

***Towards a Colleges and Institutes Collaborative Initiative  
to Strengthen Social Infrastructure in Canada***

**College Presidents' Roundtable / Follow-up Workshop  
Ottawa - March 15, 2018**

**Aide-Mémoire**

On March 15, 2018 Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) and the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation's RECODE<sup>1</sup> initiative co-hosted a workshop following-up on the October 2017 roundtable where twenty-four presidents and VPs from colleges and institutes had animated discussions on the role that their institutions play in addressing key issues of our time and considered opportunities to work together in ways that are deliberate and intentional to increase impact on communities. Building on the enthusiasm of the roundtable, the March follow-up workshop brought together fifteen college presidents and designates to provide strategic advice and generate initial ideas for one or more collaborative initiatives to increase the impact of colleges and institutes on communities through intentional and concerted action. Discussions focused on identifying priority areas of intervention to focus on a collaborative initiative, fleshing out ideas for the interventions to accelerate and scale impact and on identifying conditions for success and next steps. A complete list of participants is included in Appendix 1.

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

### **Setting the context**

- ❖ **A call to action to effect system change.** Stephen Huddart, President and CEO of the J.W McConnell Family Foundation set the context for a CICan-RECODE collaboration with colleges and institutes. Challenges to social cohesion and community wellbeing are on the rise in the world: increasing inequalities, rural and urban divides, impacts of the new economy on the future of employment digital economy on work, climate change and environmental sustainability etc. He pointed out that students are looking for ways to make a difference and are challenging institutions to address the complex

---

<sup>1</sup> The McConnell Foundation's RECODE initiative goal is to increase solutions-centered 21st century post-secondary education that enhances community well-being. It engages with post-secondary education institutions to explore how to leverage what they already do, how to align efforts and collaborate to address societal problems by building "social infrastructure" to affect system change. RECODE is working in partnership with CICan to develop a collaborative initiative to embed building social infrastructure into College and Institutes strategies and functions, and to leverages the considerable collective capabilities of the system to increase its impact on communities.

problems of today and tomorrow. They are calling for action towards system change.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>2</sup> provide a framework for this call to action and for collaboration within and among governments, educational institutions, philanthropic, private and public sector organizations to mobilize and accelerate their individual and collective efforts to address complex issues of our time. Governments and industry are increasingly looking at the social impact of organizations they invest in and work with, and are moving away from those that are not contributing to SDGs. Organizations that are leaders in social impact are among the most innovative and are attracting the best talent.

- ❖ **An opportunity to shape a new narrative around the role of colleges and institutes in Canada.** Participants noted that social inclusion, reducing gaps in society and contributing to the wellbeing of communities have always been part of the mandate of colleges and institutes, but that it may be time to move it back to the centre of our agenda as we consider how our sector can contribute to nation-building in the face of a changing economy and challenges to social cohesion. A collaborative initiative among colleges and institutes inspired by the SDGs and supported by CIGan and the McConnell Foundation offers an opportunity to bring these goals to the forefront, to consider ways we can better integrate the social infrastructure aspect of our mandates in our institutional policies and practices and to foster joint action to increase systemic impact. It also offers an opportunity to shape and sharpen the narrative around the role of colleges and institutes in Canada as nation-builders, a story that will energize Boards and leadership, attract and inspire students and employees, excite partners and engage governments, communities and funders. Initial ideas for such a narrative generated at the workshop can be found in Appendix 3.
  
