, outdoor education, arts and cultural activities. Priority is given to those programs which increase access, encourage diversity, and develop youth leadership. TCF’s Youth Micro-Loan Initiative is a new intensive social enterprise/business training program that will enable marginalized youth to foster a business idea into a realistic business plan to guide their enterprise. Some interviewees mentioned that TCF was an important player in supporting often small, grassroots youth initiatives, and is pushing some new boundaries of late. TCF was also the first to publish the now-wildly successful *Vital Signs* reports. The latest report helped draw attention to such issues as youth unemployment, deficits in access to recreational activities, decreased access to skills-building and business education opportunities, increased time spent in isolation with electronic media, and declines in neighbourhood-based sense of belonging.

Carthy Foundation: Having almost the exact same asset base and annual grants budget as the Laidlaw Foundation, the Calgary-based Carthy Foundation supports initiatives, mainly in Western Canada, that focus on adolescent emotional health and wellness or on career transitions for youth and young adults. It also operates a separate environment program. [at the time of release of this draft report, an interview is pending with the CEO of the Carthy Foundation]



Michaëlle Jean Foundation: This Ottawa-based Foundation, founded by the former Governor General and with about one fifth the assets of Laidlaw, supports creative initiatives designed to promote youth and the arts for social change across Canada. It employs a range of approaches, including funding creative platforms, arts forums, fellowships, mentorships and bursaries.

The Graham Boeckh Foundation: A private foundation with assets roughly one fifth of Laidlaw's created in memory of Anthony Boeckh. It funds initiatives that improve adolescent mental health care in Canada, and strategically leads and funds projects in basic research, research translation, and community outreach. The Foundation leveraged its resources 50/50 with the federal government to create the Partnership for Transformational Research in Adolescent Mental Health.

Toskan Casale Foundation: A relatively new family foundation based in Toronto. All of the Foundation's resources have been put into one initiative, run in-house, called the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (YPI). The program, which operates in Canada, the UK and the US, aims to foster a new generation of philanthropy, supporting high school students to actively participate in the betterment of their communities through an academic program, structured voluntarism and small-scale grant-making. There are many such "youth in philanthropy" initiatives now, often housed at community foundations. This is an idea Laidlaw once helped pioneer, but it's now a crowded field.

Ontario Trillium Foundation – Future Fund: Although the Trillium Foundation is not a foundation in the classic sense, it is given the flexibility to operate like almost any public foundation with a broad mandate, and as such has developed significant knowledge, expertise and wisdom around the practice of grant-making and community investment. A number of interviewees observed that Trillium's Future Fund, created in 2007 to underwrite "significant and sustainable change in a specific area, using distinct and innovative approaches", is a more exciting development than almost anything coming out of the private foundation milieu in Toronto of late. Motivated by the crisis in youth unemployment, The Future Fund for the coming year will focus specifically on support for youth social entrepreneurship in Ontario, a \$5 million investment. Through investments in infrastructures of support (incubators, networks, accelerators), the Fund intends to seed an "integrated economic ecosystem" that creates and supports social enterprise opportunities for youth. Laidlaw Advisor and colleague Arti Freeman played a strong role in the development of this focus, along with the Fund's Manager, Tracey Robertson.

Ivey Foundation: A Toronto-based family foundation with a comparable asset base to Laidlaw, though a totally different issue focus. It was cited by a couple of interviewees as an example of a foundation that stuck with an issue, with clearly understood objectives and a shared and highly tangible vision for what success looked like. Ivey spent the past decade investing in grantees working both 'within' and 'outside' the mainstream, convening across and beyond the NGO sector, and engaging in government and industry relations. This approach saw the Foundation become a central force in the achievement of forest products certification and establishing a new system of forestry tenures in the boreal forest. The previous decade was spent using a similar strategy that resulted in the implementation of Tele-health Ontario.



Kahanoff Foundation: This Calgary-based foundation is interesting for a variety of reasons: It is a rare example of a foundation that is intentionally spending down its endowment, and will permanently close its doors on December 31. Over the past two decades it has supported models of youth philanthropy and making Calgary more “child and youth friendly”, and it has engaged in public policy work both in Canada and Israel. A decade ago, anticipating this spend-down, it purchased a portion of a city block, including the former United Way building (now demolished) and a small office tower, which it transformed into a non-profit hub and conference centre. The original vision for the site was a more ambitious non-profit “campus”, but it was not able to secure a critical mass of funding partners – what happened was an all-too-familiar case of a private foundation assuming that its financial assets and the self-evident wisdom of its ideas are sufficient to leverage influence. The absence of a collaborative ethos doomed what could have been a far more exciting initiative.

Tides Canada Foundation: Tides Canada Foundation might be best described as a Canada-wide community foundation for donors interested in environmental and social/economic justice causes. Its role in the Greater Toronto Area skews to the latter of these interests, in sharp contrast with its Vancouver headquarters. Through its sister organization, Tides Canada Initiatives (TCI), Tides also incubates small, usually new, organizations by handling their finances and even co-locating many of these initiatives, such as The Base and the East Scarborough Storefront (Laidlaw-funded initiatives). Under siege from the federal government and certain media outlets for its role in managing and re-granting funds from US foundations to certain conservation and energy-related projects in the west, Tides Canada has re-energized their communications, resulting in some of the savviest and hippest messaging of any foundation in North America.

The Foundation for Young Australians: This foundation, created in 1999 by two mainstream public foundations - The Queen’s Trust and the Australian Youth Foundation - serves as “a national platform of respect and opportunity for the best ideas and actions that young Australians have to offer.” It provides a remarkable spectrum of support to young people from many walks of life, from budding young philanthropists to at-risk teens to Indigenous youth. Its approaches range from training and leadership development, to research and convening, to youth-involved re-granting. It publishes an annual *Vital Signs*-esque report called simply *How Young People are Faring*, which describes the aspirations, employment opportunities and education pathways of young Australians.

The Trust for London: Established in 1891 as the City Parochial Foundation, The Trust for London was the most frequently cited non-Canadian foundation among interviewees as having a reputation for city-scale innovation that could serve as a source of inspiration for Laidlaw. The Trust’s accomplishments over the past century are vast and renowned, among which was their role funding the research and thinking in the 1920s that led to the British welfare state. As they put it “we’ve always been proud to embrace causes that were seen as unfashionable...” Although in some respects they operate like a community foundation, they dive deep into the public policy realm on certain key issues, such as a living wage campaign, and provide conference, meeting and office space to non-profit organizations. Among their more interesting collaborations is *Fear and Fashion*, a five-funder



approach to tackle knife culture in order to reduce the use and carrying of knives and other weapons, and to provide positive alternatives and long-term change.

