

Friendship Centre Movement
Best Practices in

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

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Aboriginal Friendship Centres are the country's most significant off-reserve Aboriginal service infrastructure. The National Association of Friendship Centres, or NAFC, is a network of 118 Friendship Centres from coast to coast to coast. The NAFC was established in 1972 to represent, nationally, the growing number of Friendship Centres that had emerged across Canada.

There are 118 Friendship Centres across Canada and in many cities and towns, Friendship Centres are the only providers of culturally-enhanced programs and services to urban Aboriginal residents. For over 50 years, Friendship Centres have been supporting the transition of Aboriginal people from rural, remote and reserve life to an urban environment. For many Aboriginal people, Friendship Centres are the first point of contact to obtain referrals to programs and services.

The overall purpose of Friendship Centres is to provide tools for Aboriginal people to succeed in all areas of Canadian society

Friendship Centres were one of the first institutions that allowed urban Aboriginal people the opportunity to acquire knowledge and develop skills and experience as administrators of service delivery institutions. Through the devolution of the administration and delivery of the AFCP to the NAFC in 1996, conditions for the long-term development of modern Aboriginal governance were created.

You will find additional information on our activities on the NAFC website at www.nafc.ca

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The Institute On Governance (IOG) is a Canadian, non-profit think tank that provides an independent source of knowledge, research and advice on governance issues, both in Canada and internationally.

Governance is concerned with how decisions important to a society or an organization are taken. It helps define who should have power and why, who should have voice in decision-making, and how account should be rendered.

Using core principles of sound governance – legitimacy and voice, direction, performance, accountability, and fairness – the IOG explores what good governance means in different contexts.

We analyze questions of public policy and organizational leadership, and publish articles and papers related to the principles and practices of governance. We form partnerships and knowledge networks to explore high priority issues.

Linking the conceptual and theoretical principles of governance to the world of everyday practice, we provide advice to governments, communities, business and public organizations on how to assess the quality of their governance, and how to develop programs for improvement.

You will find additional information on our activities on the IOG website at www.iog.ca

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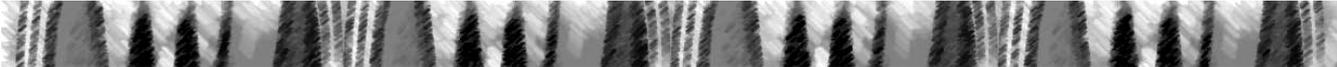
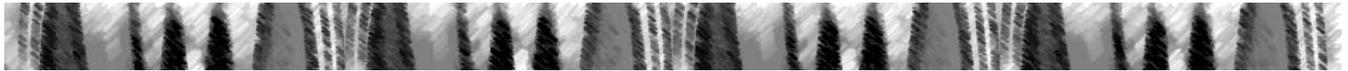


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INTRODUCTION

A. Context of the Paper

The Friendship Centre Movement in Canada has grown significantly over the past forty years. The first Friendship Centres began providing services to people migrating to and residing in urban areas in the 1950's. By 1972, when the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) became incorporated, there were 45 centres. Today, there are 118 Friendship Centres, as well as 7 Provincial Territorial Associations (PTAs) across Canada. Throughout this period of growth, the various Friendship Centres have introduced a number of different governance, management and service delivery models. Currently, there is no national documentation that offers a snapshot of the various models used by the Friendship Centres.

At its 36th Annual General Meeting held in July 2007, the NAFC highlighted the need to document the continuum of models that exist within the Friendship Centre Movement. The members of the NAFC adopted Resolution #07-04, which reads as follows:

Best Practices in Management

Whereas:	There exists a number of governance, management and program/service delivery models throughout the Friendship Centre Movement
And Whereas	There is no national documentation that provides a snapshot of models
Therefore Be It Resolved:	That the NAFC engage in a national review and assessment process to document the continuum of models that do exist in the areas noted herein

B. Method

The NAFC contracted the Institute On Governance (IOG), an Ottawa-based think tank, to conduct a national review and assessment process. The process occurred in two phases; the first phase entailed a brief literature review of best practices in governance and management in the not for profit sector in North America. While there is little in this literature that focuses on Aboriginal examples, the review nonetheless provided some valuable illustrations of best practices in the larger non-profit sector.

The second phase centred on eleven best practice case studies within the Friendship Centre Movement. Relying on a group of regional experts, personnel at the NAFC identified appropriate candidates at the national, regional and local levels to document a variety of best practices along subject lines suggested by the literature review. Each case study participant completed a questionnaire developed by the Institute. A telephone interview then supplemented this information and the IOG drafted the case study. The draft was then shared with each case study participant to ensure accuracy and completeness.

C. Organization of the Paper

This paper synthesizes the literature review and the case studies. The paper is divided into eleven best practice chapters, each consisting of one best practice category. Each chapter is divided into three sections. The first summarizes the literature review; the second details the Friendship Centre case study; and the third section offers a conclusion that integrates the literature review and the case study by highlighting similarities and differences between the two.

The last chapter discusses the common themes throughout the case studies, and offers possible areas on which the NAFC may wish to focus future attention.

The best practice categories and associated Friendship Centre case studies are:

1. Board Governance – Labrador Friendship Centre
2. Executive Leadership – United Native Friendship Centre
3. Staffing – Cariboo Friendship Centre
4. Volunteers – Grande Prairie Friendship Centre
5. Strategic Planning – Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres
6. Evaluation – Timmins Native Friendship Centre
7. Adaptive Capacity – Skookum Jim Friendship Centre
8. External Relations – National Association of Friendship Centres
9. Sustainability – Val-d’Or Native Friendship Centre
10. Fundraising – Combination of all of the above Friendship Centres
11. Human Resource Management – Prince George Friendship Centre

Having outlined the broad organization of the paper, we now turn to the first chapter featuring the Labrador Friendship Centre and its approach to board governance.

CHAPTER 1: BOARD GOVERNANCE

Labrador Friendship Centre

A. Literature Review

The Board of Directors of an organization can be critical to its success or failure. Beyond providing oversight over the financial health of an organization, effective boards lead on various strategic and management matters. The literature on effective boards discusses in detail the roles that boards can and should play; the critical importance of proper board leadership; and the need to find the right fit of Board Members. (We look at each of these three elements in turn.)

The Role of the Board

A Board of Directors should not only provide a clear sense of the organization's mission, but also lead the organization to better performance. In some cases, an organization may rely on its Board Members for their networking contacts and fundraising abilities. In other cases, Board Members may fill some work function of the organization. Plumptre and Laskin assert that the Board can perform any combination of the following tasks:

- ♦ **Ensuring the organization's financial health** (including budgeting and adhering to the budget, ensuring sound accounting systems, fundraising, etc)
- ♦ **Ensuring sound relationships** (fostering key and new relationships, communication and marketing strategies, speaking engagements, etc)
- ♦ **Ensuring high performance** (deciding how to measure it and being actively involved in collecting information)
- ♦ **Communicating or advocating effectively** (representing and promoting the organization's mission)
- ♦ **Developing and updating a longer-term plan** (thereby providing a frame of reference for fund-raising, recruitment and facilities planning)

- ♦ **Ensuring the existence of a sound governance framework** (drafting and ratifying core documents such as bylaws and articles of incorporation as well as the policies, practices and conventions that define how the governance process is supposed to work and who will make decisions)¹

The role of the Board will also depend on its 'governance capital' - that is, what each individual Board Member can offer in terms of intellectual abilities, political or social connections, and 'reputational' capital in the community.²

An important element of a successful board is the ability to self-evaluate effectively. This is with regards to individual Board Members, as well as the work and role of the Board as a whole.

The Chair

A successful Board Chair is crucial to the overall health of the Board. The primary role of the Chair is to provide strategic leadership in partnership with the CEO. When appointing a Board Chair, it is important to pay attention to what the job will entail, what capabilities are needed, and whether prospective appointees possess those capabilities. Prospective appointees must also demonstrate that they are able to make the necessary time commitment.

To fulfill his or her role, the Chair will use a number of levers, including: setting priorities; shaping board culture; initiating board evaluations; organizing the Board's calendar and agendas; establishing how board meetings are run; overseeing appointments to committees; establishing task forces and setting terms of reference; bringing in new blood; strengthening external relationships; and reviewing the CEO's performance.³ Chairs of effective boards will take deliberate steps to create a well-integrated group built on trust and willingness to share. For their part, Board Members will recognize some element of accountability towards the Chair for their own performance.

Plumtre maintains that the 'soft stuff' of interpersonal skills, group dynamics, and board-management relations is often more important to improving governance than the development of written policies and procedures. The Chair and the CEO need to work together. Collaboration is particularly useful in identifying organizational priorities; developing strategy; setting the Board agenda; determining the frequency and length of board meetings; and preparing documentation for board meetings.

Plumtre and Laskin stress the importance of creating and maintaining a good partnership relationship between the Board and the staff of the organization. It is important for the staff to support the work of the Board and vice versa. This task is the responsibility of the chair along with the CEO. The chair, with the CEO and possibly other members of staff and board, must define how collaboration will occur. Where there may be some overlap

1 Plumtre, Tim and Barbara Laskin, From Jeans to Jackets: Navigating the Transition to More Systematic Governance in the Voluntary Sector, (Ottawa: Institute on Governance, 2003), 3-5.

2 Plumtre, Tim, Not a Rocking Chair: How Chairs can Provide Strategic Leadership to Public Purpose Institutions, (Ottawa: Institute on Governance, 2007), 3.

3 Ibid, 4.

between the work of the Board and that of staff, managing relationships and communicating openly are of utmost importance. Indeed, Crutchfield and McLeod Grant maintain that high impact organizations are often led equally by the Executive Director and the Board.⁴ This is well reflected in the following quote from Cyril Houle:

Both the Board and the executive will be helped in their relationship with one another if each of them understands the need for the other to be capable and powerful. Curiously enough, some people have the idea that the Board-executive system is merely a safeguard against the weakness of one of the other of the two parties. This 'seesaw' principle may be true for short periods of time, but in the long run it is fatal to sound operation. Analysis of the leading institutions in society suggests that an institution flourishes only when it is conducted by both an effective board and an effective executive – and when both are able to work together.⁵

Board Members

Vic Murray asserts that the effective performance of boards relies to a great extent on a well-planned system of board recruitment, selection, orientation, development and evaluation. This process ensures that Board Members know what is expected of them, are committed to the organization's mission and possess the skill and knowledge needed to make good decisions.⁶ Another key to a successful board is the ability to self-evaluate effectively. This applies to individual Board Members as well as to the work and role of the Board as a whole.

Continuity in a board is also important in order to provide for a good combination of experience with new energy and ideas.

B. Labrador Friendship Centre

'A committed, disciplined board that understands client needs'

Turning from the literature review to a case study within the Friendship Centre Movement, the Labrador Friendship Centre (LFC) marks a best practice in the sphere of board governance. The LFC has existed for thirty-five years. Starting from an organization of two people, it now has a staff of forty-five to fifty, up to one hundred volunteers and accumulated assets in excess of ten million dollars. The ten to fifteen programs and services offered by the LFC include: a family centre, seniors program, an arts and crafts shop and a youth career development centre. The Friendship Centre serves about 15,000 Aboriginal people throughout the region of Labrador.

4 Plumptre, Tim and Barbara Laskin, *From Jeans to Jackets: Navigating the Transition to More Systematic Governance in the Voluntary Sector*, (Ottawa: Institute on Governance, 2003), 5; Crutchfield, Leslie and Heather McLeod Grant, *Forces for Good: The Six Practices of High-Impact Nonprofits*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 174.

5 Houle, Cyril O., *Governing Boards: Their Nature and Nurture*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1989), 88.

6 Murray, Vic, "Managing the Governance Function: Developing Effective Boards of Directors," in *Management of Nonprofit and Charitable Organizations in Canada*, (Markham: LexisNexis Canada, 2006), 83–84.

Throughout the life of the LFC, the Board of Directors has been reasonably strong. What is the reason for this? As current Executive Director, Stanley Oliver explains, there have been two key factors to the Board's success: 1) There are clearly set out roles and responsibilities; and 2) the Board Members understand and are committed to the organization's mission and are involved at a grassroots level.

The organizational structure at the LFC is very formal. The roles and responsibilities of the staff, the committees, and the Board are well defined and generally adhered to. The LFC's Constitution governs the Board, including what standing committees there should be. The constitution is a strong living document, which is amended if the need arises. This helps the organization maintain a structure that both fits its purpose and can evolve over time. The Policy Manual of the LFC includes job descriptions for the entire staff – a measure that helps direct the Board on the areas for which it is and is not responsible. Recently, a flow chart establishing decision-making processes was developed. Mr. Oliver points out that there is sometimes a fear that structures will become overly formalized, which could inhibit effectiveness. However, ensuring that formal structures with a degree of flexibility exist is the basis for a well functioning, accountable organization.

Mr. Oliver describes the LFC Board of Directors as a 'policy oriented board.' The principal role of the Board is oversight and policy development. There is an Advisory Committee for each program made up of staff and Board Members. The Committees work in cooperation with the staff. Outcomes of committee deliberations are taken back to the larger board, which then discuss the issues brought up and makes decisions and recommendations.

The Executive Director meets with Committee Managers to ensure a consistent and coordinated report to the Board. This process ensures that the role of the Board is limited to providing oversight and advice rather than mediation of any disagreements. Coordination at the committee level contributes to the positive relationship between the Board and Staff. Further, Senior Staff and Frontline Workers alike are involved in advising the Board. There exists general good communication between the Board and the staff—a feature that is facilitated by the Board Chair and the Executive Director.

Clarity around the role of the Board facilitates thoughtful oversight of the entire organization rather than 'knee-jerk' reactions to everyday situations. Notably, the Board does not involve itself in the day-to-day activities of the organization. Mr. Oliver explains that this was not always the case:

There was a situation some years ago when the chair of the Board was involved in the day-to-day running of the organization. It did not work for the organization, and the chair only lasted a couple of years.

Though not involved in micro-management of daily Friendship Centre activities, many Board Members are nonetheless implicated in some way in the activities of the Friendship Centre. They come to know the members of the Friendship Centre or volunteer time in one of its programs – examples of how the Board Members participate at a grassroots level. The result of such involvement is that Board Members gain an in-depth understanding of the needs of the community members and are well positioned to make decisions about overall vision and direction based on this insight. Oliver emphasizes that some of the Board Members have even formally used the



services offered by the Friendship Centre. This is part of the diversity of the Board – a feature that enhances its contribution to the Friendship Centre.

Turning to the composition of the Board, there are ten Board Members in total. Seven are Aboriginal and three are non-Aboriginal; all contribute something different and bring various kinds of connections in the community. Board Members included a retired British Marine, a single mother, an ex-banker and a youth representative. Though there have been challenging times for the Board over the years – largely due to a loss of expertise – Mr. Oliver believes that the current board possesses a good combination of experience and new blood. Board Members are elected at the Annual General Meeting for a term of two years. The terms are staggered so that every year five board positions of the ten available positions are up for renewal.

In Mr. Oliver's view, the Board works well together because it interacts based on Aboriginal values. Its monthly meetings operate on a consensus building model, which Mr. Oliver says works well with ten Board Members. The Board also makes sure to accommodate the needs of members – for example, if there are Board Members with literacy challenges. Its foundation in Aboriginal values and practices enables the Board to examine issues from the standpoint of a typical Aboriginal community member when necessary. The Board can do this well because its members have the experience and make the effort to ensure they understand the challenges and issues facing urban Aboriginal people. They are aware of community needs not only because they are compassionate but also because they interact regularly with the people the Friendship Centre serves.

The current Chair lets staff lead and manage their own daily job function. According to Mr. Oliver, this is the great strength of the Chair. The Chair is well informed - facilitating confidence in and support of the decisions of staff and management, and has a strong relationship with the Executive Director. The roles of both parties are well-defined and well understood – to provide leadership in board decision-making on the one hand and to implement and advise the chair on the other.

The Board Chair and Executive Director meet once weekly and at that time the Executive Director informs the Chair on the happenings of the organization. At board meetings the Chair will subsequently introduce the issue and invite the Executive Director to supply the details – a procedure that works well because roles and authority are well-defined.

Mr. Oliver describes the challenges related to ensuring an effective Board of Directors:

From a staff point of view, the challenge is what to include the Board in [vis-à-vis decision making]. It should not be the day-to-day stuff, but at the same time you do not want the Board to overturn certain decisions that you have made [as Executive Director] because it pulls authority out from under you. The question is when to inform and when to seek direction from a board perspective, the challenge is how much time you can put in as a volunteer Board Member and how much to get involved in the day-to-day stuff.

To make certain that the quality of the Board is maintained, Mr. Oliver intends to develop a strategic plan at the Board level. He hopes that this process will yield an evaluation procedure for assessing the Board and its members – all part of ensuring that the proper formal structures for promoting a sustained impact at a board and organizational level are in place.

C. Conclusions

In the area of board governance, there are many points of overlap between the literature review and the case study as well as some unique features within the case study. The Board of Directors at the LFC leads the organization in strategic matters and stays out of day-to-day management. As in the literature review, the Board of the LFC is diverse and well connected in the community. There are clearly communicated roles and responsibilities and a good relationship between the staff and the Board. In particular, the Executive Director and Board Chair operate as a team.

