

# Sharing Information to Strengthen Rural Communities: Lessons Learned from BC Projects

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is a cooperative project between the Fraser Basin Council and BC Rural Team. The Fraser Basin Council is a non-governmental organization established in 1997 to facilitate problem solving by bringing together people to make decisions integrating social, economic and environmental values. The BC Rural Team is a partnership of federal and provincial government departments who are working together toward a common mandate for strengthening rural communities.

The BC Rural Team and the Fraser Basin Council extend their thanks and appreciation to the people who provided information for the case studies included in this booklet. This booklet aims at sharing lessons learned from the wide range of rural initiatives taking place in British Columbia.

In addition, a steering committee of BC Rural Team members provided input during this lessons learned project. The steering committee members were:

- Patty Bossort, Columbia Basin Trust
- Brandon Hughes, Human Resources Development Canada/ Canadian Rural Partnership
- Leslie Lax, Canadian Rural Partnership
- Leslie Ross, Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services
- Mike Stolte, Community Futures Development Corporation
- Geoffrey Thornburn, Environment Canada
- Chris Watts, Western Economic Diversification
- Cheryl Wilson, Coastal Communities Network

Maggie Julian (Fraser Basin Council) and Clare Mochrie (Global Frameworks) wrote the case studies. Gail Wallin of the Fraser Basin Council provided guidance to this project.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sustaining healthy rural communities is vital to all residents across British Columbia. Healthy rural communities are a common goal of the Fraser Basin Council<sup>1</sup>, the BC Rural Team<sup>2</sup> and many governments and small communities across British Columbia. Through a variety of research, it has been recognized that citizens in rural communities face many common challenges around issues such as accessing information and support, a changing resource economy, youth opportunities, and community capacity. Over the past three years, BC Rural Dialogues and Provincial Youth Dialogues, public dialogue sessions sponsored by the BC Rural Team, have continually identified the need to share lessons learned among rural communities and organizations. The BC Rural Team and the Fraser Basin Council joined together to share the lessons learned from the wide range of rural initiatives taking place in British Columbia.

"Keep struggling forward, with as many people working together as possible"

This booklet contains 40 case studies of projects, selected to represent a broad range of geographic locations and issues, working towards building healthier rural communities. This is not compilation of 'best practices', but rather an opportunity to share 'lessons learned', as many rural communities are struggling with similar challenges. The projects incorporate and integrate social, economic and environmental aspects, although not all projects capture all of these elements. The intention of this project is not to evaluate movement toward sustainability or project effectiveness, instead it is to share important lessons whether a project is at the proposal stage or has been implemented and whether it succeeds or fails.

These case studies present a brief overview of the community initiatives as well as providing a snapshot of some of the lessons learned from these projects. Readers are encouraged to draw their own insights.

## SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED

### Community Participation and Buy-In

- Community buy-in is a key element for project success and the support of community groups and local businesses is important for any initiative. Events that were less successful had fewer community groups involved.

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<sup>1</sup> The Fraser Basin Council is a non-governmental organization established to facilitate problem solving by bringing together people to make decisions integrating social, economic and environmental values.

<sup>2</sup> The BC Rural Team is a partnership of federal and provincial government departments working together toward a common mandate of strengthening rural communities.

- Competition among organizations for funding and ownership of initiatives will not move the community forward nor is it healthy for the organizations involved.
- A key piece of advice is to get people working together. Being a smaller, isolated community can help the process, because people are more willing to work together.
- Go out and talk to the people, find out their level of interest, and get their support for a project. Use both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (focus group) methods for gauging interest in the project.
- Project development takes time. Start small and grow, don't expect to reach the project goal right away.
- Research other similar initiatives as you develop your own project so you don't re-invent the wheel.

### **Incorporating Social and Environmental Values**

- A holistic approach, incorporating the social and ecological goals is important.
- A contribution to the long-term sustainability of the community is central to ensuring community ownership of the initiative, and key to the successful implementation of a project.

### **Leadership in the Community**

- It is important to have respected leaders who are well connected to the community to develop and support projects.
- There is a pool of residents with leadership potential. Developing this capacity is part of long-term community sustainability.

### **Representative of the Community**

- Don't get too slick; make sure the project represents your community. The community should set the direction of the project.
- Each community must find its own direction and build on its own strengths. For example, tourism initiatives cannot be developed in every community. Key ingredients need to be in place, such as wilderness or cultural experiences.
- It is important for groups within the community to co-ordinate their activities to fit in with an overall strategy, so the pieces of the puzzle fit together. Analyse opportunities for development to see what pieces of the puzzle are missing, and focus on those opportunities.

**"Project development takes time. Expectations of a fast project and immediate results are both naïve and guarantee disappointment, disenfranchisement and diminishment of trust."**

## **Funding**

- Start thinking about funding opportunities early. There may be opportunities to link into existing infrastructure.
- Before the project is started, figure out and develop a business plan for how operating costs are going to be covered.
- A good fund-raising strategy is very important, demonstrating to donors that results are being achieved. Diversified funding without dependence on government funding is also a sustainable approach. Dependence on focused government funding can jeopardize organizations if priorities change, and funding is cut.
- Don't bend your vision to fit funding criteria of government programs, instead seek areas of common interest with funders to focus on activities you both support.

## **Partnerships**

- Partnering with an organization that has knowledge and experience can be key to project success. Organizations often take on more than they have the capacity to handle, and fail to look at whom they can partner with to make it happen.
- Funders need to spend time in the community both to understand the context of the project and to be part of its evolution.

## **Skills and Expertise**

- Some organizations do not go far enough to bring in the skills and expertise needed to do the job. Bring in staff with a diversity of expertise. The staff can help build local capacity if these skills are not present locally.
- Don't be afraid to make mistakes because they present an opportunity to learn.

## **Rewards**

- Make sure you celebrate your progress and reward everyone involved.

## **SUMMARY**

Whether a project succeeds or fails, there is useful and transferable information that can be shared with other rural communities. Each of the case studies presented in this compilation has lessons to offer. Some of the projects have improved economic stability. Others, despite significant community involvement, never quite made it off the ground. Nevertheless, we can learn from each and every project. It is the hope of project sponsors that the lessons from the 40 case studies presented here will assist rural and remote communities to strengthen their social, economic and environmental position and offer some insights to the routes to community sustainability.



## INTRODUCTION

Sustaining healthy rural communities is vital to all residents across British Columbia. Healthy rural communities are a common goal of the Fraser Basin Council, the BC Rural Team and many governments and small communities across British Columbia. The BC Rural Team, a federal-provincial government partnership, was established to address rural issues and improve communication between rural communities and government. Providing support and sharing success stories has been, and is,

the focus of many federal and provincial government initiatives. Both project sponsors, the Fraser Basin Council and BC Rural Team, have worked in partnership with rural citizens and governments to improve communication and build actions that will contribute to healthier sustainable rural communities.

Over the past three years, the BC Rural Team has sponsored rural dialogues across the province. BC Rural Dialogues have continually identified the need to share lessons learned among rural communities and organizations. Again in April 2001, the *Rural Communities- Rural Visions* conference, confirmed the need to share information so that each community can benefit from experiences learned in similar communities.

In partnership with the BC Provincial Government, the Fraser Basin Council initiated a three-phase project, in the summer of 2001, aimed at sharing 'lessons learned' from projects focused on strengthening rural communities. Phase One, an inventory of the range of projects was completed in the fall of 2001, and is available in both print and on-line versions ([www.fraserbasin.bc.ca](http://www.fraserbasin.bc.ca)). For Phase Two the Fraser Basin Council has partnered with the BC Rural Team to document lessons learned from key community projects. Phase Three will focus on communication activities to share the information among interested communities and organizations.

This booklet contains 40 case studies of projects, selected to represent a broad range of geographic locations and issues, that are working towards building healthier rural communities. This is not compilation of 'best practices'. The case studies provide an opportunity to share lessons learned, as many rural communities are struggling with similar challenges. The projects incorporate and integrate social, economic and environmental aspects, although not all projects capture all of these elements. The intention of this project is not to evaluate movement toward

"It is important to find yourself as a community and know what is important to you as a community, and to build on your strengths, and the relationships in the community."

sustainability or project effectiveness, instead it is to share important lessons whether a project is at the proposal stage or has been implemented and whether it succeeds or fails.

## **RESPONDING TO RURAL CONCERNS**

Citizens in rural communities face many common challenges around issues such as accessing information and support, a changing resource economy, youth opportunities, and community capacity. Through the Rural Dialogue, hosted by the BC Rural Team, key rural issues and priority areas were identified by rural people

**"Individuals with  
charisma and linkages  
within the community are  
key to sustaining the  
project momentum and  
engaging all aspects of  
the community in the  
project. "**

across Canada<sup>3</sup>. The Dialogue, which began in BC in 1998, made a concerted effort to get input from more than 7000 rural citizens from across the country through workshops and surveys.

In British Columbia, the BC Rural Team hosted workshops across the province with rural citizens to identify the issues and priorities for rural British Columbians. In 1999 and 2000, a series of six workshops took place in BC to discuss rural issues. A total of 170 people participated in workshops held in

Creston, Smithers, Port Alberni, Dawson Creek, 100 Mile House, and Penticton.

The following broad recommendations that came out of the BC Rural Dialogue Workshops stated that government should:

Implement actions that reflect the intent for improved rural services.

Work with existing local organizations and provincial governments to assist in distributing program information.

Continue hosting Rural Dialogue workshops with expanding participation and developing other supporting communication activities.

Ensure that knowledge gained from pilot projects and other initiatives are measurable

**"Reward everyone  
involved in the project  
on a regular basis,  
celebrate the wins and  
it will feel like less of a  
struggle."**

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<sup>3</sup> BC Rural Dialogue Executive Summary of 1999/2000 Activities

and extended to benefit other communities and initiatives.

Ensure that programs are flexible and adaptable to address the local needs of diverse communities.

This project, documenting case studies from all regions of BC, responds to a clearly stated community interest in sharing information. Project leaders willingly shared their experiences so that other rural and remote communities could learn from the successes and challenges facing each of the projects described herein. These are local stories told by local champions.

Many of these issues were confirmed as priorities during the “Rural Communities-Rural Visions” 2001 conference held in Silver Star.

## **PROCESS: DOCUMENTING LESSONS LEARNED**

The goal of this project is to develop a collection of case studies and to document the ‘lessons learned’ from rural BC projects working toward sustainability, community learning, capacity building and/or economic diversification. The BC Rural Team and the Fraser Basin Council have worked together on this project to assist rural communities in sharing past experiences as a means to help achieve rural sustainability. Representatives from the BC Rural Team formed a steering committee to provide guidance on the project (see acknowledgements).

With the input from the steering committee, the approach was to select key projects, interview proponents, document the information and prepare it for communication to interested parties.

The following steps outline this process:

1. Establishment of a steering committee
2. Development of an interview template for case studies
3. Development of selection criteria for case studies projects
4. Selection of case studies using selection criteria
5. Phone interviews and supplementary research conducted for each case study
6. Case study writing using information from interviews and research
7. Editing of case studies
8. Review of case study by project proponents who provided information
9. Review and input by Steering Committee
10. Editing and compilation of case studies into book format
11. Production and distribution of case study book in print and electronic versions

## **PROJECT SELECTION**

Projects were selected from a list of more than 240 BC projects that met the following criteria:

- The project is helping to build healthy, sustainable rural communities
- The project is located in a BC rural and/or remote community of less than 25,000 people
- The project has been initiated in the past 5 years (1996-present)
- The project involves a partnership approach of two or more parties
- The project has included fundamental information transferable to new locations.

The set of 40 case studies that follows was selected to reflect the following objectives:

- Include a cross-section of initiatives from all regions of the province
- Include economic, social and environmental spheres
- Include projects funded by a range of departments/ agencies (i.e. not all from a single funding source)
- Include projects related to Aboriginals, women, youth and people with disabilities
- Include marine, forestry, tourism, technology access, and agriculture project

## **Aboriginal Lending Circles**

### **Summary**

The Aboriginal Lending Circles Project is a joint initiative of Community Futures in South East Region and the Royal Bank based in Cranbrook. It was created to provide small loans to new entrepreneurs of the Ktunaxa Kinbasket band and Metis communities using a lending circle model of financing. The program was developed in collaboration with both communities, but to date the program has not dispensed any loans.

### **Getting Started**

The Lending Circles Project was launched in 2000. A new resort was being built in the Cranbrook-Kootenays at the time and it was expected that the development would create opportunities for new entrepreneurs. Community Futures approached the Ktunaxa Kinbasket band and Kootenay Regional Metis Association about developing a program to assist emerging small businesses with their start-up costs. Working with the Royal Bank, the frameworks for two lending circles were established, consisting of three individuals each. These offered loans beginning at \$1,000 and increasing with successive repayments to \$2,000 and \$3,000.

### **Project Description**

Lending circles are an emerging alternative approach for providing small loans to individuals that are unable to access to capital through traditional sources. In a lending circle, a small group of people comes together to help one another by pooling some of their financial resources combined with a loan from the program. Through peer support, mutual assistance and collective action, the group ensures repayment of the loan and establishes accountability. While this is an effective model for micro-financing in principle, the program has only been approached for larger loans. Consequently, there are no lending circles functioning.

### **Community Involvement**

The associations of both the Ktunaxa Kinbasket band and Kootenay Regional Metis have been partners in the Lending Circles Project, helping to develop the program and advertise its existence.

### **Project Effectiveness**

The lack of participants in the program has been attributed largely to timing. Construction on the resort development that inspired its development was stalled and it will be two years late in opening its doors. Whereas there was initially interest in the community in starting small businesses to take advantage of the

increased tourist traffic that was anticipated for the area, the momentum has waned as a result of the delay.

Although the Lending Circles themselves have yet to assist people in the community, the process of developing of the project has served to strengthen linkages in the community, specifically between Community Futures and their aboriginal partners. This has been a positive outcome of the initiative and one that will inevitably serve to benefit both communities in the future.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

Peer lending circles have proven to be a highly effective model for both financiers and community members. Loans dispersed to groups and monitored through peer support and pressure typically have high repayment rates and are therefore attractive to lending institutions. For individuals, they create an opportunity to access credit that would otherwise be unattainable through conventional sources. Despite the potential of the model for generating community-based economic solutions, micro-loans are not what is required in this particular community at this time. Consequently the project has yet to result in any economic impacts.

### **Challenges**

The greatest challenge that the Lending Circles Project has faced is attracting interested participants. As mentioned, this reflects the lack of a market for micro-finance at the present time. Insufficient awareness or understanding about the program could also be a factor.

### **Support**

The project received initial funding from the Community Capacity Building Project of the former Ministry of Community Development, Cooperatives and Volunteers. Since the beginning, it has also had the endorsement of the Ktunaxa Kinbasket band and Kootenay Regional Metis Association as well as the economic development officers in each of these communities.

### **Advice to Others**

In light of the potential of lending circles to assist small businesses and entrepreneurs, the Project Coordinator at Community Futures recommends this type of project for other communities. However, this particular initiative has highlighted the importance of there first being a need for small loans in the community and that the timing of the project corresponds to this need. It has also underlined the value of strong relationships and trust between partners participating in the project.

**Source**

- Interview with Jenna Calder, March 2002
- Written by Clare Mochrie

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## Arrow Lakes Sk8 Park

### Summary

Just under 1800 people live in Nakusp, and about 3000 people live in the Arrow Lakes Region. Established over 100 years ago and incorporated in 1964, Nakusp has a long history of logging and mining. Nakusp, "Bay of Quiet Waters", is situated 450 meters above sea level overlooking the upper Arrow Lake. The Village of Nakusp is 198 Km east of Vernon, 99 Km south of Revelstoke and 147 Km north of the Cities of Nelson and Castlegar.

In the spring of 1998 a group of interested residents of the Arrow Lake region began discussions about how to build a Skate Park for their community. The idea for an Sk8 Park was put forward because of interest from youth and because it provides an accessible and new activity for children and youth in the Arrow Lakes region. By the end of 1998 the Arrow Lakes Youth Society, a non-profit organization, was established. The committee consisted of a group of about six people of mixed ages that included one enthusiastic skateboarder and snowboarder, and an instructor at Selkirk College.

### Getting Started

Once the Arrow Lakes Youth Society was formed as a non-profit association, it was able to apply for grants to support the development of an Sk8 Park in Nakusp. The first step for project development was to research funding opportunities as well as other Skate Parks in BC. The group gathered information about almost every Skate Park in BC, and wrote letters asking for more information.

Getting support and permission from the Village of Nakusp was a key step in moving the project forward, before funding could be sought out. Two applications totalling \$59,000 were put forward and accepted by the Columbia Basin Trust. Nakusp residents had to vote on both proposals, one for \$39,000 and the other for \$20,000 before they could be accepted. Both votes were very close, with the proposals passing by only a few votes each time. More than \$139,000 was secured for the project. Ministry of Community Development, Cooperatives and Volunteers, Human Resources Development Canada, CIBC, Kootenay Savings, the local Legion, the local Rotary Club and the Vancouver Foundation also provided funding. These monies were used for wages and construction materials.

### Project Description

Consultants were hired to design the Sk8 Park, who worked in consultation with the almost all of children and youth in the community. They gathered ideas from the kids and then constructed models and blueprints from this input to show in the

community. They made a book to show all the potential plans for the Skate Park design.

Investigation of other Skate Parks by Society members concluded that concrete was the best material to use because it lasted many more years than blacktop and did not melt in the sun. Construction on the Sk8 Park began in July 2001 and the work was done by a local contractor from the Arrow Lakes region. He used the plans completed by the consultants, with some slight variations. Although this was his first Skate Park he has since worked on several other Skate Parks in other communities. The Skate Park is now almost complete. Only the benches to accommodate spectators and covered garbage cans remain to be installed. Not only skateboards, but rollerblades, mountain bikes, BMX and scooters can be used at the park.

### **Community Involvement**

Community support and involvement, particularly of the kids in the community was very important. The project leaders felt it was important to keep the project open and inclusive, beyond just the youth who were already involved in skateboarding. As well, some older people got involved in the project because they felt it was very important to have an activity for the children and youth in the community. They were able to contribute through fundraising such as raffle ticket sales, bottle collection, and organizing fundraising dances at the Legion.

### **Indicators**

The completion of the Sk8 Park is one indicator of project success, as will be the continued interest and enthusiasm of the park by children and youth. Both girls and boys make use of the park.

### **Project Effectiveness**

The project coordinators were very committed to seeing the project through, despite many other personal and work priorities in their lives. The project required commitment and dedication everyday, but through hard work the pieces fell into place. The energy and enthusiasm and willingness to carry it through have all been key ingredients to the initiative's success.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

The project created local employment for the coordinator during the planning phase and during the construction, although both these jobs are now complete. The Arrow Lakes Youth Society is now working on a new project to build a youth theatre, and is currently seeking funding to support this new initiative.

## **Challenges**

Securing the funding was the biggest challenge that the project faced. For several of the funding presentations, the youth became involved by putting on plays and presentations. Youth were particularly involved when the whole Village was voting on the funding options being presented to the Columbia Basin Trust. They also made speeches for a second presentation. In addition, a number of presentations were made to the Village in order to secure support. Finding appropriate funding sources was another challenge, but several organizations provided support for this process such as the outreach at the local employment centre.

Another challenge was to dispel the myths around Skate Parks. Some people feel they became a hangout for youth and could contribute to increased vandalism and drug use. It was important for the project coordinator to be able to share positive stories from other communities to dispel these myths. In some communities skateboarding on city streets can actually become an expense because the sidewalks get damaged and curbs need to be repaired.

## **Support and Legacy**

There was some site testing to ensure that the ground was viable for the Sk8 Park location that was selected. The landscaping is still being completed but money for upkeep and maintenance will be minimal. The Village will mow the grass, and a broom is available for kids to sweep it. There is also water at the location to hose it down if needed. There are no staffing requirements for the Park; it has a 'use at your own risk' policy.

It was very useful to talk to other communities in BC that have completed Skate Park projects. The project coordinator estimated she investigated projects in 25 other communities, including Merritt, Kamloops, and Vancouver as well as two projects in the United States. This research helped in building a case for the Village that this was a useful project that would provide a sustaining activity for the community's youth.

## **Advice to Others**

- It is important that the community supports the project.
- Do research on other parks to find out what parks your community group likes the best. Look at pictures from other communities, or visit other parks. Do this before you jump in.
- The experience of the consultants with other Skate Park designs was very useful. They recommended keeping the design simple and open.
- The project construction cannot be completed in a day, it is important to pay attention to details, and make sure the builder has adequate experience.
- Advertise to promote the project such as a logo contest, word of mouth about the project is very important to build local support.

- Don't get discouraged by the cost of the project as there are funding opportunities available for projects that are working to help youth.

**Source**

- Interview with Janice Leeson, March 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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**More Information**

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## **Bowen Island Geolibrary**

### **Summary**

Bowen Island is rural community of about 3,500 people about a 20-minute ferry ride from Horseshoe Bay, in West Vancouver. About 50% of Island residents commute to work on the Mainland. Bowen Island is part of the Islands Trust, a jurisdiction for the BC Gulf Islands created in 1977 to “preserve and protect the trust area and its unique amenities and environment for the benefit of the residents of the trust area and of British Columbia generally”. In 1996, Bowen Island completed revisions of its Official Community Plan, through a participatory process that involved hundreds of island residents. In 1999, the Island became the first Municipality in the Islands Trust.

The new municipality is wrestling with finding a balance between human and ecological health. As a small rural community at the fringe of a major urban centre, residents are faced with many challenges in shaping the future of the Island. The challenge as a new municipality will be to “develop a framework and capacity for community planning that embraces the underlying principles of sustainable development<sup>4</sup>, and that promotes self reliance, and a culture of informed decision making on issues of social, economic and ecological health within our community and surrounding regions of the Georgia Basin”.

Through the Bowen Island Geolibrary, a framework is being developed that will assist the newly formed municipal government, local businesses and residents, stewardship groups and other relevant government agencies in evaluating, embracing and implementing activities leading toward a more healthy and vibrant local community. To support dialogue on community sustainability a need has been identified for the development of an understandable and accessible frame of reference for community materials. The goal of the Bowen Island Geolibrary is to help build a sense of place by creating a user-friendly and dynamic library of information.

### **Getting Started**

The Geolibrary project has roots in the Official Community Planning process, which began about 15 years ago. The concept of a digital library evolved when the need for shared access to information that the community was compiling was recognized during the community planning process. While this was the seed for the project, the technology has only been available to develop the digital library for the past five years. It took some time to build the momentum to develop the Geolibrary. Part of the catalyst for getting the project underway was the community decision

to become a new municipality, and the recognition that the community would take over the responsibility for community planning. The Bowen Island Forest and Watershed Management Society (BIFWMS), a community society that has been active for more than ten years, initiated the project.

With a larger effort to develop a Geolibrary for the Georgia Basin also underway, Bowen Island has developed as a 'prototype' at the community level. Natural Resources Canada funds this community project through the Sustainable Communities Initiative. Natural Resources Canada is also a partner in the regional initiative, but the regional project is funded through the GEOIDE (Geospatial Information for Informed Decisions) research network. When complete, the Bowen Island Geolibrary is going to be available in two forms, as a CD-ROM and as an on-line, searchable website ([www.bowenland.info](http://www.bowenland.info)). Reports and text information as well as maps and spatial information will be included.

Before writing the Geolibrary proposal, several community workshops were held to look at the community needs and also computer accessibility issues. The importance of accessibility was identified through these workshops, and it was recognized that not everyone has computer or internet access. CD-ROMs and community information kiosks were looked at as possible responses to accessibility concerns and the CD-ROM was chosen because it was felt that it led to wider accessibility. The CD-ROM can be used at existing public computer access points on Bowen Island such as the library, Municipal Hall, and controlled access at the Bowen Island Community School and Island Pacific School.

### **Project Description**

Principle objectives of this project were to develop a conceptual framework and model for sustainability that might be used by small rural communities in addressing social and economic challenges brought on by downturns in resource industries and/or rapid changes in socio-economic fabric. The conceptual framework is based on four principle themes that can be used to support the transition toward a more sustainable, knowledge based community<sup>4</sup>.

The four themes are:

- *Sustainable economic development*; the integration of economic, environmental and social factors in community based decision making,
- *Knowledge based economy*; the identification of local information and knowledge resources, and the capacity of the community to build on these assets,
- *Social capital*; the interconnections of people within a community and their willingness to work together toward a common purpose, and

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<sup>4</sup> Crawford, J. *The Community Vitality Project; Building Viable and Sustainable Communities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, A report submitted to NRCan and HRDC by the Pacific Resource Centre, 2000.

- *Community based learning*; the process by which individuals learn within a community based setting for purposes of generating new knowledge, skills and/or action strategies.

The intention of the Bowen Island Geolibrary is to create an accessible place for community documents and materials. The project builds on almost ten years of work by the Bowen Island Forest and Watershed Management Society, collecting and documenting a baseline of information about the Island. The society has coordinated a number of mapping projects in past years. While some community members were aware of data that existed in collections both on and off the Island, the Geolibrary project has allowed for it to be collected and transformed into a useable and accessible form.

Another important component of the project is the mandate, in addition to collecting content and building an information system, to build capacity to use the digital information resources within the community. To meet this goal, a number of workshops have been organized including a community workshop, a workshop for the Municipal Council, as well as training workshops for students. This is an important element of the work, the technology is not being thrown at the community without support, instead there is an effort to build capacity at the ground level for uptake and meaningful use of the resource.

### **Community Involvement**

The project has been underway since 2000, and up to this point it has been lead by a small group of hardworking community members. The data were pulled together by local volunteers, but it is hoped that the biggest community involvement will come with use of the Geolibrary itself. The project has the endorsement of the Bowen Island Municipal Council.

A partnership has developed between Island Pacific School (IPS), a private school on Bowen, and the Geolibrary project. IPS is providing a home for both the hardware and software needed for the project. Community participation is expected to increase once the CD-ROM is released and the website is on-line, which is expected by May 2002.

So far, one workshop on Geographical Information Systems (GIS) using the Geolibrary prototype CD was run at IPS with about 20 Islanders participating. There was no formal evaluation of the workshop but informal feedback has been very positive. The workshop also spurred some new initiatives, such as a '*Coming Alive/Sense of Place*' project with the grade 10 IPS class. One lesson identified from the workshop was the importance of making sure participants' expectations were clear. The workshop had advertised that the CD-ROM would be a take-home product. It actually took more time than expected to prepare the data in a user-

friendly format and participants did not receive the CD-ROM until almost six months after the workshop.

### **Project Effectiveness**

The project has been effective in collecting available reports, planning documents, and geophysical information into one location. Project proponents tested the prototype 'information gateway' with a number of individuals and the feedback is positive: it is easy to navigate and makes sense to users. The project was relatively cost effective, although it does build on a number of years of community work that went into collecting community information before the Geolibrary component began.

### **Indicators**

The project did not establish indicators of success at the project on-set. At this point, it is difficult to measure the project outcomes using indicators. Once the CD is released and the website is operating, the 'community enthusiasm' will be a measure of how effectively the project is getting people interested and engaged in community planning. While it is difficult to measure, the level of community empowerment, this is another potential indicator of project success. The Geolibrary will introduce new and long-time residents to information they may not have known even existed. Website use and the level of interest in community workshops that are offered will be measured.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

The Geolibrary project recognizes the importance of building community understanding and knowledge about the human and natural environment. The goal is to empower the community so that people can find out more and work towards an understanding of what exists in the community. Ideally every community would have a repository for community documents and information that is accessible and user-friendly, but this is rarely the case in practice. This project is trying to address accessibility and equity issues by making the information widely available on a website.

Project leaders hope this initiative will ultimately impact decision-making in local governance, as community understanding of the environmental, social and economic considerations of decisions grow. The impact on decision making will evolve with increased community knowledge and understanding of local issues to inform local citizens and to be used as a tool for interested community members to influence Council decisions. At the same time, Municipal Council will have additional information to inform internal decisions.

### **Challenges**

While information for the Geolibrary was being collected, access to data from external sources proved challenging at times. Some of the project constraints were

technical, such as how to best portray the information. It is important to match the data with technology that is user-friendly.

Keeping the data in the Geolibrary up-to-date will be a challenge. It is hoped that enough interest can be generated among other organizations that they will want to contribute and keep the Geolibrary current. This includes pulling information that already exists into the Geolibrary, but also incorporating new information. The Bowen Island Trail Builders Association is embarking on a project to map trails on crown land, producing a hiking guide to the Island that would be a useful and interesting addition to the Geolibrary.

### **Innovation**

The prototype Geolibrary has been demonstrated in several workshops in other communities and is generating quite a bit of interest. Information contained in the Geolibrary allows users to compare land use scenarios. Other communities see how the user-friendly 'gateway' increases interest and understanding in community issues. While the Bowen Island Geolibrary is the 'guinea pig' for the wider Georgia Basin project, at least two other similar projects are underway in Cowichan Valley and Victoria. Bowen Island project leaders are sharing their experiences with other communities just beginning to look at this type of project and are also learning from similar initiatives in other communities. The Bowen Island Geolibrary may be 'sistered' with other projects in the Pacific Northwest.

### **Support**

Funding and dedicated volunteers are critical components of the Geolibrary project. The Bowen Island Forest and Water Management Society have secured more than \$40,000 in hardware and software from several sources. Global Positioning System technology has allowed community members to undertake community mapping (Galiano Conservancy has also done this). Not only does the technology (such as ARC-View GIS Software) need to be available, but also people must be trained to use it. Funding from the Real Estate Foundation via the Bowen Island Sustainability Project also supported a student to work on developing the spatial content of the Geolibrary.

