

Report for Nyland Cohousing 2020 Community Retreat with Yana Ludwig, Feb 21-23

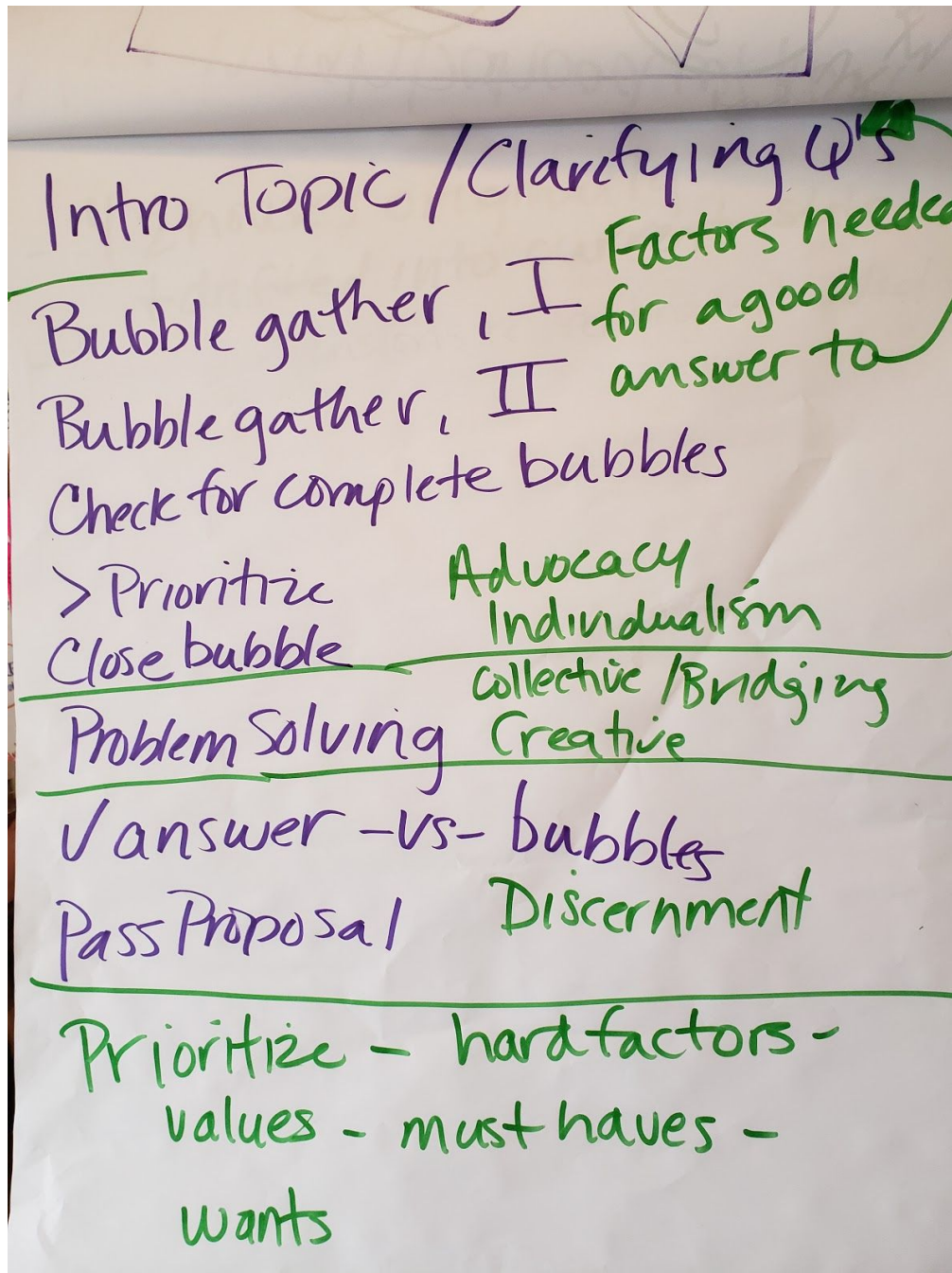
What is here? This report includes three sections:

1. A review of some key concepts I presented on the weekend,
2. Summary of the work we did together
3. Recommendations for moving forward



1. Key concepts (from my consulting/training hat) from the weekend:

Bubbles Before Boxes: gather the factors that need to be taken into account (AKA "Bubbles") before you start doing problem solving and proposal generation (AKA "Boxes"). You need to know what the full dimensions of the problem you are solving first in order to do good, inclusive work. Doing it in this way significantly increases the chances of easily getting good buy in from the group on your work. Here's the full "Bubbles and Boxes" process:

