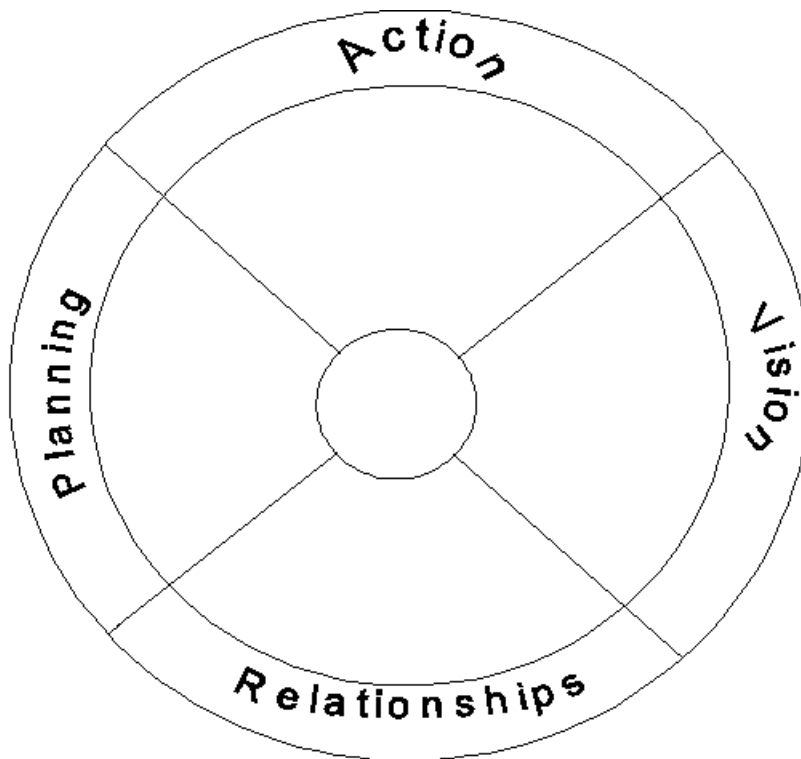


# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND THE MEDICINE WHEEL



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**August, 2004**

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## 1.0 BACKGROUND

The 1980's brought about the relocation of major industrial employers, in the Kitchener/Waterloo/Cambridge tri-city area, to locations outside of Canada, where production costs were cheaper. Approximately 20,000 jobs were lost (McNair & Leviten-Reid, 2002). Community Opportunities Development Association (CODA), launched in 1984, took the lead in addressing the critical unemployment situation in the Cambridge region by offering various support programs such as employment training, job search assistance, new entrepreneur initiatives and loan funds for new businesses. Lutherwood, which had evolved from a residential treatment centre, provided programs for youth and young families, and later seniors (Ibid). As separate entities, neither was making a major impact on the local poverty situation. The number of Waterloo Region families living in poverty in 1980, 8,300, rose to 9,700 in 1990. Despite an economic resurgence, 55,000 residents of the tri-city area were living in poverty in the mid-1990's (Ibid). To further add to the problem, one hundred provincial social services and income support programs were cut in the mid-1990's (Ibid). Local non-profit agencies, service clubs, churches and charitable organizations stepped in to meet the increasing need. Some worked in cooperation with each other. However, many operated in isolation, which resulted in the duplication of services leading to the inefficient delivery of services. Yet this disjointed effort was successful in providing a perfunctory level of service, complemented by the thousands of hours of caring concern and work by dedicated staff and volunteers.

The merger of Lutherwood and CODA in 1997 occurred within this environment of a benevolent, yet uncoordinated campaign to provide services to those in need. The merger combined human and financial resources and importantly, the creative ingenuity of two credible

and well-known local agencies. Bold and innovative thinking resulted in a new initiative. This initiative was Opportunities 2000 (OP2000).

Opportunities 2000 is not an organization or an agency, instead, OP2000 is a network - a living and growing organic entity for action and change, composed of a community of leaders with varied backgrounds, staff and many partner businesses, agencies and individuals throughout the community. In essence, it is a network or alliance of active partners and supporters working towards the common goal of reducing and preventing poverty (OP2000 web site).

Operating from a vision of a caring community with social and economic well-being for all, OP2000 set into motion Phase 1 of their plan (1996-2000). OP2000 forged relationships and partnerships with community leaders. Initially this multisectoral approach included representatives from government, business, non-profits and the voluntary sector. From a modicum of understanding, OP2000 embarked on a journey of mutual education and enlightenment with its newly formed partners. In order to confront poverty in the Waterloo area, it was necessary to understand what poverty was and the obstacles to reducing poverty. Together, OP2000 and their community partners shared information, learned together and planned together. From these partnerships, grass-root community projects began to take form and take on life.

As tangible outcomes were realized, OP2000 recognized the importance of, and took steps to engage community citizens. Their voice was recognized as being imperative to understanding the pulse and needs of the community. OP2000 also needed to know if projects that had been initiated had made any difference in the lives of those for whom projects had been designed to assist. To this end OP2000 conducted a household survey, focus groups and individual interviews. Eventually, it was determined that OP2000 would benefit from regular consultation with low-income community members.

A group consisting of low-income residents was formed; the group decided to call themselves the Community Action Team (CAT). The CAT would act as a reference group for the low-income community. An invitation was extended to the CAT to have 2 or 3 CAT members sit on the Leadership Round Table (LRT); the LRT is the volunteer committee that was formed to advise and support OP2000 as it evolved (Leviten-Reid, 2001). These 2 or 3 CAT members would act as liaisons between the LRT and the CAT. Attempts were made by OP2000 staff to facilitate an environment that was comfortable to CAT members who had an interest in participating on the Leadership Round Table.

The CAT was very successful in developing and running several projects of interest. They created a resource booklet identifying a wide range of community services and resources of interest to low-income community residents and organized the Step Ahead Symposium, a daylong series of workshops and activities for people with limited incomes. The CAT also arranged a series of training sessions to help participants develop the knowledge and skills needed to serve on the boards and committees of non-profit organizations and other agencies (Caledon Institute of Social Policy, 2001).

The CAT initiative, however, was plagued with problems. The CAT felt disenfranchised from the LRT. They felt that their opinions were not valued or taken into consideration when decisions were made. The goals of CAT and the LRT were different. Some CAT members felt intimidated by the more-formal, business-like atmosphere of the LRT meetings. There was a perception of an unequal relationship between CAT and LRT. CAT did not feel as though they had power to make their own decisions. Lines of communication seemed unidirectional – from the LRT to CAT. These problems illustrated the inherent complexities of combining the long-term, rational-based culture of a business-like entity with community interests that are based in

real-time and reflect the everyday living and survival challenges of those living in low-income and poverty. The CAT membership and attendance at meetings fluctuated as life circumstances dictated more immediate priorities. Some, because of their attire, choose not to participate in LRT meetings. Transportation and childcare presented a different set of problems. Logistical issues such as meeting times and location presented another obstacle to participation.

Three CAT members did overcome challenges to become dedicated and vocal attendees at the LRT meetings. However, the CAT became disillusioned. Increasingly they felt that their voice was being disregarded and they questioned the role of the CAT. The CAT disbanded in 2000, at the end of OP2000's Phase 1 (1996-2000).

The disbanding of the CAT, at the end of Phase 1 (2000), left an undeniable void. Following Phase 1, OP2000 entered into a year of strategic planning and reorganization. Now entering into Phase 2, (2001-2006), OP2000 is committed to finding effective ways of reconnecting with the community.

## **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

As part of my Wilfrid Laurier MSW placement, I was asked to investigate the failure of the Community Action Team (CAT) and to explore options for future community engagement.

This has been a somewhat daunting task for a number of reasons:

- I am with OP2000 for only 2 days a week, for approx. 40 weeks
- People I work with at OP2000 were not here at the time that CAT was operational and could not provide first-hand information
- Documentation, resulting from CAT activity, was sparse
- Documentation that was found did not enlighten me about why the CAT no longer existed.

- Case studies of methods of engagement, found on the internet (the major source of information for this project), were overwhelmingly representative of government engaging the public. This was problematic for a few reasons. First, civil engagement by government has tended to target a somewhat different audience than the low-income and persons living in poverty audience that OP2000 wishes to engage. Secondly, civil engagement by the government tends to engage the community for the purpose of informing and consulting. OP2000 needs to engage the community, not only for informing and consulting, but also to involve and empower through mutual collaboration and partnerships.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Interviews**

Before looking for community engagement options, I felt that it was important to develop an understanding of why the CAT had dissolved. What had been the challenges / vulnerabilities for community members? What obstacles did they encounter? How did they feel about their experiences?

Unfortunately, I was unable to contact as many past community members of CAT as I would have liked. As well as speaking with 1 past community CAT member, I spoke with 3 people who had been involved with CAT as staff (paid or voluntary). I also spoke with 3 community partners, who although not involved with CAT, had opinions about CAT and OP2000. Two of these community partners have been very successful in engaging the community. Information on their methods of engaging the community and their relationship with the community was very valuable. Information that was provided by the 1 past CAT member allowed me the opportunity to view the CAT from the inside out. This qualitative data painted a

very clear picture of why CAT no longer exists. Without the honesty of these individuals, the CAT picture would have remained a charcoal sketch with colour. Appendix A is a summary of peoples' comments. Some comments are repetitive, however, I felt it important to include all respondents' comments.

### **3.2 Literature Review**

Following the interviews, I began a literature review. Information was accessed using a variety of methods. I accessed Wilfrid Laurier's journal database using the keywords 'engagement', 'community development' and 'community consultation'. This search resulted in the identification of 2 useable articles. Google internet searches were also performed using the same keywords. This produced a plethora of information, much of which was not used. Tamarack's report "Our Growing Understanding of Community Engagement" provided links to numerous Internet sites. Various reports, published documents, and the OP2000 web site were reviewed. Course material used in the Masters of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier was also used.

## **4.0 COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION**

Before exploring methods of engagement, it is important to have a basic understanding of why people do or don't become involved in community issues and initiatives. Methods of engagement alone will not guarantee the involvement of people. The following are summaries of two articles that I felt were particularly informing.

### **"Civic Disengagement in the Czech Republic: How to Engage the Disengaged"**

Although the article, "Civic Disengagement in the Czech Republic: How to Engage the Disengaged" relays the experience of a different socioeconomic country than Canada, author Padolsky (2003) presents some interesting points about the lack of civic engagement and citizen

involvement. Padolsky cites Putman (1993) in his explanation about the social/political atmosphere that can act to facilitate citizen participation or discourage participation. Putman states that when people live in an atmosphere built on “vertical bonds of authority”, they learn not to “buck” the system. Without “horizontal bonds of fellowship”, interpersonal trust does not develop. Padolsky goes on to say that without trust there is little impetus to get involved. Furthermore, the lack of participation allows issues to stagnate and deteriorate. This deterioration results in a general disappointment and a sense of hopelessness, which results in resignation that nothing can be done to turn the tide, therefore why get involved.

