

## **What is your theory of change?**

To avoid that kind of frustration,  
for community members feeling  
they're the beneficiaries,  
the passive beneficiaries of an organisation's  
community engagement efforts,  
the only way is for the two sides  
to get together and reflect on their experience  
and develop that capacity  
for open and honest reflection.  
So that they can move beyond those roles  
where one is the giver and one is on the receiving end,  
and look at how they can develop a mutual partnership.

The first question and the most important one  
is what theory of change do I have?

Let me give you an example of that.

There's one I've used many times:

a Chinese woman, who stood in a museum in London  
and said to the museum staff there,

"What is it that you want to do to me?

What needs improving?"

She was asking them, "What's your theory  
of change in terms of me and my life?"

We have to ask ourselves,

"Do we hold ourselves in a position  
so that we feel that we have something that we can improve?"

We can give that person

to improve their life or their existence.

Isn't it better that we look at

how we can work together collaboratively

and recognise the knowledge exchange between the two sides?

This woman was heading a seniors organisation here in London.

She had 40 years' experience

and she's standing there, saying,

"I'm very uncomfortable here.

Why am I in the position where I'm feeling you're telling me

there's something I need to improve?

I thought I was here as your partner?"

This is the difference.

That is absolutely the difference.

That's the difference.

It's absolutely critical that we think of the kind of language

that we describe this work to ourselves because it has an impact.

The kind of language we use has an impact

on the way we think about what we're doing

and people are not fooled.

People will feel the difference

and will feel the frustration when explain things to them

in a way that puts them in a very passive role

as the beneficiaries of our actions.