Community Engagement Staff Training Full Script

Workshop Overview

Begin the workshop with the instructors welcoming the learners, introducing themselves and providing an overview of the training.

Title: Community Engagement Staff Training

Plan for the day:

- **Section 1:** Community Engagement Basics (50 min.)
    - Community Engagement vs. Community Led
    - Key Principles and Characteristics
    - Community Engagement at VPL
    - Social Exclusion
- **Section 2:** Learning About Your Community (30 min.)
    - Leverage Existing VPL Knowledge
    - External Tools
- **Section 3:** Making Connections (35 - 40 min.)
    - Working with team and Supervisor / Making a Plan to Act
    - Understanding privilege

Break (20 min.)

- **Section 3 cont'd:**
    - Strategies for Building Relationships
        - o Strategy #1: Conversations in Branch
        - o Strategy #2: Hanging Out
        - o Strategy #3: Attending Regular meetings and events
    - Sharing your findings (with team, supervisor, via report etc.)
- **Section 4:** Strengthening Skills (60 min.)
    - Active Listening
    - Building Comfort with Ambiguity
    - Ways to Disengage from a Conversation
    - Synthesizing Strategies and Skills Activity
- **Conclusion** (5-10 min.)

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Section 1: Community Engagement Basics

[Slide 1] Title / Land acknowledgement / Introductions to Trainers

We are gathered on the unceded homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.

[Slide 2] Overview/ timeline of the training

[Slide 3] What we hope to achieve

Learning Objectives: Upon completion of this workshop, participants will be able to

i. Describe community engagement and community-led library service in the context of our work at Vancouver Public Library
ii. Recognize and engage with different tools and strategies for getting to know Vancouver communities and community members
iii. Identify and understand relationship building strategies both inside and outside of branch spaces

Activity

Introduce yourself, your work unit, and one community engagement question or comment you would like to share.

Use flipchart & markers to record responses. Keep sheet handy and revisit during conclusion of workshop.

[Slide 4]

Part 1: Community Engagement vs Community Led

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

Community Engagement in a library context is the practice of building relationships with community members through connecting, listening, understanding, and involving. Community engagement encompasses a continuum of informal and formal tools and methods.

COMMUNITY LED:

Community led work stems from the relationships built and information gathered during community engagement. From these relationships, the library can work collaboratively with the community to discuss, plan, deliver, and assess programs and services.

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Part 2: Community Engagement: Key Principles

1. Community Engagement is an <u>ongoing process</u> that enables relationships and trust to be built with the community and strengthen *over time.*
2. <u>The Focus is on building relationships</u> so that we can learn and understand *what the community* wants or finds important. Our role in the community is not to tell them what they need or suggest a service that meets their needs.
3. Relationship building takes place **both** <u>inside and outside of library</u>
4. <u>"Success" is about the relationships</u> and trust you are building, not statistics or outputs
5. <u>Think small</u>: small actions, conversations, moments build up over time).
6. There is no one size fits all approach
7. <u>Failure is normal!</u> Be curious, be brave, and resilient! Don't be discouraged if it takes time to see progress

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Part 3: Community Engagement at VPL: Roles and Expectations

The entire organization is committed a community-led service philosophy. Different roles and classifications across the organization will have their own specific community engagement activities. Also important to recognize that depending on your branch and department, the way you approach community engagement might be different. Community Engagement activities should be a team effort, and it is important that you consult and coordinate with supervisors and peers.

Question:

What are important factors to consider in your role in your branch/department that can either support or challenge you in your ability to do community engagement work?

Part 4: Social Exclusions

Because – libraries serve some segments of the community better than others, and some segments not at all.

While the library is able to reach many community members through our open doors, regular programming, and in-building conversation, **there is still a significant percentage of the population that is not using the library**. There are many members of our community who do not feel welcomed or supported by the library, there are people who are angry at the library (maybe because of a part negative experience), and there are those who do not feel our programs/services are open to them or representative of their interests and needs.

And there are serious consequences to this for our community, community members and the library.