Project leaders advise other groups to be aware that this project is not just about getting funding, but having enough time for volunteers to do all the necessary groundwork. While the Geolibrary component of the project has only been underway for one and a half years, the project builds on almost 10 years of community-driven work to establish a baseline of information about Bowen Island. Some interest has been generated in other community groups such as the Bowen Island Conservancy and the Nature Club to contribute to the Geolibrary, perhaps taking a more active role and responsibility and creating new content for the project.

## **Legacy**

While it is unclear whether the project will be supported financially by the Municipal Council, the project has enough in-kind community support to continue in some capacity. The Forest and Water Management Society will continue to apply for grants and financial support to expand the Geolibrary. In the meantime, the on-going costs for Geolibrary maintenance and development of about \$1,500 (software licensing etc) are being covered by BIFWMS through the sale of the CD-ROM and other fundraisers. Island Pacific School, as a project partner, also contributes in kind by hosting and maintaining the web server.

## **Advice to Others**

- In building community based learning networks it is very important to go through a multistakeholder process with the community.
- Identify the user needs first and make sure that the technology meets the needs of community members. Figure out what the needs, the functionality, and the content requirements are and then make decisions on the technical implementation.
- Don't build a website unless you need it. If people would prefer a paper version of a community atlas then that is the way it should be delivered.
- The quality of data might not always be perfect, and the community needs to understand that reliability can be an issue.
- A very systematic approach is needed to put together a Geolibrary. The component parts need to be understood, and it can take a long time to put them all together.

## **Source**

- Interview with Julian Dunster, January 2002 and Murray Journeay, March 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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### **More Information**

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## **Central Kootenay Micro Lending Program**

### **Summary**

More than 60,000 people live in the Central Kootenays. The economy is resource based, mirroring most interior BC towns with forestry, hydro electricity, and mining. The government and professional service sector is strong and there is also a very strong tourism base. In addition, many people have moved to the area for lifestyle reasons and contribute as small business owners or consultants for non-local businesses outside the area.

In the Spring of 2000, the Central Kootenay Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) began developing an innovative Micro Lending operation. The Micro Loan Fund developed out of the recognition that there was a need for lending opportunities by low-income people who could not meet conventional lending criteria, and therefore had difficulty accessing credit from traditional lending sources.

### **Getting Started**

The CFDC already had a program for small business financing, with loans ranging from \$1,000 to \$500,000. The CFDC staff were interested in developing a Micro Lending program but were lacking in the financial capacity to move forward. Micro loans are for less than \$5,000, for people with no access to any other forms of credit. Historically, CFDC has provided only about five loans for less than \$5,000 in any year.

A grant from the former Ministry of Community Development, Cooperatives, and Volunteers (CDCV) provided the seed funding of \$50,000 to get the program underway. A partnership was formed between CFDC, who provided \$100,000 loan capital, the provincial government (through CDCV), and the Columbia Basin Trust who contributed \$25,000 towards operating funds. Some of grant money was used to conduct research on how to develop the Micro Lending Program, and the rest was allocated to operating costs. The majority of funds provided the seed money to be lent out in Micro Loans. The partnership was formed for two years and ends in April 2002.

### **Project Description**

By the fall of 2000, the program was up and running, with loan opportunities being advertised in the Central Kootenays. In the first year, about 30 loans were approved, and an additional 30 in the second year of the program. The program had one full-time staff support for the first two years. Funds have been secured from the Columbia Basin Trust for a position in the third year of the program.

The length of the loan varies as per business need, none are for longer than 24 months, and the loans have prime + 4 interest, or 10%, whichever is greater. On average the fund has 40 outstanding loans each quarter valued at \$45,000. The average loan is for \$3000 and is paid back in 18 months.

### **Community Involvement**

The project has an active Steering Committee that encompasses a range of community perspectives. It includes client representatives who have been involved with self-employment assistance programs, as well as social service agencies, who work together to ensure that the Loan procedures fit with the needs of the client groups.

### **Indicators**

The biggest indicator of project success is the continued demand for the program, after two years of operation. The number of businesses created, and the number of loans that are repaid are also being tracked.

### **Project Effectiveness**

Developing a partnership with the Columbia Basin Trust has helped expand the project's effectiveness. The success of the program is also likely due to the fact that the Central Kootenays is already an environment where micro-business is thriving. Other communities may not have as high an entrepreneurial spirit. This existing interest and need has resulted in a high application rate for the program. Pre-planning and research was critical to the success of the Micro Loan Program.

Another factor contributing to success is the emphasis placed on well-developed training and workshops, and the need for follow-up training and support for clients. However, experience from other micro lending operations had shown that training requirements for loan applicants can be a barrier to accessing micro loans. Training requirements developed for this program attempted to achieve a balance between the need for training and ensuring that the program is accessible. There are no requirements for training pre-application, and the business planning that is offered is free and is popular.

Many of the program's clients have not been able to secure financing through other means, and the program was developed to ensure that the design and distribution of program information (such as promotional materials) was accessible and understandable for low-income people. Literacy barriers are a big issue so the use of simple language and short sentences, for example, is important.

A flexible payment system provides financial relief when the client is facing challenges with repayment. For the most part, clients have been very good at

making repayments on micro loans. In most lending operations, the budget allows for a 3% loss on defaulted loans. The Micro Lending Program had budgeted for a loan loss of 10%, so while the interest rate is higher (10%), the funds remain at a steady level. It is too early in the fund operation to determine the actual default rate.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

More than 48 business have developed with support from the Micro Loan Program. Almost without exception, these businesses would not have developed without the support of the Program.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

In the first 17 months of operations there were 78 loan applications, 48 of which were approved. 45% of the approved loans went to women, and 54% of total approvals went to women. 14% were awarded to people with physical or mental disabilities. The loans were distributed around the service area, with a slightly higher concentration in higher density areas such as Nelson, although rural individuals were also successful in securing loans.

### **Challenges**

One of the biggest project challenges has been meeting the needs of individuals who have faced chronic poverty, who face the biggest hurdles in terms of low levels of education and literacy. Many of these people have difficulty securing a loan even through the more flexible Micro Loan program. It is important that the commitment to training and support be particularly strong in order to support this sector of the population.

The first Micro Lending program in the world was the Grameen Bank model, used in developing countries. In developing countries where the Grameen Bank has operated (for example, Bangladesh), most of the population (over 95%) have difficulty securing credit. The lending programs can pay for themselves due to the number of people and loans involved. In the West, the percentage of people with difficulty securing credit is closer to 5% of the population. So programs have fewer clients, the staff is more expensive, and the program delivery costs per recipient are higher which makes operational funding crucial.

### **Innovation**

This program has focused on individual lending, and this is innovative among micro loan programs. Most other micro loan programs have a strong peer lending program. This works when a group come together and guarantee each other's loans. This is ideal for situations where individuals cannot get loan security any other way. This option was offered when the Kootenay program was developed, but because of the accessibility of the individual lending option, all the applications were for individual micro loans. While interest exists in the peer program, getting a group together

proved to be a challenge, and people were able to get social support for their business development in other ways.

### **Support**

As mentioned, pre-planning and research were essential components of this project. Micro Loan programs were operating through other Community Futures in Trail, Cranbrooke, and Grand Forks, but the programs operate at a smaller scale than the Central Kootenays program. Other organizations have also run programs such as the Prince George Native Friendship Centre and Ecotrust Canada, although Ecotrust Canada's program didn't necessarily targeting low-income individuals. The Central Interior First Nation has a successful Peer Loan program that has been operating for a number of years.

The CFDC already had experience in lending programs, so staff and Board skills and experience around loan adjudication and assessment were very helpful in the development of micro lending. It is important for the 'host' organization to have the infrastructure to manage the loans.

### **Legacy**

While funds for micro loans is secure for continued lending (because of the high rate of repayment in the first two years of the program), funding for the staff person who can support clients is critical and needs to be secured for the program to continue successfully. Funding has been confirmed by the Columbia Basin Trust for funding of the staff person for the third year of the program.

### **Advice to Others**

The staff member supporting the Kootenay Micro Loan Program has learned a lot through the process of developing this program. Andrew Earnshaw, the Loan staff person, highly recommends pre-planning and learning about other programs before developing a Micro Loan program. Before beginning the program, he looked at programs in the U.S. such as the Accion program in the Southern U.S. The Association for Enterprise Opportunities was another good resource. There are also Micro Loan funds in some larger urban centres in Canada such as Calgary and Montreal. He also spent an afternoon at Van City in Vancouver, learning about their lending programs. The Art of Individual Lending was a very helpful print resource. He suggests that interested groups contact him for more information.

### **Source**

- Interview with Andrew Earnshaw, February 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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**More Information**

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## Clayoquot Sound Entrepreneur Support

### Summary

Ecotrust Canada has been running a program to provide entrepreneurial support for the transition to a 'conservation economy' in the Clayoquot region since early 1999. The program was set up to support entrepreneurs that are working in a way that is environmentally responsible, promotes equity opportunities for coastal communities, including First Nations, and helps to diversify local communities. The goal is to provide alternatives to resource base industries that have been in decline for a number of years.

### Getting Started

The office was modeled after an organization in Washington State called Shorebank Enterprise Pacific, a non-profit arm of Shorebank based in Chicago. Shorebank Enterprise Pacific has been the pioneers of this type of 'conservation economy' lending. Shorebank Enterprise Pacific has lent more than \$10 million over an 8-year period with less than a 0.5% default rate. Their loan projects have resulted in significant employment impacts for 1 residents of communities on the Washington coast.

Shorebank Enterprise Pacific was a partner with Ecotrust Canada for the first three years of the program. Ecotrust Canada is now transitioning out of the partnership with Shorebank Enterprise Pacific. The portfolio and loan management is being transferred to Ecotrust Canada as an independent organization.

### Project Description

Ecotrust Canada envisions an economy that supports, rather than degrades, environmental values. This is achieved through helping communities build an economy that balances the human, social, and natural capital of the community, by supporting greater efforts to:

- Process and add value to raw materials before exporting them
- Use new technologies to increase productivity rather than just using more resources
- Apply the highest standards of energy efficiency
- Reduce the release of waste to prevent damage to the environment
- Seek social as well as business returns
- Harvest no more than what is replenished naturally
- Manage natural resources to restore and maintain biological diversity

Ecotrust Canada provides a range of services, including financial lending to support entrepreneurs. Hands-on assistance with financial planning such as budgeting and business planning, and assistance with marketing goes hand-in-hand with lending.

Because of the nature of the lending that Ecotrust Canada does, involvement with clients is at a deeper level than that of traditional lenders. Ecotrust Canada financing allows flexibility that is needed in order to excel in the field.

Clients come from a variety of sectors, and each sector requires a different set of support and expertise. Some of the clients include people involved in the fishing industry, particularly in the value-added and conservation fisheries, such as shellfish. Ecotrust Canada has also worked with clients in the eco-timber industry who cut less timber and create more value in the process to be more sustainable. This contrasts with conventional logging where an emphasis is placed on high volume cuts. They also support the eco-tourism sector, some of who are First Nations operators who have cultural knowledge of the area. Some of these businesses, on start-up have limited financing opportunities because businesses do not fit in the conventional financing parameters of banks and credit unions. Another client, based in the Port Alberni area, distributes recycled and environmentally friendly office products, which is a growing market.

One of Ecotrust Canada's better-known clients is Iisaak Forest Resources, a First Nations –Weyerhaeuser partnership, that is a First Nations owned company (51%) whose forestry operations have been certified by the Forest Stewardship Council. They are on the leading edge of eco-forestry in British Columbia undertaking environmentally sensitive logging practices, employing local people, and creating value added opportunities.

There are now two loan officers on Vancouver Island. In late 2001, a second Entrepreneurial Support Program office was opened by Ecotrust Canada on Vancouver Island, in the Comox Valley. The new office is already accepting applications, and is providing services from the Comox Valley to Port Hardy.

### **Community Involvement**

In recent years, there has been controversy about conservation and logging issues in the Ucleulet and Tofino area. Ecotrust Canada developed with the intention of trying to bridge the gap between economics and environment, showing that it is possible to have viable businesses that are based upon sound environmental practices while creating more opportunities to employ people and diversify economies. There have been mixed reactions in the community to the program, but project proponents expect it will take some time to continue to build support. The program has already been successful in lending \$1.7 in loans.

### **Indicators**

An important indicator is the default rate, given that this is a revolving loan program and loans need to be repaid in order to loan out money again. So far there have been no losses on loans. There have been some challenging loans but none that

need to be written off, and there has not been any forced liquidation of assets to pay off loans. The default rate is a good indicator of whether businesses are succeeding. Another key indicator of project success is employment impacts. They are also looking at environmental impacts, and eco-certification of businesses that receive loans may be an indicator in that area.

### **Project Effectiveness**

The place-based approach has been very important. Ecotrust Canada is not interested in having many branch offices and running a high volume business. It is more important that the staff live in the community and get to know people in the community. In terms of lending, these loans are considered high-risk, but Ecotrust Canada manages the risk by getting to know the entrepreneur and understanding the context. While the loan volume is low compared to many other lenders, Ecotrust Canada considers the loans to be very strategic, demonstrating new ways of doing business and opening up sector and employment opportunities for people.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

The program has supported 80 jobs, either as jobs retained or new jobs created as a result of lending activity. It is still too early to measure the impact of Ecotrust Canada's coastal communities programs, as it is important to look at results for more than just a few years to measure achievement. However, project staff are pleased with the results so far and see it as a demonstration of what is possible for businesses with strong environmental and economic values.

The smallest loan that has been made is \$1,500, the average is \$100,000 and the maximum loan is \$250,000. Most loans are within the \$30,000-\$50,000 range. Beyond the \$250,000 range, if Ecotrust Canada is optimistic about the deal, then they will invite other lenders as partners. These lenders are usually other organizations or lenders with a social equity or conservation mandate such as Community Futures or Van City. Van City is a partner that is expanding its work in rural areas.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

When evaluating loan applications, social and environmental values are an important consideration, given the mandate of the organization. Many of the clients are lower-income and many of the opportunities would not be created if clients could only deal with conventional lenders.

The Shellfish industry is a good example of an industry where environmental values are closely integrated. Water quality is very important for the shellfish industry. The result of a more active industry is the creation of a commercial constituency that is active around water quality issues. It is relatively new sector that is not well

understood by financial institutions so Ecotrust Canada has become a leader in the provision of financing to the shellfish industry.

Although Ecotrust Canada has not been operating in the area for very long, project staff believe that understanding of integrating environmental values while still maintaining a financially viable operation is increasing in the region. For instance recognition of the importance of adding value in forestry operations has increased, as has an understanding of sustainability's social, economic and environmental components. In fisheries, this means creating markets that add value to fish to maximize the employment from a smaller harvest. In tourism this means recognizing the market value of cultural and eco-tourism and developing those opportunities.

### **Challenges**

One of the challenges has been making sure that clients are getting the support that they need, outside of direct loans. Ecotrust Canada has limited capacity to offer support. People in coastal communities often get involved in business with limited experience, financial and marketing skills. Providing support for entrepreneurs is a challenge, particularly in light of the fact that many businesses fail because of lack of management expertise. In addition, providing support is very time-consuming, so opportunities for clients may be limited more than is ideal.

Bringing products and services from rural and remote area to markets in urban areas and outside of British Columbia is challenging. Ecotrust Canada encourages clients, in the shellfish industry for example, to work collaboratively to pool their production and marketing efforts in order to increase their chance of success. Creating collaboration and facilitating competitors to work together is a not always an easy task.

### **Support**

Ecotrust Canada works in partnership with Community Futures organizations with some clients. Ecotrust Canada is similar to Community Futures in some ways, except that Ecotrust Canada has more of a conservation ethic. Many of the Community Futures have a longer relationship with the community and have more established connections. In some cases, Community Futures has provided an initial business loan, and Ecotrust Canada can then provide additional financing if a company needs to expand further. This results in some sharing of the financial risk, and benefits the client because more capital is available. In Courtenay, some potential lending partnerships are already being developed.

Dollars are needed to support entrepreneurs beyond the scope of Ecotrust Canada's work, such as bringing together operators in a particular industry to strategize about market development and expanding operations. This is going to be challenging with the limited funding available at the provincial level.

## **Legacy**

In 2000, the BC provincial government provided a \$1 million dollar grant towards the revolving loan fund, on the condition that matching capital could be raised. The loan fund now has about \$3.5 million, and it is expected to be at \$5 million by the end of 2002. The funds are loaned out and repaid on a revolving basis, allowing the program to continue. In addition funds are raised primarily from American private foundations to cover operating costs.

## **Advice to Others**

- Partnering with an organization that has knowledge and experience in lending was key to the project success. Organizations often take on more than they have the capacity to handle, and fail to look at whom they can partner with to make it happen.
- A good fund-raising strategy is very important, demonstrating to donors that results are being achieved. Diversified funding without dependence on government funding is also a sustainable approach. Dependence on focused government funding can jeopardize organizations if priorities change, and funding is cut.
- Some organizations do not go far enough to bring in the skills and expertise needed to do the job. Bring in staff with a diversity of expertise. The staff can help build local capacity if these skills are not present locally.
- Work as collaboratively as possible to build a network of support and relationships to strengthen operations in smaller communities. For example, Ecotrust Canada is working with First Nations, local farmers, BC Shellfish Growers Association and the Federal Government to assist the development of the shellfish industry.

## **Source**

- Interview with Bill Girard, February 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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### **More Information**

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## Co-Opportunities - Co-op Business Developers

### Summary

Co-opportunities was a pilot resource centre created in 1999 to support and facilitate the development of co-operatives in the Shuswap area. It was aimed at local economic development and employment creation. During the six months that the program was operating, 14 co-operatives were at various stages of development and three continue to operate as a result of the program.

### Getting Started

There was a real need for jobs and economic growth in the Salmon Arm area. There are high rates of unemployment, particularly in the winter season when forestry and tourism activities decrease. A number of people, many of them associated with a local organization providing services to the unemployed, were interested in developing co-operatives. They formed a local working group, and a workshop on 'Community Development through Business Co-operatives' was held in 1997. A follow-up workshop was held in 1998, which led to the development of an action plan for Co-opportunities. An application for financial support was submitted to Human Resources Development Canada and a grant for \$176,000 was awarded. Community organizations also supported the resource centre with in-kind donations such as office space.

### Project Description

Co-opportunities was designed to provide a range of services including skills assessment of potential co-op participants, marketing support, assistance with research and development, education and training, and mentoring support. Six staff were employed with the program including a project coordinator (4 days per week), a marketing coordinator (18 hours per week), a research and development coordinator (18 hours per week) and 2 publications and promotions staff (1 day per week each). In the six months that the program operated, background research on various types of co-ops, professional training and financing was undertaken. A co-operative resource library and a six-week Co-op Opportunity Business Training Program were also developed.

The evaluation of the program after only six months was very positive. Originally the program was supposed to be funded for a year, but due to the fiscal year, six months of funding was offered. Unfortunately funding was not renewed after the initial six months because of fiscal restraints and concern that the funding was for an on-going program. It was a surprise for people involved in the program that the funding was not renewed because the first six months were considered to be successful.

Two co-operatives developed that are still active. One of the co-operatives is Silicon Garden, a computer co-operative that is still successful in the community. Another co-operative formed between organic gardeners to share the cost of expensive machinery to sift grain. This farmers' co-op went on to become a successful venture with a high level of interest from participants.

A second proposal for an on-going cooperative support organization was developed when the initial pilot project was cancelled. The new proposal addressed the sustainability of the program, so that it could evolve to carry itself financially. A professional business planner worked with the Skills Centre to develop this plan for sustainability and viability. The second proposal has a number of changes that came out of the lessons learned from the initial pilot project. The project was never put into operation because there were not enough staff or volunteers available to carry it forward.

Some of the changes to the second iteration of the proposal included changing training requirements. In the first program, there were certain eligibility requirements (that is, for employment insurance). This meant that in a five-person co-operative, perhaps only two members would be eligible for training, which did not result in equitable skill building. The whole team needed to be present for the duration of the training program. It was also proposed that the payment system be adjusted so that some people would pay for the training program, and bursaries could be made available for low-income participants. It is important that individuals would not be restricted from participating in the program because of affordability issues.

### **Community Involvement**

Interested people from various sectors of the community became involved in the initiative, bringing their own knowledge to the program. There was a huge community response to the program. Interest in co-operatives was very high, exceeding the program's expectations. When an advertisement about the program was placed in the local paper, the staff were overwhelmed with responses and not everyone could be interviewed. As a result, there was no need to put another ad in the paper. A database was established where interested individuals and their corresponding skill sets were recorded to help meet the needs of new co-operatives. There were more than 150 entries in the local database.

### **Indicators**

During the six months that Co-opportunities was open, the number of people who participated in training, the number of people who were entered in the co-operative database, and the number of co-operatives in various stages of development were important indicators of project success.

### **Project Effectiveness**

A number of factors were identified that were key to the success of the program. The capabilities of staff were very important; therefore training for both staff and Board members needs to be a priority. The relationship between the organization and other agencies in the community needs to be nurtured, and awareness and understanding of the potential of co-operatives raised.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

Co-operatives can have advantages over conventional small businesses for participants such as less individual risk, an increased access to capital, and an increased access to labour and specialized skills. During the six month of the program a number of co-operatives that were being developed could not be supported because of the short duration of the program. It is difficult to assess the long-term impact of the program, but three co-operatives set up during the program continue to operate. There are still calls coming in about the program, so interest in co-operatives remains.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

The group dynamics of co-operatives can provide a support network for people as well as providing motivation for members. Past studies have shown that success rates for co-operatives are higher than the success rates for small businesses. The initial program appeared to have impacted participants by raising their confidence, but it is important that there is on-going support, both financially and through mentoring. Co-opportunities helped to foster a self-reliant, healthy community, and particularly supported the unemployed and marginalized people in the Shuswap.

### **Challenges**

Securing long-term funding for the program was a challenge, and ultimately it was lack of funding that ended the program, despite its success in the six months of operation. Another challenge was the restrictions and guidelines placed by funders on how the program had to be offered (that is, who received training). Also, the tight timeline under which the program was developed reduced the effectiveness of the two training programs that were delivered. Ideally, the program should be delivered over 8 to 10 weeks rather than over 6 weeks. This would support clients in absorbing the material and in the development of their business plans.

Also, it was proposed that the training model be broken down into three components. These would include a pre-development program, business training, and training in co-operative issues. This would more effectively meet the diverse training needs of clients, as some people would already have received some of the training elsewhere and could take only the training that they need.

## **Innovation**

Co-opportunities Co-op Business Developers was a service that was unique in Canada. A co-operative support program had not developed at a local level like this before. However, both provincial and national co-operative associations exist, and they helped provide support and resources to help set up the Salmon Arm resource centre.

## **Support**

Melanie Conn, who has been active in co-operative issues in BC for many years, offered some of the local training. During Co-opportunities operation there were plans to train a local trainer. Had the program operated for longer, that goal would have been achieved and it is likely that the program could have been. The local Community Futures changed its guidelines to increase access to financing for co-operatives, which will offer support for co-operatives in the region in the long-term. Recently there has been a resurgence of interest in co-operatives, and the second proposal that developed out of the pilot project is being revisited.

The Shuswap Coordinating & Training Society (SCTS) and Community Futures were very supportive in working with Co-opportunities to support the development of co-ops during the project. After Co-opportunities ended, a marketing co-operative was set-up for value-added products to assist local producers with limited marketing capabilities. SCTS and Community Futures supported the development of the marketing co-operative.

## **Legacy**

Some initial funding would be needed to re-activate the program. Through the community network, some in-kind contributions could be made such as office space. The program does need a champion, someone who can keep the ball rolling. As well, trainers are needed. The college was interested in the past in forming a partnership, so there are still opportunities to be explored for community partnerships.

## **Advice to Others**

- Co-operatives are a great option and this model could be applied in a wide variety of communities. Co-operatives go beyond just meeting economic needs to address social issues and marginalized people in the community, helping to build community capacity and inclusive social networks.
- On-going training and support for co-operatives is critical to their long-term success.
- Develop a business plan that addresses financial sustainability so that if funding is not available, the program will not immediately close.

**Source**

- Interview with Dorothy Argent, March 2002
- Co-opportunities co-op Business Developers Program Evaluation (FERENCE Weicker & Company)
- Written by Maggie Julian

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**More Information**

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## **Cranbrook Support Service Program Development**

### **Summary**

In April 1999, a BC Housing funded development, Abbott's Gardens opened in Cranbrook, providing integrated housing and support services. There are 23 units, seven that house youth, four units for frail elderly, and the rest fluctuate with groupings of people with mental health and addiction issues, women in transition, and individuals with mental and physical disabilities. Because this is a Cranbrook facility, every effort is made to house Cranbrook residents first, although some clients have come from other places in the Kootenays.

The project has evolved to focus primarily on support services for youth. The housing provides a safe place for youth who would otherwise be on the street, in high-risk lifestyles or in jail or another institution.

### **Getting Started**

The Canadian Mental Health Association for the East Kootenay is an umbrella organization that provides a broad range of services under the mandate of promoting mental health, wellness, and emotional stability. Services range from housing, mental health promotion, employment, women's, youth, child-care, and frail elderly programs. The mandate of the organization has evolved from survey and responses of clientele who feel that they have sufficient counselling type services available but need more practical, tangible ways to improve mental health through affordable housing and employment. Work of the Association has focused more on housing and more recently has begun to move into the employment spectrum.

The housing was developed with support from the BC Housing HOMES BC program. In developing affordable housing, it has become apparent that in a rural community, because of smaller populations it is not practical for a facility to house only one particular user group such as seniors, youth, or women, etc. As a result different user groups need to be integrated. An integrated model fits with the type of services that the Mental Health Association offers, providing support services to broad user groups.

The housing development provides homes for different user groups housed with 'like disabilities' in groupings of four or six. These include frail elderly, youth at risk, adults with mental health and addictions issues. Individuals who were accepted had to want to live in the housing, and to prove their commitment to improving their quality of life to whatever capacity they are able. The integration presented a risk, in terms of mixing user groups. One group could prove to be more vulnerable and integration with another user group may put them at further risk.

## **Project Description**

High-risk youth who were also at risk of homelessness were housed on the second floor. They are the largest group in the housing development. Rarely, those residing in the housing facility have children. An important aspect of the program is that the residents want to live in Abbott's Gardens. The individuals who enter the complex each sign a contract stating what they want to work on in terms of personal development. These range from the desire to stay out of the hospital to dealing with addiction issues. For some people, the housing could be transitional, a place to come to terms with an issue before moving on to something else.

With the youth, the housing was intended to be transitional housing. It was planned that youth would work on life skills to increase their capacity to return to school or to employment, and to stay off the streets. Support services offered in-house received pilot funding for a year and a half. It was intended that this support services model would be sold to various funding agencies or even family members as fee for service. This plan changed when the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) supported the program immediately, providing support service funding to sustain and maintain the youth.

MCFD referred the youth at risk who moved into the complex. This created problems when some of the youth were not appropriate for the housing, because they were in too great a state of crisis and were not able to work on improving their quality of life. As well, these community members could potentially put the other user groups housed at risk.

The youth support service program is now funded through core funding provided by the Ministry of Children and Family Development. The support services for other users (seniors, adults with mental illness) were funded by the initial pilot project funding. This funding has now run out, but other Ministries are expressing an interest in providing on-going funding on an as-needed placement basis. The current provincial reduction in home support services and increasing pressure on other facilities means that cheaper and more consistent services can be offered on-site at Abbott's Gardens. The initiative to fundraise more dollars for support services is being wound down, because the Association does not carry programs after a certain length of time. However they may be continued if provincial funding is offered.

## **Community Involvement**

There is significant interest in Abbott's Gardens, and the program has a wait list. It is important for new residents to demonstrate that they really want to be part of the housing, and for project staff to assess whether they will put the rest of the group at risk. In terms of wider community support, a good portion of the support services dollars during the pilot phase came from local businesses and

organizations. The integration of different user groups has reduced any negativity from other Cranbrook residents around the housing development, whereas if the residents were from a single user group it would have likely have created more of a stigma in the community.

### **Indicators**

An external evaluator has reviewed the program. The program has been more successful than the Mental Health Association had hoped, primarily through harm reduction measures. The most tangible indicators are with the youth. For the most part the youth have been reintegrated, with some support, back into the community. Many of the youth have been able to return to school, to work and to live independently. Many of these high-risk youth would be in jail or even dead without this program, so keeping people off the street or preventing further harm is an indicator of success.

Another indicator of success is keeping people, such as high-risk seniors, independent for longer. This helps to relieve pressure on other facilities, and allows for individuals to receive support in a community atmosphere.

### **Project Effectiveness**

From the beginning, project managers knew they were developing a new model. They did not want to have an inflexible model that could not be adapted. They planned from the beginning for an outside evaluation, and kept the program flexible in order to adjust operations based on what was working well and what was not as effective.

The Mental Health Association treatment model is more solution focused than focused on harm reduction, and generally they do not take on mandated clients. For this program, a practical approach was adopted. Initially, harm reduction was not the program mandate. It has been hoped that youth would develop the ability to make some choices and decisions in a focused way. The reality was that the youth were in such a state of crisis that harm reduction was the only option, and the program evolved to reflect those needs. The program could have changed to house lower-risk, less challenged youth, but the program was proving effective and the support workers and Ministry supported continued work with high-risk youth. It was important to continually assess the outcomes of the work. Some of the initial objectives are now being achieved. By incorporating harm reduction aspects of the program, the youth are participating better in the wellness and life skills program.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

About three and half jobs have been created in Cranbrook with the housing development, including support workers and the security staff person. As well, the program has helped at-risk youth increase their capacity for employment and independent living, and have decreased their dependence on other support services.

