

Basic Principles of Partnerships ▶▶▶

1. Know Everyone's Gifts and Goals -- Make a Plan.

Partnership does not just mean groups working together. Over the course of the afternoon, facilitator Flo Frank had our groups discuss several questions: What is a partnership? What isn't? Why are they so important right now?

As groups discussed Frank's questions, some basic principles about partnerships emerged.

The first and most fundamental was recognizing why a partnership should be formed in the first place.

Some of the groups felt partnerships are often formed because groups are told they must work together if they want to get funding. "It says right on the grant application -- Who are your partners?" explained one participant.

That is one reason partnerships are formed; because funders require it.

But the most important reason for a partnership to be formed is that partners need one another's gifts to accomplish their goals. These are the two sides to any real partnership -- gifts and goals -- what each partner agrees to put into the partnership and what each partner gets out of it. Planning a successful partnership means knowing what each partner's goals are and what each partner's contributions are. It also means working out a conscious agreement about how they'll work together.

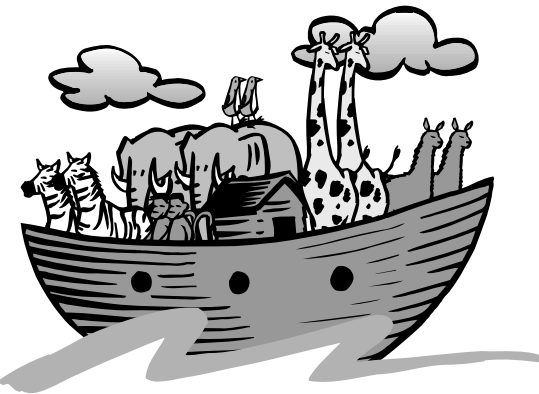
Jo Ann Storoziński of Youville Centre told the story of one partnership that hadn't worked because one of several partners had a hidden agenda.

Real partners know why they are together. They have a plan based on gifts and goals -- what each partner will contribute and what each partner will get from the relationship.

One major reason partnerships are increasingly important is because of declining resources. "When the level goes down, the animals around the water hole begin to look at one another differently," said Frank.

She illustrated many of her points with humour and overhead cartoons. We can't repeat them all here, but this one may help capture the flavour of the afternoon.

"Remember, Noah's Ark was built by amateurs," she told us. "The Titanic, by professionals."



2. Work On Nurturing Your Partnership

The Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation has forged a strong partnership between residents, city planners, private developers and businesses to provide innovative, affordable housing.

"My first lesson in partnerships was that we cannot be afraid to say we don't have all the skills needed," Laurene Viarobo of the renewal corporation told the forum. "When you have admitted you need other skills, you can accept the skills from any political or philosophical quarter. In our case, we married the business agenda with the social agenda."

Viarobo emphasized that, once partners from diverse backgrounds have come together, it's important to spend time getting to know one another's values. Relationships don't just happen, they need nurturing. Real improvements can result.

When the renewal corporation formed partnerships with several smaller developers, they discovered the developers' struggles to create successful businesses meant they had deeper understandings of issues of poverty and affordable housing. VanBi Lee, who originally came from Vietnam, was one. He has been involved in developing innovative housing solutions for tenants like Charlene Chief and her children.



Charlene Chief and her children have become friends with developer VanBi Lee, who incorporated bright airy spaces into affordable housing units.



Celebrating Our Forum's Diversity

When we looked around at the faces at our various tables, we saw the many strengths there -- service providers, health workers, business people, administrators, and students. To the left, U of M student Nadeline Khan asks questions of child and family workers at her table. At the table to the right, Richard Dilay, from Neighbourhoods Alive!, ponders a point.



3. Celebrate Diversity in Your Partnerships and Use Conflict to Grow

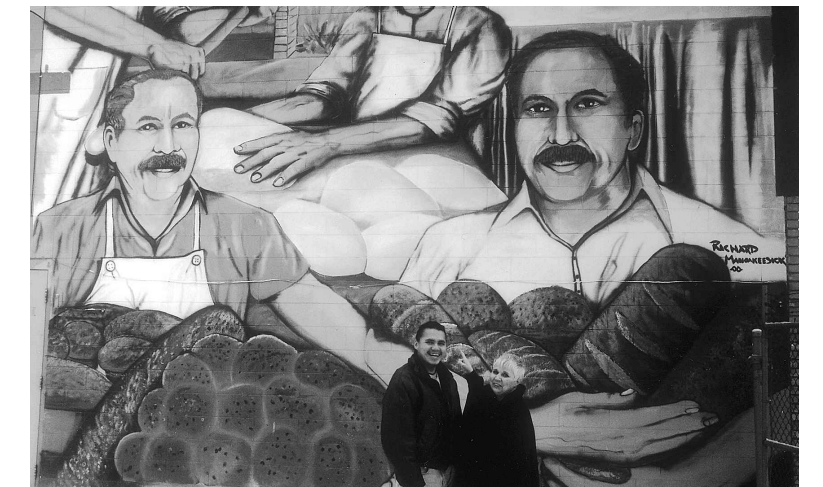
There is probably no example that celebrates diversity better than the Selkirk Avenue partnership between Sylvia Todaschuk and Richard Manoakeesick.

Selkirk Avenue is a case study of how diversity can build a neighbourhood -- Jews, Ukrainians, Poles and a dozen others made it the centre of the North End of Winnipeg from the turn of the century on. More recently, Aboriginal people call the neighbourhood home, just as thousands of newcomers did before them.

