

**Summary and Analysis of
Bridges and Foundations: CURA**

Jacqueline Thomarat
Student no. 444041
Career Internship
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Professor Joe Garcea
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Executive Summary

This report will provide a summary of the inner workings of Bridges and Foundations: CURA, a research project on housing affordability for Aboriginal people in Saskatoon. Over the course of five months, information was collected through interviews, meetings and research on the general objectives and specific projects of the Foundation and its proponents which provided the basis for this document.

This report is divided into four sections. The first section introduces the paper. The purpose of the research, the outline and the sources of information are discussed. Background information on the need for the project, its origins, the funding and the objectives allowed for more in-depth analysis. This second section sets up this context for the rest of the paper. The analysis begins with a discussion of the inner workings of Bridges and Foundations: CURA. In this third section the ways to get involved, the organisational structure, the process of approval for funding, and the processes for reporting work are examined. Lessons on which structures and methods aided or inhibited timely and effective work are enumerated. In examining the functional organisation, the understanding of objectives, effectiveness of communication, capacity differences, and the nature of the funding of Bridges and Foundations: CURA what can be learned from this project was communicated. The fourth section provides an analysis of the aspect of partnership. The benefits and drawbacks of cross-cultural, community-university partnership are discussed in terms of the level of integration and independence, networking, implications for Aboriginal people and organisations, the products of partnership, trust and time limits.

In sum, Bridges and Foundations: CURA was designed to be conducive to mutually beneficial working relations between the community and educational institutions, and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations. This is discussed in an assessment of the outcomes, the final section of the document. It was found that the mission, mandate and objectives were fulfilled. Recommendations are made for linking the research to affordable housing strategies and for ongoing evaluation of the project.

I. Introduction

This section explains the purpose of this report, its organisation and the sources of information that were used in its formulation.

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the activities of Bridges and Foundations: CURA since it began in 2001. The report will serve as the final project for a Political Studies Career Internship at the University of Saskatchewan which was completed under the supervision of Professor Joe Garcea, with the assistance of Jacinthe Taylor, the Project Coordinator.

This document outlines several aspects of the Bridges and Foundations: CURA project the project was designed to examine and make recommendations on how to improve affordable housing for Aboriginals and sustainable partnerships with Aboriginal communities in Saskatoon. This report will provide an analysis of the inner workings and partnerships of Bridges and Foundations: CURA and derive lessons and recommendations from each area of study. In order provide an effective examination the background of the organisation will first be discussed.

2. Organisation of the Report

This document is divided into five sections. The first section introduces the report. The second section discusses the background of Bridges and Foundations: CURA. It outlines the need for the work, the vision and purpose of the organisation and the funding. The third section provides an analysis, and enumerates lessons learned regarding the inner workings of the Foundation. Section four reviews the aspect of partnership in Bridges and Foundations: CURA. This section enumerates the processes that worked and those that did not concerning partnership. Section five assesses the outcomes of Bridges and Foundations: CURA, with a summary of achievements and suggestions for further analysis.

3. Sources of Information

In this document several sources were used. First of all, interviews were conducted with members of Bridges and Foundations: CURA to give insight into the working processes and relations among members. Second, Progress reports were reviewed as well as the final documents of individual projects. Background information, Management Committee meeting minutes and Planning Circle meeting minutes were provided by the Project Coordinator. Lastly, outside academic resources were referred to and were used for comparative measures. A bibliography is provided at the end of the document.

II. Background

This section explains the original need for the initiative, and the nature of the Foundation.

1. Origins of Bridges and Foundations

This section will explain how Bridges and Foundations: CURA emerged. It will explain why such a project was needed to address urban Aboriginal housing in Saskatoon. The vision that started the initiative, and a description of the funding of Bridges and Foundations: CURA will be discussed.

A. Addressing Housing in Saskatoon

Appropriate affordable housing solutions are needed for Aboriginal people living in Saskatoon for several reasons which will be discussed in this section.

First, due to poverty, an array of socioeconomic factors, and increased urbanisation, Aboriginal people in Saskatoon have generally been living in sub-standard or inadequate housing. In 1997 the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) reported that in Saskatoon seventy eight percent of Aboriginal single parent households did not have one of either affordable or suitable or adequate housing. In other words they were in core housing need.¹ According to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, all people have the right to a standard of living that is conducive to good health and wellbeing. Housing has long been recognised as a key indicator of personal health and wellbeing, which in turn contributes to the stability and welfare of the community.² Thus it was clear that research was needed as a basis for providing more appropriate affordable housing options for Aboriginal people living in Saskatoon.