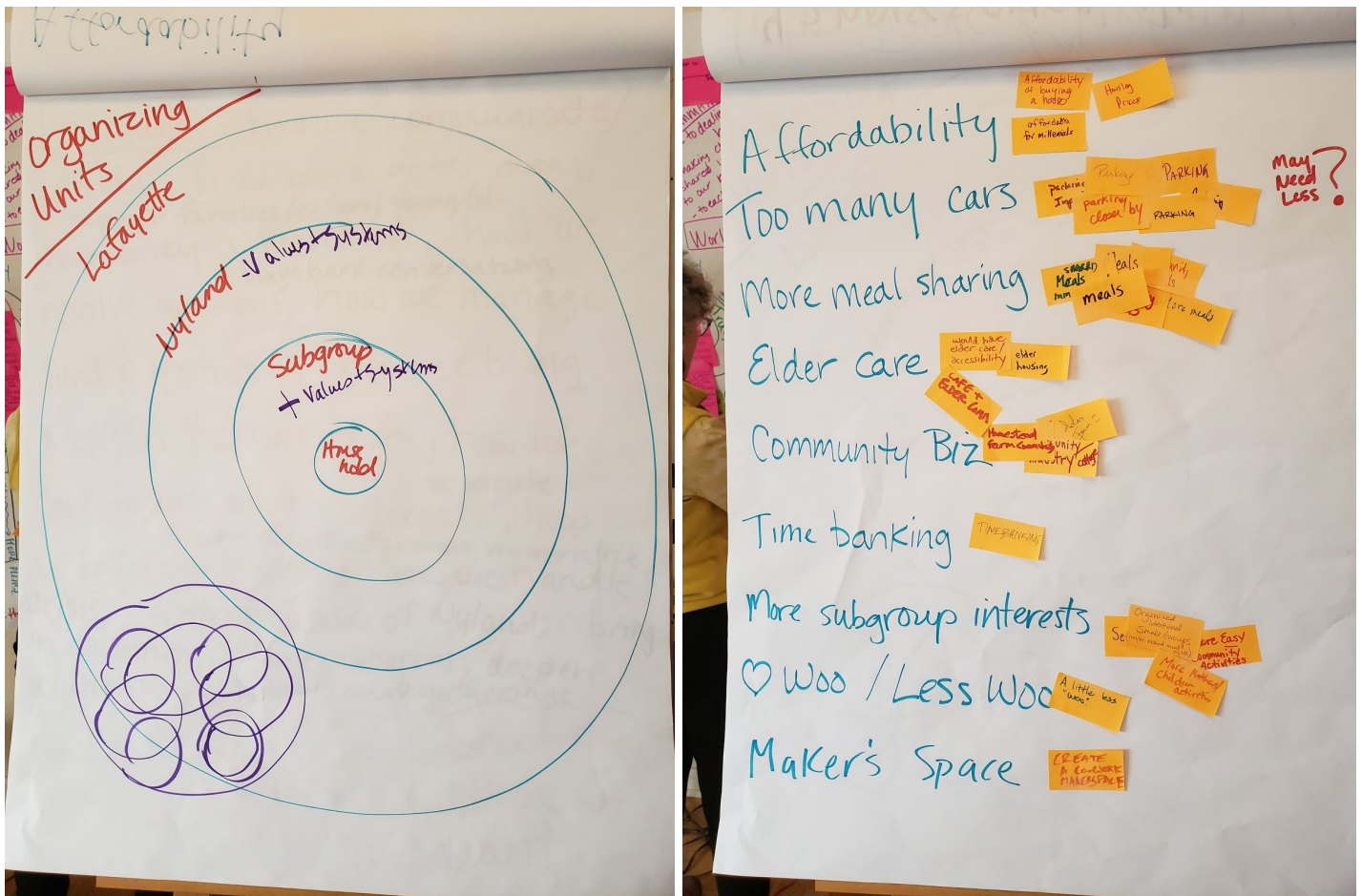


Solve problems whenever you can with the least permanent and least expensive zone. In rough order of the kinds of solutions you might try:

1. Do a worldview/values shift (i.e. changing perception of need, or a re-alignment with values that provides insights into how to solve the problem)
2. Solve it socially (i.e. social agreements, resource sharing, and sometimes time-based agreements for things being rotated or shared in different ways at different times)
3. Solve it economically (i.e. economic incentives or creative resource sharing that brings down the costs)
4. Only then look at physical plane solutions (i.e. the building or moving of physical structures)

Subgroups! Open up the subgroup level of organizing as a way to get people's needs met that the full group does not need to all be bought into. There are many different levels that something can be organized at: Colorado, LaFayette, Nyland, Subsets of Nylanders, Households, Individuals. Subgroups or subsets are generally a neglected level of organizing.

Two relevant pictures: the visual for subgroups, and the list of things I thought could be productively organized via subgroups from your work on things people would like to bring or change about Nyland (see that summary further down).