Padosky (Ibid) presents the argument that citizens engage in civic and political affairs when they experience a balance of intellectual and social capital. Citizens must feel that they have the capacity to understand an issue. Social capital is generated as a result of having the skills and traits that enable individuals to become involved in various networks of associations that subscribe to horizontal bonds of fellowship (Ibid). Through association with others in an open system of expression and acceptance, people develop trust and overcome their penchant to remain inactive. Padosky states that trust and a norm of reciprocity are needed to unite individuals in society. His view is mirrored by Coleman (cited in Padosky, 2003) in his study of civic engagement in Italy. Coleman noted that when individuals interact with each other in voluntary organizations and participate in decision-making, they develop social capital.

### **“Factors Related to Community Mobilization and Continued Involvement in a Community-Based Effort to Enhance Adolescents’ Sexual Behaviour”**

Authors Joffres, Langille, Rigby, and Langille (2002) conducted a qualitative research project to explore the factors that affected mobilization and continued involvement of community members in a grassroots association. This study was undertaken in Nova Scotia, Canada with stakeholders of the Amherst Association for Healthy Adolescent Sexuality

(AAHAS). The AAHAS surveyed fourteen project participants, twelve board members representing a coalition of community partners, and two paid staff. Their findings are as follows (a chart is also available in Appendix B):

**Factors that motivated people to become involved in the AAHAS:**

- Issue awareness

The issue was real, current and there was a community readiness to address the issue.

- Informants' feelings of efficacy

Participants felt that their contribution could make a difference. Feelings of efficacy were generated through training or experience with the issue and by knowledge of the community and/or key people within the community.

- Informants' sense of community

This involved a sense of connection to the community, a sense of shared history, and high empathy for the targeted audience. Empathy resulted from identification with the targeted audience.

- Value congruence

The match of individuals and AAHAS values and goals and/or inter-organizational value congruence was crucial to participants' involvement in the project.

- Organizational Support

Coalition partners were supportive of the AAHAS project by facilitating inter-organizational value congruence and/or by the organizations' commitment to become involved as volunteer.

- Valued expectations

Participants believed that their involvement with AAHAS would fulfill some of their personal and/or professional aspirations.

- Stakeholders' belief in AAHAS efficacy

Project participants and volunteers believed that AAHAS had the ability to improve the quality of life for the targeted audience.

**Reinforcing factors that motivated people to remain involved with AAHAS:**

- Feelings of achievement

People felt good about their involvement and believed that their involvement was making a difference. People's feelings of achievement were enhanced by their feelings of actualization; affiliation and satisfaction for working collaboratively with others; their perception that the project had progressed; the fulfillment of personal/professional experiences that were recognized and valued; and leadership (e.g. consensual decision-making, collaborative design and implementation of plans; and an open and easy line of communication).

**Inhibitors that limited involvement in the AAHAS project:**

- Issues

Some felt uncomfortable dealing with the issues that AAHAS had to deal with.

- Economic factors

Unemployment, not enough volunteers, competing issues/concerns (ie. fundraising & a financially stretched community) affected continuous involvement.

- Community specific factors

Provincial policies and regionalization limited the pool of volunteers.

- Personal characteristics

Participants' feelings of inadequacy hindered their continued involvement in the project.

- Organizational characteristics

Role overload, role conflict, inter-personal conflicts, and burnout affected continued involvement.

- Committee-related factors

Some felt frustrated by time and demand constraints. Role overload and frustration over lack of commitment by some committee members also inhibited further involvement. Inter-group tension dampened enthusiasm. Other factors cited were role ambiguity, concern over research needs rather than community needs, Board of Director meeting times and locations, the number of meetings, and meeting structure.

What is interesting about these articles is that both, in different ways, highlight the same concepts of what must be present or available to individuals in order for them to become involved in community work. Vern Newfeld Redekop (2002) suggests that each person has certain innate needs – security, connectedness, recognition, meaning and action. When individuals feel that their needs for security, connectedness, recognition, and meaning are realized or are being provided, their need for action will be realized. Redekop presents Paul Sites' idea (cited in Vern Neufeld Redekop, 2002) that action implies some control over immediate social and physical environment.

People become involved in community work for different reasons. The issues they choose to make a stand for will be based on their values, beliefs, sense of justice, and innate needs. They need to experience a sense of belonging and connection to others who share similar, not necessarily identical hopes, possibilities, and visions. Their sense of community is very strong. Underlying their individual reasons is the belief that their actions can make a difference.

What keeps people involved in community work can be different. They need to know that their efforts are acknowledged and appreciated, as well as accepted in the spirit in which it is

offered. They must feel safe in making their offerings. If one does not feel safe, inevitably fear and self-doubt are experienced, which leads to inaction and a sense of lost control over the immediate environment.

Authors, of the afore mentioned articles (Padolsky; and Joffres et. al.), agree about the importance of a sense of community and affiliation for the mobilization and retention of community members. OP2000 and the LRT were semi-successful in mobilizing community members. The result was the CAT. However sustaining the involvement of community members was a problem for many reasons. The CAT's experience was of an unequal relationship, where their goals and those of the LRT were different, communication was one-way, their input was not valued and they could not make their own decisions. With this perceived inequality, the CAT did not truly feel part of OP2000 and the LRT. Involvement with the CAT seems not to have provided a sufficient level of satisfaction for its members.

## **5.0 MODELS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Hicks (2002) suggests that the nature of community work differs depending on the perspective informing one's practice (p.82). Hicks offers that Rothman's model of community development allows one to see the differences between the various forms of community development discussed and debated in Canada today (Ibid). Included in Rothman's model are three typical approaches to community work – locality development, social planning and social action.

“Locality Development” emphasizes broadly based participation, co-operation, voluntarism, education and community initiatives to achieve community-determined goals. The “Social Planning” approach focuses on professional expertise and technical know-how that operate out of a centralized planning context, to overcome designated social problems and guide complex change processes. A “Social Action” approach aims

to organize disadvantaged populations to make demands for increased resources or treatment more in accordance with social justice (Lee, 1999, p.30).

## 5.1 Rothman's Model of Community Development

(Source Lee, 1999)

MODEL	Social Planning	Locality Development	Social Action
<b>Description</b>	Experts using technical expertise -identify & plan how to address designated social problems	Community initiative to identify & achieve community goals	Organization of disadvantaged to make demands for social justice
<b>Relationship of Worker/Organizer to Community</b>	People are objects of intervention	People are subjects & co-workers on problems	People are subjects & co-workers on problems
<b>Primary Worker/Organizer Role</b>	Expert planner	Catalyst/facilitator	Catalyst/agitator
<b>Primary Means</b>	Statistics & reports	Consensus	Conflict, confrontation & negotiation
<b>Ends</b>	Improved services	Suitable sharing of community resources among members	Readjustment of power between community & institutions

These approaches are conceptually different. The approach taken will dictate the relationship that an organizing agency will have with the community and in part suggest what methods of engagement are used. Agencies that operate from within the social planning framework will primarily employ engagement techniques that inform the community or gather information. Agencies that operate from within a social action framework will employ engagement methods that serve to empower communities to act and develop capacity building. Agencies that operate from within a locality development framework will employ engagement methods that facilitate community involvement and the sharing of responsibilities.

Problems are bound to arise when there is a discrepancy between the organizing agency's intended approach to community work and the actual approach used. OP2000 wants to operate from a place situated between Locality Development and Social Action. From this location OP2000 partners with the community to identify community concerns and then acts as a catalyst

for systemic change. However, OP2000 and the LRT employed a framework that used a more social planning approach in its relationship to the CAT, while at the same time using an engagement method that serves the locality development and social action models of community work. This has created a state of frustration for both the CAT and OP2000/LRT.

The engagement model that was used to engage the community (through the CAT) was similar to an advisory group. An advisory group provides input on specific issues and meets on a regular basis. The advisory group method suggests that the community has a co-worker relationship with the organizing agency, based on horizontal lines of communication, a shared vision, and decision-making influence. Yet the CAT felt very differently. The CAT did not feel as though it had any influence in decision-making, the lines of communication were top-down, and their goals seemed different. The engagement method must be appropriate for the purpose of engagement. When there is a mismatch, confusion, disillusionment, and unclear expectations will result.

## **6.0 LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION**

The level of community participation will underscore the degree of empowerment that individuals and the community will experience, and will dictate the level of support and capacity building that the organizing agency will need to provide or facilitate. It is important to keep in mind that with increasing levels of capacity building, there will be a corresponding need for the provision of resources. Time requirements, training, logistical support and financial resources will increase.

The following table is an adaptation of models found at the International Association for Public Participation and the Leeds Initiative web sites. The International Association for Public

Participation provided the ‘levels of participation’ (Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, and Empower). The continuums for ‘empowerment’ and the ‘need for support and capacity building’ were borrowed from the Leeds Community Engagement Guide.

## 6.1 Levels of Participation, Empowerment, and Need for Support & Capacity Building

Source: International Association for Public Participation (unknown date)

Source: Leed Initiative (2002)

<b>Low.....EMPOWERMENT.....High</b>				
<b>INFORM</b>	<b>CONSULT</b>	<b>INVOLVE</b>	<b>COLLABORATE</b>	<b>EMPOWER</b>
Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:
To provide balanced and objective information to assist the public in understanding alternatives and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public
Promise to the public:	Promise to the public:	Promise to the public:	Promise to the public:	Promise to the public:
We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible	We will implement what you decide
<b>Low..... NEED FOR SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING .....High</b>				

## 7.0 INTIMACY

Associated to community engagement is the concept of intimacy. Just how involved does the organizing agency become with the day-to-day lives of community members? Being too close may be as disadvantageous as not being close enough. Lee (1999) suggests that when being overly involved, there is a danger of losing perspective, of seeing things in a unidirectional

manner and missing an important part of the picture. This can lead to a loss of creativity and an inability to see various options. Narayan (cited in Lee, 1999) states that [being intimately involved] with people does not guarantee that we will listen to them, or understand them or their problems. When an organizing agency is too intimately involved in the day-to-day lives of community members and there is an absence of clear dialogue and mutual understanding there is a risk of misunderstanding, making assumptions, and unrealistic expectations.

Of course, there are advantages to having close relationships with the community. Close relationships build trust and respect, which form the foundations upon which partnerships and collaboration are built. Without trust and respect, there is a lingering sense of suspicion and apprehension. Within a framework of partnership and collaboration, close relationships might be seen as solidarity.