Second, the economic circumstances in Saskatoon have influenced the availability of quality affordable housing. Housing is normally an asset for Canadians. However it also represents a significant proportion of personal debts and expenses. Saskatoon has had relatively low vacancy rates in recent years, which has resulted in higher purchase and rental prices. This has been compounded by the fact that household incomes have not increased proportionally to increased housing costs. People in core need of affordable housing have been spending at least half of their income on shelter in the last ten years.³ The impacts of unaffordable housing on the economy have been negative. These impacts have included instability, lack of confidence in the economy, and disinvestment. In contrast, the impacts of more affordable housing options would be positive. Those impacts would include increased investment in communities, consumer confidence, better land use and development, and improved socioeconomic circumstances.⁴ These economic circumstances provided another motive for researching possible affordable housing solutions, particularly for Aboriginal people in Saskatoon.

Third, government jurisdiction has played a part in the supply of affordable housing. The increased devolution of housing responsibilities from federal and provincial governments to municipalities has created a jurisdictional vacuum.⁵ Existing provincial programs such as Social Housing have long waiting lists and they have not accommodated the high number of people in need. As a result, over the last decade the extent of homelessness has

increased.⁶ The role of the federal government is particularly significant for affordability and Aboriginal housing because of the fiduciary relationship that Canada has with Aboriginal peoples. Urbanisation of Aboriginal communities has increased the need for change.⁷ Consequently, there was a need for municipal governments and communities to come together to create affordable housing options for Aboriginal people. In sum, housing is a basic human need which must be met.

B. The Vision

The vision of Bridges and Foundations: CURA was to address the root of the problems that have prohibited housing affordability for Aboriginal people in Saskatoon.

In Saskatoon interested organisations came together in partnership to research programs and policies that might meet affordable housing needs and prevent discrimination toward Aboriginal people in the housing market.⁸ This new initiative would address a lack of coordination among interested parties. An analogy can illustrate this discord. Housing businesses were aware of the fact that adequate affordable Aboriginal housing was not readily available in Saskatoon. However, there were no Aboriginal people present at the meetings which addressed the issue. Similarly, there were no representatives from the housing industry present at the meetings of Aboriginal organisations that concerned affordable housing.⁹ This discord illustrated the need for partnership to effectively deal with Aboriginal affordable housing needs.

In response, three separate and autonomous sectors came together to find solutions. The first stakeholder was the University of Saskatchewan. The second was the business sector. The third and most important of the partners were Aboriginal organisations.¹⁰ This inclusive community and university partnership was the basis for Bridges and Foundations: CURA. The purpose statement of Bridges and Foundations: CURA illustrated that vision. It stated that

“Building functional, sustainable relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations to design and develop culturally supportive communities and quality, affordable housing options”

was central to the work.¹¹

C. The Funding from SSHRC and CMHC

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada’s Community-University Research Alliances (CURA) initiative funded Bridges and Foundations along with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).

In February of 2001, the Minister of Natural Resources Canada on behalf of SSHRC announced that the CURA initiative Bridges and Foundations would receive funds from SSHRC and CMHC. Approximately one million dollars was provided, six hundred thousand from SSHRC and almost four hundred thousand from CMHC.¹²

2. Undertakings

A. Mission

The mission of Bridges and Foundations: CURA was to conduct research on the issues of affordable, appropriate and quality housing in Saskatoon for Aboriginal people, and to build strong functional cross-cultural partnerships. The University of Saskatchewan and the Community of Saskatoon were represented on the Management Committee and the Planning Circle.

B. Mandate

The Mandate for Bridges and Foundations was a directive of SSHRC and CMHC. The CURA program of SSHRC and CMHC were designed to promote research and socioeconomic innovation through partnership. CMHC has striven to support grassroots endeavours such as this.¹³ This was the motivation for their support of Bridges and Foundations. Accordingly, the Foundation may lead to improved quality of life for Aboriginal through research and partnerships directed at housing affordability in Saskatoon.¹⁴

3. Objectives of Bridges and Foundations: CURA

The main objectives of Bridges and Foundations: CURA were to foster the following: partnership, cross-cultural support, affordable housing and evaluation. Each of these objectives will be discussed in turn below.

A. The Aspect of Partnership

Bridges and Foundations: CURA addressed the need for affordable Aboriginal housing through an innovative community and university, and cross-cultural partnership.