There is one best practice demonstrated by the LFC that the literature did not stress, however, the case study makes it clear that board decisions on strategic matters are based on a well-grounded understanding of the Friendship Centre's services and the needs of its clients. Aboriginal values further enhance the Board's work and allow it to make decisions that will strengthen both the Friendship Centre's organizational culture and its mission.

The proposed work on a strategic plan and an approach to evaluating the Board and its members will mark a further convergence between the practices of the LFC and good governance practices recognized in the literature.

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CHAPTER 2: EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

United Native Friendship Centre

A. Literature Review

The organizations studied by Crutchfield and McLeod Grant cited lack of talent as the second most significant barrier – after lack of funding – to increasing the impact of an organization. Whereas the leadership of for-profits is often recruited from within, leaders for non-profit organizations are generally recruited from outside the organization. This is perhaps due to the large amount of time non-profit organizations must invest in fundraising. For-profits, by contrast, might well put that time to investment in people.⁷ It is nonetheless important for non-profit organizations to cultivate internal leadership as a means to fill important leadership roles and sustain the impact of the organization.

Successful CEOs come in all personalities and with varying characteristics. Thomas Wolf, author of *Managing a Nonprofit Organization in the Twenty-First Century*, lists some of key abilities a leader of a non-profit organization would ideally possess:

- ♦ **Vision** regarding the organization's niche both now and into the future; likely opportunities and dangers; and the organization's mission.
- ♦ **Community Engagement**, including a knowledge of constituent needs, an instinct about how to serve them and an ability to work with them; knowledge of the community as a whole and the ability to create relationships; and a willingness to engage in work that at once reflects and promotes change within the community.
- ♦ **Organizational Management**, understood as an ability to articulate the organization's mission; to generate excitement in the Board and staff; to create a sense of importance and commitment among Board Members, Staff and Volunteers; to possess good instincts about the extent of risk that is desirable for an organization.
- ♦ **Personal Attributes** including clarity (personally and professionally); personal vision and self-knowledge; comfort with change and ambiguity; engagement with the world; inquisitiveness and creativity.⁸

7 Letts, Christine, William Ryan and Allen Grossman, High Performance Nonprofit Organizations: Managing Upstream for Greater Impact, 177.

8 Wolf, Thomas, Managing a Nonprofit Organization in the 21st Century, (New York: Fireside, 1999), 335-337.

There are some common features of CEOs in successful non-profits. Beyond putting their own interests aside for the sake of the organization and the cause, they also share power – especially with other executives who possess complementary skills. A powerful non-profit organization has not only a strong leader but also a strong second-in-command, strong management teams, and strong leaders throughout the organization. This type of collaborative model is important in non-profit organizations because they often operate in complex environments. With many internal and external stakeholders, they face challenges requiring a diversity of skills that cannot be found in one person.⁹

Crutchfield and McLeod Grant suggest that an effective way to model power-sharing is to have an Executive Director in charge of external leadership. This director would be concerned with vision, strategy, issues and relationship-building. Meanwhile, the chief operating officer (COO) or executive vice-president will fill the role of internal manager, focusing on operational issues.¹⁰ It is then important also to share leadership with the rest of the executive management team, so that these are empowered to do their jobs and are more likely to remain with the organization. Thea Vakil refers to this as “decentralizing the loci of authority within the vertical structure of the organization.” Vakil argues that it is also important to pay attention to the horizontal structures of an organization or the linkages between the vertical hierarchies. With an effective horizontal structure, the leaders of the organization coordinate their work in order to overcome the gaps and barriers that inevitably arise from the division of labour. Tools to achieve this include information systems and taskforces.¹¹

B. United Native Friendship Centre

With the support of a strong and empowered staff, the management team at the United Native Friendship Centre (UNFC) in Fort Frances Ontario run the organization like a “well-oiled machine.” In operation since 1973 and with a staff of more than 30, the Friendship Centre’s equation for success is a mixture of formally defined roles, well communicated responsibilities, shared approaches and complimentary personalities.

The management team at the UNFC consists of four people: the Executive Director, the Program Director, the Finance Manager, and the Executive Assistant. There had previously been an Office Manager but this position was eliminated due to funding restrictions. Between them, these four individuals manage forty staff members and seventeen programs within three buildings.

Many years ago, the UNFC ran quite differently. The staff had voting privileges as part of the UNFC membership and this caused some problems. Staff members were able to vote for a Board Member of their choice – some of whom were family members of the staff. In addition, there was a high degree of micromanaging within the Friendship Centre. While this situation has changed, the Executive Director stresses that change is slow and incremental.

9 Letts, Ryan and Grossman, 154-156.

10 Ibid, 163.

11 Vakil, Thea, “Planning and Organizing For Results,” in *Management of Nonprofit and Charitable Organizations in Canada*, (Markham: LexisNexis Canada, 2006), 302.

The first step to improving the structure of the UNFC was to develop a Strategic Plan. The members of the Board and all employees left town for a few days to work on the development of a plan – an occasion that offered them a chance to sit down together, decide where they wanted to go next, and identify how they would work as a team towards attaining the organization’s vision. The Strategic Plan still provides guidance and authority to the present Executive Director, Sheila McMahon. Ms. McMahon sees her job as making decisions about how to best implement the Strategic Plan, which has provided a collective directive issued by the Board and Staff.

At the Friendship Centre today, the management structure has well-defined responsibilities and the roles of the management and staff members are respected. The Program Director deals with most internal issues. She works one-on-one with the Program Coordinators to ensure that programs are running smoothly. The Executive Director focuses largely on external relations. She works with the Board of Directors, deals often with the community, and is involved in proposal writing and other external relations functions. As Executive Director, she has the ultimate authority within the organization and thus deals with any outstanding personnel issues in partnership with the Program Director. However, the two directors respect their two distinct areas of authority and work well to lead the organization in a complimentary way. Since the Program Director and the Executive Director are based in two separate buildings, program coordinators working in the Executive Director’s building will sometimes approach her directly rather than speaking with the Program Director. Yet this flexibility works well within a strong structure of formal responsibility and authority.

The Finance Manager takes care of all financial matters – no easy task within the constraints of the limited core funding available. As Ms. McMahon explains, the Finance Manager has a knack for seeing what needs to be done within the Friendship Centre and to ensure that programs continue to run with the funding that is available. The Executive Assistant, finally, performs a huge array of tasks. She is responsible for employee benefits, leased employees, time sheets, board minutes, the calendar of the Executive Director and many other support functions.

The “management team” holds bi-weekly meetings. The Program Director holds monthly meetings with Program Coordinators and provides quarterly financial reports to the Financial Manager. Beyond the bi-weekly meetings, the Program Director and Executive Director meet regularly as needed. The Executive Assistant works directly with the Executive Director; the Finance Manager and Executive Director meet on a regular basis. This regular contact ensures that all members of the management team remain aware of any issues arising within the different areas and can coordinate responses, tasks and responsibilities. Through regular contact and communication, the management team ensures that they take a consistent approach with staff. Ms. McMahon explains:

It is important to ensure consistency – that everyone is on the same page regarding any detail and the overall as well. We [the management team] can disagree but we must talk it out – and we are able to do that. We make sure that we are not putting it out there to staff that the management team is in disagreement. If the management are fighting, then staff is going to follow suit.

It is no easy feat for a management team to work together successfully. This requires a structure with well-defined and respected boundaries, strong communication and coordinated management actions. Other important elements also contribute to this successful management structure:

For one, the Program Director, Executive Director and Finance Manager have all been with the UNFC for over fifteen years – a continuity which no doubt provides stability and a basis for concentrating on improving various aspects of the Friendship Centre.

Second, Ms. McMahon emphasizes complimentary personalities as another recipe for success. While the Executive Director can be very direct, the Program Director takes the time to foster relationships – a combination that works well.

Third, the management team also respects traditional culture and values and the strong influence these have within the Friendship Centre. The Executive Director describes herself as a traditionalist and sees the community as the most important element of the organizational structure:

Within the organization, the community is on top, then the Board of directors, then the ED. The Friendship Centre Movement is a feeling, not just a mandate; it's a community, based on our membership... Every practice within the Friendship Centre is based on cultural values such as respect. All the programs are based on Aboriginal teachings and mutual respect... It is important to 'walk the walk' [with regards to how Aboriginal values are incorporated into the Friendship Centre]. I am a traditionalist. While the Program Director is non-Aboriginal, she has received a feather from Elders; she knows the culture and respects it. This is very important.

The Executive Director maintains a strong and positive relationship with both the community and the Board of Directors. Elders in the Friendship Centre offer guidance to staff and management team and are respected as a crucial component of good management within a traditional cultural context.

This community-centred approach is complimented by a similar management style toward staff members. The Executive Director, for example, maintains an open-door policy. She believes it is important to have a Friendship Centre that is family-oriented and in which staff members are healthy in all respects. Staff members are encouraged to approach the Executive Director with any professional or personal problems they may be encountering. A fourth key to the success of this Friendship Centre is that there are high expectations of employees. Staff members and especially Program Coordinators are encouraged to take leadership roles in fulfilling their daily tasks. Program Coordinators have substantial independence and exercise control over their programs. The management team trusts that Program Coordinators will make the right decisions and supports their involvement in other relevant agencies and outside committees. The Program Coordinators represent the Friendship Centre at external meetings and report back to management. As an integral part of the management

structure, they must be competent in both programming and supervising. Those who are not good supervisors generally do not last in that role; the management team takes care to ensure that the right staff members are in place so that leadership is strong and effective at all levels of the organization.

As a further source of empowerment, all employees have input into personnel policies and formal policy changes. Because staff size has doubled in the past decade, it is crucial to have policies in place that are flexible working documents. Policies should be capable of integrating input from staff about their changing needs while at the same time providing structure and rules. Though it can be difficult to ensure total consistency of application, appropriate formal structures ensure at least that staff know and agree to what is expected of them. This combination of positive staff-management relationships and high expectations of staff has led to a low turnover rate of employees within the Friendship Centre.

A few challenges remain for this management team, such as ensuring staff buy-in, incorporating input from staff while deciding what suggestions to not implement – even motivating staff. Monthly staff meetings are crucial tools for gaining staff input and giving presentations to make staff aware of new programs or initiatives. And funding, finally, is always a challenge. As Ms. McMahon states it, “You make improvements and get everything in place for success and then the funding is still a big hurdle – it can be very disheartening.”

Nonetheless, the positive impact of effective executive leadership can be felt throughout the UNFC and even within the larger community, where the organization has a great reputation. Says Ms. McMahon:

Our reputation has expanded. Clients go there because they know they will be respected. Community members now need a lot more support and the staff are really good at balancing the needs of community members in a way that helps the membership trust the staff. Other agencies also recognize the value of our service.

C. Conclusions

The good practice elements of executive leadership in the United Native Friendship Centre line up to a large extent with the literature review on best practices outside of the Friendship Centre Movement. The management team at UNFC is strong with regard to vision, community engagement, organizational management and personal attributes. The management team members effectively divide up responsibility and respect their distinct lines of authority in a way that improves the overall management of the organization. They provide a strong, unified structure of executive leadership that both respects staff and empowers it to increase the effectiveness of the Friendship Centre and improve the quality of its service. The management team leads by example – and encourages managers and supervisors throughout the organization to do the same.

As with board governance, an important 'value added' at the UNFC, beyond the literature presenting best practices is the emphasis it places on Aboriginal culture as the foundation effective leadership. Traditional culture and values are not only integrated into the structure of the organization but are in fact the very source from which management derives its authority, guidance and managing style.

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CHAPTER 3: STAFFING

Cariboo Friendship Centre

A. Literature Review

The literature on high impact non-profit organizations makes it clear that these organizations have strong leadership not only at the top but throughout the organization. Empowerment of employees is critical to the success of a non-profit organization. Letts, Ryan and Grossman, for example, emphasize the role that employees should play in developing the product. High impact organizations support the passion and creativity of their staffs by creating conducive work environments and harnessing staff talent.¹²

Employees of non-profit organizations are often recruited for their passion and commitment to the cause. Nonetheless, to improve their chances of staying in the long term, they have to be properly compensated with financial and other benefits. Ten of the twelve organizations that Crutchfield and McLeod Grant studied paid their employees at the higher end of the non-profit wage scale. To reinforce this point, the authors cite a study finding that non-profit executives in the United States who were dissatisfied with their compensation were twice as likely as satisfied executives to leave within a year.

There are also other tools for retaining valuable staff – for example, the creation of non-management career paths that highly skilled employees can pursue if they have no management aspirations. Also, it is important to lay off staff-members who under-perform. Otherwise organizational effectiveness and efficiency suffer; and talented staff members can become demoralized when they see underperformers rewarded or tolerated.¹³

Wolf makes a critical point about administrative positions: while it is important to staff an organization with people who are flexible, creative and believe strongly in the mission of the organization, it is equally important to fill administrative roles with people with administrative skills rather than a passion for the cause. According to Wolf, such administrative types will excel in administrative jobs and ultimately benefit the organization. Employees who possess other skills and are passionate about bringing about social change, by contrast, may become bored in administrative positions and not fulfill the job as effectively.¹⁴

12 Letts, Ryan and Grossman, 109.

13 Crutchfield and McLeod Grant, 187-191.

14 Wolf, 88-89.

B. Cariboo Friendship Society

The Cariboo Friendship Society has been active in Williams Lake, BC since 1965. The organization offers programs in each of the following areas: Social Services, Recreation and Cultural, Education, Economic Development and Housing.

In the mid-90s, the management of the Cariboo Friendship Society faced a dilemma. Staff increasingly voiced its discontent with the Friendship Centre and there was a union drive taking place for higher wages and better benefits. The problem for a Friendship Centre operating on government contracts is that the money available for wages is not flexible. The Friendship Centre had one advantage: its benefits package was better than the one offered as part of the union drive. Nonetheless, the message was clear: staff members were dissatisfied and changes were necessary if the Friendship Centre was to continue to function successfully.

Fast-forward to 2006: a survey of 79 of Canada's small and medium sized companies ranked the Cariboo Friendship Society as the fifth best business employer and highest ranked company for corporate citizenship – meaning that staff believe its employer adds value to the community. Among the impressive results of the survey: 89 percent of staff at the Cariboo Friendship Society strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, "I would without hesitation highly recommend this organization to a friend seeking employment." This is compared to the survey average of 69 percent. In response to the statement "I am certain that our organization creates something that adds value to our community (Corporate Citizenship)," 98 percent of Cariboo's employees strongly agreed or agreed, compared to the survey average of 80 percent.

So what happened? Margaret Ahdemar has been Executive Director of the Friendship Centre since 1992. She explains that the crisis created by the union drive forced management to make changes to better accommodate the needs of staff. The Friendship Centre held a two-day planning session with all staff to explore what they wanted from their jobs and from the Friendship Centre. Employees offered a lot of feedback. Surprisingly, a recurring opinion emerged: staff wanted the Cariboo Friendship Society to feel more 'like a family' in its daily operation. This did not require huge changes or many additional financial resources, but the changes had an immense impact on the loyalty and dedication of staff. For example, the staff wanted more social events and the Friendship Centre now shuts down for four days a year to hold staff events. When management speak to people and groups outside the Friendship Centre, they speak about themselves as a team, not as individuals. In describing the Friendship Centre, Jocelyn Fransen, Executive Secretary says that "the word 'family' is mentioned often."

Ahdemar felt that more could still be done to improve the Friendship Centre. Evaluations of programs have occurred internally on a regular basis. However, staff and management sensed that the feedback was often not as critical as it might have been if it had been anonymous. Ahdemar explains:

We thought we'd get a better picture of how well the Friendship Centre was doing and what changes were needed if the information asked of employees was confidential. As Executive Director,

I thought it would be of value for our organization to participate in the initiative [the 2006 Survey] as the process is a complete evaluation of the organization. . . Upon agreement [by management] that we would participate, the information was then taken to individual staff meetings and to our Board of Directors for feedback. The end result was that everyone was willing to participate to do a complete evaluation of our organization.... The initiative worked well because it was an outside organization that conducted the evaluation. Each participant was guaranteed complete privacy in completion and submission of the document. This process worked well for us... [and] was valuable to our Centre in providing us with a good picture of where we are, where we need to be going, and how well we are actually doing as one of the larger employers in Williams Lake, BC. This process has given us recognition for the hard work that we do in the community and that...as an Aboriginal organization we can be just as good or better than some of the other employer within our community or province.

The Friendship Centre runs over 15 different social and economic development programs with a staff of only 78. There are 10 managers in charge of the programs, but front-line staff members have a lot of responsibility for and input into the programs. Strategic planning takes place with input from all staff. When management is looking at implementing new programs and services, they discuss and plan it together with front line workers in order to ensure buy-in from everyone. This in turn motivates staff, elicits a sense of ownership, and improves the overall effectiveness of the programs.

