



# *Making a Difference:*

Tools and Strategies for Canadian Philanthropy  
in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**Report on the Inaugural PFC Conference**  
November 14-15, 2005





## PREFACE

Philanthropic Foundations Canada was pleased to welcome nearly 200 Canadian foundation leaders to Toronto for our inaugural conference on November 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

The gathering was an opportunity to exchange ideas and expand horizons with listening and active dialogue. Three plenaries and fourteen workshops, both practical and philosophical in content, addressed the conference theme — “Making a Difference: Tools and Strategies for Canadian Philanthropy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” It was enormously gratifying to witness the excitement generated by this gathering of people actively and indeed often passionately engaged in philanthropy.

Some comments we received:

- “This first conference was excellent. The quality of speeches, as well as the learning and networking opportunities were much appreciated.”
- “The conference was very good value! Informative, good speakers, interesting seminars and good networking opportunities.”
- “Congratulations, this was really excellent - full of energy, new people, new ideas, fun.”
- “Fabulous meeting. Practical and inspirational. Really got me recommitted.”

This report aims to capture the spirit of dialogue that arose over the day and a half of meetings, and to

convey some of the themes upon which the sessions often converged. As such, it is intended to be a document that will serve both as a record and as a point of departure for discussions and dialogue within foundations as they move forward with their philanthropic work. While not a complete account of all that took place at the conference, this report is intended to add further value to the experience for those who attended, and to give a taste of what went on to those who were not able to be there (Appendix 1 lists the full conference program, and names of all moderators and presenters).

We are committed to providing further opportunities for learning and exchange among Canadian foundations and we will look forward to welcoming all to our next conference, to be held in 2007.



**Peter Warrian**  
Chair, Board of Directors  
Philanthropic Foundations Canada  
January 2006

## THE CHALLENGES OF LEADERSHIP FOR FOUNDATIONS

When you think about foundation leadership, think of *all* of your valuable assets — not just money. This was the rallying call from Mark Kramer, Co-Founder and Managing Director of the Foundation Strategy Group and Founder of the Center for Effective Philanthropy in Boston. Kramer was the opening speaker of the first plenary panel, which collectively addressed the conference theme of “making a difference” through leadership.

Kramer set the stage by noting that foundation resources are small by any standard, especially given the scale of the problems foundations try to address. “I would suggest that none of us in this room, regardless of asset size, has the resources to bring about the change we want simply by paying for it.”

In contrast, Kramer pointed out the non-monetary assets of foundations: “Foundations have stature in their community. They have access to the media. They have access to politicians. They have access, really, to any constituency that they would like to reach. They are also uniquely insulated from external forces and external pressures. And foundations have a long time horizon,” he added. “They are typically set up to last for generations, and can think about addressing problems over a long period of time.”

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***“It is very hard to exert leadership if you don’t want to impose your agenda. And it is very hard to exert leadership if you are simply responding to requests that come in.”***

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The difficulty lies, Kramer said, in determining how to deploy these non-monetary assets. “Some foundations like to develop a strategy and an approach, a solution to a problem that they are going to go after. Others think that it is wrong to impose your own agenda on the community, and that the better way to work is to wait for requests to come in.

Quoting from the article “Leading Boldly,” co-authored with Ronald Heifetz and John Kania, (*Stanford Social*



*Innovation Review*, winter 2004-05) Kramer offered a new lens for leadership — focusing on the difference between authority and leadership. While a military commander and a CEO of a company have formal authority, he said, some of the greatest leaders, such as Martin Luther King and Gandhi, had no formal authority. “They weren’t in charge of anything,” said Kramer. “And yet, they managed to be highly effective leaders.”

“If you take this concept and apply it to foundations, you see that foundations have authority over their grantees,” said Kramer. “We can tell them what we expect of them, and if they don’t do it we don’t have to fund them anymore. But to be really effective as a leader, we need to think about how we can exert leadership where we don’t have authority, moving beyond grantees.”

### **Leaders: Heroes or Partners**

The second speaker challenged the notion of leadership itself. “I think we have an infatuation with leadership or with a certain style of leadership,” said Alan Broadbent, Chair of the Maytree Foundation of Toronto. “We celebrate it in almost ecstatic terms. Corporate CEO’s of a certain type, Prime Ministers and Premiers and Presidents make the news. Our other infatuation is with ‘heroes,’ and it seems the highest accolade is to be called a hero. In fact, we’ve conflated those two things to think of leadership mostly in heroic terms. I tend to side with the thought Berthold Brecht put in the mouth of Galileo in his play *The Life of Galileo*: ‘Unhappy is the land that needs heroes.’”