## 8.0 COMMUNICATION

Communication underpins all collaboration and partnerships. Effective communication, within a framework of community engagement must be based on a pattern of mutual dialogue and respect. Minnesota State Health, citing the Annadale Report, contrasts old ways of thinking about communication and new ways of thinking about engagement.

Source: Minnesota State Health (2004)

<b>Communication</b>	<b>Engagement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate to</li> <li>• Public hearing</li> <li>• Talk to, tell</li> <li>• Seeking to establish / protect turf</li> <li>• Authority</li> <li>• Influencing the like-minded</li> <li>• Top down</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliberate with</li> <li>• Community conversation</li> <li>• Talk with, share</li> <li>• Seeking / finding common ground</li> <li>• Responsibility</li> <li>• Understanding those not like-minded</li> <li>• Bottom up</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building a hierarchy for decision-making</li> <li>• Goals / strategic plan</li> <li>• Products</li> <li>• Public relations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing a stakeholders network</li> <li>• Values / vision</li> <li>• process</li> <li>• public or community engagement</li> </ul>
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Communication can result in conflict, however it should be seen as healthy as it helps to dissolve misunderstandings and provides a venue for a common language. Healey (cited by Carson and Gelber, 2001) proposes that effective collaboration involves planning through debate. Communicative enterprise opens up the process and outcomes of consultation to new possibilities in terms of reaching understanding (Carson and Gelber, 2001). This means that all parties are actively listening to each other, processing what is said, reflecting and then giving feedback to what is said. This is the communication of engagement.

## **9.0 TRUST AND RESPECT**

Trust and respect is the mortar that holds together the building block of community development. Without them the foundation is weak and will soon crumble. Trust and respect are especially important when an organizing agency wishes to collaborate with populations that have been marginalized and/or typically excluded from the decision-making process. When relationships have not been developed, the organizing agency is seen as the outsider and the agency will become frustrated in its efforts to mobilize the community. Checkoway (1986) states that it is difficult to build support for planning when agencies lack legitimacy in the community. Familiarity and acceptance underscore legitimacy. Without familiarity and acceptance the organizing agency remains an outsider. As an outsider, bonds of trust and respect will not develop or will not develop to the extent that is needed to sustain a partnership.

## **10.0 THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE ENGAGEMENT**

Once an organizing agency has decided to engage the community, it has a responsibility to itself and the community to ensure that engagement is done in a responsible and thoughtful manner. The agency should develop an engagement strategy that is built around the “Principles of Engagement” (iPlan, 2004). These principles are the ‘good-housekeeping’ rules that help avoid engagement mistakes and build valuable relationships. They help to support the essence of effective community engagement – trust, respect, and goodwill. The principles of engagement include clarity of purpose; commitment; communication; evidence; flexibility and responsiveness; timeliness; inclusiveness; collaboration; and continuous learning. The details of these principles can be found in Appendix D.

An organizing agency must be reflective in its approach to engagement. Engagement must not be seen as a sideline to the everyday agency business. Engagement must not be done to satisfy an ideological or philosophical imperative. To be successful, engagement must be based on vision, relationship building, knowledge and learning, and action. Before an organizing agency begins a plan of engagement they would be wise to consider the 5-W’s (Who, What, When, Where, and Why).

### **10.1 Who**

Who does the organizing agency want to engage? Who will benefit from engagement? Community is a somewhat generic word that can mean a variety of things. For example, wanting to engage those who live in poverty may be too broad. What is it that the organizing agency wants to learn, convey, receive, or impart? Would it be better for the organizing agency to focus on single mothers who live in poverty, seniors who live in poverty, or those who live in poverty because they work for minimum wage? Who the community is, may help decide what method of engagement needs to be used.

## **10.2 What**

What methods will be used for engagement? Are certain methods best suited for certain purposes? What are the limitations and benefits of each method? What resources are needed? Answering these questions beforehand will save time and resources. Using a method that is ill suited to the purpose of engagement may result in a negative outcome.

## **10.3 When**

Thought should be put into how engagement is to proceed. When and how will the community be engaged? When will the community be available for engagement and is the organizing agency prepared to meet with the community on the community's time schedule?

## **10.4 Where**

Where will engagement of the community take place? Will it be at a public forum, the local community centre, over the phone, or at an agency-organized event? The "where" will dictate per diem expenses, time involvement, staffing requirements and other resources.

## **10.5 Why**

Why is engagement necessary? Is it the intention of the organizing agency to inform, consult, involve, collaborate or empower the community? The answer to this question will dictate the form of engagement employed.

## **11.0 ENGAGEMENT**

Engagement is not a science. Methods of engagement are not prescriptive. What works with one population may not work with another. What works with a population, at one point in time, may not work again at a different time. That is because a population or a community is not static. It is alive, ever changing. Locations, circumstances, faces, challenges, assets and demographics are constantly changing. What remains constant in the lives of individuals who

make up the community are the innate needs of security, connectedness, recognition, meaning, action, and sense of being/self. (Sites cited in Vern Neufeld Redekop, 2002).

These needs do not happen in a vacuum. People realize their sense of security, connectedness, recognition, meaning, action, and sense of self only in the presence of others. In the context of engagement and community development, 'security needs' involve feeling safe to express one's opinion, safety from criticism, safety from exploitation and physical safety. 'Meaning needs' involve the sharing of goals that are significant to the individuals who make up the community. 'Connectedness needs' involve feeling that one belongs in the community, and keeping the lines of communication open and active. 'Recognition needs' involve being respected and appreciated for one's contributions, assets, opinions, ideas and diversity. 'Action needs' involves an individual being actively involved in working towards a goal or vision and that there is a sense of control over these actions. The 'need for a sense of being/self,' that is realized through the previous five needs.

It has often been said that the method of engagement chosen is important. This would lead some to think that each method has certain, undisputed uses and that to use any other method for a specific purpose is a recipe for disaster. I agree that the method is important but not because to use the wrong methods will sabotage any efforts to engage the community. What is important is that the method used fits the approach to engagement. For example, if one wants to find out what the combined household income is for families living in the Stardust community, you use methods that accommodate the 'consultation' approach to engagement, i.e. questionnaire or phone survey. You would not use a method that applies to the 'involvement' approach to engagement, i.e. an advisory group. As well, different groups may naturally prefer different methods of engagement. Oral methods of engagement, such as coffee klatches, may be preferred

by groups whose culture is based on oral traditions, or those who may feel intimidated by larger, more impersonal approaches to engagement. Adolescents may prefer more active methods of engagement such as action research where the adolescent community actively researches issues, problem solves and then takes action. It is important that the organizing organization know the community that it wishes to engage. When the engagement matches the community, the community feels more comfortable in participating and a level of trust is realized. It is also important to go to the community. Don't expect the community to come to the organizing organization. Going to the community instead of expecting the community to come to the organization shows the community that you value their participation and they have knowledge that is valuable. (A selection of engagement methods can be found in Appendix C).

What is even more important than the specific method of engagement is the relationship that needs to be in place or developed. Relationships can not be built without trust and respect. Trust can not exist in an environment where one controls the other. Author Talbot (2000) suggests that trust is more likely to develop where people see themselves as trusted (to make decisions) and where there are high expectations that people are competent and trustworthy. Respect develops from a trusting relationship.

## **12.0 MEDICINE WHEEL**

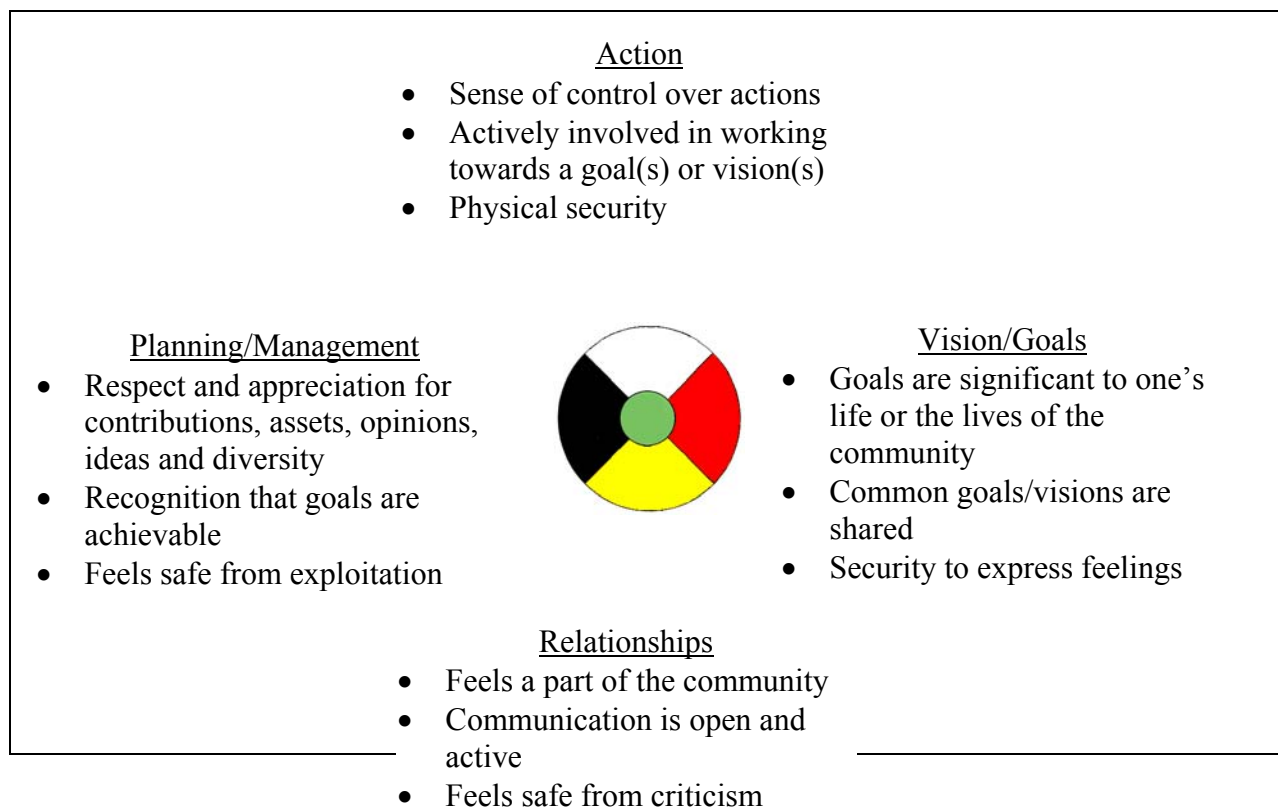
As a person with Aboriginal ancestry, I have been shown the intrinsic value of the medicine wheel. The medicine wheel is, among other things, a conceptual framework from which to understand healthy and unhealthy systems. The medicine wheel philosophy works for all human systems, whether the system is an individual or an organizational entity, since organizations are comprised of people with needs. A visual representation of the medicine wheel,

also known as the hub, is made up of 4 quadrants (east, south, west, and north) as well as 2 circles, the smaller in the centre of the larger circle.

