Learning Community of Practice

Citizen Assemblies

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Agenda

- Introductions
- Key considerations from our experts
- Discussion and sharing:
  - What do you want to learn more about?
  - What lessons have you learned recently?
  - What challenges are you facing?

Introductions

- **Jennifer Miller** — staff lead for the Community Advisory Assembly, City of New Westminster
- **Marina Bryan** — Communications & Engagement Specialist, Urban Systems Ltd.
- **Emina Dervisevic** — Manager, Community Engagement, Vancouver Coastal Health

What's a citizens' assembly?

- Broadly representative group of residents / community members
- Brought together to discuss and develop recommendations on an issue of public concern / pressing issue
- Usually convened by a level of government
- Structured process where members are provided with information and then supported to deliberate and reach consensus
- "An antidote to polarization and a bridge over widening social divides" (DemocracyNext)

Where / how is this model being used?

- Assemblies are happening all over the world!
  - Local, provincial/regional, national levels
- Climate assemblies in the Amazon, several European cities, including a three-year assembly in Copenhagen
- Deschutes County Civic Assembly on Youth Homelessness (Oregon)
- National assemblies:
  - on housing in Australia
  - on combatting disinformation in Germany (with corresponding broad online component)
  - on assisted dying in France

Overview of 23 recent assemblies

(from Democracy R&D Conference in Sept. 2024)

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Current examples in BC and Yukon

- Victoria-Saanich Citizens' Assembly on amalgamation
  - Underway now! 48 residents; recommendations expected mid-2025
- Burnaby Community Assembly on Official Community Plan
  - 40 residents; presented their recommendations to Council in July 2024
- Gibsons Residents Assembly on Official Community Plan
  - 25 residents; report delivered to Council in June 2024
- Yukon Citizens' Assembly on electoral reform (Provincial example)
  - 36 citizens; delivered report to Legislative Assembly in Oct 2024

Resources

- DemocracyNext: https://www.demnext.org/

- SFU Centre for Dialogue resources on climate assemblies: https://www.sfu.ca/dialogue/what-we-do/knowledge-practice/icen/citizens-assemblies-on-climate.html

- City of New West Assembly Terms of Reference: https://www.newwestcity.ca/database/files/library/Assembly_TOR.pdf