## THE CHALLENGES OF LEADERSHIP FOR FOUNDATIONS



Broadbent described his own experiences with many kinds of leadership. “I’ve seen the vocal, rah-rah style. I’ve seen leadership by example — the silent performer who worked harder and better than others. I’ve seen the pat on the back and the kick in the pants. I’ve seen leaders who marshaled everything for the moment, and leaders who’ve seen the bigger picture and

the longer rhythms and marshaled everything toward a future moment. I’ve seen loved leaders and feared leaders, and even the odd loathed leader. And I’ve often seen one person exercise several different styles, as situations demanded.”

He noted that foundations don’t take well to the leadership of others. “I don’t know if it is the almost complete lack of accountability we enjoy, or a lingering sense of ownership of the capital, or just a finely honed opinion of our own judgment, but we don’t collaborate very well in the sector, and we don’t tend to follow leads.”

“We need to look at our work through the lens of community needs, and do what it takes to meet those needs,” Broadbent said. “We know that none of us has enough money to do the big jobs that need to be done and that we need to collaborate both to increase our impact, and to influence public policy and public action, the biggest levers available in society.”

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***“Going it alone really doesn’t work that well, as heroic as it may feel from time to time. At the end of the day, it won’t matter who led, or how they did it. It will only matter that it worked.”***

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### **Adaptive Leaders: Tolerating Uncertainty**

Speaking of leadership in action, Mark Kramer drew an important distinction between technical problems and what he called adaptive challenges. The kind of leadership that is required in his view depends on the kind of problem addressed. “Technical problems are well defined,” said Kramer. “We usually know the answer, we know how to implement it. And someone with authority can make that solution happen. For example, building hospitals is a technical solution to the problem of not having enough healthcare facilities and treatments.”

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***“With adaptive leadership, you stay in an area of ‘productive distress’ for a protracted period. But unless you persist in producing and maintaining this type of distress, you won’t be able to solve an adaptive challenge ...”***

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“Adaptive challenges are very complex and nobody knows the answers,” said Kramer. “There is not a single authority we can go to out there to get the answers. More than that, there is nobody who could impose the answer even if we knew how... So adaptive challenges require the participants, the stakeholders, to create and figure out the solution for themselves. And the role of the leader in this case is not to know the answer and make it happen, but to lead people in such a way that they figure out the solution for themselves.”

He acknowledged that foundations are not used to working this way. “We are used to getting a report at the end of the year that says we spent the money, this was the outcome, and it’s over and done with.” Foundations who want to be adaptive leaders will need to be comfortable tackling issues without knowing the solutions, cost or timeframe in advance, and must be patient and realistic in their expectations of outcomes.

The third panel speaker, Allan Gottlieb, Chair of the Donner Canadian Foundation of Toronto, noted that the tradition of charitable giving in Canada makes adaptive leadership a style that foundations are perhaps more reluctant to develop. “In Canada, there’s still a strong connection to the Elizabethan and common law formulations of charity as the relief of poverty, the advancement of education, the advancement of religion, and other purposes beneficial to the community,” said Gottlieb. “Foundation grants for academic scholarships, hospital equipment, and church buildings, for example, fit this definition. The idea of foundations acting as agents of social change can be a delicate proposition in light of this traditional conception of charity. Canada Revenue Agency’s restrictions on charities using no more than 10% of their resources on ‘political activities’ further limit foundations’ flexibility to be change agents.”

Gottlieb described the Donner Canadian Foundation’s resolution of this dilemma. Its typical funding strategy has been to fund the creation of new policy institutes and centres, often in a university setting. “In the last 10 years,” said Gottlieb, “I think some of the Foundation’s most successful grants have been the provision of seed funding for think tanks devoted to improving public policy, such as the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies in Halifax, the Montreal Economic Institute in Montreal, and the Frontier Centre for Public Policy in Winnipeg. These grants arose out of a feeling that fresh ideas were needed in Canada’s public policy debate and out of a sense that small, flexible, and independent organizations could produce and popularize new ideas in a cost-effective manner.”