## **Challenges**

One of the challenges and concerns was how to deal with the youth in a functional way, given their high-risk life styles including drug abuse, without putting other clientele at risk. One of the solutions has been that rather than receiving more dollars for support service programs, augmenting funding has been provided through the MCFD for an on-call security service to deal with after hour problems. This helps to ensure that the youth are not involved in after-hour activities that put them, and the rest of the tenants, at further risk. This has been a successful solution. With a reduction in after-hours at-risk behaviour, their participation level has gone up in support service programming offered during the day. The other people living in the housing have also had their success rates increase because they are not being put at risk because of the youth. The program has evolved to have a clearer set of rules that need to be followed in order to remain in the housing. This has benefited all the residents. Having a physical presence on-site has made a huge difference (rather than having another social worker involved in the program). It is very clear that there is a role for security personnel that is separate from that of social worker.

Originally it was hoped that some of the seniors or well adults would be able to provide peer support for each other or youth. While this has been very successful in some cases, there have been other instances when the environment proved to be too difficult for individuals. In some cases individuals could not live up to the expectations they had put on themselves in terms of supporting others, and were at risk of being pulled back into the lifestyle that people are trying to move away from. While the seniors and the youth get along very well, there is also a risk the seniors can be manipulated and taken advantage of. Therefore it has been important to monitor and be aware of these on-going issues through the buddy system. Relationships should not negatively influence the progress that individuals are making.

## **Innovation**

This model is a new model of integrated housing in rural communities. There was initial scepticism about its potential for effectiveness from some people, although it was not widely verbalized. When the program was being set up, the project managers visited other facilities for youth, but they did not find other integrated facilities. Since then, this model has been tried in other communities, and is gaining interest.

As well, the Mental Health Association has supported the development of another facility in Kimberley, but the user groups have been modified on that project. This is because they did not want to take on another project with such a high level of involvement from management staff. As well, the Association is usually invited into

a community by a local group. The group in Kimberley was interested in developing housing for frail elderly people and for adults with mental handicaps, and adults with mental illnesses. Based on what the community wanted and the distance from the main administration office, only these user groups were housed together, without youth or adults with major addiction issues. This program has presented fewer challenges and is running smoothly, for a number of reasons including the family and community involvement in the facility, the lower-risk user groups, and the lessons learned from the pilot project in Cranbrook. This facility is seen as an alternate for intermediate care type housing in Kimberley.

### **Support and Legacy**

This is an innovative and cost-effective model that is gaining interest in other communities. Having a security person on-site has gone a long way towards addressing the high-risk behaviour and therefore has increased the overall program effectiveness, participation and follow-through. It is important to recognize that the security position and the social work positions cannot be merged, these need to be independent for both staff to be able to fulfil their roles and to avoid burnout.

### **Advice to Others**

- Consider the design of space carefully when planning housing. For instance youth were placed on the second floor and visitors have been know to enter suites via the balconies. A more appropriate design solution could have been found had this likelihood been anticipated.
- Recognize that the needs of each community are different. A model needs to be adapted and adjusted based on the user groups.
- Involve a core group of community representatives who can help build an effective model for the community and encourage the group to problem solve together, but recognize that too much input is not productive either.
- Recognize the project is going to be an adaptable work in progress.

### **Source**

- Interview with Janice Bradshaw, March 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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### **More Information**

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# **Dawson Creek Food Processing Facility Feasibility Study**

## **Summary**

The BC Peace Region has about 60,000 residents, and includes the communities of Dawson Creek, Fort St John, Pouce Coupe, Tumbler Ridge, Chetwynd, and Hudson's Hope. The Peace Region grows about 85-90% of the grain crops in BC. In the fall of 1999, a preliminary proposal was developed for an Agri-Food Community Kitchen in Dawson Creek for small-scale food producers. The community kitchen is larger scale than what producers would have in their own home, providing more extensive non-commercial equipment than they would have had access to elsewhere. With more equipment, producers are able to do more at one time and to increase their efficiency. The Dawson Creek Food Processing Facility was not constructed, but two smaller facilities in the Peace Region have developed.

## **Getting Started**

In 1999 a report was completed that looked at opportunities for value-added food processing in the Peace Region. In this report several options were identified. One of the initiatives was the branding of the Peace Region, and the other was the development of a food processing facility.

From this report, a feasibility study on a food processing facility was prepared by the Kiwanis Enterprise Centre, and funded by the Peace River Agriculture Development Fund and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Agri-Food. Information was gathered by talking to producers to understand their needs for processing, their equipment needs, and what volume of production they could undertake in a shared facility.

## **Project Description**

The proposed facility would have an area for baking, for cooking and vegetable preparation, an office, a clean-up area, and a walk-in cooler that could be shared with a separate meat preparation area. A small classroom would be included in the facility so that small seminars could be held. A locking storage area was also included. This helped to meet the needs of small scale food producers who want to make use of a legal facility but who, without the use of the locking area, have to carry their own equipment or spend time to clean shared equipment.

The idea was to make the facility multi-use so baking could take place in one area while jam preparation was going on in another area. A self-contained room for packaging only was also planned. Packaging dry goods can often be dusty, so it was important to have a contained area for this activity. A food grade hopper was also planned so that a large quantity of product (such as oats) could be brought in and

packaged, ready for grocery stores. The proposed facility included a number of good ideas that people continue to work on at a different scale.

For some time the project was developing as a partnership with Northern Lights College, who were interested in working on building a community garden and outdoor classroom. The education component would have provided a cost-sharing benefit, as fewer producers would be needed to use the facility if it were also being used for classroom activities. College carpentry classes had been willing to help construct the building. There were some issues around security and building ownership of the project as the facility was proposed to be on campus property. The school decided not to proceed with the partnership after about a year and a half of discussions. School politics may have played a part in this decision.

The Kiwanis Enterprise Centre hired Serecon, a consulting company based in Edmonton, to do a business case study showing five business scenarios for how the facility could develop. These were completed in 2000, and the conclusion was that there were not enough producers in the area that could benefit from a combined facility. One of the challenges was that many small producers were making different products. This means the different regulations for each product and the different equipment needs for production lines need to be considered in a shared use facility. The idea for a food processing facility was put on the back burner by the Enterprise Centre because of the report conclusions.

The Peace region spans the border between BC and Alberta. Despite the fact that a larger facility might not be viable, the Peace Value Added Food and Agriculture Association has helped support the development of smaller, individual facilities around the region. These smaller facilities have helped to address the challenge of needing to meet all the regulations for all the potential users. Two facilities are now operating: a federally inspected facility for fruits and vegetables in Rycroft and a provincially inspected facility in Sexsmith for herbs, vegetables, small fruits, flowers, jams and jellies.

A needs assessment was also completed for the development of local laboratory services, with the capacity to test essential oils. In 2000, the closest place to have oils from specialty crops tested was Prince George or Edmonton (it is farther now). If a number of hours or even days pass from when the crops are picked before the oil is tested, it is difficult to get a proper reading of the actual potency of the oil product.

### **Community Involvement**

In the first stages of the proposal development, there were five groups involved: the Kiwanis Enterprise Centre, the Value Added association, the College, the Career Life Training Program (in charge of the community garden), and the Good Food Box

program, that supplies people with fruits and vegetables once a month at a fair price. Each group had needs that they hoped could be met through the food processing facility, such as a place to process food and a location to offer training courses. The community is small, and many of the same people are still involved in working on similar issues.

### **Indicators**

The membership in the Peace Value Added Food and Agriculture Association has dropped, and it is likely related to the fact that the facility did not get off the ground. There were 140 producers identified in the initial study looking at the feasibility of a facility. Right now, only 27 are active in the Association, so that may be an indication that the needs of small-scale food producers are not being met. However, the development of two small-scale facilities is an indicator of a successful outcome from the initial feasibility study.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

Three companies are working with the facility in Sexsmith, making products such as herbal teas, vinegars with herbs, and dried herb spices. Use of the facility allows people to develop businesses and to package products that can be sold legally in the Province or nationally, depending on the certification of the facility. In Rycroft, one producer has hired an employee since starting to use the shared facility.

The next small-scale food production project will focus on local specialty meat producers. There is a federally inspected meat slaughtering facility in Dawson Creek that does a lot of business. In order to support the work of the producers on specialty meats (boar, bison, organic meats) the feasibility of a processing facility is being researched. It would support the meat growers and slaughterhouse by providing a location where meat could be cut, and where small producers could make valued added products such as meat pies.

The small-scale community kitchen facilities can support other spin-off local businesses, limiting their need to travel or relocate to larger places for business reasons. For instance, a core number of processors could support local graphic designers and other trades.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

Development of a community kitchen or food processing facility can have a number of advantages. It can increase farm income from value added processing. The goal of the community kitchens is to support small-scale food producers. Many of the products are value-added products. For instance, one producer is working to process Saskatoon berries. A facility can decrease resource dependence, and can provide work for the agricultural community during the slower fall and winter

seasons. It may provide opportunities for more collective activities such as co-operative buying, collective marketing and other collective community activities.

### **Challenges**

The development of the small-scale food production industry is challenging. The Peace Region agriculture industry is strong and the products are high quality but there are some real challenges getting them to market. The Peace Region covers a large area and it is a long way to any supplier. There are no regulators near-by. For example, if a producer needs to check if a label is correct, the label needs to be sent six hours away to be inspected. More and more regulations are coming in, but there are fewer regulators, making it difficult for producers to stay abreast of developments. Some regulations are changing monthly. The Dawson Creek agriculture office will be closing in June 2002, which adds to these challenges. In early 2002, the closest Canadian Food Inspection Agency is in Grand Prairie, about an hour and a half from Dawson Creek. When the inspector retires shortly, he is not going to be replaced.

### **Support**

Two people involved with the project attended a food-processing seminar held in Portland, Oregon, to become more familiar with the equipment that was available. For the most part, food processing equipment and suppliers are geared towards larger scale facilities. Some equipment suppliers were willing to work with producers to scale down to the size of the facility, and to come up with a solution that works for the Peace area, although other suppliers were not interested.

The Peace Value Added Food and Agriculture Association is linking with the BC Small Scale Food Processors Association. One of the main focus of the association is to help the government recognize that small-scale food production is not a hobby. There are many people who are making a living doing this, and they need to be recognized as a viable part of the economy.

### **Legacy**

Funding is important for larger facilities for capital investment. Research into shared facilities in locations such as Toronto and Leduc was conducted. These facilities do not run on producer money alone, they are all subsidized by government. However, the Peace Region facilities are funded for the most part by personal funds. The Rycroft facility was all personal money, while the Sexsmith facility did receive a grant from the Prairie Farmer Rehabilitation Program, which was used to upgrade and retrofit an old honey processing facility.

Both of the smaller scale community kitchens were set up by people who had been involved in the plans for the larger facility. While the people involved would have preferred one big facility, they recognized that smaller facilities were a start to

meeting the needs of local producers. It is likely that smaller, more focused individual facilities will continue to be the where energy is focused.

### **Advice to Others**

- If there is community support to develop a shared facility then move forward, do not let other people say that it can't be done.
- Keep struggling forward, with as many people working together as possible.
- Producers need to be on side and have a buy-in to the project so that it matters to them if the facility works and functions for them. Producers and funders should work together to make sure that the facility meets the needs of producers.

### **Source**

- Interview with Donna Tookey, March 2002
- Agri-Food Community Kitchen Development Plan (Kiwanis Enterprise Centre)

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## **Dixon Entrance Maritime Museum and Cultural Centre**

### **Summary**

The Dixon Entrance Maritime Museum and Cultural Centre in Masset on the Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte Islands opened in May of 2001. About 5,000 people live on Graham Island, with 700 in Old Masset and 900 in New Masset. The museum has become a focal point for the community, preserving relics of fishing, boat building and community history, and providing a draw for tourists to visit Masset.

### **Getting Started**

Twenty-five years ago, a local museum opened in Skidegate, and interest was sparked in developing a museum at the north end of the Island. About 15 years ago, a group that included two fishermen and the former owner of a cannery got together to talk about initiating a maritime museum that would reflect the fishing and boat-building history of the community. The Fisheries Union and the Native Brotherhood were both founded in the area, and it was the centre for the whole northern fishing fleet for the Queen Charlotte Islands. There was a need for a museum in the area, because of the rich maritime history and because artifacts were being stored all over the community.

In 1998 a Society was formed to work on the development of a Maritime Museum. The Society sought a location for some time without luck. There was a heritage building in Masset that was built in 1914 that was not being used by the School District. It had been the hospital in the past, had gone through several owners, but was abandoned and in need of repair. The newly formed Society approached the Village in 1999 to see if they could get the building. They were granted a 99 -year lease for 1 dollar a year on condition that it was used as a museum.

In the fall of 1999, the Society submitted a funding proposal to the Community Economic Adjustment Initiative (CEAI) through Western Diversification. The proposal was accepted and a contribution of \$250,000 was awarded to support renovations that began the following summer. The project was seen as a way of adding an attraction to the village, to encourage visitors to spend some time in the community. Haida Gwaii Community Futures administered the CEAI and the bulk of the renovation work was completed in 2001.

### **Project Description**

The museum has been open on the weekends since May 2001. Volunteers are also setting up some new displays using some of the stored artifacts. There is also a

small gallery called the Bradley Gallery within the museum complex where local artists can do shows or the gallery can be rented out for other events.

Once the building was complete, many community members began donating maritime artifacts, representing the fishing industry, the boat building industry and naval history. As well, the local history of Masset is represented with donations that help tell the history of the families and people who built the community. Many of the artifacts came from an extensive collection of settlers effects donated by the Bradley family.

The museum now has a large collection. They are in the process of cataloguing the collection, as well as designing and setting up the displays. Donations are still coming in on a regular basis. The building has a large storage space in the attic. They also have a Gwaii Trust grant to do some landscaping and built a deck on the building, and recently received a donation of wood from Weyerhaeuser for the deck and roof. The project is also going to include a community archive collection. The Society may also branch into publishing local history.

### **Community Involvement**

Support for the project grew as the building restoration neared completion. People were a bit leery about donating items until they saw the building in place. There are seven active members of the society who are all well-known in the community and this has increased project support, as well as the fact that the community itself is small and people know each other. The Board represents a cross-section of the community, so different perspectives are brought into the project. To raise awareness and increase support for the project, Society members went to meetings with displays, showed artifacts in the community, and did school presentations.

### **Indicators**

The number of visitors to the community has increased which is an important indicator of project success. There has also been some creative energy put into displays. The growth of the collection is one indicator of project success, because it shows the level of community support for the project as people bring in new items for the museum. Exposure in the local media is another indicator of success. A recent article and television show have given the museum some media coverage. This also reflects community interest in the project.

### **Project Effectiveness**

There is some collaboration between the Masset museum and the other two museums on the island, one in Port and a bigger one in Skidegate. The Society is working to get parts of these other collections transferred to Masset.

Securing the building was key to getting the project underway, because it provided a place to focus the work. Having a committed Board of Directors is critical. Board members are active, taking on responsibilities to get tasks done, such as cataloguing and building upgrading. The Board also has a lot of fun, taking enjoyment in the work, which is important.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

The Museum will not create direct jobs, as it is run by volunteer Society Board members. The economic impact will be felt because it will create a pull for people to visit the north end of the island, and come into Masset. Often when people visit the north end of the island they go straight to Towhill and don't stop in Masset except for a coffee. The Museum and Cultural Centre provides a badly needed tourism draw for the community.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

The project has helped to build community spirit by providing a project that is an important community focal point. It is also having an economic impact by increasing the number of visitors to the community. The Museum also promotes local history and culture, using the local 'resources' (artifacts and community members) to build strength.

### **Challenges**

Securing operating funds has been the biggest challenge. Regardless of the number of visitors, the building still has to be heated because of stored collections, and this represents a significant cost. Getting the building was a big challenge as was convincing the community that a museum was needed.

### **Innovation**

In terms of community impact this project is an important and innovative project for Masset. It has made people more aware of the maritime history. It is also important in terms of heritage preservation, as there are not many heritage buildings.

### **Support**

The museum in Skidegate has provided some support in getting the museum going. Community members with particular expertise have come forward as volunteers, including one woman with library cataloguing experience. A consultant helped to secure the funding by undertaking a feasibility study, funded by the Heritage Trust. The Economic Development office also offered support on the funding applications. Municipal government involvement was also encouraged. Until recently the Museum had a representative from the Village on the Board, which played an important communication role through project updates.

## **Legacy**

The Island Heritage Association is made up of the three museums on the Island. The association applies for a per capita grant from the Regional District to cover operating costs. To raise operating funding the Society is offering memberships, accepts donations and rents out the space whenever possible. Catering may be a service offered by the museum as a way of gaining revenue. It is hoped that ultimately there might be a paid Archivist, shared by the Islands Heritage Association and travelling between the three museums, but for now efforts are concentrating on getting the museum operational.

## **Advice to Others**

- Be very open about what you are doing and involve the community as much as possible. Community support is important. Make people aware that you have a goal and a project underway, and they can be part of it without necessarily coming to meetings and being active, but by supporting the idea behind the project.
- Share information and updates about the project with the community.
- Before the project is started, figure out and develop a business plan for how operating costs are going to be covered. Don't rely on gift stores for that financial support. Capital funds are easier to secure than operating funds.
- Don't get too slick; make sure the project represents your community. The community, not professional museum designers, should set the direction of the project.
- Don't be afraid to make mistakes because you learn from mistakes.
- Don't rush the project but at the same time it is important to capture historical relics and information before they disappear.

## **Source**

- Interview with Barbara Elduayen, Haida Gwaii Community Futures Development Corporation, March 2002
- Interview with David Philips, Society Chairman, March 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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### **More Information**

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# **Fort Nelson Regional Economic Task Force**

## **Summary**

The Fort Nelson Regional Economic Task Force (RETF) was established in May of 1999, in response to changing economic conditions in the area. A number of Alberta oil and gas companies had begun operations in northern British Columbia. The B.C. oil and gas companies in the Fort Nelson area were concerned that Albertan companies have a competitive advantage because they are not subject to provincial sales tax, the same level of Workers Compensation Board contributions and other regulatory burdens.

## **Getting Started**

The oil and gas service sector is an important part of the regional economy, employing more than 55% of the Fort Nelson labour force. The Regional Economic Task Force was formed primarily as a Northern Rockies Region oil and gas industry response, to position that service sector to be competitive in securing contracts. The mandate of the Economic Task Force is to “establish the Fort Nelson region as a recognized entity in northeast B.C., empower area industry, market itself strategically, and build a cohesive driving force whose job is to identify and mitigate specific impediments to the region's economic development”<sup>5</sup>.

## **Project Description**

The Task Force did not set out to develop a comprehensive economic strategy for the region. Their focus is to identify impediments to growth, and to tackle these challenges one by one. In the initial brainstorming, more than 30 issues were identified.

In response to the challenges, the key activities that the RETF has undertaken to date have been to:

- Create a new database of services available in the region;
- Create a website, which includes the service database in searchable format;
- Complete a survey of oil & gas producer companies at the corporate level to determine the perceptions of the Fort Nelson service sector;
- Bring key industry knowledge to the table to assist local government in lobbying on issues of mutual interests.

## **Community Involvement**

The Task Force is largely an industry response to developing the regional economy. The Task Force does recognize that part of its role is to make sure that the Fort

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<sup>5</sup> From [www.fnetf.com](http://www.fnetf.com)

Nelson voice is heard in decisions that affect the region. For example, the Task Force partnered with the Regional District in lobbying for key road infrastructure for industrial development. With Task Force members helping to develop the business case, \$25 million has been committed by the province for road upgrading.

### **Indicators and Project Effectiveness**

The Task Force has taken a practical approach by brainstorming a list of barriers to industry development and things that can be done to address the barriers. They have a list of 30 tasks, which they are using as a checklist for project progress. So far they are ‘batting a thousand’ in meeting the first few items on the list (developing a service directory and website), and plans are to continue working down the list.

### **Challenges**

Due to muskeg conditions, much of the industrial activity in this region needs frozen ground conditions in order to operate, so the winter season is extremely busy. This busy production time has become known as “the hundred days from hell”, for both the forest and oil & gas industries. During the four to five month winter period, people involved in the industry are totally focused on their work, and are out of circulation for other activities. As a result, efforts of the Economic Task Force have had winter lull periods when key players are not available, and it is difficult to maintain momentum.

As the Economic Task Force developed in Fort Nelson, it became increasingly apparent that a relationship needed to be developed between the Task Force and the Chamber of Commerce. There was some concern from the Chamber that the work of the Task Force was overlapping with the Chamber’s mandate. This conflict has now been resolved, and the Task Force has developed a partnership with the Chamber. As a result, Chamber staff will be available to support the work of the Task Force, which will also help to address the challenge of over-committed Task Force members, and limited volunteer availability for half of the year.

### **Innovation**

The project has proved to be innovative, because it is one of the first times in the region where the industrial sector has recognized it can and should play a role in local economic development. This initiative is industry-led; key industry players have recognized that the health of the local economy goes beyond local government to be a community responsibility.

At start-up, the project was funded through direct contributions from members and some seed dollars from the Regional District. The Northern Development Commission also provided some funding for specific projects. The recent partnership with the Chamber of Commerce will allow Task Force activities to

continue, using accumulated Task Force funds or raising new project funds as required, but working within the Chamber structure.

### **Support**

An important reason this initiative has been successful is because it is an industry-driven project. When the Task Force began, the Regional District was the local government partner in the initiative, providing logistical support by acting as the secretariat (looking after communications, coordination, and much of the work arising from the Task Force's activities). After providing that support for a period of about 18 months, the RD stepped away from that level of staff support. Industry was and remains the driving force, and the Regional District is still a partner. Project proponents recognize that industry needed to identify the situation and come to their own conclusions about what needed to be done. If government had tried to bring the parties together and drive its own agenda, the initiative would have been much less likely to succeed.

### **Advice to Others**

If Task Force members were offering advice to other communities developing similar initiatives, they would suggest exploring partnerships with local organizations at the beginning and to support other organizations to meet common goals, in an effort to prevent competition between organizations. Even though that was not the intent, this perception did arise and the resulting tension was difficult to overcome.

### **Source:**

- Interview with Linda Wallace, January 2002
- Fort Nelson Economic Task Force website: [www.fnetf.com](http://www.fnetf.com)
- Written by Maggie Julian

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## **From the Forest to the Sea Watershed Project**

### **Summary**

“From the Forest to the Sea Watershed Project” is an education program on Galiano Island in its second year of programming. It was developed by a partnership between the Galiano Conservancy Association, and SeaChange Marine Conservancy Society, an environmental education organization based in Victoria.

Galiano Island, a Southern Gulf Island, is located in the Strait of Georgia between Vancouver and Victoria. The population of the 6,000 hectare island is about 1000 people. Most people have multiple jobs or careers. Work is very seasonal, with many people employed in the tourism business (mainly in the summer) or as fisherman, loggers, or contractors. There are also many artists, musicians and craftspeople.

This project involves both the community school and the community at large in demonstrating the human health and environmental links in sea and fresh-water ecosystems. The project is helping to build community capacity to monitor water quality and understand the link between human health and environmental issues.

### **Getting Started**

The program was conceived in the spring of 2000 when the two founding groups met at a conference and discussed the development of an outdoor-oriented education program. The program has been operating since September 2000. Galiano Island has a recent history of conflict over land use, with some polarization between development and conservation interests. The establishment of the Forest to Sea Watershed Project has not intended to take a political stance, but to deliver an educational program that increases children’s and the community’s understanding of watershed issues.

### **Project Description**

The field-oriented program is for Kindergarten to Grade 8 students. The program has involved students from the Galiano Island Community School, who participate in the program in 3 groups: Kindergarten to Grade Two, Grades Three and Four, and Grades Five to Eight. Each group participates in field trips. It is seasonally oriented, with a focus on streams and forests in the fall, lakes in the winter and the marine unit in the spring. The program of the oldest group is linked to other community work such as Streamkeepers, a community-based stream restoration program active in many BC communities.

The program is also being offered to students who come from the Greater Victoria Area, other Southern Gulf Islands, and the Lower Mainland to learn about natural

systems. The “From the Forest to the Sea Watershed Project” is focussing their outreach to inner city youth.

### **Community Involvement**

Keeping the Galiano Island community informed about the “From the Forest to the Sea Watershed Project” is an important part of the project’s activities. Communication has included displays and presentations, monthly articles in the *Active Page*, Galiano’s local magazine, and updates in the Community School’s newsletter.

The program involves Kindergarten to Grade 8 of the Galiano Community School. In the first twelve months, nearly 30 volunteers participated in the program, offering skills such as model building, puppet making, and interpretation. Island residents have been involved in the program by offering their land as a field trip destination, and by offering to act as resource people, as a number of residents have biology and ecology expertise.

### **Indicators**

Student response is being used as an indicator of project success. Each grade level’s response to the program has been recorded. Student feedback has resulted in some changes to the program content. Community attitudes are another gage of project success. Parents and teachers have been active participants in program development and improvement. As well, the level of awareness about watersheds, and the level of sophistication that people are able to speak about watershed issues has also increased, with many children passing on information to their families.

The program also has a component that focuses on consumption and the choices that young people make, a unit of particular interest to Grades Five to Eight. An indicator that is not currently being measured, is the change in behaviour and consumption by youth, due to an increasing awareness of how consumption habits impact the watershed. As an indicator of project effectiveness, consumption behaviour could be measured over time by surveying program participants.

### **Project Effectiveness**

A number of factors have increased the effectiveness of the program, now in its second year. The teachers at the Galiano Community School have been supportive of the program, which has facilitated program delivery. SeaChange and the Galiano Conservancy have established a positive, open working relationship that has contributed to the program’s early success, particularly important as the organizations spend much of their time communicating by phone and e-mail. Funding has come easily in the initial phase of the education program, with support from Federal Government through the National Science and Engineering Council of

Canada (NSERC) and the Community Animation Program, and from several foundations.

Students, parents, teachers and instructors all take part in a twice-yearly evaluation process. Feedback questionnaires were filled out by teachers and parents, and students were interviewed about what they liked and didn't like, and what they learned. This feedback was used to change and improve the program on an on-going basis.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

Although the focus of the program is not economic, the program has created two on-island part-time positions. Local capacity for restoration and monitoring work has also been increased through the school and parent involvement.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

The goals of the project are:

- To encourage first-hand observation and understanding of nature and natural processes by taking students out of the classroom and into the field.
- To draw parallels between human beings and nature in order to encourage youth to see themselves as a part of nature.

The second year of the program has focused on what students can do locally and globally as individuals and part of a group to improve watershed health. For off-island program participants, this includes exploring how they can bring the ideas of ecological restoration to their own community.

### **Challenges**

The first year of the program was very challenging because of the difficulty of working with multi-age classes. The challenge for the educators became gaining the respect and keeping the focus of children with many different interests and at many different stages of learning. This resulted in a shift to hands-on and practical programs that are meaningful and relevant to participants.

Getting the program going was a challenge for a number of reasons. In a community full of a variety of conservation/development opinions, extra time was necessary for communication with parents, teachers and the community at large. An open dialogue with all community members was essential.

As well, funding took some time to come through which slowed things down during the planning stages. Working out divisions in workload was also important, given that the founding organizations were not based in the same place and three people were working part-time through grant funding.

## **Innovation**

The Forest to Sea program is innovative because of its watershed focus, making links between the terrestrial, marine, and aquatic worlds. The partnership approach between the two environmental organizations and the Community School has also been positive and has forged some new relationships, and a model that could be used in other communities. Staff are now looking to link with other Gulf Island education programs to share what they have learned, and to explore how this program can be replicated. In the summer of 2002, the program material will be collated and written up to facilitate its transfer to other communities.

## **Support**

A number of resources were very useful for project development. Project Wild is a Canadian environmental education program that offers environmentally focussed activities for the outdoors as well as the classroom. Another useful resource was a series of Earth Education books by Steve van Matre. The Streamkeepers and Shorekeepers were an important program to link with the Forest to Sea program, and allowed continuity if students wanted to continue their involvement. Native storytelling was also linked with the curriculum by combining native legends with education topics. Many traditional native stories are in tune with conservation objectives. It was helpful that one staff member already had considerable experience with restoration work on natural systems.

## **Legacy**

The program is dependent on grants, and has secured funding until June of 2002. Project leaders are seeking more money to continue the program next year. There is the possibility of delivering the program as a fee-for-service for off-island school groups as way of continuing to fund the on-island program. However this approach will not be appropriate for groups from low-income inner city schools.

## **Advice to Others**

Project leaders have some advice for other people interested in developing a watershed education program:

- Collaboration between groups such as the Conservancy and the School is key, and should begin early.
- The program should be as hands-on as possible and not too theoretical.
- Involvement of community members wherever possible is important, as resource people, or by the use of private property as a place to learn.

## **Source**

- Interview with Nikki Wright, SeaChange Marine Conservation Society, with input from Kate Emming, February/March 2002
- From the Forest to the Sea Watershed Project 2000-2001 Project Report
- Written by Maggie Julian

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## **G.W. Storytellers' Foundation in the Upper Skeena**

### **Summary**

The G. W. Storytellers' Foundation was established in 1994 in response to the downturn in the resource-based industry of the Upper Skeena. The Upper Skeena is in the traditional territories of the Gitxsan. The majority of the population is of Gitxsan heritage with most of the remaining population of Western European descent. The 6,500 people in the Upper Skeena live in 14 communities, including the municipalities of Hazelton and New Hazelton, and the surrounding rural areas. The communities are geographically separate and access between them is difficult.

The local economy is heavily dependent on forestry (45%). The public sector supports 26% of the population; construction, 8%; tourism, 8%; agriculture, 4%; and fishing/trapping, 1%. Unemployment is characterized by Human Resources Development Canada as extreme, as high as 81.5% in some villages, and averaging 52% in the Upper Skeena. Lack of education, training and skills, no full-time job opportunities and limited seasonal opportunities for work are some of the reasons for the high unemployment level.