- The east quadrant represents peoples' goals, aspirations or visions.
- The south quadrant represents human relationships.
- The west quadrant represents knowledge, wisdom and respect for others and ourselves.
- The north quadrant represents actions that are taken or need to be taken.
- The larger circle represents the connectedness & interrelatedness of all aspects of the system.
- The small interior circle is where identity is located.

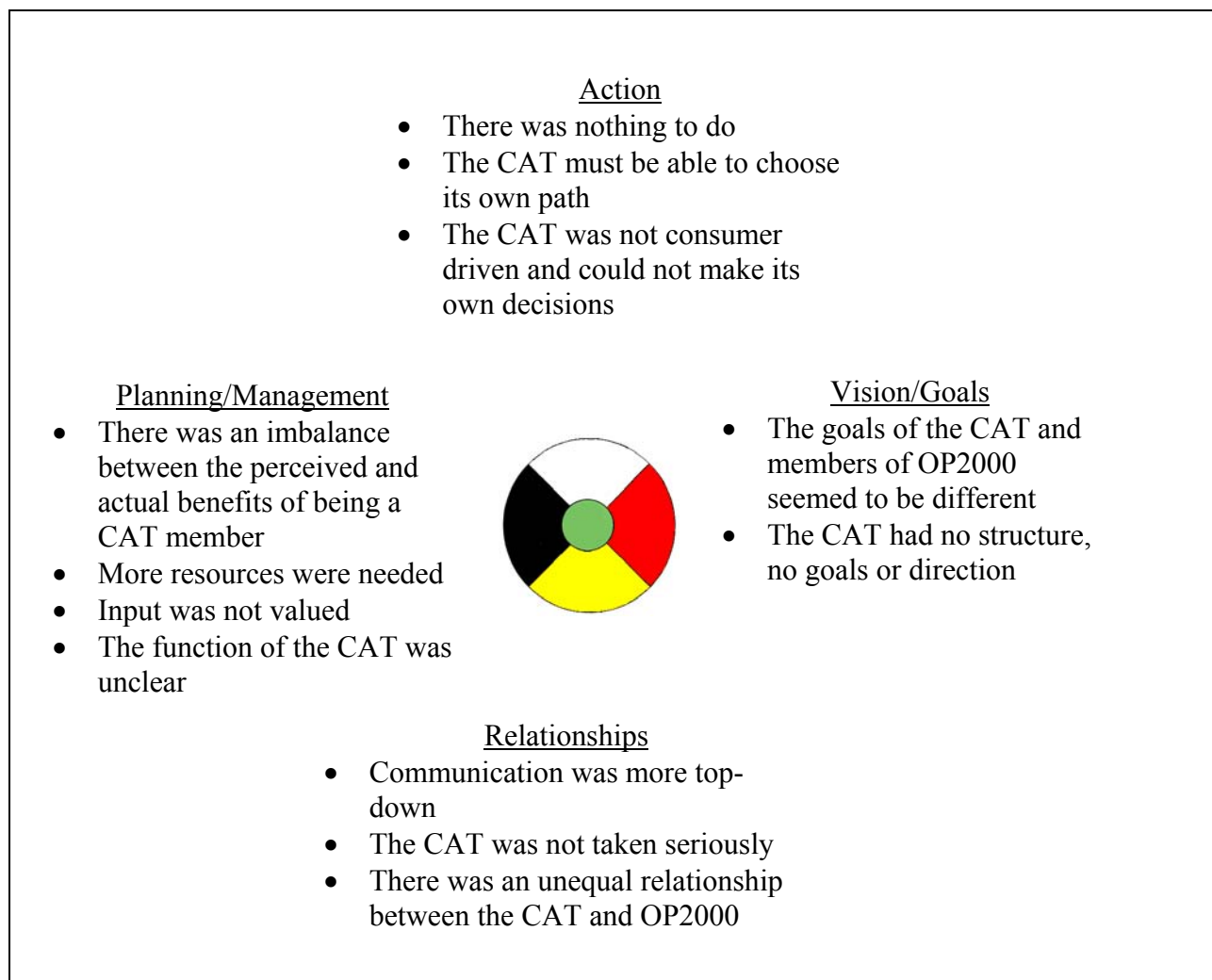
The characteristics of the 4 quadrants determine identity. When the 4 quadrants are in balance or in harmony, there is a positive identity. With balance & harmony the system will be healthy.

Based on Vern Newfeld Redekop's theory of innate human needs, and my own understanding of the medicine wheel, I have positioned human system needs (in the context of community engagement and development) around the medicine wheel.



Without balance & harmony the system will not be healthy. The system will not have a strong healthy identity. With balance and harmony the system will be strong and have a healthy identity.

I have taken the comments from Appendix A, generated themes, and positioned them around the medicine wheel. This will illustrate, in theory, why the CAT disbanded.



### **13.0 ENGAGEMENT METHODS**

The engagement methods presented in Appendix C are just some of many methods that are available. Information on each strategy includes a description, purpose, resources required, strengths, weaknesses, and where the strategy might fall within the continuum for 'levels of participation'. An example of how each strategy was used is also included.

It is important to understand that engagement methods are flexible. They can be viewed as guidelines. Methods can be adapted to some extent to accommodate financial resources, populations, and purpose. There is nothing wrong with asking the community how they want to be engaged. It is also wise to let community members choose their own level of involvement in the engagement process. Some may want to have a vocal and active role. Others may be satisfied with playing a supportive role, such as helping to set up the venue or conducting surveys. There needs to be several role options available so that members feel safe in the engagement process and feel that their unique contributions are appreciated.

Whether or not engagement is necessary, is also something that has to be considered, in certain circumstances. If an organizing agency wants to consult a community about a particular issue, can this information be obtained by other means; does another organization have this information? Another option open to an organization is piggy-backing with another organization in the engagement process. A combined effort with another organization has the advantage of resources being shared, such as financial, manpower, knowledge, and time.

Community engagement very often does not rely on any single method of engagement. Engagement must be considered as a process. The engagement process is not a 'one-size fits all'

endeavour. The engagement process must be assessed periodically and adjusted to meet the changing dynamics of the community, circumstances, and resources.

## **14.0 MULTI-METHOD ENGAGEMENT**

The following are examples of community initiatives that have used more than one engagement method. Engagement methods employed should fit the circumstances, characteristics of the community and resources.

### **14.1 NOS Quedamos Project**

Source: Sustainable Communities Network (2002, Jan. update)

Community residents came together to respond to the city's proposed urban renewal plan, which they felt would have a detrimental effect on the community. Homeowners, tenants, and business owners came together at a community meeting. They formed the NOS Quedamos **committee**. They worked with community associations to formulate an alternative proposal. Hundreds of volunteers formed a number of **working groups**. Residents conducted block-by-block **surveys** and held **community meetings** to update those who could not attend the planning meetings. The community effort attracted the assistance of professionals who worked with residents to develop a new urban design.

### **14.2 St. Joseph Initiative**

Source: The Community's Plan (unknown date)

A group of 30 St. Joseph residents organized a **steering committee** with the goal of prioritizing community issues, identifying community goals and to develop a plan of action. **Surveys** and **focus groups** resulted in a wealth of information that resulted in the identification of key issues. Community **volunteers** and the steering committee members presented story boards at community **exhibitions**, spoke with community members about issues, and actively recruited community members to serve on **issue area teams**. In a later phase of the project, the

issue area teams made up of community residents, steering committee members and issue specific experts began the process of setting goals for each of the identified six key issues.

### 14.3 Winnipeg North End Community Renewal

source: Centre for Community Enterprise (date unknown)

Winnipeg North End Community Renewal began with the commitment and capacity of 2 community organization leaders who recognized that the north end lacked planning, research, coordination, and communication resources. An **ad hoc committee** was formed with residents and **community representatives**, and **organizational leaders**. The ad hoc committee went through a period of systematic self-examination and self-education that resulted in a shared analysis and community dialogue for consensus. Forty **community leaders** attended an information meeting given by the executive director of the RESO model that had been used in Montreal. The executive director of RESO also met with all 3 levels of government, representatives from north end businesses, north end organizations and a wide range of residents at separate meetings to educate and gain support for the Winnipeg north end initiative. The next stage involved the recruitment of specific representatives from community organizations, labour, business, service groups, residents associations, Aboriginal organizations, and the religious community. This marked the formal transfer of control to the community based on representation of the community sector and through constant **networking**.

Note: What is interesting about this case study is that they recognized and acknowledge the limitations of the multi-sector process. 1) The ad hoc committee recognized that they were not fully representative of the community (however, they remained committed to strengthening local input and ownership). 2) There was no direct link to residents who were not connected to an organization or service provider. 3) Board members said that it was sometimes difficult to think

about the good of the whole community if in fact the good differed from what was best for their own sector. 4) Participation in multi-sector meetings was sometimes inadequate for a credible expression of goals and general concerns. 5) Some sectors had board members whose commitment and representation left something to be desired. 6) Even though the sector-based structure permits integration, competition for turf did occur. 7) Some sectors of the community were not represented because of not adequately recognizing their importance to the north end.

Note: Another thing that was interesting about this article was the definition of community.

Often, we consider community to mean the residents of an area. This article seems to support a community definition that includes not only residents but also businesses and organizations.

## **15.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

My recommendations for engagement will be presented within the context of the medicine wheel. The 4 directions – east, south, west, and north – will help me to

compartmentalize my thoughts and provide a blueprint for the engagement process. I will not recommend specific methods of engagement. This would be presumptuous for me to do so. Engagement methods should be chosen dependent upon whom it is that will be engaged, the circumstances of the engagement and the resources available for engagement.

### **15.1 East**

The east represents vision/goals. In the east we answer the questions ‘why’ and ‘what’. Why is engagement necessary? What are the goals of engagement? Do we want to inform, consult, involve, collaborate or empower the community? Does the desire for community engagement come from an authentic need to engage the community or is it a result of having to fulfill a written mandate? These questions are very important as they set the tone for the next steps of the engagement process. An organizing agency must answer these questions truthfully. Without truth the process will eventually crumble and engagement will fail.

My recommendations for community engagement (in the east) include:

- Determine why engagement is necessary.
- Determine who will be engaged.
- Establish an engagement committee to oversee the engagement process.
- Make a organizational commitment to the engagement process.