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Social exclusion takes many forms and may affect community members who are poor or living in poverty, unemployed or underemployed, new immigrants and refugees, seniors, and individuals who are marginalized because of race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, or class. To improve the

inclusiveness of the library and to support those who have previously felt under-supported, we *must* engage with the community and actively seek to build relationships and trust.

[Slide 8]

If We Don't Engage… [read slide]

- **Community members will avoid accessing services**
- **Programs/services won't be truly reflective/responsive**
- **Library will not live up to its values**
- **We risk privileging some needs over others and contributing to social exclusion**

We can use community engagement techniques to connect with all members of our many communities in Vancouver, and it is the only way we are going to be able to work with socially excluded groups.

Section 2: Learning About Your Community

[Slide 15]

[Slide 16]

Part 1: Leverage Existing VPL Knowledge

[Slide 17]

It's important to remember that it's quite rare to encounter entirely uncharted territory when it comes to community engagement at VPL. Staff in various roles at various worksites across the VPL system have been undertaking community engagement activities for years—as you well know, because you are those staff! As a result, whenever you're entering a new position or connecting with a community you've never worked with, you'll want to draw upon the knowledge of your peers. *Examples from co-presenters*

We realize that the daily context and job descriptions of each person shape what community engagement can look like. If your work does not include time to leave the branch, realize that there is still a great deal that can be gained by educating yourself about the work that is being done outside the branch's walls. The lifeblood of community engagement is patron conversation and you build these connections every day with the things you say to patrons. This is why community engagement is the common thread across the whole organization and why we really want to do it right.

I'm going to talk to you about how to seek out documented and undocumented information captured during past and ongoing community engagement efforts to inform your work moving forward. These will help you in your future conversations at whenever and wherever you are having them.

Documented Information:

How have VPL staff members documented their community engagement work? **[jot down a couple of examples on a whiteboard]**

       EXAMPLES: Contact lists, community maps, reports...

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- Community contact lists
    - Various worksites have created lists of their community contacts that can be accessed on the HUB or VanDocs
    - These lists are structured in different ways and capture different kinds of information, such as names of community organizations, history of working with that organization, etc.
    - You'll have to do a little digging and asking around, so do not be shy

- Community maps
    - A community map is a visual representation of a community, including service providers, informal hangout spots, etc.

- Reports
    - Reports are another way to see what kind of work has been done in an area
    - These are longer and often contain an individual's experiences of a community visit
    - The Community Librarian reports and debriefs are great examples of this type of work

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Undocumented Information:

It's important to remember that, when it comes to community engagement work, there's so much that doesn't get documented—decorum, previous approaches, observations, failures, etc. To get a sense of these things, consider reaching out to staff currently doing community engagement work within your area of focus (e.g., Branch Heads, Community Librarians, SLPSAs in your area, etc.) as well as staff who have done this work in the past (e.g., staff who previously held your position). This can be done by email or over the phone, but a face-to-face meeting is always ideal whenever possible.

During this meeting, you will be able to seek out additional information: informal strategies that haven't been documented, recommended next steps, etc. You can also provide information to them about your intended community engagement efforts to ensure efforts are not being duplicated. Throughout your community engagement efforts, you can always return to these people with follow-up questions.

Part 2: External Tools

I'm going to show you some tools and methods that will help you dig a little deeper and learn even more about local communities. Of course, this is no substitution for actually connecting and talking with community members, but these tools are a good first step.

Just a reminder that it's important to do community research in consultation with your supervisor. Community engagement is a collaborative effort, so maintaining communication with your supervisor is a great way to ensure you're on the right track.

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Right now I'm going to highlight a couple of online research tools. There's no substitution for hands-on practice, so after the workshop, perhaps when things are a little quiet, inasmuch as things ever get quiet around here, spend some time practicing these tools yourself.

Demographics / Areas of the City profiles:

[Slide 20]

First things first, It's helpful to get a sense of your community's demographics. This is a valuable early step you can take when learning about your community.

> **ASK:** Can anyone give me an example of demographics that might be relevant when you're researching your community? **[jot down a couple of examples on a whiteboard]**

> **EXAMPLES:** Family size, children per household, income, employment, languages spoken, etc.

