

Report on the DwD workshop of June 12, 2013, at OCAD University



Background

This workshop was an opportunity to share with interested participants a process of community and stakeholder engagement and to use it to explore ideas around community engagement and the PanAm games. The participants are all members of Design with Dialogue – a group that meets monthly to discuss social change through dialogue. All members are senior practitioners in engagement methods. To learn more about DwD please visit: www.designwithdialogue.com

The process used at this session is called *smartTalk* – a copy of the workshop discussion guide is attached to this report.

The participants were senior practitioners in social engineering, social marketing and community engagement. They were diverse in their views and enthusiastic about the subject.

Key Question for the Group

How can citizen engagement enhance the value of the PanAm games to the community?

Supplementary Questions

What will be the most significant impact of the games?

What will be the legacy value of the facilities?

How can we create deep economic impact?

How can arts and cultural communities be involved and benefit?

Note this conversation represents top-of-mind thinking among a group of 'engaged' citizens. Time did not permit testing of the ideas to any depth.*

Executive Summary

The workshop held on June 12 at OCAD had two objectives; one was to introduce a group of civically engaged people to a type of consultation and the other to use the opportunity to discuss the community engagement opportunities inherent in the coming PanAm games.

The responses were overwhelmingly about creating a groundswell of public excitement and activity in support of the games and, as an offshoot, excitement and pride in the diverse communities in which the games are being held – both in the municipal and the ethnic/social sense of community.

Many of the suggestions rely on community initiative and would likely have to be coordinated by existing community organizations. However, there was a strong desire to see a broadly inclusive response from individuals and neighbourhoods – using the games as a springboard to build community spirit and connection. No one should be left behind.

They see the games as an opportunity to celebrate their communities – large and small – and open them up to visitors. There was almost a sense that our diversity, while a strength, can create barriers and that communities need to be more public spirited, more courteous, more welcoming and lovelier. The PanAm games might well be the reason to act.

The group's suggestions implied the requirement of fairly strong support and recognition from the games committee. Specifically, they expect to see organizational and promotional materials to help communities create events and potentially some financial support.

There is also the expectation that there will be a major promotional effort that will include traditional broadband media (TV, Radio, newspaper) as well as new media (branded blogs, Facebook page, and Twitter accounts that would also be accessible for citizen postings).

In addition, there should be a strong, almost spontaneous street presence – pop up stores and galleries, etc. that is not hampered by over-regulation.

They would like to see the PanAM communities saturated with information – particularly about what is going on, where and when so that anyone can be a potential ambassador. The information sharing should start well in advance of the games.

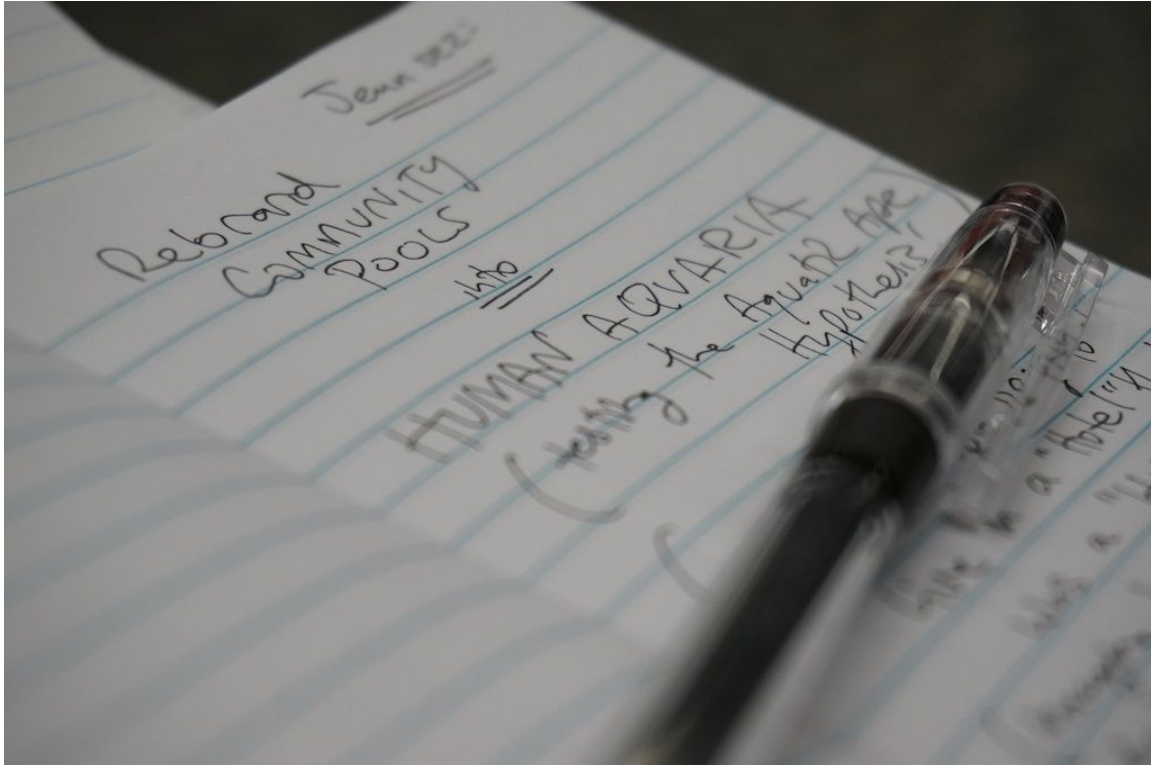
They would like to see lots of community dialogue that reaches the games' organizers and helps to knit the games and the communities in a single expression of pride and enthusiasm. They see communities as repositories of resources, knowledge and energy that should be harnessed.