Leviten-Reid (2001) recommended that OP2000 engage the community. OP2000 quickly acted on this recommendation and initiated several focus groups. The Leadership Round Table (LRT) to OP2000 then decided that engagement should take the form of community members meeting regularly, and that 1 or 2 representatives from the community group would attend at the Leadership Round Table.

It seems, however, that in its haste to comply with the recommendation, little thought was put into the recruitment process or the reason for engagement. Community members were

recruited using a method of convenience rather than a well thought out exercise of determining whom they needed to recruit and the reasons for recruitment. Members were accepted not against any criteria, but rather if they were willing to become part of the engagement group.

I believe that OP2000 made the mistake of clumping all community members, who wished to become involved in the engagement group, into one homogeneous group. It was expected that all community members would have similar concerns and goals. In reality, community members come with their own sets of priorities, expectations and goals. This can create an atmosphere of competition and a division in direction.

It would have been better if OP2000 and the LRT had organized several engagements, each representing a different segment of the community, i.e. youth, single mothers, working poor, seniors, etc. This could have been done in a number of ways, either directly with members of the focal group, or through community leaders and organizations who represent or work with the focal group. OP2000 and the LRT would then have to assess their own strengths and weaknesses with regard to how it can make an impact on the community's concerns. Once it has been decided which segment of the community and which concerns can be addressed, then further engagement can be done with this community focal group. This approach will help ensure that all involved share similar goals, expectations and direction. This focused approach will also ensure that resources are concentrated on one area, ensuring a higher probability of success. A higher success ratio will give OP2000 more credibility in the community and among its partners. As OP2000 becomes proficient in the engagement process and in what it can accomplish, it can expand its engagement focus.

## **15.2 South**

The south represents relationships. Relationships are the backbone of the engagement process. Without healthy relationships engagement will not happen. Relationships are built on

trust and respect. If the community feels that they are not in an equal relationship with the organizing agency, then they will withdraw from participation. A sense of equality facilitates effective communication. The south answers the question 'who'. The organizing agency must know precisely whom it is that they need to engage. The organizing agency must take steps to make itself known in the community before it can enter into relationships. It has been suggested that it is difficult to build community support [participation] when the [organizing] agency lacks legitimacy in the community (Checkoway, 1986). My recommendations for community engagement (in the south) include:

- Have a more active community presence.
- Strengthen ties to community organizations and agencies.
- Recruitment of volunteers help OP2000 become more visible
- Help form or join organization coalitions.
- Network with community organizations and agencies to pool information.
- Enlist community organizations and agencies to engage the community.
- Develop a survey to ask the community how they would like to be engaged.
- Establish clear roles and responsibilities for OP2000 staff (paid and volunteer)
- Develop a public relations policy

OP2000 has an image problem. Part of the problem is internal. As evidenced from Heather Rogers' report (2003), there is a certain degree of ambiguity around the roles and responsibilities of LRT members. Without a clear sense of their roles and responsibilities, I would expect there would be some difficulty for LRT members to know how to interact with community individuals and groups. There was a certain amount of interaction between OP2000/LRT and community members at the Leadership Round Table (LRT) meetings, when representatives from the

Community Action Team (CAT) would attend. One interview informant pointed out the fact that LRT members never came to CAT meetings; it was always expected that CAT members would have to go to the LRT meetings. Some CAT members perceived the relationship between the CAT and OP2000/LRT as one of inequality. This resulted primarily because CAT believed that their voice was not listened to and the lines of communication were top-down. OP2000 must develop a policy that governs its relationship with the community.

OP2000 also has an image problem in the community. I sensed a tone of resentment in the voice of one interview informant when speaking about OP2000. When speaking informally with members of the community, I would ask if they had heard of OP2000. My answer was always no.

It is unrealistic to think that community members, particularly members who are experiencing marginalization, will participate in engagement when they don't know who it is that they are engaging with. Because of their invisibility, OP2000 is unfamiliar. With unfamiliarity comes distrust and fear. With increased presence comes familiarity, curiosity, a willingness to participate, the building of relationships, legitimacy and respect.

A community presence can be accomplished in a number of ways. OP2000 should sometimes engage the community, not for the purpose of gathering information, but to inform. A presence at community events a few times a year would greatly increase OP2000's visibility in the community. Strengthening connections with community organizations and agencies is recommended. Use these connections to access community members and groups, resources and information. Develop an attractive website with lots of valuable information. Use internet links to network with other community organizations and agencies. Publish a newsletter that educates the community and distribute through community partner organizations. Invite community

representative and leaders from community organizations and groups to be part of an engagement initiative. How OP2000 decides to make its presence known will depend on its resources, willingness and the available opportunities, but it is imperative that OP2000 build relationships with the community.

### **15.3 West**

The west represents reason, knowledge, and respect. The west is the planning stage of engagement. Here the questions of ‘what’ and ‘when’ need to be answered. What engagement methods will be employed? When will engagement take place? Before these questions can be answered, the organizing agency must understand that engagement is a process. Individual methods of engagement alone will not foster sustainable engagement. The organizing agency needs to take a respectful look at what it is doing, and make changes if needed. The west is also the stage of engagement where assessments are made of past endeavours.

My recommendations for community engagement (in the west) include:

- Critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of past and existing engagement plans.
- Develop an engagement policy.
- Incorporate feedback into engagement plan.
- Determine staffing, financial and resource requirements.
- Determine what methods of engagement will accommodate the level of participation.

The failure of OP2000 to develop an engagement policy and strategy is a consequence of a few factors. Role ambiguity of the LRT is one factor. An organizational unwillingness to take engagement seriously is another. The absence of an active Board of Directors also contributes. A lack of manpower (staff and volunteers) greatly inhibits the development and implementation of an engagement policy and strategy.

It is a hard thing to critically analyze past practices and efforts, but this is exactly what needs to be done. To act without knowledge, reflection, and commitment will result in more failed engagement initiatives. Dissection and rebuilding of engagement efforts must be done if OP2000 hopes to be successful in engagement. To be successful, a policy of engagement must be in place, followed, and revisited as feedback and circumstances warrant.

It also makes sense to ask the community how it wants to be engaged. The community must have a voice in how an engagement strategy will develop. Without acknowledging and incorporating their voices and ideas, engagement strategies will remain in print on a page only, and will not have a chance of being successfully implemented.

The voice of the community can be accessed through surveys, telephone interviews or newsletters or any other method that consults the community. A good way is to ask the community partners who provide services, to the focal groups that OP2000 wishes to engage, what strategies have been successful for them. When an engagement policy and strategies are developed with knowledgeable consideration for all factors, ideas and voices, it shows respect for those whom will be engaged and the engagement process.

#### **15.4 North**

The north represents movement/action. This stage of engagement will see the plan, developed in the west, come to fruition. Whatever plan is adopted needs to be supported with adequate resources and the commitment of the organizing agency.

My recommendations for community engagement (in the north) include:

- Allocate resources, including staff and financial, to the engagement process
- Put plan into action
- Modify or change the engagement plan, as necessary
- Evaluate the engagement process

Once an engagement policy and strategies have been developed, it is important to commit to what has been put in place. Commitment is more than just going through the mechanical motions of, i.e. creating a survey, making phone calls, going to meetings. Commitment means meeting challenges as they arise, changing strategies if necessary, developing strategies that fit the needs of the community and OP2000. Commitment means allocating resources to engagement and considering engagement a major part of the “business,” not a sideline that someone will get to when he/she has time. It means doing whatever is necessary to make engagement successful.

## **16.0 MY CONCLUSION**

The Community Action Team (CAT) was OP2000’s effort at community engagement. CAT disbanded in 2000, yet no one has critically looked at the engagement process to find out why and how it went wrong. This tells me that engagement of the community is not regarded as a priority. The ill-conceived effort to engage the community eventually failed. In my estimation, it was inevitable.

I began my assignment with a lot of confusion. Little information was available to me regarding the past activities of the CAT. As I spoke to people about the CAT, I realized that looking at methods of engagement would not solve the problem that OP2000 had with engaging the community. I quickly saw that what OP2000 primarily needed was not a collection of

engagement methods. It needed a complete paradigm shift in how it looked at community engagement.

For me, the medicine wheel was the most useful and logical tool to use, to analyze a system built around human interaction. It is a holistic approach to engagement that takes into consideration feelings, relationships, the gathering and exercise of knowledge, and the actions of human systems. Although engagement methods are important, they are just part of the medicine wheel's holistic approach to community engagement.

Successful, vibrant organizations have developed effective ways to engage the community by establishing goals/visions, building relationships with the community, developing strategies around the communities' needs and then carrying out engagement with the commitment to, and respect of those it engages. OP2000 cannot and will not be successful in engaging the community if it does not take engagement seriously.

**17.0 APPENDIX A**

## 17.1 Comment Summary

### Purpose

- \* Group must feel they are part of the solution, not the problem
- \* Group must feel they are making a difference for their community
- \* Group must not feel they are only filling the needs & wants of a board
- \* Must know that input is valuable
- \* Must know that they are contributing to the solution
- \* People need to know that they are a part of the solution
- \* People want to feel that they are taken seriously
- \* Must have a purpose
- \* Groups need a cause
- \* Groups need a purpose/cause
- \* Groups need to know that what they are doing is useful
- \* Groups need the responsibility to actually do something
- \* Groups need their own projects
- \* Group must have something to work towards that is possible/achievable
- \* CAT must be able to choose its own path
- \* Prior to its termination, CAT lacked purpose and goals; at that point it was little more than just a name
- \* CAT lost interest because there was nothing to do
- \* A CAT needs a purpose, and not just as a token group that fulfills some agency/organization requirement
- \* Previous CAT had no structure; no goals and direction
- \* People need to know what their purpose is before getting involved

### Ownership

- \* Must be owned and community operated
- \* Group needs autonomy
- \* Group must set their own boundaries
- \* Groups must be given autonomy
- \* Groups must determine how they proceed, when/where they meet
- \* Groups need autonomy
- \* CAT was not consumer driven

### Benefits

- \* OP2000 and communities must both benefit
  - \* There was an imbalance between the perceived and actual benefits of being a CAT member
  - \* Often community groups serve only to further the interest of social work bodies; only the social work bodies benefit
- People have little to gain from participating in a CAT and lot more to lose

### Environment

- \* An environment that connects people is important
- \* Free of “experts”
- \* Group needs to be responsive to group dynamics

- \* Physical and emotional setting must be comfortable
- \* Safe
- \* Safe
- \* Safe, convenient meeting times and space
- \* The meeting was too business like