Young Foundation: This UK-based foundation, and one of the most high-energy innovators in philanthropy period, uses a number of fascinating approaches, any number of which could be instructive. A few examples: They pioneered the “open university” concept, which is opening access to high-quality post-secondary instruction to economically marginalized youth; they partner with venture philanthropists on an “Accelerator” model to scale up social enterprises; and they created a novel approach to leadership development, called UpRising for diverse young community activists in poor neighbourhoods. Not exclusively focused on youth, the Foundation has been able to build bridges between youth-led and youth-serving organizations and between the youth ‘silo’ and other community issues. Their approach is three-pronged: 1. Providing venture grants; 2. Conducting and commissioning research; and 3. Applying learnings into system-wide innovation. The tools they employ to communicate the issues they care about, from an engaging website to the production of animated vignettes on such issues as ‘worklessness’, are colourful, plain language, inviting and insightful. The Young Foundation has a much larger asset base than Laidlaw, but their pioneering approaches to youth development are worth careful consideration.

Farther Foundation: One interviewee suggested that travel is perhaps the most effective way for young people to expand their sense of identity, global consciousness and civic purpose. The Farther Foundation seeks to improve high school and college graduation rates for students in the Chicago area through educational travel programs and grants. In conjunction with schools and organizations that administer summer and extracurricular programs, Farther's student travel grants fund up to \$4,000 of a student's program, travel and associated expenses in partner programs. Applicants must come from economically disadvantaged families.

Edna McConnell Clark Foundation: The New York-based Edna McConnell Clark Foundation seeks to transform the life trajectories of vulnerable and economically disadvantaged youth, put simply, “by getting an education, holding a job, and staying out of trouble”. It does this by “expanding the number of non-profits with the evidence base, organizational capacity, and operational scale” to address this goal. They invest heavily and for many years in only thirteen grantees, applying an inter-active model where a “portfolio manager” is assigned to each grantee. The role of the portfolio manager is to provide access to additional resources, including assistance with business planning, evaluation, organizational capacity building, board and talent development, and communications. They have also leveraged \$90 million of their funding with 49 identified “co-investees” (mostly other private foundations though also a few corporate partners), who have collectively contributed an additional \$242 million to the 13 investees.



OTHER INNOVATORS WORTH CONSIDERING

An important insight for the philanthropic community in Canada is that many respondents noted that foundations were simply not among the innovators anymore. Very few met interviewees' expectations for innovation and relevance, and some said that they could not think of a single foundation doing cutting edge work today, at least relevant to the best corporate-sector funders, NGOs, social enterprises and think tanks. Following are examples of the cited non-foundation innovators:

CivicAction: An initiative of the late David Pecaut, the largely corporate-funded Greater Toronto CivicAction Alliance, convening a series of City Summits, transforms this information into incubating ambitious new projects that improve quality of life in Toronto in a range of areas – from poverty to transportation to diversity to the arts. Mentioned by a few interviewees as an interesting 'proxy' for a foundation, CivicAction's initiatives are designed to galvanize action on the tough issues and big opportunities affecting the city. Famously, it started Luminato. CivicAction's initiatives potentially relevant to Laidlaw's interests include an Emerging Leaders Network and the DiverCity Fellowships. It also produces a range of publications, including fact sheets and short, pithy think pieces on key issues.

Engineers Without Borders (EWB): A couple of interviewees cited EWB as an innovator worth watching. In a very short timeframe, it has emerged to challenge the status quo on both a policy track and social innovation track – essentially reinventing the field of foreign assistance. Their annual *Failure Report*, cited elsewhere in this report, is a model of self-reflection, public accountability and appetite for renewal and adaptation. It is also a whip-smart communicator.

MaRS: A number of interviewees mentioned MaRS when asked about which foundations are innovating, some noting that youth and innovation go hand in hand. As one interviewee put it, "MaRS is part of the ecosystem of innovation that Laidlaw needs to be plugged into." While some are still waiting for MaRS to deliver in a big way on its promise of innovation, it is situated in the right 'space', bringing disparate concepts and groups together, something foundations are also good at. It is an important player in the field of financing social enterprise and leveraging capital for social good.

Rotary International: For the better part of a century, Rotary - via local rotary branches - has sent high school students on study and cultural exchange experiences around the world in one of the world's largest private travel scholarship programs. High school students receive a US \$27,000 grant designated to cover travel, lodging and educational expenses for one year of study abroad. While abroad and after re-entry, students are expected to function as cultural ambassadors, giving presentations on their home culture abroad and their visited culture after returning home.

VanCity: One interviewee, who works with many foundations and corporate funders, observed that in Canada at least, foundations are very "static" – corporations are simply easier for potential investees to deal with, once your foot is in the door, and the best corporate funders can be more innovative than foundations. This would not have been said a decade ago. Corporate funders can also be refreshingly hands-off, profile requirements aside, rarely requiring formal grant reports, for example (few in the sector believe that foundations ever do much with the grant reports they spend hours completing).



One such corporate innovator is VanCity, the largest credit union in Canada. One interviewee noted that they are widely regarded as the most progressive, risk-embracing funder on the west coast, Tides Canada included. The member-owned company invests in a cornucopia of initiatives, from micro-finance and affordable housing to local food systems and Aboriginal empowerment. Going well beyond old-school CSR (corporate social responsibility) it is among the best examples in North America of what Michael Porter calls a “shared value” approach.

Youth Challenge Fund (YCF): Some interviewees identified this United Way-led, 5-year, \$45 million initiative as the most significant initiative in youth-focused philanthropy in Ontario. There are certainly some parallels to Laidlaw’s approach – young people themselves defining change and leading their own organizations. Some credit it for creating purposeful, systemic change so that youth-serving organizations now respond better. Unfortunately, YCF is a clinic in poor communications, its website offering no clues as to its impact or legacy. The major opportunity here is that the United Way of Toronto has now “taken the initiative in-house” and will be looking over the next few months for partnerships. There is a critical window of opportunity here for Laidlaw to engage United Way, and to leverage each other’s interests and resources.

DRAFT



CARVING A PATH: SOME STRATEGIC OPTIONS

The Foundation's previous strategic plan covered not only programming, but operations and communications. In a similar vein, the following strategic options each have operational implications, including communications. Most also have programmatic implications.

Strategic options are classed according to whether it constitutes a relatively *incremental* change (with no new significant allocations of resources or staffing changes), a significant program *restructuring* (which entail shifting resources in-house and potentially augmenting the staff complement), or even a wholesale *reinvention* of how Laidlaw applies its resources (which would entail winding down existing program commitments, along with a period of carefully managed staff transition).

