The CAPC/CPNP Think Tank: Parent Participation in CAPC/CPNP Governance and Decision-Making

Background

In November 2001, some twenty representatives from the Community Action Program for Children (CAPC) and Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) projects across the country gathered in Ottawa for a two-day Think Tank to explore the theme of participatory models of governance and decision-making in these community-based projects.

This event was the second Think Tank sponsored by Health Canada under the CAPC/CPNP National Projects Fund. The first Think Tank, held in the Spring of 2000, was a pilot test to explore an experimental model whereby CAPC/CPNP representatives with experience and knowledge about specific issues were invited to participate in a facilitated discussion to identify common challenges and solutions or approaches to these issues. The unique aspect of this Think Tank model was the inclusion of community-based researchers, who contributed their knowledge of current research on the issues. A key goal of the Think Tank process is to find research support for what project people have known to be true for a long time; in other words, to move from practical experience to theoretical validation, rather than the other way around.

The other key goal of the Think Tank model is to provide a forum where project people from different parts of across the country have an opportunity to share their learnings and experiences, to network outside their communities and regions and feel part of a larger national movement aimed at healthy child and family development.

At the end of each Think Tank, papers are produced in partnership with the participants and the researchers. These papers combine the experience and expertise of project representatives and capture the learnings from the perspective of the CAPC/CPNP participants and community-based participatory researchers, and are made available to CAPC/CPNP projects across Canada.[1]

Think Tank 2001: Participatory Governance and Decision-making Approaches

Think Tank 2001 focused on a single theme: **participatory governance and decision-making approaches**. This theme was selected by a national Advisory Committee consisting of representatives from CAPC/CPNP projects

[1] The pilot Think Tank, held in March 2000, addressed four separate issues. The four issue papers produced after the Think Tank, as well as a fifth paper explaining the development of the Think Tank model and process, are available on Health Canada's website at http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/childhood-youth/cbp/npfproject/index.htm#Think%20Tank

and Health Canada because of the interest expressed by programs across the country in learning more about the experiences of programs that had enjoyed some success in involving parents/participants in their governance structures. While Health Canada does not require that participants be part of CAPC/CPNP Boards of Directors or other governance structures, it is strongly recommended. However, there are many challenges and barriers to participant involvement in governance. The main purpose of Think Tank 2001 was to identify these barriers and to highlight strategies to help overcome them.

Two groups (ten CAPC/CPNP Board members, i.e., participating parents; and ten CAPC/CPNP Project Coordinators, i.e., project staff) discussed the issue under three broad headings:

- *What are the appropriate roles and responsibilities that participants can assume in Board/governance structures?*
- *What are the barriers to involving participants from CAPC/CPNP projects on Boards/governance structures? What are some strategies for overcoming these barriers?*
- *What are the skills needed for successful participant involvement in Board/ governance structures? What role can project coordinators and staff play in facilitating the process?*

At the conclusion of the Think Tank, the two groups came together in a final plenary session to consolidate the learnings. This paper captures the key themes and learnings from Think Tank 2001, as expressed by the participants themselves. Appended to the report is the Literature Review conducted by a community-based researcher, Madine VanderPlaat of St. Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, which is a "conversation between the experience and knowledge of those involved with CAPC/CPNP projects and the experience and knowledge produced by researchers who work in the fields of community development, health promotion, social intervention and social justice."

Participation of Parents in CAPC/CPNP Governance and Decision-Making: What does this mean?

"Governance" is a big word. It includes the concept of *power*: who has the authority? — and the concept of *accountability*: who is responsible? — for the decisions and actions of an organization. Governance can mean *jurisdiction*: who is legally responsible? — and it can also mean *structures and processes*: how are decisions made and implemented? The term "governance" can describe varying governing and operational structures.

"Governance is the art of steering societies and organizations. Governance involves the interactions among structures, processes and traditions that determine how power is exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say." [2]

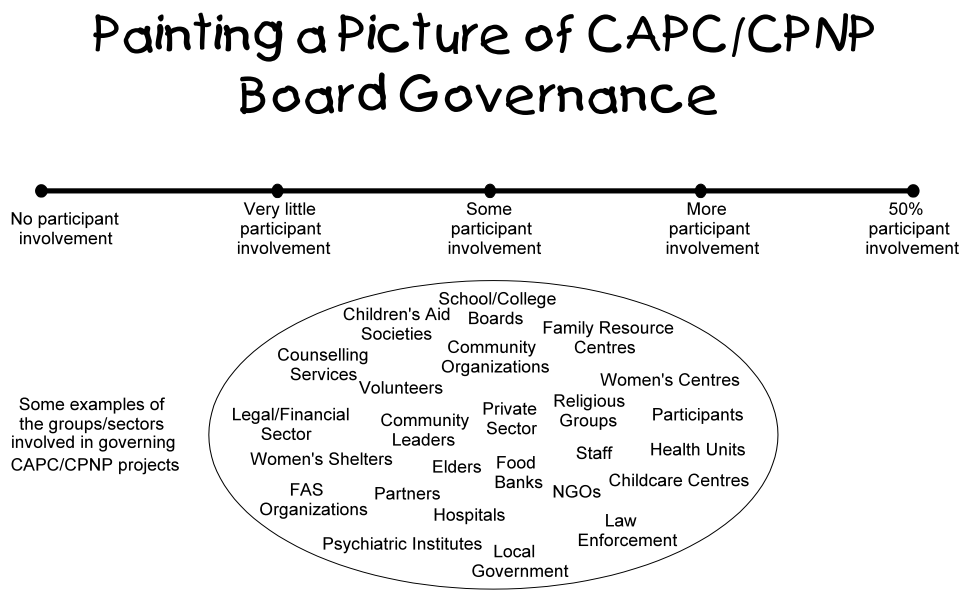
Diversity is a Defining Feature of CAPC/CPNP Projects

The CAPC/CPNP projects attending the Think Tank demonstrated great diversity both in governance structures and the extent to which parents are, and can be, involved in

[2] From a presentation by Rick Wilson, University of Toronto, Centre for Health Promotion, during the Opening Plenary of the 2001 CAPC/CPNP Think Tank.

formal and informal decision-making processes within these projects. This diversity reflects the differences in the CAPC/CPNP projects themselves. These project differences stem from a range of factors including geographical location, differences in programming to respond to the needs of specific target populations, local cultural realities and language. Given the community-based nature of these projects, it is not surprising to find so much diversity, both in the character of the projects and the way they are governed. In fact, such diversity in approaches should be applauded and celebrated (Figure 1).

Figure 1



Each project seemed to have its own governance structures and approaches. Even the language and terminology varied.

Moreover, these governance structures and approaches could and did change in response to external and internal factors, including changes in sponsorship, evolving participant needs and programming, and accountability requirements. At the same time, all projects involved participants (either past or present participants) in some manner in the governance of the organization, either formally (as members of the decision-making Board) or in an Advisory Committee or another mechanism with varying degrees of decision-making input and authority. Few of the projects represented at the Think Tank have *current* participants sitting on their Boards for a variety of reasons.

Finally, cultural diversity was deemed important in considering the composition of a Board. Cultural, racial and ethnic diversity challenges may accompany the benefits of having a diverse Board membership. Misunderstandings about issues such as affirmative action and the unintentional use of culturally-loaded terms and spaces can lead to unnecessary resentment. Having a code against racism will only go so far; some organizations have had to hold special meetings or Board training sessions to address the issue.

What are the appropriate roles and responsibilities that participants can assume in Board/governance structures?

"We don't like the word 'empower'. It suggests we are giving them something they don't already have … when it would be more appropriate to recognize their power."

It would be difficult to cast in stone what governance and decision-making roles and responsibilities are "appropriate" for parents. Roles and responsibilities for all Board members, including parents/participants, are determined by a number of factors and considerations and will vary from project to project, and even within any one project over time as participants come and go.

"It really depends on the type of Board you have."

"There are virtually no limitations to the appropriate roles and responsibilities of participants."

Different skills and attributes determine appropriate roles and responsibilities.

Typical examples of roles

- Decision-making, including budget allocation for resources, activities
- Evaluation and feedback — key input to program development and improvement
- Process — program design, policies, office policies
- Staffing decisions/hiring — job descriptions, evaluations, and interviews
- Training and peer development — including role model/mentorship role
- Committees — advisory and program delivery roles
- Advocacy, lobbying, community relations
- Fund-raising
- Expertise and guidance
- Identification of issues before they become crises.

At the same time, several roles were considered inappropriate for project-participant Board members. For example, participant Board members should not be expected to answer, on the organization's behalf, inappropriate questions on staffing issues. One organization channels all such issues to a personnel committee which includes community partners, but not past participants (Participant group). Some Coordinators noted that parents in their projects do not play a decision-making role in terms of project finances because the budget is already set, although they do have some input into hiring and some discretionary spending decisions.

"In our program, we wouldn't charge Youth with program funding responsibilities or decisions."

On the other hand, some Boards will not make budgetary decisions without first consulting with the parents/participants.

Individual skills, experience and talents need to be taken into consideration in determining whether a person is ready to take on governance or decision-making roles and responsibilities. The capacity of an individual to assume more responsibility at that point in her life is also critically important. One participant pointed out that when she came to CAPC she was a young, single, teenaged mother and could not imagine sitting on a Board at that time:

"It has taken me 15 years to get where I am."

"We find so many participants have so much they are dealing with, and are so stressed out, they can't be expected to take on Board responsibility."

"We don't pick people who are living in violence or with drug issues."

The degree of interest and willingness of the potential participant is especially important. The key is to recognize innate capacity and to provide developmental support to interested participants.

There are many different ways for people to participate in and contribute to project governance and decision-making

As illustrated by the representatives at the Think Tank, there are a number of governance models, some in which parents play a role in a formal Board structure, some in which parents have an advisory capacity, and others in which parents have no formal role. It was agreed, however, that even in this latter case, simply bringing a child to the program was a role worth mentioning and valuing. Further …

"every one of us has participant involvement of some kind and understands the value of participants being involved."

"Our project has always recognized that parents are the drivers."

Parents bring their invaluable perspective, life skills and experience to bear on Board decisions so that, for example, programs reflect an understanding and acceptance of parents' lifestyles and beliefs. Some participants described themselves as "sounding boards" or "reality checks" for professional Board members.