- ❖ **This isn't about doing something new, but acting intentionally and collectively to increase social impact.** Colleges and institutes were created in the 1960s as a vehicle for social change. Today's colleges and institutes act as community anchors and can play an important role in addressing key issues of our time. Through their mission, invested public capital and relationships to employers, employees, partners and suppliers, they provide access to post-secondary education and practical applied learning that leads to employment and contributes to local economic development. Signatory colleges to CIGan's Pan-Canadian Protocol for Sustainability and to the Indigenous Education Protocol have agreed to maximize their contributions to a sustainable future, and affirmed their responsibilities and obligations to Indigenous education in their communities. A sector-wide initiative led by a

---

<sup>2</sup> The 183 member states of the United Nations adopted a 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, with 17 global goals for enhancing sustainable development. They can be found in Appendix 2. For more information, visit: [http://international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues\\_developpement-enjeux\\_developpement/priorities-priorites/agenda-programme.aspx?lang=eng&\\_ga=2.154435704.1144048315.1522423197-1862304515.1522423197](http://international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/priorities-priorites/agenda-programme.aspx?lang=eng&_ga=2.154435704.1144048315.1522423197-1862304515.1522423197)

coalition of like-minded institutions and coordinated by CIGan could create a movement of colleges and institutes that want to collaborate to accelerate their impact in these or other priority areas.

As a prelude to the workshop's discussions, the example of the Simon Fraser University-led and RECODE-supported pilot, *British Columbia Collaborative for Social Infrastructure*, was shared with participants. Members of the collaborative include BCIT, UNBC and VIU. Their goal is to pursue action where they have collective strengths, where results can be integrated and sustained, and to prioritize areas that address the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. They identified four thematic areas of focus for practitioners' groups: 1) green and sustainable campus and community; 2) First Nations entrepreneurship and social finance (financial inclusion and Indigenous economic independence); 3) social procurement framework and community of practice; and 4) connecting PSE libraries to community libraries. They committed to sharing practices, policies, tools and relationships on instruments they use to advance social progress and to assess their initiatives to determine whether they can be scaled-up or transferred/joined with another institution. RECODE provides some funding and supports convening to operationalize ideas, acting as a neutral third party to broker examples.

### **Setting priority areas of intervention to focus the initiative**

Workshop participants worked in small groups to generate initial ideas in answer to the question: "*What pressing societal issues are Canadian colleges and institutes well placed to address and where intentional and concerted action could lead to greater impact?*". They agreed to focus their action on issue areas where they have collective strengths, where results can be integrated and sustained and to prioritize areas where creating something together could add value, and accelerate and increase impact on communities. Pressing issues identified by participants were reviewed in plenary and clustered with a view to identifying themes/issue areas that could potentially focus the initiative.

Following vibrant discussion, participants identified three thematic areas of focus for a potential CIGan-RECODE initiative: 1) Social and economic inclusion; 2) Future of work - addressing disruptive effects of change on work; 3) Nation-building – building a national movement.

### **Initial ideas for possible collaborative interventions to accelerate and scale impact in communities**

Participants were invited to join one of the three thematic area groups to flesh out ideas for a possible initiative. Each group generated ideas on: (a) the problem and/or goal for the initiative; (b) what colleges and institutes could create together that would add value, accelerate and increase impact on communities; (c) what success would look like in three years, and; (d) what would be needed to move

forward - first steps. The results of this work can be found in Appendix 3.

### **Next Steps for Moving Forward**

Participants reaffirmed the importance and timeliness of this work and were keen to further explore practical steps to move it forward. To that end, CIGan and McConnell are extending the collaboration through to May 2018 to:

1. Develop a compelling narrative on the role of colleges and institutes in strengthening social infrastructure in Canada for inclusive growth capitalizing on CIGan's [\*Imagine the Future\*](#) engagement taking place over the next few months to shape its Strategic Plan 2019-2024.
2. Actively engage groups of colleges to work together to address key societal issues where they have collective strengths and where results can be integrated and sustained.
3. Generate insights on how colleges and institutes can do this work better and increase their impact on community wellbeing in the country.

**As a follow-up to the March 15 workshop**, CIGan and McConnell will work with a smaller group of interested college and institute leaders (presidents and/or designates) to: 1) draw on the best ideas generated at the workshop to (a) shape a preliminary narrative vision re the role of colleges and institutes play in strengthening social infrastructure for inclusive growth, and (b) explore in more detail potential areas and opportunities of joint action that could engage colleges and institutes to increase systemic impact; 2) socialize the broad framework and generate interest in the opportunity for a collaborative initiative during the Presidents' Leadership Network meeting at the national CIGan Conference; and 3) identify other avenues to pursue discussion and modalities to mobilize action, including as part of CIGan's [\*Imagine the Future\*](#) engagement activities that will shape its Strategic Plan 2019-2024.

