

Helping Communities through Trying Economic Times A Message from the CIEL Board of Directors

By Norm Carruthers

Being a Board member is both a privilege and a challenge. It is a privilege because CIEL has recognized that a strong community builds from within, recognizing and utilizing its on core strengths, and Mike and his team have built amazing products to identify these strengths. This is one key fundamental to sustainable change. It is a challenge because CIEL focuses on the small, rural communities that are most in need and this means that contracts are highly reliant on funding from higher levels of government. In stable economic times, this means long lead times and lots of negotiating before projects are agreed upon.

We had anticipated more follow-up contracts to assist more communities once the processes and products were proven as the evaluations have been uniformly very good in the communities we have worked in. However, that has not generally been the case and we have been looking at ways of helping communities sustain their initial burst of improvement over longer periods of time. This could be coaching or mentoring contracts to help the initial learners or new products to help create a "second generation of leaders" in those communities that have started the change process. Whatever the mix of product and services offered, CIEL will continue to focus on ways of helping communities help themselves. Recognizing and living out this core principle for sustainable improvement requires patience and perseverance as governments retrench and look for quick payoff projects. Since rural communities need the type of help CIEL provides even more so in these trying economic conditions, our goal is to find ways of providing that assistance in this new government environment.