Similarly, because of their understanding of participants' needs and barriers to their involvement, participant Board members can contribute to planning the structure, bylaws and policies of the organization, such as ensuring that eligibility criteria are not overly restrictive. Still, many parents appear to be generally more interested in the day-to-day operations and activities of the project rather than in setting policy or high-level direction. Although it was generally acknowledged that participants seem to be less interested in "policy work", they should have the option to move into policy and financial decision-making roles if they wish. Every position and role should be open to everyone.

"It is important to identify whether participants want to do those things."

Some Boards have struggled with how formal they should be; others have opted for a "loose" sort of organization and referred to their decision-making body as a "consensus committee".

One project reported that its Sponsor Board was more of a *"management coalition/service provider from the community"*. This project had not seen much success in having parents play an important role in the Board. All decisions were made by the management coalition. The representative noted that their current governance structure was not working very well and that the project was considering a change in sponsors and a clarification of roles.

Another example sees a Parent Advisory Group which is formed every year and takes on a variety of roles including evaluation, input into development and community relations.

In one project, four teen mothers who were members of the Advisory Committee successfully lobbied to make their Centre smoke-free. The involved youth are *"sporting a certain amount of pride"* with this success and as a result of their increased self-esteem, they are becoming even more involved in the project.

One organization set up a Local Action Team of participants to help identify program and service gaps in conjunction with outreach activities. Another project develops a roster of activities for the year; participants then elect their Board representatives.

In another example, participant Board members are involved in soliciting work done by researchers, sitting with participants during critical analysis and negotiating with researchers to ensure that their analysis will actually contribute to the development of a program and not be merely an academic or political exercise.

Outreach and promotion activities are an important area where participant Board members can make an invaluable contribution to the organization. In some communities, there is confusion about the role of CAPC/CPNP projects and supportive activities such as home visits can be seen as being intrusive. Participants can help break down this stigma and conduct or accompany others on home visits to win the trust of families.

"We know with 100 percent certainty that our workers would never have gotten in the client's door without that familiar face beside them."

Past participants can act as empowering and encouraging role models for current participants. They should take every opportunity for community outreach to maximize this factor. The presence of a participant on the Board is living proof that the opinions of participants are valued.

Outreach activities are also important to recruit potential Board members. Again, participants who are sitting on the Board can be particularly effective in showing potential members that they have the skills and experience needed by the organization.

Participant Board members can play a valuable role in gathering feedback for evaluation purposes because they tend to have credibility with clients by virtue of their experiences. Feedback on program effectiveness can be channelled back to the staff and Board for evaluation purposes. Some mechanisms to accomplish this include:

- a parent's council that reports periodically to staff
- an anonymous feedback/suggestion box
- making a participant Board member available at specific times to receive feedback
- ensuring that the Board membership itself is representative of, and non-hierarchically involved with, the clients
- frequently dropping in on projects, where participants are likely to open up to a past participant
- distribute evaluation forms regularly, with staff available to help clients fill them out
- reassuring/maintaining friendships with current participants to help overcome the "mystique" of being a Board member and remain approachable for feedback.

Finally, whatever roles and responsibilities are envisaged and whatever governance and

decision-making structures are in place, roles must be clearly defined so that people know in advance what is expected of them. This also helps decrease turnover amongst Board members. New participant Board members may be uncertain of their place when they find themselves surrounded by professionals with clear roles, and the differences in professional experience can be a continuing barrier in the absence of clear roles for non-professionals.

What are the barriers to involving participants, and strategies for overcoming these barriers?

"When I came on [the Board], it was very unclear what my role was; there was no training. I had to play it by ear, and that didn't work!"

"Participants bring perspective, experience and keep us grounded in reality. This in itself needs to be valued."

Many organizations encounter significant challenges to involving participants in their Boards. This is particularly the case for community-based programs and projects like CAPC/CPNP where the participants are often struggling with an intimidating set of hurdles, both real and imagined, that make them reluctant to become active in the Board or other governance structures.

The reality is that, for many reasons, in most cases there is but a small pool of volunteers able or willing to engage in governance-type roles. Using their personal experience and knowledge as a guide, Think Tank participants categorized many of these barriers under four broad headings:

1. **Financial and logistical barriers**
2. **Group dynamics**
3. **Meeting management**
4. **Knowledge and perception about the Board's role and functioning**.

A fifth category captures other factors that can impede active participation in Boards and other governance structures.

Financial and Logistical Barriers

This category includes personal barriers such as:

- childcare
- transportation
- time
- wardrobe
- retreats

and organizational barriers such as:

- limited funding for training and facilitators
- liability
- time to "bring people along" and help them prepare for a role on the Board
- time for Board development.

Financial barriers are very real and often discourage or even prohibit participation on Boards or committees. To help facilitate participation, an organization can stipulate in its bylaws that Board members' expenses will be reimbursed. A fundraising committee can help offset these costs. Another strategy used by some projects is to offer a small honorarium for participation. This not only helps defray costs, but also boosts self-esteem by sending the signal that "your time and talents are worth something to us".

Childcare can be a barrier, particularly for lower-income clients. When project

organizers overcome their unwillingness to involve children in activities, including Board meetings, attendance often skyrockets. Child-friendly policies encourage parents to bring their youngsters along to meetings if they wish, or if they have to.

Transportation to Board meetings is often a barrier to participation. Many participants do not own cars and cannot afford public transit, even if it is available — which it often is not, especially in rural or remote areas. Moreover, when meetings are held at night to accommodate working members, others may be unwilling to use public transportation (again, even if it is available) and are unwilling to walk to meetings at night, especially if they have children with them. One effective strategy to address this challenge is to set up a car pooling arrangement.

Time for retreats and other Board activities can be a financial burden, especially when members must take time off from a paying job. Working parents in particular may be pressed for time and the lack of pay for Board duties is a disincentive when weighed against a job. In addition, volunteers, especially in lower-income, high-need communities, may be stretched between several worthy organizations.

Liability is another deterrent. Not every Board is protected by liability insurance, the cost of which may be prohibitive for the organization. Individuals may be unwilling to assume decision-making roles and the resulting accountability and potential liability.

Group Dynamics

Group dynamics includes all the issues and barriers which occur between Board members, such as:

- cultural and diversity challenges
- achieving a good balance of genders, personalities and roles
- achieving equal representation of participant members
- "where people are at", that is, psycho-social readiness
- "cliques"
- negative attitudes towards participant members and the wielding of power by longstanding members.

While most projects agreed that the composition of the governance structures should be representative to the degree possible of the community and the participant, population, cultural, racial and ethnic diversity challenges may accompany the benefits of having a diverse Board membership. Misunderstandings about issues such as affirmative action or the unintentional use of culturally-loaded terms, can lead to unnecessary resentment. Having a code against racism will go only so far; some organizations have had to hold special meetings or Board training to address this issue. It is crucial that the organization be sensitive to cultural diversity, history, differing needs and spiritual beliefs. One project suggested that participants should be elected to the Board by the program's users as a strategy to ensure both representation and legitimacy of their role.

In the case of Aboriginal communities, a more traditional structure through the use of healing

circles and elders might facilitate and encourage participant participation.[3]

A Board retreat was suggested as one strategy for addressing the challenges posed by group dynamics and cultural diversity. A Board retreat can be done relatively inexpensively if it is simple and infrequent. This kind of event can be an effective forum for strategic planning and goal setting, as well as relaxation and team-building, all of which can help invigorate and encourage Board members. The CAPC program has funds available for Board development, which could help offset the cost of a retreat. Still, retreats and Board development, including the cost of facilitators, are expensive and many organizations simply cannot find the financial resources to carry out such activities.

Meeting Management

Meeting management issues in the broadest sense include:

- user-friendliness and the use of plain language
- meetings that can be boring and mired in administrative minutiae
- a code of conduct to ensure respect, trust and honesty
- timing and location of the meetings
- procedural rules.

" I find the Board concepts heavy and very complex. I think it is important to simplify and to provide advice to new participant Board members. This goes way back to the Aboriginal communities where elders counseled and provided advice to newer members."

It is important to develop a culture that makes people want to be involved. Board meetings are often boring or at least are perceived to be boring by people unaccustomed to formal meeting processes! Board meetings could and should also be fun. Suggestions included serving pizza and pop, making processes more informal, welcoming stories and personal history; in other words, making connections instead of just "doing business".

The way meetings are conducted can be a deterrent. Meetings are often lengthy and full of administrative minutiae. As well, professionals may impose management styles which are appropriate in another organization, but out of place in a CAPC/CPNP project. Formal rules of order for meetings are not universally understood. Both potential and current Board members benefit from training in how to run and participate in a meeting.

Terminology and acronyms need to be explained and simplified so that no participant feels excluded.

"I sometimes cannot get a word in edgewise because it seems that everyone is speaking a different language and are from a different class … I feel outnumbered by professionals and their background … feeling all alone is a barrier!"

Body language, mannerisms and ways of communicating vary among individuals and this can lead to misunderstandings. Those from a less verbally-oriented background, and those with subtler styles of participating may

[3] One member spoke eloquently about the impact of residential schools on the Aboriginal community and the fact that this created long lasting disconnection effects that continue to affect families and how they relate (or do not relate) to each other and to the community. This is an important historical factor when dealing with Aboriginal children and parents and must be better understood by "the establishment". She added that disconnections are also felt by members of other ethnocultural groups and that theses realities must be taken into account.

feel left out, while other members may mistakenly assume that they are not participating because of their signals, such as avoiding eye contact or touch. Those with special communications needs including, for instance, persons who are hearing-impaired or people who have a poor command of the language, face unique barriers in trying to communicate and participate.

The ethnic, social and cultural composition of the group is often very diverse. This diversity, as mentioned before, is a strength but also a challenge as misunderstandings or outright prejudices can surface. Some projects have developed a code of conduct for settling disputes, conflicts of interest and relationship issues.

Finally, functional illiteracy, language and physical disabilities can be significant barriers for some participants. Members who cannot read the minutes in advance may not be prepared to make sound judgments at the meeting. To facilitate the participation of reading-, hearing- or vision-impaired or unilingual persons, for instance, briefings before and after every meeting are sometimes offered by projects; or the services of an appropriate interpreter are provided.

