

Community Advancement New Brunswick: Building Local Capacity

Grantor: The T.R. Meighen Foundation
Grantee: Community Advancement New Brunswick
Summary: Building the capacity of New Brunswick community foundations

Private foundations and community foundations are sometimes portrayed as competitors, not allies. The reality is very different. Private foundations have been strong supporters of the public community foundation movement in Canada. Many private foundation philanthropists cite a common motive for their support. What better way to ensure that local community resources are redistributed to meet community needs? The story of the T.R. Meighen Foundation in New Brunswick illustrates this positive partnership for philanthropy.

In 1999, the T.R. Meighen Foundation took advantage of a unique opportunity to celebrate the thirtieth

anniversary of its founding by making a gift of \$2 million over three years for Community Advancement New Brunswick (CANB). The Meighen Foundation, in partnership with Community Foundations of Canada (CFC), designed CANB to support the growth and development of four existing community foundations as well as to begin the process of establishing a new community foundation in New Brunswick.

Since its founding in 1969, the T. R. Meighen Foundation has worked for the communities of Atlantic Canada, targeting most of its grants to community-based organizations. The second generation continues to follow the wishes of Ted Meighen by supporting New Brunswick. But, from its base in Toronto, the Foundation found it difficult to identify the actual community benefits of each grant request. In the 1990s, as government funding was reduced, private funders found themselves with increasing numbers of grant applications and the Foundation simply did not have the administrative capacity to evaluate the merits of each request.

In addition, although the Meighen Foundation's vision was to strengthen com-

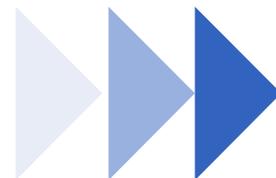
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munities in New Brunswick, it began to question the impact of its support. “We suspected that we were not necessarily encouraging innovation and cooperation between organizations and the community,” says Kelly Meighen, President of the Foundation. So, the Foundation decided to make a fundamental change in its grantmaking. It would endow the province’s community foundations. Strengthening and endowing these organizations was a way for the Meighen Foundation to ensure that it was supporting local solutions to local problems. “We wanted to put the financial resources in the hands of those individuals or organizations who knew best the needs of the community,” declares Meighen.

Community foundations have existed in Canada since 1921. By pooling the gifts of many donors, community foundations are able to build permanent income-generating endowments with which they support worthy community projects. Community foundations are also ideally situated to understand and serve the needs of the community because, as Meighen says, “They are a unique vehicle which is non-denominational and apolitical and beholden to no one except the community.”

The Foundation collaborated with Community Foundations of Canada to design and build CANB. CFC, as a leader in building effective community foundations, was an obvious partnership choice for the Meighen Foundation. CFC was asked to administer the project, and to provide professional and technical expertise. The Meighen Foundation and CFC jointly presented the idea to the four existing community foundations (St. John, Fredericton, Moncton and St. Andrews (serving the Fundy region)). But for Monica Patten, Executive Director of CFC, a significant part of the story was the relationship between CFC and the Foundation: “We sat down and created the program together.”

CANB had three components: a) financial and technical support for the community foundations to expand their organizational capacity, b) funds for grantmaking to raise the profile and presence of the foundation in the community; and c) funds to build each community foundation’s endowment. The Foundation set up a matching formula whereby it would contribute \$1 for every \$2 each community foundation raised. Georgie



Day, then Program Coordinator of CANB, believes it was all three components together that made the program really effective. "I don't think if you had taken any one of those away it would have had the same results. It was very wise the way it was put together."

As coordinator, Day respected the autonomy of each foundation while assisting them in meeting their obligations. "The idea was to increase their capacity by training volunteers, by establishing, in some cases, a physical location for the first time, by raising the profile and presence of the foundation in the community, and, by putting funds into community projects of their choice," says Meighen. Leslie Cuthbertson, Executive Director of the Fundy Community Foundation, confirms that the CANB program has served as an excellent catalyst for increasing the visibility of the foundation in the eyes of the communities it serves.

George W. Wolf III, Past President of the Fundy Community Foundation, describes how the foresight of the T.R. Meighen Foundation has energized their community, "Under CANB, the Fundy Community Foundation's goal was to raise \$300,000 over three years in order to obtain a match of \$150,000. The actual amount raised was \$500,000 over a period of two years. By providing money for operating and granting as well as endowment building, the CANB Program has helped our foundation to lay a strong base, to hire staff, to make grants and to

build the engine that drives any community foundation, the Community Endowment Fund."

As a result of CANB, for the first time, community foundation board members and staff had the opportunity to attend provincial and national workshops and conferences. In 2002, three executive directors from New Brunswick community foundations attended CFC's national conference in Kelowna, BC. Each participated actively in the conference and made a significant contribution, not the least of which was representing the unique dimensions of their respective community foundations. They also greatly benefited from meeting and exchanging ideas with other community foundations.

As members of CFC, they are "hooked into a very successful national organization," says Monica Patten. They have access to training, resource materials and capacity building support. For some boards of directors, the process was intensive but eminently rewarding. "It was something they needed to do if they wanted to grow," says Day. The re-energized boards of each of the four foundations represented the communities they serve with increased effectiveness.



CANB also created a new community foundation. To do so, Day followed up on leads in five communities, all in the northern regions of the province. While many expressed an interest in the CANB program, the Acadian Peninsula was ultimately selected due to its dynamism, determination and energy and because it presented the best chance for success. As Day and CANB discovered, enthusiastic community leaders are key to establishing a community foundation. This community was a particular challenge given the downturn in the fishing industry. But after some learning, it succeeded in putting together a fledgling but energetic foundation.

Three years later, it is evident that the Meighen Foundation's investment in CANB was "a resounding success," says Patten. CANB put financial resources as well as vision back into the hands of the community. "I have absolutely no hesitation in saying that the gift from the Meighen Foundation has made a significant difference in revitalizing these communities," she confirms.

During 2003 and 2004, Meighen support for CANB will continue in the form of \$50,000 per year designated for networking opportunities and continued professional development for foundation staff. This will allow the foundations to continue to gain prominence in their respective communities, enabling them to meet their endowment-building goals.

The Foundation is pleased with its decision to place resources directly in the hands of the community. The initial \$3 million investment has now grown to \$15 million, being managed by five community foundations. Meighen concludes "You can tell a community foundation is successful when it reflects the optimism, vibrancy and energy of its community."

**For more information visit the Foundation
Web Site: www.meighen.ca**