"Stay the course, but link the programs and tell your story" (incremental)

There are many considerable assets to Laidlaw's current approach, chief among which are its high tolerance for risk and its interactive, relationship-fostering, approach to grant-making. It could do worse than to simply stay the course, and one interviewee representing another major youth funder warned that it would be "profoundly disruptive" for Laidlaw to leave this space. "It is radical to stay the course," said another. But even if it does stay the course, consider two tweaks:

1. Some wondered whether the YO and YSI initiatives work in tandem as much as they could. How often do successful YO grantees "graduate" and move into the YSI fold? Why are multi-year grants now being approved in the YO program, but not – counter intuitively - in YSI?
2. Among the interviewees there was virtual unanimous agreement that the Foundation should update and re-energize its approach to communications.

"Triage long-term investees, and invest deeply in successful partners" (incremental)

Foundations are notorious for moving on to the "next shiny new thing" while the not-so-new program languishes or is cut before it has had a chance to prove successful. As the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation has admonished, "Philanthropy needs to stick around longer and strengthen the infrastructure of successful organizations, thereby laying the groundwork for public investment." As a recent study on engagement organizing urges, you need to "reward those doing engagement well with multi-year general support funding to execute and innovate, rather than narrow annual program funding. Consider making fewer, bigger bets and spend more time ensuring their success."²

² Roob, Nancy, and Jeffrey L. Bradach. *Scaling What Works: Implications for Philanthropists, Policymakers, and Nonprofit Leaders*. Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, with Bridgespan, 2009.



The YSI program typically has supported many of the same grantees year after year, which is de facto multi-year investing, but the approvals are on a year-by-year basis, so the grantee does not have a guarantee that next year's funding will materialize. Each year, a proposal is generated that then has to go through the committee vetting yet again, which is a clear waste of time and resources.

Clearly, there is a choice to be made between investing broadly, which the YO program is intended to do, and invest deeply to take successes to scale, which is the purpose of the YSI program. As one former Laidlaw President asked "Why do we play games with grantees when we should fund those that deliver our mission? If there is a perfect match, fund deep to accelerate." On the grantee side, one interviewer remarked that "You can't expect a program to be up and running, and evaluated, in 3 years. It should be 5 years minimum, complemented by a fuller spectrum of support - coaching, professional development; business training; impact measurement; communicating your impact; mentorship on fundraising, and strategic planning, etc."

Naturally, under such a scenario, some culling will need to take place of less successful grantees (or those less aligned with the Foundation's strategic interests). Then, for those remaining investees – the ones identified as both successful and aligned - a more long-term, focused and higher touch approach would be applied with the intent of taking innovations to scale, focusing on capacity building at both an organizational and individual leadership level, as well as helping build bridges between investees, other funders, and government. This means investing upfront in minimum 5-year grants (1 year grants are totally inadequate for a program aimed at supporting "social infrastructure").

"Refocus and reframe the Directors' discretionary fund" (incremental)

As part of its strategic planning, the Board should have a discussion about the use and potential of its discretionary budget, currently set at just over \$90,000/annum. One thing that does not appear clear is whether the fund is at the Board's discretion or at the CEO's. This should be clarified. In looking at what other private foundations do, Laidlaw's *individual* board volunteer-recognition grants are definitely at the low end relative to others. Although there is wide variation, many foundations with comparable assets allocate between \$5,000 to \$15,000 director-discretionary grants per director, per annum, with sometimes larger amounts for the Chair and/or family board members. Most foundations also allocate a specific portion to grant solely at the CEO's discretion, without requiring priori board approval, typically in the form of \$50,000 to \$100,000 envelopes.

Laidlaw appears to have dealt with this budget line item more collaboratively, which is not a bad practise, but greater clarity may help avoid any potential clashes between what the board wishes to experiment with and what the staff leadership wishes to experiment with. If these 'venture' interests are simpatico, then wonderful. But it is hardly ever the case in most foundations. Another option is to



allocate the entire discretionary fund, or a large portion thereof, to pursuing ideas surfaced in this report.

“Build inter-generational bridges” (incremental)

As the Provincial Child and Youth Advocate has noted, “Studies on child and youth development point to the importance of stable, positive adult relationships in the life of a young person.” This is consistent with Laidlaw Foundation’s theoretical approach, but not necessarily its actual approach. As the McConnell Foundation’s John Cawley has noted, “creating authentic spaces for intergenerational learning and action stretches individuals out of their comfort zones and challenges mainstream organizations’ governance structures and tolerance for risk.”³ Yet the “adult” component is frequently missing from most of the projects in the Laidlaw portfolio of grants, or at minimum it is not overtly acknowledged and supported. As one interviewee put it “if there is no handle on the door, you end up stuck with a loop of youth-speaking-to-youth.” One likely consequence of this dynamic is that the adult mentorship role by default falls disproportionately upon Laidlaw Program Managers.

Though mentoring programs have been around for many years, there are too few such programs targeted at an older cohort of youth, where it matters the most. We know, for example, that those youth transitioning from care who have identifiable mentors have much better outcomes. The growing literature on social innovation has emphasized the incredible potential of mentoring. One interviewee who is on the cutting edge of understanding youth engagement even argues that there is far more exciting work happening in the realm of youth-adult partnerships than in the youth-led organizing realm. Some caution that the old-school formalized mentor-mentee dichotomy, which can be fraught with power dynamics, is largely a relic of the past – youth today would instantly reject such an approach. A more equitable collegial approach, where both parties approach the relationship with humility and openness, is needed. One interviewee cited the US-based Civic Ventures as one amazing example of a more equitable and effective mode of inter-generational transfer of skills and wisdom, another cited Vancouver’s ReGeneration. Laidlaw could – with only a modest reallocation of some resources, develop a sensitive, experimental approach to either supporting existing partners to establish mentorships, or – failing that – develop an in-house coordinated network of mentors.

Another dimension mentioned by one interviewee, and manifest in the Aboriginal realm, is the potential power of youth engaging with elders. Adults, caught up as they tend to be in material and political preoccupations, don’t often possess the world-wise wisdom that older people do. Elders often have more time, empathy and interest in youth perspectives. On a related note, another interviewee noted that if more outdoor, nature-involved opportunities are not created, especially for youth who never go north of the 407, this will have profoundly negative consequences. This isn’t about environmental education. It is about opportunities to be more fully human.

³ Cawley, John. *Youth Scope – Community Based, Youth Paced: A Funder’s Perspective*. The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, 2010.



“Initiate a funder collaborative on youth” (incremental)

A recurring theme in the interviews is the recommendation for Laidlaw to leverage its resources and influence by convening groups of funders around youth issues and/or youth engagement. A number of interviewees observed that the state of funder collaboration in Toronto is appalling, compared with virtually every other large or medium urban centre in the country. It is clear that if Laidlaw believes that funder collaboration is important, it simply won't happen without Laidlaw leadership. Other funders echo this: “Don't wait for others to come to you. If Laidlaw convenes, others will come.”

