

Transcript for Network Building for Social Change Network Basics Webinar on April 28, 2016

Network Building for Social Change, Network Basics **Introduction by Avery Cleary**

Slide 1 — Network Building for Social Change, Network Basics (title slide)
This is the first of a three part webinar series with June Holley.

Slide 2 — The co-sponsors for this webinar are the Children & Nature Network, Back to Nature Network, and the Children in Nature Collaborative

We won't be able to answer your questions in live time – you can post your questions in the chat. We will answer as many questions as we can after this webinar through June. And some of these questions will be answered in subsequent webinars.

Slide 3 —

The degree to which a movement will actually reshape society often hinges on the real time practices of that movement—the way the people in that movement individually and collectively embody the core values and new culture at the heart of the movement.

— Movement Strategy Center

Slide 4 — We envision a future where all children experience a meaningful daily connection to nature.

Slide 5 — We believe a network approach — a new way of working together — will accelerate a change in our society and culture, bringing nature back into our everyday lives as individuals, families, and communities.

Creating the change we want to see, where all children are meaningfully connected each day to nature – is a slow and energy-intensive process. We hope that today's session will allow you to develop daily habits that will help create strong trust-based relationships in the long term.

Slide 6 —

Our work is grounded in a diversity of voices – Jane Wei-Skillern and June Holley are two of those voices helping us to accelerate the network leadership within the children and nature movement. Last fall, Jane covered four very compelling principles of collaboration success, listed below, in two introductory webinars:

- Trust not control
- Humility not brand
- Node not hub
- Mission not organization

There are some resources at the end of this webinar with links to the introductory webinars with Jane Wei-Skillern and June Holley in the fall of this past year.

Slide 7 —

What we need most is self-replicating cultural change. That happens when individuals, families or small groups of people take the kinds of actions so enticing that other people want to replicate them.

— Richard Louv

We invite you now to join us in learning from June Holley the actual steps you can take to develop and re-create your networks. June will provide us with practical tools that will help us to form purpose, trust, and mutual support with living connections around us —the people and natural world where we all want to see positive change.

Welcome, June!

A Network Approach to Social Change Presentation by June Holley

Slide 8 — What I will be doing is sharing practical tips and tools on how to create a highly effective and intentional change network to do the work that you want to do. You've all been sent a copy of the [Network Leadership Toolkit](#). There's also a link to the Toolkit in the chat box if you want to scroll back to it. The Toolkit has 31 pages filled with activities that you can take away and start implementing tomorrow. All of these activities can help you build an effective network.

What I would really love is if you would go away from this webinar inspired to try out at least one of these activities in your community — and more if possible. We're all about trying to get the "rubber to hit the road" today and making you feel that you can start creating a healthy effective network.

Slide 9 — What I am going to ask you today is to pretend that you are putting on a pair of glasses that will allow you to see all the networks around you. We are surrounded by networks. Nature is all about networks. The more we can see these networks, the more we can improve networks and make them more effective. That opens all kinds of possibilities for new kinds of action. Basically, we have the potential to change the way we live and work in this world to the extent that we can begin to see and build these effective networks.

Slide 10 — In nature, everything is connected and works together. The more we see this and bring that into our own lives, the more likely we are able to achieve what we want to achieve.

Slide 11 — When we think about connecting children with nature, it's not going to take just a few acts. We all need to start interacting like nature. We're going to need to start collaborating as diverse peers in a web of support. Now that's a lot packed into that little phrase "collaborating as diverse peers in a web of support". We're going to break this down before we get into the concrete stuff.

Slide 12 — First of all, we want to move to being more peer-like. We are used to working certain ways with managers and bosses in our organizations, but what the research is showing is that when we begin moving to networks, we need to interact as peers. It is that peer-ness that helps people feel that "Oh, I can initiate! I can come up with new ideas!" It really unleashes creativity

in people. We can be valued as highly as anyone else. That's part of the transformation from hierarchy to peers.

Slide 13 — Most of us don't realize how much we hang around with people just like ourselves. The problem with that is that it feels very comfortable, but we tend to get into ruts in our thinking. What we are trying to do in networks is to move to appreciation of difference. The more we can reach to those with different perspectives, different backgrounds, the more we are provoked to see new ways of looking at the problems and issues that we are trying to deal with. It is kind of scary because sometimes we think about difference as leading to conflict, but that is part of being in networks. We have to learn to have a little bit of conflict that breaks up our old assumptions, our old ways of thinking and helps us think in new fresh ways.

