



Reflection Conversations June 2021

prepared by Barbara Pedersen Facilitation Services Inc.

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Overview

Purpose of the Reflection Conversations

The purpose of the reflection conversations was to hear what individuals involved in different ways with the Make Shift Happen initiative (MSH) observed and thought about it. The information:

- ✓ Will help develop future community practice
- ✓ Will provide perspectives about the success and challenges of MSH
- ✓ Will be used to help inform the tri-community final report and subsequent action.

Participants

Eleven (11) individuals participated in an individual telephone conversation conducted by Barbara Pedersen Facilitation Services Inc. Answers are anonymous. The 11 individuals residents are residents of, or work within, the tri-communities (The Town of The Pas, Opaskwayak Cree Nation (OCN), Rural Municipality of Kelsey) and brought perspectives such as:

- Community volunteers
- Social service providers (e.g. addictions, mental health)
- Educators
- Indigenous community
- Faith community
- Long-term and recent residents

Question

One question was asked and if necessary, followed by several probing questions to gain more information.

Based on your experience, involvement, and perspective, what are your observations about Make Shift Happen?

Probe: What impact do you think Make Shift Happen has had or is having? personal, organizational, tri-communities

Probe: Where do you think Make Shift Happen is going?

Probe: What is the future of Make Shift Happen?

The value of MSH

The eleven individuals stated that they saw value in MSH. Of these, nine strongly supported the initiative, describing the enhanced and increased connections and dialogue between individuals and between organizations, the change in leaders' awareness and attitudes, the community projects funded by MSH, and the new and improved partnerships between the tri-communities and organizations. These benefits are explained more fully in the following themes.

Two respondents, while describing some positive results of MSH such as the youth projects and the connections between individuals and organizations, questioned the overall value of MSH. One stated that they had not seen action from the initiative and one stated that MSH had not helped to solve the issues of crime, homelessness or *street people*.

Quotes

The big piece is the community connections that have been created and could continue.

I see a big shift in leaders' awareness and attitudes from "make this issue go away" to "these are people of your community and we need to create a solution".

Biggest positive result is that different people are talking together.

MSH is out there. People know what it means. There is a concentrated effort with hundreds of people on committees, on projects. I think one of the biggest focuses is the issue of homelessness and the steps that people can take to direct efforts at the homeless. I think that there is a political movement at local and provincial levels with people talking about it.

I think MSH is a wonderful initiative. MSH, with the goal to bring together the 3 tri-communities, is a unique and specific focus. There are organizations that work with the tri-communities but not with the specific goal to bring them together. This deliberate connection of the tri-communities is the biggest impact. So much divides us: social class, racial inequities. MSH approaches these hard conversations in a safe way.

MSH has highlighted a lot of the great work being done in the community from all sectors. MSH has identified the gaps and it has become clear that we have issues in our community that are not easy to solve and it will take many people to address.

MSH made clear the racism that exists in our community. Because of some of the work through MSH and some of the conversation with all sectors and when specific items like homelessness and addictions and mental health and people frequenting the street, the racism has surfaced. People have kept the racism hidden.

Lots of good projects happened through MSH but how the projects will fit with the issue of street people is not clear or did not happen. People will see that the town got a grant of

\$300,000 for crime prevention but will see that it has done essentially nothing. I don't feel that the community sees that there was any real difference made.

I have not seen action; i.e. specific attainable actions we can take immediately.

My board wants quick results and don't see that MSH type processes is where it starts. They want a quick action and results.

Theme One: Connections are the greatest achievement of MSH.

Respondents said that the most beneficial result from MSH is the connections in the tri-communities created or enhanced between individuals and between organizations. Some identified that MSH had a unique and specific goal to bring together the tri-communities. Some said that because of MSH, they think or and work with groups that they may not typically work with.

Response: stated by 10 out of 11 individuals

Quotes

The big piece is the community connections that have been created and could continue.

The biggest positive result is that different people are talking together and holding discussions in a different way over a longer period of time. This has been a lot deeper conversation.

We work in silos and we need something like MSH gives us a way to learn about others and connect.

I think MSH is a wonderful initiative. No one is doing anything like it. MSH's goal to bring together the tri-communities is unique and specific focus. Other organizations work with the tri-communities but not with the specific goal to bring them together. This deliberate connection of the tri-communities is the biggest impact. So much divides us, social class, racial inequities. MSH approaches these hard conversations in a safe way.

I anticipate that the connections will continue and I anticipate that I will be part of the conversations.

I think MSH was throwing a pebble into a pond; not a big wave; small ripples moving out. MSH made many more people and activities visible. All the greatness that is coming out is coming from the grassroots level and not always the movers and shakers who are visible. It is the small groups and people with the seemingly small actions that are making the difference, e.g. seniors who volunteer with Red Cross, who knit the mitts. The people making the change are the important ones.

