

THE ABUNDANT COMMUNITY

Awakening the power of families and neighbourhoods

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Book Summary

This is a book about building a healthy sustainable community without sourcing the tradition public sector dollars we have become dependent on. The solution is clear when you read this book... **the solution is us.** A WIIFU (What's In It For Us) vs. a WIIFM (What's In It For Me) approach. The authors also spend considerable time focusing on our dependent consumer society and the damage it does to the community.

The power of the neighbourhood:

- It can raise a child
- Provide security
- Sustain our health
- Secure our income
- And care for vulnerable people

It assures us that when we join together with our neighbours, we are the architects of the future and community that we want to live in.

Neighbourhood/community

The market place, consumer, service provider

“It takes a village to raise a child.” This is not a youth problem, this is a neighbourhood problem: parents/adults who have forgone their responsibility to look after our children.

We rely too often on teachers, coaches, counsellors, nutritionists, marriage counsellors, and doctors etc to solve our problems.

<p>Studies have shown that if we know our neighbours by name, and that if we are active and present outside our homes in the community, and are being part of the social fabric, then we will have a safer community. A safe community is having eyes on the street.</p>	<p>Too often we rely on the police to keep our communities safe. There are limits to what the police can do to keep our communities safe.</p>
<p>Two factors often predict whether a neighbourhood is safe. Is there mutual trust & altruism among neighbours? Are neighbours willing to intervene when children misbehave?</p>	
<p>Our health – the major factors determining our health are individual behaviour, social relationships and physical environment (quality of our food and air).</p>	<p>The medical system has its limitations to keep us healthy. The medical ship is sinking because of the demands we have put on it and we struggle to swim to safety ignoring the life raft at our side.</p>
<p>Culture – is composed of the ways that people have developed to survive in a particular place. A community that looks after each other is a resilient and sustainable culture.</p>	<p>A consumer society that ‘defers to higher authority’ to satisfy their own or family needs is held hostage by the service provider.</p>
<p>A community can provide for itself when given the opportunity. A community that supports and provides for itself is far more sustainable than one that depends on others to meet their basic needs.</p>	<p>The consumer society – no matter how much you purchase, you will always want more. This has worked effectively or ineffectively since this process started in the USA in the 1920’s. The bottom line is, are you happier with every new purchase?</p>
<p>Are we producers of our own future?</p>	<p>Or what others have in mind for us?</p>
<p>Aging – the preferred process is to stay in one’s own home as long as possible. Medically, emotionally and financially, this has been proven to be the preferred route. This also requires a community that will support the person choosing this path.</p>	<p>However, our society has developed a very ‘efficient’ process where you can move from independent living to assisted living to nursing home to hospice, without ever leaving the property. Does life get any more efficient than that?</p>

- As we moved into the 20th & 21st century, our society created an imbalance in the lives of our citizens. As a consumer driven society, we believe that if we buy more of the goods and services offered to us, we will be happier and more satisfied. More police, more medicine, toys, teachers, more stuff this is not a solution, it is an addiction.
- When the community becomes too commercialized and care becomes too professionalized, life is hollowed out.
- When we're not working, home becomes a centre for entertainment purchased from others vs. entertaining ourselves. In our leisure time, we search for what we can purchase to amuse ourselves, vs. how to be creative and do it ourselves.
- Nature has become marginalized. It is now being commercialized managed and developed - moving less and less to being experienced or revered.
- The challenge is that nature if left to its own, has little commercial value, and therefore it is marginalized. We as citizens need to take back nature and rely less on commercial styles of entertainment.

Part 2- Choosing a satisfied life, the abundant community –

www.abundantcommunity.com this is an interactive web site and is a commitment to action. It has four parts:

1. The tool kit
2. Where it is working, research material
3. Commentary
4. Events

If we can agree that the consumer society makes us dependent on the service providers and manufacturers of products to keep us happy and sustainable, then the abundant community is marked by a collective accountability that can be created only in relationship to other people. The abundant community has five basic tenants:

Tenants	Commentary
What we have is enough – we value what we have and find it satisfying	A competent community builds within the family and neighbourhood the power to provide for themselves. There is less reliance on having to go out and

	purchase the solution
We have the capacity to provide what we need in the face of the human condition – we believe that this family and neighbourhood have the capacity to collectively handle an uncertain future and to endure and transcend whatever faces us.	The starting point in every transformation is to think differently.
We organize our world in a context of cooperation and satisfaction	A competent community focuses on prevention vs. reaction to events. A competent community has the power to provide for themselves vs. deferring to a higher authority to solve our own problems.
We are responsible to each other – We take seriously the idealistic notion that our future is dependent on each of us and if one of us is not free, or valued, or participating in a full life, then these are not possible for any of us.	If I have the courage and you have the vision; then we need each other. All my courage, without your vision, won't create anything. Without my courage, your vision is useless. Families and neighbourhoods become powerful when gifts/talents are combined.
We live with the reality of the human condition – we understand what we can and cannot do. Sorrow, aging, illness, celebration, fallibility, failure, misfortune, and joy are natural and inevitable. Life is not a problem to be solved or service to be obtained.	