Ahdemar looks for new staff who are honest and sincere. When a new staff member starts, he or she undergoes a formal orientation process. Orientation sessions are run on a quarterly basis and are delivered by the Executive Director:

The orientation allows me to get to know new the staff on a one-to-one basis. It provides them with a good grounding in how the Friendship Centre operates and the history of both our Centre and the Friendship Centre movement. I review our policies and procedures, our code of ethics and also allow them to ask questions about their expectations of the Friendship Centre. This kind of orientation is necessary to provide a good grounding of what we do.

The participation in strategic planning and orientation for new staff help create a positive working environment at the Friendship Centre.

The biggest staffing challenge at the Cariboo Friendship Society continues to be wages and salaries. "Government contracts do not allow a lot for wages so we cannot provide top wages or even the going wages for positions we have within our organization," explains Ahdemar.

To retain and motivate staff, the Friendship Centre does what it can to ensure staff satisfaction in other ways. The benefits package is one example: its features are standard but generous and differ from those of other small organizations in at least two ways. First, all staff members have extended health care, a benefit uncommon in other hospitality type jobs. Comprehensive health care coverage extends to those in the economic development programs, such as those who work at the restaurant. Second, Aboriginal values and culture are integrated into the written policies and procedures of the Friendship Centre. Where this is not possible, the work culture

honours Aboriginal values. For example, whereas bereavement leave is typically three days in small organizations, staff can take as much bereavement leave as they need to accommodate both emotional needs and family or community commitments – although this is not written into the organization's procedures. This reflects the fact that bereavement traditions in Aboriginal communities often include a wake prior to the funeral and another ceremony one year later.

The style of management at the Friendship Centre is another source of staff satisfaction. There is no designated human resources person at the Cariboo Friendship Society. Rather, the Executive Director and managers deal directly with any HR issues that arise. Employees go through annual appraisals with their managers, at which time employees can make requests for training and education for the coming year. These requests are taken seriously – management examines them and brings training onto the site for the most requested training.

Proper communication is also integral to successful staffing practices. For example, the Friendship Centre has many satellite programs and it takes pains to ensuring that staff is informed of what is happening so that it feels properly involved and informed. Ahdemar believes that open, regular communication is crucial to both staff satisfaction and the overall success of the Friendship Centre. She believes that the Cariboo Friendship Society is now achieving its goal surrounding effective communication.

A good benefits package, a positive working environment and a good orientation to your organization – these are the three elements that Ahdemar summarizes as key to an effective staffing structure. She stresses that it is also important to go through an overall evaluation of one's organization periodically to ensure that things are on track.

The Cariboo Friendship Society continues to introduce new initiatives to improve the staffing structure and staff satisfaction – and consequently, the success of the Friendship Centre's program delivery. Currently, the Friendship Centre is undertaking a strategic plan to reorganize the management of its programs for more effective delivery. This will mean, for example, that all children's programs will be handled by one manager rather than scattered under different people. No doubt this reorganization will include staff as key contributors to the strategic planning process and thus to the success of the programs and the Friendship Centre itself.

C. Conclusions

The experience of the Cariboo Friendship Society corresponds with the best practices surveyed in the literature review in several important respects. First, employee empowerment is critical to the organization's success. Second, compensation (high quality benefits package) is important. Cariboo's willingness to have third party evaluation is also noteworthy and commendable.

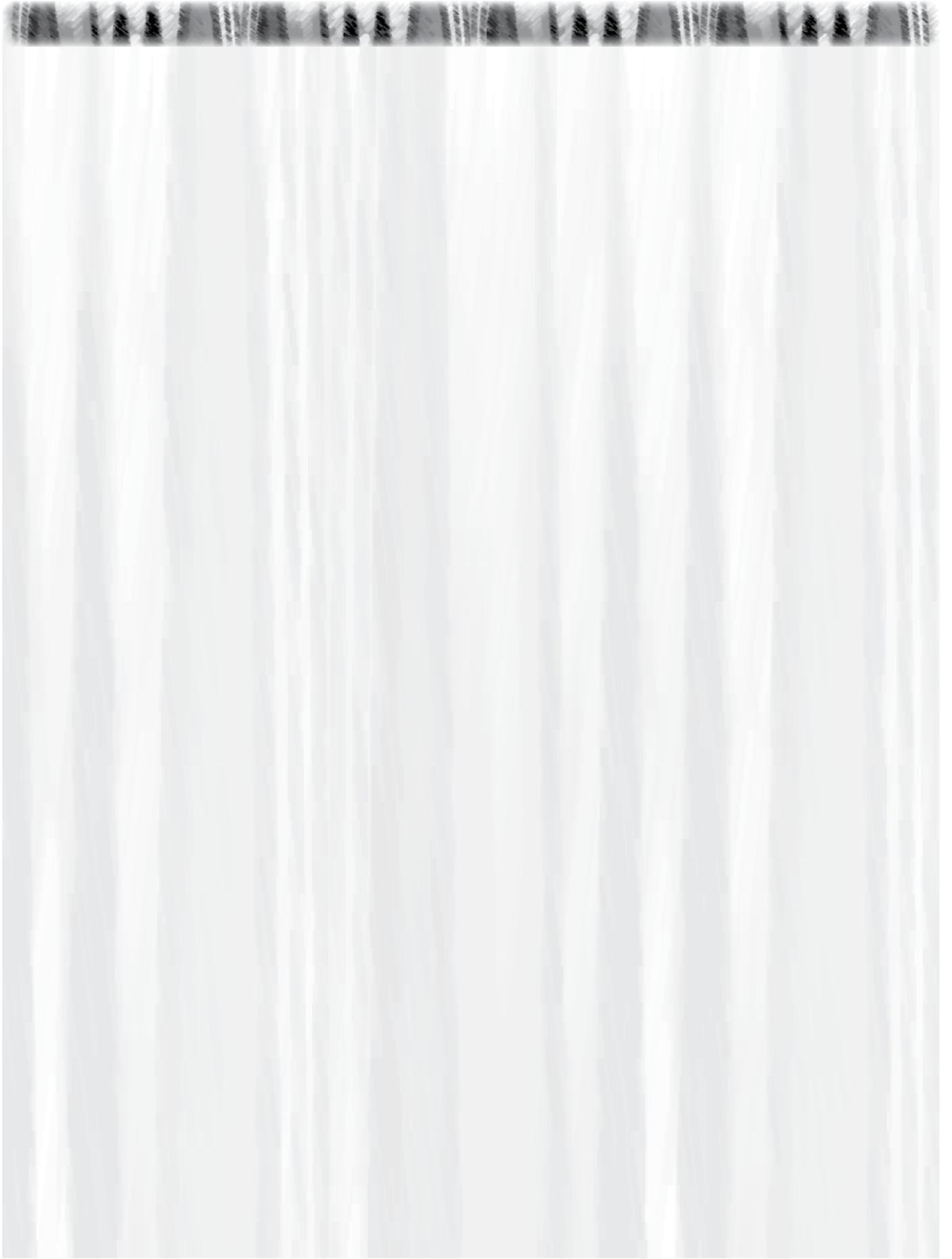


One element that was not mentioned in the literature review is Cariboo's commitment to and incorporation of Aboriginal values into both workplace practices and staff benefits.

For more information about the annual "Best Small and Medium Employers' Survey (conducted by Hewitt Associates and Queen's University) see www.business.queensu.ca/qcbv/sme or call 1-877-955-1800.

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CHAPTER 4: VOLUNTEERS

Grande Prairie Friendship Centre

A. Literature Review

To assume that all important tasks within an organization must be done by a salaried employee is a mistake, according to Wolf, author of *Managing a Nonprofit Organization in the Twenty-First Century*. Using paid staff is not always the most efficient use of resources. In many cases, volunteers can be relied on to carry out important organizational functions. Yet where this may create some overlap between the roles of staff members and volunteers, it may be necessary to manage the relationship between the two to ensure they understand how to work together and respect each other's contributions. Further, because volunteers are not being paid it is crucial that they 'get something back.' This means catering to their needs in a way that reflects the reasons why people volunteer in the first place: their sense of satisfaction with self, altruism, desire for companionship, to learn about a field, to develop professional contacts or get ahead in the corporation, their need for training and experience or entry to a particular organization, or social their prestige.¹⁵

Agnes Meinhard, in her article "Managing the Human Dimension in Non-profit Organizations: Paid Staff and Volunteers," compiles a list of tips on providing the right incentives to volunteers:

- Understand the volunteers' needs and match them with the appropriate job
- Emphasize and communicate the social meaningfulness of the activity
- Link the activity to generalizable skills
- Value their time, give them feedback, publicly and privately recognize their contributions, and reimburse their expenses

Meinhard goes on to list important 'best practice' criteria for managing an effective volunteer program:

- Provide a budget for a dedicated volunteer manager
- Train paid staff members in how to work with volunteers
- Train volunteers to lead other volunteers

15 Wolf, 96-102.

- ✦ Clearly communicate roles and define jobs
- ✦ Provide orientation and job training
- ✦ Ensure work variety and delegate responsibility.
- ✦ Create a positive ambiance in the workplace.¹⁶

B. Grande Prairie Friendship Centre

Turning from the literature to another case study, the Grande Prairie Friendship Centre (GPFC) was established in 1965. It supports 13,000 urban Aboriginal people in the Grande Prairie region. In 2006/7, the GPFC served over 50,000 people from its four locations: Administration Centre and Bingo Hall, Program Centre, Campus Location, and FUTURES Employment Services.

Bonnie Bell, Executive Director of the GPFC believes strongly in the benefits of a good volunteer program. As an organization, the GPFC recognizes that volunteer capacity strengthens both the organization and the community at large.

The GPFC has always had a volunteer program. But as operations have expanded, so has the need for volunteers. For example, the GPFC opened up a bingo hall in the late 1980s, which is now largely staffed by volunteers. Volunteers are an integral part of many programs. Other than the bingo hall, volunteers are involved as members of the Board of directors, in fundraising activities, cultural events, the children's program and the homelessness program. GPFC staff members ensure that volunteer opportunities respect and accommodate the varying abilities and availabilities of volunteers. Currently there are 150 volunteers at the GPFC.

Volunteers at the Friendship Centre are recruited in various ways, including the Volunteer Services Bureau, media, GPFC newsletters, Conferences, Board and Staff networking and other agencies. The recruitment policy respects, encourages and represents the diversity of the community. Ms. Bell points out that a volunteer program is a great way to engage youth, the future of the organization. The Friendship Centre has established certain permanent initiatives that encourage the ongoing involvement of youth, who are often a transient population. Engaging diverse volunteers from the community serves to strengthen and reinforce traditional values. Ms. Bell explains further:

The practice of volunteerism promotes respect, and reinforces the sense of community that our culture represents. As we are a 'visiting' culture, volunteerism allows for exchange of knowledge between youth and Elders and all volunteers. It is an opportunity to connect with each other, learn from each other and value each other's contribution.

The Friendship Centre develops job descriptions for all volunteer positions, clearly defining the roles of volunteers within the organization. Once recruited, volunteers undergo an initial orientation and are made aware of their

16 Meinhard, Agnes, "Managing the Human Dimension in Nonprofit Organizations: Paid Staff and Volunteers" in Management of Nonprofit and Charitable Organizations in Canada, (Markham: LexisNexis Canada, 2006), 412-413.

responsibilities. The volunteers then acknowledge acceptance of the job description in writing. This process helps ensure that the division of roles and responsibilities among staff and volunteers is clearly defined. This clarity means few conflicts within the Friendship Centre. Ms. Bell contends:

You can balance the two [staff and volunteers] and have effective service delivery with volunteers. But you must ensure that when looking at risk and responsibility, that you are not transferring the risk to an inappropriate level of authority.

Program Managers are responsible for managing the volunteers. Bell says that the biggest challenge within the volunteer program is volunteer 'burn-out.'

The definition of volunteering is to 'give willingly.' But when volunteers take on too much, they often feel overburdened. The Program Coordinator then has to step in, and when necessary, discuss an intervention strategy with the Executive Director. Sometimes the Friendship Centre may lose the volunteer; sometimes the volunteer may take some time off and return at a later time; and sometimes the volunteer will reduce the number of hours or areas of responsibility.

Overall, the volunteer program at the GPFC encourages healthy involvement and longevity. Volunteers are encouraged to review and evaluate their involvement in the Friendship Centre, to ask questions about the work it does and to provide input into possible areas for improvement. This facilitates ownership and buy-in into the programs.

In return, the Friendship Centre promotes a sense of accomplishment and belonging among volunteers by recognizing them. The Friendship Centre submits names of 'outstanding volunteers' to the local paper and also features volunteers in its quarterly newspaper. It hosts an annual Volunteer Appreciation Banquet. The cost of the banquet is \$3000 but is an important means through which the GPFC recognizes the valuable role of volunteers. Other perks are ongoing training opportunities provided through conferences and First-Aid training and skills that volunteers can apply to future employment—for example in organizing, implementing and evaluating programs or team-building and leadership skills. Volunteers who have been with the Friendship Centre for some time may gain the opportunity to attend 'Vitalize,' an annual conference held in Alberta geared towards people involved in the voluntary sector. Two Board Members have been involved in the Friendship Centre for decades – and through this involvement have been able to participate in addressing issues locally and nationally. Youth volunteers may move on and gain employment at the Friendship Centre or at other organizations that require similar skills.

The benefits to the Friendship Centre are also numerous. For one, a positive volunteer experience with the Friendship Centre can create goodwill ambassadors for the organization. At the Board of Directors' level, volunteer Board Members enhance the governance of the organization through their contribution of skills from a variety of disciplines. Volunteers also prove invaluable in terms of pure hours – estimated at 6,000 hours annually. This marks a substantial impact on funding-related human resource issues and lightens the already

heavy workload of the staff. Finally, Bell points out that a volunteer program demonstrates to funders and partners the fact that many stakeholders are invested in the Friendship Centre.

With such a small staff and such a large program, volunteers are a fundamental part of the GPFC. The volunteer program works because volunteers are properly oriented and their roles and responsibilities within the Friendship Centre are defined and well understood. Volunteers believe in the mission and vision of the organization and work to advance the work the Friendship Centre does. In return, they receive the support, benefits and recognition to sustain a long-term and committed involvement in the Friendship Centre. The results are clear: an expanded capacity to provide more services to clients and the community with improved quality of delivery.

C. Conclusions

The case study on volunteers at the GPFC mirrors much of the best practice advice that is commonly found in literature on non-profit management practices. Roles of volunteers, including those vis-à-vis staff, are well defined and clearly communicated. The Friendship Centre successfully identifies where volunteers can appropriately get involved and where the responsibility should remain with paid staff. Volunteers support the mandate of the organization and gain meaning and benefits from their volunteer experience in return.

The case study also highlights some important points that are not discussed in the literature. The GPFC volunteer program not only meets the needs of its volunteers but is even structured in part to meet the needs of the community. For example, certain volunteer programs specifically engage youth as volunteers and reflect traditional practices such as 'visiting' and learning from each other. While there is no designated volunteer manager, each program manager is responsible for those volunteering with his or her specific program. This is an effective way to structure a volunteer program within an organization – especially where funding prohibits a designated volunteer coordinator.

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CHAPTER 5:

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres

A. Literature Review

Strategic planning is a key component of any successful organization, whether for-profit or non-profit. According to John Bryson, strategic planning is about 'where you are, where you want to be and how to get there.' Strategic planning should:

- Identify and respond to the most fundamental issues facing an organization
- Address the subjective question of purpose and often competing values that influence mission and strategies
- Attempt to be politically realistic by taking into account the concerns and preferences of internal and especially external stakeholders
- Rely heavily on the active involvement of senior level managers, assisted by staff support where needed
- Require the candid confrontation of critical issues by key participants in order to build commitment to plans
- Be action-oriented and stress the importance of developing plans for implementing strategies
- Focus on implementing decisions now, in order to position the organization favourably for the future.¹⁷

Letts, Ryan and Grossman stress that strategic management increases impact by suggesting not necessarily how to expand programs but rather how to improve overall organizational capacity and effectiveness.

There is some consensus on the 'how-to' of strategic planning in the non-profit sector. It generally includes a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats/Challenges) analysis; environmental scanning (both internal and external); stakeholder analysis; mission or mandate analysis; and identification of strategic issues, vision, values, aims, objectives, performance indicators and key results areas.¹⁸ John Bryson's *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* offers an array of in-depth tools and options for completing a successful strategic planning process.

17 Bryson, John, *Strategic Planning for public and nonprofit organizations*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 30-31.

18 Courney, Roger, *Strategic Management for Voluntary Nonprofit Organizations*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 113-114.

Putting it All Together – Planning Tools

A successful strategic plan includes executive involvement, employee commitment and relevance to day-to-day functions of the organization. Thomas Wolf offers two useful approaches to strategic planning. One is linear and relies on a predictable sequence of steps. This approach allows organizations to evaluate themselves in a systematic way, to speculate about the future in all areas of work and to generate a formal document that can be shared with the public to highlight the organization's strategic direction. This approach can be a lengthy process and is generally conducted once every three years, as a special initiative separate from day-to-day functions of the organization.