Slide 14 — We also want to move from control to a web of support. A lot of us are used to "OK, here's the plan, and if it's going to be right, I have to do it (this way) because that's the (only) way I know it will be right. Let's let go of that, and move into this idea that our role is about creating this web of support. If we want to support overcoming the problems and issues that we are engaged in, we need many, many more people doing creative collaborative action to be able to make a difference.

Slide 15 — The more we understand this intentional network approach, the more we enable these shifts to occur.

Slide 16 — Just to refresh (the context) here, the organizational approach is not bad. It has served us well for hundreds of years and it is really useful for simple problems like building a car or providing services. But when we start to think about dealing with complex problems like those related to the children and nature movement (you could unpack that), it's a very complex set of issues and barriers involved there. A network approach is super effective in those kinds of situations, because leaders encourage others to initiate and act. You get lots of innovation and experimentation and learning. People work on what they care about — and they have more energy. They don't need to spend all their time getting agreement because everybody doesn't have to agree to move forward. They just have to communicate what they are learning and share that with others.

Slide 17 — Let's step back a minute, and look at some definitions. When I'm using the term network, we're talking about sets of relationships and the patterns they create. If you look over on the left you can see a network diagram. Every little circle there is a person. Every line means that person knows or has worked with another person. All of those lines create a pattern.

Sometimes you just have a hub and spoke pattern and everything has to go through one person. Those tend not to be so good for communication, because the people on the spokes are not communicating with each other. But in this one (diagram) you can see a whole core of people who are starting to interact and communicate and work together. The quality of this network is higher when you want to collaborate and innovate.

Slide 18 — There are lots of different kinds of networks and some on the left (see diagram) are trying to work on fairly simple things such as a membership organization that provides a variety of services to its members. Those tend to be more centralized. What we are going to be dealing with today are the networks on the right hand side (of the graphic) that are more decentralized.

These are the intentional networks and what the Children & Nature Network really is – a network of networks.

Slide 19 — In particular, we are going to focus today on an intentional social network and how to build it. What an intentional social network means is that people have decided, often very informally, that they want to focus on some particular area such as children and nature. They want to help build a network that's going to be very effective working on that issue. An effective network has these three characteristics:

- Decentralized Core to Expand Leadership & Diversity
- Overlapping Clusters of Action
- Strong Periphery for New Ideas & Expansion

Later, when you want to map your network, you will want it to look something like this (see graphic) — with a decentralized core — that means no one organization is dominant. Some nodes (individuals or organizations) have more connections than others, but no one organization is dominant. Effective networks also have the tendency to continually expand. This network (see graphic) is actually a little small in the core — most networks need a core with a couple of hundred, or maybe more people, who know each other or know of each other. As you keep growing the core, it will bring in more leadership, more energy, and more diversity if you do it intentionally.

How do you get more leadership? You help people say, “Here’s something that I want to do!” One group may want to take a playground and make it more nature-like, whereas another group in the community may be looking at the green spaces in the community and be saying “How can we be making them more kid-friendly?” And maybe there is one overlapping person involved in both of those. When these people are thinking about the green spaces project, they can say, “We need some kids to tell us (their thoughts) about a green space park.” The overlap can bring all kinds of synergies to what you are doing.

You need a strong periphery and that’s the green nodes (in graphic) around the outside that only maybe one or two people have a connection to. They bring in new ideas and resources – maybe they are people in other communities that you can learn from. There are also the people that you eventually want to bring into your core – that’s your pathway for expansion. You need to think explicitly about your periphery and be constantly reaching out to new people.

Slide 20 — Questions

What questions do you have about a network approach? What kinds of networks are you a part of? What would you like to learn about networks?

We’re not going to be able to take direct responses, but in the chat, I’d love for you to try answering some of these questions. It will help us both in developing the next session and in helping us find some ways to keep communicating between sessions.

Slide 21 — Now we are ready for the essential elements – there are four elements that you need to develop for an effective intentional social change network.

Slide 22 — These are the four here (see graphic). We are going to spend a little time on each one and then we are going to talk about how you can help each one of these develop.

The first is convening with intention (see graphic). Then we want to create and expand quality connections. And we want to help people initiate and act with others. We also want to support the network, so all of this can happen.

Slide 23 — First, you need to have an intentional network. This doesn't mean you have to all agree exactly on a purpose by spending days and months getting a vision statement that everyone agrees on every word. It means that you each share what your vision and purpose is and you look for those overlaps.

