What Actions Support Sharing of Voice and Decisions?
At a story-gathering session in November 2017, community partners and staff members of the City for All Women Initiative (CAWI) discussed…

“What is different about partnership (working with others) that centers the experiences (voices) and decision-making of equity-seeking (justice/fairness) groups?”
The story-sharing and paper quilting which followed highlighted important insights about the qualities and actions central to CAWI’s collaborative leadership approach.

This presentation of CAWI Paper Quilt Squares, and its accompanying resource of CAWI Stories were produced as tools for learning in partnership with the Collaborative Leadership in Practice (CLiP) project.
“Partnership that centers around voices – it’s very important.”

“It helps break different ground. When we meet different people, together we can move a mountain. A key part of our partnership is that we all express ourselves, we are open and we have a common goal.”

- Andrea
“The commitment to equity has helped me have a healthy family. It’s grassroots in a different way. Learning how to work in the community and in partnerships leads to healthy families.”

- Andrea
“The process of getting people to share their voices and be a part of decision making is to go from the “they” to bringing people together in collaboration and engaging them. This leads to results.”

- Andrea
“Love going from person to person like a butterfly goes from flower to flower supports people sharing their views.”

- Andrea
“Me and my two kids – 22 years old and 7 years old. Creating a sense of family enables people to share their views and be a part of decision making.”

- Andrea
"We are doing stuff and going all in different directions. While looking very different, the arrows cross and make something beautiful. In the crossing of perspectives and points of views there comes acceptance and love.”
- Linda
“Voices, decisions - it’s all a journey. It can be positive.”

- Rabeya
“Support in action means assisting with basic life tasks.”

- Nancy
“I went through a few years without Cornerstone (Housing for Women). This is Melanie (Cornerstone staff) looking over my wall to check-in on me. Checking-in and concern is support in action, which assists in voices being heard.”
- Rabeya
“Supports (including financial and love) at all levels assist people to share their views and be part of decision-making processes.”

- Tong
“6” and “9” - it’s all about perspective. What you see from different angles is different.”

- Nancy
“Compassion is an important action when soliciting people’s voices and making decisions. It’s not enough to just accept people.”

- Melanie
“The world has made women feel and appear small. When you create the right conditions, and when you do that like a telescope multiplied across organisations, then they just blossom. The women become magnified.”

- Suzanne
“It’s important to ask questions. It’s an action that elicits good voice and decision-making.”
- Melanie
“We use our hands to do the work we do. When you do workshops and when you are evaluating something, you have to consider the head (what did you learn?), heart (how do you feel), and feet (what action are you going to do?), When you leave a butterfly here, it will float away. From that hand there is so much subtle impact. There is a reverberation and lots of echoes.”
-Linda
“We are all chatting. Time makes no difference. – Follow-up and reconnection is important.”

- Rabeya
“Inclusive community is my action towards all being able to share their views and make decisions.”

- Melanie
“In English this means “We are all equal”. Nobody is above or beyond – no more and no less.”

- Rabeya
“Using the pronoun “they” supports inclusiveness. The words we use enable and support the sharing of voices and decisions.”

- Andrea
“For many people in the disability community lots of things cost money that we don’t have. Along the dollar sign are the supports to get us here. If I haven’t eaten all day, I can’t spend money on transportation to a meeting. These supports allow people with disabilities to share their voices.”

- Terrie
“I see the dynamics of how [CAWI] works and the community development framework: sit down with other residents, bring forward our ideas collaboratively, build teamwork, work alongside each other.”

“It’s very important. I would not use the word empowerment, but I felt enriched.”

- Andrea
Conclusion

The story-gathering and paper quilt activities with CAWI partners allowed the Collaborative Leadership in Practice (CLiP) project to listen attentively and document knowledge about this topic directly from the voices of CAWI’s community partners.

The images speak in rich ways and the words convey, through stories of strength and vulnerability, the power of community leadership which prioritizes equity and inclusion.
The CLiP project team is very thankful to the eight women who shared their time, their stories, their art and their analysis to co-create this unique tool for learning through stories.

The full stories shared by these women are also available on the CLiP project website.

Visit the website of the City for All Women Initiative (CAWI) here: http://cawi-ivtf.org

The CLiP project facilitated the sharing across Ontario of experiences and insights related to collaborative and equitable leadership in partnerships. For more information, visit: www.clip-lcp.org