2. Summary of Work

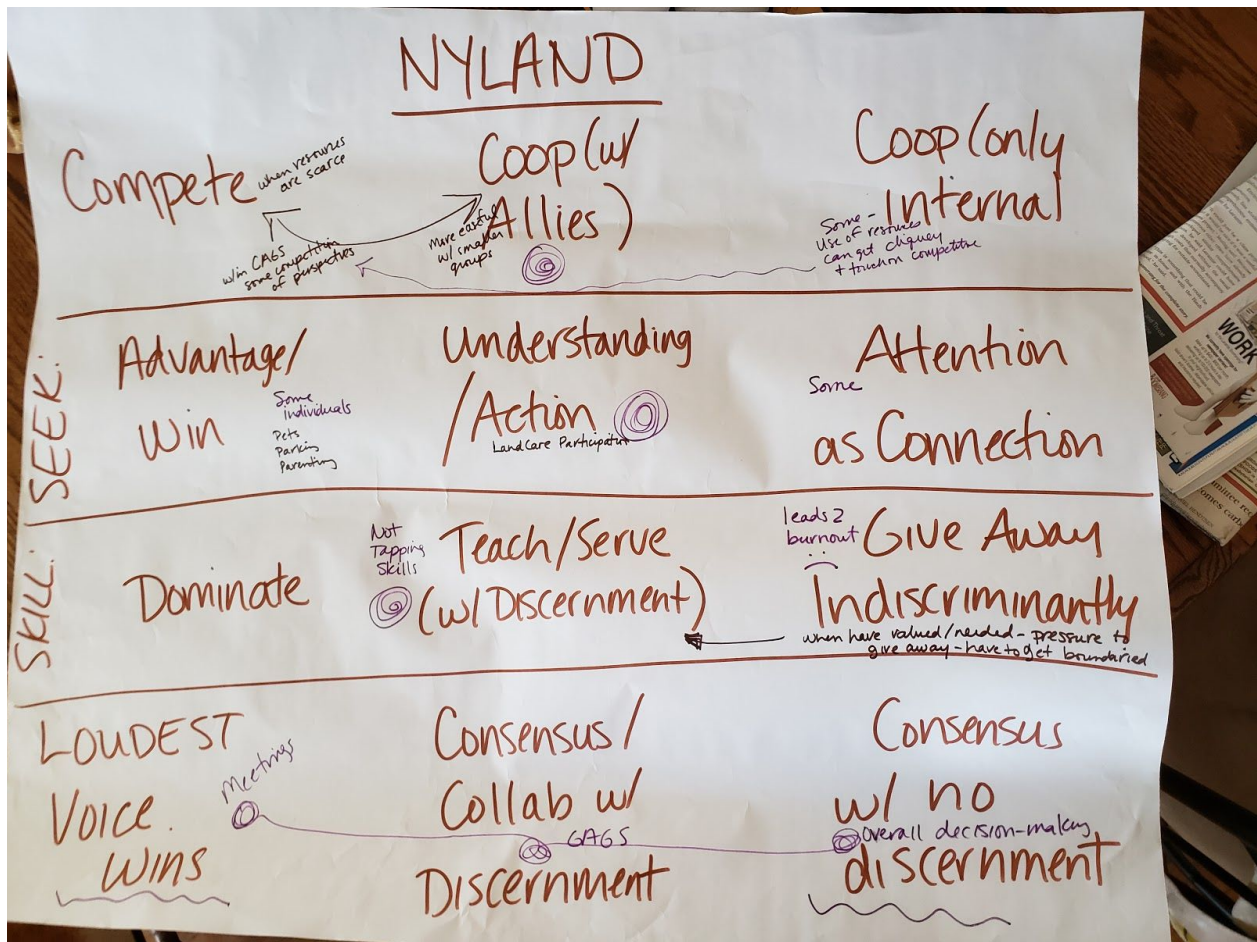
Nyland small groups cultural assessment

I'm including the pictures from the actual sheets here, and the cooperative culture chart.

Comparing Cultural Worldviews and the behaviors that come from them

Extreme Competitive Culture	Sustainable Cooperative Culture	Extreme Cooperative Culture
Compete with others	Cooperate, including collaboration with allies	Cooperate within; collaborate only with others your group fully agrees with
Seek advantage and winning	Seek understanding and effective action	Seek attention as connection
Have skill? Use to dominate	Have skill? Teach with discernment	Have skill? Give away indiscriminately
Loudest voices win	Collaboration/consensus with discernment	Consensus with no discernment
I-oriented (individualistic, focus on self)	We-oriented (communal, focus on self in balance with others)	Us-oriented (hyper-communal, self subsumed to group)
Independence encouraged/celebrated	Interdependence encouraged/celebrated	Codependence encouraged/celebrated
Dis-integrated	Integrated with differences valued	Individual needs/strengths lost
Capitalize on circumstances	Empathize with circumstances	Pity circumstances
Protect (resources and emotions, with no risk)	Share (resources and emotions, with boundaries)	Share (resources and emotions, without boundaries)
Make others responsible	Recognize personal and collective responsibility	Over-own personal responsibility
Differences threaten me	Differences are interesting	Differences threaten the group
Narcissism based on being "the best" and not needing to care	Not narcissistic: self is valued member of valued team	Narcissism based on emotional neediness met by group
Systems serve me	Service to others	Martyrdom

We worked our way through the chart together and then had small groups do their assessment of Nyland's culture. The spirals (see pictures) indicate where the groups doing the assessment thought Nyland mostly was. Since some of the writing is pretty small, there is a transcription of it:



Compete

When resources are scarce
Within CAGs, some competition
Of perspectives

SEEK

Advantage/Win

Some individuals
Pets, Parking & Parenting

SKILL

Dominate

Loudest Voice Wins

Meetings

Cooperate (with Allies)

More easeful with smaller groups

Understanding/Action

Land care participation

Teach/Serve with Discernment

Not tapping skills

**Consensus/Collaboration
w/ discernment**

CAGs

Cooperate (only internal)