One of the primary objectives of this organization was to build long lasting cross-cultural partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations in the city of Saskatoon. It was only in engaging the relevant stakeholders that solutions could be found. Partnership was important for building cross-cultural and interdisciplinary support networks, determining the priorities of the organisation, finding access to funds and investment strategies, and much more.¹⁵

The partners of Bridges and Foundations: CURA were each members of the Planning Circle. These members were the University of Saskatchewan, the Saskatoon Home Builders Association (HBA), Quint Development Corporation, Sasknative Rentals, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology (SIIT), City of Saskatoon, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN), Métis Nation of Saskatchewan (MNS) and the Central Urban Métis Federation (CUMFI), Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, Affordable New Home Development Foundation, First Nation University of Canada, Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP), and the Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC).¹⁶

B. Culturally Supportive Communities

Cross-cultural partnerships are important for the wellbeing of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada, and to the development of culturally supportive communities. Therefore this was one of the main objectives of Bridges and Foundations: CURA.

Culturally supportive partnerships entail respect, reciprocity, and mutually satisfying relations. These were the building blocks of Bridges and Foundations: CURA. Respect was the operative term, because research goals could only be accomplished with the full cooperation of the Aboriginal community in Saskatoon.¹⁷ However this did imply that the partners needed to change their modes of thinking and operation to be more inclusive. The partnerships that resulted from the Foundation will hopefully bring about improved discourse in the community of Saskatoon, and prevent the discrimination that Aboriginal people currently face in the housing industry and market.¹⁸

Bridges and Foundations: CURA provided Aboriginal people with an avenue to improving their housing and affordability. This partnership may lead to a more trusting relationship between the members, and may have laid the groundwork for positive cross-cultural relations in future endeavours.¹⁹

C. Development of Quality Affordable Housing Options

More appropriate quality affordable housing options for Aboriginal people in Saskatoon may be possible because of the research and improved discourse that has resulted from the work of Bridges and Foundations: CURA.

Innovation was necessary in light of the devolution of housing responsibilities from the Federal government to the Provincial and Municipal governments. The positive discourse and research that resulted from this inclusive local partnership may later increase the success of affordable housing initiatives. The partnership between the university and the community provided a means to applying the findings of the research.²⁰ The Bridges and Foundations: CURA partnership has also enhanced the work of each of the individual members. This project enhanced the understanding of Aboriginal affordable housing needs and how to better accommodate those needs in Saskatoon.²¹

D. Evaluation of Working Processes

The research done through Bridges and Foundations: CURA was also intended to provide insight into the process that worked and those that did not when attempting to build cross-cultural partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in urban centres.²²

Bridges and Foundations: CURA ensured there were means to measure success of the projects. However, given the innovation of this Foundation, there were bound to be some road blocks. It was therefore essential that obstacles be enumerated, and solutions be identified. This task was completed by the Management Committee on a regular basis. Yet further analysis and evaluation would benefit the Foundation.

4. Overview of Projects

This section will provide a general overview of the work done through Bridges and Foundations: CURA. This section will enumerate the general activities of the Foundation. Conferences, community, university, and business endeavours will be discussed. For more detailed information on projects the various Progress Reports can be consulted.

A. Conferences

Conferences were held by Bridges and Foundations: CURA with the objective of building bridges between stakeholders and improving discourse.

A mini-conference was held on September 18, 2003 and the findings of that conference were made available online. Present at the mini-conference were business members, community groups and educational personnel. Themes that prevailed were the nature of the housing market, employment, and community development. The roles of the municipal and federal governments were discussed, as well as the need for more program creation and understanding between groups, and the need for proponents to work together. The findings of the mini-conference were used to devise an action plan for Bridges and Foundations: CURA.²³

Another larger conference is currently being developed for October 2004, near the end date of the Bridges and Foundations: CURA initiative. This conference will present the completed work of the organisation and provide a large forum for networking. A Conference Planner was hired to coordinate the activity. He will work with the Conference Planning Committee, which is made up of members of the Planning Circle, and the Co-Chairs Darlene Lancely and Jacinthe Taylor.

B. Community Ventures

Community and grassroots initiatives are important for Aboriginal communities like those involved in Bridges and Foundations: CURA.

Some of the resources produced by community members included the community housing surveys and population surveys, and plans for building vibrant communities, and assessment of investment opportunities in Aboriginal affordable housing initiatives and employment strategies. Resources produced by Aboriginal organizations included Reserve surveys, migration studies, assessments of housing needs of different sectors of the Aboriginal population such as students, and home ownership and rental market studies. For the Foundation to be successful in its community work a high engagement of Aboriginal and community groups was essential.²⁴ The future success of the organisation will depend on the practical application of the research to housing affordability initiatives in the community.