A major goal of the Selkirk Avenue Task Force has been brightening the neighbourhood. They formed a partnership with R.B. Russell School. Richard was a student then and painted the first mural. Sylvia Todaschuk, a member of the Selkirk Avenue BIZ, kept the partnership with Richard going long after he left school. They've become like adopted mother and son. Now he's painted 47 murals on the street and is helping other young artists in their work at nearby Graffiti Gallery.

The Selkirk Avenue murals are a celebration of the strengths of diverse partners.

"Know what you're good at -- and what you're not," Flo Frank said. "That's the strength of partnership."



The mural at Gunn's Bakery towers over artist Richard Manoakeesick and his adopted "mother" Sylvia Todaschuk.



Photo courtesy of WASAC

What Our Partnerships Are All About

Darryl Bruce reminded us that the real purposes of partnerships are the people who will benefit from successful programs, like these kids in the Winnipeg Aboriginal Sports Achievement Centre. Because of partnerships with funders and city facilities, the centre can offer programs for hundreds of Winnipeg children.

Forum Facilitator - Flo Frank ▶▶▶▶

Co-operation, common sense and courtesy are foundations of partnership that go together as well as perogies and hummus, said Flo Frank, using a folksy reference from her own Saskatchewan experience to press a point: "We always travel with food," she said.

But Frank provided us with more than that Saskatchewan list. She displayed many lists of principles during the afternoon. (See "The Partnership Handbook" she co-authored, www.caledoninst.org)

The three basic principles below are a summation of those lists and the many discussions she led during the afternoon:

1. Know everyone's gifts and goals -- Make a plan.

Know why you are partners in the first place -- the individual goals of each partner and each one's contribution. Make a conscious agreement about how you'll work together. "One possible reason why things aren't going to plan," said Frank, "is that there never was a plan."

2. Work on nurturing your partnership -- Find the values in each other

Partnerships don't just happen, they need nurturing. Take time getting to know the people and values of partners. Explain what you mean to one another. Frank showed us a cartoon of a man and woman shaking hands and making an agreement about a "cat". But the woman understood this as a house-pet; the man, a construction machine. Communicate.

3. Celebrate diversity in your partnerships and use conflict to grow

Partners who are successful are going to be different. Recognize you don't have all the skills needed and celebrate the different gifts your partners bring. Learn from them. This tension is what makes for dynamic partnerships. Frank showed one cartoon of a slightly bemused woman holding an animal hoop -- "I'd like to be an animal trainer," she said, "if I liked animals... or training."

During the afternoon several groups stressed that there was going to be conflict. Partners are, by definition, different, with different values, different understandings. Properly understood, this is the real strength of a partnership. But it also contains the potential for conflict. Sometimes, Frank said, you need partnership counselling the same way you need marriage counselling.



Flo Frank's style as a facilitator was interactive. Above, she talks with forum participants like David Rice-Lampert, who works on settlement issues with new immigrants. Below, she listens to points from a table that includes Erica Wiebe, of West Central Streets; Geoff Ripat, of Child and Family Services; Steve Wilson, of Graffiti Gallery and Vincent Champagne, a former R.B. Russell artist now working on community programs in Pt. Douglas.



Using Partnerships ▶▶▶▶ To Strengthen Neighbourhoods

This was the final forum in a series of three which began in June, 2001. In the first forum, neighbourhood workers developed 21 tools to strengthen neighbourhoods. In the second forum (February, 2002), participants found how neighbourhoods were using 11 principles of community economic development. The September, 2002 forum concluded with participants identifying 12 pieces of practical advice about how you can actually achieve a successful partnership. Those tips are listed below, under the three basic principles that came out of the afternoon:

1 Know everyone's gifts and goals -- make a plan.

Know why you're together.
Make a plan, but be ready to change, and defend, the plan.

2 Work on nurturing your partnership. Find the values in each other.

Be sure you're ready, that you have energy to put into the partnership.
Nurture the partnership. Feed it. Look after it.
Make sure each member is heard and validated.
Practise active listening.

3 Celebrate diversity in your partnerships and use conflict to grow.

We can do what I cannot.
Feel okay about not having to do everything.
Stay optimistic.
Conflict will happen; deal with it appropriately.
Discuss early on how you'll deal with conflict.
The moment you're ready to quit is probably the moment of breakthrough.



Neighbourhoods Alive! is the Province of Manitoba's long-term, community-based social and economic development strategy to support revitalization efforts in specific neighbourhoods in Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson.

Thanks to organizers of the forum:
• Linda Williams • Shannon Watson
• Laurene Viarobo • Jackie Sokoliuk • Trudy Turner

This report was written by an independent source, based on his own notes of the forum.

THE BASIC PRINCIPLES



▶▶▶ How To Build Strong Partnerships To Build Strong Neighbourhoods

NEIGHBOURHOODS ALIVE! FORUM, SEPTEMBER 26, 2002, WINNIPEG

Partnerships are increasingly proving to be a necessary and effective way to strengthen neighbourhoods. partnerships work.

On September 26, 2002, Neighbourhoods Alive! presented an afternoon forum which gave a chance to think about partnerships and hear some stories of effective partnerships in Manitoba.

Manitoba Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Jean Friesen, opened the forum in the magnificent setting of Thunderbird House. The national conference on community economic development was happening at the same time and Minister Friesen told us that programs of community-based organizations like Art City and the Spence Neighbourhood Association are examples of neighbourhood



Thunderbird House's Circle of Life was an appropriate setting for the forum. The star pillows, the feeling of respect as we donned slippers for the afternoon, the prayers led by elder Linda Blomme -- all created the right setting to consider the partnerships we all need.