Some, use of
resources can
get cliquey &
Touch on competitive

Attention as Connection

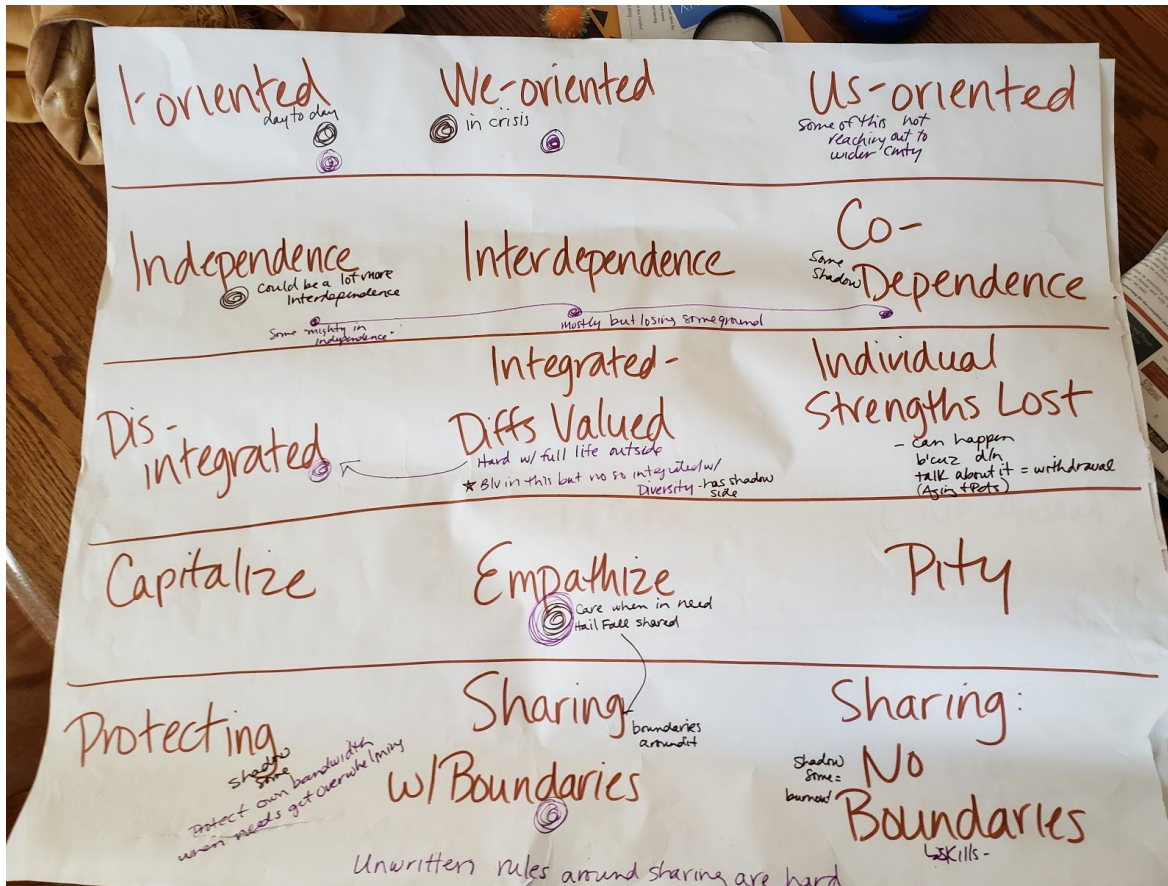
Some

Give Away Indiscriminately

Leads to burnout when we have valued/
needed, pressure to give away, have to
get boundaried

Consensus w/ no discernment

Overall Decision-making



I-oriented
Day-to-day

We-oriented
in crisis

Us-oriented
Some of this- not reaching out to wider community

Independence
Could be a lot more Interdependence; some are "Mighty in independence"

Interdependence
Mostly, but losing some ground

Codependence
Some shadow

Dis-integrated

Integrated- differences
Valued
Hard with full life outside
Believe in this, but not so Integrated with diversity
Has shadow side

Individuals Strengths lost
Can happen bcuz "do not talk about it = withdrawal
Aging and pets