C. Educational Initiatives

Education brings pride, cultural insight, self-sufficiency and hope to people in all Aboriginal communities. This was the reason that part of the work of the foundation was focused on education and training that targeted Aboriginal people and their specific cultural needs.²⁵

Part of this initiative was aimed at encouraging Aboriginal people to enter post-secondary training and education programs. This was encouraged through funding, such as scholarships, internships and bursaries provided by businesses and educational institutions. Bridges and Foundations: CURA also encouraged education through research, in that it funded graduate work that was related to the project.²⁶

D. Business Endeavours

The businesses involved with Bridges and Foundations: CURA were evidently interested in social policy and social change. This was important for the practical application of the research of the Foundation, and may influence the outcomes of the partnership.

These partners provided a link to the community which should not be overlooked. They had the capacity to provide integral community services. Businesses had the ability to make these services more accessible for Aboriginal people. Such services included development of Aboriginal employment, and educational strategies, and investment possibilities. Those services may impact housing affordability and improve the quality of life for Aboriginal people in Saskatoon. Businesses also made steps toward establishing solid partnerships with Aboriginal organizations.²⁷

E. Website

The intent of the Bridges and Foundations website was to create a public forum for the work of the organization.

The address of the website is www.bridgesandfoundations.usask.ca. The website was set up as a link from the University of Saskatchewan website in February of 2004. The content of the Website included background information, links, completed research, procedural guidelines, and information on conferences.²⁸

III. Inner Workings

The working process and practices of this organisation will be discussed in this section. The means to get involved, the approval process, the communication and reporting guidelines and procedures will be discussed in this section.

1. Analysis

A. Getting Involved

There were several ways to become involved in this project. For students, internships and graduate scholarship opportunities were available. Aboriginal students were targeted in the recruitment process. Community organizations could apply for funding to do research on urban Aboriginal housing, or Aboriginal communities in the area of Saskatoon. Funds were also available for post-secondary institutions in Saskatoon to conduct research on the housing needs of their Aboriginal students. Monies were also available for apprenticeship and training programs in the housing industry. Finally, funding was available to those who were attempting to build cross-cultural partnerships and find solutions for urban Aboriginal housing affordability through the Community Housing and Design program of the Foundation.²⁹ The processes that were used in conducting research strengthened the partnerships that Bridges and Foundations: CURA was attempting to build.

B. Organizational Structures

The Management Committee was the central administrative unit of Bridges and Foundations: CURA. There were three co-directors of the Foundation, Dr. Alan Anderson, Priscilla Settee, and Keith Hanson. Dr. Alan Anderson is the Acting Head of the Department of Sociology at the University of Saskatchewan, he was the Research Co-Director. Priscilla Settee is the Director of the University of Saskatchewan Extension Division's Indigenous People's Program. She was the Aboriginal Co-Director of the Foundation. Keith Hanson is the President of the Sun Ridge Group and the founder of the Affordable New Home Development Foundation. He was the Community Co-Director of Bridges and Foundations: CURA.³⁰ The functions of the Management Committee were numerous. Together they were responsible for the products of the Foundation.

The Planning Circle functioned as a forum for discussion, a source of networking for partners, a tool for partnership building, and a means to communicate and coordinate between organisations. Yet all members simultaneously remained autonomous, answering to the Management Committee only for work relating to the Foundation.

The Project Coordinator, Jacinthe Taylor began working for Bridges and Foundations: CURA when the project was already underway. The Project Coordinator was the link between the members of the Planning Circle and the Management Committee. She took on the responsibilities for the Progress Reports, contracts, meeting minutes, and planning and coordination, and other responsibilities as delegated by the Management Committee.³¹

C. Process of Approval for Funding

To participate in Bridges and Foundations: CURA, proposals for research or work had to be approved by the Management Committee. At least two of the Co-Directors had to approve the project in order for it to be considered for funding. One of whom had to be the Research Coordinator.

The process of approval involved several steps. The first was to submit a letter of intent to the Project Coordinator who could then give the go ahead for the next step. The next step was to draw up a proposal according to the predetermined protocol. Once completed, the proposal was to be submitted to the Management Committee. Thereafter the Committee could approve, deny or request changes to the proposal. This information would be communicated by the Project Coordinator to the interested party. If approved, the Project Coordinator would draw up contracts, which were to be approved by Keith Hanson the Community Co-director, and signed by Dr. Alan Anderson the Research Co-Director.

D. Reporting the Work

Continuous reporting of the working processes of Bridges and Foundations: CURA occurred in the form of regular Progress Reports which were prepared by the Project Coordinator and the Research Co-Director.