The second approach is integrated into the regular operations of the organization. In this approach, the components of planning (mission statements, goal formulation, development of objectives and targets, action plans, implementation and evaluation) all take place constantly. Information flows in all directions rather than from the beginning to the end of the process. This approach allows an organization to respond quickly to a new or changed circumstance and encourages continuous involvement of Executive, Staff and the Board.

Crutchfield and McLeod Grant maintain that a balance between these two approaches is most important, so that the planning process allows for 1) both discipline and freedom, and 2) the abilities both to innovate and to evaluate, learn and modify.¹⁹

B. Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres

The Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC) is the provincial association supporting and representing the collective interests of twenty-seven member Friendship Centres in Ontario. The OFIFC directly administers and manages a number of provincial programs while at the same time supporting Friendship Centres within Ontario and advocating for both the Friendship Centres and the Friendship Centre Movement on a provincial and national level.

The OFIFC has a long history of successful strategic planning. Its first strategic plan was established in 1985 and implemented in 1987. The plan consisted of three overall strategic areas: 'Development of Diversified Funding,' 'Forecasting and Controlled Growth of Friendship Centres,' and 'Technical Growth.' Each strategic area had specific associated indicators.

The first strategic plan was a twenty-year plan. This timeframe is unusual in the fast-paced environment of today's NGO and business world. But OFIFC Executive Director Sylvia Maracle explains that a twenty-year strategic plan works well for the Federation because it helps maintain a vision for the long-term future, based on the Aboriginal tradition of focussing on the needs not only of the current generation but also of seven generations to come. While the plan was a flexible document, it ultimately changed very little over the years.

¹⁹ Crutchfield and McLeod Grant, 150-151.

After seventeen years, the OFIFC management felt that the goals of the first strategic plan had been accomplished and that there was a need to develop a new plan. As the literature review highlights, a typical and effective strategic plan essentially lays out 'where you are, where you want to be and how to get there.' As an organization operating from a cultural management perspective, the process of developing and evaluating a strategic plan includes these typical mainstream requirements but operates from a cultural base. Ms. Maracle's explains the beginning of the strategic planning process at the OFIFC:

We return to the cultural base. We offer tobacco, hold a feast and ceremony to begin to get a clear perspective: Who are we? Where did we come from and where do we want to go? What are our responsibilities in getting there?

The next step in the planning process is a retreat for senior staff to consolidate the input received about possible future directions. This input comes from a number of sources, including the Board of Directors, the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and staff at both the OFIFC and local Friendship Centres throughout the province. Throughout the process of developing the plan, Ms. Maracle used the Medicine Wheel concept to help discuss and illustrate some of the issues, highlighting the four important directions of the Medicine Wheel: Physical, Emotional, Spiritual and Mental. The concept of the Medicine Wheel also helped incorporate the notions of vision, knowledge, reason, and action into the approach to the strategic planning process. In addition, participants often use images and metaphors in their deliberations.

The current strategic plan is articulated into a broad base (strategic areas) and then broken down into a series of goals (indicators). When developing the specific strategic areas, Ms. Maracle emphasizes that it was important to determine what exactly is meant by each broad area. For example, in the previous strategic plan, the area 'Forecast and Control Growth of Friendship Centres' essentially meant that the OFIFC had to identify how many Friendship Centres would be needed from that point in time; then, they would support their creation from the community level. The indicators help to clarify the strategic areas as well as guide implementation of the plan. Both the first and second strategic plans are based on one common, concisely stated overarching goal. Additionally, ten principles guide implementation of the plan – for example, "the local control and direction of Friendship Centres must be respected and reflected in funding mechanisms."

Aboriginal values guide the entire process, so that the result is a final product that is professional, effective and culturally relevant. The plan is then monitored by the Executive Committee and updated as necessary. It is formally reviewed every five years by the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors and then taken to the AGM for approval. Ms. Maracle explains that it can be a challenge to extend the initial enthusiasm for the plan throughout the duration of the implementation stage, especially for such a long-term plan:

When designing [the strategic plans], people are excited and there is buy-in. But then there is turnover. It is hard to translate excitement about the Plan, difficult to 'pass the torch.' 'Faithkeepers' are charged with transferring that fire, saying to everyone that [the plan] was talked about and decided upon... It can be hard for people to accept a twenty-year plan because everyone wants to give input and own it. Younger members think twenty years is too long. The plan is flexible but it is about not losing sight of the vision. Sometimes there is a tension between twenty years and what needs to be done today.

One way that the Federation gets around the challenges arising from such a long-term plan is to maintain its relevance through annual strategic planning. Based on the strategic plan, the Board establishes annual programmatic strategies with input from staff, youth, and elders. There is a youth gathering each autumn which then adds to those annual strategies. Annual work-plans and performance reviews are based on the role of the staff member in advancing the strategic plan, which is jointly negotiated by the staff member and manager. The result is that all staff and the Board are aware of the deliberate steps taken towards achieving the goals of the plan and are accountable for those steps. This helps to ensure that even if the goals are not achieved in a year, the Federation is at least working in the right direction.

Ms. Maracle identifies other challenges to strategic planning. First, government cycles are not conducive to developing a deliberate, long-term strategic plan. With changes in government, newly elected officials or bureaucrats need to be educated about the issues. Such changes may also mean new processes or other requirements that cause the OFICF not necessarily to have to change the long-term goals but possibly to adapt the way to achieve those goals.

Second, there is no funding for strategic planning or for evaluation processes – both of which can be costly and time-consuming. Government and other funders often want short-term results, which may sometimes be difficult explicitly to identify within a long-term plan.

Last, Ms. Maracle states that, as a provincial association supporting local Friendship Centres, it is difficult to convince some local Friendship Centres of the value of evaluations – in other words, that they should not be afraid of evaluations or the mistakes that the evaluations may highlight but rather regard them as positive tools that can help a Friendship Centre learn and evolve.

Nonetheless, the OFIFC's strategic plan has had great impact on the effectiveness of the Federation in many ways. The long-term strategic plan has allowed for planned growth and more control over what happens when. For example, the goal of 'capital acquisition' under the strategic area of 'Development of Diversified Funding' was successfully achieved because it was planned deliberately and in stages. At the beginning of the first plan's implementation, most member Friendship Centres – including the OFIFC – were renting office space. Now, all member Friendship Centres and the OFIFC own their facilities. Though some still have mortgages which are sometimes tricky to manage, others now own several buildings and land, resulting in a much greater equity base.

Ms. Maracle argues that the strategic plan has helped the OFIFC develop as an organization into a force for social justice – for example, on matters relating to mental health, justice and addiction. External people know the Federation and what it stands for. The OFIFC is often asked to present research and models to external groups and is asked for input. This subsequently helps to increase the profile of urban Aboriginal issues, resulting in increased economic viability and self-sufficiency for urban Aboriginal peoples.

Ms. Maracle points to the concrete results:

The Urban Aboriginal Taskforce conducted research in 1984 that concluded that pretty much all urban Aboriginal people were poor or working poor. The same research conducted recently found that 22 percent of urban Aboriginal people are defined as 'middle class.' This is phenomenal change.

C. Conclusions

The strategic planning process at the OFIFC follows closely the key points raised by John Bryson in the literature review. The strategic plan ensures that the fundamental issues facing the Federation in the long-term are identified and kept at the forefront of regular planning activities. The strategic plan includes indicators that help to guide concrete action. Critically, the strategic plan considers external political realities as they affect the needs of the organization.

Two aspects of the Federation's approach to strategic planning stand out in contrast to the principal themes in the literature. These are: the importance of Aboriginal culture and values in both the process of producing the plan and the substance of the plan itself and the twenty year time frame. This longer time frame, combined with the annual planning process and regular reviews of the strategic plan, allows the OFIFC to link its long-term vision to shorter term goals and activities. These ensure that the OFIFC continually works toward identified goals.

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CHAPTER 6: EVALUATION

Timmins Native Friendship Centre

A. Literature Review

Organizations pay so much attention to 'internal' processes such as planning, leadership and governance ultimately in order to deliver high quality programs and services more effectively. Thus, a crucial component of strategic planning is the delivery and evaluation of programs and projects. There are many tools organizations can employ to evaluate and improve performance and service delivery. This section addresses some of the more popular and interesting ones.

Performance Assessment and Outcomes

Susan Phillips and Tatyana Teplova explain that evaluation of projects, programs and organizations used to be based on outputs, or what was produced. The focus has now shifted to outcomes, or actual changes realized in the lives of users or beneficiaries. This approach has been adopted by large funding organizations as well as Provincial and Federal Governments. It has consequently increased pressure on non-profit organizations to pay ever more attention to concerns surrounding accountability and performance measurement.

In 1997, the *Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector* (PAGVS) was created to review, consult and make recommendations on how the Canadian non-profit sector could improve its practices. The resulting report encouraged voluntary organizations to develop their own assessment indicators relating to results-based performance. The panel also recognized the important role that intermediary organizations (funders, federations, umbrella organizations, etc.) should play in developing indicators.²⁰

Roger Courtney suggests that, while there is some resistance among non-profits to what they see as a reduction of their complex work to measurable outcomes and outputs, many non-profit organizations have been able to develop a number of key indicators demonstrating the progress the organization is making towards achieving long-term goals.

20 Phillips, Susan and Teplova, Tatyana, "From Control to Learning: Accountability and Performance Assessment in The Voluntary Sector" in *Management of Nonprofit and Charitable Organizations in Canada*. (Markham: LexisNexis Canada, 2006), 312-313.

Research into non-profit practices in Canada reveals that 92 percent of organizations conduct performance assessments on programs or projects with in-house resources. 80 percent involve the Board of governors in the performance assessment process. Challenges to successful performance assessments include lack of internal capacity and money, unclear expectations on the part of funders and confusion about language (such as the difference between an outcome and an output).²¹

Phillips and Teplova suggest that, for an organization to move from conducting occasional evaluations to ongoing performance assessment, it must first become “competent and confident in doing evaluations of a variety of activities, from assessing programs to the organization overall.... The second step is to build assessment into governance processes and the routine operations of an organization, and develop capacity as an organization to do so.”²²

Letts, Ryan and Grossman stress that it is necessary to look beyond traditional measures of feedback to collect data which will allow an organization to talk meaningfully about quality of service delivery. This type of evaluation will entail extra work for staff. If done well, it can produce positive results for both the organization and the individual staff members.²³

Thomas Wolf offers a useful five-step approach to organizational evaluation. This approach could aid a benchmarking process as well as other evaluation processes:

1. Accurately diagnose the organization’s current situation and identify areas of opportunities for positive change
2. Separate the problems into those that need immediate attention and those that might be dealt with later
3. Build board and staff consensus so that identified problems can be dealt with honestly, forthrightly and in a timely manner
4. Develop a realistic, affordable, multi-year schedule for implementing change
5. Continue the diagnostic, evaluation and self-improvement process year after year²⁴

B. Timmins Native Friendship Centre

The Timmins Native Friendship Centre (TNFC) was established in 1974 by a small group of dedicated people and incorporated in 1976. With a current full-time staff of twenty-six and two part-time staff, the Friendship Centre now provides about thirteen different programs and services.

When Veronica Nicholson became the Executive Director of the TNFC in 2004, the Friendship Centre was facing some significant challenges. Some of the issues Ms. Nicholson identified were: low morale among staff, a

21 Phillips and Teplova, 316-317. For a full discussion of outcome-based evaluations, see Chapter 9 of *Management of Nonprofit and Charitable Organizations in Canada*.

22 Ibid, 318-319.

23 For a full discussion of Quality Processes, see Chapter 3 “Quality Processes: Advancing Mission by Meeting Client Needs” in *High Performance Nonprofit Organizations: Managing Upstream for Greater Impact*.

24 Wolf, 346.

lack of leadership, high employee turnover rate, a lack of staff empowerment to make everyday decisions, gaps in programs and services, and a debt of \$200,000.

One of the first orders of business was to develop a strategic plan, which would provide a base from which to conduct ongoing evaluations and a strategic direction forward. Having never successfully completed or implemented a strategic plan, staff resisted at first. But once the staff members realized that they would have significant input into the formation and ongoing evaluation of a properly implemented strategic plan, they became more motivated and became driving forces for change. The planning process allowed staff to come together, take a step back, and conduct an overall evaluation of the organization and its priorities.

Evaluations of the strategic plan itself are an important means by which to keep the momentum of strategic planning. Staff, Management and the Board of Directors at the Friendship Centre conducted an annual evaluation of the plan. They examined the goals and objectives in terms of what has been accomplished and what still needs to be done. Evaluation of the strategic plan offers a guide to build upon and mark progress.

Another priority at the TNFC was to improve the effectiveness of staff by empowering them to be proactive. Instead of devising a punitive evaluation for staff, the Friendship Centre developed a 'Leadership Development Program' for each program worker. Each individualized plan is discussed at monthly staff meetings and annual staff evaluations, at which time staff set their own leadership goals for the next year. The intention is to work together to ensure that each staff member demonstrates the competencies required to meet the long-term succession needs of the programs they are responsible for delivering. Ms. Nicholson maintains:

As a team, it is important to all pull in the same direction and commit ourselves to a work environment that provides a safe, harmonious atmosphere, where good humour can flow and creativity flourish. We each have our own special gifts to offer and to give opportunity to an environment that meets our spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical needs, so we in turn can continue to offer the community opportunities for healing and renewal...A solid performance review process is absolutely critical to the ongoing success of the Friendship Centre. Without an annual evaluation, staff members don't have a clear idea of what's expected of them and may not be working toward the goals that contribute to the long-term success of the Friendship Centre.

The staff evaluations are done in three parts: 1) a review of job performance; 2) input from the employee regarding performance, how they might improve and how the Friendship Centre could improve; and 3) personal goals for the upcoming year. During the evaluations, employees are encouraged to list their own success stories. They are challenged to do something new in their personal goals. The Staff Member and Manager discuss feedback from clients, describing what went well and what did not work well or what needs to change. Generally, staff evaluations are done annually, unless there is a need for follow-up throughout the year. The Executive Director and the Personnel Manager conduct the evaluations.

As Executive Director, Ms. Nicholson's approach to evaluation and management brings together tradition and good management. In her view, the three main practices of a culturally-based management framework are

communication, correction and celebration. For example, it is important to communicate what the funders want and require clearly, so that all staff possess the proper level of understanding of this critical matter. And it is important to conduct ongoing evaluation as part of the daily function of the Friendship Centre. If a program worker is not following through on an agreed commitment, management must intervene and follow-up (correction). Finally, when people are on track, celebrate it!

Evaluation, planning and management are done within the context of cultural safety. Ms. Nicholson explains that the Friendship Centre is culturally very diverse; she sees the Friendship Centre as ‘cultures within a culture.’ Therefore, there is a need to pay special attention to creating an atmosphere where everyone feels comfortable to be who they are. An organizational structure should be created that does not threaten the diversity of the staff and membership. She warns that transforming an organizational culture is a slow process; initiatives – diversity initiatives for example – must be taken slowly so that everyone is clear about expectations. Individuals must fully understand the time, effort, commitment and risk involved as well as the need for a systematic approach including both individual staff members and entire programs.

Once undertaken, staff evaluations provide plentiful benefits. They help staff gain a clear understanding of their individual goals and how these fit into the bigger picture of the organization. They provide the link between program objectives and the day-to-day actions of staff members. Workers are empowered to make their own decisions because they know the direction of the organization and their role in it. Teamwork is improved. By setting goals, establishing timelines, tracking progress and identifying obstacles, the evaluation process clarifies for staff what is expected of them. This last benefit highlights an important point: planning and evaluation must be done in tandem if either is to succeed.

Another important level of evaluation occurs at a programmatic level. The TNFC holds case management meetings to allow for ongoing evaluation of its programs. Because such meetings are a relatively new initiative, their place within the evaluation structure of the organization is still developing. The staff members at the Friendship Centre have taken the important first step of defining for themselves what ‘case management’ means for them and for the Friendship Centre. This is a good example of how evaluation processes are adapted to fit with the needs and structure of the Friendship Centre.

Once the program evaluations are developed and implemented, this evaluation tool will be given to clients as a way to incorporate community stakeholders into the Friendship Centre’s evaluation processes. Community members had been heavily engaged in the strategic planning process – these new program evaluations will provide a means continually to integrate the input and feedback from clients and community members into evaluation and planning processes. This new level of evaluation will help the Friendship Centre understand the needs and expectations of clients, as well as the gaps. It is an example of how the Friendship Centre is improving its integrated approach to evaluation.

Ms. Nicholson warns that the biggest challenge to evaluations of all types is the great time commitment required to ensure that evaluation processes are conducted properly, appropriately and regularly. For example, for an evaluation process to prove useful there must be follow-up. Evaluations of the strategic plan must then be incorporated into planning processes and revisited at a later time to ensure those plans were acted upon.

Other challenges in conducting evaluations include the difficulty in conducting well-rounded ones. Meeting this challenge requires the input and open communication of all involved. Beyond this, there is the natural resistance to change, a recurring constant in any organization. Other challenges are funding restrictions that limit the ability to implement the changes identified by evaluation processes as well as the need to manage larger amounts of input with a quickly expanding workforce. Specific to the TNFC, there has been a high turnover of Board Members, which has made it difficult to implement evaluations at a board level. Ms. Nicholson intends to develop a board orientation package to promote a sense of ownership in Board Members as a step towards improving the evaluation processes of the Board.

