Working SMART in the New Millennium
Building Community Controlled Telecommunications Services in Keewaytinook Okimakanak First Nations

From "Spray Diagrams" to "Rich Pictures"
(From e-mail messages by Ricardo Ramírez and Don Richardson)

BACKGROUND:

Our job is to create an atmosphere where we all respect the visions and ideas of the people in the workshop, hear each others' stories and try our best to help everyone to capture a collective picture of how people want to harness communication technologies to meet community needs and goals.

Communication technologies are like a pack of dogs barking in different directions... w'geewi-animoh. How do we make these dogs our companions so that we can guide them to take us where we want to go?

During our time together we will be doing some learning together and some growing together. The people in the workshop will be coming with a wealth of experience and observation about communication technologies and their role in community development. Ricardo & I help people to draw this wealth of experience and observation together - in doing so we will all be developing new ways of perceiving and thinking about this stuff.... the pictures help us to learn about things that we cannot express and share together easily in words.

THE TOOLS:

The **"spray diagram"**:
• in the first instance people in small groups around a table draw and write on a large piece of paper the information that matters to them about the subject or topic of concern (in this case I wrote " First Nation's Strategy for Harnessing Information, Communication Technologies" and I put it in the centre circle).
• We are "spraying" peoples perceptions and ideas on the paper with a few rules:
    • first put down the major themes,
    • then add the secondary themes that relate to each major theme,
    • keep on going until you feel you can stop without losing important items.
• The drawing ends up very complicated and messy, but it is a "spray of ideas".

The second drawing is a **"rich picture"** (this is the organized summary of the spray diagram). We encourage people to use as many graphics and icons as possible.

The rich picture shows inter-relationships, and it is useful in many ways:
1) it helps the group communicate what they are brainstorming about to someone else,
2) it helps the group identify each "issue area" or "system of interest" (example I

came up with: "Training and skills development"; another example: "Cultural affirmation") and all of the links across to the other issues;

3)   it helps identify the relevant ACTORS or STAKEHOLDERS that need to be invited and involved in further brainstorming;

4)   it helps identify the linkages (the lines) and this is a first step to identify things to count (indicators to measure) that make sense for tracking changes.

I repeat, these drawings are mock-ups made by ONE person in Guelph. They are meant as examples of the tools, don't worry about the content, it is bound to be very narrow and inaccurate.

These are visual group planning tools. During the Red Lake conference, the participants will get a taste of how the tools can be used, and they will at least be able to decide whether the tools are worth trying again at the community level (OR, also/alternately, within their own organizations). The actual drawings we make next week are less important, because these tools become more and more useful as the planning is a done in a real context in each community with the right initial set of stakeholders around the table.

The tools are used in an iterative way, as each issue or theme is explored again with the stakeholders who are part of the issue. The participants will also be able to think about who needs to be trained to repeat and improve this kind of session in each community.

I see the added value of the rich picture to the consultation effort as:

-     a GROUP LEARNING TOOL, one that only "happens" in a GROUP learning and planning setting (so it complements consultancy reports);
-     a tool that can be developed using visuals and syllabics from the start (no need for translation): I imagine we will have many bilingual participants
-     a tool that can be modified and "owned" by the users quite soon
-     a tool that helps the group describe the different aspects of their lives, on "wellness", and on how "applications" can contribute to "wellness" (using the words from the consultation report)
-     a tool that allows a group to look at:
  - i)   the whole system -not just the parts one after the other,
  - ii)   the relevant actors that need to be involved, and
  - iii)   at the interrelationships among them; (this is after all the parts of our lives that networking technologies should enhance)
-     a tool to help a group focus on "what changes in terms of people's relations to people, and to sources of information" (when telecommunication applications are used); rather than focusing only on the applications.

This balance I think may be useful for planning and for a Smart application: it provides a systems-based way of identifying what you will track, and what indicators you choose to track, and how those indicators are evidence of a society whose "wellness" is expected to improve with applications.