The content of the progress reports included an executive summary, an introduction, and synopses of completed initiatives, current initiatives and projects in the development stages. The introductions of the reports summarized the recent work of the Foundation, and the challenges that were overcome. They also reiterated the goals of the initiative. As of May 3, 2004 there were a total of 17 completed initiatives. Documentation of these projects was made available online or through a request to the Project Coordinator or the Research Co-Director. All the Progress Reports included information on the proponents involved, the estimated timelines, titles of the projects, and short synopses of the work. Each of the progress reports were distributed to the Planning Circle members in a timely manner, and suggestions for future reports were welcomed and implemented.³²

2. Lessons and Recommendations

This section examines the functional organisational structures of Bridges and Foundations: CURA, as well as those that presented some obstacles to the workings of the Foundation.

A. Innovative Organisation

Innovative and collaborative management contributed to the success of Bridges and Foundations: CURA. Management was innovative in that it was representative of the primary stakeholders of the initiative. Their different areas of speciality and their extensive backgrounds contributed to the diversity of Bridges and Foundations: CURA. The Management Committee met on a weekly or bi-weekly basis to discuss the progress of all the current projects of the Foundation. The Committee was responsible for the distribution of funding to organisations or individuals who were accepted into the

program. They also evaluated, in discussion with the Planning Circle regarding which proposals would be approved for funding. The functions of the Management Committee were coordinated by the Program Coordinator.

The occurrence of regular meetings among partners was integral to the functioning of the Foundation. Meetings provided the means to communicate progress and collaborate on initiatives. At each meeting the members shared their work and invited criticism and suggestions from other partners. This communication led to the sharing of resources, and created new partnership between interested groups. The Planning Circle was also a means to establish new partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations. The Planning Circle members originally included only the members that were mentioned above. Yet as the work of Bridges and Foundations progressed, it was evident that there were more possibilities for partnership. For example, the Métis affordable housing company CUMFI was invited to sit on the Planning Circle and participate in the project. This type of networking may laid foundations for improved relations among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Saskatoon even after the completion of the initiative.³³

Having trained staff working on the project regularly was in integral element of the work of the Foundation.³⁴ Originally, there was no one person working on Bridges and Foundations: CURA on a consistent basis. The role of the new Project Coordinator was to cement existing partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations, and to do the logistical work for the Foundation.³⁵ Diplomacy played a considerable part of this position. Many of the members of the Foundation have commended the work of Jacinthe Taylor.³⁶ The creation of this position improved the coordination and work of Bridges and Foundations: CURA.

B. Definition and Understanding of Objectives

Clearly defined objectives and methods of operation may have been better established in the beginning stages of the initiative. In general, the aforementioned mandate, and goals and objectives for the Foundation had been established. Yet to an extent, the processes of approval left the development of objectives and expected outcomes of individual projects up to the interested parties.³⁷ The independence of the partners in Bridges and Foundations: CURA was empowering to the member organisations. However, this independence was perceived by some as a lack of guidance, and resulted in uncertainty regarding goals and objectives of the project.³⁸ Consistent consultation and evaluation of the projects may have prevented some of the challenges that arose.³⁹

C. Effective communication

Communication was central to building functional sustainable partnerships in the Foundation. There were different means used in the project to achieve effective communication. Priority was placed on engaging the Aboriginal community in the working process of Bridges and Foundations: CURA. In order to engage the Aboriginal community, clear communication of goals, objectives, and priorities was needed. Means to effective communication included the development of the website, consistent reporting of progress, hiring of the Project Coordinator, consistent review and evaluation of

operations and projects, public forums and conferences, collaborative projects, and regular Planning Circle and Management Committee meetings.⁴⁰

Communication was the basis of Bridges and Foundations: CURA's success. Effective communication provided a basis of conflict resolution within the Foundation.⁴¹ A frank discussion of some issues at the beginning of the initiative may have prevented some discord. As an example of miscommunication, different people had different understandings of the meanings of trust. A discussion of the expectations of the partners among the partners in conjunction with the management and the coordinator may have improved the communication and understanding within the Foundation in its early stages.⁴² Sharing information between groups was important, particularly for those in need of more appropriate housing. Understanding was also needed, and for the most part it was present among the stakeholders of this project.⁴³

D. Volunteer Participation

The management and membership in Bridges and Foundations: CURA was diverse, and it was also volunteer-based. Volunteer participation strengthened this partnership, and increased the capacity of the organisation as a whole, because everyone who was involved wanted to be. However, volunteerism also had its limitations.⁴⁴

Volunteer membership and management of Bridges and Foundations: CURA presented some challenges to the functioning of the organisation. First, volunteer participation implied that there was no obligation to remain involved in the organisation. Although the spirit of volunteerism in any organisation can be beneficial, it was not clear what benefits the participants would receive for the high levels of responsibility they accepted in participating in Bridges and Foundations.⁴⁵ Second, as mentioned above, each of the Co-Directors was an active participant in the community of Saskatoon. As such, their work on the project was not full-time. The message that was portrayed as a result may have been one of a lack of commitment on the part of the management. This may have been prevented with hiring of full or part-time personnel to orchestrate the initiative from the start.