The Timmins Native Friendship Centre is in the midst of important processes of change aimed at improving evaluations and the overall effectiveness of the organization. But that is exactly the point. As change is a continuous force in any organization, the needs and demands of staff, management and the membership also change and need to be adapted to. At the same time, change requires incremental, evolutionary steps to occur successfully. This is precisely the kind of change the TNFC is channelling. When Ms. Nicholson became Executive Director, she set out to evaluate the organization overall. This put in place the framework on which to develop individual evaluations. Currently, the Friendship Centre is developing evaluation processes at a program level to complement the other levels of evaluation.

Evaluations are an inclusive process based on the need to create a shared sense of values through listening, appreciating, building and practicing conflict resolution. As someone who approaches management from a cultural concept, Ms. Nicholson tells us:

Evaluation is the most important thing in an organization that you can give back to employees – not in terms of monetary value, but in the sense of their personal satisfaction and values.

C. Conclusions

There is much overlap between the literature on evaluation best practices and those practiced by the Timmins Native Friendship Centre. The TNFC began the process of building assessment and evaluation into its governance processes and routine operations by taking a step back and examining where the organization was at and where it was going. Evaluation processes were then developed based on these desired outcomes and indicators. Processes were initiated slowly to ensure support and success at each stage. Evaluations and assessments were then based on clearly communicated and accepted expectations.

One important good practice at the TNFC is that evaluation processes are not dictated solely by funding requirements. Instead, the evaluations are largely based on the specific needs of staff and clients within an Aboriginal context – manifested by the organization’s unique method of conducting staff evaluations and the degree to which these reflect its goals and values. Evaluation processes involve input from staff and clients. They are followed up on in order ultimately to improve how the organization functions and delivers its services.

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CHAPTER 7:

ADAPTIVE CAPACITY

Skookum Jim Friendship Centre

A. *Literature Review*

Many authors make the point that adaptive capacity is the key element to becoming and remaining effective as an organization. Adaptive capacity refers to knowing where and how to change programs and strategies so that an organization continues to deliver on its mission. Crutchfield and McLeod Grant define adaptive capacity as mastering the art of adaptation – the ability to listen, innovate, learn and modify your approach. Organizations actively solicit feedback from different stakeholders and, in the process, find new opportunities for solving social problems.

An example of adaptive capacity is provided by Share Our Strength, an American non-profit organization that addresses hunger issues. The realization that it should engage people who care about food led the organization to target chefs as an important volunteer base. It later discovered that, while chefs are generally eager to help out, they are more willing to donate time and talent than money. This led to the development of the ‘Taste of the Nation’ event series, where chefs donated their time and efforts to fundraise and raise awareness of the organization and issues around hunger. The initiative was a great success because the organization was able to listen to the interests and needs of an important volunteer base.²⁵

Letts, Ryan and Grossman underscore an important point about how non-profit organizations develop programs:

While [for-profit] businesses stress the benefits of linking idea generation and implementation, nonprofits take the opposite tack: Through program replication and the use of national intermediary organizations, they tend to generate ideas in one set of organizations and implement them in another.²⁶

This point highlights one possible approach to program development, which depends on a replication of existing best practices. However it is important to recall that many authors believe the key to successfully implementing ‘best practices’ lies in an organization’s ability to adapt and modify programs and projects based on the relevant, ever-changing circumstances as well as on continuous feedback and program evaluation.

25 Crutchfield and McLeod Grant, 131-133.

26 Letts, Ryan and Grossman, 61.

B. Skookum Jim Friendship Centre

The Skookum Jim Friendship Centre (SJFC) provides programs and services to urban Aboriginal people in Whitehorse, Yukon. With a staff of approximately twenty-four, the Friendship Centre runs nine programs, including: a) Recreation Program; b) Prenatal Program; c) Traditional Parenting Program; d) Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Program (UMAYC); e) UMAC Regional Desk (administrative support for other UMAC programs in northern Canada); f) Youth Diversion Program (provides diversion from the courts and programming for Aboriginal youth); g) Student Training and Financial Services; h) After School Tutoring Program; and i) Métis, Aboriginal and off-reserve Inuit Diabetes Prevention Program.

SJFC Adaptive Capacity – Homeless Youth Pilot Project

The SJFC's pilot project for homeless youth in Whitehorse provides useful lessons on successful adaptive capacity, understood as the ability to listen, innovate, learn and modify approaches. The SJFC never intended to be a service provider for homeless youth in need of shelter and other support. But when staff at the Friendship Centre realized that there was a pressing need that was not being addressed in an effective manner, they took action.

The genesis of the initiative was the formation of a coalition of community youth organizations and other interested parties. This new group outlined a need for an emergency shelter for youth. Attempting to secure funding for infrastructure for an emergency shelter, the coalition approached the SJFC for advice on the plan. The SJFC provided input but subsequently felt its input had not been considered. Its suggestion that more Aboriginal input was needed where the majority of homeless youth are Aboriginal yielded no results. The Friendship Centre disagreed with the proposed approach of setting up an emergency youth shelter youth would enter in the evening and have to leave in the morning – without any other interventions to determine the youth's needs such as counselling, reconnection with family or community, provision of permanent affordable housing or returning to school. Further, staff at SJFC felt that more data was needed to determine the actual needs of the youth before a permanent program or structure could be established.

As a result, the Friendship Centre did not support the youth coalition's proposal – in the end, neither did the territorial government, the would-be funder. But the territorial government remained interested in addressing the issue of homeless youth. And the SJFC still saw a pressing need for culturally appropriate services for homeless Aboriginal youth. So the two parties continued discussions. After exploring a few possibilities, the SJFC decided that the best approach would be to access beds in pre-existing facilities while providing other support for youth. This kind of support and involvement would allow the Friendship Centre to gather data and determine what needs existed. Thus began a four-month pilot project that included a youth crisis telephone line, safe beds in secure facilities and support from frontline workers.

The Friendship Centre ran into some significant problems at the beginning. The existing facilities that agreed to provide safe beds for the youth included an alcohol and drugs services (ADS) facility and a women's transition home. There was a lot of negative media attention about the youth going to the ADS facility, even though the youth beds were in a separate area with a separate entrance.

Shaken by the negative media coverage, the women's transition home pulled out. Some parents, First Nation leadership and community members voiced opposition to the project. Although this hurt morale at the Friendship Centre, those in charge responded proactively. The Friendship Centre directly approached those opposing the project to discuss it with them. It also canvassed all 24-hour businesses and provided them with the Friendship Centre's contact information. These two actions represented innovative approaches to encouraging buy-in and support for the project. Ms. Kolla, the Friendship Centre's Executive Director, advises other centres that may want to run a similar type of project that getting support from parents and First Nation leadership beforehand is critical.

Despite the strained relations with some organizations and members of the community early on, the Friendship Centre worked hard to make the pilot project a success. Its hard work paid off. Many of the other youth organizations are now back at the table, likely due to the Friendship Centre's ability to adapt the project to the needs of the youth and feedback from other external stakeholders.

The entry point for youth to the service is often a call to the crisis line. In response, a frontline worker goes to the youth and determines the best action to take. Ms. Kolla stresses the importance of talking to the youth to help determine the issues that both contribute to and are compounded by homelessness. The way forward is not necessarily referral to an emergency shelter; it may be reconnection with family or community, support to go back to school, referrals to other services or a spot in a safe bed. This flexibility allows the Friendship Centre to respond based on the needs of the youth rather than a predetermined solution. Ms. Kolla expands on the Friendship Centre's approach:

This practice is informed by Aboriginal practice, culture and views by looking after the spiritual, physical, mental and emotional well being of the youth. It requires family, community and Aboriginal leaders to become involved in the health of our young people. Aboriginal culture of respect and the importance of our youth is instilled by empowerment and not allowing our young people to become dependant on a system that has failed our people for many generations.

Ms. Kolla argues that the project fits well within the Friendship Centre, despite the fact that the Friendship Centre did not see itself at first as the appropriate service provider. There are many projects and programs at the Friendship Centre from which to borrow expertise and adapt resources. The pilot project had been scheduled to end in May 2008, but was extended to the end of August due to its success and to allow time to determine the best way forward.

The following examples illustrate some ways how the Friendship Centre has adapted the program to better meet the needs of youth, their families and their communities.

First, they enlisted First Nation leadership. Since the pilot project began in January 2008, 90 percent of the youth accessing services have been Aboriginal. Thus, support and involvement of First Nation Leadership, representing the larger community, was essential for success. Ms. Kolla approached First Nation leadership, who responded by supporting the project in principle. Later they passed a formal resolution as a reminder of the commitment they had made. Ms. Kolla says she is working on securing more hands-on involvement of First Nation leadership because she believes that youth homelessness must be dealt with by the community as a whole.

Second, the project evolved to enlist the whole family. The crisis line format meant that calls came not only from youth but also from parents looking for their children. Parents sometimes even go to the Friendship Centre to discuss the situation. The effect of this has been twofold: it facilitated more parent involvement, allowing for greater flexibility to help reconnect and rebuild families. At the same time, it highlighted a need for greater family support, so that healthy youth would not have to return to unhealthy situations. Where frontline youth workers were not always able to provide this family support, the Friendship Centre provided them with training and support focused on working effectively with the whole family.

The third example of the adaptive capacity of the project arose because, contrary to initial predictions, the majority of youth accessing the Friendship Centre were female. This created a challenge: the Friendship Centre had to provide separate beds for males and females and also ensure there is both a male and female worker on shift at any given time. Ms. Kolla says that it has required creativity to deal with these challenges.

Fourth, data collection and feedback have revealed severe mental health issues among many of those accessing the service. In response, the Friendship Centre has drawn on the expertise of organizations specializing in mental health problems. This kind of collaboration, arising out of an identified gap or need in the program, is starting to occur more frequently. For example, the Friendship Centre now works closely with the Salvation Army, sending its own frontline workers to talk to and assess the needs of the youth who are using the emergency shelter there.

Last, having realized that many of the youth require support in basic life skills, the Friendship Centre is now trying to increase existing training in that area.

Some big hurdles still remain. Ms. Kolla maintains that the lack of affordable housing for youth is a huge issue and remains an important contributor to the homelessness problem. In addition, funding for and availability of affordable housing for youth will likely continue to be a problem. Ms. Kolla believes that it would be useful to create long-term accommodation options combined with life skills training and other support. But this is not likely to happen anytime soon. In the meantime, the Friendship Centre will continue to adapt the youth homelessness program to best meet the needs of the youth, their families and the community.

The Friendship Centre has a number of achievements to be proud of so far. Despite much opposition and external pressure, the SJFC stuck to what it believed would best suit the needs of homeless youth. The Friendship Centre worked tirelessly, using innovation, creativity and flexibility to develop a project that addressed the real needs of

youth. The government approves of how the project has been run so far. It wants it to continue and is willing to support it financially to ensure that it succeeds. The benefits have been impressive, as Ms. Kolla highlights:

The benefit of this practice for the Friendship Centre is that it allows the Friendship Centre to be adaptive in meeting the needs of the youth without creating more dependency from the youth. It does not allow youth to adopt a lifestyle of becoming a shelter tenant. It empowers youth to take control of their own life and work towards independence with assistance as they may need it. This practice has also forced local First Nation governments to hear the needs of the youth and to think about how they should be involved and what their responsibility as governments is.

C. Conclusions

The SJFC identified a problem and used creativity and innovation to address it. This is in essence adaptive capacity. The Friendship Centre listened – to youth, to parents, to the community and to other organizations. At the same time, the SJFC demonstrated commitment to its values and mission and to the real needs of homeless youth. The Friendship Centre modified its approach based on what it learned, what worked and what did not.

Though the homeless youth project is still in initial stages of development, the SJFC has already demonstrated an ability to be adaptive in its approach to program development. The result will likely be a superior quality program that serves the needs of the youth, emphasizes the values of the Friendship Centre and reinforces the culture of the community – and this building on what services and expertise already exists.

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CHAPTER 8: EXTERNAL RELATIONS

National Association of Friendship Centres

A. Literature Review

Much of the traditional literature on best practices of non-profit organizations focuses on 'internal' concepts. It views 'external' issues and relationships as being important only for fundraising and volunteer purposes. Increasingly, however, research into successful non-profit organizations has begun to look at these external relationships as key ingredients to effective, high impact organizations.

When Crutchfield and McLeod Grant conducted research for their book, *Forces for Good*, they were surprised by many of their findings. They realized that high impact non-profits are not just about replicating programs or building effective organizations. They describe the organizations they studied as 'catalytic agents of change' – organizations that are not merely housed within four walls but are:

catalysts that work within, and change, entire systems. The most effective of these groups employ a strategy of leverage, using government, business, and public, and other nonprofits as forces for good, helping them deliver even greater social change than they could possibly achieve alone.²⁷

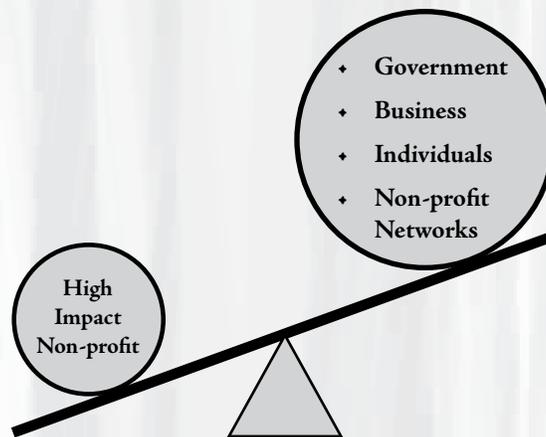


Figure 1 - Leverage Increases Impact²⁸

²⁷ Crutchfield and McLeod Grant, 5-6.

²⁸ Ibid, 20.

All of the organizations these authors studied play a dual role of advocacy and service delivery. The organizations connect their role as service providers to their advocacy role – and in doing so reinforce the power and effectiveness of both elements. Ultimately, they increase their impact on the overall cause. The advocacy role brings the organization beyond its own borders, involving government, business, individuals and other organizations.

According to Kathy Brock, challenges to forging strong alliances with external partners include the financial and human resource costs as well as the time required.²⁹ Such relationships are nonetheless increasingly critical to the vibrancy and sustainability of the non-profit sector and its ability to create meaningful impact. The literature on non-profit best practices offers the following tips on engaging government, the private sector, individuals and other organizations:

Government

The Institute on Governance (IOG) indicates that the following steps may prove helpful to effectively lobbying government:

1. **Know how government works:** Get to know key players. What are their roles, functions and goals? Who needs to be persuaded and who should be involved?
2. **Prepare your case:** Develop your position by defining the problem, getting the facts, doing the analysis, assessing the options and creating a statement of what you want. Align your case with government priorities wherever possible.
3. **Look for windows:** Opportunities may arise at any time so keep informed of new or changing policies and programs. Networking opportunities will also present themselves at any time.
4. **Pursue at several levels:** Lobby decision makers as well as those who influence decision makers.
5. **Look for Allies:** Seek opportunities to increase influence through collaboration with other groups with similar goals.

Private Sector

Crutchfield and McLeod Grant identify three ways that non-profit organizations can work successfully with business:

1. **Change business practices:** In making a business more socially responsible, sometimes change can be created in an entire industry. Non-profits can often make a compelling case that includes not only moral persuasion but bottom-line arguments as well.
2. **Partner with business:** Partnerships may range from accessing corporate donations to operational alliances. This is generally the easiest way for non-profits to leverage market forces.
3. **Run a business:** Income from a charged for product or service can be channelled back into the charitable mission of the organization to increase financial stability.³⁰

29 Brock, Kathy, "Government and Community Relations," in Management of Nonprofit and Charitable Organizations in Canada, (Markham: LexisNexis Canada, 2006), 175.

30 Crutchfield and McLeod Grant, 60.

Individuals

Crutchfield and McLeod Grant assert that, in order to successfully engage individuals, non-profits should consider the following points:

- Outsiders are more likely to help an organization if they are treated as a valued member of a community rather than simply free labour or deep pockets. To do this effective organizations create, as an organizational priority, opportunities for people to actively participate and to experience what the non-profits do.
- Great organizations creatively engage outsiders through experiential and emotional events that allow them to take part in creating social change. Such events help people understand the organization, feel more connected to its values and become active participants.
- High impact organizations recruit ambassadors or champions by convincing them of the organization's positive impact through a positive volunteering experience. In addition, they are strategic about identifying, converting, and cultivating powerful individuals to be allies or ambassadors who can take the organization to the next level by virtue of their political, social or economic power.
- Effective organizations build entire communities committed to the organization and invest time and effort to sustain these communities.
- Small initial investments to engage individuals catalyze greater impact.³¹

Partnering

The following tactics nurture a strong network mentality for an organization:

1. Grow the pie for the larger cause through funding other organizations, leading collaborative efforts, and helping other organizations improve their ability to fundraise as a way to increase resources for the cause and increase overall impact.
2. Share knowledge and expertise through research, publications, and replication manuals; build the skills of allies through training programs, conferences and workshops, thereby increasing influence by working as a collective.
3. Develop leadership for the larger network or movement, nurturing talented employees and developing the next generation of leadership. This increases both the personnel capacity of other organizations and the organization's own social connections within the network.
4. Work in coalitions, mobilizing the network for collective aims; play both lead and secondary roles and share credit for their success.³²

31 Ibid, 87-100.

32 Ibid, 110-111.

B. National Association of Friendship Centres

The Friendship Centre Movement (FCM) dates back to the 1950s, when Friendship Centres first started taking shape to address the increasing needs and concerns of the growing population of Aboriginal people in urban areas. During the 1950s and 1960s, Friendship Centres were largely autonomous. They relied primarily on volunteers and were funded by fundraising activities, churches, service groups, and small grants. As the demand for services by urban and migrating First Nations, Inuit and Métis people increased so did the number of Friendship Centres. The nature of programming and services and critical need for more funding was quickly amplified.