Knowledge and Perception about the Board

This includes:

- lack of knowledge about what the Board does
- difficulty in understanding concepts (financial management; accountability/ liability; the "greater public good" versus individual goals)
- mistrust of or disdain for "the system"
- perception that meetings are boring (as distinct from the reality that they often are, as captured above)
- little appreciation of one's possible role to influence the project and assume ownership

It is important to ensure that the Board has clearly defined roles and responsibilities, that these are communicated to all participants and understood throughout the organization. Strategic planning, visioning and orientation sessions for Board members can help ensure that new (as well as current) members understand their roles and responsibilities.

Many projects have seen the benefits of educating the Board about CAPC/CPNP principles. A vision and/or mission statement were seen to be particularly useful. Some projects start every meeting with a reading of their mission statement; one project has printed the mission statement on placemats that are set around the table for each Board meeting.

Annual Board development workshops and information/orientation packages also help members understand their roles.

Prior knowledge, including education and class background, was a major concern for non-professional Board members. Many parents feel that they lack the credibility to sit on these Boards. Participant members with less experience often struggle to establish credibility and capability in order to speak and be heard, particularly when asking questions. Training and orientation for Board members can help address this issue. Some chairs try to establish trust with new participant members before their first meeting so that they are more comfortable asking questions and taking part in discussions.

Accurately assessing members' capacity would help prevent over- or underwhelming members. Many participants are not asked about their interests, experience or skills upon joining the Board.

"If we invite someone to come to the Board [and don't prepare them], it's as if we hire someone without telling them what to do."

One organization is developing a questionnaire to be filled out by prospective Board members and any person who referred them. Organizations can actively choose from these prospective Board members based on the skills they need to have represented on the Board.

An effective strategy used by a number of projects to help prepare a participant for a formal role on the Board is to guide her through a continuum of steps or stages, with increasing levels of input, responsibility and accountability. In this way, a participant with the potential and the interest to serve on the Board can grow into the role over time, especially if supported through training and peer guidance. One project uses a "buddy system" where a potential Board member accompanies a current participant to meetings, acts as an alternate and assumes roles and duties gradually, with no obligation to take a formal position on the Board if she decides she is not ready, or is not interested after the experience.

Each project has its own set of challenges and barriers depending on the nature of the people with whom it works. For example, in projects that provide services to abused women …

"it takes a long time for them to come out from being oppressed for so long. We constantly remind them of their ability to make choices and decisions for themselves."

One has to be careful not to **impose** Board responsibilities on these women, while at the same time welcoming their participation should they have the willingness to do so.

Projects in communities where violence or substance abuse are major problems often find that it is difficult or inappropriate to involve their participants in governance roles.

Boards sometimes contain cliques of friends who have recommended other friends and the new participant can feel out of place. Some organizations have policies to help prevent this and many hold the first meeting after a membership turnover in a social setting to help members "gel" as a group.

Board members want to feel valued and empowered. Participants are encouraged when their ideas and contributions are not dismissed.

Other **barriers** to involving participants include:

- participant turnover
- a transient population
- personal relationships outside of the project

Turnover of participants can be a major challenge. People move through and out of the programs regularly. This is both good and bad news: good news in that it is often a cause for celebration of success; bad news in that "moving on" is not always a sign of success — sometimes, participants go back to the street or to other negative situations. Nevertheless, participants who move on have still had the opportunity to make an impact on the project and that is valuable. As one representative pointed out in speaking about how the youth in her project tend to move on after having participated in the Advisory Committee, taking their experience with them ...

"we really have to celebrate when youth move on … it is really a gift — we're giving a really great kid to the community."

The fact that someone "moves out" of the project as a participant does not necessarily mean that her participation on the Board has to come to an end. In fact, most of the projects represented at the Think Tank indicated that they have "past" participants on their Boards or other governance structures; however, few have "present" participants.

At the same time, some project representatives mentioned the other side of the coin: sometimes, individuals do not want to leave the Board, which hinders the introduction of new blood and ideas and discourages potential new members from expressing interest. Organizations therefore need to have a succession plan; that is, to prepare for the eventual turnover and replacement of Board members. Strategies include:

- staggered Board terms
- imposing a maximum number of terms
- imposing intervals between terms served
- implementing a "buddy system"
- increasing staff efforts to identify and recognize innate skill and talent amongst participants as potential Board members.

What are the skills needed for successful participant involvement in Board/ governance structures?

What role can project coordinators and staff play in facilitating the process?

"You have to have a stake in it to be the best you can be. It has to be where your heart is, or else you aren't going to put your whole self into it."

The word "skills" implies professional or subject-related abilities and expertise. When considering the aptitude of an individual to participate on a Board, however, personal qualities and life experience are just as important. Skills can be acquired; the key is trust and willingness to participate. Think Tank participants suggested that the following personal attributes are indicative of the qualities which would help a participant contribute effectively to the Board, and at the same time draw the maximum personal benefit from her participation:

- a willingness and interest to participate
- the ability to look past yourself
- the desire to represent, and be motivated to represent, the community for the broader good rather than having a personal agenda.

Effective Board members are participants who:

- are connected and rooted to the community and willing to share information
- have an understanding of CAPC/CPNP mission and values
- have a good understanding of the broader implications of decisions
- are willing to speak with one voice once decisions are made, or agree to disagree with grace.

While skills and attributes look great on paper, many parents will come forward without any immediately-identifiable qualifications other than willingness and trust.

"If I had to wait for those skills, I would have no parents on the Board. Personal qualities are more important. "

For many people, participation is based on a "relationship" and on a rapport that has been

built over time. A Board member who is passionate and committed to the cause will ultimately contribute the most.

What makes a good Board member?

"The perfect Board member doesn't exist!"

Personal traits and qualities that help define an effective Board member can be grouped under three broad headings:

Work ethic describes a candidate who is punctual, prepared, reliable, available, willing to participate, takes initiative and is a "do-er".

Attitude and personality traits include commitment, creativity, a compatible philosophy and being focussed.

Professionalism is distinct from work ethic. A candidate with professionalism is a team player who is non-judgmental, culturally sensitive, tactful, open-minded, in touch with the community, a good listener, possessing life skills, a "people person", respectable, law-abiding, respectful of others and of confidentiality, disciplined, courageous, persistent, humble, able to see the "big picture", even-tempered and knowledgeable about their role. Still, as one Coordinator said …

"If I had to wait for someone with all these qualities, I would wait a long time!"

A candidate should believe that the program is worthwhile; for example, that single mothers are not "bad"! It has happened in the past that such incompatible beliefs go undetected until after a Board member has been recruited.

Participants should be able to remain open to suggestions and ideas.

"The person also has to have leadership and initiative, and there needs to be a willingness to change. If parents aren't willing to take on new skills, then it won't be worthwhile."

As well, self-confidence and self-esteem were deemed essential for the role.

"Until people feel that confidence, they probably won't move forward."

Participants need to be aware that they are talking for the group — not just themselves. They need to know it is not about status but assistance. If they forget, it is up to their peers to remind them that they are there to represent the whole.

A degree of professionalism is necessary to deal with situations such as a conflict of interest and to avoid the involvement of personal feelings at inappropriate times.

Participants also need to be aware of the implications and long-term effects of decision-making. To defend potentially unpopular Board decisions, a member should have courage and tenacity.

Cultural sensitivity, open-mindedness and a non-judgmental attitude are valuable in dealing with diversity and with new ideas.

Good communication skills are important. Such skills can be developed through serving on the Board, especially if roundtable discussions are used. However, all members need to be good listeners and should be tactful. A respect for confidentiality is crucial.

Credibility and being respected in the community can be problematic. Ideally, desirable candidates would include those from high-risk backgrounds who may not be widely respected in the community due to a history of substance abuse. The important element is

whether or not a person has earned the right to be seen as a role model for the program. Still, while credibility can be built through Board membership, a degree of it is necessary to establish trust upon joining the Board.

It is also useful if the Board member is "connected" to her own community and peer group.

"Having a group of adolescents is incredibly valuable in terms of what they like, their insights, as well as information and underlying gossip. They are seen as 'connected' to their peers and willing to share information."

In addition, many Boards find it necessary to ensure that potential recruits are bondable or at least that they pass a police screening for items such as family violence, although issues of substance abuse are not automatic disqualifiers. Other Board members should display compassion, empathy and understanding in accepting new members from diverse backgrounds, including one of substance abuse.

Finally, meeting management is made easier by members who are available, punctual and reliable. If they have read the minutes and are prepared, so much the better. An ideal Board member would be organized. These are attributes that may be developed through peer example and education/training.

How coordinators and staff can encourage and facilitate participant participation

"Rather than looking for specific skills, the most important thing to take into consideration is the fact that a person wants to be there!"

In particular, staff should:

- **Be vigilant and aware at all times of the potential of new participants from the moment they join the program. Anyone could have the potential to serve on the Board.**

  It is important to recognize innate qualities/skills rather than looking to "develop" people. One participant had experience in a "gang" that proved valuable for sharing and learning.

- **Provide orientation on the goals and vision/mission from Day One.**

  One group had placemats made up which include the vision, goals and mission of the project so that everyone can be reminded of these core values throughout each meeting. Other groups hold orientation sessions and provide information brochures to every person who walks through the door. Helping people understand the mission and vision of CAPC/CPNP "from Day One" can over time encourage their participation in the governance of the organization.

- **Ensure that people are involved in the meeting from the outset.**

  For example, it is important to include the participants when setting the agenda so that they can bring forward what is important to them. Another strategy is to alternate "chairmanship" of the Board meetings, giving parents an active role in leadership. One Board holds a Prayer Ceremony at the beginning and close of the meeting, which is the traditional way and has the effect of calming people.

- **Present an honest view of the Board.**

  The staff's attitude to the Board is important. Sometimes, staff are frustrated with the Board; when this is the case, staff need to be careful not to colour the perceptions of the participants. It would be

valuable if staff could discuss more the benefits of what the Board is and does. They should stress the positive aspects.

- **Act as a mentor**.

  Staff should be a model for "healthy relationships" and harmonious consent.

- **Offer training and skills development in, for example, communications, presentations and negotiation.**

  Communication is a key skill. Communications skill development would help participants express their point of view at meetings. One broad strategy to improve the skills of Board members is the implementation of a skills development committee. This group can arrange workshops on topics which the Board wants to address, such as cultural training. Individuals could also be supported in seeking out any education or training they feel they need to make the most of their participation on the Board.