### **Communication**

- \* Need horizontal line of communication
- \* Need horizontal line of communication
- \* Must be kept informed about developments
- \* LRT did not listen to the voice of CAT
- \* CAT was cut out of the loop
- \* CAT opinions enlisted after a decision was made
- \* CAT felt that they were not consulted on final decisions
- \* OP2000 needs to firmly establish what they want a CAT for, the function of a CAT and the expectations of the CAT
- \* CAT members did not understand what OP2000 was trying to accomplish; the goals of the CAT members and OP2000 seemed to be different
- \* CAT must have a voice
- \* Groups must meet each other with a common language
- \* Must be listened to

### **Human Relations**

- \* A sense of respect and trust must underscore the relationship between the working group and the supporting agency
- \* De-emphasize structure; emphasize people
- \* Group needs to be given respect and listened to
- \* Horizontal functional relationship
- \* People don't want to feel as if they are tokens
- \* Treat people with dignity
- \* LRT must be clear about function and expectations
- \* Must determine: why they want a CAT; who they want (characteristics, i.e. unemployed; disabled; single moms; working poor, etc); the role CAT will play; and how they will connect with potential members
- \* Roles must be clear
- \* Limitations were imposed by OP2000
- \* People don't want to feel that they are getting "lip service"
- \* LRT needs to act on the suggestions of the CAT
- \* If a group exists as an advisory group, then they would expect that their voices are heard, appreciated and acted upon
- \* It is difficult to imagine another CAT if the reason for their existence is that they exist only to fill the needs of OP2000

### **Membership**

- \* community partners must find their own CAT reps

- \* must be a cross-section of the community
- \* group must determine if membership is open vs. closed
- \* Selection of CAT reps was hap-hazard

### **Staff Involvement**

- Facilitation of meetings is useful
- OP2000 must be available for support
- OP2000 to provide support and resources
- Staff must be flexible in their accommodations to the group

### **Time**

- Groups need to progress at own rate
- Groups need to work at their own pace
- It takes 6 months before a group is organized and focussed
- Meetings are often a waste of time

### **Personal Development of Group Members**

- \* Need to gain confidence
- \* Experiences must contribute to personal development
- \* Groups need to know what to do and how to do it
- \* Leadership and how to analytical skills
- \* Skills
- \* Need to know how to produce a working plan

### **Participation challenges**

- \* Transportation, time for CAT members and OP2000 staff, meeting scheduling, childcare, frequent changes in group members, group design that will accommodate change

### **Additional Comments**

- \* It is important that the group also have fun
- \* People are important, more important than reports
- \* Consider changing the name – CAT may have a negative connotation
- \* OP2000 should stick to what it does best – working at the system level

## **18.0 APPENDIX B**

## 18.1 Factors that Influence Participants' Initial Mobilization and Continuous Involvement

Source: Joffres, C., Langille, D., Rigby, J., and Langille, D. (2002)

<b>Mobilization's Motivating Forces</b>	<b>Mobilization Barriers</b>
<p>Personal Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of issues and belief that issues need to be addressed</li> <li>• Feeling of community</li> <li>• Positive expectation</li> <li>• Participants' belief in organizational efficacy</li> </ul> <p>Value Congruency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual-organizational &amp; inter-organizational value congruency</li> </ul> <p>Organizational Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizational support</li> </ul>	<p>Personal Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived sensitive issues</li> <li>• Feelings of inadequacy</li> <li>• Fear of conflict, repercussions</li> </ul> <p>Role Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role overload</li> <li>• Role conflict</li> <li>• Fear of professional redundancy</li> </ul> <p>Community Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economically disadvantaged community</li> <li>• Aging population</li> <li>• Too few volunteers or overworked volunteers</li> </ul>
<b>Reinforcing Forces to Initial Involvement</b>	<b>Barriers/Limitations to Active Involvement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feelings of Achievement:</li> <li>• Feelings of actualization (and deemed satisfactory ratio effort/success)</li> <li>• Feelings of affiliation</li> <li>• Felt and visible</li> </ul> <p>Felt and Visible Success was fostered by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizational membership</li> <li>• Multiple partnerships</li> <li>• Organizational leadership</li> <li>• Specific organizational processes (e.g. consensual decision-making, evaluative feedback)</li> <li>• Hired staff</li> </ul>	<p>Personal Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feelings on inadequacy</li> <li>• Inter-personal conflict/lack of affiliation</li> <li>• Participants' understanding of commitment</li> </ul> <p>Organizational Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inter-group conflict</li> <li>• Members' lack of commitment</li> <li>• Specific organizational process (meeting structure and times)</li> <li>• Too tight deadlines</li> </ul> <p>Role Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role ambiguity</li> <li>• Role overload</li> </ul>

## 19.0 APPENDIX C

## 19.1 Action Research

Source: Scottish Executive: Effective Intervention Unit (2002)

### Description

Action research is an approach that enables community members to explore issues, difficulties and experiences in a collaborative and participant way to identify and test out solutions. It involves a cyclical process of identifying a problem, action planning, evaluation, and identifying findings. It is usually community led rather than led by an external expert.

### Purpose

- Planning, development and evaluation
- Build partnerships and consensus

### Resources Required

- Research skills
- Materials such as flipcharts, questionnaires, refreshments, administrative support

### Strengths

- Can be incorporated into everyday work as part of reflexive and responsive approach
- Inclusive – can be used with any group and is appropriate for socially excluded groups
- Flexible
- Responsive – ability to develop/reformulate agenda with the work
- Problem solving and test solutions

### Weaknesses

- Can lose focus unless research question is tightly defined
- May not be representative

Low.....EMPOWERMENT.....High				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
			√	√
Low..... NEED FOR SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING .....High				

### Example

The Pupil Participation Project of Edinburgh Scotland used an action research approach with adolescents with social, emotional and behavioral problems to empower them to explore issues of interest, problem-solve, and test solutions when practical. Youth identified some of the barriers to their participation in society, talked about their lives, evaluated the services they received, and proposed their own solutions to the problems they faced. Techniques used included group discussion, mapping, semi-structured interview, drama and a graffiti wall.

## 19.2 Charette (Community Planning and Design Workshop)

Source: Victoria Local Governance Association (date unknown)

### Description

A Charette is a collaborative exercise between community members and planning & design professionals to explore issues and develop strategies for a locality/community. A cross-disciplinary team facilitates the workshop, which requires a minimum of two days to adequately cover all activities. The process involves issue identification, assets and needs analysis, visioning, exploration of topics, and development of plans and strategies.

### Purpose

This approach is best suited to situations where there:

- Is a wide range of immediate issues to be addressed, but within the context of a long-term strategy
- Is a range of complex and related issues to be resolved
- Is a need to generate a sense of enthusiasm and a fresh start to community involvement and action
- Are multiple interests that may exist and a need to develop agreed strategies
- Publicity is required
- Is a need to encapsulate ideas and plans

### Resources Required

- Skills in facilitating discussion and planning exercises
- Central venue that accommodates adequate space to accommodate small group workshops
- Tables and displays
- Materials, stationary and equipment
- Advertising and promotion (this methods relies on the whole community being involved)
- Consultants
- Catering and cleaning
- Plan printing and copying

### Strengths

- Participants are directly involved in the planning and design process, improving the likelihood of strategies being supported and implemented
- The process instills a sense of collaboration and can shift perceptions of indifference
- The process encourages dialogue and can expose professionals to issues and ideas they would not otherwise encounter
- Short-term demands and expectations can be addressed, while developing long-term strategies

### Weaknesses

- If a workshop is poorly attended or poorly run, the process can be counter-productive
- Significant pressure is placed on the project team to produce within the short time-frame
- Relies heavily on group facilitation skills to generate enthusiasm and activity

- Without the days needed for the workshop, detailed strategies and designs cannot be completed

Low.....EMPOWERMENT.....High				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
		√	√	
Low..... NEED FOR SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING .....High				

#### Example

Shire of Yarra Ranges initiated a Charette to produce community ideas and strategies for improving well-being, economic vitality and environmental quality. The 2-day workshop took a hands on approach with community members directly involved in producing plans and designs, assisted by a project team of professionals. Over 60 people participated – some attended both days and others chose to drop-in for short periods. Plans and designs were displayed for discussion and comment as soon as they were produced. The workshop changed some council perceptions of which issues were priorities and clarified the community's preferences.

### 19.3 Citizen Juries

Source: Scottish Executive: Effective Intervention Unit (2002)

Source: Victoria Local Governance Association (date unknown)

#### Description

A group of 10-25 citizens, representative of the community, take evidence and deliberate on particular issues and make recommendations. Evidence can be provided by a combination of expert witnesses, written information and audio/visual presentations. The jury is led by a skilled facilitator.

#### Purpose

- To deliberate on a range of policy and planning issues

#### Resources Required

- Skilled facilitator and coordinator
- Venue, catering, expenses paid to participants
- Considerable staff time in preparation, giving evidence, responding to recommendations
- Training or briefing of jurors is required

#### Strengths

- Good for obtaining informed opinions on complex or controversial issues
- Can promote a culture of citizenship and participation
- Can help to identify solutions to problems

#### Weaknesses

- Expensive and time-consuming
- Doubt about representativeness because of small numbers
- Could exclude people with low literacy or non-English speakers

Low.....EMPOWERMENT.....High				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
			√	√
Low.....NEED FOR SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING.....High				

#### Example

The Lewisham citizens' jury met for four days in April 1996. The jury considered the question 'What can we do to reduce harm to the community and individuals from drugs?'. The 16 members of the jury were selected at random but according to a quota system so that they were representative of Lewisham's population. Over four days, jurors heard evidence from expert witnesses about drugs education and drugs and crime. The witnesses included a psychiatrist involved in the treatment of drug users, teachers, youth workers, people with experience of drug use and Council community safety and education officers.

At the end of the four days the jury produced a series of recommendations to the Council and others including the Health Service and the Police. The jury's recommendations on drug education were that the whole community should be involved, especially parents, and that a

range of people with different areas of knowledge and experience should give drugs education. In response, the Council has set up a Community Drugs Education Project which will extend to the whole borough over four years. The jury's report was sent to over 100 opinion formers in politics, the Civil Service, research organizations and the media.

#### **19.4 Citizen Panel**

Source: Victoria Local Governance Association (date unknown)

Source: Scottish Executive: Effective Intervention Unit (2002)

### Description

A group of community members (typically up to 2000 participants, representative of the whole community) are recruited for regular consultation. This contact could be by phone, written surveys, or discussion groups. Participants are asked to commit for a fixed term.

