

## Questions and Answers

### Celebrations Webcast

These questions are transcribed from the Celebrations Webcast which took place on April 20, 2006. The Webcast included Dolly Hopkins (Public Dreams Society) and Ian Tait (2010 Legacies Now). Since this is a transcription, many of the answers will have a conversational tone. We recommend that you watch the entire Webcast and read the accompanying Celebrations Toolkit for more information.

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#### THE EVENT

**Q: How should you decide whether an event is one-time or an annual celebration?**

**A:** It's important to remember that when you build an event that has a future that you can change it; it doesn't always have to be exactly the same. It's also important to decide on the size and therefore how many staff, and unpaid or paid volunteers and sponsors. Then you should do something that's going to be successful within the parameters that you've decided or in some cases that have been defined for you and to provide meaningful experience. You should try not to grow too big beyond your ability to manage it.

What is really important and can't be stressed enough is that you need to grow at the capacity to which you have the resources to do so. Often people want create a big event straight away but that is not a good way to build foundation. It's important to build your foundation so that you can grow.

You need to have a stable foundation so that you can successfully manage your event and engage people in a consistent manner. You have to keep the long term interests of the community in mind along with the sustainability of the event. If you keep in mind that everyone is creative and give them the opportunity to be creative then you will encourage your community to participate.

**Q: Over what period of time did/do these events typically occur. One day? 1/2 day? Varies? What works best?**

**A:** It depends on the event. Public Dreams has tried to sometimes capture light and from light into darkness which creates an element of suspense and it also creates an element of spectacle and it changes the nature of the event. Which is awesome. For example Circus of dreams is a daytime event from 4 - 9 pm, Illuminares starts at around 4 pm when people find their spot, set up a picnic and watch the night unfold until around midnight, and Parade of Lost Souls is between 6 and 9.30 pm

**Q: How many events can a community typically accommodate, given the volunteer nature of them? 4 per year?**

**A:** This is a question of capacity. You need to base the answer to this question on the answers to the following questions:

- What kind of community is the event being held in?
- What size is your community based on?

In a smaller community, you should decide whether you could hold an event once a month or once a week. It really depends on what the community needs. You need to find out what's already happening in the community because another event could be unsustainable. Particularly when you are looking at finite resources like volunteers. You could decide that existing events can be enhanced by bringing in another element to add a little magic or something new to an existing event.

**Q: What time frame (from first community meeting to actual event) seems to be do-able for a first-time event? In practical terms - how much lead time is required to organize a major event such as we've just seen?**

**A:** It depends on the size of the event. If you are starting small, some events can be staged in a matter of a few months or six months. But that's small so as you build it you need more time to build it. It takes a year to put Illuminares up and happening. It's a major event. It means that we need the resources to be able to outsource to our artists, our community members, our volunteers. If you are talking an annual event that's year over year you'll be wrapping up one event and starting planning for the next year. You need to organize the space, services, sponsors, the volunteers, the performers and all those amenities you need to put on an event.

**Q: What mistakes have you made when organizing events and what have you learned from them? What are your top tips?**

**A:** The event needs to be planned so that it has a structure and is thought through. Your plan should be put down on paper. If you have a well laid plan you can work with a structure; you don't have to be tied to the plan and structure.

Be sure you are communicating clearly to all of your community members about what you want to do, where you want to go, how you are going to stage your event and where the event will start, go to and end. It's very important to be a big communicator so everyone knows and is tied into what you want to do.

Make sure that you have key people on your side so you can move forward with your ideas and be successful.

**Q: What would you say the biggest challenge is when planning a community celebration?**

**A:** It's money - having the resources to ensure that you can carry out the event. And getting the right people on board. Also locating a space and getting permission for all the relevant people, your city, your fire department, your support services.

**Q: How do you plan for inclement weather? For example if it rains would you change locations or move celebration to another day?**

**A:** Public Dreams' plans for inclement weather as we go ahead rain or shine and we do not change locations because we have committed all our programming to the chosen site.