For example, Casey (see graphic) was interested in helping children realize how important it is to treasure nature. And then there is Alex who is so interested in children and nature (because of obesity rate in children) and getting children more involved in activities in nature to help kids be healthier. The two of them have an overlap and they can find a way of working together on developing green spaces that are kid friendly. If they are all seen as caring deeply about something, then they have different perspectives with enough places that overlap to act together — and that's what is really important.

Slide 24 — The second element is “Creating and Expanding Quality Connections”. This is often where people start. Section 4 of the Toolkit is full of ways that you can help people do informal maps of their networks to begin to see what the networks look like. Then you may see that there are some people missing and reach out to them. How can we connect people that are interested in the same kind of thing? How can we bring people from the periphery in? There's a whole set of activities in Section 1, Section 2 and Section 4 in the Toolkit that will help you create those connections among people.

Every gathering or every interaction that you have can be an opportunity not only to make connections with other people, but also to deepen them. Some recent research came out, showing that if people share about themselves, it helps build trust and understanding that helps people know how to work together. Trust is based on really knowing the other person.

Slide 25 — Networks need to help people organize many actions. Try to get people to work from their passion, what they really care about — rather than doing something because someone told them (what to do). And you want people to experiment — not just experiment, but communicate about those experiments with each other and reflect deeply. How much time do we take to actually figure out, “What was it about what we did, that worked — that we want to do again? What was a little messed up that we want to make sure we want to avoid? Spending time on reflection to gain insights is important to making our next step better.

The last piece is that we often are trying to bang our head against concrete walls to get things to change. What the network way (of working) is to look for the openings, look for the opportunities where maybe some people on your city council have changed or there's another change or shift that opens up some new kinds of opportunities for action. What you are going to do is more likely to succeed — and it's important to have successes.

Slide 26 — We call this self-organizing: what everyone in the network can do to initiate some action to make a difference, and work with others to do something. That is the most important aspect of this whole network — getting lots of people to self-organize, to act, to feel they can

act with others. That's most likely to bring transformation — when that happens, is communicated and reflected on.

Slide 27 — The last element in Section 6 of the Toolkit (that has some activities for this) is supporting the network. As I mentioned before, communication is huge — people should not have bottlenecks, not have to go through someone else to find what someone is doing.

People can communicate peer to peer throughout the network — where they can help each other to develop network values. We'll talk a little more about the things we talked about in the beginning of this webinar. Openness and peer-ness are really important — it's really hard for us to be aware enough to change. The network needs to make sure there is opportunity for collective sense making, that deep reflection that I talked about before.

Slide 28 — In the toolkit there's an example of what I call a communication ecosystem. The reason why there is so much possibility now that wasn't there fifty years ago, is because of the web — all the web-based platforms and tools that we can use to interact.

This chart (see graphic) says, "Ok, you need to think about how you are going to share and discuss things, capture new ideas — and how you are going to build relationships, how you are going to work together — and how you are going to track network development. All these have a component that is web-based — that's a whole topic for another session, but very exciting. There are things like this video conferencing that I have been using in all of my projects. With some platforms, people can interact and go into breakout rooms and have discussions. These platforms allow people, hundreds of thousands of miles apart to collaborate in new ways.

Slide 29 — Take a minute in the chat to respond to these questions:
Which of the elements — connecting, collaborating, convening or supporting — is strongest in your network? What is most challenging? What do you want to learn most about?

Slide 30 — Now we will talk about leadership roles and functions.

Slide 31 — I love this quote from my good friend Deborah Meehan at the Leadership Learning Community: You can find can find the Leadership & Networks booklet [here](#). This is a free booklet on network leadership.

"Learning to lead with a network mindset is not as simple as acquiring a new skill. Often our deeply held ideas about leadership collide with new ways of leading that are more distributed, relational, and interdependent.

Those who lead with a network mindset practice openness and transparency, let go of controlling outcomes, and believe in the leadership potential of everyone."

— From Networks & Leadership, Deborah Meehan

Slide 32 — You can see network leadership, or what we call network weavers, are different because their number one purpose is to help others become leaders and to take initiative and act. They also try to encourage everyone to be responsible for creating that healthy intentional social network.

There are four functions. Now it's important to realize that you need to fill all of these — but no one person needs to do all of these, or be good at all of these. You need to know which ones you are good at and let others know that. And you need to know which ones you want to learn more about. You need to make sure that your network has all four of these functions.

There's a great activity in section 2 of the Toolkit that you can do — it's a little checklist that takes five minutes for people to do and there's a matrix to help you see which of these four functions lots of people are already doing in your network — and which ones your network needs to do some training on or help more people learn the skills needed for that. Actually it is usually number four (supporting function) that we don't have enough of. We really need more of all of these.