As philanthropic thought-leader Tim Brodhead has noted, “funder collaborations are not just about money – it's not the pooling of funds but the pooling of perspectives, ideas and insights... it's paying attention to what matters.” And what works: “We shouldn't have to experiment on grantees to find the best way to do things”, one frustrated grant-maker lamented. Good collaboratives work together to understand a field, or a system, and once they have a shared handle on it, they then collectively seek to improve the quality of that system. Part of the secret, though, is to avoid over-formalization of a collaborative: Form follows function.

Although there are a couple of US-based funder affinity groups focused on youth, both of which have on occasion produced highly relevant research and were effective in disseminating innovations, Laidlaw staff have of late found these venues to be of limited value. The *Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing* provides the most meaningful and relevant opportunities for knowledge-sharing, but being almost exclusively American in membership and focus, the transferability of learning does have its limits. Still, a number of their publications proved useful for this report, as a way to more clearly understand the field and some of the innovators in philanthropy. The better known *Grantmakers for Children, Youth and Families* appears solely focused on influencing US policy, rendering it largely irrelevant to Laidlaw's priorities and practices.

There is also no formal funder network around youth issues in Canada. This, despite many Canadian foundations supporting youth initiatives regularly: Examples include the Burns Memorial, Carthy, Counselling, Michaelle Jean, McConnell, Paloma and Toskan Casale Foundations, never mind community foundations and United Ways. There is an *Early Child Development Funders Working Group*, as well as funder networks in areas such as the environment and Aboriginal engagement. The Early Childhood group, according to its co-chair Margaret McCain, took its inspiration from the 1992 Bouchard Report “A Quebec Crazy for its Children”, riffing – interestingly enough - on the Urie Bronfenbrenner-inspired Laidlaw theory of change, i.e. the need “for every kid to have at least one adult who is crazy about them.”

Although Laidlaw Foundation was an institutional partner in the United Way-initiated Youth Challenge Fund, this model of engagement appears to have many flaws with an uncertain legacy. A decade ago, Laidlaw was an active participant in a network called the *Funders Alliance for Children, Youth and Families*. There are many versions of why this collaborative failed, but among the more compelling



critiques were a lack of shared goals and agreed-upon strategic direction, and a diffuse membership based only in the GTA (which meant limited conversations about serious innovation and a lack of exposure to lessons and practices from other cities).

The new *Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples* may be instructive because it is structured not as a club of funders, but as a learning community. First Nation, Metis and Inuit organizations were involved in the conversation from day one, and are included as full partners in the collaborative. This may be an appropriate model given Laidlaw's ethos and approach, which consciously seeks to break down the power dynamic between "grantor" and "grantee".

"Seed and support Indigenous youth initiatives" (incremental)

Over half of the Aboriginal population in Canada is under 25. And while the rest of Canada ages, the Aboriginal population grows younger. Aboriginal Canada has a population pyramid mirrored only in the 'global south'. Over 600,000 Aboriginal youth in Canada (over 100,000 in Ontario alone) will turn 15 within the first quarter of this century.

Despite an increase in overall post-secondary enrollment numbers, post-secondary achievement between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians is widening. Aboriginal people are overrepresented in the youth justice and child welfare systems. Teenage fertility – one of the most reliable human development indicators - remains astonishingly high, as does youth suicide among certain populations, Inuit most strikingly, but also in some Northern Ontario communities, as Laidlaw would know from its experience funding Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win, the North-South Partnership for Children.

In every other Canadian city, a program that reached out to marginalized youth without a specific strategy to reach Aboriginal youth would be, simply put, unthinkable. Yet the GTA philanthropic milieu is, by and large, just not connected to Aboriginal Canadians, or at best subsumes them under the rubric of diverse or ethno-cultural communities. Although the Greater Toronto region does not have a large Aboriginal population *relative* to other populations of different ethnic origin, comprising only half of 1% of the population, Toronto still has the fourth largest urban Aboriginal population in Canada with nearly 35,000 people, larger than even Calgary or Saskatoon, cities that have a dense thicket of support organizations run by, or serving, Aboriginal youth. Complicating this further, the GTA Aboriginal population is among the most diverse in Canada, with a diasporic character (having moved here from every corner of the country). The result is a kind of 'invisibility', as well as a lack of cohesiveness. Despite this, there are a small number of youth-serving programs that could serve as entry points, such as Miziwe Biik's 'Skills Link' program, and the first ever comprehensive study on Aboriginal peoples in Toronto, released earlier this year, which "found that Aboriginal youth are



looking for a greater sense of community and belonging in the city through the creation of a centralized Aboriginal space and an inclusive form of urban Aboriginal governance.”⁴

Laidlaw, if it were to consider adding an Aboriginal dimension to its portfolio, brings two very important assets to the table, much more important than money: 1. An interactive grant-making style, where potential and successful grantees are supported, people are listened to with an open mind and heart, and trust is built; and 2. A holistic programmatic approach, where traditional issue ‘silos’ are eschewed in favour of crossover approaches that connect culture, identity, participatory decision-making and service.

Sadly, it is all too common for Foundations to have one or two negative experiences with Aboriginal grantee organizations and extrapolate from this single experience. Or to jump to the conclusion that there is just “no way in”. Most would say the same about newcomer and diverse communities, though foundations like Maytree, Toronto Community Foundation and indeed Laidlaw have clearly proven this untrue. Foundations like Trillium, Gordon, Vancouver and Schad have shown that not only is it possible to engage meaningfully and with impact with Aboriginal communities, albeit elsewhere in Canada, but that such partnerships can be a source of innovation.

“Become the gadfly” (restructuring)

A number of interviewees felt that Laidlaw should have a ‘public voice’ on issues that it now knows a tremendous amount about, but on which the public remains relatively uninformed. Interviewees said it should “spread its gospel” and “put more skin in the game”. Another explained it as taking the wisdom garnered through years of grassroots engagement and “pushing it out” into the public marketplace of ideas. Some cited such incidents as the Danzig Street or Eaton Centre shootings, Mayor Ford’s anti-graffiti initiative and the current conversation around youth ‘priority centres’ in Toronto as being prime windows of opportunity for Laidlaw to nimbly and emphatically add its voice to public discourse. Laidlaw has ready access to data and authentic voices that, skillfully mobilized, could be a powerful evidence-based counterpoint to the “hug-a-thug” critique, which has more play with the public than we care to think.