### Purpose

- Citizen panels can be used for a variety of purposes from getting prompt responses on issues to community development and planning

### Resources Required

- Ongoing or casual staff (depending upon requirement) to develop and maintain relevant databases, and questionnaire/survey development

### Strengths

- Eases the burden on the community (people who prefer not to be surveyed are spared)
- Cost effective (interviewees know when respondents are available and willing to participate)
- Provides longitudinal data
- When matched attitudinally and demographically, the panel is balanced against the whole community
- Response rates better than for other types of surveys because panel has agreed to participate
- Quick method of consultation
- Participants feel valued as long as adequate feedback is given
- Allows for partnership approach to consultation
- Can undertake research at short notice

### Weaknesses

- If random sampling is used as the basis of inclusion, the panel may not necessarily represent the community
- Extra care needed to guarantee an accurate representation on the population.
- A considerable degree of commitment is required from panel members

Low.....EMPOWERMENT.....High				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
	√	√		
Low.....NEED FOR SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING .....High				

### Example

South Lanarkshire Council has established a Citizens' Panel of 1600 people. The panel membership reflects the statistical profile of South Lanarkshire in terms of socioeconomic status, age, gender, tenure and employment status etc. Annual quality of life surveys have been carried out, including questions on drugs, personal safety and crime. Focus groups have also been used with panel members, on occasion.

## **19.5 Community Exhibitions**

Source: Victoria Local Governance Association (date unknown)

Description

Exhibitions are set up on a temporary basis at public places, and are run by staff or community representatives who answer questions from the community, give out questionnaires, and promote discussion and feedback of current local issues and problems.

#### Purpose

- Community exhibitions are useful for:
- Broader visioning exercises such as community plans or policies
- Issue development
- To enable visual material to be displayed and discussed
- As part of a broader consultation strategy

#### Resources Required

- Public venue
- Display and information material
- Questionnaires

#### Strengths

- Face-to-face meetings, enable the community to ask questions directly
- Enables people to learn and provide feedback on an issue in a non-threatening and unstructured way
- The consultation comes to them – people may have the opportunity to participate when going about their daily business, for example going to the library or visiting the park

#### Weaknesses

- Has limitations in terms of exposure and may be a roving exercise
- Can be resource-intensive in terms of staff time, unless community leaders assist

Low.....EMPOWERMENT.....High				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
√	√			
Low..... NEED FOR SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING .....High				

#### Example

Casey City Council organized a campaign to inform the community of the content of a strategy and to get feedback. As part of the campaign, community exhibitions were held day and evening in the major shopping centres. Council planners and customer service staff provided strategy literature and answered questions. Shopping centre participants appreciated staff getting out to meet the community.

## 19.6 Community Forums

Source: Scottish Executive: Effective Intervention Unit (2002)

#### Description

Ongoing groups established for consultation and participation, focus on a particular topic. They may have a fixed or open membership and can use different techniques, such as meetings, events, seminars and workshops to focus on specific issues or concerns. They should be as representative as possible of the relevant interests concerned. Use of a facilitator can help to ensure that forums run smoothly, balanced consideration is given to issues, all views are aired and a way forward is agreed upon.

#### Purpose

- To provide a wide community input to a strategic planning
- To respond to community issues or concerns

#### Resources Required

- Suitable venue
- Facilitator
- Materials/resources for chosen techniques employed
- Information, training and briefing sessions to enable effective representation and participation
- Payment of participant expenses
- Printing and stationery costs

#### Strengths

- Can allow for wide community input
- Can provide long-term community engagement
- Capacity building
- Gain knowledge and expertise from the community
- Can help generate new ideas and provide early warning of problems
- Can consider a wide range of issues and helps to determine priorities

#### Weaknesses

- Needs sufficient support and resources to sustain community involvement
- Difficult to achieve in some communities
- May not be wide ranging in who this method attracts
- Difficult to ensure genuine representation
- May be perceived as a talking shop if it doesn't focus on action

Low.....EMPOWERMENT.....High				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
	√	√	√	
Low.....NEED FOR SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING.....High				

#### Example

West Lothian Drug and Alcohol Concern is a forum open to any individual and groups who are interested in furthering the forum's objectives; which are to promote education and action on substance misuse. Three to four public events are organized each year in local communities to

investigate local concerns. The results of the discussions are fed back to the Drug and Alcohol project. Discussion helped to form an important part of the Drug and Alcohol response to a national plan for alcohol. A newsletter was produced by the forum and widely distributed in West Lothian.

## **19.7 Community Leaders**

Source: Victoria Local Governance Association (date unknown)

Description

Community leaders are identified as belonging to a group or community that can often be under-represented in generic consultation activities because of language barriers or other determinants. Community leaders can have an ongoing role and are typically trained or provided with some incentives for their involvement.

#### Purpose

- Particularly suited to communities where there is a range of different diverse backgrounds and languages.
- A desirable approach for groups often under-represented, such as youth, elderly, and those with disabilities

#### Resources Required

- Payment or reimbursement to community leaders
- Training
- Costs for actual consultation between the community leaders and those they represent
- Cost associated with venue, catering, and other presentation expenses

#### Strengths

- Engages individuals and groups in conversations regarding issues that had never been available before
- Enables participants to be heard in a preferred language, increasing the potential for meaningful input
- Provides an opportunity to engage with groups from diverse backgrounds and gather more information about core community issues that are important to each group
- Can create a base of individuals who can be engaged for a variety of consultation activities
- May increase capacity and skills of selected community leaders for further individual and community benefits

#### Weaknesses

- Data is qualitative and may be difficult to analyze

Low.....EMPOWERMENT.....High				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
	√	√	√	
Low..... NEED FOR SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING .....High				

#### Example

In the “Peer Driven Consultation in Diverse Communities” projects, six group leaders in culturally diverse social groups were identified. These leaders held informal conversations within their groups to discuss health issues. This initiative engaged 340 people from 23 community language groups as part of a major strategic planning process. Feedback was gathered and

analyzed. Because of these consultations, municipal public health unit developed practical solutions to some of the issues raised

## **19.8 E-Consultation**

Source: Victoria Local Governance Association (date unknown)

Description

E-consultation involves the use of information and communication technologies for consultation processes and activities. Typically this involves the use of a web site or electronic discussion groups (including usenets, email/listserv, discussion boards and chatrooms) for structured consultation.

#### Purpose

- Well suited for broadly defined issues or events.
- Posting of plans and reports
- The immediate nature of input/response may be particularly suited to performance reviews or citizen satisfaction exercises

#### Resources Required

- Costs related to the design, development and maintenance of a website
- Listserv discussions require a facilitator

#### Strengths

- Provides opportunities for individuals to participate who would not usually be interested in the traditional methods of consultation
- Provides flexibility in terms of time, scheduling, personal expenses
- Enables quick responses to concerns and issues
- Provides a medium whereby information can be kept current easily
- Data can be easily stored and collated

#### Weaknesses

- Inability to see, hear, move or process some types of information
- May be difficult for some to read or comprehend text
- Provides an obstacle to those who are unfamiliar with computer use
- Language difficulties not addressed

Low.....EMPOWERMENT.....High				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
√	√			
Low.....NEED FOR SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING.....High				

#### Example

Latrobe City Council has a public message board for discussion on local issues. This allows citizens to respond to topics or post their own.

## 19.9 Focus Groups

Source: Victoria Local Governance Association (date unknown)

#### Description

Groups of 2-20 people are brought together to discuss a pre-determined issue. The participants are people with a particular interest, involvement or stake in the subject being discussed and usually, the group is led by a trained facilitator.

#### Purpose

- Can be successfully used for in-depth consultation
- Can be used for multiple purposes

#### Resources Required

- Staff time for facilitation and recording of meetings (an external facilitator may be sought)
- A venue to match the group size
- Tape or video recording equipment and staff to operate it
- Refreshments
- Payment for participants
- Expense reimbursement

#### Strengths

- Useful for obtaining in-depth responses to an issue
- Lots of opportunities for deliberation and debate
- Can be very productive
- Can target specific groups

#### Weaknesses

- May not be representative of the larger community
- Some may feel inhibited in expressing non-consensus views

Low.....EMPOWERMENT.....High				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
	√	√		
Low..... NEED FOR SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING .....High				

#### Example

Scottish Youth Crime Review – the Scottish Executive commissioned for focus groups with young offenders to get their views on why young people offend, how offending might be prevented, experiences of the criminal justice system and the impact of offending on others

## 19.10 Hypothetical

Source: Victoria Local Governance Association (date unknown)

#### Description

A panel of 6-8 people, representing the viewpoints of various interests, is led through two or three issues by the facilitator. The facilitator directs the attention of the participants to

hypothetical problems requiring action-based solutions, flexibly and dynamically modifying the scenarios as participants grapple with solutions.

#### Purpose

- Useful to break-open issues and canvas a broad range of views.

#### Resources Required

- External facilitator may be required
- Promotional material distribution
- Video or audio-visual equipment and staff to operate

#### Strengths

- A forum to canvas a broad range of views around an issue in a short time

#### Weaknesses

- Is usually only the first step or one component of a broader consultation strategy
- Is not a factually-based or as reliable as other methods

Low.....EMPOWERMENT.....High				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
		√	√	
Low..... NEED FOR SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING .....High				

#### Example

The SouthEast Metropolitan Regional Office held a hypothetical to explore and discuss the provision of an integrated transport system for metropolitan Melbourne. The panel was comprised of 14 people representing the transport sector, local & state governments, developers and interest groups. Over 200 people attended as the audience. The moderator used real case scenarios, with plot twists and turns to keep the audience amused and interested in the topic. This allowed the audience to learn and to remember what they learnt.

This exercise produced excitement at new ideas and novel, yet conceivable solutions/situations.

## 19.11 Imagine

Source: Scottish Executive: Effective Interventions Unit (2002)

#### Description

This method asks people to tell stories of what works. It involves:

- Defining the issues and a set of exploratory questions
- Using the questions to draw out stories

- Dreaming how the future could be and expressing peoples' ideas as provocative propositions – ideally done in a one-day workshop
- Co-creating the dream by forming partnerships
- Celebrating the project and its achievements
- Evaluating the project

#### Purpose

- Builds partnerships and consensus
- Helps define and explore issues

#### Resources Required

- Training of core group, who can train others in technique
- Materials to take note of conversations/stories
- Suitable venue for workshops/community event
- Skilled and independent facilitation for workshop

#### Strengths

- Inclusive – all sections of the community can take part
- Based on storytelling, which is familiar and fun
- Links people who don't normally meet
- Participants learn skills
- Flexible – can be used for a wide range of issues
- Creates a shared vision
- Visions rooted in success, so should have realistic outcomes
- Generates commitment and social action

#### Weaknesses

- May be seen as strange and/or trendy
- May not be representative

Low.....EMPOWERMENT.....High				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
		√	√	
Low.....NEED FOR SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING .....High				

#### Example

Sustainability Thanet used Imagine to build a community vision for Thanet in 2020. Workshops were held with 186 local people to find out who and what they appreciated most in Thanet and what could be built on in the future. Using local people's stories and visions, a series of Vision Statements was created. A touring Visioning Conference was held over two weekends, at which 350 local people gave their views. From this, a Vision for Thanet in 2020 was produced which identifies actions and priorities for the years ahead.