Project proponents describe the goals of the project:

“We saw the need to create ways of shifting people’s notion of what economic development involved...Storytellers’ has been committed to citizenship research and education within the Upper Skeena. The observations from our research told us that people in the Upper Skeena wanted to gain back control over their social and economic future. A sense of control and power has been lost due to the impact of colonialism and corporatism from our most recent socio-economic history. We believe that for this control to return to the Upper Skeena economic development must be sustainable by contributing to the overall health of the entire community. In order to achieve sustainability equal weight must be given to the development of human, social and economic capital”  
(G.W. Storytellers’ Foundation *Citizenship Education*)

### **Getting Started**

Project leaders recognize that the work of the G.W. Storyteller Foundation builds on many years of past community development. The Foundation involves a core group of five community people who consider the area home, and who provide support to each other. One of the catalysts to form the Foundation was the recognition that research be community-based, rather than involving outside researchers. A number of researchers had worked in the area in the past but there had never been any

follow-through on this research and there was no sense of ownership in the community.

In 1993 the founding partner received a fellowship to the Pointer Institute in St.Petersberg, Florida to study how media leaders can better represent visible minorities in the press. During this program he and media colleagues explored the idea of developing a news magazine that would be non-profit such as Mother Jones. Because of his work with the Gitxsan he suggested Native Americans such as the Navajo could use the magazine. This magazine would represent the Native American community it served. It would be community based and a tool to promote citizenry as well as to inform citizenry. On his return to the Upper Skeena he created a non-profit that would follow this ideology. This was the model for G.W. Storytellers. They wanted a model that focused on bringing back a sense of individual and community control over the future, in light of the history of colonization and commercialization. The project has undertaken social and economic research as well as literacy research.

Three important pieces of research were completed between 1994 and 1999, to document local knowledge and begin the process of community members doing the work, while still partnering with outside community groups. The research was diverse, including a forestry economic study, the literacy needs of young people who were both in school and not in school, and another piece of funding supported the development of an Upper Skeena socio-economic vision. Efforts were made to connect these four research projects so that they built on and complemented each other.

### **Project Description**

The G. W. in the G.W. Storytellers' Foundation name represents the Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en nations whose traditional territories make up the Upper Skeena. G. W. Storytellers' engages in participatory research involving the people impacted by the research outcomes from the beginning of the research process. The current work is intended to be supportive of community values and work towards the community vision.

G. W. Storytellers' organizes the research and development into three areas:

- Citizenship education,
- Social Capital development, and
- Sustainable development.

The findings from the action research are documented, analyzed, and then linked into the work of developing a Learning Community Development model that brings together economic development, human capacity and social cohesion. These are all recognized as important elements of a sustainable community.

This model of community development incorporates individual capacity building, social capital and community networks in economic development processes. Project partners recognize that if efforts are going to be made to build sustainable local industry such as tourism, it is important to make sure that local people benefit from this development. Community values such as knowledge about the land and a stewardship ethic are incorporated into the work. It is also critical that the skills are developed within the community. This will address concerns that industry may come, but people from outside the area will move to take that work. The Upper Skeena does not have a history of transience: for the Gitksan people, this is home.

The G.W. Storytellers' Foundation work recognizes that the people in the area are undergoing a decolonization process. The current reality is that many people don't believe they have power or control over their lives. They also have to live bi-culturally, and there is not an equal sharing of wealth, or an equal balance of power in the region. In this context, it is important to look at the aid that is received and make sure it is being distributed with these concerns in mind. At a practical level, it's taking an approach to recognize the power and the abilities that people do have to take responsibility for their futures.

A number of 'core competencies' have been identified for a healthy and active citizenship (see Indicators). With the research stage of the project wrapping up, project leaders are developing several practices to support the development of these core competencies. The project focuses on mobilizing the community to realize their vision. In keeping the project manageable specific focus has been given to working with youth and Gitksan caregivers. A number of informal education strategies such as outdoor education, citizen education, and forum theatre are in progress. Over three years, G.W. Storytellers' Foundation is working with the Upper Skeena Development Centre who has received \$300,000, from the Office of Learning Technologies, Human Resource Development Canada. Storytellers involved this community development agency as part of the learning community process of creating collaborations and partnerships.

The work with youth has moved ahead quite quickly. In the summer of 2001 more than 700 kids between the ages of 6 and 16 participated in Citizenship Programming including outdoor education, ropes courses, recreation and forum theatre. These programs helped young people to develop critical thinking skills, leadership development, cultural competence and an interest in making things happen in their community.

The impacts of these programs are tracked in three key areas: what effect do the programs have on their family and personal life, on their community interactions, and their working life. They are tracking the young peoples' skills and knowledge

from when they first become involved, and how these change and develop, how they have become active and caring in the community. It's important to look at not just whether the person is working or not, but whether they are still dealing with unhealthy home circumstances or abusive relationships. People need to understand how their life circumstances have changed to become healthier.

The work in the fall has also expanded to support Gitxsan caregivers as they begin to support Gitxsan community members use traditional relationships to build a healthy community. The same three key areas are tracked as with the youth work.

Despite being such a poor community with high unemployment, funding that doesn't fit with the goals of the project is not pursued because it is recognized that this moves away from the bigger picture of community goals and core competencies. Project leaders feel that they are able to make these choices because they live in a rural community and because of their strong sense of commitment to the community and the work. The core group of people involved in the project recognizes the importance of the work to the community. Sometimes this means that people working with the project are unpaid, or that paid opportunities are shared among the core group, depending on who has the greatest need.

Community economic development needs financial capital, human capital (skills and abilities as workers and citizens), and social capital (the trust and relationship between individuals and communities). One of the roles of G.W. Storytellers' is to support the development of social capital, where people are coming together over a common need or concern, by offering assistance to help them work together as a group. Project leaders are working on developing measurements of social capital, and are also linking this work to the development of measurable Quality of Life Indicators for the community.

Supporting economic development is also part of the work of the Foundation. There is a need to develop livelihood so that people can stay in the Region. However, livelihood should reflect community values that people hold, such as a respect for the land and respect for kinship and connections.

One project underway is the creation of a Virtual Museum, a partnership between the Gitxsan and the local library, with a very extensive collection of oral histories. The Virtual Museum will also be a resource for academics and a place to store and preserve information. There is also a project in partnership with the Band for a recreation centre that is environmentally sound, reflecting the stewardship ethic, and a cultural heritage centre, connecting youth with Elders. Another project is the development of a farmers market. Many of these projects are being led by groups in the Upper Skeena and supported by the G.W. Storytellers' where possible. Support is provided by developing citizenship and human capacity and

social capital around each of those initiatives, or by writing funding proposals for other groups.

### **Community Involvement**

The Foundation builds on two important community assets: a strong connection to place, and the connections between people. Gitksan and non-Gitksan community members are connected to the land. Many have lived in the area for generations and want to stay there. Research by the GW Foundation has revealed that one reason for the failure of past community development projects is that they haven't used local knowledge. There is a distinct knowledge that is needed to live in this area. With 70% of the population being under 28, there are concerns that this knowledge is not being passed on. Therefore work by GW Foundation needs to support the transfer of this community knowledge.

### **Indicators**

Youth, parents, educators and elders have identified a number of key competencies. These competencies are seen as necessary to continue the way of life in the community, in order to be a healthy and effective citizen. The citizenship competencies provide benchmarks to measure program success. The competencies include:

- Sense of Self (personal values; practicing beliefs)
- Cultural Competency (awareness of cultural impacts; cultural diversity)
- Social Responsibility (community ownership; land ethic and stewardship)
- Working with others (establish relationships; conflict resolution)
- Evaluate Performance (assessment; problem solving)
- Global Perspective (connection to others; awareness of world politics)

Quality of Life indicators are also under development. Six have been developed so far and the expectation is that more will be developed as the project moves forward.

### **Project Effectiveness**

Project leaders identified two important factors that have contributed to project effectiveness. The project is a community driven project, and the ownership is in the community (although this also offers challenges). The project leaders have done a lot of research, and really held off on pursuing funding until it was quite clear how they should move forward to support the goals flowing from the research.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

The connection to the land and the recognition of stewardship is very important; it is inherent in all the work of the G.W, Storytellers Foundation.

## **Challenges**

One of the big challenges is how to work towards sustainable development when people in the community are struggling in dire situations. People are not able to feed their children, and losing their homes. The challenge is finding a way to survive the transition, which project leaders estimate will take seven to ten years to become sustainable, when people need to find a way to survive. It is a very real struggle.

It is often challenging for project leaders to continue working towards long-term goals. It can be hard to recognize that their work is important, in the face of the harsh realities of extremely high unemployment, and that while they have not directly created jobs, the community will be stronger and more resilient as a result of this work. It is easy to jump to a quick solution that could address some of the despair in the short-term.

Another challenge is that the demands of work doesn't allow for reflection or time to look elsewhere for effective community development models to make sure that the Foundation is not 'reinventing the wheel'. It is important to make connections with other organizations and resource people, but it is difficult to take the time to do this given the desperate situation in the community. Right now project leaders are addressing this concern and are looking for other models for developing participatory evaluation tools.

Working towards recognition of the Gitksan as a Nation by the Provincial and Federal government is an important part of the context of all of this work, and this has been an on-going challenge.

## **Innovation**

Project staff realize that they are building on many years of community development work by others in this area. Some of the innovation of the G.W. Storytellers' Foundation has been the emphasis that all the pieces of the community work are being woven together. Also there has been an emphasis on the need to bring together local governments, creating a legal arrangement for them to work together while still embracing cultural differences. There have also been significant inroads in building bridges between the Gitksan and the non-Gitksan community, to recognize differences and similarities, and to work with them both.

## **Legacy**

Much of the staff's energy has gone into facilitating the continuation of this work. The project has a grant as a Learning Community that continues into 2003. The work is on-going, and the project staff intend on continuing this work regardless of whether adequate external funding can be found. Staff have realized that they will have to start charging for some of their project work such as workshop facilitation, but they only take on short contracts that fit with the research that they are

doing. They would like to secure some funding dollars that would be used only for research. They are developing a video and package to secure more funding, moving away from government funding toward foundation support. This is partly based on their research that communities dependent on government funding do not become sustainable.

The GW Foundation staff are building sustaining partnerships with and between other community organizations. The goal is always to work themselves out of a job, to build community capacity to the point where they are not needed anymore. Developing this capacity sometimes takes place in work with other organizations through a mentoring or apprentice process, where they help out the organization but ask for an apprentice who can learn the skills.

### **Support**

The 3-year HRDC grant was very important as it was a crucial to have ‘bread and butter’ funding. The support and encouragement of people who recognize the importance of this work, outside of the community is also helpful. The personal relationships and connections in the community are important, as is the level of trust between individuals and trust in the staffs’ community work for the past twenty years. That trust comes from the fact that project leaders are local people. They live in the community, and trust has developed over time. The project leaders are non-Gitxsan but they have been adopted into Gitxsan families and through this grooming process have helped develop a relationship within this First Nations community.

### **Advice to Others**

Recognize that a rural community is a valuable way of life. There is a special type of knowledge of local people that is crucial for the people of Canada, and everyone is in trouble if it disappears.

It is important to find yourself as a community and know what is important to you as a community, and to build on your strengths, and the relationships in the community. That is what drives this work.

It is OK to be different. Recognize and celebrate cultural differences. A lot of the work revolves around being different and yet still being neighbours.

Don’t get stuck on the need to produce an outcome or product. Relationship building is a long-term initiative, and discovering this is part of the process.

If you are participatory in your process trust it is the natural relationships you have in the community that will allow the work to build in momentum.

- When you are creating relationships and nurturing capacity building it can feel like you are ‘not working’ but this element of development is really important.
- You need to stop and reflect on the process, and not get too busy in project practice.

**Source**

- Interview with Anne Docherty and Karen Erickson, February 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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## **Gateway Tourism Marketing Co-operative Project**

### **Summary**

Valemount, Lake Cowichan, Wells, Golden, Fort Nelson, and Burns Lake are six rural BC communities that have taken part in a year-long Gateway Tourism Marketing Co-operative Project. The goal of the project is to promote local co-operative marketing strategies to improve sustainable employment in small, resource based communities. The project promotes an area for tourism by pooling the talent and resources of tourism related businesses, which would not be able to undertake this initiative on their own. It is seeking models for co-operative activity that could be applicable in other communities throughout the province.

### **Getting Started**

In 2000, the communities of Valemount, Lake Cowichan, and Wells were the first BC communities selected as tourism ‘gateway communities’ in a larger provincial program developed and funded by the Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture. In each of the communities, a process was established to bring stakeholders together for discussions and problem-solving about issues that impact local tourism. During this process, the opportunity for co-operative marketing of tourism opportunities was identified as a strategy to be explored. Funding became available through the Provincial Ministry of Community Development, Cooperatives and Volunteers, and last March a one-year Gateway Tourism Marketing Co-operative Project was launched. The original gateway program played an important role in developing the readiness and capacity for the marketing co-op program.

Historically, front country (i.e. accommodation, tourist attractions) and back country operators (i.e. guiding, skiing) have not worked together in any capacity. When this initiative was launched, the first step was to get service providers together to introduce the idea of co-operative marketing for tourism promotion. Many operators were not convinced that this was a worthwhile venture. Because of this a considerable amount of time was spent working at the awareness level about cooperative marketing. During the pilot project the majority of the coordinator’s activities have been focused on getting the operators to consider co-operative marketing activities.

### **Project Description**

The Gateway Tourism Marketing Co-operative Project is being facilitated by a project coordinator from the Ministry of Community Development, Cooperatives, and Volunteers (now the Ministry of Communities, Aboriginal and Women’s Services)

in six gateway communities. Burns Lake, Fort Nelson, and Golden have been added to the original three gateway locations.

The original mandate of the six-community project included the establishment of formal co-operatives to promote tourism. However, all the communities have decided not to establish a formal co-op. They are interested in working co-operatively, engaging in on-going meetings, without the formalized structure of a new organization. Each community has funding for a part-time local person to support this work for one year, ending in March 2002.

### **Community Involvement**

In Valemount, the municipality was the driving force behind the gateway marketing initiative. Valemount has less than 2000 residents. In early 2002, a count was taken of the number of people who had become involved in this initiative and more than 34 groups had participated and 161 tourism employees.

In Golden, the initiative has resulted in a mix of public and private sector interests coming together including the Golden Tourism Association, the Chamber of Commerce, the district and municipality, the Kicking Horse Ski Lodge and Resort, the golf course, and snowmobile club. They have pooled their funds to produce a new brochure to attract tourists to the area for a variety of activities.

It's important to recognize that many industry operators are used to working independently, and have limited time and money to put into long-term planning. In some areas, it was necessary to plan meetings in conjunction with other meetings and events to minimize travel for some back-country operators. Meetings were coordinated by the local staff person, with help from the Gateway Marketing Project facilitator.

### **Project Effectiveness**

For the project to be effective, a base of tourism infrastructure and existing operators need to be in place. Another factor affecting project effectiveness is the level of support of local government. Among the gateway communities, some local governments are supportive of the tourist industry, while in others, the industry has thrived despite local government.

In each community the role of the coordinator was slightly different, depending on local needs. In some communities getting to all the parties to the table was a real challenge, and in some cases having a concrete outcome, such as the development of a brochure, was an important focus for the group. Where there were existing Gateway activities (i.e. Lake Cowichan and Wells), the coordinator from this first phase of the Gateway community development continued work with the project.

New coordinators were hired in Valemount and Golden. These were recruited locally by advertising for a coordinator with a tourism marketing background.

Once a month, the coordinators in the six communities have conference calls to talk about challenges and trouble-shoot solutions. It also allows them to share successes, such as setting up a web-based central reservation system, a promotional CD-ROM and brochures.

### **Indicators**

The impacts in each of the marketing project will not be felt right away. Two indicators of project success are job creation and increased dollars circulating in the area. Although difficult to measure, the strength of the business climate in the area and the level of community cohesiveness are also indicators of project success.

In January and February of 2002, a participatory evaluation was conducted in the six communities. There is no funding available to do follow-up monitoring of job creation although it would be useful to measure the longer-term economic and job creation impacts.

It is important to recognize that for small business, an increase in business of 15-20% can be critical. In rural areas many businesses can be operating close to the margin so even a small change could be the difference between staying or going out of business. Many small operators do not have enough budget to effectively market and bring in business on their own. These small operators are marginal economically, and their shoulder season is non-existent.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

The Gateway Marketing project is the second phase of the gateway community initiative, building on the first year of the gateway program. In the first year, stakeholders with an interest in tourism came together, often discussing land use issues that impact tourism. Environmental concerns continue to be addressed through this forum, including issues that have been brought up through the marketing initiative. The Co-operative Marketing process has fostered and strengthened linkages between the front and backcountry operators.

### **Challenges**

One of the biggest challenges for the gateway communities was working with a wide range of tourism operators from both the front and backcountry to develop a co-operative strategy to meet all operators' requirements. The larger operators tend to have marketing knowledge and budgets while the smaller operators are often managing on a shoestring with few resources available to devote to marketing. There was a significant investment in time at the project start-up to sell the concept of a setting up a formal co-operative. After some time, it became apparent

that communities were supportive of the idea behind co-operative marketing, and those goals could be reached without setting up a formal co-operative.

There was also some skepticism in some of the communities as the project got underway. There was a desire for a guarantee of positive results, before operators would invest their time. There has also been some burn-out with volunteers, and so the need for on-going professional support to market tourism has been recognized.

### **Innovation**

This project did not take a 'one size fits all' approach, it took into account that the approach for co-operative marketing needed to be very flexible to succeed in each community. Taking this co-operative approach simultaneously with six communities is also new. The Project was also innovative in succeeding in getting the players to collaborate in a marketing venture.

### **Support**

Seed funding is important to facilitate the initiation of activities, but there must be enough support available to facilitate the achievement of project objectives and results (such as a brochure or website) and to help set-up an on-going process. Local political support and the awareness of the importance of tourism to the local economy are also important elements, although these ingredients were not present in all the pilot communities.

### **Legacy**

In Wells, the importance of co-operative marketing has had enough of an impact that a number of groups are contributing money to hire a tourism coordinator to continue marketing efforts for another year. These include the Village of Wells, the Chamber of Commerce, the new casino that is under development, and the Barkerville Merchants Association. Some communities would have chosen to form a co-operative society if it created an opportunity to access funding, but decided to base marketing efforts with existing organizations (i.e. the Chamber of Commerce) when it became clear that further provincial funding would not be available.

In Fort Nelson the municipality and the regional district spearheaded the cooperative marketing initiative. They will continue the marketing after the initial funding commitment is complete at least until September of 2002 with other sources of funding. Marketing activities in Valemount are on-going and are coordinated through the municipality.

Burns Lake worked with the Chamber of Commerce and the municipality and will not continue marketing activities once the funding is over, as new sources of funding have not been found. Lake Cowichan does not have funds to continue the marketing activities but it will continue on a volunteer basis.

Activities in Golden will continue on a volunteer basis. The brochure that was the main focus of the project and brought the different parties together is being printed. There is no funding to keep activities on-going but people are working together who were not working together before.

### **Advice to Others**

The project manager for the Gateway Tourism Marketing Co-operative Project recommends the co-operative marketing approach for other communities, but recognizes that establishing a formal co-operative is not necessary. People involved in the project in Valemount had the following feedback when asked what they learned through this process:

- The co-operative model requires time, as many operators are independent and may not have worked together before.
- The formal co-operative model is not essential to achieving the outcomes of co-operative marketing.
- The co-operative is the end of a process, not an end in and of itself.
- There is no need to set up a new organization as it will require a time commitment to keep it operating.
- Volunteer time has a high value. A paid staff to support the work of volunteers is very helpful and will keep the project moving forward.

### **Source**

- Interview with Sandy McElroy, January 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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### **More Information**

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## **Gitanyow Historic Village Museum**

### **Summary**

About 500 people live in the Gitksan community of Gitanyow in the Upper Skeena. There is no longer any significant forestry or fishing employment in Gitanyow. Unemployment is at 96%. Economic development and new businesses are geared toward tourism because of the failing fisheries and forestry industry. The Gitanyow Historic Village Museum, a new cultural heritage interpretive centre, is nearing completion. It is built like a traditional longhouse, and will house community relics and be a cultural centre for community members and visitors.

The objective of the museum and the vision of the Gitanyow Chiefs is to preserve the Gitanyow laws, history, culture and stories from past to present and into the future. This includes educating people about the culture, traditions and the story of Gitanyow from the First Nation's perspective, not from other people's perspective.

### **Getting Started**

The area benefits from tourism between April and November. Gitanyow has the oldest standing traditional totem poles which provide a tourism attraction. Two years ago, 1500 people visited community in a period of two months. Once the museum is up and running the potential will be even higher.

Glen Williams, the chief Treaty Negotiator for Gitanyow, is the driver behind the project. He represented the Hereditary Chiefs who have been involved in the project, as well as the Band Council. In the spring of 2000 the project received funding from the Community Economic Adjustment Initiative (Fisheries Renewal BC), and construction began in the summer of the same year.

### **Project Description**

The museum building has features such as airtight glass that allows older artifacts to be housed safely. A number of chiefs have items that are over a hundred years old and they would like to display them. Some heirlooms that will be displayed are goat horn spoons, bentboxes, headdresses and jewellery handed down from generation to generation. Many community members feel the best place to house these artifacts and keep them safe is in the museum. One of the steps still to be completed is the signing of loan agreements with people lending artifacts to the museum.

As of March 2002, the museum is not yet ready to open its doors. Currently the process of preparing a list of community loaned artifacts is underway. Project

leaders are also seeking funding to support curator training for four to six community members.

In March 2002, the Gitanyow community began an Economic Development strategy, geared toward tourism, to build capacity by establishing small businesses. Some businesses are already established but there have been problems supporting the development of new business, mainly in terms of business planning and funding. This economic development strategy will be linked to the Gitanyow Historic Village Museum. They are in the process of developing a plan for a traditional gift shop, and looking at an economic development plan that is culturally oriented, reflecting local values.

As well, they are looking for training programs that will fit into their economic development plan. Planning will involve looking at the existing tourism market and how it can be geared towards self-sufficiency and independence of people who already have businesses. Some community services could include career counselling, entrepreneurial skills, and small business training workshops.

### **Community Involvement**

Eight hereditary chiefs supported the development of this project. Wanda Good, a community member, was a key worker on the project. It took a significant amount of work to get the building to look like a traditional longhouse. There was significant cooperation between different groups in the community lending support to the project during the early development stages, and there is widespread community support for the project.

### **Indicators**

Project success will be measured by the level of community support, the increase in knowledge and understanding of cultural history and values, and the economic impacts such as new business creation and increasing the number of visitors to the community.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

An architect and building contractor were hired to build the museum. The contractor hired seven or eight people to work on the construction of the longhouse. They started construction on the building from the ground up. A few more people were hired to do some building construction and landscaping that is still underway. People who have been employed on the project are from Reserve and had been on social assistance. Community members were hired as cultural trainees, to be trained in traditional activities such as button blanket making, song and dance, drum making and other activities. That program is now complete.

## **Social and Environmental Values**

The project supports important community goals including an increased understanding of history from a First Nations perspective. It is also helping to build self-sufficiency within the community.

## **Challenges**

Securing funding was a significant challenge in getting the project underway. This is a common challenge among First Nations who struggle with the whole process of trying to get funding from government sources or other funding agencies. Budget shortfalls or unexpected costs can hold up the construction. It is very important to have a project proposal that describes accurately what is going to be done, and how. The project planning should be done in advance, and described well. A cooperative and responsive proposal writer can make a big difference. Often there can be great proposal ideas but getting these ideas across can be a challenge. From the funding perspective, the proposal for this project was very well written.

Finding the capacity to operate the facility in the community can also be challenging. With a project of this scale, training needs to begin at the same time as construction so that there are community members trained and ready to staff and support the facility when construction is complete. Operating a museum brings up a lot of issues such as safety, proper handling of relics, and repatriation, and it is ideal if the people in the community can deal with these issues.

Repatriation is an important part of the process of establishing a community museum and cultural centre. Gitanyow has artifacts in the Museum of Civilization, and in world museums such as in Philadelphia, New York and Britain. The process of bringing these artifacts back into the community can take a long time. There must be agreement on returning them and who will be responsible for handling the relics, respecting the rightful owners and safeguarding the items.

## **Support and Legacy**

The project is geared toward being self-sufficient and to operate independently from other museums and government. Charging an entry fee to tour the site will help to support operating and maintenance costs. A gift shop supplied by local people running craft businesses will be an asset in funding the museum.

Proponents have already established the number of home-based businesses in the community. This includes a list of those who could contribute to a gift shop. There are also home-based catering businesses that could support the museum and help cover expenses.

### **Advice to Others**

- Don't bite off more than you can chew, make sure the capacity is there to manage the project.
- Research all the funding available whether it is private sector or government when putting together a business plan. Often the lack of information about funding opportunities can be a challenge for First Nations. Entrepreneurs who are starting out can get some support from the Community Futures or micro-businesses grants, small business grants, and private sector grants that are often geared to community based businesses.
- First Nations in negotiation should explore treaty-related measures for repatriation issues.
- Talk to your MLA. They could help you secure funding.
- Make sure you have a good business plan that you can sell to funders.
- Developing community support takes a lot of communication (and newsletters!) Keep people knowledgeable about what is going on to get full support of the community.

### **Source**

- Interview with Debbie Good, March 2002
- Interview with Lisa Dunn (formerly Community Futures 16/37), March 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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### **More Information**

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## **Greenwood Alternative Power Project**

### **Summary**

The Alternative Power Project is a community initiative based in the city of Greenwood, aimed at converting an old power sub-station into a *Mining, Smelting, Alternative and Electrical Interpretation Centre*. Systems have been established to generate power from solar and wind energy. The community is now in the process of developing the facilities and educational materials to enable the public to observe and learn how the systems work, as well as to explore further applications of alternative power systems.

### **Getting Started**

The City of Greenwood is a tiny community located on route Highway #3, located in the west Boundary Mining Area of southern BC. In the early 1900s, Greenwood was the hub of copper mining and exploration in the Boundary Country and the town subsequently has a long history related to smelting of copper ores, electrical power, railway transportation and the world demand for copper.

The old West Kootenay Power sub-station, located on the edge of town, originally supplied power to the local smelting operation. However, since the smelter closed in 1918, the station was being used only to supply power to Greenwood and the Okanagan via Oliver. In 1997, the large brick building was deeded to the City of Greenwood as part of the Centennial Celebration. Upon learning about the Greening Communities Fund, in 2000, the Mayor of Greenwood approached the community with the idea of converting the building into an alternative power project. Both the Heritage Development Organization (HDO), made up of a consortium of community groups, and the City, were very supportive.

### **Project Description**

On February 21, 2002 the power was officially 'switched on' at the Alternative Power Project in Greenwood. Power is being generated from solar panels and a wind generator and converted into 120 volt AC electrical current. Computer systems have been set up to monitor the performance of the equipment and maintain records of activity. The City is now working with the local power provider to have the systems connected to the grid so that the power produced at the centre and helping to provide electricity for the interpretive centre, will be deducted from their usage. They are also working on developing the interpretive centre where the local and travelling public will be able to learn about the alternative power systems already in place, and how to adapt them in their homes and communities.

### **Community Involvement**

The project has been led by the HDO and the City of Greenwood through the office of the Mayor. The work and achievements to date have been the result of a serious commitment by these groups, and the Mayor specifically, to the project in the form of financial and in-kind support as well as countless hours of volunteer labour. Although outside expertise was sought for the design and engineering of the systems, members of the community came up with the ideas for the project and determined the parameters of the work to be done. Due to the highly visible nature of the building on Highway #3, there is broad awareness about the project among local residents and neighbouring communities.

### **Indicators and Project Effectiveness**

The power project has received enormous support from individuals within the community as well as within the region and in B.C. Already, the construction of the project has generated interest and enthusiasm around alternative power options and several smaller local initiatives within residences have been inspired. The focus of the project is now on expanding this interest. There will be more opportunities for members from the community to get involved in the project through employment and extensive educational outreach throughout the region.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

There are a number of upcoming initiatives planned to enhance the local economies of Greenwood, Anaconda and Boundary Country. Working with the regional economic development agency, the Boundary Economic Development Commission (BEDC), there is funding secured to develop educational materials, seminars and workshops to engage the local and travelling public in learning more about alternative power systems. With support from Human Resource Development Canada, the project will also be working with a local community group focusing on employment and training for youth. Employment opportunities will be created in the building of the interpretation centre, as well as in its ongoing maintenance and operation. The engineering company that has worked closely with the community throughout the project, will be conducting training on the solar and wind systems to create a pool of knowledgeable individuals in the area to provide advice on alternative power and lead the education activities at the centre.

### **Challenges**

The Greenwood project has benefited from having a highly committed and enthusiastic project team. In addition to representatives of the City and the HDO, the technical consultants employed by the community were driven in the goal of achieving the vision of the centre. The project team worked extremely well together and subsequently, the few challenges that arose out of undertaking such a technical project, were addressed without difficulty.

## **Innovation**

The Alternative Power Project clearly represents an innovative use of resources. The City of Greenwood is the smallest city in Canada and has no industrial tax base. The donated building offered an opportunity for the community to secure a more sustainable form of power generation for themselves, expand their knowledge base on alternative energy, and take a lead in an area of growing importance and attention. Their creative entrepreneurship is already attracting the attention of communities in the area.