Capitalize

Empathize
Care when in need- Hail Fall shared

Pity

Protecting

Protect own bandwidth
When needs get
Overwhelming
Shadow some

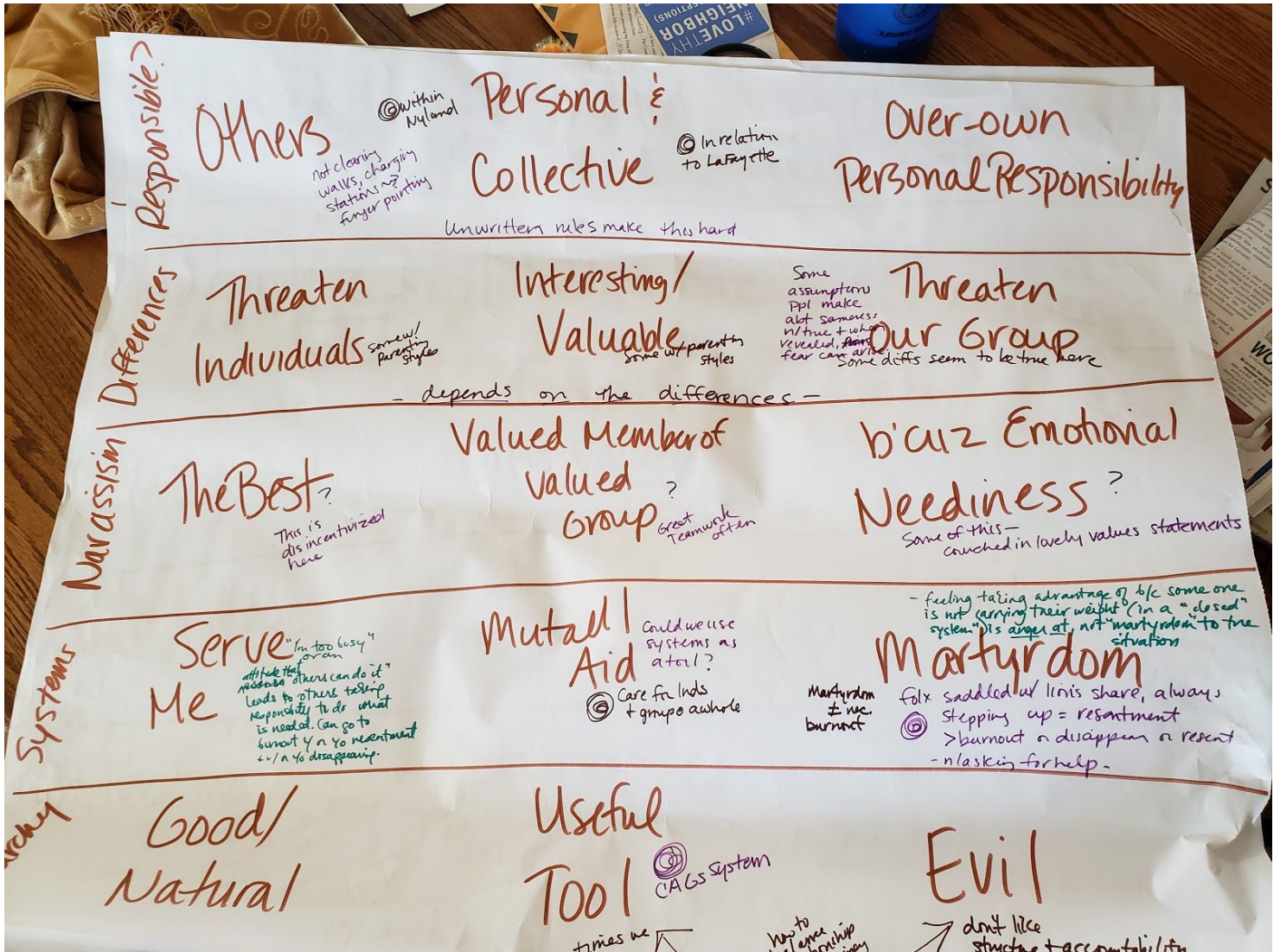
Share with Boundaries

Boundaries around it (Hail Fall)

Share with no boundaries

Shadow some = burnout
Skills

Unwritten rules around sharing are hard



Responsibility?

Make others

Not clearing walks
Clearing stations
Finger-pointing

Personal and Collective

unwritten rules make this hard
within Nyland.....

Over-own Personal

Within Nyland
in relation to Lafayette

Differences?

Threaten Individuals

Some with parenting styles.....Some with parenting styles

Interesting/Valued

Threaten our Group

some assumptions ppl make
About sameness not true;
When revealed, fears can arise
Some differences seem to be true here

Depends on the differences

Narcissism

“The Best”

This is diincentivized here(?)

Valued Member of Valued Group

?great teamwork often

Because Emotional Neediness

?some of this, couched in lovely Value statements

Systems

Sevre me

“I’m too busy” or an attitude
That “others can do that”
Leads to others taking
Responsibility, can go to burnout
Resentment? Disapproval?

Mutual Aid

Could we ise systems as a tool
Care for lands and group as
a whole

Martyrdom

Martyrdom =/= necessarily burnout
feeling taken advantage of bcuz
someone is not carrying their
weight is anger at, not
martyrdom
Folx saddled with lion’s share
Always stepping up =
Resentment
Burnout or disappear or resent
Not asking for help

Hierarchy

Good/Natural

Useful Tool

CAGs system
@ times we embrace
How to balance relationship and efficiency

Evil

done like structure and accountability

Nyland Cultural Assessment, part II: what things are working/not working to support the kind of culture we want at Nyland? I asked each person to do some writing about what they thought was and wasn't working, and then we collected answers in a spiraling round (a round that goes for as long as it needs to, and lets each person give one answer at a time to ensure everyone gets a shot at contributing.)

WORKS

Sense of Cohousing beyond HOA	Celebrations
Farm, bees and Chickens	community -wide decision-making teaching cooperation
Pets agreement	Crisis response
Land work days	CAGs decision-making and communications
Commitment to growth	Natter
Cottage meetings	Collaboration, esp with clarifying
Board functions well	Young men initiation
Board management of \$\$	Communicate easily re: problems
Care and respect in communications	Honoring elders
CommonHouse (and that is it used)	Having community meetings
Baby support	Generally shared understanding of community norms
Childcare for meetings	Deepening relationships in small groups
Connection from doing the work ourselves	Ghost roles
Snow removal	Community spaces for kids
Welcoming newcomers	Budgeting process
Woo	Participation agreement (land proposal)
Guest booking rooms	recycling/compost
Outside events	Small scale buddy system
Conceptual plan for parking repair/upkeep	When we hear from all
On the same page re: values	Strive to be inclusive
Getting the right people	strong/structured boundaries with woodshop
Long term financial mgmt	Care of eco-impact
Humor	Community gardens
Newsletter	Creativity and potential
Term limits for board of directors	EV charger
Sharing resource	New social tech
Resolving small tensions	Connecting new folks to the right person
Welcoming new people	Third-siders
Community training	

Doesn't Work (this list was part of the spiraling go-arounds brainstorm, but then I also gave everyone a chance to mark 5 of these items to indicate that they thought doing them would make the biggest impact on Nyland's culture. The numbers indicate how many dots each item got. In a couple cases I have combined very similar answers and added their dots together.)