“One of the specific areas where I think the Foundation has been particularly influential in recent years,” said Gottlieb, “has been the examination and strengthening of Canada-U.S. relations. I suppose the Foundation’s approach might fit within Mark Kramer’s definition of adaptive leadership in that the Foundation hasn’t presumed to ‘know the answer and bear the full

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***“Relatively speaking, you have so little to lose. If you folk are so cautious, where will the risk-taking come from? You have to be out front, on the edge, with your nerves exposed, afraid you are going to fall off the limb. If you’re not there, you are not doing as much as you could be doing for this country.”***

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responsibility for problem solving.’ We have instead funded projects that produce new ideas and bring stakeholders together to grapple with political, cultural, and historical impediments to a more productive relationship with our neighbour to the south.”

### **High Expectations for Foundation Leadership**

Further encouragement for pushing the boundaries of foundation leadership — and the urgency of doing so — came in the eloquent closing address by Dr. Janice Stein, Belzberg Professor of Conflict Management and Negotiation at the University of Toronto, and Director of the Munk Centre for International Studies. In her remarks, Stein expressed what she called her “unreasonably high expectations” for foundations.

Stein noted the key policy challenges facing Canada in the next few decades, including urban transformation and immigrant integration. She urged foundations to invest more imaginatively in their communities. And she delivered pointed but constructive criticism in articulating her frustrations with foundation leadership in Canada.

“Trust yourselves a little bit,” she said. “Trust your judgment. You know this country. You know your community. But you are wrapping yourselves up in measurement like Gulliver. You are investing resources in project development and project monitoring and project evaluation, and it’s stifling your creativity. When did you last get up in the morning and say, ‘I’ve got a great idea and I’m going to persuade my board to do it.’? You need one day like that a year.”

According to Stein, a good litmus test for whether a foundation is leading boldly is to ask: “What smart failures did we have this year?” “If you tell me none,” said Stein, “you are not where you should be.” A smart failure, she said, is a risky project in which the risks are understood and the foundation decides to proceed regardless — the risks are reasonable. “When it fails — not if it fails, but when it fails — then you do an analysis to find out what can be learned from the failure, how much is controllable, what can be changed? Great failures,” Stein concluded, “define a great foundation.”





## SETTING YOUR DIRECTION



In the workshop on “Foundation Leadership and Social Change,” the two presenters, Dr. Joy Calkin, President of the Muttart Foundation of Edmonton, and Patrick Johnston, President and CEO of the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation of Toronto, drew upon their foundations’ leadership experience in

discussing how foundations can effect the changes they want to see in the world.

Calkin described some innovative Muttart initiatives to increase the leadership capacity of charities, such as the Muttart Fellowships, which provide a sabbatical year of renewal to senior managers of social service charities. She emphasized the Muttart Foundation’s commitment to being a learning organization. “Inward changes are as interesting as outward ones,” she said, speaking about the way in which foundation leaders, specifically board members, can be brought to think and act in a new leadership style. She outlined two ways in which the Muttart board members started changing their behavior. As she said, “Train the brain. You can choose to define anything as technical; you can choose to define anything as adaptive. Social change is unlikely to occur if the board isn’t thinking along the lines of change.” Calkin herself endeavours to think about both strategies and solutions not by simplifying issues but by enhancing complexity. “I learn as much as I can, I push the boundaries as far as I can,” she said.

Johnston enumerated several ways in which foundation leadership can have an impact on public policy — an explicit

mandate of the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation. First, practice niche philanthropy if you can. “Choose upstream issues that are not yet on the public policy agenda and get them on it,” said Johnston. As an example, he pointed to his foundation’s Fresh Water Resources Protection Programme. Five years ago, he said, it was counter intuitive that fresh water availability and the protection of the resource should be an issue at all in North America. But today it is on the radar screen of looming environmental concerns.

Second, he said, balance reactive and proactive grantmaking. “This is a false dichotomy....It doesn’t have to be one or the other. Make it a hybrid — interactive granting.” He urged the importance of directing dialogue and debate by posing questions, not imposing answers. “As a foundation we are agnostic. We ensure a fulsome debate on the pros and cons of the issue. Our interest is in supporting the pursuit of answers and solutions, not imposing those answers and solutions.” He suggested that a foundation as a rule should neither seek nor shun public profile, though a foundation is at liberty to leverage its name and expertise to draw attention to an issue.

Mark Kramer, also a panelist at this workshop, concluded by emphasizing that not every foundation venture need be approached with the same strategy. “It is a mistake to have too broad a strategy,” he said. “What matters is to be clear.”