- **“The youth problem”** – is not a youth problem but a lack of community problem. If a child is raised without anything useful to do, not being part of something, has no purpose in life, or does not feel needed; they may search out a peer group that may just be a gang of similar minded youth.
- A competent community can fill this need to support our youth if they care enough.
- **A competent community has three properties:**

1. Focuses on the gifts/talents of its members
 2. Nurtures associational life
 3. Offers hospitality, the welcoming of strangers
- These collective properties create the communal conditions for the emergence of families and neighbourhoods. They develop the following capacities: kindness, generosity, cooperation, forgiveness, acceptance of fallibility and mystery. (What do you do when you do not know what is going to happen to you)?
 - **Associational life** – An association is a group of people with a shared interest. We come together for some reason, and that reason makes it work. An association is often a fulfillment of one’s individual likes and purposes. Associations decide what needs to be done, they decide how it needs to be done and then create the environment to join with other volunteers to do what needs to be done.
 - **Volunteerism** – When people do something voluntarily, it is because they care about it or it wouldn’t stick. There is no cohesion without care; there is no care without choosing freely to be there. They have not commercialized the relationship. There is an exchange but no commerce. It is called a **citizen ecosystem instead of a consumer ecosystem**.
 - **Hospitality** – A neighbourhood is not really a competent or abundant community if strangers are not welcome. Hospitality is the signature of not only an abundant community, but a confident one. When you do not have confidence and you feel separate or threatened, you are unable to be hospitable. Hospitality is generated because people feel so good about themselves that they want others to share it and they want to share the joy with others. A wounded community does not have this capacity. Hospitality generates from trust and produces trust.
 - **Kindness** – How do you create authentic kindness in the world? The building blocks are Dance, Music & Storytelling (page 85)
 - **Cooperation** – “When we put people in competition with each other, for one to win, the other must lose” Alfie Kohn The definition of cooperation is: “for me to win, you must win.” Or if winning is not the point, then: “For me

to prosper and find satisfaction and peace of mind, then you must find satisfaction and peace of mind.”

- **Competition** – is the core value of the scarcity world of systems and the consumer society. The consumer culture short changes the idea of cooperation. It keeps us wanting more.
- **The listening table** – page 101 - if institutions wish to do a project in the back yard of your neighbourhood, the best way of getting feedback is from local families, neighbours, and local associations. This dialogue can be framed by three questions:

Community role

1. What functions can neighbourhood people perform by themselves?	
2. What functions can neighbours achieve with some additional help from institutions?	
3. What functions must institutions perform on their own?	

A community in Savannah, Georgia use the process of “Leading by Stepping Back.” The town managers new that institutions could “invade” a community with programs and services who would displace the capacities of local residents. He then listened directly and in person...to residents - no surveys or speaking to those who “speak” for residents and their associations.

- **Neighbourhood impact statement** – This is like the environmental impact statement industry and government must follow. It would ask any institution that was planning a project in our community:

1. What action are you proposing?	
2. What impact will this have on the social fabric and local economy?	

<p>3. Will this contribute to building a sustainable & viable local economy?</p>	

A useful dialogue can then proceed and become a win-win scenario.

- **Lessons from the pioneers-** the first settlers who came to this great nation over 300 years ago had a daunting task. They arrived in the wilderness with their families. They had simple tools and basic provisions. For them to even arrive on the shores of Canada was a feat in itself. What can we learn from these hardy souls?

1. They had land, some tools, themselves and some neighbours to help start building a new community.
2. They first worked together to build the homestead shortly after, a hamlet.
3. Everything would have been made with their combined skills
4. Not everyone was perfect. Some were industrious, some were lazy. I suspect some did not even want to be here.
5. The result was a community in which they had pride, because they had created it.
6. Today, we are the beneficiaries of these pioneers. What will we leave for those families that follow us?

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