- 14- accountability & self-accountability re: agreements
- 12- Farm taken for granted/no future plans
- 10- No time banking
- 9- institution memory not well organized/ accessible (specifically agreements) and holding of history
- 7- violent dogs/aggressive
- 7- support of family with older kids
- 6- lack of CAGs participation
- 5- ice limiting what some folks can do
- 5- lack of shared resources/structures = lack of deepening and strengthening relationships
- 5- rare to hear from all
- 5- more internal hiring (too much volunteer reliance) and doing the work ourselves = exhaustion
- 4- when CAGs struggle, no quick help/feedback loops in place
- 4- follow-through with new practices/systems
- 3- no term limits CAGs
- 3- values/mission statement needs revitalization
- 3- lack of clarity on structure of existing systems
- 3- boundaries/agreements re: community spaces for kids
- 3- EV car share needs revisiting
- 2- unclear understanding of needed work/responsibilities
- 2- no systems for family support/elder, etc
- 2- no way to navigate infrastructure of aging/expanding
- 2- opportunities for visioning for input, esp land
- 2- need more playfulness
- 2- resolving bigger tensions
- 2- overly centralized systems of decision-making
- 2- initiating gatherings
- 2- do not know how to deal with abuse/derailment of community norms
- 2- new ideas land hard on the burned out, and not sure how to get started for others
- 2- need more orientation for new folks (esp CAGs and kitchen) and welcoming new people
- 1- second class citizen dynamics with newbies and renters
- 1- farm private ownership
 - 1- get outside help more
- 1- history telling needed
- 1- meals hard to sustain with dietary variety
- 1- implementation of parking
- 1- folks not using available systems
- 1- succession planning not happening
- 1- meeting absences

1- do not have effective follow-through
1- communications missing some people
1- structure of community meetings (time use)
1- thinking more about young adults, neuro-diverse and disabled folks
1- agreements get stuck and can't unstick
1- innovations getting picked up
Free roaming cats and dogs
Honoring our dead
Contributing outside of nyland
Unsure if people are taking without giving
Woo
Delegation clear
Long term financial management
Need train the trainers (for community training)
Natter
No initiation for young women
Honoring elders would be stronger
Land management \neq thriving habitat
Medical knowledge we have not easily accessible
Not handling physical accessibility well
Re-evaluation of what's needed (regular check ins from CAGs)

Building a shared understanding of what Nyland is and what it wants to be.

Over the course of the weekend, we progressively added more layers to a big map on the wall that was divided into four quadrants:

- worldview/values
- social/community
- economic/work
- ecological / place

We started Friday night with people sharing answers to three questions in pairs in a milling exercise.

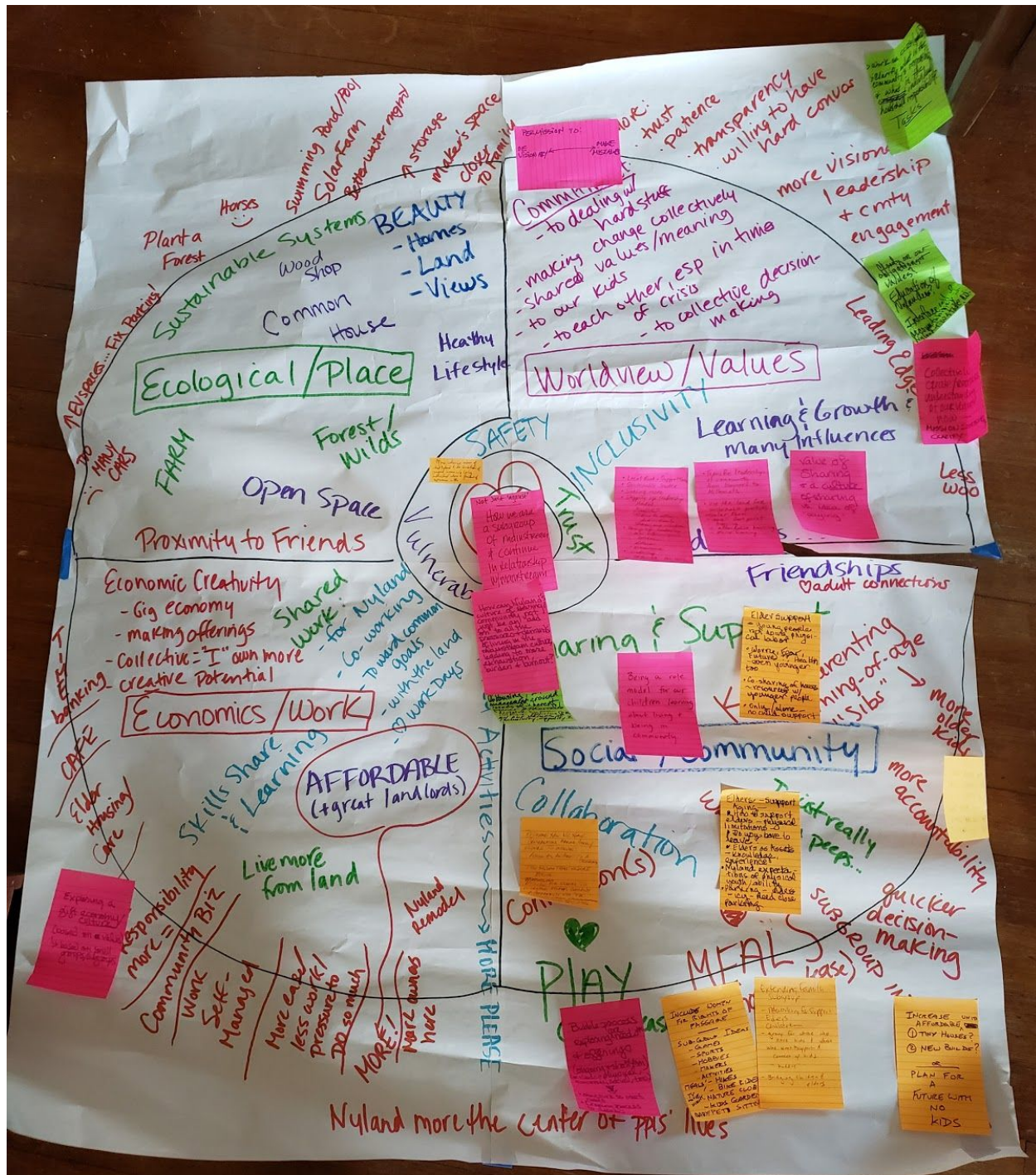
1. What brought you to Nyland originally?
2. What has kept you at Nyland?
3. If you could add or change one thing here, what would it be?

