

Museums must take ownership about what they mean by partnerships. In these challenging times, building more meaningful partnerships is critical as they create opportunities which contribute to long-term operational sustainability for our institutions. Moving beyond donations and sponsorships, partnerships are a mutually beneficial relationship-building tool. They connect the museum to issues of importance to its community while also creating

challenge being that partnerships require a transformative cultural shift in the way we think. They require a deeply embedded philosophical commitment to the idea of collaboration for long-term mutual benefit rather than thinking about organizations external to the museum as competitors.

Museum professionals have been historically positioned as the expert and often find sharing control difficult. Our values are so deeply

ship methodology involved stakeholders in identifying space and programming needs, and in the planning for the concept rather than seeking input on concepts developed by the consulting team.

The NMC project is a catalyst pulling together the independent activities of a local, national and international community with a shared interest in maritime related programs, products and services. It is being driven by the City of North Vancouver in collaboration with individuals and organizations representing the maritime industry, education, tourism, recreational boating, community-based learning organizations and institutions. These are Canadians that are passionate about our maritime legacy and future.

Building meaningful and successful long-term partnerships

Catherine Rockandel

opportunities to lever the museum's mandate, goals and limited resources by building a wider constituency of support.

Museums need to become strategic about developing and leveraging their relationship networks if they are to expand opportunity and capacity. In developing meaningful collaborative relationships, the museum and its partners can co-create programs, enhance products and services, access alternative funding, revitalize communities, drive visitation in traditionally slower shoulder seasons, revenue share from education and training programs, enhance reputation and relevance, exchange expertise and much more.

Yet, creating and implementing successful partnerships is challenging. The main

ingrained in the way we work that they, along with our assumptions and beliefs, guide our day-to-day decisions whether we realize it or not. Partnerships require trust and this is built by respect and recognition that everyone has wisdom. What are you doing to create opportunities for partners to enact their identity and voice, their social vision and leadership through your museum?

The National Maritime Centre for the Pacific and the Arctic (NMC) which is being developed at the foot of Lonsdale, in North Vancouver, BC, developed its institutional partnership strategy as part of the master planning process being conducted by Aldrich Pears Associates, Hotson, Bakker, Boniface Haden Architects + Urbanistes and Economic Research Associates. The partner-

The NMC used a number of tools to guide partnership development. It considered the level of engagement and the role of partners along a decision-making continuum (see chart). Stakeholders identified as potential partners provided input in meetings and workshops alongside consultants and museum staff. They contributed to the decision-making and co-created programs in which they held an implementation role.

The goal was to identify opportunities to transfer decision-making authority and responsibility for aspects of the project and programs. This approach moves beyond processes that simply inform stakeholders either through meetings, emails, or the media about the project or program. It is based on authentic collaboration versus consultation which merely encourages agreement or



Aldrich Pears Associates, a Vancouver-based firm, is one of the consulting firms involved in the National Maritime Centre for the Pacific and the Arctic project. AldrichPears Associates' previous projects included, from l. to r., the Vancouver Museum, the Turtle Bay Museum and the BC Wildlife Park. Photo: Aldrich Pears Associates Ltd.



The National Maritime Centre for the Pacific and the Arctic is being developed at the foot of Lonsdale, in North Vancouver, BC. Photo: Aldrich Pears Associates Ltd.

consent to decisions or assists those affected to understand impacts.

John Falk, Ph.D., Sea Grant Professor of Free-Choice Learning, Oregon State University developed another tool used to analyze and identify partners for the NMC project. In analyzing why and how visitors interact with museums, John suggests that visitors attend in order to fulfill identity-related needs that are specific to 'this visit' at 'this moment'. These motivations include: the *Explorer*: "I come here because it interests me and I like it"; the *Facilitator*: "I come here because others such as children will like it or want to come"; the *Experience Seeker*: "I come here because of its reputation, to see and experience this place"; the *Professional/Hobbyist*: "I come here because it relates to my work or is something I actively pursue as a hobby"; the *Recharger*: "I come here because it makes me feel refreshed, focused or appreciative".

This tool was used to identify potential partners such as the Canadian Power and Sail Squadron (CPSS). The CPSS had strong relationships with members that were "explorers" and "professional/hobbyists" engaged in recreational boating and the maritime industry. They and other partners informed the concept development for exhibits and programs. They advocated for the development by writing letters of support to the North Vancouver City Mayor and Council to endorse Council decisions, championed the development with over 20 different partners

appearing at a public hearing about the regional and community benefits of the centre, and supported provincial and federal grant applications.

The CPSS partnership has the potential to contribute to the NMC's long-term financial and operational sustainability as well as leveraging its mandates and goals. The CPSS intends to position the NMC as the centre for "safe boating" and as a "Maritime Learning Centre." They are committed to marketing NMC programs that will contribute to its diversified revenue streams through facility rentals of flexible meeting, classroom and special event and conference space. In addition, CPSS will partner and promote NMC events and programs as well as package CPSS member benefits with NMC membership.

The CPSS envision the NMC as the centre for recreational boating education and certification. The partnership strengthens and supports NMC's mandate and builds awareness and credibility for NMC programs and exhibits. The partnership also supports CPSS' mandate and meets its need for secure meeting, classroom and storage space that it currently rents from a variety of providers.

Partnerships matter because they build deep connections that enhance connectivity and trust between individuals, organizations and community-based groups that are essential to the success of museums. Partnerships engage groups and individuals external to the museum authentically while also supporting traditional activities of collecting, preserving, researching and exhibiting. In building agreements that sustain these relationships and developing indicators that measure their effectiveness and impact, we can greatly enhance the success of museums. **M**



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to facilitate collaborative planning and enhance strategic decision-making. This paper informed a presentation for the 2009 CMA Conference in Toronto, Ontario. Catherine can be reached at cat@growpartnerships.com

Continuum of Partner Involvement in Decision-Making

8 PROJECT RESPONSIBILITY

Partners have full responsibility for all aspects of a project or program through agreements, contracts, committees, etc.

7 DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY

Authority is transferred to partner for certain decisions within clearly defined terms of reference through a team, committee or organization.

6 IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITY

Partners co-create programs and are designated to either co-deliver or independently implement project through team, department or committees.

5 INCLUSION IN DECISION MAKING

Include stakeholders and partners input in consultant and institutional decision making through consultation, workshops, focus groups, interviews.

4 IMPLEMENTATION INPUT

Gather input or feedback from stakeholders and partners on how to implement programs or planning developed by consultants or the institution after initial planning is completed.

3 EDUCATING STAKEHOLDERS

Educate stakeholders/potential partners to understand decisions, how they are affected and what is expected of them through meetings, workshops, etc.

2 PERSUADING STAKEHOLDERS

Encourage stakeholders/partners to agree or give consent to decisions or planning processes.

1 INFORMING STAKEHOLDERS

Inform stakeholders and potential partners of decisions through meetings, emails, memos and media.

Note: Inspired by Ladder of Citizen Involvement by Sherry R. Arnstein and adapted from the Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs, Ladder of Involvement in Decision Making.