## **Support**

There has been enormous support shown for the Alternative Power Project from all levels of government – community, regional, provincial and national, as well as local companies and institutions. The main funding source has been through the Greening Communities Fund with the provincial Ministry of Community Development, Cooperatives and Volunteers. However, the BEDC, the City of Greenwood and Human Resources Development Canada have also furnished critical financial and in-kind resources to the project. Local companies and utilities have offered the use of their equipment and assisted with installations.

## **Legacy**

There are endless possibilities and plans to expand the capacity of the centre as a facility for both learning about, and inspiring, similar initiatives using alternative power sources. In addition to the physical legacy of the building itself, the hope is that the project will be the source of broader knowledge and action around alternative power options.

## **Advice to Others**

A number of individuals and neighbouring communities have already expressed interest in the project at Greenwood. The Mayor and project team are enthusiastic about assisting other initiatives by sharing their research and knowledge about the technology. The success of any project, however, requires a team of highly committed individuals willing and able to devote time to planning the project, setting goals and making them happen. Lacking full funding for the project, the solid support from the City and other communities in the region were crucial in enabling the project to take place. Similarly, the cooperation of the supplier providing the materials (i.e. solar panels etc.) was key to ensuring that the project ran smoothly and was carried out in line with community expectations.

## **Source**

- Interview with Mayor Arno Hennig, February 2002
- Written by Clare Mochrie

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**More Information:**

Heritage Development Organization; City of Greenwood

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# Greenwood Community Economic Development Strategy

## Summary

The community of Greenwood, situated in the Kootenay Boundary Regional District, was incorporated in 1897 and claims to be Canada's smallest City. Greenwood's population was 666 in 2001, down from 784 in 1996. Most communities in the Boundary region share common characteristics such as unemployment and underemployment, and smaller communities such as Greenwood face considerable economic hardship. There was a time that Greenwood's industry included mining and smelting, utilities, and forestry operations. As a resource dependent community, it has not been able to revive the economy after industry moving on or shutting down.

The Greenwood Community Economic Development Strategy was initiated in early 2001 to address job losses and loss of core community services by developing the long-term capacity of Greenwood and developing new opportunities for economic resiliency.

## Getting Started

Greenwood's history is rich with mining and smelting, forestry and railway activity but most of this industry is a shadow in the past. Mining was the catalyst behind the construction of many of the heritage buildings that remain. As a result of industry pulling out and shutting down in Greenwood, the tax base of the community is constantly dwindling.

Consequently, Greenwood is threatened with losing core services. Banking is no longer available in the community, and the nearest bank is located 94 kilometres away in Grand Forks. Some people aren't able to travel that distance and some members of the community, such as seniors, cannot access on-line banking. Pursuing financial institutions in efforts to restore banking services remains a priority.

In response to dwindling jobs and reduced services, a series of community meetings were initiated. The first Town Hall meeting, in early February 2001, was an opportunity for community members to meet with representatives of various provincial and federal ministries: the Rural Development Office, the Ministry of Community Development, Cooperatives and Volunteers (MCDCV), the Ministry of Forests, Forest Renewal BC, and the Rural Secretariat. Ed Conroy, the local MLA, the City of Greenwood and CFDC were also in attendance.

Meanwhile a grant was approved for \$5,000 from the Rural Development Office and a \$50,000 grant was awarded by MCDCV to support a community planning process.

## **Project Description**

The main goals of the project are to:

- To develop the long-term capacity in Greenwood for community economic development by recruiting, training and cultivating local leadership skilled in community economic development.
- To develop a community economic development strategy through: a review of past studies and recommendations; collecting current information on Greenwood; and looking at case studies of communities similar to Greenwood in other parts of the North America.
- To develop clear vision and goal statements, prepare an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, analysis of current demographics and future trends, and develop strategies and actions to achieve goals that are realistic.
- Identify, assess and pursue specific economic development opportunities through the following process:
  - Building on past planning sessions, identify up to five business or economic opportunities
  - Develop skills and an agreed method for assessing opportunities, including criteria for weeding out unfeasible ideas and the development of a consensus building process;
  - Support committees to conduct initial business definition, planning and feasibility analysis; and
  - Develop an implementation strategy for those opportunities deemed feasible.

The planning is on-going with a June 2002 deadline for the development of the Economic Strategy. Certain components of the project goals have been implemented such as the Community Policing Office and the pre-implementation of the Theatre Production (Dinner Theatre Club) is wrapping up in the spring of 2002 with a final proposal completed in April.

The local CFDC is overseeing this process and implementation of various projects is administered in conjunction with or by other partner organizations such as the City of Greenwood, the Greenwood Board of Trade, the Community Policing Steering Committee, and Youth & Children's Steering Committee. Community partners recognize their commitment to the process of community economic development as a life-long mission.

## **Community Involvement**

Involvement of community members in the development of the economic strategy is very important. The process is inclusive, emphasizing capacity building of community members to enable participation that is more effective. Rather than relying only on

the involvement of ‘traditional’ community leaders, a different approach was taken though this process still includes people from the established pool of leaders within the community.

Five residents have been identified as community leaders. At this stage each of the identified residents are not part of established groups that have been strong influences on the community to date. This decision was made because the community at large strongly indicated that new people with fresh approaches were needed in leadership roles. The training the individuals have received to date is mostly focused on the direct support of initiatives that they have started. This “hands on” approach will give them important lessons on “how to” create new projects or businesses. Over the latter part of the contract, more formal training will take place based on input from the community on training needs. In addition, there are about six working committees, created by community members who had not taken on a leadership role but who had the necessary skills identified and were encouraged to move into leadership positions in these committees to ensure widespread involvement.

Another goal is to gain consensus within the community through surveys of the business community and community at large, town hall meetings, and presentations to community groups and neighbourhood meetings.

In order to ensure that people who did not come to community meetings still were involved in the process, “kitchen table” meetings were organized. Residents from different neighbourhoods either volunteered or were recruited to lead a series of discussions about the planning process, and to get people’s input. We anticipate that the level of research and feedback on the process will result in more citizens becoming interested in the overall process and participating.

### **Indicators**

Although indicators have not been formally selected, the project coordinator has suggested a number of indicators. These include the level of trust among community members, community spirit and the desire of residents to be involved and pitch in, community pride, and the number of new business investments. Other indicators can be related back the project goals: Has a strategy been developed? Have the vision and goals been developed? Have local leaders been trained and cultivated?

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

It is early to evaluate the economic impacts of Greenwood’s economic development strategy, but five local jobs have been created to support the development of the Strategy, including a coordinator, consultant and three researchers. The business development projects identified will create job opportunities. As an example, the Theatre Production will create local employment. Positions will be available for

ticket sales, marketing, actors, costume designers, prop designers, entertainers, and more. Actors and production staff will require accommodations, food, entertainment, etc., as will the patrons. There are many spin-off business opportunities that can materialize as a result of developing these projects

Growth migration into the region is influenced by both economic and non-economic factors. Early retirees are affected more by non-economic factors such as climate, life-style and retirement services. We are exploring the tourism and retirement services opportunities and stimulating an entrepreneurial climate. Younger age groups, most notably in the 25 to 45 range, tend to be mobile and motivated by jobs, wages and other economic factors. Consequently, there continues to an in-migration of mostly early retirees and an out-migration of younger people.

The local community economic development approach is intended to be holistic, with consideration being given to how opportunities can be developed that complement each other. The Community Economic Development Strategy plans include the analysis and development of up to five bigger business opportunities, including a Dinner Theatre Club, and a Mining Interpretive Centre. Community beautification efforts are also on the list to attract people passing on the highway to spend time in the community. These efforts include upgrading and improved lighting and signage on business and municipal properties.

Project proponents wanted a ‘quick success’ to help build community spirit and support for the project. One project, a Community Policing Office (CPO) was set-up entirely through the efforts of the volunteer CPO steering committee in a restored heritage building highly visible on the highway. The CPO office supports crime prevention programs geared to youth and the community at large and provides a training facility for the Citizens Patrol group. A small grant was secured from BC Gas for \$1,000 and there is a possibility of a secondary grant of up to \$25,000 to hire a youth coordinator and develop brochures to promote crime prevention as an immediate solution to local business concerns of increased crime due to the loss of banking services. Businesses have no nightly deposit services since the closure of the bank.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

The plan is intended to address underemployment in the community, promoting economic diversification without detrimental community impacts. A business plan has been developed for a business centre and the potential location, the now vacant Boundary Training and Convention Centre, identified. The building is currently listed on the market for \$150,000.

Ecologically, efforts are being made to minimize habitat disruption. The trail network is being further developed to allow more people to be in touch with the

natural surroundings. Brochures and websites are being upgraded and added. A demonstration alternative energy project has been developed in the community that is cost-effective and also has important educational value (see *Greenwood Alternative Power Project*). The process itself has emphasized inclusivity and accessibility for community members.

### **Challenges**

There were many challenges associated with process of developing this economic strategy. Many community members were resistant to getting involved in another planning process. There was a high level of distrust and many Greenwood residents were cynical after too many planning initiatives without tangible results. Many people were left wondering why they should bother to become involved. Getting people together to participate in the process was extremely difficult. There was a lack of understanding around the process and developing community consensus.

It is critical to maintain a constant flow of information through distribution of reports, processes, and survey results, town meetings, neighbourhood participation and collaboration. This process must be ongoing long after the Strategy has been developed.

### **Innovation**

The community of Greenwood has recognized that partnering between community groups can play an important role in community development. In this case, local and provincial governments, Telus, BC Gas, community groups, businesses and citizens has come together in different ways to explore partnerships, offering technical advice and some financial support where needed. There is also interest in developing partnerships with community groups and organizations in other communities. A dialogue has been initiated with the Rosebud Theatre from Alberta, who may be able to share their experiences in the dinner theatre project. Another innovative approach has focused on efficiencies of industry supply. A number of businesses surveyed indicated a desire within the business community to organize bulk purchasing power where possible and a co-marketing strategy. It is still too early to comment as we really have not proceeded to a point beyond the initial interest at this stage.

### **Support**

Greenwood experienced a decrease in the population base, the people that left typically were the ones that had “employability skills” and they left to enter other job markets. This legacy of declining rural communities affects the very capacity of a community to diversify its economy when its skilled workforce is absent and capital to fund CED projects has been drying up. The project aims to develop community capacity in leadership and entrepreneurial skills.

Other communities have taken an interest in this strategy. Community leaders in Beaverdell and Grand Forks have expressed an interest in some of the positive outcomes from the Greenwood strategy. Project proponents plan to share these outcomes and process with other communities in an economic development meeting to take place in June 2002.

### **Legacy**

Sustainable development occurs when a project or opportunity is developed and does not require grants to support its ongoing operations or activities. This means the generation of revenue that supports operating expenses and future growth. Sustainability takes place when the community itself recognizes its needs, not when government or non-profits try to fix the community's problems for them. Communities must recognize that the global economy has direct impacts on our local economies, therefore, all communities are in transition! Transition leadership that engages the CED process through a plan based on capacity, consensus and collaboration is more inclined to be successful than communities that wait for solutions and opportunities to come to them. Diversification comes from taking one step at a time, creating a success and then building on it.

### **Advice to Others**

- It is important for groups within the community to coordinate their activities to fit in with an overall strategy, so the pieces of the puzzle fit together.
- Analyse opportunities for development to see what pieces of the puzzle are missing, and focus on those opportunities.
- Economic development strategy should be based on consensus within the community, supported by research.
- A holistic approach, incorporating the social and ecological context is important.
- There is a pool of residents where leadership and skill building can be developed. This capacity building is part of developing long-term community sustainability.

### **Source**

- Interview with Renee Bernier, January 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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### **More Information**

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## **Harrop-Procter Community Forest**

### **Summary**

The communities of Procter and Harrop are located 30 kilometres east of Nelson, in southeast BC, between the Purcell and Selkirk mountains. Together they have 650 full time residents, which expands to 1100 in the summer. Harrop and Procter residents have a long history of social and environmental activism, with a strong interest and concern for the health of the watersheds, as most people draw their drinking water from local creeks. For more than 25 years the communities have struggled to be involved in the management of nearby land, and manage it with an 'ecologically lighter' touch. The community forest concept was initiated in 1995, after the Harrop and Procter watersheds were excluded from plans to protect the area through the creation of the West Arm Park.

After much political bargaining and community discussion, a forest license was finally awarded through the provincial Community Forest pilot program, in the summer of 2000. Harrop-Procter has become the first tenure applicant to be awarded an operating area using an ecosystem-based management approach, which is now operational. The community wanted to secure a lower, more sustainable cut that did not jeopardize water, viewsapes and other important community values but it was not easy to challenge the status quo forestry tenure system during the application process. The license that was finally awarded is area-based and covers 11,000 hectares.

### **Project Description**

As the community forest project moved forward, the Harrop-Procter Watershed Protection Society was formed, as well as the Harrop-Procter Community Co-Operative that holds the forest license. The Watershed Protection Society operates the environmental advocacy, education and outreach aspects of the community forest while the Co-Operative runs the business operations, although there is cross-over between the two bodies. The Watershed Society applied for and was awarded the forest license, but the license was shifted to the Co-Operative when it was incorporated.

In addition, the project also includes Sunshine Bay Botanicals, a co-operative herb and medicinal plant business, which produces non-timber forest products, tinctures, and farm products. Four acres of land have been put into production, growing plants that will be used to make products such as teas and medicinal tinctures, as well as bulk herbs. This was developed to contribute to economic diversification and to help off-set the lower volumes harvested in the Community Forest by building a broader economic base. While the farm is not directly linked to the forestry operations, it would have not have developed as a community venture had the community forest

tenure not been secured. One project goal will see the blending and marketing of products from the farm with non-timber forest products.

The botanical products are available for retail sales and the product line is expanding. There are also long-term plans for eco-tourism with a recreation strategy for the area currently under development. This ecosystem-based approach to forest management allows only one-third of the logging that conventional logging would have allowed. Diversification is a key part of the strategy. The project needs to be innovative in its approach in order to meet its goal of offsetting smaller timber volumes through the creation of more jobs per cubic metre harvested. Logging began September of 2001, and will continue in June or July of 2002.

### **Indicators**

With protection of the ecosystem established as a key goal for the community, ecosystem health and a clean supply of water are important project indicators. The number of people employed by the project, and the economic viability of the community forest are two economic indicators of project success. Strengthening existing talent and social capital within the community are other indicators of how the project is succeeding.

### **Project Effectiveness**

This project is still in the start-up phase of its development and so it is too soon to tell whether it will be successful in meeting all its objectives. However, the commitment of those who have spearheaded it has been remarkable. The people behind the project, many of them tenacious and with strong opinions, have included a balance of both visionaries and practical thinkers. Both the Co-Operative and the Society have a Board that is elected once a year by the community, and anyone who wants to contribute can run for the Board. The combined Boards have 14 members, and there are five seats that are on both Boards to ensure that Society values are represented and respected at the Co-Operative table as well.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

The herb business is currently underway, and logging began in 2001. In 2000, 17 full and part-time staff were employed, doing a variety of jobs including trail-building, layout in the forest, office work and business planning, public education and outreach. Ten were hired for the 2001 summer season. In a small community, even a small number of jobs has a big impact, and the project's importance in local capacity building has been significant. Currently, in BC's forest sector, less than 1 job is generated, on average, for 1000 m<sup>3</sup> of wood cut. The Harrop-Procter Community Forest is aiming for 3 to 4 times that number of jobs for every thousand cubic metres of wood harvested while maintaining a financially viable operation.

## **Social and Environmental Values**

The Harrop-Procter Community Co-op Board recognizes that protecting the ecosystem will provide social benefits, such as clean water and employment, over the long-term. Social values are also given priority. For example a band-saw mill is being used despite its higher operational cost as it allows for more local job creation.

## **Challenges**

Financial barriers to the Harrop-Procter Community Forest project have been significant. In addition to requiring financial support at the start-up, developing a new model of forest management can also be restricted by the parameters of the existing system. The tenure system places limitations on new innovations, and obtaining tenure in the first place is difficult. The geography of the land is often another limiting factor as it will dictate what can and cannot be done, a critical consideration in ecosystem based planning. The Harrop-Procter forest is using a precautionary approach so, if there is uncertainty about the consequences of a management decision, it isn't undertaken.

Starting a new business is a challenge in itself, especially with many people involved who have never been in business before. They are passionate about their beliefs but don't necessarily know a lot about business. Project leaders admit they have made mistakes, and it might have been a better approach not to have tried to do so many things so quickly when the initiative began. Trying to make money in the lumber business is a challenge, especially given the higher costs associated with single tree selection logging systems. The wood does not have a higher value than wood cut using less sustainable methods, although that could change in the future.

## **Innovation**

The project has required a lot of community learning to get it going, but it is breaking new ground for community-based ecological forestry in BC. Despite its innovation, the project has never been assured of success.

Wood cut from the Harrop-Procter Community Forest is expected to be eco-certified by early summer 2002 by the Forest Stewardship Council. Costs of producing eco-certified wood are high, and unlike organic food, consumers are not always aware why they have to pay more. One Director of the Harrop-Procter forest is involved in a provincial strategy to raise the profile of eco-certified wood, in cooperation with manufacturers and millers. Initiatives such as consumer marketing and promotion of co-operative buyers groups to access larger markets will help to overcome this barrier. However the current need to focus on everyday operations means there is limited project capacity to focus on market development.

## **Legacy and Support**

Like many new businesses, the Co-Operative is in sizable debt to several financial institutions, borrowing money to fund the start-up forest operations. The outreach, education and research work of the Society is mainly funded through Foundations. It is hoped that increasing value-added components of the project will help to offset the significant cost of doing business in an ecologically sustainable manner.

Community Forest Directors feel that adequate funding from government or private sources is key for project support. As well, project proponents believe improved access and linkages with the academic world to develop research projects that support the forest would benefit both the community forest and students. External support to facilitate community projects, such as a workshop held on how to start a co-operative, has been useful during the start-up phase. Harrop-Proctor Community Forest Directors believe that in order for more community forests to develop, the tenure system will need to be reviewed.

In terms of local community support, volunteers have played a critical role in the project. Community outreach and education, through slide shows, newsletters, and workshops, have been on-going.

The Harrop-Proctor Community Forest Board encourages the development of enabling legislation to help facilitate the creation of community forests in other communities in British Columbia. In addition to this, the Board believes that for community forestry to succeed, one of the most important ingredients is the will and effort to develop local skills and capacity.

## **Advice to Others**

- Don't try to do too much too fast and get overwhelmed, starting two businesses at the same time has been challenging.
- Talk to other Community Forests organizations and try to avoid some of the mistakes they have made.
- It is very important to be inclusive with the community, put effort into community participation or it won't be a community initiative.

## **Source**

- Interview with Rami Rothkop, Harrop-Proctor Watershed Protection Society & Harrop-Proctor Community Co-op, March 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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### **More Information:**

Harrop-Proctor Community Forest  
[www.hpcommunityforest.org](http://www.hpcommunityforest.org)

## **Horsefly Tourism Plan**

### **Summary**

Horsefly is an unincorporated community located about 60 kilometres north east of Williams Lake. The 1996 census population was 800 people. With an economy almost totally dependent on forestry, project proponents recognized the need to diversify. The Horsefly Tourism Plan is focused on promoting the existing resources in the community. The Tourism Plan is was not created with the intention of replacing forestry activities, but it is hoped tourism activities will develop in addition to forestry, to complement existing operations.

### **Getting Started**

Horsefly has a long history of economic transition, beginning with the 1859 Gold Rush. When the Gold Rush was over, the economy become dependent on trapping, then ranching and then logging became the dominant sector of the local economy. The forest industry has been the main driver since the 1940s, with agriculture also playing an important role. The Ministry of Forests Office has been a large employer but numbers have declined in recent years (50 in 1997 to 39 in 2000) and the office will be eliminated completely by April 2003 due to Ministry of Forests restructuring.

Recognizing that economic diversification was needed to boost the weakening economy, tourism was the most obvious economic opportunity. A large local population of Swiss and German immigrants meant that links had already been forged to European tourists, drawn by the numerous outdoor activities. There is a natural fit with historical cultural-tourism through Gold Rush heritage sites, as Horsefly was where gold was first discovered.

### **Project Description**

The Horsefly Tourism Plan addresses three key issues: the enhancement and development of existing tourist attractions, the organization, management and promotion of the community as a destination spot and the maintenance and ongoing sustainability of a long-term cooperative tourism plan. The plan focuses on seven specific projects: trail development, tourism promotion (brochures etc), further development of the existing Jack Lynn Memorial Museum, promotion of the Flying Horse Gallery, website development, promotion of a Horsefly festival, and community safety preparation work. It was very important to community members that tourism development would not change the face of the community, such as in a town like Whistler, but would build on the existing community resources.

### **Community Involvement**

The development of the tourism plan was a community driven process. The Horsefly Community Development Centre was able to facilitate and support the process by providing administrative help. A committee was formed with representation from every community group and from the business community. Computer technology was key in keeping committee members in touch and updated on the project, with an e-mail list and regular updates, often putting issues out on e-mail for feedback. The plan was developed during a six-month period of community meetings from July to December of 1999.

### **Indicators**

Economic impact and increased business are important indicators of project success. The Horsefly Festival resulted in increased visitors to the community and increased revenues of approximately 30% to various local businesses. Development of new businesses is another indicator that could be tracked, but there are no results compiled yet.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

The main objective of the tourism planning in Horsefly is to diversify the economy and create opportunities. Not only will this open up new opportunities for existing tourism operators, but new businesses could develop. In recent community festivals such as the Horsefly River Salmon Festival, more than 1000 visitors came to the community. One business saw an increase in sales of more than \$3000, so the impact of spending is felt by the community as a whole. The increase in business during the festival was estimated at about 30%.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

The Salmon festival is one event planned in Horsefly, bringing recognition that Horsefly was once one of the biggest Salmon runs in the province. Since the Fraser River was blocked at Hell's Gate in 1913 during CN Rail construction, the salmon population has diminished drastically. Every four years Sockeye Salmon do return to the Horsefly River, 760 kilometres upstream from the mouth of the Fraser. Community residents recognize the relationship of the health of rivers to the health of the community, and the Horsefly River Salmon Festival was created to celebrate the Horsefly watershed and as an educational opportunity.

### **Challenges**

Developing community support for a tourism plan was not easy. Horsefly is an unincorporated community and without a town council, there was no elected body looking out for the community's interests. Most people were not familiar with the idea that the community could take control of their economic future, and people needed to develop an understanding of the need to be pro-active. Many people

choose to live in Horsefly because of the peace, quiet and isolation, and found it difficult to adjust to the idea of promoting the community to outside visitors.

Securing adequate funding to implement plans has been a challenge. Several grants have allowed students to be hired, which has been important for developing valuable job skills for local youth. Of the eight to ten youth hired to work on various aspects of the Tourism Plan, including the website, only two were from Rose Lake, a nearby community, the rest from Horsefly itself. It does take a significant amount of money for small communities to promote their assets, and external funding is both important and often difficult to secure.

### **Innovation**

Nothing like this had ever been attempted before in Horsefly. Project coordinators feel that Horsefly is now on the map for many people around the province who were not familiar with the community before. It has also contributed to community spirit and an openness to an understanding that the community can play a role in building local prosperity.

### **Support**

A number of resources provided very useful in efforts to develop the tourism plan. *Strategic Directions for Cultural and Heritage Tourism and Marketing*, produced by the former Ministry of Small Business, provided direction for some of the cultural tourism planning. A book by Flo Frank and Anne Smith called *Getting People Ready, Willing & Able to Revitalise their Community* was also a useful resource. *Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities* helped address issues about community impact. An additional resource was the *Community Development Strategy for the Horsefly Forest District* by the Horsefly Board of Trade & Horsefly Community Development Centre. Horsefly has been able to make a connection with Likely, and the communities now refer visitors to attractions in their neighbouring communities.

### **Legacy**

Implementation of several parts of the tourism plan is dependent on securing external funding. Part of the proposal for trail development includes an educational component dedicated to the Chinese people that had worked in the mines in the area during the Gold Rush era. The Chinese in this area contributed a great deal to mining, including digging an extensive series of ditches to re-route water for hydraulic mining. Money has run out and this portion of the project has not been completed, although project proponents are looking for financial backing.

### **Advice to Others**

- Tourism initiatives cannot be developed in every community. Key ingredients need to be in place, such as wilderness or cultural experiences.
- Community buy-in is a key element for project success and the support of community groups and local businesses is important for any initiative. Events that were less successful had fewer community groups involved.
- It's important that the groups involved understand the intent of activities, whether an event is planned for the community itself or to draw people in from outside the community.
- The key advice is to get people working together. Being a smaller, isolated community can help the process, because people are more willing to work together.

### **Source:**

- Interview with Paula Kully, January 2002.
- Proposal: *Community of Horsefly Tourism Plan for Economic Diversification*
- Written by Maggie Julian

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## **Kaslo Community Forest**

### **Summary**

The community of Kaslo, population 1032, is a forestry-based community in the Kootenays. The Kaslo and District Community Forest Society was formed in 1996. The mission of the Society is to manage the diversity of values of the Community Forest in an ecologically responsible and fiscally accountable manner on behalf of the people of Kaslo and Area D of the Regional District of Central Kootenay.

### **Getting Started**

In May 1996, there were 80,000 cubic metres of unallocated wood in the Kootenay Lake Forest District surrounding the community of Kaslo. Discussions had been underway among a group of Kaslo and area citizens for 10 years articulating the vision to access management control of the working forest surrounding the community. At the time, the area MLA Corky Evans was the Parliamentary Secretary to the Forest Minister Andrew Petter. Evans initiated a consultation process for determining an approach to the unallocated wood.

Kaslo's interest in a community forest was acknowledged and the Province put out a call for a Community Forest management proposal. Only one community proposal would be accepted and with a deadline in four months. A sub-committee of the Kaslo and Area Round Table was asked by the community to take on the task representing the diversity of perspectives in forest management including watersheds, forestry contractors, local government, Share BC, local business, environment, and recreation. The proposal development process was funded by Forest Renewal BC. This Planning Committee identified as its key criterion that the proposal be as independent as possible, and arms length to industry or government control.

### **Project Description**

The community forestry proposal was accepted and the Kaslo Community Forest Society was created. The Society consists of a nine-member consensus-based board, with a seat for a Regional District representative and another seat for the Village of Kaslo, acting on behalf of the community. The seven other Board members are selected by the existing Board from the community-at-large.

Logging began in one small block in 1998, and operations expanded in 1999. The timber license is volume-based, with an annual allowable cut of 10,000 cubic metres.. After several years of a volunteer Board of Directors working with two technicians and a volunteer signing forester, a manager was hired. With so many people involved in the forest industry in Kaslo, it was proving challenging to find

Board members who met the conflict of interest policy that states a Board member could not work for the Society. This has now been changed to allow Board members to work for the Society on a case-by-case basis. The challenge now is organizational development and building policy that reflects the needs of the diverse community of Kaslo.

To date the Society has engaged in many activities, but the bulk of its time has been devoted to operational planning. Other projects include: water quality monitoring; terrain analysis and biodiversity assessments; developing a forest stewardship curriculum, and inventorying non-timber forest products.

### **Project Effectiveness**

Project leaders see that the 'value' of the project is much greater than what appears on the bottom line. The project has played a large role in community capacity building. Community involvement includes environmental and fiscal management. People in the community are learning about the compromises that are necessary in the management of a small license and the process has strengthened the community.

The project has become a focal point to address other community issues. Youth employment is an issue in the area. At the same time, contractors are experiencing difficulty getting reliable, motivated workers. In the summer of 2001, the Community Forest employed a youth crew of 4 to 6 local young people working in the crown land in the area. While this is only a small percentage of the 400 young people in the area, it is a proactive contribution for youth employment and workforce training.

### **Indicators**

The landscape level management plan that is under development will help determine the key priorities and values of the Community Forest. A key goal of the Community Forest is to undertake sustainable logging practices with strong public support, so one indicator of success is public opinion on how the Community Forest is managing the diversity of values. Completion of the Kaslo Community Forest policy documents is a huge task and progress in this area is also an important indicator of project success.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

The revenue from the Community Forest contributes directly to the local economy. The vast majority of the people who work in the forest are locals who live in the community. This contrasts with many other forest contracts in the area where workers are brought in from elsewhere. Revenue from the community forest last year was \$1.6 million; all but a small portion was spent in the local area employing local people and purchasing local products.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

The Columbia Basin Trust has provided two years of funding for a Forest Stewardship Education program in the local K-12 school in partnership with the Community Forest. The curriculum is being revised based on the first year's experience, and is an important tool in building understanding about forestry in the community. Outreach and education is on-going with the greater community as well. In an attempt for education to be fun, the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Winter in the Forest Festival was held in February. Activities from sleigh rides to compass competitions engaged 300 people for the event.

### **Challenges**

The development of the Kaslo Community Forest has not been easy. No analysis of the spatial area or cutting volume has been done. The cut for the operating area has been set by the province at 10,000 cubic metres. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the current harvest is high, suggesting reduced volumes and reduced revenue in future years. Costs for the existing cut rate are already high. A landscape level plan is being developed that will determine an appropriate, long term cut for the operating area based on all local values. It is currently in its first phase of development.

The Community Forest currently has a 15-year tenure, which is proving to be a constraint. The 15 year non-renewable license does not provide a long-term tenure for community management. The Board has expressed interest in the project being included in the Community Forest pilot program, where the forest would be managed under woodlot regulations, and the Allowable Annual Cut could be renegotiated.

While there is interest in value-added products, so far revenue from the Community Forest has come only from the sale of the raw logs. A market analysis of value-added products needs to be done, but those involved with the project do not have adequate funding to undertake the analysis. It is hoped that in 2002, external funding can be secured to support a value-added study.