## FOUNDATIONS AND THE MAKING OF PUBLIC POLICY

Ratna Omidvar, Executive Director of the Maytree Foundation of Toronto, was a panelist during the workshop “Behind the Scenes or on the Stage? Foundations and the Making of Public Policy.” Picking up on Mark Kramer’s plenary remarks, she declared: “We are in a constant state of productive distress.” Productivity amid the distress, she said, depends on being very clear and focused. Maytree focuses on policy work with and for immigrants and refugees. “Focus is our friend,” she said. “The more we focus the more returns we get... You have to do the work, you have to go deep. There is nothing superficial about policy work.”



This focus on public policy, she said, means that Maytree can leave a larger footprint than the size of its resources. “We apply a public policy lens to all our work. Practically, this means that every strategy, every approach, every grant is viewed through that lens.”

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***“Small is not a problem. Being small makes us hungry for results. Partnerships — with captains of corporations and government alike — are the key. You can’t do policy work alone.”***

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Dr. Roch Bernier, the Executive Director of the largest foundation in Canada, the Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon, explained how the Foundation also mobilizes public policy in order to accomplish its mandate for the prevention of poverty and disease primarily among children and their parents in Quebec. The mandate is made even more pressing, according to Bernier, because the benefactors want and expect to see results in their lifetimes. In this sense, Bernier said, a commitment to public policy change has in some instances been difficult for André Chagnon. “Action is very important to him,” said Bernier. “He doesn’t like talking about public policy because this is too far away from the daily reality. We have clear direction from him: ‘Do something. Do something everyday. Do something new everyday.’”

To maximize its impact, the Chagnon Foundation avoids acting as a substitute for state resources. It does not want the government to withdraw funding in response to its sizeable investments. So the foundation has secured a 50-50 partnership with the government on major programs. “From the start the vision involved the development of public policy. We had to work, if not hand in hand, at least in coordination with the government in order to transform society,” said Bernier.

It has not been easy to work with the juggernaut of government, Bernier said, especially in convincing it to translate successful partner projects into ongoing policy. “We are here for the long-term, and we want government to be a partner with us...If you want to have a sustained impact on an important issue, you must be able to act with and on the government.”





## THE POWER OF SMALL FOUNDATIONS

Martha Shuttleworth, granddaughter of businessman and philanthropist Richard Green Ivey, considered her options long and hard before establishing her own foundation — the Neptis Foundation, “neptis” being the Latin word meaning “granddaughter.” Shuttleworth first explored the possibility of setting up a foundation in 1988, but it took her 8 years to decide upon her mission — a commitment to city regions, their built environments, their change and growth. “I was slow to act because it was very important for me that I seek out an area that would hold my interest and I wanted to make the most out of this opportunity,” said Shuttleworth, a panel member for the workshop on the theme, “Bigger Than You Think: The Power of Small Foundations.” With her fellow panelists Mary Rozsa de Coquet from the Rozsa Foundation of Calgary, and Helen and Aviva Zukerman from the Zuckerman Family Foundation of Toronto, Shuttleworth gave evidence of how small foundations have been able to make a difference in their communities.

Having found her focus, Shuttleworth decided that Neptis would conduct research — timely, reliable, non-partisan research — with the aim of informing public discourse. “The word ‘research’,” she said, “is like a button that immediately induces boredom. But what if we use, instead, the words ‘information for action’? What if the activity is that of providing new knowledge and perspectives that can galvanize action, change perceptions, and even change governmental approaches? What if research, in revealing some of the essential dynamics of a complex system, in Neptis’ case the urban region, helped target new areas of policy making?”

Neptis takes a very deliberate approach, funding research not in support of a preexisting idea or ideology but rather research that fills voids.

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***“Simply put, our aim is to present the facts so that we can see what is, in ways that haven’t been seen before.”***

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“We are dealing with increasingly complex situations” said Shuttleworth. “We measure things. Here are the facts. Here are the consequences. We can show scenarios — the ones that work, the ones that don’t work. By simply giving people the facts without the pressure tactics, without the shame and blame, we give people the space to hear.”

Straight up facts in a world that is full of endless spin can be unusual.”

The foundation has funded 25 major studies on the Toronto Metropolitan region. “Their effectiveness and influence is difficult to judge,” said Shuttleworth, “because it is indirect, rather than direct. I believe, however, that they have become part of the knowledge base on urban regional development. The reports are used in university courses and are widely read by government staffs and legislators, and by the public through media coverage. We think they have contributed to the current round of provincial measures, for ‘smart growth’ regional management.”

“If you are a small foundation, and if you want to take a run at having a big impact, you might consider making information your tool. I believe that with information, the potential is there to make a difference.”