I think that MSH helped to create conversations and relationships.

Overall, a very positive, interactive work. MSH has been a huge connector for the community bringing groups together that might not talk to each other otherwise, especially in a small community. Everyone is so busy and wear so many hats, it is nice to have the one contact of MSH to work together, to work towards the same goal. People do not know where to start. MSH is a nice first step to change by getting the conversation moving.

I have seen a huge benefit from the MSH group to help me think outside of normal wheelhouse and think of groups that I may not typically work with or new approaches.

MSH made lots of connections between OCN and The Pas. Many people connected that would not have without MSH. I think it built connections with the community. The Pas and OCN are working together; so are the Chambers of Commerce. We linked people together to talk about what worked, didn't work, successes, and future connections.

MSH really helped let people know in the community what other community people are doing. I think that the newspaper stories increased the readership of the local paper. Many people are talking about the stories. The paper wants more stories; people in the community want more.

My organization worked with partners that we would not have done otherwise if not brought together by MSH, focusing on youth and culture.

Theme Two: Make Shift Happen or a similar initiative needs to continue.

All respondents said that MSH needs to continue in some form. They see that the first two-year funding timeframe was a start to community conversations and solutions and served as a catalyst. Some respondents said that the time frame was too short to create significant change in the community around issues of crime, homelessness, people on the streets, addictions, and mental health.

Response: stated by 11 out of 11 individuals

Quotes

I would like to see a Phase 2 of MSH. What we do was a great start and served as a catalyst to dig in and for the community to carry out initiatives that were started or identified as feasible. It takes time; no two year magic window. Silo doors are opened and many have their hands out stretched to work together, but without MSH, I think the silo doors will close again.

We need solution-focussed labs to identify and work towards a project. We need to take action; not only brainstorm ideas. For housing, we need a collaborative group such as a co-op. We need support of the community to develop this housing and could sprout from MSH as a movement from change.

Trying to prevent things before they happened is a great approach and what Karen tried, but ultimately I don't think it went anywhere. I think we would need a 10 year project. MSH was a good step to find solutions and I hope that Karen is able to find money to continue to specifically target the issue of people on the street.

I hope that ownership in the tri-communities occurs to take this forward.

We hope that the MSH final report outlines things that we can do; small, attainable, and realistic and we can use it to get more funding. Not a resource centre, we know we need it but not the money yet.

I believe this type of initiative needs to continue to happen; meet and talk with solution based focus and bring what they can contribute to the table.

I think it could continue as it reaches out and organizes the mass voices in the direction they want to go forward. Specific actions: community plans - maybe an OCN plan in combination with The Pas and RM of Kelsey.

Theme Three: A coordinator or facilitator is an essential factor in the success of MSH.

Respondents said that a main reason that MSH was successful is that one individual was in place as coordinator and facilitator. The coordinator or facilitator focusses on the initiative and reduces the reliance on volunteers to assume the coordination role. A mandated position and responsibility is necessary.

Response: stated by 6 out of 11 individuals

Quotes

I think we need one person, place, email, etc. for a Community Connector. Their job is to keep up with who is doing what; refer them to someone else. I don't think we are at a place where we could do it informally.

For the future when MSH is gone, I think we need a facilitator. Someone takes the baton and facilitates. I think there is room for a position. Could the Town provide a position? There must be a mandate; not only a volunteer. The shift and changes need capacity and investment. It must be a mandated responsibility and role.

I have mentioned MSH to other communities and they see such an advantage to have one person dedicated to this work. I hear others who say, "We wish we had that here."

For the future when MSH is gone, I think we need a facilitator. Someone takes the baton and facilitates. I think there is room for a position. Could the Town provide a position. There must be a mandate; not only a volunteer. The shift and changes need capacity and investment. It must be a mandated responsibility and role.

Someone needs to be hired with the compassion, passion, drive, smarts. The MSH initiative needs one person as a strong leader. Karen as the coordinator is a strong leader, able to see a huge goal, is detailed and well-organized, and able to keep all people connected. Now it is handing the torch to someone with this drive.

It is the facilitating piece that is great. Karen (as facilitator) is observing, facilitating, and networking; not taking the lead and helping others talk the lead.

I think that someone needs to have “boots on the ground”; not just an initiative of one-day training events.

It will take the money now to retain Karen or someone like her to do the legwork and bring people together.

Theme Four: MSH requires more time and more resources.

Respondents said that the timeframe of two years was too short for lasting impact. The changes in the community are starting to appear and a longer initiative with more funding would have created lasting positive effects. Finances are necessary to hire a coordinator.