Make a rain plan and let your audience know you will be doing this event whatever the weather conditions. Make sure you can stage whatever you're doing in any kind of weather. For example with Illuminares clear plastic bags cover all the

paper tissue lanterns and everything in sight if we think it's going to be a rainy day. If we think that it's going to rain we need more volunteers to take the clear plastic bags off and light the lanterns so that they are not exposed for a long period of time in the inclement weather. We accept the fact that we will probably lose a lot of those lanterns. If it rains it doesn't mean you have to cancel your event. It means you have to think about your event if it's outdoors being able to address those situations.

**Q: Illuminares started out with 300 people and now has 25,000 participants. For communities that have existing events how can they look critically at what they do and incorporating elements to make what they do a little bit bigger?**

**A:** As you build your event you need to take a look around you and see who your other community partners are. Who's out there and who would want to be engaging with you because it's difficult to do it all by yourself and it's important that when you engage with other people you really are including everybody so look around you. A partnership would help your event become sustainable and grow. Those partnerships could be in the form of funders, sponsors, businesses and associations (particularly community businesses and associations) and the local community.

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## FINANCE

**Q: How did you fund all of these special activities? Do you rely on sponsorship?**

**A:** No we don't rely on sponsorship. We get a lot of support through in-kind. In-kind include goods (space used by applicant, equipment, supplies, materials, etc.) and services (volunteer time, transportation, printing, etc.) donated to the applicant organization. Note: The dollar value of these contributions (what it would cost if the organization had to pay for them) must be reported separately from the cash columns in the budget section.

Public Dreams gets money from membership, from community members, from selling items at events, applying for grants (from your city, province, the Canada Council, the BC Arts Council). Work with the resources you have and build your event from there. Another thought is if you wanted to link up with Arts Councils in other regions to see if you could share resources that would and could be another way to go.

**Q: How do you address the issue of insurance coverage for such big events?**

**A:** You can find information about insurance coverage in the Celebrations Toolkit. Insurance is very important. You need to speak to your city council regarding your event. You should say if you are holding the event for free. (All of Public Dreams events are free except for Mountain Mardi Gras which has a very minimal gate fee). You should ask city officials what you need to do to ensure safety at the event and insurance. You could ask if the city can support your event by providing insurance. You should remember to ask all the right public officials about your event so that there is no obstacle to your success.

In addition, there are organizations which could give you in-kind insurance. For example, your event could be sponsored by an insurance company who can pay for the in-kind insurance for public safety and to stage an event. Putting together a plan can help you to get in-kind insurance from insurance companies as they can see that you have thought of everything and know you have put things in place. Doing your homework is very important for example finding out the numbers of fire

extinguishers, portable toilets and hand washing stations are needed and liaising with the local health and fire departments.

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## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**Q: Have you carried out any outreach to the culturally diverse communities to invite their participation as well and if so how have you done that?**

**A:** You need to include your cultural community and to decide how you are going to do that. You can go to community centres in your town/city and hold community meetings. At these meetings you should share your ideas and invite the community to give you feedback and to get involved in the initiative. You need to hold these meetings at the beginning ensuring the community has an opportunity to have ownership of the initiative. The community then has a chance to buy in at that next level and to participate as you progress forward.

Ideally you want to be able to create an event that can showcase your city, your community, your town, your municipality. Whatever it is you want to showcase who lives there. What makes meaning to that community? Who are the people who live there and what are their interests?

**Q: Do you have any strategies for winning over your community to ensure their support?**

**A:** You need to have a clear idea, vision and documentation - having that clarity will allow people to see that you've thought it through that you have some ideas about how you think it might be staged and the safety measures needed. You need to show that you've taken into account the police, fire department and the ambulance services. You need to show that you've created access, that you understand the importance of public safety and how to move people in and out. This will bring support that will actually help you move forward and get your community to move.