The other two panelists had contrasting stories to tell. The Zukerman Family Foundation, administered by Helen and Aviva Zukerman, has made its impact with many small grants. In 2002, it awarded \$450,000 to 38 different organizations. Established in 1986, in honour of Barry Zukerman, a successful member of the Canadian financial community, the inaugural project saw the creation of the Barry Zuckerman Investment Fund at McGill University. Subsequent projects include the Barry Zukerman Amphitheatre at Earl Bales Park, the founding of the Toronto Jewish Film Festival, Kolel: The Adult Center of Liberal Jewish Learning, Women’s and Children’s V.O.I.C.E., Canine Companions for Independence, and the Canadian Women’s Foundation.

Mary Rozsa de Coquet also spoke about not being limited by asset size in making an impact. The Foundation uses an online granting procedure, and keeps an eye out for multi-goal programs. Its approach is collaborative in many ways. “We share connections and knowledge,” said Rozsa de Coquet. “We share profile, we share opportunities, we share our voice, and we share our good fortune.” Through a number of programs and awards centred on the arts, the Rozsa Foundation effectively makes its mark in concert with its mandate: “Invest in strength, rather than respond to need.”



## LOOKING OUT FOR THE FUTURE OF PHILANTHROPY

How will global trends and influences mold Canadian philanthropy in the decades to come? What are the major “what ifs” that foundations will have to address? These important questions proved substantial fodder for debate during the workshop on “Looking Out for the Future of Philanthropy.”

Joe Breiteneicher, CEO of The Philanthropic Initiative of Boston, emailed 50 colleagues from Mexico, Brazil, Russia, the UK, Australia, Canada, and the U.S. and asked them: “What are the serious challenges that are driving issues in the world? What are you worrying about?”

First and foremost, they replied, was the issue of poverty: the growing gap between rich and poor; and the implications for social justice. Threats to the global environment, and managing global flows of people were second and third on the list.

Breiteneicher also asked: ‘What are the forces that may not be on the radar screen today but that organized philanthropy cannot ignore?’ What he heard in response was concern that organized philanthropy might “lose the franchise” awarded by government. “Governments may well choose, in the next 10 to 15 years, to either revise or revoke our terms of engagement,” he said. “There is a profound sense that philanthropy is not making a case for itself effectively enough, either because of a lack of accountability or transparency.”

His third question was, ‘Then what? If the world is seriously in danger, and philanthropy ought to be engaged, then what are the qualities that would stand philanthropic leadership in good stead for the next 10 to 15 years?’

The answer from colleagues was, “No timidity.” “We have to understand that risk-taking is a crucial factor in the business of philanthropy,” said Breiteneicher. “You’re not playing with the house’s money if you are taking informed risks...”



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***“Philanthropy done right is more art, more entrepreneurial behavior than science. It is grounded in knowledge, obviously. But it is about the entrepreneurial spirit.”***

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Breiteneicher argued that philanthropy has to stop being fearful of collaboration —not necessarily pooling money, but pooling knowledge, intellectual resources, and skills. “The collaborative impulse,” he said, “has to be a key element of going forward.” And, he concluded, “Leadership, to have standing, to have merit, has to have a strong sense of social justice.”

David Pecaut, Senior Partner in the Boston Consulting Group, took the argument further by addressing the potential of philanthropy to catalyze and convene civil society. “All around the world civil society is having a more difficult time coping with social and economic issues,” said Pecaut. “I think there are some fundamental reasons for that. The first is that most difficult issues have complex root causes that cross many boundaries. So profound solutions, around the environment and around poverty, require various parties to come together to find solutions, much more so than 50 or 60 years ago.”

Peter Warran, Managing Director of The Lupina Foundation of Toronto, highlighted the trend towards shifting the burden of funding responsibility. Over the last 20 years, he said, the road map has been turned upside down in terms of the role of government and the role of foundations, between core funding and project funding. “Twenty years ago consensus was that foundations funded innovative pilot projects, and if they had some traction they would get taken up by governments over time,” said Warran. “But now somebody has inverted the map. Government agrees to do the project, and then the community agency has to find funding, which means foundations are increasingly pressed for core funding. This is just not a viable proposition.”



## LOOKING OUT FOR THE FUTURE OF PHILANTHROPY

Both Pecaut and Warrian pointed to various forms of collaborations as a future trend. “I think affinity groups are going to increase in importance” said Warrian. “We must organize our voices to deliver a consistent, effective, and strategic message. A consortium between foundations will be an increasing part of the future.”