Such a strategy could include blogging, writing op-eds, meeting with editorial boards, convening conversations and commissioning research around an array of topics that emerge out of the work Laidlaw has funded. Here again, Maytree was cited as a model, as their founder/board chair and CEO regularly enter the public fray with op-eds or newsletter editorials, for example. Opinion pieces could rotate between Laidlaw leadership (board chair and CEO), program staff, as well as advisors and grantee community leaders. Following are just a few such examples of relevant topics, based on what

⁴ McCaskill, Don, Kevin FitzMaurice, and Jaime Cidro. *Toronto Aboriginal Research Project: Final Report*. Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council, 2011.



interviewees have raised as potential topics Laidlaw could dive deeper into and raise public awareness about:

- Youth unemployment and economic prospects
- Democratic disengagement
- Creative economy
- Canada’s NEETS (“not in employment, education, or training”)
- Front line work and vicarious trauma
- The power and potential of street art
- Youth mental health
- Entrepreneurship/ social entrepreneurship
- Youth transitioning from care
- Services for remanded youth
- Mentorship
- Identity-formation
- Experiential learning

“Dive into public policy change” (restructuring)

Achieving large-scale and systemic change almost never happens with private resources alone. At some point in the innovation process, government needs to be engaged and swimming in the same direction. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, for example, has done some recognized work in the realm of public policy related to juvenile justice, child health insurance and predatory mortgage lending. The Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation stopped granting altogether in favour of partnering deeply with the Quebec government (including, amazing as it may sound, *granting* to the government) to revitalize approaches to early childhood development.

Laidlaw has certainly been involved, both historically and more recently, in pushing for policy change. Consider the efforts around youth transitioning from care, widely admired, as one example. More recently, Laidlaw co-chaired and helped spearhead Ontario Youth Matter! (OYM), pushing for a provincial youth policy framework. But OYM, which was pushing for results comparable to the framework on early childhood learning, now appears stalled. There are a lot players involved, which may have transformed what should have been a nimble coalition into something unwieldy. As well, a provincial “framework” can be a more challenging and amorphous goal – with tenuous outcomes - than choosing a set of specific, achievable, desired policy goals and pursuing those. Just as one example, pursuing a goal such as raising the age of support for youth in care, a recommendation of the Child and Youth Advocate, may be a more fruitful way to proceed. OYM, if revived, could be one prong of a broader strategy that pulls multiple levers.



If Laidlaw determines that it wants to go deeper into the policy realm, as many urge it to do, it must be in for the ‘long haul’ and the Board must be squarely behind this, adding their voice, time and connections, in particular those of the Chair, to this work. Depending on the issue(s) and change strategy identified, the Foundation would be looking at a more strategic, choreographed, and disciplined-yet-nimble approach, supported by a clear grasp of the opportunity, barriers, and players.

There are many specific strategies available to influence policy, appropriate to different foundations’ operating styles and which either address different audiences – i.e. decision-makers, influencers or the general public – or that are focused on different outcome arcs – i.e. raising awareness, developing will or achieving action. The available toolkit includes not just government relations, but potentially public advocacy, coalition-building, commissioning research (and/or partnering with polling firms or think tanks), litigation if necessary, and making strategic grants to a range of savvy partners working both inside and outside the mainstream. Incidentally, only a small number of these strategies are considered “political activities” by the Canada Revenue Agency. Laidlaw has ample untapped scope to enter the policy arena without running afoul of the charities regulator.

“Develop a leadership program” (restructuring)

If Laidlaw is serious about investing in people, vis-à-vis organizations or institutions, it could do so in a more resolute way, helping youth build the life skills, knowledge, confidence and power to transform their communities for the better. Some interviewees lament that too many amazing young community builders just leave the space and take up often surprisingly banal career paths, divorced from social change. It’s not that young people stop believing, but rather that the avenues to affect change at the next level are perceived to be few and fruitless. We know that even civically engaged youth mistrust institutions of government and lack the knowledge and skills needed to effect more systemic change.

Leadership programs used to be the purview of the political right; many of our current premiers and federal cabinet ministers developed networks and skills as fellows of organizations like the Fraser Institute, which offers post-secondary internships and seminars. For the right, leadership programs were an integral part of a 30-year vision to “reshape the value landscape” and address the “excess of democracy” that emerged out of social movements in the sixties and seventies. Much more recently, progressive institutions are seeing leadership programs as an essential adjunct to their core business, as are many foundations. As one interviewee put it, you can’t just “hope that young people hanging around long enough in the sphere of social change will simply absorb skills by osmosis.”

There are many examples to draw from: Maytree and the Max Bell Foundation each offer an intensive program of public policy training for non-profit sector leaders. The Jane Glassco Northern Fellowship, operated by the Gordon Foundation for young adults in the far north, draws from Maytree and Max Bell, but also builds in Aboriginal pedagogy, as well as on-the-land team-building and collective action components. Meanwhile, a recent study by the Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing argues that “more attention must be paid to creating intentional social justice leadership experiences”. There is a



chasm of opportunity between “the poles of the Occupy movement and the Public Policy Forum”, as another interviewee put it.

One such example to build on might be *Emerge*, a Toronto-based young leaders program operated by Laidlaw grantee Schools Without Borders. The seeds of something similar might exist in the “think tank” convenings of another Laidlaw grantee - the Frontline Partners for Youth Network - albeit with a very narrow spectrum of young people. A program called NextUp, offered in four western Canadian cities and geared more to giving meaning and expression to young people’s anxieties about the world, blends community organizing and activism with more conventional public policy training. Institutions like Action Canada, Hollyhock, Tamarack and the Coady Institute, and some of the training offered by United Way, offer other potential templates, as might the Social Pioneers program run by the Foundation for Young Australians. There is also much to be learned from executive training programs such as those offered at the Ivey or Schulich schools of business, the Banff Centre or the Niagara Institute (which uses the same methodologies as the widely admired Centre for Creative Leadership).

Two UK-based initiatives may also be instructive: The School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE) addresses inequalities and social exclusion by supporting young social entrepreneurs from all backgrounds to transform their talent into real social outcomes. SSE has just opened up its first Canadian branch at the Centre for Social Innovation Regent Park. The first Fellowship program began earlier this month.

UpRising, an initiative of the Young Foundation, aims to open pathways to leadership for talented young adults aged 19-25 from diverse backgrounds. UpRising describes itself as a “Finishing School of emerging diverse leaders” (How British, we might say, but it isn’t much different than one interviewee’s challenge for Laidlaw “to bring youth to cocktail parties”). Like the Maytree, Max Bell and Gordon programs, UpRising involves regular training sessions aimed at learning how the levers of power work behind the scenes in Parliament, government departments and the media. They also test their skills by running their own local campaigns and receive one-to-one support from mentors – other young leaders who can offer support, advice and guidance. The Young Foundation also talks about building ‘grit’ – the quality that helps people adapt to change and become leaders and social innovators.

As a side note, it will be critical to make an upfront and ongoing effort in supporting Laidlaw staff training and professional development. It is considerably more difficult to build leadership pipeline initiatives if staff are not exposed – at depth – to similar opportunities. If it is not already happening, each staff person could be challenged to create an annual learning and development plan, with budget enough to take advantage of at least one such ‘premier’ opportunity.