Slide 33 — As we are going through this next session, just be thinking, “Which of these network functions do you fill? What would you like to learn more about?”

Slide 34 Let's first talk about network facilitating. We want lots of people to be filling all these roles — none of them can be just one person — no one person is doing everything.

We have to start convening people and bringing people together — not necessarily always in big groups, but just like this (reference to photo) — in small groups for people to get to know each other, know their interests, know what the shared interests are, what's their purpose, what moves them and drives them. What resources do they know about? Who else do they know? Those are the kinds of conversations, besides content, that need to happen in meetings.

Slide 35 — There's a nice little exercise in section 3 in the Toolkit about determining purpose and structure to get you started on that. And that's important to convening people. What is it that you care about? What do you want this network to be about?

Slide 36 — There's so much intelligence in our network already — right now — that hasn't been made into collective intelligence. For collective intelligence, it requires discussion, people thinking about hard things, and capturing some of what they are learning.

Slide 37 — The other thing network facilitators do is notice what's emerging — let's work where the opportunities are, not where the concrete walls are. We can crack things open like this little piece of grass coming through the asphalt (reference to photo).

Slide 38 — One of the major activities that a connector (a person doing network connecting) does is closing triangles. You talk to somebody. There's a volunteer interested in youth leadership and they are passionate — they want to do more about it. And then you think, “Oh, I know this person in a foundation that is really interested in some grassroots activity around this”. These two people don't know each other. You bring them together for a conversation, have coffee, and keep asking questions so they begin to get to know each other, and share their interests. All of a sudden, what starts coming up is, “Oh, here's a new pilot project that we could do for and with youth — let's think of some young people to bring into our project.” This closing triangles is the beginning of that collaborative action. You bring people together — you try to think about who might have the right chemistry, who has an overlapping interest, and get them to start talking to each other.

Slide 39 — And you want to have lots of generative conversations – no more of everyone sitting around a table at meetings. You need to break up meetings — have two people (I call them twosies) or three people talking, getting to know each other, finding out what each other is interested in, and helping each other do some deeper thinking.

Slide 40 — Another thing a network connector does is help people map and understand their networks. In section 4 of the Toolkit we have several activities that you can do with post-it notes or chart paper to help people begin to draw their networks and start thinking, “Oh, this person is not connected to that person — and that (connection) could create some really interesting energy”. There’s a whole set of things you can do to help people start putting on those glasses that we talked about earlier to help them see the networks around them and take responsibility for making them better and connected.

Slide 41 — Network connecting is also all about reaching out to get more diverse leadership — whether it is people of color, people with less resources, young people, people in rural communities, people who have often been left out — bringing them in and helping build their leadership.

Slide 42 — Now, how does that happen? Lots of times it happens by giving someone a bit of responsibility and then being there with them — coaching, mentoring, listening, asking questions, connecting them to others who can help them build their skills. New leaders often don’t think of themselves as leaders — and don’t always have much confidence. An essential investment is to take the time to support this new emerging leadership in your network.

Slide 43 — I love this – catalyzing, coordinating and celebrating collaboration. You need to know how to cluster people and bring together people together with some overlapping interest. You can do this a lot of different ways. In the Toolkit Section 5, there are different ways you can do this in your meetings, using post-it notes. You can use Google forms — you can ask, “Which of these 3 things are you interested in working on with others in the next six months?” Then you can actually make maps (with each of these three things) and begin to bring those people together and have them start thinking about what they may want to start doing together.

Slide 44 — And now, there’s the important thing that we always forget. We always want to go for the big act because we know that big acts often have big impact. But we forget about the small acts — that's where people build relationships, where they learn about each other, and where they build skills that they need. Just a small act, whether it is setting up a create-with-nature zone on a city street, or two people calling up another community to find out what they do to create more nature based parks. Start with small acts and support new people to take leadership in those small acts.

Slide 45 — Just because an action is small, doesn’t mean it isn’t important or an important step on the path to transformation. We need to celebrate and make sure people have a chance to take time to celebrate and notice that they did something successful. Even celebrating failure is important and you can make it be fun – especially when they (children) are little.

Slide 46 — It is really essential in working on the communication ecosystem to support the network. You need to get people in your network to try out technology. I’m an old “gray hair”,

yet I spend a lot of time keeping up with new technology because I know it is going to make a huge difference in what my networks can do.