During the late 1960s, these autonomous Centres began to organize into Provincial and Territorial Associations (PTAs), a development that eventually led to the establishment of a national body – the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC). In 1972, the Government of Canada initiated funding of the Friendship Centres through the Migrating Native Peoples Program. In 1988, the federal government established a permanent program, the Aboriginal Friendship Centre Program (AFCP). Because of the quality of services provided and the vital role they played in the communities they served, the Friendship Centres gained an increasingly positive reputation with the government as legitimate urban Native institutions responding to the needs of Native people.

The funding relationship fundamentally changed in 1996, when the administrative responsibility for the AFCP was transferred from the Department of Canadian Heritage to the NAFC. This new agreement meant that all operational funding for AFCP would be administered by the NAFC to the local Friendship Centres and the PTAs. This devolution signified a new era in Aboriginal/Government relations and, to this day, suggests a unique relationship with the Government of Canada. It notably demonstrated a commitment on behalf of the government to increase the capacity and sustainability of Aboriginal organizations.

During the devolution process, the NAFC developed a number of administrative documents. Committees and consultations within the Friendship Centre Movement helped develop the principles of transfer which included the NAFC goals and objectives, and code of ethics. At this time, the NAFC also developed the *AFCP Administration Manual* and *AFCP Criteria and Guidelines*. These documents are fundamentally based on customary Aboriginal values such as accountability and transparency. They play an important role in ensuring accountability in the relationship between the NAFC and the government, between the NAFC and the local Friendship Centres and ultimately between the Friendship Centres and their clients. The NAFC ensures a sustained relationship with the government by continually fulfilling the evaluation and funding requirements.

The impact of this funding arrangement has been significant. Funding devolution created conditions for the long-term development of modern Aboriginal governance and offered urban Aboriginal people the opportunity to acquire knowledge and develop skills and experience as administrators of service delivery institutions. Indeed, this relationship with government has helped increase the reputation of the NAFC as a professional service provider. Further, the Friendship Centre Movement has successfully levered funding from other sources – to such an extent that the \$16.1 million from the AFCP is only a small fraction of the total \$140 million in annual revenue for the Movement.

Given that there is no champion of FC's in the federal government, it is especially significant that a strong Friendship Centre presence is implied through the NAFC administration of AFCP. Therefore is able to access and influence government in a more sustained and direct way.

Challenges to this relationship with government remain. Although it is recognized as Canada's only network of Aboriginal service delivery providers, the NAFC still hopes to enhance its reputation as a high quality service delivery organization of choice. At the same time, the NAFC recognizes the need to balance its service delivery with advocacy activities. NAFC Executive Director, Peter Dinsdale, explains:

There was fear at the beginning of the funding arrangement that we [NAFC] would become administrators rather than advocates. There is some controversy over this, how much we are a representative body versus a service delivery organization. While we like to think of ourselves as a professional service provider, we nonetheless reserve the right to speak the truth about what is happening. We speak the facts and leave out emotional issues. This is the manner in which we advocate.

Establishing its advocacy role in this fact-based, respectful manner has allowed the NAFC to maintain a positive relationship with government despite the fact that the government is often the target of its advocacy efforts. Most notably, this occurred in the time leading up to the signing of the Kelowna Accord in 2005, where the NAFC took a very public stand opposing the Accord because it did not commit enough for urban-based Aboriginal peoples.

The NAFC attempts to improve the quality of life for urban Aboriginal people by working with other groups as well. Mr. Dinsdale points out that it can be a challenge to partner with certain organizations because of the nature of their business. Because the Friendship Centre programs are all delivered in a culturally appropriate manner, partnering with non-Aboriginal organizations at a program level can be difficult. At the national level, the NAFC is less involved in direct program delivery. Therefore, the nature of working arrangements with other organizations is more along the lines of policy partnerships.

In 2006, the NAFC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). The MOU is based on a few important principles:

WHEREAS the AFN recognizes the important urban service delivery function of the NAFC and the priority issues of access to culturally appropriate service for First Nations peoples living in urban areas; and

WHEREAS the NAFC recognizes that AFN is a political organization and advocate for First Nation governments; and

WHEREAS the AFN and the NAFC agree that it is our mutual desire to work together in support of all First Nations peoples, regardless of residency.

Mr. Dinsdale explains that this MOU is about supporting each other and moving toward a deepened relationship based on the NAFC's role in supporting some of the AFN's members, but not representing them. One example of how this MOU has unfolded is the NAFC's participation at the National Day of Action in June 2008, where the NAFC was involved in the planning committee with the AFN and was included in the line-up of speakers at the event. The NAFC is confident that the MOU with AFN offers a template for PTAs to develop their own regional agreements with provincial bodies. Two instances of these pragmatic approaches are the agreements between PTAs in Quebec and British Columbia and their provincial governments.

The NAFC is working to establish stronger links with other organizations in Canada, such as the Métis National Council (MNC), the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) and the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation (NAAF). On a policy level, the NAFC cultivates research and policy partnerships on a project basis. For example, the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) solicited the NAFC to conduct a literacy consultation. Thirty local Friendship Centres were engaged in identifying and discussing family literacy issues. As a result, a discussion paper was developed and some PTAs were able to leverage new literacy programs from the province. Other policy partners include the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Canadian Council on Social Development.

For its work, the NAFC has been recognized nationally and internationally as an important institution that advocates for and improves the lives of urban Aboriginal peoples in Canada. An example of this recognition is the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples' Issues (UNPFII), which during its 7th session, formally affirmed:

*that the National Association of Friendship Centres in Canada is an example of a good practice model for developing indigenous peoples' centres in urban areas that should be replicated.*³³

The NAFC anticipates that through building and maintaining meaningful relationships with external partners, the organization will be able to gain increased recognition and therefore enhanced opportunity to advocate the decisive needs of Canada's urban Aboriginal population based on the necessity and success of direct Aboriginal service delivery. The external relationships that now exist have proven their ability to help facilitate an improved quality of life for Aboriginal peoples in an urban environment.

33 *United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples' Issues (UNPFII) 7th Session Final Report*, Page 17, #107. www.nafc.ca/PDF/UNPFII-IRReportResponseJune2008.pdf

C. Conclusions

In relation to the literature review on external relations, the NAFC emulates many of the declared best practices and has also generated many of its own. The NAFC enjoys a unique relationship with government that allows them access to and influence with certain departments and policy makers. The NAFC navigates effectively between service delivery and advocacy and is constantly pursuing opportunities to strengthen both roles. Its advocacy role is based on harvesting all the relevant facts that best represent and champion the interests of their clients with external stakeholders and partners. Although the NAFC does not actively pursue fundraising partnerships, it does partner with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations in support of policy and research objectives.

Despite an interest in partnering with the private sector, the NAFC has yet to identify and pursue such interests. Also on the horizon is the appointing of champions from outside the Movement. The NAFC has successfully illustrated the power of leverage that is typical of high performing non-profits acting as catalysts for social change. "Indeed," offers Peter Dinsdale. "The NAFC has only begun to tap its enormous potential both for both program delivery and for advocacy."

Continuing to capitalize on external relationships will help to uphold NAFC's reputation as an essential conduit for the success of Canada's urban Aboriginal peoples.

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CHAPTER 9: SUSTAINABILITY

Val-D'Or Native Friendship Centre

A. Literature Review

Much of the literature on non-profit best practices suggests that the key to an effective organization is not necessarily expanding the organization or its programs but rather sustaining the impact of the organization and its programs.

For non-profits and for-profits alike, financial sustainability is the key challenge. However, according to Crutchfield and McLeod Grant, by contrast to the for-profit sector, the non-profit sector faces a disincentive to invest in such critical organizational elements as people, infrastructure and systems that help sustain success. The non-profit sector holds an erroneous belief that all funding should go to programs. This is in part due to a tendency of funders to view success in financial terms, such as the overhead to program spending ratio, rather than in terms of the impact or change created by the investment.

Real success and sustainability requires looking beyond financial measures. Crutchfield and McLeod Grant suggest that there are three critical elements to sustaining impact:

1. People: develop a people strategy and invest heavily in top performers
2. Capital: find the right sources of funding (and diversify to reduce financial risks)
3. Infrastructure: invest in overhead, despite pressure to look lean³⁴

The authors continue that there is no recipe for scaling up organizations. Of the organizations that the authors studied, some grew first and then developed the organizational capacity to fill the gap between their expectations and their effectiveness. Other organizations grew slowly to reach and then remain at an effective and efficient scale.³⁵ The bottom line in either situation is the ability at least to sustain current levels of impact. Crutchfield and McLeod suggest the following list of what an organization must do to sustain its impact:

1. Find the right balance for the organization (identify and then invest heavily in what it needs to sustain impact)

34 Crutchfield and McLeod Grant, 185-186.

35 Ibid, 204.

2. Focus on what, then who (hire based on cultural fit and mission and then give people the latitude and development they need to succeed)
3. Pay to play (pay top talent relatively well, ideally at or near the top of the field)
4. Find sources of ongoing funding to diversify risk
5. Fuse fundraising with your theory of change (government, business and the public are potential sources of funding but also a means of leveraging social impact)
6. Resist pressure to look lean (fund overhead properly)³⁶

Much of the literature on financial sustainability suggests that diversification of funding sources is the most important factor to decreasing risk and maximizing sustainability.

According to Thomas Wolf, the critical factor to successful sustainability is an organization's ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Some of today's challenges can include increased competition, higher expectations from the public and funders, increasing costs, declining support, rapidly changing technology and differing ways of conducting business. Adaptability is intrinsically linked to sustainability because it allows an organization to remain relevant to the needs of its constituents, financially healthy, well managed and accountable. Wolf also maintains that sustainability comes from organizational leadership, especially the CEO and Board Chair.

Part of being sustainable is finding the right size and scope for the organization, which involves asking some key questions in at least six different categories:

- **Industry comparables:** What is the range of size for other organizations in the field that appear viable and healthy?
- **Essential activity:** What is the minimum activity that must be performed every year?
- **Cost versus revenue structure:** How much does it cost to perform the minimum activities of the organization each year in a way that assures quality service and program delivery?
- **Capitalization:** Are there sufficient reserves to meet unanticipated needs and cash flow requirements?
- **Visibility:** Is the organization large enough to be visible to the community and its program impressive enough to attract leaders to the Board and command gifts from individual and institutional givers?
- **Balance of supply and demand:** Is there sufficient demand for the amount of product or service being delivered?³⁷

B. Val-D'Or Native Friendship Centre

Founded in 1974, the Val D'Or Native Friendship Centre (VDNFC) will celebrate 35 years of existence in 2009. A team of sixty-four employees provides the Friendship Centre's wide range of services, which include a) early childhood development (0-5 years old); b) family services; c) Elders and women support groups; d) support

³⁶ Ibid, 220.

³⁷ Wolf, 326-327.

group to the survivor of residential schools; e) front line and counselling to individuals; f) children homework support (6-12 years old); g) children's social club (Little wolves club: 6-12 years old); h) youth services (12-24 years old); and i) community services (social activities, leisure, community food kitchen, recreational, health prevention workshops).

In addition to these social and education-type services, the Friendship Centre also runs a number of revenue generating businesses, including lodging, cafeteria, arts and crafts shop, on-site hairdresser services and rental of meeting halls. In 2004 the Friendship Centre added a new service by opening up a culturally sensitive Aboriginal Day Care Centre, accommodating some 80 children and run by 25 employees. The Friendship Centre is now the largest employer of Aboriginal people in Val-D'Or – a city of some 35,000 people that acts as a hub for the Cree of northern Quebec and the Algonquin (Anishnabe) people.

The Friendship Centre has experienced significant growth over the past two decades. When current Executive Director Edith Cloutier joined the Friendship Centre in 1989, the budget was \$.5 million with 12 staff. Since that time, the budget has grown to \$3.3 million. Further, the Friendship Centre built a new facility in 1995, and in 2001 doubled in size with an addition.

VDNFC Approach to Sustainability

Ms. Cloutier believes that the Friendship Centre's approach to sustainable growth rests on three pillars: the Friendship Centre's approach to its staff, funding diversification, and adaptability. We look at each aspect in turn.

In terms of staffing, Ms. Cloutier starts from the premise that the Friendship Centre is providing services that a government should provide in other contexts. Consequently, she believes strongly in attracting the expertise and competence one would normally find in a professional public service and in paying equivalent salaries. This means that the VDNFC pay rates are above those normally found in an NGO. Further, these rates of pay are supplemented by a generous benefits package including group insurance and time off work through vacations, summer hours, holidays and an extended Christmas break.

Another aspect of the Friendship Centre's approach to human resource management is putting significant emphasis on investing in its staff through, among other things, training – focused especially on new employees so that these fully understand the Friendship Centre's philosophy and the manner in which the programs relate to one another.

The result has been the retention of a core group of 5 to 6 employees, all with 10 to 20 years of experience. And as the literature review suggests, this approach to staffing is often at odds with funders, whose pre-occupation is low program delivery costs. The battle with funders on this issue is constant, according to Ms. Cloutier.

The second pillar in the Friendship Centre's approach to sustainable growth is funding diversification. Of the Friendship Centre's \$3.3 million budget, an impressive 45 percent comes from the businesses that the Friendship

Centre runs. Further, the Friendship Centre's capital plant was financed in part by a fund-raising campaign that in 1989 had raised nearly \$.5 million. According to Ms. Cloutier, self-generated financing through 'social entrepreneurship' is critical to avoiding the burden of a large mortgage and the financial risk such a debt would entail.

An additional 40 percent of the Friendship Centre's budget comes from federal sources (Canadian Heritage, Service Canada and Health Canada) and a remaining 15 percent comes from the province. This latter source of funding is worthy of special note. According to Ms. Cloutier, the Friendship Centre achieved a major breakthrough in 2006 with its successful negotiations with the Quebec Government. The resulting agreement provided financial support for the establishment of the 'homework support' component of the Little Wolves Program (see box below for a detailed description). The Friendship Centre is now working on a second provincial breakthrough and sees potential core funding from the province as the means to put the Friendship Centre on "another level in our development."

Little Wolves Program – Holistic, Culturally Sensitive Programming

In 2003, the VDNFC initiated a new program for children 6 to 12 years old: the Little Wolves Club. This initiative has two components: a homework support program and a social club for children based on culture and tradition. Funding for this initiative came from a federal program called Community Action Program for Children (CAPC), a program that is not an Aboriginal-targeted initiative. Since 2007, the Quebec government has funded Friendship Centres for the homework support component through the provincial "Programme d'aide aux devoirs." This funding was a direct result of the First Nation Socio-Economic Forum held in October 2006. In total, both components of the Little Wolves Club receive approximately \$38,000 per year in grants.

Staffing for this initiative is comprised of one community organizer, one youth animator, one specialized educator and one psycho-educator. The funding allocated does not cover the total expenses related to this initiative. Instead, "inter-program" collaborations enable the provision of services to this specific "clientele" of the Friendship Centre. The other programs collaborating in this initiative are the Aboriginal Head Start program and the Diabetes Initiative.

This initiative benefits a total of 50 children and services are provided in both French and English. The homework support component also includes services to the parents through workshops and child/parent meetings. In order to maintain participation in this component, the Friendship Centre provides transportation for the children. Also, a maximum of 8 children per linguistic group is accepted. The program evaluates the children and gives priority to those with special needs.

The Social Club component is open to all children who are 6 to 12 years old. Children must be registered to participate in this component of the initiative. During the school year, regular activities are organized according to the school calendar. On Aboriginal Day (June 21st) of each year, the Friendship Centre puts on the Mëmëgwashi Gala, an event that emphasizes the perseverance of the students and celebrates their accomplishments throughout their school year. Summer camps occur in July and August and are animated by summer students.

Culture and tradition – reinforcing the Aboriginal identity, self-esteem and pride of the children – are at the heart of this initiative.



The third pillar in the Friendship Centre's sustainable development strategy is adaptability. As Ms. Cloutier notes, the Friendship Centre operates in a complex political environment involving three levels of government (federal, provincial and municipal) as well as a number of Aboriginal governments and organizations. The result is a constantly changing environment with significant funding uncertainties.