We will keep you up to date and share opportunities for further engagement.

**Thank you once again for your participation! It was a pleasure to host you in Ottawa and we look forward to continuing the conversation at the Annual Conference and beyond.**

## Appendix 1 – List of Workshop participants

### College / Institute Representatives

Karen Barnes  
President  
Yukon College

Don Bureaux  
President  
Nova Scotia Community College

Paula Burns  
President & CEO  
Lethbridge College

Odette Côte  
Directrice Générale  
Champlain College

Stuart Cullum  
President  
Olds College

Jim Hamilton  
President  
Okanagan College

Alan Davis  
President  
Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Dennis Johnson  
VP, Strategy & Business Development  
Sask Polytechnic

Paul McCullough  
VP-Advancement  
BCIT

Wayne Poirier  
Vice-President Student & Alumni Services  
Mohawk College

Tom Roemer  
VP Academic  
BCIT

Jasmin Roy  
Director, Student and Community Services  
cégep Édouard-Montpetit

Michel Tarko  
President  
Justice Institute of BC

MaryLynn West-Moynes  
President  
Georgian College

### Regrets

Ann Buller  
President & CEO  
Centennial College

Marilyn Luscombe  
President  
New Brunswick Community College

Dan Patterson  
President  
Niagara College

Paul Thériault  
President  
Victoriaville College

## Guests / Invités

Philip Landon  
Vice President, governance and programs  
Universities Canada

Suzanne Taschereau  
Consultant

## Fondation McConnell Foundation

Stephen Huddart  
President and CEO  
McConnell Foundation

Chad Lubelsky  
Program Director  
McConnell Foundation

Jennifer Lockerby  
Social Innovation Fellow  
McConnell Foundation

## CICan

Denise Amyot  
President and CEO  
CICan

Christine Trauttmansdorff  
VP-Government Relations and Canadian  
Partnerships  
CICan

Ingrid Caron  
Executive Assistant to VP-Government Relations  
and Canadian Partnerships  
CICan

Appendix 2

 **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**



### Appendix 3 - Initial ideas for a CIGan-RECODE initiative to support colleges and institutes collaboration to affect systemic change

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Social and economic inclusion</b>
<b>Group members:</b> Karen Barnes, Odette Côté, Alan Davis, Jim Hamilton, Christine Trauttmansdorff	
<p><b>The Problem:</b> While education is a social equalizer, wrap around services typically start once students have crossed the threshold of the college. Large numbers of persons are not accessing PSE, affecting their chances for meaningful participation in society. Large parts of the country don't have access to PSE, particularly in the North, in rural and remote areas. There are worrisome and growing gaps in educational attainment, with many at risk of being left behind in both rural and urban areas. Making post-secondary education available in more communities and to more Canadians will reduce the risk of leaving people further behind. A challenge is to link talent development to the strengths of the local community.</p>	
<p><b>Goal of the initiative:</b> Empower all Canadians, current and aspiring, to fully participate in the current and future economy and culture of the country.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach out to and increase access for people who are not participating in society. Sustainable development begins with Education.</li> <li>• Effectively support under-represented/equity seeking groups, first generation learners, in communities</li> <li>• Address low literacy levels that keep parts of the population on the margins</li> <li>• Identify and scale innovative educational delivery models and alternative ways of distributed learning and partnerships can be mobilized to overcome barriers faced by rural communities</li> </ul>	
<p><b>What we could create together:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A national network of recruitment centers (existing, new, in partnership, virtual) that help people develop personalized learning plans and access resources across the network and through local institutions. A national portal with shared, free resources</li> <li>• Collaboration with employers for co-design and delivery – investments from employers to access a skilled workforce</li> <li>• Pilot population: youth at risk, unemployed/displaced workers, under-skilled workers at risk</li> </ul>	
<p><b>What success would look like in 3 years:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilots underway: members in provinces and territories</li> <li>• Open digital resource of research, best practices and active communities of practice</li> <li>• Metrics: evidence of change, research</li> </ul>	
<p><b>What is needed: initial steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Messaging - College is for everyone. Support creating a dream for learners we want to reach</li> <li>• Coalition of the willing – a manifesto, protocol, commitments</li> <li>• Models that inspire and support participation in PSE</li> <li>• A business case</li> <li>• Funding – current and new (government and foundations)</li> </ul>	