E. Capacity

Some capacity building was needed on the part of a few of the proponents. Capacity imbalances were important because they may have influenced pre-existing power imbalances.⁴⁶

Some preventative measures may have helped to build the capacity of the organisation. For instance, the funding agencies could have provided orientation or training for the management or the members in the initial phases of the Foundation. If provided by SSHRC or CMHC this training may have provided insight into the expectations of the project and respective responsibilities of partners.⁴⁷

The organisational structures and business workings of some of the organisations did not match those of other partners. Partnerships may have suffered because certain groups were able to take on bigger workloads than others, or they may have had more funds and human resources at their disposal. In this respect, effective communication was needed to keep small problems under control.⁴⁸ On the other hand, the organisations with lesser capacities may also have had the opportunity to learn from their more developed partners in working with Bridges and Foundations: CURA.

F. Nature of the Funding

This project may have been influenced by outside the investors, SSHRC or CMHC. This influence was of an indirect nature, since ultimate responsibility for the project lied with the Management Committee. Given that partners may have otherwise been competing for the same pot of gold had they not been partnered in this initiative, competition for resources was part of the underlying nature of the funding. In addition, the short timeline for funding influenced the work that the foundation was able to produce as well as the extent of the partnerships that were established.⁴⁹

IV. Summary of Partnership

1. Analysis

The processes that were involved in building functional sustainable cross-cultural partnership will be discussed in this section. There were advantages and disadvantages to this partnership.

A. Type of Partnership

A partnership can be defined as the shared responsibility for a project. In turn, shared responsibility may lead to shared benefits. What this implied for Bridges and Foundations: CURA will be different for other partnerships and projects.⁵⁰ Partnerships can be categorized based upon the type of partners, the duration of the partnership, the level of formality, and who is responsible for decision making.

Bridges and Foundations: CURA project partners included the voluntary management, stakeholders from the community, the University of Saskatchewan, and other educational institutions and Aboriginal organisations. Those organisations shared the workload and came together in the Planning Circle. Because of the diverse background of each of the members ideas and solutions were found through partnership that may not have otherwise been possible. The Bridges and Foundations: CURA project had a mandate of three years. Yet the intent was for the partnerships to be enduring. The partnership process was generally informal, and the decision making was the responsibility of the Management Committee. This was a mutually beneficial endeavour. This partnership, like any other was unique in that it was cross-cultural and inclusive in nature.

B. Building a Sustainable Partnership

Building functional sustainable partnerships was one of the main objectives of the Foundation. This was a long-term goal accomplished in a series of stages. First, personal relationships were established between members of separate organisations. Second, objectives were established. In order to cement cross-cultural partnerships however, these partnerships needed to endure the turnover of staff. This would have been the next step in building sustainable partnership. However, the amount of time allotted for the project was not sufficient.⁵¹ In terms of applied partnership, joint projects were created, and resources were shared. This created a cooperative environment for all the partners to share in.⁵²

It was also important to reinforce that all the stakeholders were involved because they genuinely cared, not because they wanted money. The members were seeking a better understanding of the roots of the urban Aboriginal housing crisis in Saskatoon. In the end, this partnership initiative did add to the understanding of the issues at hand.

C. Cross-Cultural, Multi-Dimensional Partnership

This partnership was unique in its makeup. Not only was this a community-university partnership, it was also an Aboriginal non-Aboriginal partnership.

Engaging Aboriginal people in the work of Bridges and Foundations: CURA was a central objective of the project. A better understanding of the similarities and differences between partners was gained in this project.⁵³ Public acceptance of any given strategy can have an influence on its outcomes. Similarly this was particularly important for dealing with Aboriginal communities, whose needs are unique. Thus, Aboriginal participation and acceptance was essential. Cultural sensitivity and trust building were just some of the components to building this cross-cultural partnership. For example, holistic perspectives were incorporated into the work of the Foundation.⁵⁴

D. Reciprocal Relations among Partners

The various partners of Bridges and Foundations: CURA gained from the partnership in different ways. Partnerships enabled the Foundation to better serve the affordable housing needs of Aboriginal people as defined by Aboriginal people.