“Peel back the curtain: Expose and convene” (restructuring)

A number of people wondered about the extent to which talented youth in the current program structure are actually supported to “go deep” in pursuing their talents. Many noted that youth are not linked to other opportunities that allow them to bridge these specific talents and interests with career possibilities. One interviewee framed this as “giving kids the resources to develop mastery.” Internship placements could help address this. This is one way to build a “pipeline” to success for early career individuals lacking influential networks but showing promise. As the Metcalf Foundation’s recent retrospective on its performing arts internship program observes “...there is an immediate impact on the knowledge and networks of the intern, as well as advantages for the host organization. There is also a broader contribution to the sector. Interns will take skills and systems with them, and the field benefits from an infusion of capable and resourceful people. And there is a deeper impact that unfolds over time. By experiencing the benefits they had from nurturing and collaboration, interns are strong agents for creating that environment wherever they work.”⁵

Many interviewees also remarked that the realm of youth-led initiatives is operating in a completely different orbit than that of traditional youth-serving organizations. In its current guise, the Foundation has turned away a number of youth-serving organizations seeking grants. But some interviewees say an “either-or” approach is counter-productive. Having a firewall between these two realms means that, on the one hand, that the older established organizations have less exposure to innovation, and, on the other hand, that youth-led groups have no way of knowing whether there are things that older established organizations could offer them. As merely one example, does Amadeusz have any connections with the John Howard or Elizabeth Fry Societies? Looking at ArtReach, as another example, are the mainstream (or even alternative) arts organizations anywhere in sight? On the flipside, one Ontario-transplant interviewee’s main question, looking about the Toronto non-profit sector is “Where are all the young people?”

Although many older NGOs have reinvented themselves to respond to shifting realities, YMCA and Environmental Defence being among the more interesting examples, the sector remains stubbornly saturated with “old guard” organizations. The non-profit sector ‘establishment’ organizations on the whole do a very poor job of rejuvenating and reflecting changing demographics. Organizations stubbornly live the stereotypes: Thoroughly Anglo Saxon international aid groups, sedate arts organizations, and wilderness conservation groups playing out Thoreau-ian fantasies of gentlemanly solitude in nature. In Toronto, large parts of this sector looks a lot like the Toronto of yesteryear, the beneficent face of Upper Canada. Small wonder that Laidlaw wants to relegate the traditional non-profit silos to the past.

On the other hand, as leading edge philanthropies like Maytree, TCF and Laidlaw know well, Toronto *has* changed. There is a complex constellation of typically much less formal organizations who bring new ideas, new faces and new sensibilities, but often lack fundraising savvy or influential networks.

⁵ Metcalf Foundation. *Places Please: Metcalf Internships in the Performing Arts, 2001-2012, 2012.*



The “membrane” separating these non-profit worlds is no less present in the youth-involved milieu. Such innovators as Actua, Journalists for Human Rights, Free the Children and TakingITGlobal are amazing groups, but their roots and supports are establishment. The groups Laidlaw supports are anything but. But is there any link worth fostering? YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs and many other established groups serve the sector well with dynamic leadership and much insight to offer up-and-coming leaders and organizations. But how much crossover is there? To be fair, the YSI program does recognize this dynamic through supporting intermediary organizations. But the opportunity exists to build both deeper and broader connections. One source of inspiration might be the English National Youth Arts Network (ENYAN), which has a similar focus to ArtReach, but at a larger scale and spanning a wider spectrum of the sector, from marginalized grassroots groups to more mainstream partners who offer coaching, mentoring and internship. ENYAN also operates both “think tank” focused on sector-level change and public policy, and a “resource tank” aimed at building capacities of arts organizations.

A related suggestion is that Laidlaw could play a convening role between youth organizations and business. As business guru Michael Porter has suggested, in his widely circulated treatise on “shared value”, business and society have drifted apart and must come together again. But they will need credible catalysts and honest brokers who can create a ‘safe’ space for conversation. The Walter & Duncan Gordon Foundation, for example, convenes a semi-annual private luncheon with the CEOs or VPs of Toronto-based mining companies structured around a dialogue with a (typically Indigenous) community leader from the far north. The companies involved actually observed that they never meet as peers to discuss northern affairs, except in this venue, convened – surprisingly - by a philanthropic foundation. With time and will, such a convening could result not only in leveraging Laidlaw funding through corporate philanthropy, but even more excitingly, through shared value partnerships between the companies and youth organizations directly.

Many groups also make the mistake of assuming that the friend of your enemy is your enemy. Issues of inequity and social justice have many allies in often strange and unexpected places. But the anti-oppression lens can be immobilizing – if everyone wanting to do good is working for The Man, it can only make one cynical and determined not to engage in broader community, beyond a self-reinforcing orbit of victimhood (and we all know people who are quite happy staying in that comfortable space). One interviewee cautioned not to let perfection get in the way of good – some activists don’t know how to stop criticizing and when to recognize opportunity. While Laidlaw’s ethic of deep consultation is a needed brake on the full-steam-ahead tendencies of other institutions, remarked another, this needs to be balanced with recognition that windows of opportunity may be brief. Listen to your activist wing, but don’t let them drag you down.



“Be the platform” (restructuring)

Laidlaw has extensive experience with the concept of “platforms”, having produced the report *From the Ground Up: Youth Organizing Platforms*. A platform is a “space” – typically technological, but also with physical or legal aspects – that young people can easily access to receive guidance and support, and to amplify their efforts with minimal replication. It is similar in concept to the notion of a “backbone” organization, and is premised on the idea that the locus of innovation is less and less in conventional organizations, but rather within (typically) upstart initiatives, highly networked across affinity, interest or geography, and ideally either co-located or otherwise sharing legal, financial, professional development and other forms of capacity. Tides Canada Initiatives’ The Base is a good example of an emerging platform.

The suggestion from some, however, is for Laidlaw to step into the void that it already has first-hand knowledge of. It knows how to occupy this space arguably better than any other single organization. It requires additional staff support and a shift in culture, but it would not be an enormous leap. It does make sense to consider such a strategy in concert with the youth organizing “hub” concept and/or the “developing leadership” strategy, both described later in this report.

“Align your market and community investments” (restructuring)

Laidlaw, already an active participant in SHARE, may be ready to take a next step toward social impact investing. The most fruitful possibilities in the Canadian foundation sector are close and natural alignments with mission, where a foundation can leverage a portion of its endowment to achieve outcomes that are sympatico with its granting investments. In truth, such opportunities are rare. But one opportunity may lie in the challenge from some interviewees to do more around youth social entrepreneurship. Laidlaw seed capital, loans and/or micro-grants could help address the number one barrier in the field, which is, according to the Public Policy Forum, “the disconnect between funders’ conditions and entrepreneurs’ needs”. The Trillium Future Fund would be a natural ally, as would the Toronto Community Foundation and institutions like MaRS or the Centre for Social Innovation.