<b>Theme</b> Future of work - Addressing disruptive effects of the digital age on the workforce
<b>Group members:</b> Denise Amyot, Paula Burns, Stuart Cullum, Dennis Johnson, Paul McCullough, Tom Roemer
<b>The Problem:</b> In the context of automation and exponential technological advance, the emergence of the gig-economy, skills rapidly become out of date. We need to transform the PSE sector to proactively address the potentially disruptive effects of the digital age on the labor market.
<b>Goal of the initiative</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and challenge orthodoxies; beliefs about "how things are done" that become blind spots standing in the way of new models<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Remove barriers to access to PSE</li> <li>• Innovative and flexible educational delivery models that support continuous learning</li> </ul>
<b>What we could create together:</b> A national micro-credentials framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stackable credentials (LinkedIn is offering to validate credentials with registrars' offices)</li> <li>• Recognize prior learning and experience</li> <li>• Outcomes-based quality assurance, competency vs time based recognition and progression</li> <li>• A national data base/ National Council of Academic transfer building on existing provincial organizations</li> </ul>
<b>What success would look like in 3 years:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Framework developed and adopted by a lead institution in each province/territory</li> <li>• Champions from industry that use and promote the framework</li> <li>• Employers preferred method to assess credentials</li> </ul>
<b>What is needed: initial steps</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus groups of stakeholders: industry, government, quality councils</li> <li>• Database/NCAT</li> <li>• Identify early adopters for a pilot</li> </ul>

---

<sup>3</sup> The reference to orthodoxies came from a document produced by Deloitte. It can be found at <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/monitor-institute/articles/re-imagining-measurement-redefining-standard-practices.html>

<p><b>Theme</b> Nation-building – building a national college movement for achieving SDGs</p>
<p><b>Group members:</b> Don Bureaux, Chad Lubelsky, Wayne Poirier, Jasmin Roy</p>
<p><b>The Problem:</b> The role of colleges and institutes in fostering community wellbeing is in the background, not explicit or visible. We need a new narrative around the role of colleges and institutes in achieving SDGs, a vision and story that will energize Boards and leadership, attract and inspire students and employees, excite partners and engage governments, communities and funders.</p>
<p><b>Goal of the initiative:</b> Create a national movement of colleges committed to nation-building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publicly declare colleges are in the business of nation building - put our stake in the ground re: role of colleges in achieving SDGs.</li> <li>Increase awareness of current activity in Canada – this could lead to focus and more effective collaborations</li> </ul>
<p><b>What we could create together:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A narrative for colleges and institutes as a nation-builder – and build a brand around it</li> <li>A protocol commitment to anchor achievement of SDGs in the goals, policies and practices of colleges and institutes</li> <li>A platform for shared resources</li> </ul>
<p><b>What success would look like in 3 years:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt a protocol</li> <li>Create a framework for the network</li> <li>Build a brand around it</li> <li>Define and capture skills for graduates</li> <li>Integrate in strategic plans</li> </ul>
<p><b>What is needed: initial steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CICan convene membership around SDGs and nation building</li> <li>Create a protocol</li> <li>Identify advocacy and constructive engagement for each goal</li> <li>Work on messaging that mobilizes and does not appear self-serving</li> <li>Identify what others could/should invest</li> </ul>