As a bonus because we were also working on listening skills for the weekend, I also had partners reflect answers back to each other. This also happens to help people get more concise about how to say what they need to say, which is a good lead in to the third part of the exercise we did, where people had to fit it in a small space. After the milling rounds, I asked people to write on yellow $\frac{1}{2}$ post its the most important things for them about Nyland, and then on orange post-its their answer to one thing they'd like to add or change.



The final step was having folks map it onto the map. Here's what it looked like at the end of Friday night:

I then took this map and created a summarized version of it and shared that summary on Saturday morning. On Sunday we came back to it and added one final layer: post its where folks would express another round of what they wanted at Nyland, based on small group conversations. Here's what that final map looks like, followed by a transcribed version of what it on it.



Center

More cohesive vision of what Nyland and its direction/purpose means without losing individual colors and flavors of expression.

Love- Safety-Trust-Vulnerability

Big Post Its: Not just “against” how we are a subgroup of mainstream and continue in relationship with mainstream

How can Nylands culture of sharing/community not just be an “add on” to all the pressure and demands of living in the mainstream culture, leading to more exhaustion, burden and burnout.

Worldview/Values

Things that brought us and keep us here:

Commitment to

- Dealing with hard stuff

- Making change collectively

- Shared values/meaning

- Kids

- Each other, esp in times of crisis

- Collective decision-making

Inclusivity

Learning and Growth and many influences

Friendliness

Leading edge

Things to add/change:

More:

- trust

- Patience

- Transparency'

- willing to have hard conversations

- Visionary leadership and community engagement

Less woo

Big post its:

Permission to be visionary and make mistakes both

Work on CCRs (updated)

Clarify what is the community responsibility and households responsibilities (tasks)

Clarity on our obligations and values?

Education of Nylanders

Interface with/of accountability with Nyland and with state of CO

Collectively create and reassess understanding of our values now- mission statement clarity

Value of sharing/culture of sharing, rather than idea of “paying”

Transfer of leadership of community from boomers to millenials

Use the land for sustainable practice

- Solar farm

Small footprint housing
Affordable housing
Senior housing
Local food/support farm
Sustainable leader
Sharing more
Stepping up leadership
model/mentor elders to other individuals sharing our wisdom
Bump up leadership
Take off economic burdens

Social/Community

Things that brought us and keep us here:

Sharing and support
Friendships
Love adult connections
Kids
Co-parenting
Coming of Age
Sibs
Collaboration
Connections
I just really love you peeps
Meals
Play

Things to add/change:

More older kids
More accountability
Quicker decision-making
Want more subgroups interests met
More Meals
More Play
Nyland more the center of people's lives

Big post its:

If we are a self-managed community, how do we make it happen
How do we bridge HOA and cohousing, self-management around issues of power differentials, dictated by our CCRs and policies with our values of inclusivity and equality
Being a role model for our children and learning about living and being in community
Elder support
Young people not doing physical labor
worry/fear re: future, health? (Even younger people, too)

Co-sharing of housing/resources with younger people
only/alone- no child support

Elder support/aging

Hold to support elders

Physical limitations-

do you have to leave?