The diversity of opinions that exist in Kaslo makes it almost impossible to please everyone. The project works by a consensus model, which means there is a lot of juggling to make sure that decisions are something that everyone can live with. The project is still having growing pains. Developing policy that has community support is a huge challenge. Dealing with fallout from a recent fire on a highly visible block has become a new challenge.

## **Innovation**

For Community Forest boards to function effectively they need experienced forest workers and forest professionals to serve as active board members. This is especially true for Community Forest organizations that have limited financial resources to hire staff. But in small communities, it is not always in the interest of these workers and professionals to volunteer their time if this jeopardizes their chances of gaining employment. This situation makes standard corporate conflict of interest guidelines difficult, if not impossible to implement. The Kaslo and District Community Forest Society has developed a policy to address the issue of conflict of interest. A balance must be struck whereby all community perspectives are represented on the board, and real or perceived conflict of interest is avoided.

## **Support**

Support both from the community and from external organizations is very important to the operations of the Community Forest. Dedicated Board members are very important because dynamics between the people involved are fundamental to the success of the project. The Board feels that people need to stay open and keep talking, and have a willingness to work together. Reliable technical leadership that can be depended upon by the community and the Board is of critical importance. Difficult complex management decisions cannot be based on just passion and prayers. The leadership role is still evolving for Kaslo.

Funding is an important external support tool and project start-up funding is critical. The government is not giving out Community Forest licenses freely, as they can be difficult for governments to manage. Without financial support for start-up the success of the project can be compromised. The Board suggests that start-up loans of several hundred thousand dollars, and assistance with facilitating networking and sharing of knowledge between Community Forest projects would be ideal.

Community Forests are seen by many as a viable option to strengthen rural communities. In March 2002, the Kaslo and District Community Forest Society joined with other community forest organizations from across BC to form the *British Columbia Community Forest Association*. The new association aims to promote culturally, ecologically and economically sustainable forestry in the province. This association will promote networking and support among existing and developing community forests, and will also help to bring the concerns of community forest organizations to broader discussions of forestry policy in BC.

## **Legacy**

The forestry operations, including planning, have been funded entirely from log sales. The only external funding the Society has received is for its education programming.

**Source**

- Interview with Susan Mulkey, KDCFS Director, March 2002
- Susan Mulkey, Speaking Notes, Community Forests Conference March 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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## **Kimberley Economic Development Summary**

### **Summary**

Kimberley has a population of about 7,000 people and is located in the southeastern corner of British Columbia, just north of the U.S. Border. Previously, mining, forestry and agriculture dominated the economy of the region. Over the past 15 years, an economic development strategy has been developed and implemented that has resulted in a shift in economic activity and a steady growth in tourism. Kimberley's objective is to make a transition to a prosperous diversified economy while maintaining the desirable social and environmental qualities of the region. In recent years the community has developed first rate recreation and tourism facilities including a major ski area, two 18 -hole golf courses, hiking paths and a unique "Bavarian Village" theme in the downtown core.

### **Getting Started**

Cominco Ltd., operated the Sullivan Mine in Kimberley for the past 100 years. The underground and unobtrusive mine, was one of the largest lead and zinc mines in the world. In the early 1980s, the city Council realized that the mine was predicted to close in 2000 when ore was depleted. Anticipating that the major industry would be lost, it was recognized that the community would need to begin planning for an economic transition. The City had already recognized that tourism had some potential and were putting some time into tourism development.

In 1984, the City set up an Economic Development office, a unique move for a community of its size. The first step was to undertake an analysis of the economic potential outlining strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the community (that is, a SWOT analysis). From this analysis a number of committees were formed to look at economic options including tourism opportunities, institutional opportunities (government offices, prisons, etc), small business opportunities, and industrial opportunities. The committee members were chosen because of the experience they could offer. In one case an ex-Cominco engineer was on the industrial opportunities committee.

It is important to note that work continued concurrently on all the potential development streams, but tourism was seen as the most promising. Further analysis concluded that industry was not a great option for Kimberley, in part due to competition from sites available in American communities. Two other factors worked against the community in developing industrial opportunities: the BC tax regime and the cumbersome regulatory regime. Several times companies investigated a move to Kimberley but when the tax regimes were compared with Alberta, Alberta won the business. The mine was shut down completely in early

2002, but the industrial infrastructure that remains in the community includes rail lines, natural gas, low cost hydro, excellent highways, air access, a stable skilled work force, low cost housing and cultural and social services.

Institutional opportunities were not expected to be strong given the move toward centralization of government services to larger centres. Tourism became the main focus, because of the natural attributes working in Kimberley's favour such as clean air, the Rocky Mountains, seven nearby provincial parks, and a ski hill right in town.

### **Project Description**

Kimberley had a community-owned ski area that went into bankruptcy in 1984 because of high interest rates on loans for facility upgrading. The City bought the ski area in order to keep it operating in the community. They did not make the purchase with the intention of holding on to the facility in the long-term. Instead they hoped to making it profitable again before selling it to private enterprise to expand and market , as this was not a role that the City could take on.

The ski area was for sale for a number of years, but it was not an attractive purchase option because of aging equipment and the one-season nature of the resort. A more ambitious plan was put together and a new strategy was developed that included a golf course. The new golf course would be right at the base of the ski area, in a design that is similar to Whistler village (although Kimberley has a much longer history than Whistler does).

There is a bench of land in between the community and the ski hill that was developed into the Trickle Creek Golf Course. It was a financial risk, with much of the money coming from the community or other funding programs that were available to the community. The City developed the golf course and were the initial owners. The ski area became more attractive and saleable with this addition. The City also began to assemble land and rationalize the acquisition of adjacent land. A Master Plan was developed for the recreation area, Happy Hands Campground, the racket and tennis centre, the golf course, the ski hill, a large nature park (2,200 acres) and other lands available for development.

Once the Master Plan was developed a call was put out for expressions of interest and a number of serious purchase offers were made. One was from Charlie Lock, who at that time owned ski areas in Lake Louise, Calgary and Fernie. The property was sold to him with the master plan already developed and a proviso that development would move forward. The purchase meant that a player had become involved who had the capacity to market the development nationally and internationally, moving beyond the development capacity of the City.

## **Community Involvement**

The community has been very supportive of the economic development strategy for the most part, although sometimes it is difficult to communicate to the public the trade-offs between different development options (that is, tourism vs. industrial development). For instance some industrial development with potential pollution problems, such as a proposed waste disposal plant, would not have been compatible with tourism. Other times, it is just not possible to attract industrial development to the community, and the community needs to understand the complex reasons for this to fully support the chosen development path.

## **Indicators**

Economic indicators include Kimberley's tax base and job creation. By selling the recreation properties, they were added to the City tax roll and have replaced a good part of the tax base that they lost with Cominco. This has created economic development, and more people are willing to come and invest in Kimberley, creating more jobs and a better community image. An improved community image and pride in the community are other important indicators of project success.

## **Project Effectiveness**

It was very important to have a strategy and a plan that worked for the community of Kimberley. While other communities may have an anti-development mandate, it was very important for Kimberley to bring in new development. In a small town with people out of work and moving away, well-planned development makes a lot of sense, particularly if it provides amenities for people who want to live there.

## **Strengthening the Local Economy**

Communities function on the income from their tax base. That is what paves the roads and provides basic services in the community. Previously, Kimberley had a tax base of residential, industrial and business properties. Over the last few years almost 100% of the industrial tax base has been lost, but the business component has increased significantly, as has the residential class. Selling the properties created direct revenue for the City that can be reinvested. The recreation area has become a very important economic generator and also helps the downtown core development. Since the properties were sold there has been new development, and the ski hill now has a quad chair and a new Marriott hotel.

Many jobs were lost when the mine closed, but the community has gained jobs through the tourism development. The Economic Development office does not have the resources to research and track the impacts of tourism development, so the number of new jobs created is not known.

The Economic Development office has learned that money earned through the tourism industry tends to stay in the community. If people make higher industrial

wages, then they spend them on big purchases whose impacts aren't felt in the community whereas people who are making what are perceived to be lower wages, spend their money on rent, food and in other places in the community.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

During the development of the golf course there were a number of people who were concerned with the impact on the wildlife area. Consultation with wildlife biologists concluded that outside of a natural fire, a golf course would actually benefit the overgrown site by providing open areas for animals. As it turns out there are bear, moose and deer population making use of the area. The golf course development, which did alter the natural area, was balanced by the creation of a nature park, which has remained completely natural and untouched.

### **Challenges**

There was discussion and interest in sustainable development from some members of the Kimberley community. A sustainable development committee was formed and money was raised to employ a sustainable development coordinator for two years. The sustainable development committee strongly emphasized process in their discussions, ensuring that every stakeholder was included in the discussion, and working by consensus. Setting up the discussions took several months. No concrete projects were put forward by the committee, discussions were more abstract and no practical goals and solutions were developed for implementation. Translating the global issues that people were struggling with to on-the-ground solutions in the community was a real challenge.

### **Support and Legacy**

The City has played a key role in the economic development program by creating and continuing to support the Economic Development office over the long-term. At the same time that the Economic Development office was created, the Kimberley Community Development Society was formed. The idea behind the Society was to create a vehicle to secure and provide funding to support community economic development. For instance the Society operated and developed the campground after it was purchased from the ski hill before it went bankrupt. Over time, the Society has provided services such as administration, payroll, marketing, the operation of the campground and other business services to the golf course, and derived revenue from these services. They are now providing the service of marketing 21 golf courses in the Kootenay River Valley and take a commission for these services as well.

### **Advice to Others**

- Make sure whatever economic development strategy you pick is appropriate. Many communities are looking towards tourism, but it may not be appropriate for your community.
- Try to develop some community goals. Setting short-term goals and trying to achieve them develops camaraderie and a feeling of success among people that is a short cut through a lot of the process. Don't develop the process with an academic model.
- One of the important lessons was that you have to have a plan and get on with things. You cannot concern yourself too much with process or you can get bogged down entirely. Process is important. However be aware that in some groups, process can take all the energy of the group and nothing is achieved. At some point the community has to determine that they are going to go somewhere. Get a road map, get a vehicle and begin the journey.

### **Source**

- Interview with Larry Haber, March 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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## **Many Hands Cooperative**

### **Summary**

The Many Hands Cooperative was developed by the Ktunaxa Independent School system in the Cranbrook area in 1992. The Cooperative was started to create a supportive environment for the segment of the First Nations population who had not been successful in participating in mainstream employment due to a variety of challenges, including FAS/FAE. Many of these women were good at crafts or had the propensity to be good at crafts and do well at repetitive activities, and the idea for a women's cooperative developed as a way to support them.

### **Getting Started**

The Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Tribal Council received funding from Human Resources Development Canada to do the first round of training through the Aboriginal Strategic Initiative Project. Training covered both life skills and craft training and was delivered through workshops and incorporated into a day-to-day routine. The coordinator brought in different community people to train the Cooperative members in beadwork, sewing and hide tanning.

The St. Eugene Mission Resort is a resort, golf course and casino that has been under development for a number years for the St. Mary's Reserve. The original plan would have seen the Many Hands Cooperative becoming more proficient around the time that the Resort was slated to be open, in 1997. The resort opening has been delayed and it is now expected to open in the summer of 2002.

There are five Bands that are part of the Tribal Council. The original intent was to have women from all the Bands involved. It was hoped that there would be workshops and women working out of their homes from all five bands. It started out with this way, but there were not enough sales, and the women were not making the money that they wanted to make. The slow-down in the St. Eugene resort development contributed to these economic challenges.

### **Project Description**

The Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Tribal council lands are about eight kilometres north of the City of Cranbrook. The workshop is located in the renovated tool shop of the old residential school. The retail shop is located close by the workshop, in the same compound where the hotel and casino will open. The women work in the workshop and some women also work at home. The sewing machines remain in the workshop. The women do end up working together most of the time, and this also provides some social time.

There is a core of about five women involved in the Cooperative. Originally there were about 13 women involved. It had been hoped that more women who already had good business skills or good craft skills would join the Cooperative. These women would then provide support for the other women. That has not happened, so a full-time staff support person has continued to be provided to the program. The Tribal Council subsidizes the position, but it is hoped that eventually the Cooperative itself could fund the position although this is not expected for at least two years.

Crafts are sold on the Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Tribal Lands adjacent to the St. Eugene Mission Golf Resort where they have a retail store front, as well as at high-end craft fairs. The Cooperative has also received several contracts such as one from Parks Canada. The women had a contract to make beaded animals for display in the parks interpretive centres. Other products include hand-tanned buckskin items like moccasins or gloves, beaded items such as barrettes, purses and necklaces, and ribbon shirts and regalia. As well they are moving into more contemporary products such as burlap shopping bags.

When a product sells, the women make money off the product and the Cooperative makes a portion from the sale as well. The staff person for the Cooperative helps support the marketing and finds new retailers and craft shows. She also tracks what products sell best and to understand better where the Cooperative should direct production efforts.

Another project outcome has been increased interaction between First Nations and non-First Nations communities. Some funding from the Ministry of Community Development, Cooperatives and Volunteers supported workshops for the general non-Native public to learn beading and pine needle basket making. This was offered on a fee for service basis, and run through a local non-Native craft store. The exposure through these workshops was positive, but unfortunately it was clear that more work was needed to educate the public and non-Native partners so that stereotypes about First Nations are not reinforced. Cooperative members have also participated in craft fairs and art adjudication and in early 2002 won first and third prize in one competition. This helps to establish the Cooperative members as high-end artisans.

### **Community Involvement**

Initially it was not difficult to get women involved in the Cooperative. When it first began, women received a steady income not based on sales if they worked with the Cooperative, and more women were willing to be involved in the project. After about two years income was tied to sales. Due to a number of factors, sales were not significantly high and commitment of women has lessened over time, but the five women currently involved have been there from the beginning.

## **Indicators**

The number of career challenged women involved in the project is an indicator of the success of the Women's Cooperative. Increased sales and increased revenue from those sales will improve interest in the Cooperative.

## **Project Effectiveness**

The commitment of all the parties involved has been very important for the success of the Cooperative. The Tribal Council has had to provide a fair amount of both human and financial support to keep things going over the years. The manager is still subsidized, and this will continue at least until the resort and casino gets up and running. The commitment of the five Cooperative members themselves is also critical.

## **Strengthening the Local Economy**

The Many Hands Cooperative has provided employment income for as many as 13 women in past years, and now has five women involved. It is likely that sales will increase and the Cooperative could expand once the St. Eugene Resort opens later in 2002.

There were some sales last year on reserve with the golf course traffic, but these were limited. Signage for the retail store was poor and exposure was limited. The new Cooperative manager has a marketing background and there are plans to improve visibility for the upcoming tourist season in 2002.

## **Social and Environmental Values**

The Cooperative is providing employment and meaningful work to career challenged women. Most of the crafts are traditional, and so the Cooperative is also helping to preserve the cultural heritage of the Ktunaxa Kinbasket people.

## **Challenges**

Some of the women involved in the Cooperative have personal challenges they are working on. With this population there can be drastic changes in their lives so support and flexibility is very important.

One of the challenges is that the production level of the Cooperative is not very high, with five women involved. Tanning hides and the other crafts are labour and time intensive. Also, it has been challenging to communicate understanding of the need for the Cooperative to raise the price for the customer so that they can make a commission off the product. This does not bode well with a number of craftspeople who feel that they should get the full sales amount. It has taken time for the women to understand when raw materials are purchased, the Cooperative has to take more money to cover their costs. It can be difficult to explain those

concepts and can end up causing friction within the group that needs to be diffused.

The whole concept of cooperatives is poorly understood. To address this, the Tribal Council is working on some initiatives to encourage people to embrace the idea of economic development and increase the understanding of leakage of money from the community. This is being done through workshops and by communication of basic ideas like buying local bread from someone in the community and showing how this helps to build a local economy.

There are a number of good artisans with strong skills and business backgrounds who could be of real benefit to the women's Cooperative. Unfortunately they do not see that connection and see the Cooperative as more of a threat to them than an opportunity. The Cooperative operates on a consignment basis, so it is not instant income because products might not sell right away.

Geographic location has also been a challenge because the resort has not begun operations and the storefront is on the reserve.

### **Support and Innovation**

When the Many Hands Cooperative was being set up, project leaders spoke with a number of aboriginal cooperatives in Canada, including one in the Yukon and two in Ontario. Tribal Council staff found out about some of their challenges, and learned a lot of useful information that way. The Yukon cooperative in particular had more in common with the proposed plans for the Many Hands Cooperative, although in the Yukon they tend to do much of their work at home in the winter, and focus on product sales in the summer.

Better communication with the public and with other artisans would very useful, especially at the beginning of the project. More information is needed about project goals and how the community could support the project. There needs to be the realization, from the beginning, that a cooperative is a long term initiative and is not something that can be accomplished in a year.

### **Legacy**

When the Cooperative began, there had been the expectation that the Cooperative would be self-sufficient. Due to constraints in developing the market, it was realized that the Cooperative would need to be subsidized until the market can be developed. Career challenged women are a difficult population to work with, but it is a population that needs support. It is important not to let this function fall off. Early recognition of the challenges of the population and the need for a permanently subsidized manager position would have saved some grief on the project.

**Advice to Others**

- You really need to know the population you are working with, it takes a lot of patience and a lot of support and a lot of understanding. There is still a lot to learn about coping with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, and every person is different.
- The Cooperative is worth the investment that the Tribal Council has put into it.

**Source**

- Interview with Rosemary Nicholas, March 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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**More Information**

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## **Monashee Learning Community Partnership**

### **Summary**

Since 1996, a group of community volunteers calling themselves the Lumby Community Internet Access (LCIA) has been working to create what is now being called the Monashee Learning Community Partnership. This group has been developing a community learning center in Lumby, a small village in the North Okanagan region of BC. An open-door CAP site had been first established in the local elementary school during off-school hours, providing free public access to computers and the Internet. Volunteers provided basic computer and Internet instruction at the center and more in depth courses are provided for a fee. Early plans included introducing technology-based employment and career-oriented training for adults. A giant milestone was reached when just recently, on April 5, 2002 the grand opening was held of the Monashee Learning and Training Center.

The project has been built through community partnerships and it continues to rely on these relationships and broad-based community participation for identifying, prioritizing and addressing unmet local needs. Partnerships are seen as a mechanism for reducing the isolation of individuals and groups and helping them to gain access to services not readily available in rural areas.

### **Getting Started**

The village of Lumby is home to approximately 1,800 people and serves a larger regional population of 5,700. The region's economy has been traditionally based in forestry and farming, with the six local sawmills that operated in the area at one time, providing the bulk of employment. Increasing pressures in the forestry industry from international competition and environmental regulation have led to all six of these companies leaving the community. The region has since been forced into a state of transition, with high unemployment rates and large proportions of its population, formerly forest sector workers, with less than a Grade 12 education.

As the last mill shut its doors, it was clear that Lumby would need to devise innovative strategies to ensure that it could achieve its own socio-economic goals. Subsequently, the community rallied to form a Community Adjustment Team (CAT) to be a proactive force in saving the village.

A self-defined needs assessment that the Team facilitated identified a community learning center as a key priority. The Whitevalley Community Resource Centre – a local non-profit, community-based services which provides counseling, employment assistance, referral and information training to families, youths and adults – thereby submitted an application to the provincial government's new Community Schools Program (CAP), with the hope of being able to provide access to the

Internet, along with other services for the community at large. Full funding for the project was received from a second application to the CAP program later that year.

### **Project Description**

The mission of the Lumby Community Internet Access Program (LCIA) and now the Monashee Learning and Training Center continues to “provide access to and training about the Internet for Lumby and visitors to Lumby and District community members, and to increase opportunities for community development”. The initiative’s main objectives include:

- providing low-cost or free community access to the Internet;
- building partnerships to share resources;
- providing training and employment opportunities to community members; and
- sharing best practices with other communities.

In line with these objectives, the LCIA’s primary activity is to provide free public access to the Internet, along with some basic education on computers and the Internet. Lab supervision and instruction are provided by volunteers. Fee-based courses are administered on topics such as computer keyboarding, Internet use and creating home pages. Other short-term intensive computer courses have also been arranged at the Centre through local educational institutes and partnerships are being pursued to expand this component.

### **Community Involvement**

Five community partners were initially involved in the LCIA, including Okanagan Internet Junction, an Internet provider which donated \$25 for every new account it received through referrals from the LCIA; the Monashee Web Programmers’ Alliance, which provided Web page design services to local businesses and individuals and reinvested 60 percent of its earnings back into the LCIA; and the four local schools of the Community Schools Association. Finally, the Whitevalley Resource Centre played a critical role as a financial and administrative parent to the project. Whitevalley has been essential in applying for funding and managing the finances for LCIA. WCRC’s 15 member board as also helped to involve a broad range of community interest groups into the project.

There is a strong reliance on volunteers and students for supervising the computer lab and providing basic instruction. All volunteers receive a basic education in computers and the Internet as well as more specific training and experience related to supervising the Internet access site.

In order to expand community participation in the initiative, the LCIA launched the “Vision 2020” exercise in 1997. Vision 2020 is a nation-wide online forum intended to encourage Canadians to participate, dialogue and record their thoughts about their communities and their country in approaching the Millennium. Under this

larger initiative, 50 local people met to begin creating a vision for Lumby and CTV, one of the sponsors, filmed and broadcast the proceedings.

### **Indicators**

The LCIA evaluated its impact in the community by monitoring the numbers of people and repeat customers using the CAP sites and Centre. The number of schools and partners working in cooperation with the program is another important measure of their success. Additionally, employment created through the program and the number of students that are subsequently hired after receiving training through the Centre have been seen as indicators of the project's effectiveness.

### **Project Effectiveness and Strengthening the Local Economy**

The LCIA has brought new life into the community of Lumby. Whereas the community was formerly inwardly focused by being dependent on the resources of the area, the Internet offers the capability to move beyond the geographical confines of rural living and connect with communities all over the world. The LCIA has thereby fostered motivation to look beyond the bleak realities related to the downturn of the forestry sector and provided a vehicle to move into the future, stimulate positive socio-economic development and create realistic alternatives for community revival.

The LCIA provided a research tool for local businesses and provided them with exposure on the Internet through free websites, developed and designed by students. It has also provided technical service to a number local organizations and events, advancing their capabilities and broadening their scope of impact. The LCIA assisted the Legion, for example, to produce copies of their records and provided all the technical support to the BC Yukon Community Learning and Networking Conference.

### **Challenges**

Technology and computers are central to the LCIA initiative, however, in the beginning, they were relatively new concepts to many of the people in Lumby. Subsequently, the project was initially met with resistance by some of the organizations and community leaders of the village. There was a general disbelief regarding the power of the Internet and the appropriateness of the organizations involved in the LCIA.

The unfavorable economic situation in the province and the time necessary to build partnerships have further compounded these challenges. As a result, it has been difficult at times to sustain momentum around the project.

## **Support**

In addition to the support of the LCIA partners and volunteers, government support has been critical to the project by funding for both the launch of the initiative as well as new projects and programs. The federal CAP program, administered by Industry Canada (IC), has provided the basic connectivity hardware for the project. The CAP summer student program, a partner of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), has been a crucial source of youth volunteers and both IC and HRDC continue to fund the initiative through the IC Digital Collections Program and the Community Futures Development Corporation in Vernon.

The BC government's Community Schools program has also been an important player in supporting the LCIA by making it possible for the local schools to come together and offer some of their computer lab facilities and programs to the public during off-school hours.

## **Legacy**

The project begun by the LCIA and now being carried on as the Monashee Learning and Training Center will continue through the committed force of volunteers and extensive community involvement in the project, but also as a result of the excitement that has been created around learning about computers and the Internet. The informal learning environment of the center has had a "cascade" effect in the community, with students and volunteers training more students and volunteers, and community members passing on their insights and enthusiasm to others.

## **Advice to Others**

It is one of the primary objectives of the LCIA/MLTC to motivate similar initiatives in other communities and help others from being disenfranchised as a result of their isolated rural positions. However, the Project Leader emphasized the importance of researching other initiatives and having a committed group of people to be champion the project, before initiating it. He stressed the need to work out measurable goals for the project and be bold in seeking partners and funding. The importance of paying attention to demographics, involving all interest groups, and forming partnerships have also been key lessons learnt by the LCIA.

## **Source:**

- Interview with Harry Adam, March 2002
- Written by Clare Mochrie

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### **More Information**

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## Nelson Virtual Call Centre Pilot Project

### Summary

Nelson has an economy based on resource industries (forestry, hydro electricity, and mining), tourism, and serves as a regional centre for government and professional services.

The call centre industry is a \$1.8 billion dollar industry in Canada. In June of 2000, a Virtual Call Centre pilot project was developed in the Kootenay community of Nelson. The objectives of the project were to:

- prove the VCC technology;
- provide employment opportunities and economic activity;
- test high-speed, connectivity options in a rural setting; and
- develop a replicable model that other rural communities can implement.

### Getting Started

Previous to the development of the Call Centre, a *Distance Learning/Distance Working* project was undertaken in Nelson for 6 months. That project involved training rural area residents in the use of telecommuting tools, thereby allowing them to live and work in their chosen community, an important economic development strategy for attracting and retaining a highly skilled workforce in small communities.

The technical partner in the Virtual Call Centre project, Infocast had offered to help facilitate the further development of teleworking projects in the area. At that point the *Distance Learning/Distance Working* project was winding down. Infocast had a virtual call centre technology that they were about to begin Beta testing (Beta testing allows a sample market to test the technology prior to full-scale implementation). The original plan had been to operate the Beta test in either Toronto or Chicago. However the telework Coordinator with Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) of Central Kootenay convinced Infocast that if CFDC could provide funding assistance, then they could test the system from Nelson. Planning for the centre began in October of 1999, and the first staff members were hired in June of 2000.

Community Futures Development Corporation of Central Kootenay became the sponsoring agency for the Virtual Call Centre pilot project, and they contracted a coordinator to implement the contract, with Infocast providing the technology. Funding was secured from the Canadian Rural Partnership pilot project (\$15,000), and from Human Resources Development Canada job fund (\$234,000). There was also a contribution from the province's Industrial Science and Technology Program.

## **Project Description**

The original intention of the project was to enable people to work out of their homes, with technology that would support that objective. To allow the project to develop this way, financial support and human resources to support people in their homes is also needed. Logistically, home telework can be more complicated because of a range of technical issues. As a result, people worked from one location in Nelson.

The pilot program ran for six months, from May to November of 2000. The Centre hired twenty-five workers, after a recruitment process that included ads in the paper, HRDC postings, and Shaw cable listings. A total of 204 applicants applied for positions with the Virtual Call Centre. Of the 204 applicants:

- 62% lived in Nelson
- 63% of the applicants were female
- Age range of applicants who responded was relatively even with 22% falling in the age range of 40– 49 years of age
- Over 50% of the applicants had some post-secondary education
- 70% stated that they were not employed Full Time or Part Time
- 35% of these applicants were either on Income Assistance or on Employment Insurance at the time of application
- 7% of all applicants considered themselves disabled
- Of the 204 applicants, 47% have previously operated a business.

New employees were asked to participate in six weeks of unpaid training at the beginning of the program, with employees then moving into paid employment if they successfully completed the training. Selkirk College created a certificate for the pilot program. The College offered the initial training which included a practicum component for work at the call centre. The initial training included a combined curriculum from Community Futures, BCIT, and Selkirk College.

During the pilot project, staff were digitally connected to call centre's client's customers whether it be by e-mail, web or voice. Clients included government contracts, such as Service Canada, and private companies and businesses without an in-house call centre. The technology is not housed in Nelson, rather it is a hosted solution. Phone calls to a 1-800 number went through a telephone network from anywhere in North America and terminated in Markham, Ontario, then traveled on a high-speed data line to Nelson. There they were translated back into voice via a sound card on a computer. The staff worked on headsets connected to computers. A frame relay connection was built for the connection between Markham and Nelson. A very high level Internet connection also helped facilitate the digital process. Customers could also get in touch by e-mail and web request allowing a live

connection between customers and staff, and for staff to lead customers through a web browsing session.

The Community Futures Development Corporation of Central Kootenay (CF) was the primary sponsor of the project. C4 – Community Call Centre Corporation evolved out of the project. C4 continued until June of 2001 as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Community Futures. However, the company did not have a sales staff and therefore relied on direct referrals for new contracts and clients. As a result the company was being maintained but was not growing. CFDC decided not to put further resources into the project and put it up for sale. The Coordinator of the pilot project recognized the company's potential and with a business partner secured financing from private parties to purchase the company. One of the existing clients is also a shareholder. The company is now known as nTouch, and much more effort has been put into sales resources to attract on-going clients and short-term contracts. There are ten full-time staff but the capacity exists to support 44 full-time jobs.

### **Community Involvement**

To increase awareness of the pilot project, it was promoted widely in Nelson and further afield. Local service agencies, city council, and other organizations were kept apprised of the initiative, particularly given the potential positive economic development impacts on the community. The project was widely supported locally. Part of the Canadian Rural Partnership funding included support to build awareness of the project. A number of presentations were made to external organizations such as the Economic Development Association of Canada, the Economic Development Association of BC, the National Rural Conference in 2000 and to the Call Centre Association of BC.

### **Indicators**

The number of jobs sustained after the pilot stage was complete is an important indicator of project success. Twenty-five jobs were sustained through the practicum period. This number dropped to seven and is now at the level of 12 full-time jobs, which makes a significant economic impact in a community the size of Nelson.

### **Project Effectiveness**

Partnerships that developed for the pilot program with BC Institute of Technology and Selkirk College were very beneficial. As well, several of the government contacts have provided client referrals, since the prevalent option for securing contracts was through word of mouth. One provincial government agency has the charge of bringing Call Centre business into BC. Most of their work revolves around finding locations for larger call centres, but they are also contacted by smaller companies looking for outsourcees and can refer clients to Nelson.