City of Vancouver community profiles: https://vancouver.ca/news-calendar/areas-of-the-city.aspx

You can find many neighbourhood profiles on the City of Vancouver website. These profiles do an excellent job of providing demographic information about Vancouver's diverse neighbourhoods.

[demo how to access the Areas of the City page on the City of Vancouver website]

We find ourselves with a map and list of neighbourhoods. Simply select the neighbourhood relevant to your needs. You can either click within the map or select a neighbourhood from the list. For example, if you're working at Marpole Branch, you might click Marpole from the list. **[click "Marpole"]** Here we can find assorted information about the neighbourhood, such as…

- History
- Heritage buildings
- Major initiatives, like the Marpole Community Plan and the long-term plan for development along the Cambie corridor
- Local community services, including some service providers (a very sparse list)
- Statistics **[view community statistics census data]**

Right now we're looking at statistical census data for the Marpole neighbourhood, going back a number of years. They probably just look like a jumble of very small numbers. Rather than have you strain your eyes looking at the screen, I'm going to direct you to the statistics handout in front of you, which is simply a print-out of what's currently on the screen. In small groups, we're going to do a brief activity in which we dive into these statistics.

Activity—Community Statistics:

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Examine the Marpole neighbourhood statistics handout. What jumps out at you? What are some initial observations and/or questions that come to mind? What do the statistics tell you and what don't they tell you? If you were about to begin doing community engagement in this neighbourhood, what would

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be useful or at least interesting to note based on these statistics? (Remember that we're not yet at the stage where we're planning programs and services for this community. We're simply looking at statistics to build our preliminary understanding of this community.) Take a few moments to examine the statistics and then discuss some of your observations and/or questions at your table.

After a few minutes…

ASK: Would anyone like to share some of the observations and/or questions that their table discussed?

Receive responses from a few groups. Some potential observations…

- Slightly more people 19 and under than the rest of the city
    - This is a community that really needs its children's services
- Fewer people with English as their "mother tongue" and more people with Mandarin or Cantonese as their "mother tongue" than the rest of the city
    - Chinese-language community engagement is advantageous
- Median household income is lower than the rest of the city; population in low income households is higher than the rest of the city

Community Service Providers / bc211:

[Slide 22]

Additionally, it's obviously quite helpful to identify some key community service providers you might connect with in order to reach community members.

ASK: Can anyone give me an example of a type of community service provider organization in Vancouver? **[jot down a couple of examples on a whiteboard]**

EXAMPLES: Settlement organizations, community centres, food banks, local community meals, local daycares, local supportive housing sites, etc.

bc211 aka. Red Book Online: http://www.bc211.ca/

bc211 is an excellent resource for identifying community service providers. It's a really easy-to-use online search tool for discovering community organizations that you might want to partner with. It's really easy to use bc211 to narrow down specific types of organizations you might want to engage with.

[demo how to access the bc211 website]

As we can see, there are numerous categories representing different types of community service providers: organizations that provide mental health services, that provide employment and training support, that specialize in serving Indigenous communities and more. We can click on any one of these icons to perform a search.

Right now I'll demo a search. Let's say you're interested in researching what kind of community meals are provided in your neighbourhood. A good place to start, obviously, is Food and Basic Goods, which

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I'm going to click on. **[click Food and Basic Goods]** First I need to select the community I'm searching within. **[type Mount Pleasant]** Then Meals and Snacks. **[click Meals and Snacks]** We now have a list of organizations that provide community meals and snacks. The name, location and approximate distance from the area I searched are all listed. I can click select "click for more" to read a description of the service. I can also click "Map" to see these organizations plotted out on a map.

Note that it's an imperfect search in that it surfaces some hits from outside the Mount Pleasant area. Also note that it's not an exhaustive search—there are many community service providers that won't be represented here. That said, it's a valuable start.

Community Walks:

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One final way of learning about your community that I'm going to discuss is community walks.

ASK: Who here can tell me what is a community walk as well as what is the purpose of a community walk?