### **19.12 In-Depth Interviews**

Source: Scottish Executive: Effective Interventions Unit (2002)

#### Description

In-depth interviews are usually carried out on a one-to-one basis, over a period of ½ - 2 hours. Interviews are commonly semi-structured. Telephone interviews may also be used, depending on the topic and type of participant.

### Purpose

- Suitable for complex or sensitive issues

### Resources Required

- Expenses associated with interviewing, travel, writing up and analyzing information
- Skilled interviewer to prepare questions, elicit and analyze findings
- Tape recorder, if needed

### Strengths

- Can provide more detailed feedback than group discussion
- Can elicit views/issues not previously considered
- Can be used to gain views on sensitive or complex issues
- Good for in-depth exploration of peoples' views on issues/services
- Can target specific groups

### Weaknesses

- Not guaranteed to be statistically representative
- Interviewees may feel vulnerable on their own

Low.....EMPOWERMENT.....High				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
	√			
Low..... NEED FOR SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING .....High				

### Example

The Real Deal, a project organized by a partnership between Save the Children, Centrepoin, Demos, Pilotlight and the Camelot Foundation, consulted with over 100 young people from socially excluded groups, using mostly group-based techniques. However, 53 young homeless people were consulted using in-depth interviews, as it was considered they would not be easily able to participate in discussion groups. Interviews covered community and sense of belonging, education, employment and training, leisure and social activities and transition to adulthood.

## 19.13 Open Space

Source: Scottish Executive: Effective Interventions Unit (2002)

Source: Victoria Local Governance Association (date unknown)

### Description

Open Space allows participants to set the agenda in a bottom-up process of creative problem solving. It usually consists of an event, over one to three days, in which all participants are

considered to be equal and able to break free of inhibitions created by status and structures. Participants start off in a circle and are given pieces of paper on which they write the issues they are concerned about and are willing to work on by convening or contributing to a workshop. All issues are placed on a large matrix and participants sign up for workshops to discuss and agree on action. In practice, dominant themes emerge which are relevant to community issues.

#### Purpose

- Use when the situation presents "high levels of complexity, diversity and potential for conflict"

#### Resources Required

- Facilitator experienced in the technique
- Catering
- Presentation materials, such as flip charts and wall charts
- Venue large enough to house the entire group in one seated circle and many spaces (formal or informal) for parallel discussion groups of varying sizes
- Facilities for providing each participant with a collaged set of reports

#### Strengths

- A wide variety of issues can be addressed
- New alliances can be formed across social barriers
- Participants have equal opportunity to be heard
- Generates a high level of commitment to outcomes and future action

#### Weaknesses

- Focusing on action, rather than issues, may be difficult
- May not be representative

Low.....EMPOWERMENT.....High				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
			√	√
Low..... NEED FOR SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING .....High				

#### Example

The Men and Health Development Group of the Glasgow Healthy Partnership held an Open Space event on the topic of men's health. It was attended by 135 people including, stakeholders from the health service, governments, community institutions and organizations, the media, the private sector, police and men themselves. All had only first name badges to promote equity. Twenty issues were raised and voted on, resulting in the prioritization of 44 actions that have been incorporated into a strategy for men's health.

### **19.14 Questionnaire**

Source: Victoria Local Governance Association (date unknown)

#### Description

Questionnaires can target specific groups or be delivered to the general population. They can be delivered through the mail, telephone, face-to-face, and the Internet. Questionnaires solicit responses to predetermined questions.

### Purpose

- When statistically significant responses are required
- When feedback from a large group of people, in a short time, are required
- When the budget is limited
- When straight-forward responses on an issue is required
- When rating a service or program over time

### Resources Required

- Time: time is dependent on the sample size, form of distribution and whether the questionnaire is self-delivered or contracted out
- Skills: statistical skill may be an advantage
- Cost: cost can vary, depending on the sample size, format, method of distribution, and who develops, delivers and analyzes the questionnaire

### Strengths

- Questionnaires can be distributed to a broad sample of residents
- Questionnaires are time and resource friendly
- A well developed questionnaire minimizes the time respondents need to answer questions

### Weaknesses

- Need skills to develop a questionnaire that is not too long yet will solicit the information required
- Self-completion formats are not as effective for some populations (i.e. illiterate, elderly, disabled, youth, and ESL<sup>1</sup>)
- Information gained will only be as good as the questions asked

Low.....EMPOWERMENT.....High				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
	√			
Low.....NEED FOR SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING.....High				

### Example

Edinburgh Women's Safety Working Group carried out a questionnaire survey of Edinburgh women to find out their feelings on personal safety, to gauge the prevalence of violence in their lives and to learn about the services they used. A self-completion questionnaire was distributed through community groups, workplaces, at train and bus stations and supermarkets. The questionnaire was translated into ethnic languages, large print and Braille, on request.

<sup>1</sup> ESL = English as a second language

### **19.15 Steering/Advisory Committee**

Source: Victoria Local Governance Association (date unknown)

#### Description

These committees are established to provide input and overview for either a particular project or issue (steering committee) or on an ongoing basis on specific issues (advisory committee).

Steering committee members will have some sort of stake in the issue or process being discussed

or developed. Advisory committee members may have a specific skill set or knowledge base relevant to the emerging strategy or policy.

#### Purpose

- Suited to overseeing developing projects, issues or long-term and targeted strategies

#### Resources Required

- Facilitation skills
- Chairing skills

#### Strengths

- Provides detailed analyses of project issues
- Participants gain an understanding of other perspectives, leading towards compromise

#### Weaknesses

- General public may not embrace committee's recommendations
- Members may not achieve consensus
- Sponsors must accept the need for give and take
- Time and labour intensive

Low.....EMPOWERMENT.....High				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
			√	√
Low.....NEED FOR SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING .....High				

#### Example

Twenty youth formed the Street of Harmony committee. They were asked by Wellington Shire Council to perform a mapping and scoping exercise to identify projects and programs that could involve young people. The committee developed a survey and undertook consultation with community groups, businesses and other young people. The project produced a database of youth programs, which the youth used to recommend issues and projects to focus on.

## 20.0 APPENDIX D

## **20.1 Principles of Engagement**

Source: iPlan (2004)

### **Clarity of purpose**

- Understand clearly why the engagement is occurring, and its context, in order to plan and resource an effective process.
- Ensure the choice of engagement techniques is suitable for the objectives of the community engagement process, the target community and the time and resources available.
- Be clear about how participants can influence the decisions that may be made and, equally important, what cannot be influenced.

- Be clear about the desired outcome.
- Be clear about whom should be engaged to achieve the purpose.

### **Commitment**

A demonstration of commitment is important to establishing and maintaining credibility. Without adequate demonstration, the whole process can be undermined.

- Show commitment by allocating sufficient time and resources to the community engagement processes.
- Ensure senior level commitment is visible, that commitment given can be achieved and that those responsible for the process or parts of the process are adequately skilled and prepared.
- Provide and encourage feedback during the process.
- Properly record and document the process and feedback so that participants (and others) can see if and how their input has influenced the process and its outcomes.
- Make community engagement integral to your normal development assessment and plan making practices and operations.

### **Communication**

Community engagement is primarily about communication, the two-way process of providing accurate and timely information, and demonstrating that feedback is being heard.

- Communicate openly, honestly and accountably with those you are seeking to engage.
- Ensure that the team engaging with the community is well informed so that it can answer questions during the process.
- Remember that communication is multi-faceted. It does not just include information giving but information gathering, information sharing, collaborative discussion and decision making.
- Clearly communicate the purpose and limitations of the community engagement process at the outset. Agree to the basic procedures and mechanisms at the planning stage.
- Avoid creating false expectations about what community engagement can achieve.
- Acknowledge community input and the time and resources people put into the process.
- Communicate well with your peers and avoid duplication of process. Many communities, particularly those that require special consideration, are faced with an ongoing stream of agencies aiming to consult with them, often on similar matters.

### **Evidence**

Good engagement practice is based on sound research and quality information.

- Use latest available research and a sound understanding of history in order to plan the process, and who should be involved.
- Provide quality information to the participants at different stages during the process.
- Ensure accuracy and consistency of information throughout the engagement.

### **Flexibility and responsiveness**

Engagement plans have to be flexible during the course of a process; timetables may change, comments may require change, the political environment may change.

- Be flexible at both the planning and implementation stages.

- Be prepared to continually review and revise the way you engage the community during the process.
- Select a range of techniques that enable different communities or sectors to participate effectively.

### **Timeliness**

It is important that participants know how long an engagement process is expected to last, and when feedback is expected at each stage of the process.

- Be clear about the time you have for the task.
- Ensure participants receive information in enough time to make effective contributions.
- Inform participants as to when they can expect feedback on their contributions.
- Make sure that feedback is given to participants on time.

### **Inclusiveness**

Being inclusive means understanding who is likely to be interested in, or feel the impact of, a particular plan or development.

- Aim to be as inclusive as possible but accept that in few circumstances is it feasible to involve everybody.
- Get to know and understand the communities you want to engage.
- Acknowledge and respect their diversity.
- Accept different agendas, but ensure that dominant special interest groups are not the only voices heard.
- Choose a variety of engagement techniques that offer the widest possible opportunities to participate.
- Avoid jargon and technical language.
- Aim for accessibility
- Consider the timing, location and style of engagement events and strategies, as well as the support available to participants (such as translators, childcare, out-of-pocket expenses).
- Pay particular attention to the needs of groups that tend to be under represented in an engagement associated with development assessment and plan making.

### **Collaboration**

Leading practice processes require early involvement of community interests at a level that is appropriate for their involvement.

- Adjust for scales of involvement – different interests require different involvement along the engagement spectrum.
- Aim for a participatory approach to development assessment and plan making, particularly in larger, more complex processes.
- Involve the community as early as possible in the process.
- Seek community input at the planning stage of a community engagement process, particularly in the selection of engagement techniques.
- Work with other agencies operating in the area to avoid repetitive consultations with a community on the same or similar subject matter.

**Continuous learning**

- Monitor and evaluate as you go – modify your approach as necessary.
- Encourage community feedback on the process itself as well as the subject of the engagement.
- Build on past experience – acknowledge mistakes so that you can learn from them.
- Find out what has happened before in an area relevant to the engagement process subject matter – past consultations may have occurred with or without success.
- Report back within your organization to ensure the organization learns from the process.

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