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## **PEOPLE AND VOLUNTEERS**

**Q: Volunteers are very important at all of these community events. What recommendations would you have for community events in terms of engaging the volunteer sector? How do you draw in and organize volunteers? How many are involved and how do you sustain them? Who directs them?**

**A:** Firstly, you need to designate one person to be able to pull together your volunteers. Secondly, you need to reach out to your community to the boys and girls club, girl guides, scouts, the Kiwanis club. You need to find out what kinds of different volunteer organizations exist in your community. They you need to take your ideas to the local volunteer organizations and ask them if they would be interested in being involved in your event? You could also put out a random call perhaps through email or through community broadcast on your community channels letting people know you need volunteers.

There are other tools available such as Volweb.ca. Volweb.ca is 2010 Legacies Now online resource both for volunteer dependent organizations and volunteer dependent events Organizations can list their events and volunteers looking for a

volunteer opportunity register on [www.volweb.ca](http://www.volweb.ca). Volweb.ca also contains important information about volunteer responsibilities and management.

**Q: What role do professional artists/animateurs play in the development of the celebration i.e. working with the community volunteers, inspiring imagination, teaching skill sets?**

**A:** Professional artists can act as mentors to assist recreational artists and amateurs to build their skills. They play a key role in helping grow your performance base and assist in showing the community the creative opportunities that can be actualized by everyone.

**Q: How or where can we find people with specialized skills- like stilt-walking - to train people in our community?**

**A:** Public Dreams has the capacity to assist you in training community members how to stilt walk. You can also go to your local art council to see if they know of artists that have these skills. You may already have people locally who could assist in training.

**Q: How much of a debrief is required after an event - and do you need to debrief with everyone including volunteers or just your committee?**

**A:** A debrief very valuable to learn what works and what doesn't work as you always want to build on what worked and to have a record of this. Public Dreams' creates event bibles to document what they did. In their meetings they discuss what worked, what didn't work and how to improve upon what did work or how to celebrate what worked and continue to do that again. Debriefing is an important structure. You need to involve all the partners and even sometimes the community. You could even have community meetings debrief.

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## 2010 LEGACIES NOW AND PUBLIC DREAMS

**Q: Are we going to have multicultural winterfest performance like the one we had in Calgary Olympics'88? Are we going to have an International Food Tent as the one in Calgary Olympics'88?**

**Are you going to invite multicultural performing groups to participate in the opening and closing ceremonies?**

**A:** VANOC (the Vancouver Organizing Committee) is organizing the Cultural Olympiad and other events surrounding the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. The opening and closing ceremonies are also being organized by VANOC (the Vancouver Organizing Committee). You can find more information about these events on their website at: <http://www.vancouver2010.com/>.

**Q: Can you tell us a little bit about how the Public Dreams Society is structured? How it is funded? Is it a charitable organisation or simply not for profit, etc.?**

**A:** Public Dreams has a team that works together to produce our signature events. We have the Artistic Director, General Manager, Volunteer Coordinator, Production Manager. We bring additional team members on when we move closer to the event. We get operating funding from different sources and apply for grants. We are a

charitable society. You can find out more information about Public Dreams at <http://www.publicdreams.org/>.

**Q: Has Public Dreams been involved in creating celebrations in rural and/or northern BC? Wondering about the additional challenges of geographic and - potentially cultural - isolation.**

**A:** Yes Public Dreams' has supported different communities in northern BC. If you work in isolation and you want to be able to create your community event that will draw people outside of your region then you need to build a strategic plan that will allow you to build your event successfully with your community. Word of mouth about your event helps along with exposure, media and documentation. Documentation is really important to be able to track your event. You can then build opportunities for other people to come into your community.

**Q: Has Public Dreams participated in an International event?**

**A:** Yes, we have participated in International events. We represented Canada at the 2004 Summer Games in Athens. We also had some of our performing artists who worked with us go to Torino Italy for the Winter Games.

**Q: Will 2010 Legacies Now be conducting event workshops for communities around the province?**

**A:** Yes we will be. You can find out more about the Arts Build Communities Celebrations Workshops at <http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/Content/ArtsNow/ArtsBuild.asp?langid=1> Guidelines and an application form for this program can be found at this site.