A community walk is exactly what it sounds like—it's when you walk around your community! It sounds very simple, but it's also an extremely valuable way to get to know your community beyond what community demographics or bc211 can teach you.

To conduct a community walk, simply take a stroll, maybe for just 30 min., around an area in your library's neighbourhood. Pay close attention to what you see—you'll often find small hints and clues that develop your understanding of your community.

For example…

- What are some local community service providers that you maybe didn't identify in your prior research?
- What are some informal community hangout spaces where you can connect with community members?
- Who are the people who hang out there (e.g., primarily families, seniors, etc.)?

Jot down what you see in whatever format you want—perhaps some rough notes, or maybe make a rough map. When you're ready to actually begin making connections community members, you can return to this information for ideas on what to do first. *Examples from co-presenters*

Always make sure you're doing community engagement in consultation with your supervisor. You can decide together whether a community walk is the right approach for the community engagement work you're doing, and which parts of your community you would want to prioritize.

Section 3: Making Connections

Now that you've done the work of learning about your community, you're ready to start making connections and building relationships. This is Section 3 (refer to triangle visual) and we are going to talk about:

1. Working with your supervisor and team to make a plan
2. Understanding privilege
3. Strategies for building relationships

Part 1: Working With Team and Supervisor

Knowing what VPL can do/provide

- Establishing priorities with your supervisor can guide you. Work with your supervisor to discuss capacity and negotiate the right time to do the work you have identified in your community research.
- Your supervisor will support you as much as possible, while balancing the needs of the work unit.
- There may be times where you are not sure how to respond to a request from a partner or community member. It's okay to say that you don't have the answer but will take it back to your branch or team to see what is possible.

Part 2: Make a Plan to Act

- When you are going out into the community, it helps to think about or even physically write down your intentions and your rationale for where you've decided to focus your energy.
- "Who are you choosing to contact and why?", "How do you plan on approaching them?", "Are there specific areas of sensitivity or empathy required of you to effectively engage with these community members?"
- Once you have worked with your supervisor and team and made a decision to connect with a group, it's time to call, email, or drop in (depending what's appropriate for them).
- After the workshop, you will receive an email with an evaluation form in Limesurvey and a detailed handout attached. We have some hardcopies available at the front, if you prefer, come see us after the workshop. Resources include helpful ideas on language to use when cold-calling or emailing a potential partner and templates that you can adapt for your work. The Community Engagement Training HUB page is currently under construction but these resources will available there once it goes live.

Part 3: Systemic Inequality

[Slide 27]

When reaching out to connect with community members, groups, or organizations, check in with yourself and consider how you might be viewed by the community you are connecting with. One way to do this is to examine your own privilege and how this frames the way you interact with your community. This is especially important when working with marginalized groups. Understanding our various privileges as individuals can help us surrender our expertise and demonstrate humility.

What is Privilege?

Privilege refers to not having to face barriers that others have to face (trainer can give an example of one of their privileges here for understanding). Privilege can be hard to recognize, hard to acknowledge or something we take for granted because we didn't ask for it. It can make us feel guilty. It can be hard to let go of, especially if we cling to the idea that we're entitled to it. Recognizing privilege is a good place to begin as we try to figure out how to work together, and how to work across differences.

[Slide 28] Video – Power, Privilege & Oppression
From the Department of Social Work at Denver University.
Before we watch, let's be aware that the video is American. While watching, consider 1) paralells on the local/regional level in terms of the communities you serve, 2) some form of inequality/privilege are not represented in the video.

Discussion:

Review questions 1 & 2 after watching the video.

Time for a break [20 min]

Part 4: Strategies for Building Relationships

[Slide 29]

Welcome back! Before the break we have reflected on the importance of privilege and how it applies to our work. This understanding will help you build relationships with community members.

[Slide 30]

How do we build relationships?