Response: stated by 6 out of 11 individuals

Quotes

Grant funding should have been three years. The two-year time frame was too short to be successful. With another 1½ years, we would have had phenomenal results.

Two years gets things rolling but not the longevity.

It is unfortunate that it is coming to an end just as things are growing. I hope there is a way to keep this growing and to keep Karen (the coordinator).

The main component is always funding. If there was a way to pull in another paid position, it would be great. More than one or two people are needed.

A challenge to the communities for funding has been made. I think that has to happen. the communities need to demonstrate commitment and not only look for funding from other governments. Your contribution demonstrates your commitment.

If MSH can secure more funds, it would be very worthwhile. in a very short time, it built much momentum.

A massive problem is that funding is usually term-certain of six months to one year.

The continuation of MSH needs to happen from a community investment background. Karen has been working in the background to get community investors (government, agencies, businesses) to fund a community connector for three years. We need that type of investment from across the community. I think that this is the way to go. I don't know if it will be \$10,000 each for three years but I think something will pick up; maybe a smaller amount for a year.

I think it is an excellent idea to get smaller amounts from multiple stakeholders to fund MSH although it is very hard to obtain funds. A useful website is Manitobaresourcelibrary.com for a listing of funding sources.

I think MSH was successful. I think it should be funded by government: local, provincial, and federal. They need to fund more of this kind of initiatives. Find people in the community who do this work. This is what our tax dollars should be used for.

Theme Five: Commitment from leadership and grassroots levels is needed.

Sustainability of Make Shift Happens or a similar initiative needs commitment from leadership and *grassroots* levels. Respondents differed in how effective MSH was in changing attitudes of political and community leaders about issues such as people on the street, homelessness, addictions, and mental health. Some saw emerging changes in attitudes; others did not see any shift in how leaders think and act. Some respondents talked about the importance of community volunteers being leaders in any community building initiative.

Response: stated by 7 out of 11 individuals

Quotes

An initiative like MSH needs involvement from political groups, money, commitment on part of some politicians. I think it will take a huge commitment and compassion and resources.

Future of MSH is through having someone to provide the leadership. Town Council will get the report and I don't know if anything will be done with it. The Town does not have the resources to roll it out. It needs the financial resources to have the position. The other resources are in place such as connection with community and supports. No single organizations has the financial resources or the people to do the coordination.

That is a big shift happening with politicians stepping up to work on the issues.

In our meetings, I notice a shift in attitudes among our mayor, business owners, etc. to "make this issue go away" to "these are people of your community and we need to create a solution".

I have not observed any change of attitude by local politicians. Politicians are good people trying to do good things. The local politicians talk about going ahead in partnership, yet, nothing happens when we talk about money.

Political and organizational leaders often want quick results and don't see that MSH-type processes is where it starts. They want a quick action and results.

I have not seen much change at the political levels. There might be more of a willingness to listen, yet, not sure hearing different perspective and stories will lead to meaningful change. Not big change, yet, a willingness to listen compared to the beginning.

MSH is out there. People know what it means. There is a concentrated effort with hundreds of people on committees, on projects. I think one of the biggest focuses is social issues with the issue of homelessness and what are the steps that people can take to direct efforts at the homeless. I think that there is a political movement at local and provincial levels with people talking about it.

I talked with local politicians and think they started to see things differently and started being more compassionate about issues in the community such as the homeless (street people) issue.

Theme Six: The MSH contractor is highly valued.

The value of the MSH contractor, Karen Driedger, was recognized and highly appreciated with much of the success of MSH attributed to her community building approach, attitude, and abilities.

Response: stated by 9 out of 11 individuals

Quotes

Karen is very good at being straightforward, being positive, solution focussed. She hears the concerns and then ask for solutions and actions. She has done a good job at being a bridge and changing attitudes and the stories behind the situation.

I think that Karen is hitting the points, doing a great job.

Karen puts a spotlight on the issues and asks what will be done. Karen has got people together and got them talking on a longer-term. Karen is the one that calls meetings otherwise they won't happen. She is a mover and shaker. She has someone writing stories.

I believe that MSH has come this far because of Karen's beliefs, passions, drive, ability to pull people together.

Someone like Karen needs to be hired with the compassion, passion, drive, smarts. It needs one person as a strong leader. She is a strong leader, able to see a huge goal and is detailed and well-organized, and able to keep all people connected. Now it is handing the torch to someone with this drive.

Differing Perspectives about MSH

Two respondents had perspectives that were different than those expressed by the majority. Quotes are provided below to show the diverse perspectives.