“Create a (physical) youth organizing hub” (reinvention)

An idea that first appeared in Laidlaw’s *Pipelines and Foundations* report – the need for a physical hub for youth initiatives to co-locate, with or without the Foundation also locating to such a venue - resurfaced in the course of these conversations. Organizations likely interested in such a hub include Manifesto and The Base (Tides Canada Initiatives). Examples of non-profit sector collaborative co-location worth looking at include the Centre for Social Innovation in Toronto, the Kahanoff Centre in Calgary, the Woodward’s redevelopment in east Vancouver or the Alliance Centre in Denver, each of which has distinct tenure and governance arrangements. One interesting example is the Social Justice



Centre in Madison, Wisconsin, which received leveraged social financing to create a cooperative-run multi-organization model housing education, youth resource and civic action groups. Another is the Youth Opportunity Centre in Nashville, which houses a dozen youth-serving or youth-led organizations – from mental health counselling to mentorship to arts space - under one 40,000 square foot roof.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Transition with Grace

If Laidlaw chooses to re-allocate resources pursuant to a change in strategy, there will be an effect on one or both of the existing YO and YSI programs. A large proportion of Laidlaw grantees, in particular in the YO program, are organizations that receive no other source of funding. But this raises an important question: If Laidlaw funding were to disappear, what would be the effect among its grantees?

Since the YO projects are typically one-time, one-year grants, and since new, less-formalized groups tend to be more nimble, resilient and possibly entrepreneurial, the effect would be minimal for any one organization. If funding were to disappear from the YSI program, there might be some ability for organizations to absorb the loss, given that other funding sources are typically present (or within reach). However, the de facto core/multi-year nature of granting in the YSI program means such a change would be profound. Any step away from the community of YSI grantees should therefore be done as a gradual, multi-year transition. Even then, the notion that organizations will always be able to replace this lost funding may be, as one interviewee put it, “a fantasy that helps us sleep at night.”

Consider Sharing this Learning

Respondents appreciate many aspects of the Foundation’s transparency, including its reflections on grant-making philosophy. A number of people expressed how interested they would be in learning about the strategic options developed and, given the range and quality of people consulted, commented that a (significantly) re-worked version of this report may have value for Advisors and grantees, and even beyond the immediate Laidlaw community. One interviewee suggested that a “white paper” be issued, asking the community – grantees especially - to respond to what we have identified as gaps and potential opportunities for change.



INTERVIEWEES

Youth-Engaged Partners

Julian Caspari, Schools Without Borders (SWB)

Jenny Katz, Frontline Partners for Youth Network (FPYN)

Che Kothari, Manifesto

Phyllis Novak, Sketch

Foundations/Philanthropy

Rahul Bhardwaj and Mini Alukutserry, Toronto Community Foundation

[scheduled] **Ian Bird**, Community Foundations of Canada (formerly with Sport Matters)

Alan Broadbent and Ratna Omidvar, Maytree

Stephen Couchman, PQR Foundation

Stephen Huddart and John Cawley, J.W. McConnell Family Foundation

Sandy Houston, Metcalf Foundation

Elisa Levi, Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada

Ruth Richardson, Small Change Fund (former Laidlaw advisor)

Ed Skloot, Center for Strategic Philanthropy and Civil Society, Duke University (former CEO of the Surdna Foundation)

Shelley Uytterhagen, Carthy Foundation

Toronto/Ontario Civic Infrastructure

Pedro Barata, United Way of Toronto (formerly with Atkinson Foundation)

Mitzie Hunter, CivicAction

Heather Laird, Ontario Non-Profit Network (ONN)

Elizabeth McIsaac, Mowat Centre for Public Policy

Social Innovation

Tim Draimin, SiG at MaRS

Tonya Surman, Centre for Social Innovation

Other Youth-Engagement Actors

Larry Ketcheson, Parks and Recreation Ontario

Karen Kun, Waterlution (also former Editor of Corporate Knights Magazine)

Marc Langlois, Heartwood Institute

Alison Loat and Fiona O'Connor, Samara/Democracy Talks

Tim Merry, Myrgan Inc. (assisted with YSI development process)

Jenn Miller, The Base (Tides Canada Initiatives; formerly with Ontario Trillium Foundation)

Kevin Millsip, Next Up (and founder of Check Your Head)

Government

Denise Andrea Campbell, Community Resources, City of Toronto

[scheduled] **Irwin Elman**, Provincial Child and Youth Advocate

[scheduled] **Darryl Sturtevant, Rachel Simeon, and Sean Twyford**, Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services

Laidlaw Chairs and Past Chairs

Alina Chatterjee

Brian Chu

Phillip Haid

John Fox

Walter Ross

Laidlaw Staff

Nathan Gilbert

Violetta Ilkiw

Denis Lefebvre

Ana Skinner



PUBLICATIONS CONSULTED

Laidlaw Foundation

Annual Reports – 2007-2011.

First Leadership Ltd. *Formative Evaluation of The Laidlaw Foundation's Implementation of the 2008-2012 Strategic and Operational Plan*, 2010.

Foundations and Pipelines: Building Social Infrastructure to Foster Youth Organizing (Funded in partnership with Funders Alliance for Children Youth and Families). 2010.

Ground Floors : Building Youth Organizing Platforms (with Schools Without Borders, Tides Canada, HRSDC)]. 2011.

Ilkew, Violetta. "Emergence of the Youth-Led Sector", in *The Philanthropist*. Vol. 23, No. 1 (2010).

Scott, Fiona. *The Impact of The Laidlaw Foundation's Funding, 2008-2012*, 2012.

Skinner, Ana and Caitlin French. *Youth-Led Community Organizing: Values Driven Work* (Laidlaw Learning Report). 2012.

Skinner, Ana and Caitlin French. *Youth-Led Community Organizing: Strategies and Tools* (Laidlaw Learning Report). 2012.

External

Black, Rosalyn and Lucas Walsh. *In Their Own Hands: Can Young People Change Australia?* Foundation for Young Australians, 2011.

Block, Peter. *Community: The Structure of Belonging*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2008.

Cawley, John. *Youth Scape – Community Based, Youth Paced: A Funder's Perspective*. The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, 2010.

Coffman, Julia. *Foundations and Public Policy Grantmaking*. The James Irvine Foundation, 2008.

Couchman, Stephen, and Rebecca Thomas. *Beating the Odds: Post-Secondary Scholarships for Youth Transitioning from Care*. Measured Outcome, 2012.