- *Building relationships in the community is the foundation of the community-led model. It involves putting in the time to build trust with community members, by engaging them in conversations about themselves, their needs, their community, and the library. (Adapted from Community-Led Libraries Toolkit, p. 62)*
- There are 3 main strategies for building relationships in the community (pulled from the Community-Led Libraries Toolkit): **Conversations in-branch, hanging out**, and **attending regular meetings and events**

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[Slide 31]
Strategy 1: Conversations In-Branch

- Community engagement can also take place in the branch
- Every interaction in the library is an opportunity to build relationships and learn about the community we serve
- Sometimes these conversations highlight things the library is doing right or areas for improvement. These sorts of conversations are useful to other staff in your unit and potentially to management
- Be visible on the public floor of your service point. Being in the service space allows for opportunities to meet current library users and to form relationships with them
    - E.g. Storytime, roving, information and service desk, etc.
- Sometimes there are competing needs between working in the service point and getting out into the community. Your service point may need you to be on site due to operational needs and as a result, you may find that opportunities to go out into the community are limited
    - Talk with your supervisor about how you can work together to schedule time for community engagement outside of the library. But also remember how important service point work is and how reassuring it is for patrons to see you actively engaged within our library walls as well as outside

[Slide 32]
Example: *At Kerrisdale there is a large population of seniors. Over time, you get to know them and build a relationship. You learn about their lives, and what their individual needs are. Seniors seem to want a more personal interaction when they come to the library. I can share their comments with staff at the branch so that we can discuss how to enhance their experience and access.*

[Slide 33]
At the information desk you get to know seniors and at storytime you get to know families. By staying after storytime is over and hanging out with families, asking them what their children are reading, asking them about their children's development or just chatting with them about whatever they want to chat about you make yourself available on their terms. – Elizabeth Taron (SLPSA)

[Slide 34]
Strategy 2: Hanging out in the Community

- Hanging out in the community involves regularly visiting a community space to meet and talk with people and allowing time to build and nurture a trusting relationship with community members and community partners
- Purpose is to have conversations with people about themselves, their lives, their community, and their experiences or perceptions of the library
- When you first connect with community groups, remember that you don't need to do a "hard sell" about the library. Nobody likes feeling like someone is trying to sell them something and promoting the library can be alienating for some people.
- Long-term goal is to allow these casual conversations to evolve into ongoing, respectful relationships. The hope is that community members will eventually feel comfortable sharing information and work with you to develop ways that the library can provide services to them

- Hanging out gives community members the choice and freedom to participate in a conversation in an environment they are comfortable in. It is also a way to meet community members who do not come to the library
- Shared activities can be a fantastic icebreaker. It can also be helpful to visit when another event is going on. This enables you to observe and interact with community members naturally, without agenda. Find out ahead of time whether you can visit a group around planned activity or meal times. But be sure to check with group leaders beforehand.
- Sometimes you may bring VPL materials (e.g., books, DVDs, brochures, etc.) as a way to start conversations, but remember that conversations are your primary reason for attending a hangout

Where to go and what to do?

Activity—Table Discussion:

Where could you go to hang out with community members and what might you do there?

Each group selects someone to record their responses on lined paper. Then take turns to share with the larger group. Below are some additional examples, if needed.

Where you can go:

- Service provider's common room
- Neighbourhood house
- Short-term housing shelter
- Youth resource centre
- Community kitchen
- Immigrant and refugee service agency
- Senior's centre
- Coffee shop
- Park

What you can do:

- Break the ice and address awkwardness from the start by introducing yourself to people and making a joke about not knowing what to do
- Bring things for conversation starters that can relate to the location or activity (e.g. laptops, crafts, books)
- Dress appropriately for target population (including VPL ID, if appropriate)
- Be alert for opportunities to join things like a card game, coffee break, meal, group conversation
- Initiate conversation and actively listen. Be curious about their experiences, needs and skills
- Challenge yourself to have three conversations
- Ask service agency for ideas for connecting with people who use their agency

Strategy 3: Attending Regular Meetings/Events

Hosting a VPL table at a community event can be an effective way to meet people who are not connected with service providers or with other community groups where you hang out. Every VPL classification can participate in this kind of activity.

Attending regular meetings provides an opportunity to learn about community resources, connect with service providers, and share current information about each other's organizations, and represent VPL as an integral part of the community. Usually, Librarians and Branch Heads will participate in these meetings.