- **Tactfully, and where appropriate, recognize courage and contributions.**

Summary of Key Learnings

There are many challenges in bringing participants into a meaningful governance role, whether as members of the Board of Directors, an Advisory Committee or other structures and mechanisms appropriate to each individual CAPC/CPNP program. Over the years, these programs have learned through their own experiences and through the experiences of other projects and programs dealing with similar challenges how best to maximize the contribution of participants to the benefit of the organization and its initiatives, the individual participants, and the community at large.

The CAPC/CPNP Think Tank 2001 involved two groups, one composed of Program Coordinators; the other, participants who are involved in the Boards or other governance structures of their CAPC/CPNP programs. While people in each group may have expressed their views in different ways, the key learnings that they identified were remarkably similar.

- The key point to remember in considering the question of participatory governance models is that each project is different and unique and so are their governance approaches and Board structures. This diversity should be applauded and celebrated.

- Governance and Board structures have an impact on how participants become involved. It is important that the Board represents the broader community. The key determining factor has to be the readiness and willingness of each individual to take on a role in the governance of the organization. Moreover, regardless of the governance structure, the process should be democratic and simplified.

1. What are the appropriate roles and responsibilities that participants can assume in Board/governance structures?

All roles and responsibilities are appropriate, according to the interest, capacity and capability of the participants, and the capacity and willingness of the organization to provide support. There is no limit.

While many participants are most interested in day-to-day activities and operations, every position and role should be open to everyone.

Think Tank participants identified a number of typical roles of Board and governance roles and activities. These roles are common to many projects, but the list is not meant to exclude other roles, nor to suggest that every

Board assumes all of these roles, all of the time.

Typical examples of roles

- decision-making, including budget allocation for resources, activities
- evaluation and feedback — key input to program development and improvement
- process — program design, policies, office policies
- staffing decisions/ hiring — job descriptions, evaluations, and interviews
- training and peer development — including role model/mentorship role
- committees — advisory and program delivery roles
- advocacy, lobbying, community relations
- fund-raising
- expertise and guidance
- identification of issues before they become crises

2. What are the barriers to involving participants from CAPC/CPNP projects on Boards/governance structures? What are some strategies for overcoming these barriers?

Think Tank participants categorized many of these barriers under four broad headings: **Financial and logistical barriers; Group dynamics**; **Meeting management**; and **Knowledge and perception about the Board's role and functioning**. A fifth category captures other factors that can impede active participation in Boards and other governance structures.

Financial and Logistical Barriers

This category includes personal barriers such as:

- childcare
- transportation
- time
- wardrobe
- retreats

and organizational barriers such as:

- limited funding for training, facilitators
- liability
- time to "bring people along" and help them prepare for a role on the Board
- time for Board development

Group Dynamics

Group dynamics includes all the issues and barriers which occur between board members, such as:

- cultural and diversity challenges
- achieving a good balance of genders, personalities and roles
- achieving equal representation of participant members
- cliques and the need for a buddy system
- negative attitudes towards participant members and the wielding of power by long-standing members
- participants should be elected to the board by the program's users

Meeting Management

Meeting management in the broadest sense includes:

- user-friendliness and the use of plain language

- meetings may be boring and mired in administrative minutiae
- a code of conduct to ensure respect, trust, and honesty
- timing and location of the meetings
- hiring policies
- limiting term length
- explaining procedural rules

Other Barriers

Other **barriers** to involving participants include:

- participant turnover
- a transient population
- personal relationships outside of the project

Many of the barriers to participation could be addressed through **training and orientation** in, for example:

- terminology
- public speaking
- procedures for working within the organization
- rules of order for meetings (such as quorum, voting, motions and minutes)
- roles and responsibilities, expectations of participants

The following table summarizes key barriers and strategies suggested by Think Tank participants for addressing these challenges.

Barriers	Suggested Strategies
Some barriers are physical and logistical in nature and include: • the time of meetings • the cost of participating • childcare • travel and transportation	• offer small honoraria to help defray costs and also build self-esteem ("my time is worth something to the organization") • design meetings for participants, not staff • have fun, e.g., River Boat Tour
• Where people are "at" in their lives	• increase staff awareness and empathy to individual needs
The Board is intimidating and daunting: • Complex and heavy concepts, language and responsibilities. • The Board is seen as "the system"	• simplify process and language • implement a "buddy system" • use substitutes/alternates to relieve pressure and the sense that it is "all on my shoulders" • orient new participants from Day One, i.e., when they join the program • provide training and education – provide annual Board development workshops and information packages • educate Board about CAPC/CPNP principles – they need to be fun and in alignment with CAPC/CPNP principles • refer back to more "traditional" ways and structures (e.g., healing circles, elders, etc.), but do keep in mind that there are differences in the belief systems amongst Aboriginal groups as well
Succession issues: • People move on and out; turnover means loss of skills, perspectives and leadership	• practice succession planning (e.g., staggered terms) • celebrate success, not problems • use a "buddy system" • place the onus on staff to recognize new talent and interested participants • have mechanisms to bring new people along and welcome them

Barriers	***Suggested Strategies***
• Other side of the coin: some won't leave; Board needs new blood	• limit the number of terms • have intervals between terms
Disconnection: • People don't relate to family, community, others (e.g., the residential school experience)	Board/Organization • has to have representation from community • be sensitive to cultural history and realities, as well as needs
Credibility: • with other Board members • with "movers and shakers" in the community	• educate Board, stakeholders and community concerning CAPC/CPNP principles • in meetings of the Board and with external groups/people, send the signal that "This is our Board. We are equals."
• Relationship with sponsor agencies, Social Services, etc.	• clearly define respective roles and responsibilities • have a vision and mission • promote buy-in: educate, communicate, negotiate • program consultant, presentation, gifts • develop ground rules and code of behaviour
• Conflicts of interest (e.g., interpersonal relationships; outside lives; self-interest and agendas)	• develop a code of conduct
Recruitment: • How to make it attractive and make people want to participate?	Annual Board Development Workshop • regional/provincial coalitions (formal and informal) to share ideas, resources, etc. • flexibility (e.g., use evaluation dollars to finance workshop) • provide orientation information for new participants ("how we work") • encourage staff and peers to recognize interest and bring people in/along.

3. ***What are the skills needed for successful participant involvement in Board/governance structures? What role can project coordinators and staff play in facilitating the process?***

Program and project coordinators and staff can play an important role in identifying potential Board members, encouraging their participation and "bringing them along" so that they get the most out of their participation on a personal level, as well as making a valuable contribution to the organization. In fact, to a large extent the onus is on staff to recognize new talent and interested participants.

Think Tank participants suggested that the following personal attributes are indicative of the qualities that would help a participant contribute effectively to the Board, and at the same time draw the maximum personal benefit from her participation. First and foremost, a potential Board member must be willing:

- to participate
- to look past herself
- to represent, and be motivated to represent the community for the broader good rather than having a personal agenda

Effective Board members are participants who:

- are connected and rooted to the community and willing to share information
- have an understanding of CAPC/CPNP mission and values
- have a good understanding of the broader implications of decisions
- are willing to speak with one voice once decisions are made, or agree to disagree with grace.

The importance of feedback and communication is another key learning. This communication works in several directions:

- feedback to the board and staff on how the project is working
- keeping the board grounded in the realities of clients' needs and lifestyles
- liaising with current participants as a trusted board member
- acting as a role model for participants and as proof that their opinions are valued

It is important to involve participants in Board policy issues, including participant input into criteria, structures and procedures. **Public awareness, promotions and outreach** to target members of the community, facilitating access to participants and promoting the project can prove invaluable in recruiting new members and in improving the credibility and legitimacy of participant Board members in the broader community.

What does the research literature have to say?

The CAPC/CPNP Think Tank process has two main purposes. The first purpose is to bring together a representative group of CAPC/CPNP project people from across the country for focussed discussions around an issue of interest to many of these programs and projects. The report produced from these discussions captures the common themes and key learnings as identified by the Think Tank participants. This report is made available to all CAPC/CPNP projects so that everyone can benefit from the shared knowledge and experiences of their colleagues.

The second purpose of the Think Tank process is to take these key learnings and

themes identified by the CAPC/CPNP representatives and to validate them against current research and literature related to the issues addressed during the Think Tank. This feature of the Think Tank process is an unusual approach, moving from practical experience to theoretical validation, rather than the other way around. Madine VanderPlaat, a noted social scientist and community-based researcher from St. Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia has prepared a Literature Review entitled ***Parent Participation in CAPC/CPNP Governance and Decision-Making***, which includes an extensive bibliography and is appended to this report.

There are several reasons for conducting a literature review to validate the key learnings of the Think Tank. One reason is to increase the body of empirical knowledge, thus adding value to research in the field.

The main reason, however, is to provide solid, evidence-based proof for what people "in the field" have known to be true for a long time. One of the more frustrating challenges confronted by small, community-based projects such as CAPC/CPNP is the reluctance of "the system" to recognize the concrete accomplishments realized by such initiatives. Project coordinators and participants alike have commented on the problem of "credibility" when dealing with people of standing and power in the community, for example, the Chiefs of Police, social workers, local and provincial government officials and funding agencies and departments at all levels of government.

Ms. VanderPlaat explains the approach to the literature review as follows:

"In more traditional approaches to literature reviews, the review usually comes first and dictates the direction of subsequent activities. This review takes the opposite approach and begins with the learnings produced by the Think Tank. In other words, where we looked for academic material and what we considered to be important is directed by what members of the Think Tank thought was important in terms of CAPC/CPNP governance and participation in decision-making. The literature review is therefore a conversation between the experience and knowledge of those involved with CAPC/CPNP projects and the experience and knowledge produced by researchers who work in the fields of community development, health promotion, social intervention and social justice."

The Literature Review has been organized around three main conclusions drawn from the Think Tank:

1. *Governance should not just be thought of in terms of participation on formal Boards. Parents are the primary communication link between projects and Boards and should play a vital role in all aspects of project development, management and promotion.*

2. *There are no limits to the roles and responsibilities that parent participants can assume if they so choose. The particular strengths that parents contribute to governance structures include knowledge based on everyday experience and an understanding of participants' needs and interests. These strengths are most effectively used when all Board participants bring with them an appropriate work ethic, attitude and sense of professionalism.*

3. *Barriers to parent participation can be practical (e.g., finances, child-care),*

cultural (e.g., norms, language) and social (e.g., attitudes, communication styles). Solutions should focus on capacity building and flexibility.