Pecaut talked about “the notion of convening social society in a way that brings all partners to the table. This means taking a fairly well-defined problem and looking around to determine who in society can contribute to that, who has to be at the table in order to come up with a solution? There needs to be a heterogeneous leadership group that has a strong commitment to solving that problem.” The process creates a common fact base, which facilitates the elimination of prejudice, and then devises a plan of action and a commitment to follow through.

“I think scale is the most singularly difficult problem facing the issue of poverty and social innovation — how do we get pattern change? The world has changed in some ways in which this convening, catalyzing force is necessary,” Pecaut concluded. “There is something very special about the neutrality of these efforts and the way they can bring all parties to the table. But it requires funding — all these things do. It also requires a lot of talented people.”

Breiteneicher closed the workshop by stating: “Issues don’t know boundaries. And the key commodity [for foundations] is not money but knowledge”. He and his fellow panelists agreed that “Knowledge transfer through collaboration and convening may be one of the most important contributions that foundations will make to the future global community.”

### SOCIAL INNOVATORS : MAKING SOCIAL CHANGE



“Philanthropy is really the innovation capital of society,” said David Bornstein, the keynote dinner speaker, closing the first day of the conference. “Business entrepreneurs have angel investors, they have a whole set of financial services. But social entrepreneurs have to rely on philanthropy, particularly family philanthropy, which has always been the most agile form of innovative capital for new ideas.”

Bornstein is the author of a book on global social entrepreneurs, *How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New*

*Ideas*. Describing the behaviour of social entrepreneurs, Bornstein said, “For social change to happen, you need a mono-maniac with a mission. Somebody starts building a computer in their garage, and thirty years later everybody has a computer on their desk. This is the same entrepreneurial process.”

The fulcrum of this process, as Bornstein identified it, is “failing forward,” or flipping failure into success. “The real world tells you this is a bad idea, you are wrong, your assumptions are

wrong. But then you take this information and you adjust. You try it again, and a little bit larger. Then you make more mistakes. And you try it yet again. Through this iterative process of continual experimentation and adaptation, you develop a system that works on a broader scale. This is the process by which all successful companies grow.”

“The factor that drives the system forward,” said Bornstein, “is boldness of thinking, deep caring for excellence, and focusing on impact — making sure the results are what we want...All change begins with belief,” he said. “Belief that change is possible.”



## SUSTAINING SOCIAL INNOVATION

Social innovation was further debated during the workshop on “Where Do Social Innovators Go Next? Sustaining Social Innovation in Communities.” Andres Dussan, the Executive Director of Ashoka Canada, illustrated the approach of many social innovators by using the image of the artichoke and its many layers. The symptoms of a social problem can be likened to the outer leaves of the artichoke. If you peel away these leaves, you find the next level, the apparent problem. Looking deeper yet, to the next layer, you may find multiple causes of the problem. “Social innovators go one layer deeper,” said Dussan. “They get to the heart of the artichoke, what is at the centre of these causes.” This is where they do their innovative work.

As important as it is to support this type of innovation, Dussan said it is equally important to know when to let go. “If you don’t let things go, you are not sustaining

social innovation,” he said. “The ultimate goal of a social entrepreneur is to disappear. You have succeeded when you are not needed.”

“Facing that transition is key,” said Frances Westley, Director of the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.” She introduced the “ecocycle” as a metaphor for successful social innovation, noting that the two key dynamics in the life cycle — whether a life cycle of a forest or the life cycle of a social initiative — are connectedness or sameness, and stored capital or potential. Creative destruction leads to or fosters renewal, as in a forest fire. And exploitation, such as clear cuts, leads to or motivates conservation. Similarly, foundations are naturally cyclical. Sometimes this means that ventures falter, end, or even fail — but not in futility. “To allow things to die,” said Westley, “is to allow things to begin.”

David Bornstein tells the story of a social entrepreneur in Bombay, India, a woman named Jeroo Billimoria. Billimoria founded Childline, providing street children with quick access to police assistance and health care by dialing a number at a payphone.

Billimoria wanted to do something to help the many street children of Bombay— children who had run away, or children who had gone to the city to work. “They might be nine or ten years old, walking through the streets of Bombay, selling Wrigley’s Spearmint gum or Marlboro cigarettes, sleeping in a train station,” said Bornstein. Billimoria started giving out her phone number at night for emergencies. “She would get up at 2a.m. to rescue a child, and then spent the next couple of months looking for the appropriate services in Bombay for follow up assistance.” Billimoria decided to develop a system to respond more effectively. “She approached the ministry of telecommunications and asked for a number for a hotline,” Bornstein recounted. “They refused. She spent three years fighting the ministry. She had all of her friends, anybody who had any political clout, write a letter on her behalf, and eventually she got a toll-free number.”