The call centre now has a number of clients around North America. An important lesson has been in understanding the target for market development. What has been found is that small to medium size enterprise should be targeted. Generally these are companies that cannot afford to build call centres in-house but who could benefit from dedicated customer service representatives. The pilot project helped to build the profile of an ideal customer.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

The training program was very beneficial to participants, offering a number of transferable skills. It was an important project goal that value was being added to the staff's work skills, especially as there was a mix of staff receiving income support and Employment Insurance. Two people received disability support from the province. There were also several people who had employment, but chose this program because they were underemployed, as well as people who had been supported by their families or spouses. There are four staff from the original pilot project that are still with the company.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

The original pilot plan incorporated the opportunity for people to work from home, which would have reduced the environmental impacts of travel to and from work. However, these impacts are more significant in an urban centre where travel distances are longer. In Nelson, working at home was found to be less critical as many people liked to have a more structured working environment, and a number of staff traveled by foot or bike to work. The company has a wireless Internet connection, which involves a lower impact infrastructure development.

### **Challenges**

As this project served as the Beta test for the new call centre technology, there were some bugs in the system that needed to be worked out. At times, it was difficult to meet the needs of customers when the network was down, and there were would also be down time for the staff. After five months these problems had stabilized and things were operating more smoothly. Another significant challenge has been building a customer base. It is important to recognize that you cannot build a call centre and expect the business to develop, there needs to be a strategy in place to recruit a client base.

One of the challenges was the mix of staff experience which included a range of ages, mindsets, personalities, genders, and income support. Given the mix of personalities involved, it was challenging to encourage staff to work together as a team.

## **Innovation**

The project also proved that it is possible for a small community to attract and retain a high tech business. Before this project began, a call centre of this type had not developed in any rural community. The project employed leading edge technology even for urban settings. At presentations and conferences, there has been significant interest from other rural communities.

## **Support and Legacy**

The call centre industry in North America is large and well-researched, so information is readily available through trade magazines and research agencies. Early on in planning, the project coordinator attended a call centre conference in Chicago that helped develop contacts. The technical service provider, BCIT, and the government funding partner contacts were also supportive. Most of the customers were direct referrals so networking was important.

In smaller communities training support is necessary. The Nelson project accessed co-op programs at the College for staff. Income support for staff was also a huge benefit to the business as it was being built. This would be less necessary if the customer base can be built first.

Technology support is also useful, having a unique technology mix allows the development of a unique service, which makes the business more attractive in the market place. Economic support from local economic development agencies is also important, such as helping to secure space and find client companies.

## **Advice to Others**

- Make sure you know who your target market is, do your market research in advance.
- Try to have knowledge about your customer base and build up the company's sales resources. It is very important to give adequate resources to sales.

## **Source**

- Interview with Mary Lou Troman, March 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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### **More Information**

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## Northern Exposure Gift Company

### **Summary**

The Peace Liard region covers more than 21% of the province and has a population of about 63,000 people. In recent years, many jobs have been lost in the area because of the downturn in the forest industry, and the closure of the Quintette mine in 2000.

The Northern Exposure Gift Company is a non-profit division of Peace Liard Community Futures Development Corporation. It was started in the Spring of 2000, with the objective of promoting the sale of locally manufactured products in the region, helping to foster growth of the agriculture, forestry, value-added and manufacturing sectors.

### **Getting Started**

The Northern Exposure Gift Company was proposed to consolidate marketing efforts in Peace Liard given the expanse of the region, and relatively small population size. More than 70% of small-scale manufacturing fails in the first year of business because of a lack of markets.

The Northern Exposure Gift Company is very loosely based on a similar venture in New Brunswick called the Rural Riches Trading Company. It is funded by the provincial government, and operates by purchasing products and wholesaling to tourist information centres around the province and also has catalogue sales.

Forest Renewal BC (through provincial funding) provided the biggest piece of the funding for the program, supporting the feasibility study. Human Resources Development Canada, Canadian Rural Partnership and CARCI (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada), the local science council called Sci-Tech North, the Ministry of Community Development, Cooperatives and Volunteers and the Northern Development Commission were other funding partners.

### **Project Description**

More than 300,000 tourists visit the region each year, with about 30,000 of these travelling the Alaska Highway. This has facilitated the test marketing of products because of the mix of nationalities, ages, and income levels visitors to the area.

There are twenty-five stores in the region involved in retailing the products, with two more from Grand Prairie being added in the Spring of 2002. The retailers range from health food stores to sporting good stores because of the diversity of products for sale. About 100 products are now available including jams, cookbooks,

coffee table books, t-shirts, and children's' clothing. All of the manufacturers are home-based, have less than five employees, and are often just a one-person business.

Northern Exposure has one full time and one part-time employee. Northern Exposure, in their role of moving products from producer to retailer, mark-up the products 15%. The retailers, and not the producers, pay this cost. For this mark-up, the retailers get more than 100 products to choose from, one invoice rather than having to deal with a number of producers, and also get first choice of new products, as well as a money-back guarantee. Retailers are now starting to refer new producers who approach them directly to Northern Exposure because they value these services.

The business will be expanded in early May 2002 to add on-line functions for both wholesalers and for direct retail. With the on-line store, it is likely that other retailers from outside the region may purchase products. There is already interest in Kelowna, Vancouver, Edmonton and Prince George. The on-line store is a much less expensive option than developing a catalogue.

Due to funding cuts to the program (three of the provincial ministries funding the program are no longer in existence) the program has modified its retailer recruitment. Staff used to travel with product samples, which helped build partnerships with retailers. It was also very expensive due to the size of the region. The new on-line store will be a more cost-effective way of recruiting retail partners, and the catchment could be wider, expanding beyond the Peace region.

### **Community Involvement**

The project began with a feasibility study that included a survey of about 200 (out of an estimated 300) producers in the Peace Liard region. The majority responded that they would use a service that provided help with marketing because of the isolation of the region. The feasibility study also included surveys of local retailers, to gauge the level of interest in selling local products, even if they were more expensive than products made outside of Canada. This was supported unanimously, because retailers have found that tourists are looking for locally made products and are willing to pay more for them. The study concluded that there was a niche for a giftware marketing concept.

The next stage was to do seven information sessions in regional centres targeting manufacturers, to get manufacturers to commit to involvement with the initiative. Once they expressed interest, staff worked to help interested producers develop market-ready products through one-on-one counselling and workshops. Areas where people got help included product finishing, packaging and pricing.

The goal was to get about 50 products from 25 to 30 producers. Producers were given a month to bring in their products to be adjudicated. 116 products were brought in, which far exceeded staff expectations. About half of the products were already market-ready. Adjudication of about 10 new products takes place every six to eight weeks. To date, more than 300 products have been assessed from 119 producers across the region. A number of producers have returned two or three times before the products are market-ready.

### **Indicators**

The number of full and part-time jobs created are important indicators of initiative success. Also, total sales are another important indicator. In the first two years of sales, more than \$85,000 (retail) has been sold, starting with ten products and working up to the 100+ products that are now sold. That means \$54,000 has gone back into the pockets of producers. Also the number of stores selling products is another project indicator, and this number has been steadily increasing. Reaching the goal of project self-sustainability will be another milestone.

### **Project Effectiveness**

The location is very important in the effectiveness of the venture. There is high demand for local goods because of tourism. From the retail perspective, it is very important for producers to be able to supply to the retailers at a steady rate so that shelves do not sit empty. This had been problematic in the past when retailers dealt with local craftspeople. Northern Exposure has helped alleviate the stress around this by being able to work with a number of producers in similar product areas to keep supply levels steady for retailers. At one time, Northern Exposure paid producers first, which helped to provide a smoother, more reliable system and more security for producers. There are no longer any consignment arrangements because this places a financial burden on Northern Exposure, although consignment was important when the initiative first started because it help build partnerships with retailers. Now retailers pay for the products within 30 days to receive the maximum discounts.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

By April 2005, about 22 full-time jobs will have been created through Northern Exposure in the region. In the first two years of the program this level would already have been met if measurements include part-time work that has been created for the 50 producers. Previously many of the producers were on some form of income assistance, and the program can be credited with helping them to get off these programs. This impacts individuals not only financially but also helps build hope and self-confidence. About a half-dozen of the producers are currently involved in the self-employment program (which is linked to Employment Insurance), allowing them to establish a manufacturing venture.

## **Social and Environmental Values**

Northern Exposure emphasizes value-added production, particularly with the agriculture industry. In the past, many agricultural products have been shipped out of the area to be processed elsewhere. This initiative promotes products that are grown in the area to be processed in the region (such as jam making) and providing employment. Similarly, the forest industry shipped out most cut wood in raw form, and local manufacturing opportunities are being promoted for job creation. Two of the home-based producers run organic farms that make jams and herbal vinegars.

## **Challenges**

It will be important in the future for Northern Exposure to keep the product line fresh. New products are adjudicated every two months or so, which does allow for the addition of new products. Because of the isolation and size of the area, most of the retailers use computers. This facilitates communicating about new products via e-mail.

One of the challenges with making the transition for producers from trade fairs and craft sales is that producers will not be able to personally sell products, and answer questions about the product. The product must rely on the way it looks, the way it is packaged and the way it is labelled, even before price is a factor. It has been found that consumers really appreciate the story of the production, and it helps with the marketing, so producers are encouraged to add this information.

Some products sold well in some locations and not others; Northern Exposure staff was then required to pick up and re-distribute products. This was addressed by encouraging retailers to order only those products suitable for their location and customer base. Another challenge was with retail pricing, which can vary depending on retail locations and the customer base, and as a result Northern Exposure's suggested retail price was not always accurate. The solution was to allow retailers to set retail prices appropriate for their location and clientele. Northern Exposure offers a Suggested Retail Price, but the retailer can adjust it according to their experience. Producers now ship their products directly to retailers to streamline ordering, handling, and distribution. This helped address a concern about damage, delay, and expense when Northern Exposure staff initially hand-delivered products to retailers.

## **Innovation**

More than 35 communities have approached Northern Exposure for more information about their gift company model. It is particularly suited for areas that do not have a big population but have a healthy manufacturing population. Small-scale producers in any region share many of the same challenges in terms of marketing. If 80% of time is spent marketing the product, only 20% of their time is left to manufacture products, which is not enough.

Project staff have given presentations at conferences and events, such as agricultural conventions, small-scale food producers conventions and economic development forums, in Quebec, Calgary, Vancouver, and Prince George. Three Community Futures offices are also looking at developing a similar initiative.

### **Support**

Support from communities has been very high and every mayor in the region has written a letter of support, in recognition that the initiative is helping to diversify the local economy and promote value added production. This allows people to stay in the area. Peace Value-Added Food Association and Peace Value-Added Wood Association have both partnered to put on workshops. Retailers have also helped to adjudicate products, and offer a lot of support to the program. The local Agri-Food office has been instrumental in helping to secure program funding and with strategic planning. The Alberta Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Economic Development (Grand Prairie Office) have also been supportive, partnering in several workshops.

### **Legacy**

Northern Exposure is projected to be financially sustainable by April 2005. Northern Exposure will also be involved in more training and market development in partnership with Community Futures. This five-year perspective was developed in the original business plan. Northern Exposure may start charging a fee to producers for workshops and product adjudication. These fees would help with program cost-recovery.

### **Advice to Others**

Project leaders would like to see this model replicated in other communities across Canada. They have offered some advice to others who are interested in developing a similar initiative:

- It is very important to be patient with producers, it takes a lot of work to transform a product from the farmer's market table to being ready to sell in a store. Whatever support, compassion and patience that can be offered are needed. Northern Exposure has worked closely with several producers to develop products that are now best sellers.
- Give good advice, be honest with producers, and don't build up false hopes.
- Follow-up with producers is critical. Many producers with products that were close to market level but not quite ready applied to the program. When their application was turned down the first time, they didn't reapply until project staff followed up to offer assistance where needed.

**Source**

- Interview with Terri Hanen, March 2002.
- Written by Maggie Julian

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**More Information**

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## **North Okanagan Youth Co-op Demonstration Project**

### **Summary**

The North Okanagan Youth Co-op Demonstration Project was developed to help address a need for employment opportunities for youth at risk. The project received funding for six months, from May to October 2000.

The proposal outlined the following objectives for the youth participants:

- Fostering of their entrepreneurial skills and attitudes - the ability to conceptualize and promote innovative solutions to problems.
- Acquiring business, organizational, technical and communication skills essential for success in today's labour market.
- Taking ownership of both the problems and solutions to unemployment - instilling a sense of local possibilities and empowering youth to capitalize on these possibilities.
- Establishing networks among people in the community, and draw on the local knowledge and skill base.
- Developing and sustaining a sense of community spirit, identity, and social organization.

### **Getting Started**

The program drew on lessons learned in the development of a similar initiative called the Boundary Youth Entrepreneurship project in Grand Forks. The Boundary project was designed with input from a youth advisory panel and focused on youth entrepreneur development although it did not use a co-operative model. The Boundary project manager took over as the project manager of the North Okanagan program for the second half of the project.

The North Okanagan Youth Co-op Demonstration Project evolved to adopt a co-op model for several reasons including: community interest; a coordinator who was enthusiastic about co-operatives; and the availability of funding for this model. The co-operative model is based on one member, one vote. Co-operatives become incorporated business with a Board of Directors.

The original business idea for the Youth Demonstration Project was to develop a greenhouse business. Everyone involved would be part-owner and have a vote in how things were executed. This business was chosen based on a model in Winnipeg "Growing Prospects" which utilized seized hydroponics equipment to develop an indoor greenhouse growing basil for local restaurants and stores. After some research and business planning, the decision was made not to proceed on this idea. The capital investment was quite high (\$250,000) and it could take up to two years

for the project to become profitable. The model would require youth who did not know each other to accept high financial risk on each other's behalf.

### **Project Description**

The youth were not as interested in the co-op model as they were in entrepreneurial work. As well, with the greenhouse idea proving unfeasible, the project evolved from one business venture involving the whole group, to three separate business ideas. Each business idea was developed further by a partnership of two to three youth who prepared business plans. The youth were also responsible for raising the project financing. One venture, a silk-screening business, secured financing and got started during the six-month project timeline. The other youth participants developed business plans for a café and e-commerce solutions company, but they did not develop beyond the planning stage. However, the youth still learned valuable skills through the process.

### **Community Involvement**

Getting youth interested and participating in the project was not difficult. Rural communities tend to have limited economic opportunities for youth and this was a chance for free education and experience in entrepreneurship. The youth participants, aged 18 to 29, were from the North Okanagan, mostly from Vernon, and also from Lumby, Enderby and Armstrong.

### **Indicators**

Indicators of project interest included the number of people attending information sessions (80 predicted, 70 actual), the number of applicants (30 predicted, 55 actual), and the number of community members involved as co-op members (10 predicted, none actual because of the change of structure). On-schedule loan repayments were another potential indicator, although no loans were required.

The project indicators included the number of marginalized youth participating in the project (8 marginalized youth), the number of viable businesses created (1 business and 1 youth involved as a partner with another community business). As well, the forecast economic spin-offs were another identified indicator although these were not calculated. The number of cooperative members receiving continued support was another indicator, and all the participants are receiving assistance through the Connections Career Centre or from Community Futures on an as needed basis.

### **Project Effectiveness**

Group dynamics are very important. It can be challenging to get the right people involved in the project, so participant selection becomes critical. It is important to have complete participant buy-in. It is more likely that the youth will buy in to the project if they can decide on their business idea. In this case, the greenhouse

project was selected before the project began, and some youth were not interested in this idea as a business.

The project coordinator needs to be able to support the youth with both life skill and business skill development. With a youth at risk population, many issues can surface. The coordinator does not necessarily have to deal with all the issues but does need to be able to refer youth to appropriate services as needed.

The series of events and training can be very important. Training time should be allocated for team building, idea brainstorming, discussion of viability of businesses and business planning, before launching into operations. It is also important to talk about the option of not being an entrepreneur as some group members discovered that this option was not appropriate or interesting for them. It is important to communicate that this choice is not letting the group down in any way, as it will be almost impossible to find nine youth that will be ready to be entrepreneurs at the same time.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

During the six-month program, one business secured financing and began operations. The six month follow-up with the youth participants showed three working, two starting their own business, three in school and one on income assistance, as well as another that could not be reached.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

The initial idea for a Greenhouse business supported the co-operative model, environmental values, and social responsibility, although this business did not proceed because of the challenges already outlined. The original plan was to use grow-op equipment that had been seized by the police.

### **Challenges**

One challenge with the co-operative model was that by undertaking a selection process for the youth, the effect was pre-selecting a group of people to be business partners. It is difficult to really get to know potential participants in the selection process, and they will not know each other, and yet the project mandate is for them to begin a business together. This can present issues because if one member borrows money for the organization, the other coop members are liable. Also, whether an individual invests \$10 dollars or \$1,000 dollars everyone gets the same vote, which can create challenging group dynamics.

The proposal required that the project accept youth-at-risk, in other words youth possessing two or more barriers to employment. These barriers included: lack of home stability, single parents, past drug/alcohol abuse, anger problems, lack of high school completion, inability to retain jobs, inability to attain jobs, history of

physical and/or sexual abuse, poor self esteem, self destructive behaviours, and physical challenges. The participants often have other personal issues going on in their lives, which can detract from their attention to the project. Working with youth at risk can be unpredictable and many different issues service can surface when youth have a history of emotional, physical or social abuse. The coordinator has to be flexible and supportive under the circumstances.

It is important to recognize that the goal is not for each youth to start a business. As well, the timing may not be right for everyone. Another challenge was presented by the six-month timeline with only one intake. It would have worked better with this population to have more flexibility on timing.

Group dynamics were challenging for a number of reasons. The age spread of the group created some challenges, as the group ranged in age from 18 to 29. As well, friendships and relationships developed within the group that affected the group.

Another challenge is that the youth are trained for six months and during this time they develop expectations that after the six month program they will be able to pursue the career they want, despite being under-qualified or under-experienced. There is a need to counsel the youth toward realistic goals, and to support the process of mapping out a path to reach the goals.

### **Support**

In the Grand Forks project, the project included a Board of Directors who were involved as mentors. People from the community volunteered who had a keen interest in supporting the youth and the project, with no financial subsidy. Each volunteer had a different role to play; some had life skill training while others had strong business skills. It was up to the youth to get in touch with the mentors. The participants designed the process for how they would involve the mentors, hosting a social event to welcome them to the project, before getting more involved in the operations of the business. In the North Okanagan project, the Board of Directors also acted as mentors, but the coordinator helped organize some of the meetings between the youth and the Board.

It is important to have staff with diverse skills (business and counselling) to support this type of program. Partnerships were also key in supporting the project, including community organizations such as the Social Planning Council, the career centre, and any other relevant service and education providers. They supported the program through letters of support and by offering accessible services for the clients in case of emergencies. A number of consultants also offered to work with the youth. Volunteers must have a genuine interest in working with youth, because it is a challenging role to play.

This type of program must have a very strong relationship with the funders, because project managers are going to need some flexibility, given the high-risk youth participants. At a practical level, this could mean using broad budget categories such as ‘participant materials’. As the project evolves, the business idea develops and the project managers get to know the participants better, this flexibility becomes more important. A strong community network is also important, such as the mentoring model already outlined.

### **Legacy**

The initial youth cooperative pilot project ran for six months. With the co-op model, if a youth business had developed, the initiative would have relied on business revenue to sustain it. What has evolved from this pilot project is a proposal for a Youth Entrepreneurship Centre that would have continuous intake of youth. The CFDC of the North Okanagan is applying for funding to support this initiative.

Some recommendations for future programs outlined in the from *Demonstration Project Final Report* include:

- Future programs should promote hands on participation in conducting the feasibility study and extend the time allotted to conducting initial feasibility studies.
- Form smaller groups focusing on several business options. Participant commitment and productivity both increased once the business concepts aligned more closely with their personal interested and the potential for employment of participants increased.
- The process of artificially creating group cohesiveness and common vision required the greatest amount of effort and was the largest distraction to the groups making headway. Future programs should enhance the group team building and consensus decision-making training in the initial phases and consider working with pre-established groups who are known to each other and already have a basic business vision in common.
- Youth participating in this program have no or negative credit histories. Any business venture that would be considered in similar programs must take this into account early in the business research phase.

### **Advice to Others**

- The selection of participants is a key part of the process to find out who really wants to be there. It is important to make sure that the participants have a commitment to be part of a team environment if they are going to take part in this type of program.
- Ensure that the Board of Directors and Project Manager have a broad skill base.
- Once funding is secured, develop concrete milestones and a clear process to achieve those milestones, while ensuring that there is still program flexibility.

- Make sure that participants have input in the process, but the participants shouldn't have control over every aspect of the project. The project manager needs to support the budget planning and put key project parameters in place.
- Be patient, it can be challenging to get the funding in hand. This is particularly difficult with youth projects because the potential participants will be anxious to get things moving and can't wait six months for funding to come through.
- Be flexible, many different challenges and issues can come up with youth at risk
- Reward everyone involved in the project on a regular basis, celebrate the wins and it will feel like less of a struggle.

#### **Source**

- Interview with Wayne Robert, March 2002
- North Okanagan Youth Co-op Demonstration Project Final Report February 2001
- Written by Maggie Julian

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## **Pender Harbour Growth and Development Partnership**

### **Summary**

The Pender Harbour Growth and Development Partnership (PHGDP) brings together community interests to promote economic diversification in Pender Harbour, a community of 2500 people on the Sunshine Coast.

### **Getting Started**

Since the mid-1990s, the local economy has been weakening. The biggest factor in this was the decline in the Pacific salmon fishery, which impacted not only commercial but also sports fishing, which had been the backbone of the local tourism industry. Income from the forestry and mining sectors is also being lost as those industries lose strength.

In an effort to change the local economic situation, the Chamber of Commerce initiated a community process in early 1999 to develop an economic strategy. The Pender Harbour Growth and Development Partnership that developed has representatives from small business, the Pender Harbour Tourism Association, the Pender Harbour Health Centre, the Community Club, the Community School, commercial fishers and other groups.

The overall focus of the partnership is on economic development and tourism is an important part of their plans. Attracting tourists to the community and getting them to extend their stay rather than driving by the community is the goal. Early on efforts began to spruce up the town, with many contributions of time and supplies by individual volunteers. The Harbour Authority initiated a project to fix up the community docks, and this increased the level of community interest and engagement.

In August of 1999, six months after the group began meeting, they entered into an Industrial Adjustment Service (IAS) agreement with Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), the province and the Community Futures Development Organization. The focus was to “develop and implement strategies for the revitalization of the Pender Harbour area”. This funding helped to build community capacity by providing the means to operate as an official Committee. Financial support through the IAS could not be used to purchase materials or building supplies. The Committee identified many of the local challenges and proposed a number of short and long term solutions focused on economic development.

## **Project Description**

The Pender Harbour economic development plans include three main projects: village center development, a wetlands project and a cultural and ecotourism project.

### *Village Center Project*

The decline of the sports fishing industry and related tourism negatively impacted the appearance of the village center. Over 6000 hours of volunteer time have been logged and more than \$30,000 has been donated to the village clean up and landscaping by local residents. Parking has been upgraded. Funds are being sought to improve signage, lighting and the community entrances, and to complete the landscaping efforts that have begun.

### *Wetlands Project*

A spawning creek runs through Pender Harbour, flowing into a saltwater marsh. The Partnership is proposing to clean-up the marsh, building a trail, boardwalk and displays to increase the educational and tourism value of the area. The Sechelt Indian Band is a partner in Wetlands project. The creek will also be restored, with sections running underground proposed for “daylighting” (being exposed above ground). The Partnership is working with the Regional District to secure a lease for the wetland area to begin implementation of plans.

### *Cultural and Ecotourism Project*

In the first phase of this project, the Partnership worked to:

- Gather information from other communities who have been successful in this area
- Identify the cultural and eco-tourism resources for Pender Harbour to create a database, including but not limited to resorts, B&Bs, boat tour companies, artists, sculptors, writers, boat-builders, musicians, artists’ organizations, etc.
- Conduct community consultations to determine appropriate directions
- Undertake a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis
- Form an ongoing working group

Phase 2, which commenced in April 2001, has as its objectives to:

- Develop and implement a strong theme-based marketing plan for the off-season and a comprehensive marketing strategy for the Pender Harbour and Egmont area, building a solid foundation for more steady, year-round economic activity.
- Conduct a feasibility study for the creation of a Marine Heritage Centre which might include a living museum and boat-building school, and coordinate the planning of this facility with the museum currently in operation at the Sundowner Inn in Garden Bay and the proposed museum in the community of Egmont.

- Facilitate better access to natural wilderness areas for hiking, biking, and horse back riding, as well as public access to waterfront areas throughout the Pender Harbour and Egmont region, while limiting environmental impact.

The Partnership has a number of working groups, one for each of the objectives in the eco & cultural tourism project, as well as small groups to tackle each of the other priorities. Some of the accomplishments to date have been developing a community brochure, launching of a feasibility study for a Maritime Heritage Centre, and coordination of community-wide theme days such as a Harbour Fall Fair, May Day and April Tool boat-building contest. The Partnership links with existing community events such as the Jazz Fest that has been around for more than five years.

The Partnership also liaises with Sunshine Coast-wide economic development efforts. In September 2001, a coast-wide IAS agreement was signed. This provides funding to local Partnerships in Pender Harbour and also Sechelt and Gibsons. Representatives from each community meet regularly to coordinate efforts.

### **Community Involvement**

In other communities the Chamber of Commerce is often limited to representing business, but in Pender Harbour, because the community is unincorporated and has no Town Council, the Chamber plays a wider community role, including supporting this initiative. There is widespread community involvement in the Pender Harbour Partnership. With the exception of part-time paid coordinators, members of Committees and those donating labour on the Village enhancement are volunteers. The project chair noted that once the Village improvement began, there was an increase in pride and a greater willingness by people to get even more involved.

### **Indicators**

A number of indicators have been identified for the Pender Harbour Growth and Development Partnership. The main focus of the project is tourism development, so an increase in tourism is a clear indicator of project success. Project leaders also identified the 'community spirit' of local residents as an indicator. If locals feel excited about the place that they are living, the community becomes more vibrant and it is expected that this will spill over into positive economic impacts.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

While it is still early in the economic development plans for significant economic impacts to be felt, anecdotally there has already been a positive impact. A recent wedding in Pender Harbour filled the four main resorts with more than a hundred people. The couple being married were not from the area, but had got to know the community since the village improvements started. Project leaders say this is just

the kind of interest they are looking for: people who get to know the community, get hooked and keep coming back.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

Creek and marshland restoration is one important aspect of the Partnership. The creek restoration preserves habitat and project proponents recognize the intrinsic value of the wetlands as “the kidneys of the world”. There is an important environmental educational component of the project, and fundraising is on-going for trails, educational materials and a Wet Lab.

### **Challenges**

Time availability has been an issue as the volunteers involved in the Partnership contribute their own time. There are a number of Committees and some people are involved with several at the same time. Project leaders have learned a lot through the process about setting reasonable and achievable goals, especially given the reliance on volunteers.

While funding has been available for capacity building to support the process very little has been available for capital development, even for such simple items as paint and nails for village improvement. As one project leader put it “everyone's capacity is built out!”. Another challenge has been negotiating the bureaucracy in order to secure funds. It can take a lot of the project coordinator's time to apply for funding, with tight restrictions on the application process, and the money doesn't always reach the ground quickly.

### **Support**

After the first six months, Community Futures became involved which was a huge support for project development. Pender Harbour has already had success at fundraising, when they established a community health centre. The community owns the building and hires the nurses. A recent initiative to raise money within the community has seen the establishment of a Pender Harbour Community Improvement Foundation, which will allow tax receipts to be issued when donations are made and community organizations without tax status can apply to be a member in order to facilitate donations.

### **Legacy**

The Partnership needs financial support in order to fund the paid Coordinator, and to begin to implement the projects that have been developed. Right now they have enough money to support the partnership for another year and a half. Less provincial money is now available so project leaders recognize they can't rely on provincial government funding. They are looking towards money from private foundations, as well as federal funds available through Community Futures. They are also looking for partners in specific projects such as the development of the

educational Wet Lab. The community has had success in raising money for other projects such as the Pender Harbour Health Centre.

### **Advice to Others**

- Leaders within the project emphasize the importance of developing partnerships to bring community groups together to coordinate activities, helping to build community capacity.
- The Chair should be independent, bringing people and groups together, but not pushing an agenda. The Chair should be aware of activities, but should recognize that one person cannot do everything or do too much of the work without the project suffering.
- Communication is very important. When so many people are involved in a project really good communication is needed among committees. Sometimes information does not flow easily and people are not aware of what's happening with other committees.
- Priorities need to be set at the community level and then go 'attack' them.
- It is important not to chase money because of discovering a grant. The project can get off track if you do research on grant opportunities and then try to fit priorities to the grants available.

### **Source**

- Interview with Larry Curtiss, February 2002
- Pender Harbour Growth and Development Partnership Key Project Listing

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## **Pilot Seaweed Harvesting and Management**

### **Summary**

The goal of the project is to develop market opportunities for seaweed by carrying out the harvesting, processing and test marketing of seaweed products in the Prince Rupert region. The decline in the Pacific salmon fishery has impacted coastal communities. Many smaller communities receive federal support through various programs, but with a declining forest industry in the Prince Rupert area, there are limited opportunities for employment. This project is intended to lay the groundwork for sustainable economic diversification into seaweed harvesting and product development.

### **Getting Started**

The North Coast has abundant resources of more than 600 species of seaweed, estimated to grow at a density of 1.4 tonnes of seaweed per metre of shoreline. In 1998, in cooperation with the provincial government, a pilot project for kelp cultivation was undertaken. The Tsimshian Tribal Council was a partner in the project. The kelp grew as expected, developing from spores and undergoing incubation as plants.