The following table summarizes representative supporting literature as identified and discussed in the Literature Review. References are listed in order of their first appearance in each section of the Review. To identify the references, please refer to the Bibliography at the end of the Literature Review.

Think Tank 2001 Conclusion	Representative Supporting Literature
1. *Governance should not just be thought of in terms of participation on formal Boards. Parents are the primary communication link between projects and Boards and should play a vital role in all aspects of project development, management and promotion.*	Barnes, 1999; Commonwealth Foundation, 1999; Jensen, 2001; Llewellyn-Jones, unpublished; Putnam, 1995, 2001; Wolff; 2001; Kaye, 2001; Campbell and Marshall, 2000; Wymann, 2001; Brown, 2000; Reitsma-Street, et al., 2001; Shiell and Hawe, 2000; Portes, 1998; Veenstra and Lomis, 1999; Veenstra, 2001; Whent, 2000; Woolcott, 2000; Dobell, 2000; Health Canada, 1997; VanderPlaat, 1998; Robertson, 1998; Cattell, 2001; Jennings, 2001; Lynn, 2000; Israel, Schulz, Parker and Becket, 1998; Gittell, et al., 2000; Jackson, forthcoming; Schneider, 2000; Simpson, 2000; DeFoucauld, 2001; Dickson, et al., 2001; Reger, 2001; Laidlaw Foundation, 2001.
2. *There are no limits to the roles and responsibilities that parent participants can assume if they so choose. The particular strengths that parents contribute to governance structures include knowledge based on everyday experience and an understanding of participants' needs and interests. These strengths are most effectively used when all Board participants bring with them an appropriate work ethic, attitude and sense of professionalism.*	Hyde, 2000; Sharp, 2001; Perlstadt, et al., 1998; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1987; Scott, 1987; Grombjerg, 1993; Stone, Hager and Griffin, 2001; Barnes, 1999; Poguntke, 1987; Sharp, 2001; Cherin, 2000; LaBonte, 1998; Dickson, et al., 2001; Kline, Dolgon and Dresser, 2000; Campbell and Marshall, 2000; Reitsma-Street, Mackzewski and Neysmith, 2000; Fisher and Schragge, 2000; Foster-Fishman, et al., 2001; Allahyari, 2000; Checkoway, 1998; Driskell, et.al., 2001; Singleton, 2001; Gittell, et al., 2000; Kaye, 2001; Goodman, et al., 1998.

Think Tank 2001 Conclusion	Representative Supporting Literature
3. *Barriers to parent participation can be practical (e.g., finances, child-care), cultural (e.g., norms, language) and social (e.g., attitudes, communication styles). Solutions should focus on capacity building and flexibility.*	Singleton, 2001; Kaye, 2001; LaBonte, 1998; Reitsma-Street, Maczewski and Neysmith, 2000; Gittell, et al., 2000; Barnes, 1999; Popay, 1998; Williams, Popay and Oakley, 1999; Folayemi, 2001; Cohen, 1985; Melucci, 1985; Kline, Dolgon and Dresser, 2000; Chinman and Wandersman, 1999; Goodman, Robert M., et al., 1998; Mor Barak, 2000; Revenson and Cassel, 1991; Foster-Fishman, et al., 2001; Poguntke, 2001; Oldfield, 2000; Sharp, 2001.

Literature Review

What the Research Says …

Parent Participation in CAPC/CPNP Governance and Decision-Making

Prepared by Madine VanderPlaat

Introduction

This literature review looks at insights and issues arising from the November 2001 Think Tank on CAPC/CPNP governance and Board participation. The Think Tank, attended by participant Board members and coordinators from some fifteen different CAPC/CPNP projects, addressed three key questions:

1. *What are the appropriate roles and responsibilities that participants can assume in board/governance structures?*
2. *What are the barriers to involving participants from CAPC/CPNP projects on boards/governance structures? What are some strategies for overcoming these barriers?*
3. *What are the skills needed for successful participant involvement in board/governance structures? What role can project coordinators and staff play in facilitating the process?*

Context

Health Canada recommends but does not require parent participation in project governance. The CAPC/CPNP projects attending the Think Tank reflected considerable diversity both in governance structure and the extent to which parents are and can be involved in formal and informal decision-making processes. In terms of structure, governance models ranged from the formal and bureaucratic to the informal and consensual. In terms of current participation, almost all projects attempted to include parents in some sort of advisory capacity and many have past participants serving on their more formalized governance structures. Few projects have current participants sitting on their Boards. In terms of the extent of participation, members of the Think Tank noted that ideally parents should play a primary role in all aspects of governance. As one coordinator noted, "our project has always recognized that parents are the drivers". However, and realistically, they also cautioned that the willingness and readiness of each individual had to be recognized. For example, some projects are primarily focussed on youth who have in our society been given limited decision-making powers. As one coordinator noted, "the problem with youth is democracy — because they weren't born in a democracy". Others noted that many of their participants come from extremely stressful backgrounds which makes Board participation very difficult, "we find so many participants who have so much they are dealing with that they can't be expected to take on Board responsibility". This then is the background against which both the Think Tank and the literature review takes place. The discussion attempts to be as inclusive as possible, while at the same time recognizing differences and acknowledging challenges.

Approach

In more traditional approaches to literature reviews, the review usually comes first and dictates the direction of subsequent activities. This review takes the opposite approach and begins with the learnings produced by the Think Tank. In other words, where we looked for academic material and what we considered

to be important is directed by what members of the Think Tank thought was important in terms of CAPC/CPNP governance and participation in decision-making. The literature review is therefore a conversation between the experience and knowledge of those involved with CAPC/CPNP projects and the experience and knowledge produced by researchers who work in the fields of community development, health promotion, social intervention and social justice. As in any conversation, sometimes CAPC/CPNP experiences related to governance reinforce and are reinforced by the literature. Sometimes CAPC/CPNP adds depth and experiential evidence to the existing literature, while at other times, the literature provides a larger context within which to consider issues concerning the governance of CAPC/CPNP projects. At still other times, the literature provides useful strategies for dealing with some of the challenges posed by the governance of CAPC/CPNP projects. Alternatively, Think Tank discussions illuminate gaps in the academic literature providing researchers with direction for future research efforts.

Overview

The Think Tank produced three main conclusions which guided the organization of the literature review:

1. *Governance should not just be thought of in terms of participation on formal Boards. Parents are the primary communication link between projects and Boards and should play a vital role in all aspects of project development, management and promotion.*
2. *There are no limits to the roles and responsibilities that parent participants can assume if they so choose. The particular strengths that parents contribute to governance structures include knowledge based on everyday experience and an understanding of participants' needs and interests. These strengths are most effectively used when all Board participants bring with them an appropriate work ethic, attitude and sense of professionalism.*
3. *Barriers to parent participation can be practical (e.g., finances, child-care), cultural (e.g., norms, language) and social (e.g., attitudes, communication styles). Solutions should focus on capacity building and flexibility.*

The first section of the review looks at the importance of parent participation in CAPC/CPNP decision-making structures within the broader context of governance and the issues related to citizen participation. In creating this broader context, we will look at CAPC/CPNP in terms of the project model's place in *civil society* and its potential to promote *social inclusion* and *social capital*. Parents who participate in governance structures are seen as bridge builders linking program participants and projects to their larger communities.

The second section of the report looks at parent participation within the context of different governance structures and the values, roles and skills that contribute to successful organizational development.

The third section examines how CAPC/CPNP projects can build parent capacity in governance and decision-making by identifying the challenges to participation and exploring possible solutions.

The Importance of Parent Participation in CAPC/CPNP Governance and Decision-Making

Conclusion #1: Governance should not just be thought of in terms of participation on formal Boards. Parents are the primary communication link between projects and Boards and should play a vital role in all aspects of project development, management and promotion.

Governance

Governance refers to the processes through which people are governed. Over the last decade or so, citizen participation in governance has become a major concern throughout the modern world (Barnes, 1999; Commonwealth Foundation, 1999; Jensen, 2001). There is a general sense that people want to make their own contributions to the public good and are increasingly asking for participation and inclusion in the decisions made by public officials and agencies. In Canada, as in all democratic countries, participation in governance is viewed as a right of citizenship. Being a citizen does not refer only to a right to vote or the expectation of equal access to services such as health care. It also refers to equality of access to governance (Barnes, 1999). As Jensen (2001) explains,

> *"being a full citizen also means being able to actively engage so as to claim one's rights, exercise one's responsibilities, and participate in political institutions. As well, having full citizenship means sharing a sense of belonging to the political community. Being a full citizen therefore requires having the resources and opportunity to participate in social and public life as well as to receive social services and express solidarities."*

Throughout the literature, and consistent with the position taken by the Think Tank, the term "governance" does not only refer to involvement in the public sector or participation in formal organizations. Participation in governance is participation in any form of decision-making that determines the processes through which we as organizations, communities and jurisdictions pursue our collective goals. It is clearly recognized that participation in governance can take a number of different forms. The challenge is to expand the range of opportunities available.

Citizen participation in decision-making is considered to be vital to the health of individuals, communities and the broader society (Jensen, 2001; Llewellyn-Jones, unpublished; Putnam, 2001; Wolff, 2001).

> *"It is a truism that the state exists to promote the well-being of its citizens. However, it is only now being accepted that the only true definition of well-being can come from citizens themselves, because it is they who have to live with their problems, their needs, their hopes and their aspirations." (Commonwealth Foundation, 1999: 3)*

It is also recognized that community-based initiatives, such as CAPC/CPNP, are more likely to be successful in promoting well-being if project participants are actively involved in decision-making (Wolff, 2001). As Kaye argues, at the community level it is time to move beyond the practice of governance that has, "the service sector 'usual suspects' sitting around the table, deciding how the people who are really impacted by the problems and issues should behave, what they need, and what is going to make their

lives better" (2001: 269). Campbell and Marshall (2000) go on to argue that if the interests of marginalized groups are to be taken into account, "they need to be represented by people who share their identity and experience". It is not enough for these groups to be just consulted or heard, they must be present at the table. Campbell and Marshall (2000) refer to this as "the politics of presence".

