



WHAT CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS SAID ...

“Every once in a while we get a jolt that we weren’t expecting ... so obvious, but it takes seeing, hearing or experiencing it, in that moment, and in that way to be open to it. During the opening plenary of the conference, I was hit with a mini-jolt. We were about to begin an exercise using the Open Space

Technology facilitation method and we were reminded of the method’s underlying philosophy. The following words had particular saliency that morning: *‘Whatever happened was all that could have happened.’*

“This wasn’t new information. I am familiar with Open Space Technology. But in that moment, I realized that it isn’t enough to apply this way of thinking just as a facilitator. I need to apply it holistically and make it a way of being. This reflective start to the conference put me in the right frame of mind to learn from all of the experience and knowledge I was surrounded by.” **Julia Balabanowicz**

“My participation in the IAP2 North America Conference left me with strong impressions about the state of our field. While many of us represented diverse cultures, locations and professional backgrounds, we largely spoke the same language about our work. We expressed the same challenges and face the same collective opportunities moving forward. This universality was evident in the discussions of many adapted models, from open space session and our own workshop on designer democracy (featuring American and British experiences) to the adaptation of a Brazilian model (Porto Alegre’s participatory budgeting) in contexts across the United States at the plenary lunch. Many of our most pressing issues today hinge on our ability to leverage participatory work across cultures, so it was exciting to see and hear a level of global thinking demonstrated in such a conscious manner.

“‘Reflecting Forward,’ the event provided me with hopeful signs for the future of our field. There were many young professional participants who are not only hungry to grow in P2 work, but are already demonstrating new leadership – the future of our profession was well-represented. We also found inspiration in the Core Value Award winners, whose innovation and ability to open doors to new voices should provide us all with energy and direction in our future work. We found solidarity in the stories, the shared experiences of the conference, and in the host city – Winnipeg. For all the talk of the city’s cold climate, its residents exhibited a genuine warmth. Their generosity and hospitality will leave us with fond memories for years to come. **Joel Mills**

“I was struck by the level of commitment to P2 from the attendees, no matter where they came from, or what industry they represented. I think we all recognize that by getting stakeholders involved sooner, enabling them to proactively shape the programs/facilities we promote, the long-term sustainability of that initiative is placed in a much better position.” **Kevin Thorvaldson**

"My objectives were to network with other practitioners, learn new skills and best practices, and seek interest and advice on developing a northern 'chapter'. I got that and more: I left inspired and convinced I had found 'my people'. Oh, and it was lots of fun! Ultimately, the conference affirmed my desire to become a better P2 practitioner. I was blown away by the level of experience, competence, and passion in the IAP2 family." **John Glynn-Morris**

"... the keynote speakers were exceptional, especially Cindy Blackstock. So much of what she said moved me to question more and to try simple ideas to create change. Very rarely have I taken immediate action after a presentation but because she asked for it, I did ... the opportunity to chat with other presenters and attendees was where I found the greatest value." **Sarah Phillips**

As with so many things in life it was the people that stood out for me. The conference attracts dedicated, passionate, engaged people that deeply care about issues, about how to deepen and improve the practice of public participation. In the sessions and in the breaks I connected with people I knew virtually through working on IAP2 committees. I made new connections as we explored common challenges, while sharing our experiences and our knowledge. As I reflect on the conference there is a thread of storytelling that resonated deeply with me. From the personal stories that people shared at my tables, to keynote speakers such as Cindy Blackstock, CEO of the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada. These people all provided insights into the truth of our history, but also a path forward to bridge the indifference and engage Canadians in a more just society. **Catherine Rockandel**

Aaahhh Winnipeg!

As a new board member of IAP2 Canada, I was really looking forward to this year North American Conference. My hopes were overcome. Learned new techniques, get to know new p² tools and networked a lot! Too much? Never enough! But lots of follow-ups to do!!

It was also a unique chance to meet with other p² practitioners and to speak the same language, not French in my case, but the p² language!

What do I bring back home?

- Learned about marketing research as a way to reflect the majority and not the minority
- Discovered participatory budgeting and really hope to see many of these initiatives around the globe
- Confirmed my beliefs about the importance of relationship building, social licence & stakeholder capital on a day-to-day basis
- Tried the Socratic circles technique and can't wait to try it again!
- Saw online consultation from a new angle as a way to engage the disengaged

I also realized that «P² practitioners have a rich sense of high-touch and now a better sense of high-tech» while talking with the vendors at the tech-fair. Was also happy to hear that millennials «are motivated by better ways to do things, and attracted by the dynamics nature of p² field».

I don't know for you, but for me, it's official, my passion for p² is growing everyday! See you all in Portland in 2015 for IPA^{too}(!) conference! -- **Hugo Mimeo**

It was a pleasure and a privilege to spend two days connecting and learning with public participation professionals from across the continent at the IAP2 Annual Conference in Winnipeg. The experience left me feeling supported and energized by the great community.

For me, the highlights were meeting many peers with whom I have worked at a distance, discovering examples of P2 in sectors other than my own, engaging in interesting conversations about how we can improve the practice, and exploring the wonderful city of Winnipeg! I appreciated the concerted effort to discuss Canadian Aboriginal issues from a P2 perspective and the dynamic conference format.

Moving forward, I hope we will ask the following questions together: How can we engage a greater diversity of people in public participation (as practitioners and as participants)? How can we continue these conversations outside of conference season? How can we integrate research into our every day as practitioners? -- **Lindsay Wiginton**

I thought this was a great conference, not only was the price point reasonable, but I think there was actual exchange going on. Having sessions where there are ways to explore new techniques and learn about past challenges are more useful than showcasing the best. And we all know sharing real experiences around the table is much better than a lecture! Not that we don't learn from the best, of course we need balance, and I think you came close to finding that balance. Not only did I find that I came back to my firm re-energized, but I felt compelled to share. To share with my team the feeling of being included in a decision or process, to share the messages of our Keynote Speakers, and to share some of the techniques that I learned more about. I would also like to share a video of our Keynote Speakers if and when it becomes available. – **Anne Huizinga**