

Top 10 Guiding Principles for Successful Collaborations

British Columbia | Canada 150: Celebrating B.C. Communities and their Contributions to Canada

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In 2017, the Province of British Columbia announced the *British Columbia | Canada 150: Celebrating B.C. Communities and their Contributions to Canada* grant program. The BCMA has been honoured to administer the program on behalf of the Province, with support from Heritage BC. The program invested \$7.6 million dollars in 221 museums,

historic places, galleries, indigenous communities and archives located all around our province. The program has had a great impact for our sector – not only for the injection of funds, but also for the lasting legacies – including solid collaborations – it has enabled.

In preparation for this issue of Roundup, a variety of BC | Canada 150 grant recipients were asked to

share their advice and guiding principles of collaboration.

Below is a list of the Top 10 Guiding Principles for creating powerful and lasting collaborations for your organization.

Top 10 Guiding Principles for Successful Collaborations

1. Be opportunistic and pitch an idea at someone even if it is no more than a nugget of an idea. The best collaborations have grown out of a “can I share an idea with you?” conversation.
2. Acknowledge that there are different ways of working. Be open to creating space within your work to accommodate different ways of being, working and knowing.
3. Do the groundwork to build relationships before you seek to collaborate. True collaboration comes at the end of a long dance.... that begins with an introduction.



Above: BC | Canada 150 grant recipient, Northern Trails Historical Society, brought together Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists and other community groups to produce this very creative, collaborative public art sculpture.
Photo credit: Anissa Paulsen



Above: Unveiling of “Emergence” public art sculpture in front of the Dawson Creek Art Gallery, August 2017. Photo credit: Anissa Paulsen

4. Communication: Make sure to communicate with everyone involved in the project openly and honestly throughout the process. Ideally this communication starts well before the grant is submitted, to make sure that your collaborators want to collaborate, and in what capacity. Keeping communication going throughout the process is time-consuming, but absolutely necessary to make sure that everyone is moving forward together, is informed, and has many opportunities for questions and feedback.

5. Have an open mind: The greatest internal challenge can be making decisions based on pre-supposed assumptions. Team members must be careful not to shut down or refuse to communicate openly with other

collaborators. Decisions should be made openly and collaboratively and should not be based on how one *thinks* other collaborators will respond or react. Approach collaboration with an open mind, and a willingness to just ask.

6. Make the process as inclusive as possible: “Check your egos at the door!”

7. Don’t be afraid to look at other organizations in other sectors for collaborative opportunities. Find out what other organizations are doing and offering in your community. Then you can come together with a common focus and interest upon which to build your own unique project.

8. Collaborators might not have the same reasons for participating in a project. It is good to understand why your collaborators want to be involved and what they want to get out of it. In these cases, for a project to be a success, it is not enough for it to be successful only to your organization - your collaborators must also have their goals and expectations met.

9. Good collaboration should leave a tangible legacy with the community that participates; diversity and inclusion are cornerstones of all interaction, participation and outreach.

10. Build in time – lots of time – for collaborative projects. When you think you have built in enough time, build in more. Building relationships for successful collaborations takes a lot of patience and time, but in the end, it is definitely worthwhile.

We realize this list is just a start, so please feel free to get in touch with us and share your advice on this important topic. Email grants@museums.bc.ca.

A special “Thank you” to the BC / Canada 150 grant recipients who contributed to this list (and congratulations on completing your important projects!)