Use [Google Drive](#) – again, you need some people in your network who are tech stewards who help or mentor others about how you use Google drive, [Google Hangouts](#), and [AnyMeeting](#). My new favorite is [Zoom](#) that is easy to get on and use. Using these new kinds of communication platforms is really important.

Slide 47 — Lots of projects that we are talking about — these collaborative projects — are small and just need small bits of money — you don't necessarily need to write big grants for all the types of things. You may want to teach people how to use crowd funding — places like [Kickstarter](#) and [Indiegogo](#) where they can raise two thousand dollars or five thousand dollars to get a project going really quickly. Exploring these kinds of funding are really a win-win for your network.

Slide 48 — This is really critical for you to start thinking about. Now you have the toolkit. How can you set up some sort of learning group or community of practice to go over some of these things and try them out and meet weekly or monthly. Go through and make sure you understand a certain activity and then you all commit, "I'm going to try this out in the next week or month" The group goes off and whatever work they are doing, they try out that activity. The group comes back and talks about it. There's also a chance to do what I call a "peer assist". Someone brings a challenge, and everybody helps that person figure out (what to do). "Oh, the meeting went really badly, help me think about what I can do differently next time".

Getting into the network mindset takes time. If everyone helps each other find a way to meet, and helps each other to make that shift — then you will have a lot more success. You can't just have a one-time training like this and think it is going to be OK. You have to find the way to continue this learning, even if it is just one more other person that you meet with to keep learning and practicing.

Slide 49 — One of my new favorite little projects I am working on is what I call a "network fitbit". If you don't know what a [fitbit](#) is, it's a tracking device that you wear that helps you walk 10,000 steps a day and tracks your blood pressure and things like that. We need that to help us track our shift to a network behavior.

There's a Facebook Network Weaving Group that you are all invited to join. If you enter "network weaving" into Facebook — you will find a [link](#) to a network behavior dashboard that we created as a Google Doc. You can make a copy of this and do it at your meetings. You can actually help people. For example, the question "Am I open to new ideas?" Check range 1-5.

I did this for one group and look at this (see graphic) for number eleven — "it is easy for me to let go of control". This network obviously had a little trouble letting go of control. The group saw this — 85 people sitting in a room together — they took this survey and instantly, people saw the graphical representation of everyone's responses that were completely anonymous, up on the screen. People could go through and see where it is that they are having issues and where they were really strong. This group was able then to talk about how they could let go of control. In the graphic, you could see four people who rated themselves as a five (able to let go). These four people could talk to the group about how it was easy for them to let go of control — some

of the ways they used. This kind of tracking helps you get a constant read on your shifting into a more network way of working. This is really great fun and we're hoping to do a lot more work on this in the next year.

Slide 50 — In the chat which of these network functions have you tried? Which do you find most challenging? Which do you want to learn more about or try out? Please do try putting questions in the chat and we will try and address those.

Your First Steps – Final Slides with Maria Legault

Slide 51 — Your First Steps

As we emerge together into this world of new possibilities for intentionally framing and reflecting on the relationships we're building in our living networks, there are some next steps and final thoughts that we'd like to leave you with.

Slide 52 — Culture and social change happens at the individual level — in the hearts and minds of those involved. Creating intentional networks contributes to and requires a fundamental shift in values and practice:

1. Focus on mission
2. Build trusting relationships
3. Collaborate generously
4. Take action and help others take action

When you take small, daily actions to focus your energy on building trust-based relationships, they can become a part of your daily routine. When you pay attention to, and reflect upon, the living relationships between people, you may start to see beyond organizational boundaries to the core of your shared mission with others. As we begin to shift our focus, we may find it helpful to take these first steps.

Slide 53 — You can try sharing these slides, asking more questions, forming a learning group, or trying out an activity in the toolkit.

Slide 54 — We would love to hear from you, after today's session, on what you were most interested in, and what you'd like to learn more about.

Slide 55 — Resources and Acknowledgement

Slide 56 — Webinar Resources and Follow-Up – Network Weaving Handbook

Slide 57 — Webinar Resources and Follow-Up

- Download and share the [recording of this webinar](#) and slides
- Access the [Network Leadership Toolkit](#)
- Ask questions and continue the conversation by joining the [Networks for Social Change Google Group](#)
- Continue joining upcoming webinars for this three-part series “Network Building for Social Change” – dates will be announced

Slide 58 — Recordings of Previous C&NN Webinars

Slide 59 — Acknowledgements

Slide 60 — End

Recording link for this webinar:

https://www.anymeeting.com/WebConference/RecordingDefault.aspx?c_psrId=E953DF8287483D