In recognizing the value of including participants in governance structures, it is important to bear in mind that their contribution is not necessarily limited to the day-to-day management of CAPC/CPNP projects. When project participants join community partners on Boards the opportunity arises for decision-making at the community level. Likewise, individual CAPC/CPNP projects are linked jurisdictionally and nationally through a CAPC/CPNP network. Collectively, they represent a powerful voice for Canada's children and families. In 1999-2000, over 34,000 women participated in CPNP. In a typical month, 57,038 children and youth and 47,234 parents/caregivers participated in CAPC. The potential of CAPC/CPNP projects to contribute to policy development at many levels should not be underestimated.

The CAPC/CPNP Think Tank on governance therefore takes place within the context of a much broader debate. Many of the issues and concerns are the same particularly as they relate to how best to increase participation and build citizen capacity in governance. It is therefore important that we first look at the issue of governance and participation in decision-making in this broader context both in terms of its importance for CAPC/CPNP participants and projects, but also in terms of its importance to the communities within which CAPC/CPNP participants reside.

Civil Society

There are three terms used by social scientists that are particularly helpful in discussing the importance of citizen participation in governance. The first of these is the concept of *civil society*.

The Commonwealth Foundation notes that "citizens and their collective endeavours constitute the basic fabric of any society. Individually and together, citizens have always acted voluntarily to improve their communities and societies" (1999: 9). These collective endeavours or acting together voluntarily in the interest of the public good is what constitutes civil society. Sometimes these collective efforts take place through business associations such as the Chamber of Commerce or Board of Trade or service organizations such as the Lion's Club or the United Way. Sometimes organizations are established to focus on a specific issue, for example, MADD (Mothers' Against Drunk Driving) or CAVEAT (Canadians Against Violence). Some collectives are international and longstanding such as Amnesty International and Greenpeace, others are temporary and local such as the Friends of Point Pleasant Park — a neighbourhood group protesting the cutting of diseased trees in Halifax's largest park. Citizen participation in governance takes place through these formal and informal organizations of civil society. It is the "public" space between the privacy of our families, the workplace and the agencies and institutions of our communities, province/territory and our country. It is a space where we can associate with others who may share our interests, needs and/or life experiences, give us a sense of identity and belonging, and a chance to address the policies and governmental decisions that effect our daily lives (Wyman, 2001).

CAPC/CPNP projects constitute organizations of civil society. In common with other

organizations of civil society, they are characterized by "some focus on inclusiveness, popular participation, participatory methods, communication, networking and deliberate efforts to address and redress imbalances relating to issues of race, gender, class, age, and origin" (Brown, 2000: xiii). CAPC/CPNP projects give participants the opportunity to participate in "acting together" if they so choose. This may be at the project level where parents participate in decision-making through advisory boards or informal interest groups. It may be at the Board level where projects, through their participant members, link with other community groups. It may be at a local level where groups who share the interests of CAPC/CPNP participants work together to pursue a common goal. It may be at a national level where CAPC/CPNP projects come together to address a collective issue.

Active, voluntary participation in community activities through organizations like CAPC/CPNP contribute to healthy individual development, as well as healthy communities and child sensitive social policies (Reitsma-Street, et al., 2000). Encouraging the participation of youth is particularly important in that young people who are prevented from participating in their communities for extended periods of time are more likely to feel disconnected from society later in life (Reitsma-Street, et al., 2000).

Social Capital

When parents participate in CAPC/CPNP governance structures, they create the opportunity for individuals and projects to build on their *social capital* (Shiell and Hawe, 2000; Portes, 1998; Putnam, 1995; Putnam, 2001; Veenstra and Lomas, 1999; Veenstra, 2001; Whent, 2000; Woolcock, 2000).

As Dobell explains, "The basic idea of 'social capital' is that one's family, friends and associates constitute an important asset, one that can be called upon in a crisis, enjoyed for its own sake and/or leveraged for material gain" (2000: 4). The more people we are connected to and the more we develop trusting relationships with other people and groups, the greater capacity we have for acting collectively and pursuing our goals. Participation in CAPC/CPNP projects provide parents with the opportunity to connect with other people who share their interests. In many projects, the relationship among parents is one of mutual support, caring and sharing of experiences and knowledge. This opportunity to give and receive support is viewed as one of the most important features of the CAPC/CPNP project model (Health Canada, 1997; VanderPlaat, 1998). It is through mutually-supportive relationships that people solve problems and pursue common interests. Relationships that increase our capacity to influence and to act are regarded as valuable and hence the term social capital.

Social capital is something that exists in the relationships between individuals and groups (Dobell, 2000; Robertson, 1998). When project participants serve on Boards and other governance structures, they are increasing social capital for themselves, other parents and their project by extending the connections parents and projects have to the larger community. These connections may be quite casual in that participation on Boards or advisory groups may increase the number of people one is acquainted with or the number of people who are aware of CAPC/CPNP projects. The social capital residing in casual connections should not be dismissed or underestimated (Cattell, 2001; Putnam, 2001). One is still more likely to be able to seek and get help from a casual acquaintance than one is to seek and get help from a stranger (Putnam, 2001). However, the more these

connections are based on shared values and trust, the more effective the individuals and groups working together can be (Whent, 2000). Hainard and Verschuur (2001) argue that empowerment is actually a function of the degree of networking as progress cannot be realized in one domain if rights and freedoms are undermined in another.

Strong communities are those where collaborative networks exist among groups based on social trust, or in other words, strong communities are those that are rich in social capital (Jennings, 2001; Putnam, 1995).

> *"Those communities endowed with a rich stock of social networks and civic associations will be in a stronger position to confront poverty and vulnerability ... resolve disputes ... and/or take advantage of new opportunities." (Dobell, 2000: 4).*

The extent of social capital in a community is likely to have a powerful effect on health (Cattell, 2001; Putnam, 2001; Whent, 2000). There is also evidence to suggest that a community's ability to address the welfare of its children is higher where social capital is higher (Putnam, 2001). However, Lynn (2000), following Israel, Schulz, Parker and Becket (1998), remarks on the difficulty many organizations face in participating in broader networks or coalitions. Communities have histories. The legacy of mistrust or conflict between individuals, families, groups or organizations can be an impediment to collaboration. The participation of grassroots organizations like CAPC/CPNP in community governance structures is seen as vital to the growth of social capital and the building of healthy communities (Gittell, et al., 2000). "When community coalitions can engage the grassroots, they also provide a forum to reverse the decline in civic engagement and build new social capital for the community" (Wolff, 2001: 264).

Social Inclusion/Exclusion

Citizen participation is the foundation of civil society (Commonwealth Foundation, 1999). In a democratic country, all citizens should have an equal opportunity to participate. Unfortunately, this is far from being a reality. In Canada, many citizens are excluded or marginalized from both the economic benefits this country has to offer and the opportunity to participate in its political and social life through civil society. There is a general recognition that most people are not marginalized because of their own character flaws. Rather, they are relegated to the sidelines because of discrimination, poverty and racism (Jackson, forthcoming; Schneider, 2000; Simpson, 2000). As Barnes points out, "some exclusions have resulted both from social policies which have been deliberately designed to separate those regarded as deviant or different, and by public attitudes which have reinforced such policies (74). DeFoucauld (2001) defines social exclusion as, "a phenomenon of alienation and distance from society … Exclusion is the fact of preventing, even temporarily, someone from participating in social relationships and the construction of society." (12). As Wyman (2001) points out, "social exclusion has unfairly limited involvement of women, the poor, youth, the disabled, immigrants — those identified ... as "invisibles." (35). Dobell notes that, "A defining characteristic of poverty is to be excluded from social networks" (2000: 4). As pointed out in the Think Tank, there are many ways in which people can be marginalized or discouraged from participating in governance structures, especially the more formal models. Some are quite blatant, such as not having access to the necessary financial resources or failing to take into account the childcare responsibilities of project participants. Some barriers are more subtle, such as the disempowering use of language either through a strict adherence to

"official" rules of order or discussions dominated by the language of professional disciplines (Dickson, et al., 2001; Reger, 2001). From this perspective, many of the issues raised in the Think Tank can be seen to relate to how to increase the *social inclusion* of CAPC/CPNP participants in civil society.

The Laidlaw Foundation (2001) defines social inclusion as, "a sense of belonging and acceptance; reciprocity and positive interactions; being valued; having valued social roles; participation." Jackson (forthcoming); Schneider (2000); Simpson (2000) add to this the idea that social inclusion is not just about equity in opportunity, but also the existence of policies that reflect the concerns and life experiences of those directly affected. CAPC/CPNP projects and Boards give participants the opportunity to be socially included. Parents who sit on Boards and informal Advisory groups serve as bridge builders, linking the everyday lives of project participants to their larger communities. As noted in the Think Tank, parent Board members help to establish trust (social capital) between community service providers and parents, and they serve as governance role models for other participants. In doing so, they increase and promote the opportunity for the social inclusion of CAPC/CPNP participants, many of whom have traditionally been excluded from social and political participation. Parents who serve on boards and advisory groups are the connection between projects (other parents) and the larger community. They bring the voice of CAPC/CPNP parents into civil society.

Governance Structures and Parent Participation

Conclusion #2: There are no limits to the roles and responsibilities that parent participants can assume if they so choose. The particular strengths that parents contribute to governance structures include knowledge based on everyday experience and an understanding of participants' needs and interests. These strengths are most effectively used when all Board participants bring with them an appropriate work ethic, attitude and sense of professionalism.

Models

As mentioned earlier, there is considerable diversity in the type of governance models used by CAPC/CPNP projects. For example, as described in the Think Tank, one project was governed by a management coalition made up of community service providers, others had formal incorporated Boards which included parents, while others had chosen a less institutional approach with activities being directed by a consensus committee or a steering committee. In the chart below, Hyde (2000) provides a useful typology for comparing the type of governance structures used by nonprofit organizations. Based on roughly 13 criteria, she develops a model for categorizing organizations along a "governance continuum" with hierarchical organizations at one extreme, and collectivist types at the other (see also the United Way-Centraide website at http://www.boarddevelopment.org. for a useful typology based on vision, finances, human resources, operations and community relations).