Eger, John. "The Best Way to Grow the Economy? Creativity.", *Huffington Post Business*. Nov. 24, 2012.

Enviroics Institute. *Focus Canada 2011*.

Freeman, Arti and Viola Dessanti. *Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Youth Social Infrastructure Initiative: An experiment in supporting emergence in communities beyond grant-making*. Ontario Trillium Foundation, 2011.

Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing. *Building Transformative Youth Leadership: Data on the Impacts of Youth Organizing*, 2011.



GEO (Grantmakers for Effective Organizations). *Evaluation in Philanthropy*. Published with support from the Council on Foundations, 2009.

Gibson, Cynthia, Jean-Marc Chouinard and Ian Bird. *Funder Collaboration: Making it Work*. Opening plenary summary from Philanthropic Foundations Canada Symposium, 2012.

Ginwright, Shawn. *Building a Pipeline for Justice: Understanding youth organizing and the leadership pipeline*. Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing, 2010.

Grantcraft. *Funding Community Organizing: Civic Participation through Social Change*,

Grantmakers for Children, Youth and Families. *Key Considerations Before Investing in Public Policy Work*, 2009.

Hart, Brock and Sanathan Kassiedass. *Innovation Blueprint: Aboriginal Youth Initiative*. Suncor Energy Foundation, Public Policy Forum, and the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, 2012.

Hanleybrown, Fay, John Kania & Mark Kramer, “Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work”, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, January, 2012.

Horizons Policy Research Initiative. *Hope or Heartbreak: Aboriginal Youth and Canada’s Future*. Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2008.

Kershaw, Paul. *Does Canada Work for All Generations? A Report to Canadians in Ontario*. University of British Columbia (blog post), 2011.

Lemos & Crane, Inc. *Different World: How young people can work together on human rights, citizenship, equality and creating a better society*. City Parochial Foundation (The Trust for London), 2006.

Malik, Alveena, et al. *The Best of New Britain: An UpRising survey on leadership in the UK*. The Young Foundation, 2012.

MacKinnon, Mary Pat, Sonia Pitre, Judy Watling. *Lost in Translation: (Mis)Understanding Youth Engagement*. Canadian Policy Research Networks, 2007.

Marche, Stephen. “The War Against Youth”, in *Esquire*. March 28, 2012.

McCaskill, Don, Kevin FitzMaurice, and Jaime Cidro. *Toronto Aboriginal Research Project: Final Report*. Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council, 2011.

Metcalf Foundation. *Places Please: Metcalf Internships in the Performing Arts, 2001-2012*, 2012.

Mitchell, Alanna. *Brains: The Secret to Better Schooling*. Atkinson Series (Fellowship in Public Policy). Atkinson Foundation, 2008.

National Center for Responsive Philanthropy. *Criteria for Philanthropy at its Best: Benchmarks to Assets and Enhance Grantmaker Impact*, 2009.

National Collaboration for Youth. *A Shared Vision for Youth: Common Outcomes and Indicators*. Published in partnership with the Forum for Youth Investment and Ready By 21, 2012.

O’Connor, Fiona. *Apathy to Empathy* (Dispatch from the Democracy Talks project). Samara Canada, 2012.



O'Rourke, Dominique. *Generation Flux: Understanding the Seismic Shifts that are Shaking Canada's Youth*. Community Foundations of Canada, 2012.

Patrizi, Patricia, Elizabeth Thompson and Abby Spector. *Improving Care at the End of Life: How the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Its Grantees Built the Field*. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2011.

Porter, Michael and Mark Kramer. "Creating Shared Value: How to reinvent capitalism and unleash a wave of growth and innovation", in the *Harvard Business Review*, February, 2011.

Price, Matt, and Jon Stahl. *Engagement Organizing: The Culture and Technology of Building Power* (research funded by The Brainerd Foundation), 2012.

Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. *Report to the Ontario Legislature 2010-2011*. Office of the Legislature of Ontario, 2011.

Public Policy Forum. *Building Youth Civic Engagement through Collaboration: A Report of the Roundtable on Youth Voter Engagement*. 2012.

Public Policy Forum. *CHANGE Inc. Toolkit: Cultivating Young Social Entrepreneurs*. With TakingITGlobal, 2012.

Roob, Nancy, and Jeffrey L. Bradach. *Scaling What Works: Implications for Philanthropists, Policymakers, and Nonprofit Leaders*. Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, with Bridgespan, 2009.

Surman, Tonya, Mark Simpson and Nathaniel Whitemore. "What it means to be a mentor", in *Globe and Mail Business* online, March 26, 2010.

Toronto Community Foundation. *Toronto's Vital Signs: 2012 Report*. 2012.

Towne, Liz and Kelly Shipp Simone. *Top 10 Ways Private Foundations Can Influence Public Policy*. Council on Foundations, 2010.

United Way of Toronto. *A Call for an Ontario Youth Outcomes Strategy*, 2008.

W.K. Kellogg Foundation. *Intentional Innovation: How Getting More Systematic about Innovation Could Improve Philanthropy and Increase Social Impact*, 2008.



ABOUT 8th RUNG

8th Rung connects people, policy and place. Based in Toronto, our work focuses on leadership and network development, policy scoping and analysis, and citizen-driven strategic planning and evaluation. We help organizations uncover new possibilities for their programming and operations, enabling them to better reach out, respond to and support communities and clients. Our services include designing and implementing participatory approaches to solving complex problems; helping organizations maximize their relevance and effectiveness; helping philanthropic and community organizations be strategic, authentic and enduring in their impact; facilitating cross-cultural learning and dialogue; bridging local knowledge with public policy; and helping communities and industry establish strong relationships based on equity, trust and openness.

ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

James Stauch is a community planner and recent foundation executive with nearly two decades of experience working in the field of philanthropy, on public policy in the Arctic and far north, and with Aboriginal communities and organizations. Before founding 8th Rung, James served as Vice President, Programs and Operations, at the *Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation*, where he managed its programming related to the Arctic and far north. Among other initiatives, James co-created and oversaw the 2-year pilot cohort of the *Jane Glassco Arctic Fellowship* program, an initiative designed to expand the knowledge, networks and confidence of early career northern Canadians (aged 25-35). Prior to joining the Gordon Foundation as a Program Manager, James managed the Community Grants Program at *The Calgary Foundation*. Previously he worked in the field of community and regional planning in the private and non-profit sectors. James is past Chair of the *Canadian Environmental Grantmakers Network* Board of Directors, a co-creator of the Arctic Funders Group and the current Chair of two organizations working to build relations between philanthropy and First Peoples: *The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada* and the San Francisco-based *International Funders for Indigenous Peoples*.

CONTACT

James Stauch
8th Rung
11 Coleridge Ave.
Toronto, ON M4C 4H4
647-760-6596
www.8thrung.ca
Twitter: @8thrung