Her next challenge was to find people to run the hotline and provide outreach for distress calls. “In the United States and Canada, you dial 911 and paramedics come,” said Bornstein. “She realized she didn’t have enough money to do that. But she could train mature street youth to handle most of the emergencies.” She also solicited a hundred organizations in Bombay and asked that they join a support network. Eighty-six declined. “I asked her if she felt discouraged,” recalled

Bornstein. “She said she knew that they didn’t understand the program yet. And she had the strong support of a few others. She flipped failure into success.”

With the hotline number and a \$6,000 grant from a family foundation, she started Childline in 1996. Awareness spread through word of mouth. In its first year Childline fielded 6,600 calls. “One of the calls was from a man passing through the train station in Bombay,” said Bornstein. “He saw a little girl, an abandoned toddler, naked, burns on her stomach and her leg. He couldn’t stay with the child. But he called the Childline number to report her. The street youth who manned the Childline phones rushed to the train station and spent 7 hours looking for the girl. A beggar in the station had taken the girl as if she was his daughter so that she could beg with him. They had to fight with the man, and fight with the transit police. But they wouldn’t give up and eventually they got permission to have her released. She was put in a short-term hostel and then a family in Bombay adopted her. “She could end up at the University of Toronto,” said Bornstein, “that’s how different her life trajectory is now. This man with his cell phone, passing through the train station, played God with her life.”

“The power of a system like that is it turns a city into a team,” said Bornstein. “Childline now operates in 66 cities in India. It has fielded more than 7 million calls. It has rescued more than a 100,000 children from desperate situations. And it has been adopted by the Indian government as the national child protection system.”



## LUNCH ROUNDTABLES

Conference participants made the most of their lunch break on the opening day of the conference, with what PFC Chairman Peter Warrian called, “a small social engineering experiment.” “We were testing the waters to see what kind of chemistry we could find if we got people around the table on specific topics in grantmaking,” said Warrian.

Many conference sessions focused on the “how” of foundation work. The roundtables, which were facilitated by practitioners and subject experts, were an opportunity to gather like-minded participants to talk for an hour or so about the substantive “what.”

The eight roundtable topics were varied, and involved both existing and emerging affinity groups of grantmakers. They ranged from rural philanthropy and granting to aboriginal communities through international grantmaking to funding children and youth, the arts and the environment.

Despite the brevity of the dialogues, there was active participation by many. A number of people commented that more intensive sessions dedicated to developing affinity networks would be a productive exercise for future conferences.



## CONCLUSION

At the conclusion of these two days of thought-provoking, practical, and inspirational sessions, a large number of the participants pronounced themselves pleased or very pleased with the outcome. There was strong agreement that the conference has produced excellent opportunities for discussion and learning.

A few themes came even more clearly into focus throughout the two days. The importance of thinking creatively and flexibly about the forms of foundation leadership was one. Another was the importance of working in partnership or collaboration with other funders on a wide range of initiatives. A third was the need to take calculated risks in order to realize the full potential of private philanthropy, to act and to 'lead boldly'."

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***No matter what foundations choose as their mission, they should act without timidity, with conviction, and in the spirit of learning through innovation.***

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This was an inspiring and energizing first gathering for many Canadian foundations. This conference report will remind attendees of the "buzz" and the new ideas that were generated. It also offers a small taste of what was discussed to those who were not able to be there. Until the next time...

### FINAL NOTE:

Many of the ideas generated by the various conference workshops are found in the presentations posted on the PFC web site. Please visit [www.pfc.ca](http://www.pfc.ca) for free access to the available materials.

PFC gratefully acknowledges the contribution of Siobhan Roberts who authored this report.





## APPENDIX 1

# Making a Difference: Tools and Strategies for Canadian Philanthropy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

### CONFERENCE PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

**Opening plenary:** A panel discussion about **foundation leadership in catalyzing social change**, drawing on the experience of a senior consultant to many Canadian and U.S. foundations, and two Canadian foundation CEOs.