The Friendship Centre has done a number of things to ensure it adapts to this environment, including:

- Having a strong board with a clear, strategic plan that is constantly reviewed and updated
- Empowering staff to understand how the Friendship Centre operates and review the relevance of its current direction. As Ms. Cloutier notes, "Everyone from the Janitor to Program Directors understand how the Friendship Centre's budget works and all staff participate in the review of the strategic plan to ascertain that we are still on track."
- Participating in political fora to keep current with changing political priorities and to develop important networks. For the past fifteen years, for example, the Friendship Centre has worked closely with the AFNQL chiefs and participated in many joint initiatives such as the Quebec First Nations Socio-Economic Forum in 2006.

According to Ms. Cloutier, the Executive Director's role is part manager, part 'social entrepreneur' and part 'politician' in the broad sense of that word. All of these roles are critical components of adaptability in a fast changing environment.

One of the real benefits of a successful, sustainable development strategy is that it brings with it credibility and new opportunities. Ms. Cloutier gave several recent examples of other entities approaching the Friendship Centre to develop partnerships. For example, the Chamber of Commerce asked the Friendship Centre to coordinate a series of events involving business and Aboriginal leaders to enhance Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relationships within the city and region. Negotiations with financial institutions and governments also became easier, thanks to the sustained success of the Friendship Centre.

C. Conclusions

The VDNFC approach to sustainable development follows closely the major themes that appeared in the literature. Its three pillars – an emphasis on quality staff, funding diversification, and adaptability – are components found in many successful non-profit organizations. Its emphasis on ‘social entrepreneurship’ is another emerging trend in the literature. Finally, the Friendship Centre’s strong board and Executive Director as well as a strategic plan that it continually reviews and updates is another common theme of civil society organizations that succeed in turbulent political environments.

The Friendship Centre, according to Ms. Cloutier, cannot afford to rest on its laurels. As she notes, “we are at times overwhelmed at the challenges of meeting the many needs of Aboriginal peoples in our region.” Judging from its success over the past two decades, chances are good that the Friendship Centre will be up to meeting these challenges.

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CHAPTER 10: FUNDRAISING

Friendship Centre Movement

A. **Literature Review**

The inclusion of an organization's fundraising strategy in core strategic planning is critical. Fundraising both informs and is informed by other areas of strategic planning. The organizations featured in *Forces for Good* all addressed fundraising as integral to the process of planning their programs, mission and mandate. Some also incorporated fundraising into their advocacy role and larger vision for creating social impact. For example, the CEO of YouthBuild USA lobbied the government to support a national YouthBuild program for two complimentary reasons: one, because that was where a large sum of money could be mobilized for the organization; and two, because of a deeply held belief that the government has a responsibility to provide housing for low-income youth.³⁸

The organizations featured in *Forces for Good* accessed a diversity of funding sources. At the same time, half of them relied on a single source for a majority of their funding. This model depends on securing one main, reliable source with further supplementary sources to offer security if one funding source should disappear. Organizations that received a substantial amount of government funding stated that government funding is the best source of large amounts of money. The drawback to government funding is that it can be unreliable – for example, in the face of an administration change. Accessing government funding may also run the risk of having to relinquish some control of the project. In many cases, however, the large amount of public funding appeared to be worth the constraints.

Other sources of funding include individual donors, foundations, the private sector, fund-raising activities or events staged by the organization itself. In Canada, *the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations (2004)* found that revenues for nonprofits come from the following sources: 49 percent from government (40% provincial, 7% federal, and 2% municipal sources); 35 percent earned income from nongovernmental sources (1% charitable gaming, 11% membership fees, 20% fees from goods and services, 4% earnings from endowments or investments); 8 percent individual donations; 1 percent fundraising organizations and family community foundations; 3 percent disbursement from other nonprofit organizations; 3 percent corporate sponsorship, donations or grants.³⁹

38 Crutchfield and McLeod Grant, 192.

39 Murray, 219.

Crutchfield and McLeod Grant believe that organizations that raise their own money through some kind of service or product (social entrepreneurship), while they are possibly the most sustainable, will only remain so if the activity fits within the core mandate and mission of the organization.

Andrea McManus offers the following tips about fundraising in Canada:

- Organizations should tap into the philosophy that people give to people. The number one reason that people give is because they have been touched by the cause represented by the organization. People give because they are asked and because they want to help others.
- In most organizations, the 80/20 rule applies: 80 percent of funding comes from 20 percent of sources.
- Potential donors are not always obvious. Statistics show that people with all levels of income donate to charity. This is the case with corporate donors as well. The key is to find a suitable donor(s) and devise a way to approach them.
- Relationship or donor-centred fundraising is the key to successful fundraising programs. This includes building relationships with donors and respecting them as stakeholders in the mission of the organization.
- Fundraising must work in synergy with strategic planning, governance, and program planning and execution.
- An organization should match a prospective donor's interest with the needs of the organization so that the act of asking becomes an opportunity to support a cause with pride.⁴⁰

There is some disagreement in the literature about the role that the Board should play in fundraising. Thomas Wolf asserts that all Board Members should be involved in fundraising, either through giving directly or through other fundraising efforts. Letts, Ryan and Grossman warn that board involvement in fundraising is potentially dangerous because it can refocus how the Board views success, crowding out performance goals and substituting growth in revenues for mission fulfillment. As well, wealthy, well-connected Board Members may crowd out other Board Members who have important perspectives and expertise. Nonetheless, many authors emphasize the important role that boards play in resource development. Letts, Ryan and Grossman suggest that balance is necessary. Perhaps boards can play a vital fundraising role by helping “funders distinguish between unproductive overhead and real value-creating organizational capacity... [thereby] raising money for the organization to improve its effectiveness.”⁴¹

B. Friendship Centre Movement

Fundraising is an on-going concern for virtually all organizations in the non-profit sector. From local Centres to the national office, the Friendship Centre Movement (FCM) knows well the challenges involved in fundraising. The importance of effective fundraising strategies is also well understood. As in the literature review, many

40 McManus, Andrea, “Resource Development Basics,” in *Management of Nonprofit and Charitable Organizations in Canada*, 227-230.

41 Letts, Ryan and Grossman, 141-142.

Friendship Centres featured in the previous case studies cite fundraising as one of the organization's trickiest and most time-consuming activities - as well as one of the biggest barriers to increasing the impact of the organization.

The core funding received from the Department of Canadian Heritage through Aboriginal Friendship Centre Program (AFCP) has not increased – including for inflation – since administration of the funding was devolved to the NAFC national office in 1996. Despite this, the NAFC operates on a budget of \$140 million, less than 12 percent (\$16.1million) of which consists of the AFCP core funding. Though some Friendship Centres have had more success than others in fundraising, overall, these figures demonstrate an amazing fundraising ability among local Friendship Centres, provincial/territorial associations and the national office.

Fundraising as Part of Strategic Planning

So how do the Friendship Centres fundraise successfully? As the literature on fundraising best practices recommends, many of them include fundraising as an integral part of their strategic planning. The Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC) listed 'development of diversified funding' as one of three main strategic areas in its latest long-term strategic plan. One specific goal under this theme was 'capital acquisition,' intended to increase self-sufficiency of local Centres and of the OFIFC.

Through fundraising efforts such as bake sales and rummage sales, the OFIFC managed to raise \$16,000. With this money, they bought land which they later sold at a profit and re-invested. Through these kinds of fundraising and smart investment efforts, the OFIFC have been able to purchase two new buildings without any government funding. Says Executive Director Sylvia Maracle: "If we did not talk about strategic planning and the importance of physical capital, we would not have been able to purchase our own buildings." The inclusion of specific fundraising and investment goals in the strategic plan has allowed the OFIFC to improve sustainability and plan the growth of the organization. The OFIFC has a labour force growth target of 10 percent per year. At the same time, it is able to maintain salaries and benefits comparable to those in the public sector.

The OFIFC's current strategic plan highlights 'self-sufficiency' as one of the main strategic areas. As part of this initiative:

The ongoing training of Board, staff and community members around investments, economic development, innovative strategies for accessing and creating new resources, Villages Equity, private sector support, service contracts with First Nations and Métis peoples were all considered possibilities in this area.

Again, capital acquisition is an indicator for this strategic area – as are fee for service initiation, increased core support, partnership ventures, and research and development of a Friendship Centre foundation.

Sources of Funding

Effective Friendship Centres list an impressive diversity of funding sources, ranging from national and provincial government funding, to funding drives, to running small businesses.

Different Friendship Centres derive the majority of their funds from different sources. The Timmins Native Friendship Centre (TNFC), with an annual operating budget of \$1.6 million, supplements the annual core funding of \$114,000 through service agreements. The service agreements are largely with provincial departments and programs administered through the OFIFC. Other sources of revenue include the money the Friendship Centre receives for the building space the local college uses for course delivery and its fully licensed daycare with the Cochrane District Social Services Administration Board. The TNFC is always on the lookout for new funding opportunities. TNFC Executive Director, Veronica Nicholson emphasizes that, when the Friendship Centre is going after a provincial fund, collaboration with OFIFC is important: the OFIFC can lobby for all member Friendship Centres in Ontario. While this may prolong the process for the TNFC, it benefits all the Friendship Centres in the long-run and is thus a worthy delay.

Through ensuring an efficiently run Friendship Centre, the TNFC leverages the administration and program funds needed to sustain an effective organization. It uses savings in one area to pay for other areas, such as debt and capital. Over the past few years, the Friendship Centre has become more proactive about leveraging funds from service agreements. Since 1994, money left over from the core at the end of the year went toward paying off its debt. The result: last year, the Friendship Centre's debt was reduced to \$80,000. And this year for the first time the Friendship Centre ended up with a positive balance, \$977! The Friendship Centre is also in the process of establishing a capital fund for the first time.

Ms. Nicholson explains that the fundraising strategy for their programs and services is largely about leveraging funds from revenue sources. She says that some traditional 'selling hotdogs' fundraising is done, but this occurs primarily within individual programs for funding of special perks rather than core functions. For example, the youth offer DJ services for events such as weddings; the money earned goes towards special events and trips, such as attending the pow wow in Toronto. This type of fundraising, while it does not support the core services of the Friendship Centre, still serves an important function: it elicits a sense of pride among those who both raise the funds and benefit from the end result. It also sends the message that "the Friendship Centre is not a hand out – we have to work hard for what we have and work to keep what we have."

For many other Friendship Centres, self-run businesses provide an important source of revenue. Grande Prairie Friendship Centre runs a bingo hall that is largely run by volunteers. The Cariboo Friendship Centre has five economic development projects: a restaurant, lodging, a painting service, Long House rentals and an arts and crafts shop. The Labrador Friendship Centre runs a hostel offering affordable accommodation and a cafeteria. The Val d'Or Native Friendship Centre's businesses include lodging, cafeteria, arts and crafts shop, on-site hairdresser services and rental of meeting halls. As mentioned in the case study, profits from its businesses constitutes 45 percent of the Friendship Centre's overall operating budget.

For these Friendship Centres, some of the businesses are primarily about raising funds. At the same time, many of the businesses fuse the need to raise funds with the Friendship Centre's mandate and vision. The businesses provide jobs, training, a sense of belonging and accomplishment, affordable accommodation and other important benefits to the Aboriginal people who both run the businesses and are its clients. These fundraising initiatives thus strengthen the overall mandate of the NAFC significantly, serving in fact:

to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal peoples in an urban environment by supporting self-determined activities which encourage equal access to, and participation in, Canadian Society; and which respect and strengthen the increasing emphasis on Aboriginal cultural distinctiveness.

The private sector is currently not a major source of funding for the provincial/territorial associations or for the national office. NAFC Executive Director Peter Dinsdale explains that some private sector businesses would like to sponsor certain NAFC projects and initiatives. However, the NAFC does not have charitable status, which is a strong barrier to these kinds of sponsorships. OFIFC Executive Director, Sylvia Maracle adds that her organization lacks the human resources needed to access private sector funding.

While the private sector is generally not a source of continuous funding, businesses often do make valuable lump sum contributions to local Friendship Centres. For example, a private mining company in Newfoundland recently donated \$4,000 to the Labrador Friendship Centre (LFC) to replace the tables and chairs in the cafeteria. LFC Executive Director Stanley Oliver explains that private corporations generally like to give money for specific projects or for a specific purpose. The LFC thus raises funds accordingly, organizing funding drives for specific projects and initiatives. Many local Friendship Centres, as well as the NAFC national office, highlighted their desire to develop more partnerships and funding arrangements with the private sector in the future.

The Executive Directors of the Friendship Centres mentioned above display an enthusiasm for constantly seek out new funding opportunities. As Mr. Oliver explains:

One of the key challenges of achieving success in our organization is always limited funding to provide the necessary programs and services that our clients require. The organization is constantly on the look out and submitting proposals for government programs and grants as well as seeking corporate sponsorship for specific projects. Continuously having to put the message out there about the good work the Friendship Centre does can be time consuming and stressful.

Despite its being time consuming, Mr. Oliver jumps at any opportunity to talk about the work of the LFC. The Friendship Centre developed a power-point presentation Mr. Oliver uses to do presentations to a diverse audience ranging from churches and rotary clubs, to visiting federal bureaucrats, to executives of private companies. The key factors for success in fundraising at the NAFC seem to be a willingness and creativity to put in the time to seek out opportunities and to lobby governments to secure funding.

C. Conclusions

The Friendship Centre Movement demonstrates an impressive ability to fundraise and leverage funds to sustain organizational priorities. Interestingly, the organizations featured in this case study focus less on traditional 'bake sale' style fundraising and individual donations discussed in the literature. Rather, many local Friendship Centres are moving towards social entrepreneurship, an increasingly popular and necessary trend in the non-profit sector. The issue of raising the money to sustain the organization's programs, services and infrastructure is given increasing importance in short and long term strategic planning. As the literature also suggests, this is a key element to successfully plan the growth and sustainability of any organization.

By necessity, the Friendship Centre Movement has developed fundraising techniques that allow both an expansion of programs and infrastructure and the build-up of assets to maintain them. Those organizations in the FCM that are successful are aware of the large time commitment that fundraising requires and are willing to put in the time required. No doubt those that continue to succeed will be those that can continue leveraging funding arrangements and develop new and innovative approaches to fundraising.

CHAPTER 11: HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Prince George Native Friendship Centre

A. Literature Review

Letts, Ryan and Grossman identify the management of human resources as one of four key factors to improving an organization's chances for success. They maintain that non-profit organizations should view human resource (HR) practices as a strategic issue.

The Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) highlighted human resource management as an area in need of development in the non-profit sector in Canada.⁴² The VSI created the HR Council for the Voluntary and Non-profit Sector, which developed a website for organizations wanting to improve their HR practices <<http://www.hrvc-rhsbc.ca/>>.

According to the website, the purpose of strategic HR management is threefold:

- Ensure adequate human resources to meet the strategic goals and operational plans of your organization – the right people with the right skills at the right time
- Keep up with social, economic, legislative and technological trends that impact on human resources in your area and in the voluntary sector
- Remain flexible so that your organization can manage change if the future is different than anticipated⁴³

Strategic HR helps “get, keep and motivate good people specifically to advance the objectives and mission of the organization.”⁴⁴ It moves beyond a focus on compensation policies, administration, and training, although these are important elements. In addition to these core functions, HR should focus on creating ways to support, challenge, equip, and develop staff to help deliver the organization's mission. Letts, Ryan and Grossman summarize a few specific HR techniques and methods:

42 Meinhard, Agnes, “Managing the Human Dimension in Nonprofit Organizations: Paid Staff and Volunteers” in Management of Nonprofit and Charitable Organizations in Canada, (Markham: LexisNexis Canada, 2006), 391.

43 The HR Council for the Voluntary and Nonprofit Sector, “Strategic HR Planning”, <http://www.hrvc-rhsbc.ca/hr-toolkit/planning-strategic.cfm>, accessed March 24 2008.

44 Letts, Ryan and Grossman, 109.

- ✦ Offer loyalty to the employee in return for performance.
- ✦ Challenge workers, even where career ladders are short – for example, through lateral moves; assignment to high-visibility task teams to address a specific organizational or service delivery problem; and participation on corporate task forces.
- ✦ Evaluate performance in terms of results and attitude rather than just skills and ‘outputs.’
- ✦ Reward performance with bonuses.
- ✦ Use data to develop an effective HR policy - for example, to track minority recruitment and retention of female managers.⁴⁵

B. Case Study

The Prince George Native Friendship Centre (PGNFC) was established in 1969. Organized into four departments, the Friendship Centre offers numerous programs:

- Early Services, for ages 0-5, such as Headstart and Aboriginal Infant Development programs;
- Child and Youth Services, for clients under 18 years old, such as the alternate school programs, youth shelter and semi-independent living apartments;
- Cultural and Social Development Programs, such as the Native Healing Centre, drug and alcohol services, and the sexual abuse intervention program; and
- Economic and Employment Initiatives, such as the Smokehouse Kitchen Training Program, hospitality services and catering.

With a staff of 200, equity and fairness are central goals of the Friendship Centre’s HR management. There is one Executive Director and four senior managers. Each manager is responsible for one department, including all of the program coordinators and frontline staff that work within it. There are also two Elders at the Friendship Centre, who act as cultural advisors to all staff including the Executive Director.

