Reflection: Why Do We Need Whole Systems Leadership?

We live in a world full of challenges that are unprecedented in complexity and interdependence.

The factors that contribute to these rapidly changing times include:

- Instantaneous global and local communication
- Accelerating rate of technological innovation that now comes from anywhere in the world
- Increased diversity (by 2050 whites will be in the minority in the U.S.)
- Shifting demographics (50% of the global population is younger than 25 and resides in developing nations, while the population in industrialized nations is aging and declining below the replacement rate)
- Awareness of global threats, such as climate change, as well as global opportunities
- Failure of national boundaries to provide security

According to Adam Kahane, author of Solving Tough Problems: An Open Way of Talking, Listening, and Creating New Realities, these conditions demand leadership that is…

- **Systematic** - not piecemeal or divided into isolated silos
- **Participative** - involving many people’s ideas, energy, talent, and expertise
- **Emergent** - able to move and adapt nimbly in a minefield of uncertainty

**Reflect and Discuss**

Do you agree with Adam Kahane that these times demand leadership that is systematic, participative and emergent? What else do you think would be helpful for leadership in these dynamic and challenging times?