Moderator: Shira Herzog, The Kahanoff Foundation  
Presenters: Mark Kramer, Co-Founder and Managing Director of the Foundation Strategy Group, Boston, Alan Broadbent, Chair of the Maytree Foundation and of the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, Allan Gotlieb, Chair of the Donner Canadian Foundation and former Canadian Ambassador to the United States

**Session A1**    **Setting Your Direction: Foundation Leadership and Social Change**

Moderator: Nathan Gilbert, Laidlaw Foundation  
Presenters: Mark Kramer, Foundation Strategy Group; Joy Calkin, Muttart Foundation; Patrick Johnston, Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation.

**Session A2**    **The Difference a Good Board Makes**

Moderator: Bob Filuk, Thomas Sill Foundation  
Presenters: Ruth Armstrong, Vision Management; Angie Killoran, Lawson Foundation; Bruce Lourie, Ivey Foundation

**Session A3**    **Bigger Than you Think - The Power of Small Foundations**

Moderator: Françoise Vien, Fondation Pathonic  
Presenters: Martha Shuttleworth, Neptis Foundation; Mary Rozsa de Coquet, Rozsa Foundation; Helen and Aviva Zukerman, Zukerman Family Foundation

**Session A4**    **Building Nonprofit Capacity – Fad or First Principle in Grantmaking?**

Moderator: Robin Cardozo, Ontario Trillium Foundation  
Presenters: Sandy Houston, George Cedric Metcalf Charitable Foundation; Chris Smith, Muttart Foundation; Susan Pigott, St. Christopher House

**Session A5**    **Foundations and Research: Why Do It, and What Defines Success?**

Moderator: Robert Alain, EJLB Foundation  
Presenters: Stephen Toope, Trudeau Foundation, Allan Northcott, Max Bell Foundation; Rick Blickstead, Wellesley Central Health Corporation

## APPENDIX 1

<b>Session A6</b>	<b>Looking out for the Future of Philanthropy</b>
Moderator:	Tim Brodhead, The J. W. McConnell Family Foundation
Presenters:	Joe Breiteneicher, The Philanthropic Initiative; Peter Warrian, The Lupina Foundation; David Pecaut, Boston Consulting Group and the Boreal Institute
<b>Session A7</b>	<b>Where Do Social Innovators Go Next? Sustaining Social Innovation in Communities</b>
Moderator:	Bill Young, Bealight Foundation
Presenters:	Katharine Pearson, J.W. McConnell Family Foundation; Andres Dussan, Ashoka and Harbinger Foundations; Frances Westley, University of Wisconsin-Madison
<b>Session A8</b>	<b>Collaborating for Impact: Grantmaking and Action</b>
Moderator:	Monica Patten, Community Foundations of Canada
Presenters:	Bev Wybrow, Canadian Womens' Foundation; Shelley Uytterhagen, Carthy Foundation
<b>Session A9</b>	<b>Behind the Scenes or on the Stage? Foundations and the Making of Public Policy</b>
Moderator:	Norman Webster, R. Howard Webster Foundation
Presenters:	Ratna Omidvar, Maytree Foundation; Dr. Roch Bernier, Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon
<b>Session B1</b>	<b>What's Going on in the World of Charities Regulation?</b>
Moderator:	Michael Kray, Mike Weir Foundation
Presenters:	Arthur Drache, Drache and Associates LLP; Terry de March, CRA Charities Directorate
<b>Session B2</b>	<b>Thinking Strategically About Your Assets: Linking Money to Mission?</b>
Moderator:	Paul Dyer, Windsor Foundation
Presenters:	Bill Young, Bealight Foundation; David Elton, Max Bell Foundation; Tim Drainin, Tides Canada Foundation
<b>Session B3</b>	<b>From Evaluation Inaction to Evaluation in Action</b>
Moderator:	Graham Hallward, Alva Foundation
Presenters:	Craig McGarvey, GrantCraft; Sheherazade Hirji, Hirji&White Consulting; Cathy Smalley, George Cedric Metcalf Charitable Foundation
<b>Session B4</b>	<b>The Next Generation: Dialogue and Engagement in Family Foundations</b>
Moderator:	Kevin Munro, The W. Garfield Weston Foundation
Presenters:	Nancy Rosenfeld, Stephen R. Bronfman Foundation, Margaret-Jean Mannix, Carthy Foundation
<b>Session B5</b>	<b>Communications: Afterthought or Essential?</b>
Moderator:	Julie Toskan Casale, Toskan Foundation
Presenters:	Charles Pascal, Atkinson Foundation; Bronwyn Drainie, Literary Review of Canada



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