But with both community events and regular meetings, you will want to keep the following in mind:

- Be open and curious, listen actively
- Come early or stay late to build in time for conversations
- Don't do a hard sell, but be prepared to answer questions about what is happening in your area or what the library offers for specific groups
- Listen for barriers as well as positive stories of how the library is impacting peoples' lives and bring that feedback to your supervisor and team. Solicit ideas from community members on how the library can do better
- When hosting a VPL table at a community event bring promo materials and swag
- Your participation allows community members to see active engagement and interest outside the library walls

Part 5: Share Your Findings

[Slide 36]
Regardless of whether you are meeting patrons in branch, hanging out in the community or attending a regular meeting or event, it's important to share what you learn during your community engagement activities with your team and supervisor.

The most common ways of doing so:

- Staff meeting (perhaps a standing item every week)
- Community contact lists
- Reports
- Community maps
- Or something even more amazing?

Most important: Talk and Be Proud!

Knowledge is not just transmitted through reading. Conversations are equally important and sometimes the less formal, the better! It is important to not limit these conversations to just your supervisor. Letting everyone know about your work will encourage others to speak up about their interactions and will set up a workplace environment that considers improving community engagement a natural course of doing business.

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Section 4: Strengthening Skills

What the skills and tools needed to do effective community engagement? Based on the feedback we received from staff across the system, we've identified three soft skills that were the most common areas people wanted more training and support:

1. Active listening
2. Comfort with awkwardness and ambiguity
3. Ways to disengage from a conversation

Part 1: Skills and Tools

1. **Active Listening**
   - "Community members generate service ideas when sustained relations are in place. In order for this to occur, library staff need to reposition their role in the community from an expert to a facilitator. By becoming active listeners instead of disseminators of information, library staff take information from the community and place what they are hearing within the context of library services. Each community is unique and will identify need(s) for services based on its unique circumstances."- Williment, K. W. (2009). It takes a community to create a library. *Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research*, *4*(1).

Active listening and your role:

1. **BE THE LEARNER**: Use active listening skills to help move away from the role of the expert. The focus of active listening is the same as being a learner: we are trying to receive information and build understanding. Let community members guide the conversation to ensure that it focuses on issues that are important to them

2. **SUMMARIZE**: Always reflect back to the speaker—repeat or rephrase what you've heard—because assumptions and biases may shade our understanding of what is being said

3. **CLARIFY**: Probe and clarify to understand what people are trying to tell you. Remain curious. Ask questions

4. **STAY IN THE MOMENT**: Do not think ahead. Keep an open mind and try not to prepare your next remark. This can distract you from what is being said. Provide time for people to finish describing their thoughts.

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Activity—Active Listening (10 min.)

1. Pair up and identify who is partner A and partner B
2. PART 1: Partner A (speaker) will share something they are passionate about. Partner B (listener) will respond with short, closed-ended answers and be distracted by checking the time, mentally going over their to-do list for the day, and planning what to cook for dinner while Partner A is talking (90 seconds).
3. Debrief: Ask participants to share their experiences. E.g. *How did you feel as A or B?* (2-3 minutes)
4. PART 2: Partner A (speaker) will share something they are passionate about. They can repeat the previous topic or choose a new topic. Partner B (listener) will apply active listening skills by responding with curiosity, asking clarifying questions, summarizing, staying in the moment. (90 seconds)
5. Debrief: Ask participants to share their experiences. E.g. *How did you feel as A or B? What changed? What are some questions you asked or ways you expressed curiosity that opened up the conversation?* (2-3 minutes)

I think we can all agree that active listening makes a huge difference in connecting with people and is essential to building relationships. No one wants to build a relationship with someone who doesn't seem interested in what they have to say. Essentially, be kind and curious.

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2. **Comfort with Ambiguity & Awkwardness**

Who here has felt awkward going out into the community?

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Awkwardness is OKAY. Feeling anxious and uncomfortable is natural. Remember, you have the skills to succeed regardless of how anxious and uncomfortable you might feel.