Criteria	Hierarchical Organizations	Collectivist Organizations
Board Composition	elites/professionals	lay participants
Board appointments	honorific	merit/volunteer
Leadership	executive	equal
Relationships	impersonal	personal/face-to-face
Incentives	material/instrumental	value-based/normative/ communal solidarity
Rules	formalized	informal
Expertise	certification/training/ conduct/evaluation	experiential, participant-based
Merit	paid staff/conventional staff arrangements	equality of pay regardless of seniority/experience

Criteria	Hierarchical Organizations	Collectivist Organizations
Division of Labour	hierarchy/specialized	minimal specialization/full job rotation
Tiers of Stratification	3 to 4	2 at most
Decision-Making	majority rule/closed committee	consensual/open membership
Volunteer Participation	minimal/paid/professional staff	peer committee work/governance
Policy Orientation	organizational efficiency/ solvency/fund-raising/ marketing	vision/political action/empowerment/ communicative action/ community development

In theory, the principles underlying the governance models selected by CAPC/CPNP should reflect the values and beliefs of the project itself. Participants in the Think Tank noted that tensions can exist when there is a discrepancy between the two and some have adopted a flatline hierarchy (or what Sharp (2001) calls an "amorphous" profile) as being most consistent with project philosophy. Perlstadt, et al., (1998) contends that projects which focus on social issues are more successful if they are not based on a bureaucratic model. However, which model is implemented and how they may evolve is dependent on sponsorship, participant needs and accountability requirements. The "external environment" in which a CAPC/CPNP project finds itself can influence its structural and strategic decisions and even mission and vision (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1987; Scott, 1987). As Gronbjerg (1993) and Stone, Hager and Griffin (2001) observe, more institutionalized sponsors may require more stringent fiscal, managerial and programmatic requirements. Likewise, Barnes (1999) points out that sometimes projects have to adopt fiscal and managerial strategies that contradict their vision and undermine participatory commitment in order to get access to the resources they require. In Canada, as in many developed countries, the current external environment is one that includes an emphasis on decentralization whereby governments have transferred to communities an ever increasing responsibility for the welfare of their citizens, but often without an accompanying transfer of adequate resources.

While most CAPC/CPNP projects adopt a governance model somewhere along the continuum of hierarchical to collectivist, it is useful to look at some of the problems each presents in terms of parent participation. Readers will note that weaknesses associated with one tend to be the strengths of the other.

Hierarchical organizations are usually dominated by professionals and service providers. It is here that one is most likely to run into the issues raised during the Think Tank regarding the privileging of expert knowledge, the use of inaccessible language and rules of order and the undermining of parent participant credibility. Poguntke (1987)

argues that using parliamentary rules of order creates first and second class citizens. Sharp (2001) notes that hierarchical organizations are much less likely to be able to reflect diversity in a community or to find clear roles for non-professionals which, as one Think Tank participant notes, "is as if we hire someone without telling them what to do". Sharp (2001) also contends that this type of organizational structure is much more prone to the perpetuation of elitism and cliques. Barnes (1999) discusses the difficulties grassroots organizations face in attempting to have their experiential knowledge recognized and validated by professionals within a hierarchical structure.

Cherin (2000) outlines the dimensions of the collectivist or the "flat" organizational model This model incorporates principles of interpersonal communication, flexibility and organizational learning. There is an interweaving of problem solving, communication and decision-making. The success of the system depends on "interpersonal relationship skills". The multi-dimensionality of relationships within the group system become important … "the social aspects of organizations and the tasks within organizations become interwoven" (40). LaBonte (1998) notes "some organizers argue that decentering the idea of leadership to incorporate a plurality of potential leadership roles is important … as esteem building for many less formally educated persons and as a way to overcome status issues" (40). Collectivist organizations also present challenges. As noted by both participants in the Think Tank and researchers such as Dickson (2001); Kline, Dolgon and Dresser (2000); and Poguntke (1987), a more democratic approach to governance does not prevent the forming of cliques. The risk here is that while meetings may appear open and democratic the real decisions are being made behind the scenes. Poguntke (1987) points out that collectivist approaches are also more likely to be characterized by a lack of clearly defined roles for everyone, not just the non-professionals, and vague rules and bylaws which in turn may lead to tensions and organizational paralysis. One Think Tank project provided an example of this whereby a regional action team and the sponsoring agency were both unilaterally attempting to take responsibility for management issues. Poguntke (1987) also describes the difficulties experienced by organizations that attempt to govern through collective leadership where tasks are not clearly defined and there is no mandate for leadership. However, Kline, et al., (2000) describe a grassroots community organization that functioned effectively on a consensus model of decision-making by having facilitation rotate among those who were willing to take responsibility on any given occasion. Some researchers have found that in collectivist organizations professionals are the ones who tend to lack credibility. Dickson, et al., (2001) describe a situation where professionals were not seen as having a legitimate role on governance structures because of their perceived distance from the grassroots community. Likewise, Campbell and Marshall (2000) note that the term "professional activist" is sometimes used by communities in a derogatory way to describe professionals attempting to work with grassroots organizations. Finally, while some researchers (Kline, Dolgon and Dresser (2000); Perlstadt, et al., (1998); Reitsma-Street, Maczewski and Neysmith (2000)) stress the importance of the consensual nature of collectivist organizations, others disagree. Dickson, et al., (2001) and Fisher and Shragge (2000) question whether or not an emphasis on consensus obscures rather than illuminates what needs to be done and may prevent much needed critical debate. This concern is reflected by a comment made by one Think Tank participant who, in discussing the issue of consensus, cautioned, "people do have the

right to dissidence, this is a democratic group after all."

Researchers such as Poguntke (1987) and Foster-Fishman, et al., (2001) distinguish between governance issues related to organizational structure (rules, roles, procedures, etc.) and organizational culture (style of debate, intensity of participation, attitudes to leadership, etc.). Foster-Fishman, et al., (2001) identifies the following structural and cultural characteristics as most effective for the governance of community-based projects. It should be noted that many of the issues identified in the Think Tank are very similar to those listed below.

Structure	Culture
• Effective leadership	• Positive working environment
• Formalized procedures	• A shared vision
• Effective communication	• Power sharing
• Sufficient resources	• Valuing diversity
• Continuous improvement orientation	• Positive links to community

Allahyari (2000) contends that where the culture of an organization is progressive, inclusive and egalitarian, participants are able to achieve personal recognition, satisfaction and fulfilment. In an organization dominated by a conservative culture, participants from disadvantaged groups are treated as if they need to redeem themselves through self-discipline, sacrifice and hard work. Reitsma-Street, Maczewski and Neysmith (2000) found that the social atmosphere associated with "organizational culture" was an instrumental factor in making participants feel motivated – things such as a caring and respectful atmosphere; visiting; listening; sharing; talking; feeling welcome; friendly atmosphere; the ability to cultivate "profound" relationships. A poor atmosphere stemmed from insensitivity; criticism; differences in personality; repetitive work tasks; limited resources; predominance of English; feeling dismissed; unwanted; or ignored.

One issue that emerges from the literature on governance structures is whether or not it is possible to identify an "ideal type" of governance model for CAPC/CPNP projects. While recognizing the fact that projects may not always have a say in how they are governed, it would be useful to consider which characteristics are most conducive to parent participation and community development specifically from the perspective of CAPC/CPNP projects. Unfortunately, the literature is not very forthcoming in this regard primarily because researchers in the field rarely ask participants what they require in terms of organizational structure and culture (a notable exception being Reitsma-Street, Maczewski and Neysmith's (2000) exemplary article on volunteers in community resource centres in Ontario). Considerably more research is needed to address the unique governance requirements of CAPC/CPNP projects. For example, Think Tank participants repeatedly noted that their

participation in governance structures needs to reflect their role as mothers. The question therefore is whether there are approaches to governance which are more consistent with the realities of women's lives, not only in terms of their responsibilities, but also in terms of how women relate to the world around them. For example, Gittell, et al., (2000) provides an interesting examination of the leadership styles of women working in low-income neighbourhood projects and the particular strengths that women-led groups bring to the community development process.

The same argument applies to youth involvement in the governance of CAPC/CPNP projects. Think Tank participants stressed the participation of youth noting that "the youth give back more than you can imagine" and that "youth can figure out what they want and where they have to go". Researchers such as Checkoway (1998); Driskell, et al., (2001); and Singleton (2001) have looked at how to more effectively involve youth in development projects and argue for the importance of their inclusion. Young people "are important actors in their own communities and their insights, energy and creativity should not be ignored" (Driskell, et al., 2001: 77). Reitsma-Street, Maczewski and Neysmith (2000) report that community resource centres have had to try to reverse paternalistic approaches to youth volunteerism steeped in "adultism": "… the assumption that adults know better than youth" (671).When thinking about youth participation in the governance of CAPC/CPNP, we have to take into account that the youth involved in CAPC/CPNP projects are also primarily young women and parents or parents-to-be. These realities need to be taken into consideration when exploring more innovative governance structures.

Both Gittell, et al., (2000) and Reitsma-Street, Maczewski and Neysmith (2000) argue that determining the best approach to supportive organizational structures and cultures must begin with the experiences and concerns of those directly involved (i.e., parent participants). It is only by asking them what does and does not work that we can begin to identify a governance structure best suited to the interests and concerns of CAPC/CPNP projects. As one Think Tank participant pointed out, "the organization has to create an appealing culture rather than having participants fit into the standard Board regimen".

Roles and Skills

Think Tank participants identified a number of important roles that parent participants can assume on a Board. In general, there was a sense that parents could fill any role that they were willing and able to assume. What was considered to be important was not so much which role, but rather having one. Both Kaye (2001) and Reitsma-Street, Maczewski and Neysmith (2000) found that while not everyone needed to assume the same roles, it was important that participants are not made to feel as "token" representatives of their community. As one Think Tank member noted, "You need to provide these Moms with a feeling they have something to give, so in five years they're still on your Board."

There was considerable consistency in the skills needed for participation in governance structures identified in the Think Tank and those found in the literature. In their own extensive reviews of the literature Goodman, et al., (1998) and Foster-Fishman (2001) identified the same practical skills as those put forth in the Think Tank in terms of organization and planning, problem solving, conflict resolution, advocacy and meeting management. The literature also provides considerable support for the feelings of this one project coordinator, "If I had to wait for those skills, I would have no parents on the

Board. Personal qualities are more important." Foster-Fishman, et al., (2001) notes that to be effective members of Boards and other governance structures individuals have to be able to cooperate and respect others, deal with conflict and acknowledge diversity. In addition, they should hold positive attitudes about the project, about the other Board members, as well as themselves. It is important to note that the literature does not differentiate between the roles and skills required by project participants and those assumed by other community members. This highlights the need to extend the discussion of appropriate roles and skills to everyone involved.