In terms of a community university alliance, this Foundation was successful. The community members of Bridges and Foundations: CURA appreciated the expertise of the academics. It was perceived as a form guidance, which was deemed beneficial for future endeavours as well. In turn, the practical realities in which the community members were well versed provided a learning tool for the academics. Looking at the applications of research in the real world improved the accessibility of the research.⁵⁵ Housing was seen by many of the partners as a means for social change because it is interrelated to health, social, economic and political issues, particularly for Aboriginal people.⁵⁶ The benefit of working together was that the solutions were found that otherwise may not have been possible.

2. Lessons and Recommendations

The following section will enumerate the effective workings of Bridges and Foundations: CURA in terms of the roles of the partners, networking, empowerment, and research.

A. Independent Partners

The partners involved in this organization retained a large amount of their autonomy and independence. This allowed for specialized proponents to define what work was needed, and allowed them the freedom of action to set out to do it in the most effective way. The organizations defined their own goals, objectives and game plans within the encompassing framework of the Foundation.

B. Networking

Several opportunities were available for networking. For example, the process of research implied formal and informal processes which were conducive to building functional sustainable relationships. These culturally supportive relations laid the groundwork for positive future cross-cultural endeavours. The Planning Circle meetings were also a forum for networking, and a means to establish contacts with organisations and individuals outside of Bridges and Foundations: CURA. In addition, the mini-conference provided an opportunity for people to voice their immediate concerns and to discuss ways to resolve them. The wrap-up conference will provide another medium for this type of discourse.⁵⁷ These activities helped to build relationships between proponents. The networking that ensued from Bridges and Foundations: CURA may be an important determinant of the success of the partnerships. Future efforts will be needed to continue the good work that was started here.

C. Organisations Empowering Aboriginal People

In the socio-political realm money, power and values count. Many of the activities of this project were designed to empower Aboriginal people. Concerned Aboriginal organizations were at the forefront of the work. For instance, First Nations were responsible for conducting their own research on their own land and people, and qualified Aboriginal people were actively sought out to do work for the Foundation. Communication between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal organizations was effective and respectful. Lastly, the business, academic and other community partners were all committed to the goal of empowering Aboriginal people and organizations.⁵⁸

It was important to respect the traditional ways and values of the different Aboriginal stakeholders. There was protocol for dealing with Aboriginal people which the partners of Bridges and Foundations: CURA may or may not have been aware of before entering into the project. Active learning and involvement with Aboriginal people was a respectful way toward a cross-cultural partnership.⁵⁹ The Bridges and Foundations: CURA was an ambitious endeavor, and there were setbacks. However, three steps forward and two steps back is after all, still one step forward.⁶⁰

Empowering Aboriginal people and organisations with the resources to achieve their goals was important. The independence of the partners permitted Aboriginal people to define their own goals, and they were thereafter given the resources to achieve them. This was empowering, and if it continues it may lead to improved socioeconomic and socio-political circumstances for Aboriginals.⁶¹

D. Partnership Resulting in Valuable Research

One of the central goals of Bridges and Foundations: CURA was to produce valuable research on appropriate affordable housing for Aboriginal people in Saskatoon. Due to the useful nature of the research initiatives, completed projects were made available to the public, and will remain accessible to interested parties.

Much of the research that was produced was made available on the Bridges and Foundations: CURA website. Some of the completed works included on the website were the Family Friendly Housing Initiatives Report, the Whitecap Survey, the Muskeg Lake Report and Data Analysis, Quint's Final Report, the Romanow Research findings, and Saskatoon and Region Home Builders Association Reports. The completed and ongoing research projects were also summarized in the Progress Reports.⁶² Any information not available on the website was made available through the Project Coordinator or the Research Co-director upon request. Ideally the work that was produced will aid in the development and implementation of more affordable and appropriate housing for Aboriginal people in Saskatoon, and improved cross-cultural relations.

E. Overcoming Barriers of Mistrust

Saskatchewan has been leader in successful partnerships with Aboriginal people, in order to continue that trend more efforts are needed.⁶³

Although consultation and communication took place with Aboriginal organisations, there was still an atmosphere of mistrust. This was evident in that one of the most time consuming processes was diplomacy.⁶⁴ Had a culturally sensitive communication plan or protocol been established in conjunction with other policies and procedures and in collaboration with the partners, these obstacles may have been minimised.⁶⁵

F. Timeline

Finally, this project was approved for a period of three years, this timeline was not sufficient for establishing functional sustainable partnerships. Yet it was enough time to produce valuable research and begin establishing partnerships.