Elders as assets... knowledge and experience

Nyland expectations of physical youth/ability

Parking elders-- need close because of ice

Elders

Reframe how we have conversations about elders to include

Aging as an asset to community

The wisdom elders bring

Utilize our elders to increase Nylands capacity and capability, esp for activities, tasks, responsibilities that our older folks have been doing for years

Eldership is focused on generativity- engaging thinking in a way that is about future generations

"If the children are not in youth into the tribe, they will burn down the village just to feel its warmth"

Bubble process exploring core needs* and offerings (ongoing and short term)

Needs are physical, economic, social, time ---> structure to meet needs and ongoing process for success

Include women for rites of passage

Subgroup ideas

Games

Sports

Hobbies

Makers

Activities

Meals

hikes

TV

Bike rides

Movie night

Nature club

Kids garden

Baby and pet sitting

Extend family subgroup

Networking for support

Elders

Children

Group for those who have kids and those who want top support/comment with kids-- buddies

Bridging of children and elders

Increase affordable units via tiny houses and new builds? Or plan for a future with no kids

Economic/Work

Things that brought us and keep us here:

Economic creativity

Gig economy

Making offerings

Collective = "I" own more

Creative potential

Shared work

For nyland

Co-working

Toward our common goals

With the land

Love work days

Skills sharing learning

Live more from the land

Nyland remodel

Affordable/great landlords

Shared activities

Activities

Things to add/change:

Time banking

Cafe

Elder housing/care

Share responsibility more =

Community business

Work self-managed

More ease/less work and pressure to do so much

More affordable

More owners here

Big Post its

Exploring a gift economy/culture based on values and small groups and subgroups

Ecological/Place

Things that brought us and keep us here:

Sustainable systems

Beauty-- homes, land , views

Wood shop

Common house

Healthy lifestyle

forest/wilds

Farm

Open space

Proximity to friends

Things to change/add:

Too many cars

Need more EV spaces

Fix the parking

Plant a forest

Horses

Swimming pond/pool

Solar farm

Better water management

More storage

Makers space

Closer to family

WORK ON PARKING

Parking: Using the new “Bubbles and Boxes” method I introduced, we did a first round of “bubble gathering”, asking the question, “What factors do we need to take into account for a good solution around parking?”

The group then sorted the answers into categories that made sense to them.

Nyland Way

Ideal = no cars on Nyland Way

Addressing poor flow

Safe car traffic

Street parking is accident risk

Parking on NW = slower traffic = safer

City regs and how much willing/Able to push back

Types of Parking

Addressing oversized vehicles

Parking near homes

Need vehicle storage

Solve for overflow/event parking needs

Desire for more car ports

visitor/workshop/work related parking

Enough space fo regular cars

Need adequate parking for everyone who lives here

EV

Incentivize expanding car sharing (for sharing values)

Ability to expand EV ownership

Adequate EV plug-in spaces available

Economics

Value of equity between households

Adequate funds to pay for it

Affordability

Trash-related

Repair costs-recurring expenses

Need access to trash and recycling for big trucks

Nice to have more separation between trash zone and parking

Aesthetics

sustainability

Think through implications of shrinking size of car pool in the future

Discourage unnecessary vehicles on property
Sustainability
space/plan for snow piling

Relation to land

Relation to land
Balancing different land use needs
Regs around surfaces that are allowed (re: eco-impact)

Process

Clarity on who should decide what on this topic (1/42nd formula doesn't intersect well with this)
Solutions that lower competitive dynamics for spaces
Heal old emotionally hard feelings

Recommendations for Next Steps

Share info from the retreat with the full group. This report should go to everyone, and if you are feeling ambitious, it might be good to offer an optional review and catch up session some evening with food and invite people who weren't there. This can help bring folks along in terms of alignment and being able to move forward more coherently.

Moving Parking forward. Do a second round of "Bubbles" on parking. We didn't actually let it run it's full course the first time because we were running out of time, so I'd suggest returning to the full group brainstorming format, even just for another 15 minutes. Then pick a different way to gather input-- over email, with a clipboard in the common house, it doesn't really matter. Just a way of engaging that doesn't require the same level of "think on your feet and speak in a big group" that full group brainstorming requires.

After that, you will want to compile the full list of gathered input, share it to the full group and ask folks "Is there anything missing?" and give people at least a few days for late-breaking input. Then I think it would be best to send it to a subgroup to try to problem solve. Whoever that group is, please consider my model of starting with the least expensive and permanent ways of solving the problem and trying to think through those possibilities before jumping right to "build more parking".

After that, it should be a fairly standard approval process.

What's not working? Looking at the not working list, the top four things you identified as leverage points for making the biggest difference were these:

- 14- accountability & self-accountability re: agreements
- 12- Farm taken for granted/no future plans
- 10- No time banking
- 9- institution memory not well organized/ accessible (specifically agreements) and holding of history

My general suggestion is to have an initial session for each of these to clarify what was meant for each of them. What does "accountability" mean, for instance? What are time banking systems? What exactly isn't working about how you do record-keeping and hold your history? Things sometimes get messy sometimes when you don't take a little time at the beginning to simply clarify what you are talking about and why.

Once you are clear what the problem in each case is, start the B&B process with bubbles.

Note: any of these could be good material for the facilitation training, having my student facilitators do that clarification and first bubble gathering steps.

Vision and Mission clarification. It seems like it is probably time for some new work on your vision and mission. Getting clear what your explicit shared values are in the **here and now** could be great. I would key that work off of the big mapping we did for what kind of a community you want to be, what's missing for people, etc. Someone could take the summary in this report and do some further refinement on it, and bring it as a starting place for that conversation.

Prep for the facilitation training weekend, March 20-22. You have the opportunity in a couple weeks to have 2-4 hours of outside facilitation support. (To be clear, the facilitation on that weekend will be done by student facilitators with me as back-up. I will help them plan and then be available to step in if something goes awry, but I won;t actually be facilitating.) We will want to have a call with someone(s) from Nyland about a week ahead of time to get the background the students will need... that's coming right up!