The influx of athletes from all over the Americas struck the group as an opportunity to engage people in physical activity by having the athletes as special guests at community events.

There was so much more that could have been said. The next step in this conversation would be to finalize a set of tested recommendations and suggest responsibilities and timing. This conversation could be the start of an ongoing series of conversations hosted by facilitators who are members of DwD.

We offer our support to the PanAm games and look forward to a response to this report.





Verbatim Notes

Offer students free or low cost tickets to the games.

Invite athletes to conduct youth workshops at the villages or in communities.

Feature local artists and photographers doing work on sports themes – in temporary exhibit space at or near the venues.

The games should buy local services and supplies.

There should be greater diversity in the games' spending – to include minority owned businesses and non-profits.

Locals can be engaged to offer directions to visitors (particularly during rush hours).

Suggest other places for tourist to visit such at the AGO and Kensington market.

Citizens must put a positive face on Toronto (don't complain about the Mayor).

Citizens need to know up front where all the venues are and the wayfinding.

Be prepared for safety and security issues.

Showcase our diversity and diverse neighbourhoods.

Leverage the learning and teaching opportunities of having the athletes here.

Redeploy the resources/facilities after the games.

Address current budget overruns and poor financial reporting.

Engage the whole community in becoming more physically active before/during and after the games.

Hold a lottery for tickets.

Hold community-level dialogues about how to participate.

Engage schools and students.

Promote local tourism attractions.

Have volunteer hosts to share community information and stories – they could be identified by a button.

Reignite the “Caravan” idea to bring people to diverse neighbourhoods.

Use the games as a catalyst for community aspirations – building and promoting them – to inspire community activity.

Communities could promote their histories and assets from an aspirational perspective.

Make this a national event of interest.

Engage local communities in discussions about the design of facilities and uses following the games – this is a way to build bridges between the games and communities.

Promote the spirit of “ambassadorship” among local people.

Use the “Participation” idea to get youth and schools involved in physical activity.

Encourage neighbourhood beautification and safety.

Plan for high volume pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

Have themed neighbourhood-based potluck meals.

Bring “dreaming” back to neighbourhoods – encourage the celebration of diversity, achievements and big thinking – act as a catalyst to neighbourhood transformations.

Have the community “own” the facilities (in the sense of having good access to) after the games.

People should organize street exhibits about history or culture ...

Use citizen engagement to amplify the creation of shared stories about the games.

Suggested citizen engagement approaches:

- No media blackouts
- Open source media coverage
- Citizen journalists (and a single blog or web page for entries)
- Encourage a citizen-led kickstarter in local communities – with matching funds from the games organization
- Hold citizen dialogues before, during and after the games.
- Hire local people

Themes

The group reviewed their initial contributions and grouped them into the following sets:

Neighbourhood beautification

Ambassadorship

Arts and culture

Public education

Local economy

Community dialogue

Physical activity

Safety and Security

Recommendations

Several ideas emerged in discussion. However, time did not permit us to test these very thoroughly. They are offered as general direction only.

- 1) Launch a public “Be Nice” campaign. “Be Nice” is not a suggested campaign slogan but it expresses the overall interest of the group in a campaign that engages everyone in being good hosts to the visitors to the games. Use broadcast and online media – TV, radio, Facebook, Twitter, bus shelters, subways, etc.
- 2) Create an online location for “citizen” journalists – a non-paid journalistic force of bloggers and photographers.
- 3) As part of the campaign small businesses and restaurants should be encouraged to have an open-door policy re: washrooms, the provision of water bottles...
- 4) Map diversity – produce a games map that locates the venues and also the communities of Toronto (i.e., Little Italy, Greektown, etc.)
- 5) Incent community-organized events that involve: food, entertainment, sporting events and community pride. Some people supported the idea of a mini-PanAm games hosted in neighbourhoods for local amateur athletes.
- 6) A official PanAm games song - launch a contest that is open to everyone. Video performances of the winning song - by ethnic and social communities - for use at the opening of the games and for broadcast and online advertising. Don't limit the contest to established artists.
- 7) Brand the PanAM games and produce a kit and promotional materials for community use.
- 8) Allow community events to use the Pan Am brand.
- 9) Link the games to existing community activities.
- 10) Seek volunteers to be trained as games Ambassadors. They could wear a button that says something like – “Ask Me” or “I’m Your Host” or “Welcome” with the PanAm brand. Their job would be to provide information on the game schedule, how to get to events, direct people to interesting things to do in the communities. They would become the face of the games – courteous, helpful, interested hosts.

- 11) The PanAM committee should work with communities to enable greater flexibility in regulations so that lots of street activities and foods could be enabled.
- 12) Host theme days in the athletes' villages – bringing diverse communities to the villages to provide their food, history, activities etc.
- 13) Launch a community-involved pop up, mobile market. This is envisioned as a touring market although it could also be a set of markets that covered all PanAm communities. The markets would demonstrate the diversity of our communities – offering food, drink, entertainment, goods for sale and PanAm promotional items.
- 14) The markets could be the location of a branded shuttle bus service to the games.
- 15) Use the waterfront. Hire local boat owners to provide water taxi services to different venues (Luminato rented ferries).
- 16) Design and sell passports to the games. The passports could offer tickets to events and neighbourhood events, provide a map and schedule.
- 17) Link with existing events like: Foodstock, Woofstock ...
- 18) Provide marketing materials and idea kits to BIA's, churches, schools, social organizations etc.
- 19) Consider crowd sourcing to draw attention to specific events/activities – for instance, there could be a crowd sourced to sing the winning PanAm anthem. This could be part of the opening ceremonies.
- 20) Sponsor an essay contest - open to students and neighbourhoods about why they love their community. Post exceptional entries online. Invite winners to read their submissions at an event (like the opening ceremonies).

