

A Framework for the future: We can't get there alone

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As Maurice Bitran CEO and Chief Science Officer of the Ontario Science Centre stated in the January/February 2019 Dimensions Magazine that looks at the future of science centers,

"It is clear to us that what took us to the present would not be enough to take us to the future. If we had any doubts, the closing of the Ringling Brothers circus in 2017 was a stark reminder that even if you have the greatest show on Earth...you cannot expect to remain relevant if you don't keep up with your visitors' expectations and adapt to the new conditions of the environment".

This environment is one of change – learning pedagogy, new technologies and the need for the teaching of new skills that will lead us into the 21st century. The support of community is becoming more and more crucial and therefore we need to bring a new focus to the evolution of our role as science centers within our communities.

So what have we done recently to handle the increasing need for new relevance? What partnerships have we been building with the formal education system; allowing us to play a role in testing new educational experiences and approaches?

In partnership with the Ministry of Education in Ontario, in 2018, we tested new opportunities to orient our educational programs so that we offer the skills of critical thinking, problem solving, resilience and collaboration. **"Cultural Collisions"** offered students a chance to take a journey back in time in collaboration with CERN and the scientists that work at the Large Hadron Collider. They studied the formation of the universe and the building blocks and laws fundamental to its existence. Students used art, music and literature to offer their perspective on who we are, where we are going and worked with scientists to tell that story in creative and unexpected ways. Science and art were brought together - students rapped, created videos and put together various forms of visual arts around the topic of physics and experimental physics.

Other collaborations connected us with various parts of our community. These included collaborations with Steamlabs for specific activities in Inventorium, a co-creative space within our centre that opened in 2017; new collaboration with MOCA – the Museum of Contemporary Art in Toronto, has again brought science and art together in unexpected ways, giving our visitors a new way to bring science and art together, and gain relevance for other community members; working in close collaboration with Geneva Centre for Autism, the Science Centre developed family-friendly programs on **Sensory Friendly Saturdays**.

This past March, other collaborations have brought and science and sport (skateboarding) together, giving visitors a chance to increase the relevancy of science in their everyday lives.

Interesting collaborations, unexpected results, some of these are key to the story that we will tell as we work towards relevancy in the 21st century.

Presenter: Natalie Das