One interesting skill identified by Think Tank participants was the need for courage and tenacity. This characteristic is not well recognized in the literature although Revenson and Cassel (1991) recognize the need for "hardiness" and Barnes (1999) writes about how persons who confront traditional power structures may put themselves at risk and need the support of their peers.

Building Participant Capacity in Governance

Conclusion #3: Barriers to parent participation can be practical (e.g., finances, child-care), cultural (e.g., norms, language) and social (e.g., attitudes, communication styles). Solutions should focus on capacity building and flexibility.

Challenges

As noted earlier, parent participation in the governance of CAPC/CPNP projects is a vital component in building healthy communities and developing effective social policies. Those parents who do choose to participate are leaders in the effort to break through the barriers that have traditionally excluded this population from civil society. This also holds true for the youth who participate in the governance of their projects. As Singleton (2001) observes, "participation is an essential component in the development of young people's citizenship skills without which the cycle of social exclusion cannot be broken" (634).

The practical barriers identified by participants in the Think Tank are consistent with those found in the literature. Kaye (2001); LaBonte (1998); and Reitsma-Street, Maczewski and Neysmith (2000) also note the challenges posed by financial barriers, child-care and access to transportation. Gittell, et al., (2000) also includes domestic responsibilities and lack of support from partners and peers, and Kaye (2001) adds the need to be considerate of people's different time schedules.

Both the members of the Think Tank and the literature recognize the barriers posed by negative attitudes, particularly as they relate to participant credibility or competence. One Think Tank participant observed that "There has to be an attitude that we are on equal ground and just because someone doesn't have a university education doesn't mean she isn't smart."

The issue of less powerful groups being seen as less competent or credible is well documented in the literature (Barnes,1999; Popay, 1998). The need to recognize the value of "lay" or "experiential" knowledge is also well documented (Barnes,1999; Popay, 1998; Williams, Popay and Oakley, 1999). Barnes (1999) in her research describes the challenge that a grassroots organization of "disabled persons" faced in their attempts to have their "experiential knowledge" recognized and validated by experts and officials. She argues that, "… the opportunity to share experiential knowledge provides access to an expert resource which is different from that available from health and social care professionals" (Barnes, 1999: 80).

Cultural barriers can also prevent individuals from participating more fully in decision-making and governance. In this sense, culture can be related to different ethnic backgrounds, as well as to class and professional differences. As one participant pointed out, "I sometimes cannot get a word in edgewise because it seems that everyone is speaking a different language and [are] from a different class …. I feel outnumbered by professionals and their background … being all alone is a barrier!"

Barnes (1999) points out that there is a definite challenge to developing dialogue amongst populations who have been traditionally defined as "incompetent" and excluded from decision-making. But, the value of such agency lies in "breaking the chains of victimhood" (10).

Creating Supportive Environments

Overcoming practical barriers requires the availability of appropriate resources. Reitsma-Street, Maczewski and Neysmith (2000), in their study of volunteerism in community resource centres, found a common concern was removing financial barriers to participation: providing food and child care, reimbursing transportation costs, providing small honoraria, and the availability of petty cash systems that reimbursed people quickly. Overcoming social and cultural barriers requires the creation of supportive organizational cultures and imaginative approaches to building on people's willingness to participate.

In terms of creating a supportive organizational culture, Kaye (2001) identifies six "Rs" for encouraging participation.

- **R**ecognition – people's contributions in terms of volunteerism and leadership need to be acknowledged
- **R**espect – people need to feel that they themselves, along with their knowledge and values, are respected.
- **R**ole – people need to feel they have a role and that their role is important, regardless of what it is
- **R**elationship – people need to feel they have an opportunity to build on their friendships and social networks
- **R**ewards – people must feel that the rewards of continued participation outweigh the costs
- **R**esults – people must see their participation as having direct impacts on their communities/issues of interest

Folayemi (2001) adds to this by identifying the key characteristics of supportive organizations:

- patience – allow time for people to do things their own way
- communication – allow time for everyone to get "on the same page"
- focus – emphasize community interest rather than self-interest
- broad-based participation – encourage diversity and ownership
- technical assistance – provide training and orientation and access to "expert" knowledge when needed
- respect – do not allow disagreements to become personal
- adaptability – set goals which reflect the needs of the community and be flexible in the methods used to achieve goals
- trust – foster trust in each member's skills
- recognition – celebrate success and recognize shortcomings
- commitment – be committed to the community being served

A number of researchers also agree with the Think Tank participants' emphasis on social events for member and prospective Board members (Barnes, 1999; Cohen, 1985; and Melucci, 1985). Kline, Dolgon and Dresser (2000) describe the effectiveness of periodic retreats for strategic planning and renewal, while informal brunches, pot luck dinners, and picnics proved to be effective mechanisms in building trust and collegiality.

There is a considerable consensus among researchers with Kaye's (2001) observation that participants must feel that the rewards of participation outweigh the costs (Chinman and Wandersman, 1999; Goodman, Robert M.

et al., 1998; Mor Barak, 2000; Reitsma-Street, Maczewski and Neysmith, 2000).

In their research, Reitsma-Street, Maczewski and Neysmith (2000) found that participants felt rewarded or valued when they were engaging in relationships, accomplishing tasks and experiencing "the power to decide" (658). Mor Barak (2000) found that the perception of group inclusion is fundamental to a person's need to have positive affiliations (a feeling that they are a member in "good standing"), self-esteem, and ultimately physical and psychological well-being.

Chinman and Wandersman's (1999) list of rewards includes: personal skills development, learning new ideas, satisfaction from being involved in projects, friendships, social contacts, increased status and prestige, a sense of responsibility, social activities, help with a job search, influence, sense of pride, feel important among friends, information, helping others, sense of support, contacts to consulting work, new friends and building community.

The costs individuals may associate with participation include: demands on time, feeling unwelcome, disagreeing with goals, frustration with lack of progress, need to attend meetings, child care, organizing service projects, raising funds, difficulty of coalition participation, out-of-pocket expenses, conflict, exclusion from policy setting, embarrassment, feeling stigmatized, lack of appreciation (Chinman and Wandersman, 1999). Reitsma-Street, Maczewski and Neysmith (2000) add to this the assignment to meaningless tasks, treatment as "tokens", lack of information or consultation and manipulation. Revenson and Cassel (1991) also found that where participation is by default through lack of interest from others, when people feel that they are left "holding the bag", they will eventually succumb to feelings of bitterness and early resignation.

Building Capacity

The Think Tank produced a number of suggestions for increasing parent participation in governance and decision-making. Chief among them is the need for adequate training and orientation, a requirement also noted in the literature by such researchers as Foster-Fishman, et al., (2001) and Kline, Dolgon and Dresser (2000). There is also support in the literature for the Think Tank suggestion of a "buddy" or mentoring system (Kline, Dolgon and Dresser, 2000; Mor Barak, 2000; Poguntke, 2001). Foster-Fishman, et al., (2001) argue that participation can also be increased by maximizing the use of existing skills, determining unique assets of project members and creating settings or roles where these talents can be used. This suggestion is somewhat reflective of the governance structure of some Aboriginal CAPC/CPNP projects where elders are included because of their unique skills.

As noted earlier in the review, many projects afford parents different levels of participation ranging from very informal committees to established advisory groups to Board membership. The value in thinking about a continuum of participation or different levels of participation is also reflected in the literature. For example, Oldfield (2000); Poguntke (2001); and Sharp (2001) suggest projects encourage participation by creating task forces or working groups around specific objectives. Sharp (2001) notes the effectiveness that organizations have had building community networks through *de facto* committee work or task forces that explicitly bring together disparate groups (even factions) in the community to work for common goals. Likewise, Labonte (1998) recommends that projects ensure "… that a sufficient number of visible and short-term activities occur both to maintain involvement from a broader range of persons, and to sustain a base from which new core

volunteers may arise (39). Barnes (1999) writes that "limited roles" may help to slowly build confidence to engage more in such activities.

Conclusion

The interest in the governance of CAPC/CPNP comes at a time when many countries are increasingly concerned with the need to build citizen participation in decision-making and policy formation. The involvement of grassroots organizations like CAPC/CPNP is considered to be particularly important in this regard. As Wolff (2001) notes earlier, participation by the traditionally marginalized provides an important new source of social capital for communities. Barnes (1999) agrees, "The latter part of the 1990s is seeing a rediscovery of the community as both a resource and a focus of empowerment" (74). As is recognized by members of the Think Tank, participation in CAPC/CPNP governance structures is not just about project management, it is also about establishing important linkages between CAPC/CPNP participants and the larger community.

There is considerable consistency between the experiences and insights provided through the Think Tank discussions and the findings related to governance issues produced by researchers in the fields of community development, health promotion, social intervention and social justice. Studies related to increasing volunteerism and building leadership were particularly informative as they relate directly to participation in decision-making.

The "conversation" between the academic literature and the insights produced by the Think Tank offer some exciting possibilities for future research. First, it is obvious that CAPC/CPNP projects and participants can play an important role in developing stronger communities. It would be interesting to explore this more extensively with projects which are well integrated in their communities. What are the characteristics of the communities where CAPC/CPNP projects are more entrenched? How can we build capacity between CAPC/CPNP projects and their communities? Can we demonstrate direct benefits for children and families in those areas where CAPC/CPNP projects participate in community development? Does CAPC/CPNP provide experiential evidence for the claims made in the literature that grassroots organizations provide an important new source of social capital?

Second, CAPC/CPNP projects provide some interesting opportunities for the development of innovative governance structures. It would be useful to take a "best practices" look at which CAPC/CPNP governance structures have been particularly effective and why? In addition, the idea of a continuum of participation needs to be more fully explored particularly in terms of youth and others not willing or able to assume more formal roles.

Third, the potential of projects like CAPC/CPNP as organizations of civil society needs to be more fully developed and documented. While future funding may depend in part on projects' capacity to demonstrate their contribution to the health of children and families, this claim would be significantly enhanced if we could also demonstrate CAPC/CPNP's contribution to the government's commitment to social inclusion.

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