In working with cross-cultural partnerships, a significant amount of time had to be allotted to the diplomacy involved in establishing good working relations with individuals and organisations. Although there may have been enough time to complete research that was only one of the goals of the Foundation. A timeline of five to ten years may have been more appropriate for the nature of the partnerships that Bridges and Foundations: CURA set out to establish.⁶⁶ The timeline has already impacted the future use of the research. Some of the partnerships were not cemented in the community, and awareness about the successful work of the Foundation has only just begun, as a result there has a fear that the products of this project may just sit on a shelf upon its completion.⁶⁷

V. Assessment of Outcomes

The following section will discuss the achieved mission and mandate of Bridges and Foundations: CURA, as well the goals that were reached. It will also discuss the future challenges of the Foundation.

1. Summary of Achievements

This section will provide an assessment of the successes of Bridges and Foundations: CURA in terms of the completed mission and mandate, and suggestions for time remaining.

A. Mission and Mandate Fulfilled

Bridges and Foundations: CURA has produced valuable research on housing affordability for Aboriginal people. The mission of Bridges and Foundations: CURA states

“Building functional sustainable relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations to design and develop culturally supportive communities and quality affordable housing options.”⁶⁸

Bridges and Foundations: CURA has fulfilled this mission. This mission was first accomplished in that the initiatives of the proponents have produced a wealth of resources that may enable future implementation of affordable housing strategies for Aboriginal populations in Saskatoon. Second, this Foundation was successful because it created a desire among the community and Aboriginal members to continue working together. There was important underlying change that occurred in the administrative cultures of the partners.⁶⁹

Bridges and Foundations: CURA has fulfilled its mandate. Through partnership and innovation, the Foundation has developed resources that may improve the quality of life for Aboriginal people in Saskatoon. By bridging together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities along with educational institutions and community members, Bridges and Foundations: CURA has laid the foundation for socioeconomic change through more appropriate affordable housing options for Aboriginal people in Saskatoon.

B. Goals and Objectives Reached

The main objectives of Bridges and Foundations: CURA were reached. First, research was created concerning appropriate, affordable and quality housing for Aboriginal populations in Saskatoon.⁷⁰ Second, the foundations were laid for bridging together communities in Saskatoon. Toward that end, partnerships were commenced among different members of the Foundation. Much was learned about cultural diversity and the implications for partnerships. The involved members of the housing industry may now be more culturally supportive in future endeavors. Third, ways to create more appropriate housing options for Aboriginal people were enumerated in the various reports. Yet a more comprehensive and extensive evaluation is still needed. Fourth, the research and partnerships established through Bridges and Foundations: CURA are engendering

creative thinking and innovation in the housing sector. Comparable research and partnership arrangements for proponents involved in Aboriginal housing have ensued.

2. Suggestions for Time Remaining

A. Future Work and Collaboration

An assessment of how to implement the research into real Affordable housing for Aboriginal people would link the useful findings of this project with practical applications. In order for this to occur, there should be some linkage between similar initiatives. For example, other development strategies could use the work done by Bridges and Foundations: CURA to create better affordable housing for Aboriginal people in Saskatoon. Relations could also be established between investors and Aboriginal communities in order to identify common interests.⁷¹ These improved relations with concerned investors and organisations may lead to improved Housing affordability for Aboriginal people. Alternatively, organisations might consider pooling their resources, whether financial, human or otherwise, into collaborative future partnerships. Therefore, work should continue to be done cooperatively, which in the long run would build the capacity organisations, and possibly improve the quality of life for Aboriginal peoples in Saskatoon.⁷²

B. Further Evaluation of Current Projects

Further evaluation would of the project benefit Bridges and Foundations. The production of a detailed and unbiased professional analysis of the organisation would be advantageous not only the Foundation, but the members, and anyone who may be interested in doing similar work in the future. The funding for this position might be considered by the Management Committee and the Planning Circle. The report should be unbiased, and contracted from outside of the Bridges and Foundations: CURA members and affiliates. The Management Committee and Planning Circle and the person or persons responsible for the evaluation could work together on the desired content of such a project. Lastly, other projects similar to Bridges and Foundations could be considered in this evaluation process. For example, the City of Winnipeg produced a similar review.⁷³ This type of in-depth analysis may assist other proponents in future endeavours to identify key aspects of cross-cultural partnerships, and housing affordability initiatives.

3. Appendices

A. Notes

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