The four managers and the Executive Director are responsible for all HR matters. They are supported by the administration team, which includes a person responsible for payroll, another for accounts payable and receivable, an Accounting Clerk, as well as the Financial Controller who acts as an overall supervisor. Hiring, firing, budgets and job descriptions are examples of HR processes over which managers have autonomous control within their departments.

Executive Director, Barbara Ward-Burkitt, aptly describes this management structure as ‘lean.’ She has been with the Friendship Centre since 1992, and took over as Executive Director three years ago. When she assumed the role, she immediately identified a need to improve the formal HR processes at the Friendship Centre, especially with regard to the roles and responsibilities of senior management. Luckily, she had worked with many of

⁴⁵ Ibid, 112-113.

the senior managers before she became Executive Director. Many were long-time employees of the Friendship Centre and had a good working relationship with each other and with Ms. Ward-Burkitt. Thus Ms. Ward-Burkitt recalls that there was general consensus amongst managers on what new policies were needed to increase accountability of staff throughout the Friendship Centre.

The first changes were to develop a policies and procedures manual for senior management and to update the existing policies and procedures manual for the rest of staff. There had always been a manual for program coordinators and frontline staff but it was still in its initial draft form and was outdated. This process is currently under way and Ms. Ward-Burkitt hopes that the manual will be a tool into which staff members can provide input on a continual basis and use to protect themselves.

Ms. Ward-Burkitt felt that there were enough issues specific to senior management to warrant a separate manual. She reviewed what frameworks existed and what was required. In conjunction with managers, she developed a new policy and procedures manual relevant to the roles and responsibilities of senior management. The Board of Directors approved the manual. Management now reviews it every two years.

There are two other HR tools that Ms. Ward-Burkitt introduced: employee agreements and performance evaluations. Again, senior management were subject to the new policies. Employee agreements detail the necessary qualifications for a particular employee and the duties that employee agrees to fulfill. Confidentiality, pay and termination are also outlined. The individual employee and the Executive Director then sign the document. It is reviewed every two years and serves to ensure accountability for the individuals' actions through explicit and well-communicated roles and responsibilities.

The performance evaluation states as its purpose:

To pinpoint strengths and weaknesses and to review past objectives and corresponding accomplishments so as to identify areas where performance can be improved to the benefit of the employee and the Friendship Centre; and to develop a practical improvement program of specific challenges.

The evaluation is conducted every two years for management and annually for frontline workers and program coordinators. Management ensures that there is a budget line for training within the performance review. The current evaluation form – which covers eleven areas of work such as working relationships, problem-solving skills and financial management – is under review. The tool is a very 'corporate document,' explains Ms. Ward-Burkitt, because a performance evaluation at the Friendship Centre must be more holistic in nature. She goes on:

For example, it is critical to talk about how the roles within the organization are in line with philosophy of the organization. What does culture look like and how does it impact practices on the worksite? There are staff that, as part of their professional development, need to look at that as one of their goals, perhaps work with Elders, etc.

Indeed it is this cultural element, this holistic approach, which adds perhaps the most crucial ingredient for success in the Friendship Centre's HR management. Though the policies and procedures are stringent, there is enough flexibility meaningfully to accommodate individual circumstances.

You can have all the policies and procedures in the world, but the bottom line is that sometimes you just have to go with your gut and your cultural way of doing things, through a cultural lens – we have no way of doing that at the moment in the policies and procedures manual...Despite there being a policy or practice, it does not always fit for that person. The most important piece is to look at that person in a holistic way, as an individual and to remember that each individual also has families and communities.

The health of the staff member, and how it affects colleagues and clients is the number one concern for Ms. Ward-Burkitt. She and the senior managers may refer staff to an appropriate support such as the cultural advisor or the Friendship Centre psychologist, or to a cultural activity such as the sweat lodge. Every morning there is a smudge ceremony at the Friendship Centre. Staff is welcome to attend. All of these activities are voluntary.

Senior managers hold weekly meetings to debrief on HR issues. The personal approach to dealing with staff is important, but it can also be difficult for managers, emotionally or otherwise. The weekly meetings help each of them deal effectively with the issues; a skill that Ms. Ward-Burkitt maintains must be fostered:

You do not learn about ways of dealing with staff through a management course. It comes through listening, being humble, being real with them, building relationships and trust, and teachings from Elders and others.

There are other perks for staff of the Friendship Centre, all of which contribute to an effective HR scheme that keeps staff happy and clients satisfied as a result. The Friendship Centre maintains a personal health and wellness program, which includes a gym at the Friendship Centre and special 'health and wellness' draws. The Friendship Centre gives out watches on 5th and 10th employment anniversaries of staff. Events and parties take place on special occasions and often feature a draw. These all help staff to feel valued and appreciated.

But it is not all fun and games. Ms. Ward-Burkitt attends workshops to stay up to date with any new developments in HR management. To ensure that they are in line with current legislation and regulations, the Friendship Centre's lawyer approves all new or changed policies. The payroll administrator keeps abreast of new methods and rules in payroll processes. Management puts energy towards responding to the needs of staff. For example, the previous health plan used to reimburse 75 percent of medical prescriptions. Staff expressed a desire for an improved health plan. Management adapted the benefits package to include a 'drug card', which would cover 100 percent of prescriptions up front.

Ms Ward-Burkitt believes that the Friendship Centre has struck a good balance between following the law and adopting practices specific to the Friendship Centre. Staff members appreciate the fairness and equity that comes with clear and formal procedures that respond to staff needs. The result is a low turnover rate at the Friendship Centre – the average length of employment of current staff is 7 years. And the most important impact is on the effectiveness of the Friendship Centre: when staff members are happy, clients get the best service and support possible.

C. Conclusions

The literature reflects many of the practices at the Prince George Native Friendship Centre. Employment agreements ensure that staff members are qualified for the jobs they are performing and that they are aware of what is required of them. The Friendship Centre uses a variety of approaches to make staff feel valued and appreciated, thereby keeping staff motivated. Further, managers evaluate staff performance in terms of results and attitudes and not just on the basis of skills and outputs. Management is flexible and responsive to the needs and desires of staff. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Friendship Centre views HR management as a strategic issue to which all senior managers must contribute.

Meanwhile HR management at the Friendship Centre requires both formal rules and a personal approach. This style of management works well for the Friendship Centre and serves to keep staff happy and adequately supported to do their jobs well.

There is one important divergence between the Friendship Centre's approach to HR management and the best practice literature: the sensitivity to Aboriginal culture and values that the Friendship Centre incorporates into its HR management approach.

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CHAPTER 12: CONCLUSION

The literature review of governance and management best practices within the non-profit sector aligns in many ways with the Friendship Centre Movement (FCM) case studies. The case studies in this report are impressive, demonstrating many examples of good practice that might be useful not only to other Friendship Centres but to other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations alike. Throughout the case studies, a number of common themes emerge regarding what makes an effective, successful and sustainable organization. As highlighted throughout the case studies, some good practice examples are unique to the FCM. There are also some areas where the FCM could or would like to improve. The following two sections of this concluding chapter discuss six common themes emerging from the case studies (A) as well as possible areas for focus in the future (B).

A. Common Trends

1. Strong Executive and Strong Board

The Friendship Centres in all of the case studies benefit from the leadership of capable Executive Directors. These key staff members possess a keen sense of the larger picture and a strong vision for the future. At the same time, these Executive Directors pay attention to the smaller details of the organization such as staff morale and client needs – but without micromanaging. They work well with other managers, value the input of the staff and empower staff at all levels. Yet they are also good at exercising authority and ensuring that their authority is recognized.

Executive Directors of successful Friendship Centres are all heavily involved in the community. They actively promote the interests of urban Aboriginal people at the community, regional and national levels. Due to the nature of the services provided and the turbulent political climate in which their Centres operate, Executive Directors must be able to represent the Friendship Centre's interests in diverse and sometimes difficult situations. They balance many roles. As Edith Cloutier of the Val d'Or Native Friendship Centre stated, they are 'part manager, part entrepreneur and part politician.'

The Board of Directors also provides an important source of guidance and leadership, both to the Executive Director and to the organization as a whole. Executive Directors interviewed in the case studies reported positive, productive relationships between the Board and Staff – and notably, between the Board Chair and the executive leadership. Boards of successful Friendship Centres are meaningfully involved in planning and evaluation processes. Many Friendship Centres describe their Boards as 'policy oriented,' providing important strategic oversight. Board Members offer a diversity of skills: both

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, many are actively involved in the Friendship Centre. Here too, they do not micro-manage but rather participate in the broader activities of the Friendship Centre. Board Members are also likely to be actively involved in the community at large.

As the literature review highlights, it is essential to have both a strong Board and a strong executive leadership. This point arises from the case studies, all of which identify both strong leadership and a strong board as important ingredients in the Friendship Centres' recipes for success.

2. Planning Coupled with Evaluation

Regardless of the theme of the case study, a common element for success is a clear strategic plan. Veronica Nicholson of the Timmins Native Friendship Centre (TNFC) stresses the importance of developing a strategic plan as a first step towards improving an organization. Not only developing a strategic plan but, perhaps more importantly, setting associated short-term goals and continuously implementing the plan contributes to success. Throughout the case studies, strategic plans have demonstrably helped improve staff morale, the quality of service delivery, the structure of staff roles and responsibilities and the organization's ability to grow and sustain itself. Sheila McMahon of the United Native Friendship Centre emphasizes that a strategic plan must include meaningful input from all staff – thereby giving the Executive Director the authority to move forward based on everyone's input and agreement. This ensures that everyone is working towards the same goals and is accountable for their actions and outcomes.

The other side of the planning coin is evaluation. No plan is successful without having regular evaluations to ensure that implementation is on track. If it is not on track, evaluations help gauge what subsequent changes should be made. While many of the Friendship Centres do not evaluate on all organizational levels outlined in the literature review (organizational, programs, individual staff members), the representatives of those surveyed stated that they are now developing more evaluations to fill in gaps. Successful evaluation processes must be regular and ongoing – and above all followed-up on.

3. Formal Structure, but with Flexibility

An interesting element that emerged from the case studies is the importance of formal structures that are adhered to but that also allow a degree of flexibility. Effective Friendship Centres have well defined job descriptions and clearly communicated roles and responsibilities. At the same time, their structures are flexible enough to allow for adaptation to changing circumstances. Regular and open communication enables both clearly understood formal roles and adaptation to changing circumstances. Many of the Friendship Centres demonstrate an ability quickly to adapt programs, staffing structures and organizational processes according to changing circumstances. This flexibility allows them to remain relevant to client needs.

Within the formal organizational structures, management has high expectations of staff. Yet it also empowers and supports its staff members so that they can perform their jobs well. This conduces to lower turnover rates and staff continuity, which provides stability to the Friendship Centre and its programs.

4. Combining Service Delivery and Advocacy

Both the literature and some of the case studies suggest that a dual strategy is most appropriate. The NAFC national office, for example, is moving in this direction with respectful, fact-based advocacy. It reduces the possible risk of appearing to ‘bite the hand that feeds’ by attempting to diversify its funding sources as well as engage in advocacy partnerships.

This dual role of service delivery and advocacy is evident in many local Friendship Centres. Indeed, some centres are able to strengthen their advocacy role as a direct result of the structure and content of their programs. For example, the youth homelessness program at the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre in Whitehorse: through its programming, it has done much to raise awareness about the needs of homeless Aboriginal youth within the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities alike.

Significantly, the case studies also establish that as service delivery improves the capacity for successful advocacy also increases. Friendship Centres that are well-run internally are seen as professional organizations, thereby gaining increased recognition from external stakeholders. This in turn offers better leverage for advancing the agenda of the Friendship Centres on the local, regional and national levels.

5. Aboriginal Values

Friendship Centres are founded on and operate based on Aboriginal values – a common theme in all the case studies. Important concepts like transparency, accountability, respect, and client-based service are often understood and approached from a traditional Aboriginal point of view. Culturally-based management is a common management framework of the Friendship Centres studied, whether informally demonstrated or explicitly stated. This style of management is manifest in various examples, ranging from adapting policies regarding leave of absence to incorporating traditional Aboriginal ceremonies, to using Aboriginal concepts such as the medicine wheel in planning and evaluating, to using consensus-based decision-making at the Board level.

Culturally-based management adds an attractive feature for staff working in the FCM. Many Friendship Centres describe their centre as a ‘family atmosphere,’ a community rather than just a work place. Staff and Board, in return, offer real understanding of and commitment to Aboriginal issues and experiences.

Another example of how Aboriginal values are manifest in the structure of Friendship Centres is the inclusion of youth and Elders in the structure of the various centres. Many Executive Directors emphasize the important advisory role that Elders play – providing guidance to staff, executive and to the Board. Youth are also engaged in the Friendship Centres, largely based on the traditional view of the importance of youth and of fostering positive relations between youth and the rest of the community.

When Executive Directors discuss the people who access the Friendship Centre's services, they refer to the community as a whole. They regard the community as both client and advisor; and the staff and board see themselves as members of that same community. The interaction Friendship Centres have with the communities they serve is a unique feature of these organizations – one that gives them credibility both with the communities they serve as well as with the larger communities they operate in.

An organizational culture that reflects Aboriginal values is cited as one fundamental reason that community members feel comfortable going to the Friendship Centres and accessing services. It is clear that a Friendship Centre grounded in Aboriginal values is essential to the success of these organizations, both internally and with their clients and other external stakeholders.

6. Financial Diversification

Although most Friendship Centres lament that core funding is not nearly adequate, effective Friendship Centres have found innovative ways to use a very small amount of core funding to help secure very large amounts of total funding. They have done so through proactively seeking out new funding opportunities, diversifying funding sources, and entrepreneurial success. Val d'Or Native Friendship Centre, which garners over 40 percent of its revenue base through business enterprises, is one such example.

In some ways, this presents a conundrum: the more a Friendship Centre successfully raises funds independently, the more difficult it may be to build a case for the need to increase core funding. Nonetheless, an efficient, effective Friendship Centre that can demonstrate great value for money presents a good business case to any potential funding source.

B. Future Areas of Focus

1. Becoming even Greater 'Forces for Good'

In *Forces for Good*, Crutchfield and MacLeod Grant identified four sources of leverage that organizations can use to increase impact: government, other organizations, private sector and individuals. In the FCM case studies, we saw many examples of leveraging relationships with government and to a lesser degree with other organizations. For example, the Labrador Friendship Centre ensures that it maintains good

relations with many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations and with all three levels of the Canadian government. The LFC includes as many stakeholders as possible in all activities that they do. Similarly, the Val-D'Or Friendship Centre has adopted a strategy of working with all levels of government and political organizations.

Throughout the case studies, however, we did not note many examples of leveraging impact through the private sector and individuals. There is great potential for the FCM to further explore increasing leverage in all four areas mentioned. Specifically:

- More thought could be given to fostering partnerships with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations and to leveraging these partnerships for maximum impact.
- High profile individuals could be cultivated as allies and advocates for the movement. An example of such an individual might be a CEO of a corporation, a politician or a celebrity. This individual would advocate for the organization and help to increase the profile of both the organization and its mission.
- There may be more potential to partner with the business sector in a sustained way. Relationships with the private sector will likely need more time and attention devoted to exploring them if they are to succeed.
- It may be useful to hold sessions at an Annual General Meeting specifically devoted to exploring and sharing ideas around some of these topics – for example, partnering with the business sector, advocacy strategies, etc.

2. Service Delivery and Quality Management

The NAFC believes that there is enormous potential for Friendship Centres to take on more service delivery responsibilities. We agree. The issue is how best to market the Friendship Centre Network.

One thought is to develop a certification system for the Friendship Centre Movement – in essence, a modified ISO quality management and governance certification process. This would bring many benefits, including improved accountability and transparency with funders and with members; greater confidence to those outside the movement who might want to work with Friendship Centres; providing a template for ongoing evaluation work; and helping to focus capacity-building.

Certification is increasingly used in private and public sector institutions as well as the non-profit sector. Accreditation Canada is a non-profit, independent organization that provides accreditation to many hospitals in Canada in order to help them “examine and improve the quality of service they provide to their patients

and clients.”⁴⁶ The Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations developed a ‘Standards for Excellence Program,’ which “offers a voluntary, peer-review certification program.”⁴⁷

Examples of certification also exist in the Aboriginal world: Membertou First Nation and Sagamok First Nation are both ISO certified. An additional benefit of certification would be that it would serve to help formalize evaluation processes. Hence our final recommendation:

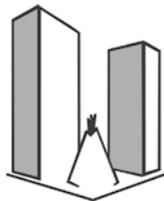
- It may be useful to explore the notion of certification further, possibly with government or the private sector as a financial sponsor. The first immediate step here might be to conduct a feasibility study.

46 Accreditation Canada, <www.cchsa.ca/default.aspx?page=66&cat=2> accessed July 16th, 2008.

47 Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations, *Standards for Excellence Application Information*, <http://www.marylandnonprofits.org/html/standards/04_04.asp> accessed July 16th, 2008.

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