Awareness of MSH

One viewpoint	Contrast viewpoint
<i>I have not heard anything about MSH outside of work. The people I hang out with do not know about MSH.</i>	<i>MSH has been a positive influence on our community. If people haven't heard about MSH, they have been living under a rock.</i>

Results of MSH

One viewpoint	Contrast viewpoint
<i>Leaders need and want actions; not seeing it.</i>	<i>MSH was unique in that it was action-driven, not just research. MSH had the action and was in the community, e.g. a logo, the stories of people and groups in the community, projects, connections</i> <i>I have seen MSH use existing avenues such as SCAN Committees. MSH has been helpful in working towards actions. I saw the agenda for the next SCAN meeting and it is focussed on action items, not only discussion.</i>
<i>I think the goal of MSH was crime prevention. Although I was involved from the start, I didn't understand what was going on, the purpose of the project, the expected outcomes of MSH. If I don't understand it and I am working on this committee, who else doesn't understand it? I don't think MSH made a difference with the street people and crime.</i>	<i>In terms of impact of MSH, on a scale of 1 to 10, I would say a rating of 8 to 10. There are so many avenues where people are hearing it or seeing it.</i>
<i>Lots of good projects happened through MSH but how the projects will fit with the issue of street people is not clear or did not happen. People will see that the town got a grant of</i>	<i>The people I am involved with see MSH as very useful and fantastic.</i>

<i>\$300,000 for crime prevention but will see that it has done essentially nothing.</i>	
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Partnerships through MSH

One viewpoint	Contrast viewpoint
<i>I do not see any evidence of increased relationships between The Pas, RM or OCN because of MSH.</i>	<p><i>I have seen Karen do outreach to the three communities and somehow she has increased representation from other than the Town of The Pas. in the last few meetings, it has been wonderful with representation from OCN leadership and Ministry of Indigenous and Northern Affairs.</i></p> <p><i>MSH made lots of connections between OCN and The Pas. Many people connected that would not have without MSH. The Pas and OCN are working together; so are the Chambers of Commerce.</i></p>

Shifts in leaders' attitudes

One viewpoint	Contrast viewpoint
<i>I have not observed any change of attitude by local politicians.</i>	<i>In our meetings, I notice a shift in attitudes among our mayor, business owners, etc. to "make this issue go away" to "these are people of your community and we need to create a solution".</i>

Final Comments

Respondents were invited to give concluding comments about Make Shift Happen.

More specific and concrete actions are needed to address crime, homelessness, and people on the street.

MSH provided us with the opportunity to have the discussions in a different way over a longer period of time. This has been a lot deeper conversation. Who is going to do this after the MSH Contractors leaves, is a big question.

I hope there is a way to make this happen. I would like Karen to continue. I would like to work with Karen more. She is fantastic. I would like to see more people hired to work. I think it is so valuable and needs to move forward.

I think Karen understood that and her approach was effective; not pushing her own agenda; trying to get the community to take the accountability for the change. She was good at pulling the conversation back to what needed to be done. She had compassion, understood who she works from, wasn't coming with her ideas of change. She built up the community and portrayed MSH as the community and every person involved is the change; not Karen.

I am a huge supporter of MSH and very happy it was happening.

I was the only volunteer on one of the MSH committees and all others were part of it as a role of their job. They only contributed during work hours and were not committed and invested in the same way. I don't think that the approach to make the community connect and take the initiative worked. I think that the money needs to be spent on crime prevention specifically street people. I think that Karen now needs to work with the town, OCN, RCMP, etc. and give the \$300,000 (example) to deal with the issue.

I am very thankful that our school and division had the opportunities to put opportunities forward. We will likely collaborate with the high school next year. The timing is perfect to collaborate on Indigenous activities particularly with the Kamloops and other situations in the past six weeks. We will involve our Indigenous liaison in our conversation and activities. I think what the youth said they will do, will get done.

MSH has been a positive influence on our community. If people haven't heard about MSH, they have been living under a rock.

if MSH can secure more funds, it would be very worthwhile. in a very short time, it built much momentum.

The first thing is that MSH has highlighted a lot of the great work being done in the community from all sectors. My second point is that MSH has identified the gaps and it has become clear that we have issues in our community that are not easy to solve and it will take many people to address.

The last point I would like to make is the clarity raised by MSH that racism that exists in our community. Because of some of the work through MSH and some of the conversation with all sectors and when specific items like homelessness and addictions and mental health and people frequenting the street, the racism has surfaced. People have kept the racism hidden.

The message is that our community still has a lot of racism particularly towards Indigenous people, and while the education opportunities are offered (such as Blanket Exercise), the turnout is low from the non-Indigenous community.

Shift happened.