- Expect some degree of awkwardness to start with.

Even when you have experience working in the community, it can still be uncomfortable to be in a new situation where you don't have a defined role and aren't on the home turf of the library. You may not know exactly what to expect and that ambiguity can be challenging to navigate.

- Go into new situations with an attitude of "I'll just see how this goes," rather than "I'll follow prescribed steps and expect a specific outcome."

Discomfort is a predictable result of putting yourself outside your comfort zone, and a good indication that you're probably on the right track towards breaking new ground in making connections with people you might not otherwise meet.

- Give yourself permission to fail and if failure happens, leverage it! A mistake can be an opportunity to learn and grow. It can provide direction. Community engagement work is not a smooth process with a predetermined outcome.

- If you are nervous about going to events where you will meet new people, try setting small goals for yourself. For example, talking to three new people. This will keep you focus on your goal rather than the nerves.
- Arm yourself with neutral topics to discuss (e.g. food, weather, movies, etc.)

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Solicit examples from the group: **What are some strategies for managing discomfort or awkwardness?** Use a flipchart to record the group's responses. Add examples below if they are not brought forth by the group.

- Learn to act without the complete picture - gather what information you can and act on that.
- Set small goals
- If the group you're visiting is doing an activity – join in!
- Make jokes to break the tension
- Remind yourself of why you're there, and the unanticipated ways in which your presence can have a positive effect

[Slide 44]

3. **Ways to disengage from a conversation (15 min.)**

- Sometimes you need to disengage from a conversation but feel awkward excusing yourself.
- Speaking points: "I'm due back at the library but it's been great talking with you. Thanks for taking the time to share your idea/experience/perspective. I'll be sure to discuss this with staff at the branch."
- Setting boundaries for your interactions with community members is a matter of personal and professional judgement. Talk to a supervisor or with a colleague who has experience with community work and can help you clarify what's appropriate in a professional sense as well as what feels right for you individually

Activity—Table Scenarios: Each table will be provided with a scenario of a conversation they would need to disengage from. In groups, participants will discuss how they might disengage from this conversation, including practicing language they might use to disengage.

Scenarios:

1. You are in a heated conversation with a community member at an event and it is taking all your time away from other people. How can you positively disengage?
2. You have just finished delivering a program out in the community and a patron approaches you to complain about something that happened at the Central library several years ago. It's a long, long story… How do you positively disengage?
3. You are at a community event and a community partner is commanding all of your attention with ideas for various ways to partner. You are not getting a chance to connect with community members. How can you positively disengage?

Debrief scenario activity.

Part 2: Synthesizing Strategies and Skills Activity

[Slide 45]

Activity—Flipchart Scenarios (15 min.):

- Flipchart scenarios: there are five flipcharts, each with a different scenario
- Pair participants together and instruct them to go around to each flipchart and write ideas for handling the scenarios keeping in mind the strategies and skills that were discussed today. This will take 10 minutes.
- Afterwards, collectively rove to each flipchart to review the results: Read through the answers, ask participants to elaborate, and reflect back to the skillset

Example flipchart scenarios

- You were invited to game night at the senior's community centre by the service provider.
- Desk staff identified that the same group comes in every Thursday morning. This group of adults comes with their care givers and enjoys anything related to space from the juvenile collection.
- Your manager has asked you to go to farmer's market to represent the library.
- There is a group of seniors meeting in the library branch before their weekly yoga class.
- Last week you met a service provider at a breakfast club for newcomers. They thought it would be a good idea to come by and meet the people. You sent a follow up email but have not heard back in a week.
- You have noticed more and more people attending the Tuesday afternoon storytime. You begin to recognize faces and the patrons seem to recognize you.

[Slide 47]

Part 3: Original Question Check-in

Activity—(5 min.): Revisit the original question from the intro, "What is one question you have about community engagement?", and consider as a group whether these were answered. Discuss. If some are unanswerable by the group, take them back to supervisors and get back to the person who owns the question.

[Slide 48]

That's all folks! Make sure everyone signed in and offer up printed handouts.

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