This project is focused on doing further research into harvesting, and learning more about what products could be marketed successfully. The results will be coordinated with the research from other partners doing the trial cultivation. The cost of this pilot is about \$267,000.

The Lax Kw'alaams Band will harvest wild kelp in their traditional waters, about 25 miles north of Prince Rupert. The Lax Kw'alaams Fish Plant has been used for reducing fish waste to be used as fertilizer, but been out of use for more than six years. This reduction plant can be converted for use with kelp. In this pilot project, only kelp detached in late summer and fall storms, mostly giant kelp and bladder kelp, will be harvested. For bioprocessing, at least 5 tonnes of kelp are needed, which will be processed to provide a range of product samples.

### **Project Description**

The main outcome of this pilot project is to gather information for future business planning of a sustainable kelp industry. The two major partners involved are Lax Kw'alaams Band Council (a member of Tsimshian Tribal Council), Biozyme Systems (a research and development company). The Northwest Marine Institute was founded in 1996 to foster Research and Development and economic diversification on the North Coast. The Northwest Maritime Institute is a co-sponsor of the project along with the Institute for Pacific Ocean Science and Technology.

Identifying, processing and testing of raw materials and product marketing and forecasting is the focus of the pilot. Federal and provincial environmental and other regulatory issues also need to be clarified. The main deliverable of the project will be a business plan and financial feasibility study that explores commercial scale operations.

More than 40 kelp-related products are being studied. Products that are being studied and test marketed include a liquid kelp based fertilizer that would be suitable for hydroponic farmers. There is already a ready market for this product on the West Coast. In addition, seaweed can be added to toothpaste to prevent the formation of 'chalk' and to ice cream to prevent ice crystals from forming.

Other marine industries are being tested in the area as well. Urchin harvesting in wading pools is being studied. Under these conditions their roe can be harvested at times that are convenient for the market. There is already a major market for this product in Japan.

### **Community Involvement**

Partnerships are an important part of this project, with several organizations involved as sponsors and partners. Due to the research orientation of the project, community members are not directly involved, but if the project moves forward, there will be more opportunities for more widespread involvement.

### **Indicators**

Indicators are not being used for this research-focused pilot project. If the seaweed harvesting moves to commercialization, economic impacts and sustainable rates of harvesting will be important indicators to monitor.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

Unemployment is very high in the Prince Rupert area, estimated at more than 80% in First Nations villages. While the pilot project will not likely create new employment, it does hold promise for new industry development for First Nations and other people on the North Coast.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

Project partners are concerned with the development of an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable kelp industry. Seaweed is an important habitat for salmon, as salmon use kelp as a hiding place from predators such as mackerel. A UBC fisheries project has been working along the North Coast to document anecdotal and traditional knowledge about different species along the Coast, and this information can be related to kelp populations as well.

There is interest in furthering research on the lifecycle of seaweed, and the implication for harvesting and cultivation. Kelp can grow extremely quickly, sometimes as much as a foot every other day. Besides differing growth rates and life cycles, there is a range in the quality of kelp between species. Bull and Sugar kelp are valued more highly for their product potential.

### **Challenges**

Securing financial resources to move forward on research has been a challenge. As well, coordinating meetings between different groups on the North Coast can be complicated logistically.

There is also a need for a coastal strategy to be developed that focuses on economic development. Coordinating research and development for fisheries and other marine projects would be facilitated by this strategy. Resources are not currently available to develop a strategy at this time.

### **Innovation**

A coordinated approach to developing seaweed harvesting on the coasts of BC has never been undertaken. The baseline information that is being gathered is necessary for a business plan to move forward. The project also builds on research done elsewhere, including Ireland where 20,000 tonnes of Kelp are harvested per year. There is also kelp harvesting activity on Canada's East Coast.

### **Legacy**

If market testing of products proves positive, it is hoped that seaweed products could provide a sustainable economic opportunity for North Coast communities. Further funding towards research and project start-up will be needed in the short-term but ultimately it is hoped that the industry will be able to operate without subsidies and become economically viable.

### **Advice to Others**

- Communities have to work together in a coordinated way, developing meaningful partnerships between First Nations and other community groups is critical.
- Coordinated marketing efforts (for instance among Coastal communities working on similar products) allow resources to go farther and can have a greater impact.
- Communities need to get away from grant and subsidy dependence by looking at long-term investment possibilities.

### **Source**

- Interview with George Hayes, January 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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## **Port Alberni Consumer Business Project**

### **Summary**

Port Alberni, a community of almost 20,000 people on Vancouver Island, is an economically depressed town due to the downturn in the fishing and forestry industries in BC. There are many stores in the community that are closing. The Canadian Mental Health Association of Port Alberni has initiated the development of a construction materials recycling business to provide employment to their clients with mental illnesses.

### **Getting Started**

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) in Port Alberni initiated the Consumer Business Project in January 2001 as a way to develop a meaningful business opportunity that would employ people with mental illness. The Ministry of Community Development, Cooperatives and Volunteers awarded an initial grant of \$45,000 for business planning. The grant covered consultant fees and initial training costs for clients. In-kind donations were also made by the CMHA.

The goal of the project is to develop a viable recycling business in Port Alberni. The idea of establishing a new business employing people with mental illness had been under development for a number of years. The recycling business option was put forward and supported by an enthusiastic CMHA staff member, the supported work coordinator. Obtaining the grant from MCAWS to support the development of the business plan proved to be the catalyst to develop this idea more fully.

The first step was to prepare a business plan. This included networking in the community, and talking to people involved in recycling. This was done with the aim of identifying partnerships, utilizing community expertise to find a recycling niche in Port Alberni. This information was used, together with the expertise of a consultant, to develop a business plan. Consumers of mental health services were included in the process as much as possible.

### **Project Description**

The concept for this initiative is to create a construction product recycling depot, with an adjoining retail outlet. A business plan has been developed for a second hand business. On 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Port Alberni, there is a recycling depot for bottles and cans and across the street is a recycling lot where people bring in milk jugs, cardboard and other materials. A private company called Sunbird runs the depot business. Adjacent to this operation there is an empty lot. The CMHA is trying to secure the lot in order to construct a building to be modeled after the Nanaimo recycling exchange. People will donate goods and this will be sold cheaply. In the

front of the building there will be a second hand store, which will become a 'last stop' for materials before the dump.

A number of stores are closing in Port Alberni which has resulted in a growing supply of recycled construction materials such as doors, windows and other materials. The lot is large enough to accommodate this type of materials. Another product will be damaged pellets purchased for one dollar and resold for two to three dollars.

It is important that this project is not creating any competition with the Sunbird operation, a family-run business, or the can and bottle depot. As it will not be economically viable in this small town for two businesses to work on collecting the same product, the CHMA has worked out an agreement with other players to enable the Consumer Business Project to join the construction products market niche.

An advantage to developing beside the Sunbird lot is that the Consumer Business staff will work Monday to Friday from 9 to 5 and will be able assist in monitoring the Sunbird lot. The location of the business will also help develop 'recycling alley' with the bottle depot, second hand store, and Sunbird offering appeal to consumers for one-trip recycling.

The design of the building, a garage-type shell, has already established been prepared with an anticipated project cost of \$50,000. A number of funding sources have been identified, but this process is on hold until the lot is secured from the City, a process which is currently underway. As part of the process, the City has asked CMHA to engage in discussions with other second hand dealers to get their input because of the potential for competition.

The City also needs to undertake a process to ensure they have displayed due diligence before leasing the lot at a reduced rate to the CHMA, a non-profit organization. The next step is to advertise the availability of the property in the paper and ask for expressions of interest. This process has been slow but steady, because the City and CMHA staff are busy with other projects and issues. If the lot cannot be secured, then there are other possible buildings in the vicinity that are for sale that could also be used.

In the meantime, while waiting for the building to be secured, the mental health clients who are interested in working with the facility are being trained in first aid and other skills in preparation for the business. Once the lot is secured, six to eight applications will go out to various Foundations and organizations that support work on environmental and disability issues. Project staff feel that there are a number of funding opportunities in this area that can be explored. The regional

office of the Canadian Mental Health Association is also supporting the development of funding options.

### **Community Involvement**

A consultant was hired to do the business plan for the CMHA. Part of the plan included a survey of the Port Alberni community's recycling needs. The members were trained and paid to conduct telephone surveys. Since then, the CMHA has developed a contract with North Island College to continue to use these trained members. Now, when the College is awarded a contract to do a telephone survey they now can draw on the supply of CMHA trained workers if they choose. This has helped North Island College to meet their goal of creating programs for people with mental illness.

As well, the clients have been involved in on-going discussions around their ideas and desires for the working environment for the Consumer Business Project. Many of the clients are on disability pensions and so are restricted in what money they can earn. Therefore the new business will need to be flexible.

It has not been difficult to find several committed people in the community who want to work on the project and offer expertise, for instance Sunbird has offered skills and expertise.

### **Indicators**

A number of indicators will be used to track project effectiveness. The number of people employed is an important indicator, as well as the financial viability of the project. The project will be deemed successful when employment is created, materials are being reused, bills are being paid and money is made on the project that can be channeled back into other CMHA projects and services. This will allow CMHA to increase or stabilize their present programs and services, and decrease dependency on the funding Ministry. Another indicator that can be tracked is the hospitalization rate for the client base. There are also methods to measure increased assertiveness and self-esteem in the client base.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

Approximately ten consumers of mental health services have been involved in training and conducting telephone surveys. Once the business is operating, it is anticipated that both full-time and part-time employment opportunities will be created, for a manager and on-site workers. It is possible that eight to ten people could be employed part-time or fewer staff on a full-time basis. Complete employment projections are under development. There may also be opportunities for people to volunteer at the second hand store thereby gaining experience, and for people on probation to become involved with the project as a way of working their mandatory volunteer hours.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

The Consumer Business Project will integrate social and environmental values by focusing on a niche in the recycling market in Port Alberni. It is hoped this will increase community reuse of materials while providing employment and support for people with mental illness.

### **Challenges**

One of the challenges of this initiative has been the process to secure a site from the City. Another challenge has been finding the time to talk to people in the community to bring them on-board with this project, given this is only one of a number of projects that the Association works with. Finding the time to consistently work on the project has been the biggest challenge.

For the most part the project has not met many roadblocks, and the timing for the project is fortuitous as it supports many of the Ministry of Health's new mandate, moving towards a supported employment model offered during business hours (the 'Clubhouse model').

### **Innovation**

There are other similar projects underway in BC, such as recycling centre run by the Canadian Mental Health Association in Vernon. However, the Port Alberni business could not be modeled too closely on this because opportunities for recycling contracts were different in Port Alberni because of existing recycling businesses located there. However it was still useful for project proponents to spend a day seeing how the Vernon business was run. The consultant visited a number of locations in BC. It turned out that one of the closest facilities, a second hand store in Nanaimo, most closely resembled the business plan that was developed.

### **Support and Legacy**

The project needs capital funds in order to secure an existing building or to build a new one. CMHA is seeking a grant, as they do not want to be burdened with debt. Once a grant is secured, it is hoped that the second hand business will become financially viable over time. CMHA has a building for their existing Port Alberni office and staff recognizes this as a strength of the organization.

Financial support for the business plan development was critical to move the project to the point where funders and other partners would take the project seriously. Most non-profit organizations are too small to take it on with existing workloads so securing a grant was extremely important. Support from the community and the advice and expertise of community members have also contributed to the project reaching several of its key milestones.

**Advice to Others**

- Partnerships can be very beneficial, take stock of community resources and knock on every door because you often find partners and good advice.

**Source**

- Interview with Bob Hargreaves, March 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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**More Information**

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## **Powell River Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities**

### **Summary**

*The Powell River Model Community Project (MCP)* initiated the Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities in April 2001 with the aim of providing training, support and work experience to members of the Powell River community that live with disabilities. Groups within the community were engaged as partners in the project to assist in identifying participants for the program and creating opportunities in their organizations for these and other disabled workers. Over the past year, the Program has worked to provide support and employment for eight individuals.

### **Getting Started**

*MCP* is a non-profit society operating in Powell River, a small community on the Upper Sunshine Coast of BC, to address the needs of individuals living with disabilities. They focus on issues of transportation, education, recreation, housing and employment, and represent the official advisors to the Powell River Municipality on issues pertaining to people with disabilities.

The Employment Project was initiated by *MCP* to address a serious lack in opportunities for disabled people to access training and support in preparation for employment. By working with partners in the community, the aim was to assist a small group of individuals in finding employment, but also to expand opportunities for disabled people generally in the community.

### **Project Description**

The Project Team determined that it had the capacity to accommodate six participants in the program. They then began approaching groups in the community to identify participants and help in finding them work. The individuals chosen for the program were assisted in developing realistic goals to achieve through the program in relation to their abilities and employment aspirations. *MCP* worked with their partners to develop opportunities for training and experience in relation to those goals. Due to sickness and injury, two of the initial participants were unable to continue with the program. Subsequently, two additional individuals joined the program later in the year.

### **Community Involvement**

The Project received tremendous support from a broad range of community groups, including Community Futures, Career Link, Malaspina University College, BC Ministry of Community Development, Cooperatives and Volunteers, Vocation and Rehabilitation Services, Sliammon First Nation, Visitors Bureau, Powell River

Community Health Council, Powell River Chamber of Commerce and the City of Powell River. These groups were active in providing training and employment opportunities to participants of the program. Meeting space was made available for the Project Group and the Sliammon First Nation furnished \$5,000 to support a participant from this band.

### **Indicators & Project Effectiveness**

The main objective of the project was to assist the participants to be as employable as possible in their fields of interest. The more specific goals were those outlined by the participants themselves. The project's success will thereby be evaluated by looking at what has been provided in terms of assistance to the participants as well as the degree to which each of the participants has achieved their expected outcomes.

*MCP* is currently in the process of revisiting the specific goals of each of the participants with them to determine the project's effectiveness at an individual level. At a more general level, the Project Leader reports that all six of the individuals that were able to maintain their active status in the project, have gained some form of work experience. Examples of the types of employment opportunities include:

- Creating business cards for the Powell River Chamber of Commerce;
- Working three to nine hours at Malaspina University College;
- Helping to teach a course for the mentally ill;
- Providing assistance to the elderly;
- Doing yard work; and
- One participant is actively involved as a volunteer, as a means to make connections and gain access to paid work sometime in the future.

In order to equip the program participants with the necessary skills for these positions, relevant training was arranged through Community Future's Entrepreneur Program, SuperHost Program, Malaspina University College and the Community Health Council. Special equipment, such as that to allow blind participants to work on computers, was procured to assist the individuals gain access to employment. *MCP* has also assisted one individual in attaining 'Disability 2 Status' whereby he will be recognized as having a permanent disability but still being capable of some work. This participant will subsequently be provided with the necessary support to enable him to work in the future.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

Powell River is currently in the midst of a serious economic downturn. Recent pressures on the area's mainstay forestry, pulp and paper and fishing industries have resulted in high levels of unemployment. As a result, the community is being forced to explore new areas of economic development. The Employment Project has

assisted in providing employment for six individuals that were otherwise on social assistance. Moreover, it has served to broaden the capacity of the local economy to utilize a broader scope of the community's assets and create new opportunities.

### **Challenges**

*MCP* has encountered a number of difficulties in achieving its goals. These began at the very outset of the project when they realized that some of the funding that had originally been pledged to the project, was withdrawn. Working with a reduced budget, they were also challenged in assessing participants' abilities with respect to work. For example, although individuals may have a high school certificate, they might only function at a grade three level with respect to reading and writing. This made it very difficult for the Project Team to match the participants with suitable work and training opportunities and delayed the project's progress. Vocation and Rehabilitation Services, one of the partners on the project, assisted in addressing this problem by conducting more detailed evaluations of the participants and their learning levels.

Another critical challenge that the project faced has been the one-year duration for the project. Particularly with respect to the two participants that were encumbered by health issues, the project was not long enough to allow them time to recover and rejoin. The economic situation in Powell River has exerted an important external pressure on the project. With an unemployment rate of eighteen percent, it has been particularly difficult to find employment opportunities for disabled individuals.

### **Support & Legacy**

Funding for the Employment Project was furnished by the Community Enterprise Initiative, a now discontinued program of the BC Ministry of Community Development, Cooperatives and Volunteers. Crucial support has also been provided to the project from its community partners. These organizations have assisted *MCP* in addressing the challenges that have arisen and will also ensure that the project has a lasting effect in the community. Increased awareness with respect to disabled workers will serve to expand the employment opportunities for these members of the community in the future. Additionally, graduates of the program will continue to serve as role models, demonstrating the potential of individuals with disabilities to make a valuable contribution in the workplace.

### **Advice to Others**

- *MCP's* employment initiative can serve as a model for other communities as a means of engaging people with disabilities and expanding employment opportunities. However, the past year of the project has illustrated the necessity of such an initiative to be carried out over a longer time period – at least three years.

- While this project included participants with a broad range of disabilities, in retrospect, the Project Leader recognizes that they would have been able to better serve the needs of a less diverse set of medical circumstances.
- To other communities, the Project Leader suggested that projects be started in August/September, as opposed to April, in order to correspond to the majority of training schedules.
- Finally, it was recommended that a different means of evaluating participants' skills and learning capabilities be used. Whereas this project relied mainly on the people's qualifications on paper, the Project Leader emphasized the need for more in-depth assessments in order to determine the most suitable forms of training and employment.

#### **Source**

- Interview with Geraldine Braak, March 2002
- Written by Clare Mochrie

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#### **More Information**

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# Quadra Island Mapping Project

## Summary

The Quadra Island Mapping Project was initiated in 1995 by a consortium of local non-profit societies. Its mandate is to create an inventory of biophysical resources on the island for the purpose of educating and building capacity in the local community to engage in sustainable resource management. Since 1996, geographic information systems (GIS) have been used to access, interpret and communicate data on the natural systems on the island. The data is used for a variety of ad hoc community projects related to sustainable development and conservation.

## Getting Started

The Mapping Project is the creation of four long-standing parent organizations, all dedicated to upholding the ecological integrity of Quadra Island and promoting the sustainable management of its natural resources:

- Quadra Island Recreation Society;
- Mitlenatch Field Naturalist Society;
- Quadra Island Salmon Enhancement Society; and
- Quadra Island Conservancy and Land Trust Society.

These groups came together to address a shared need for accurate and current data for the island. They also saw an advantage in having a single focus for disseminating information and engaging the community in becoming stewards of their environment. The gathering and sharing of data about Quadra Island is seen as a way of expanding local input and involvement in the planning process.

## Project Description

The Mapping Project is run completely by volunteers and works on an ad hoc basis to provide information to community projects or interests. The data is used for a wide variety of initiatives in the community. For example, it provides teaching materials for the local elementary school and species/biophysical data to support or reject certain planning and development decisions.

The Mapping Project participated in the *Islands in the Salish Sea Mapping Project*, an initiative where local artists from 16 Gulf Islands were invited to design interpretive community maps. Similarly, it furnished support to a project mapping the shore zones of the island aimed at reducing the negative impacts to sensitive coastal habitat. Presently, the GIS Coordinator for the Project is working in collaboration with a local resident on a study of eagle nests and heron rookeries on the island.

### **Community Involvement**

It is the mandate of the Mapping Project to disseminate information to the community and engage local people in local planning processes. Much of the community outreach is achieved through the four parent organizations of the project. However, visibility in the community is also sustained through open houses and presentations. At these events, project volunteers typically display maps to highlight different natural assets of the island. The public is also invited to add features related to the flora and fauna that they are aware of, such as the location of a bird's nest for example, or a salamander crossing. This input is used to continually update the GIS data and biophysical inventory.

### **Indicators & Project Effectiveness**

The Mapping Project is intended to provide a resource to the local people. Therefore, its success is reflected in how visible and integrated the project is in the community. Indicators include the level of broad-based support provided to the project and the number of linkages that it maintains with other projects or communities. The GIS coordinator emphasized the importance of having members from all aspects of the community feeling comfortable about approaching the mapping project and requesting information.

The Mapping Project has played a key role in enhancing the community's understanding of their environment and their ability to participate in local planning processes. In dealing with regulatory agencies, the credible data enables the community to communicate on equal ground with policy makers and substantiate their positions. Similarly, the project provides the community with information necessary to plan proactively to protect their resources and natural habitats.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

Quadra Island faces increasing pressures from the community of Campbell River on Vancouver Island. Due to its close proximity, the island has long served as a recreational and industrial resource to Campbell River. The forests on the island have been logged for 120 years and the surrounding waters have supported a vibrant fishing industry. The majority of the land on Quadra is held within a tree farm license and increasing portions of the island are being developed to accommodate residences. However, whereas the economic value of the land might be relatively easy to calculate, its ecological integrity is more likely to be overlooked. Subsequently, many members of the Quadra Island community fear that shorter-term economic priorities will supersede protection and conservation of critical natural assets in making development decisions.

The mapping project therefore represents a powerful tool for illustrating the biophysical attributes of the land. For example, when a unique wetland on the island was recently affected by logging, the GIS coordinator felt that, had the data been

available sooner, arrangements could have been made for its protection. The Project also offers a means by which to explore alternative forms of economic development. For instance, the Mapping Project has developed a map of the points of interest for visitors to the island in support of a more sustainable tourism-based industry.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

As a true grassroots initiative, the Quadra Island Mapping Project is a manifestation of the community's social and environmental values, and concern regarding sustainable development. The parent organizations meet quarterly to discuss their mandate and ensure that their funding and efforts are expended in line with the community's priorities. Additionally, the project does extensive outreach to engage the community and input their values into their process.

### **Challenges**

Because the project is entirely volunteer-driven, it faces an ongoing challenge of finding qualified volunteers for its initiatives. In addition, while enthusiastic volunteers may be available, training is very expensive and time consuming. Networks with other communities are also crucial to the project, and yet very difficult to maintain. The project retains a number of valuable linkages, but continues to strive to expand its scope of connections and partnerships.

### **Support**

The Mapping Project has been sustained since 1995 as a result of the support that it has been afforded from the community and government funders. The GIS software and ArchView licenses have been provided by the Environmental Systems Research Institute, a large, philanthropic conservation agency based in the US. Money to purchase digital data sources has been furnished by the Sustainable Communities Initiative of Natural Resources Canada. These funding sources, which have also covered the costs of training of volunteers in the computer programs, have been key to stabilizing the mapping project, enhancing the project's effectiveness and raising its credibility. Additional regional government funding has been received for individual initiatives.

### **Legacy**

Due to the extensive support for the project in the community, the Mapping Project is well positioned to sustain itself well into the future. Financially, government funding has provided stability to the project, but past fund raising efforts in the community have also been successful. As the population of the island expands, the community leaders see an increasing need for a coordinated vision and planning framework to guide development on Quadra. The Mapping Project represents a potential tool in this regard and is therefore likely to have a significant impact on the community planning process in years to come.

### **Advice to Others**

All communities stand to benefit by gaining greater control over the planning processes that affect them and the way that resources are managed. Therefore as a tool for community empowerment, the Quadra Island Mapping Project has broad application elsewhere. However, it is important that a clear mandate is defined for the project and a set of goals for meeting that mandate is outlined. In order to truly reflect the priorities of the community, the project needs to retain an overview vision in directing its projects and allotting its resources.

Leadership is also a critical factor in starting a project such as this. Individuals with charisma and linkages within the community are key to sustaining the project momentum and engaging all aspects of the community in the project.

Finally, in order to benefit from implementing a grassroots planning process, it is necessary that a community be well organized before embarking on a project. Together with the successes that they will enjoy, a group also needs a stable foundation to deal with setbacks encountered along the way.

### **Source**

- Interview with Alvin Tye, March 2002
- Written by Clare Mochrie

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### **More Information**

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# Quesnel Sustainability Indicators Project

## Summary

A set of Sustainability Indicators has been developed by the community of Quesnel, to track the community's progress toward sustainability and community health and to identify specific actions that will help the community reach its goals.

## Getting Started

The project is funded by the Ministry of Community Development, Cooperatives and Volunteers, and facilitated by the Fraser Basin Council. The Project Team met for the first time in March 2001, to work out a process to select and track a set of indicators. The first step was to collate goals and challenges from existing community documents, to help identify community priorities that relate to sustainability. Then a list of more than 100 potential indicators linked to the community goals was identified. The project team narrowed this down to the current list of 21 indicators, over the course of a couple of meetings. There was also an opportunity for the wider community to give input when the list of potential indicators was published on a website and in print form and distributed in a number of public locations around Quesnel.

## Project Description

The selected set of sustainability indicators will provide residents of Quesnel with relevant, useful information on sustainability issues to:

- increase public awareness about important community issues;
- inform and influence policy development and enable inclusive decision-making;
- assist the community to identify priorities and workplans related to sustainability issues;
- build partnerships between government and non-government organizations in the effort to meet the community's sustainability goals.

The Quesnel indicator report *State of Our Community: Moving Sustainability Forward* will be released in May, 2002.

## Community Involvement

A local Project Team with representation from a number of different community organizations was formed in February of 2001 to supervise and provide input into the process of indicator development. The Forestry sector, Labour Council, School Board, Economic Development Corporation, City staff and municipal councillors, the Child, Family and Youth Network, local health council and the Quesnel Environmental Society were among the groups represented on the Project Team.

They met over the course of the year to pick indicators, review the data, and select benchmarks (goals) and actions for each indicator.

### **Indicators**

The following criteria were used to guide selection of draft sustainability indicators for Quesnel:

- Available- Data are available and easily accessible
- Understandable- Data are easily understood by a diverse range of people
- Credible- Data are valid, reliable
- Temporal- Data can show trends over time and progress towards targets
- Relevant- Indicators reflect community values
- Integrative- Data demonstrate connections among key dimensions of sustainability
- Comparable- Data can be compared with other regions
- Linked to Action- Selected indicators can be linked to concrete actions to help reach community goals

Based on these criteria, 21 indicators were chosen for Quesnel, in the following categories:

- **Community** (Community Vision; Social Issues and Services; Community Safety; Health and Health Care; Education)
- **Environment** (Water; Air Quality; Waste; Energy; Ecosystems)
- **Economy** (Economic Diversity; Economic Dependency; Employment; Commercial)

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

While the indicators project will not directly work to impact the local economy, the Economic indicators were selected to track progress towards community goals in this area. The indicators selected include the number of jobs by sector, economic dependency on various sectors and the number of new business licences given out each year in Quesnel.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

Social and environmental values were closely integrated into the Indicators work. Members of the project team represented social service agencies and the health council in Quesnel, as well as both the Airshed Committee and Environmental Society. A number of the indicators address concerns about the socio-economic and environmental concerns of the community.

### **Challenges**

Now that the project is close to wrapping up, finding an organization to take on ownership of the project and to volunteer to collect information in the future will be a challenge. This process will need to continue to involve the community. Many

community organizations are under-funded and don't have the time and capacity for staff to take this role on.

### **Innovation**

This project was one of four pilot indicator projects funded by the Ministry of Community Development, Cooperatives and Volunteers in BC. The other three projects are in New Westminster, the Sunshine Coast, and Tofino and Ucluelet.

### **Support and Legacy**

The grant from MCAWS supported the development of the indicators and the first phase of data gathering. The Project Team has discussed how the indicators can continue to be monitored in the future. It is likely that the Indicators will find a 'home' with the City of Quesnel, to ensure the indicators are tracked on a regular basis.

### **Advice to Others**

- The diversity of the Project Team was critical to the project's success. Team members were respectful of each other's opinions, and worked to make sure everyone's concerns were being represented in the indicator work.
- Don't reinvent the wheel when identifying community goals and potential indicators. Take the time to look at examples of indicator initiatives in other communities to see what lessons they have to offer, and what indicators they have used.

### **Source**

- Interview with Gail Wallin and Maureen Young, March 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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## **Revelstoke's Economic Development Strategy**

### **Summary**

The North Columbia Mountain City of Revelstoke has had an economy based on forestry, minerals, and on a number of massive hydroelectric projects on the Columbia River. Its strategic location on the Canadian Pacific Railroad and the Trans-Canada highway has played an important role in its growth and development.

In 1983 Revelstoke's population was approximately 10,000 people. With the completion of the last hydroelectric project in 1985, Revelstoke faced serious economic decline. By 1986 the population had dropped to 7,200 people. In addition, a significant amount of land had been lost to flooding during dam construction and so the town began to consider its options for economic renewal.

With 450 houses on the market and 25% unemployment, community planning was an important and necessary response. In 1985 the provincial government funded an Economic Development Strategy involving an unprecedented 100+ members of the community. The federal government provided assistance to the town through the establishment of a Community Futures office in 1986.

### **Project Description**

One component of the Economic Development Strategy focused on forestry. Forestry had always been a significant part of the economy, although for 30 years wood left the Valley without any value-added activity. This provided the impetus for the development in 1993 of a community forest project and a value-added wood processing plant in Revelstoke in the fall of 1997.

At one time CP Rail was the “backbone employer” of the community, providing 25-30 percent of the economy in Revelstoke. To reflect this history the community raised \$1.2 million to develop a railway museum in June 1993, an innovative initiative that promotes railway heritage. The museum attracts helps to attract over 27,000 visitors annually of the more than 4 million people who travel by Revelstoke on the Trans-Canada Highway each year.

Developing adventure and winter tourism is another part of Revelstoke's Economic Development Strategy. A tourism coordinator was hired to work with service providers, accommodation, and recreation specialists to put together packages to attract tourists to the community and coordinate marketing of the area. Mt. McKenzie, a nearby alpine ski resort, was purchased by the municipality when it was put on the market. The municipality recognized the ski-area's importance to the local economy and knew that there was a likelihood that if it was not purchased it

would otherwise be shut down. Snowmobiling and cross-country skiing are also being promoted. In 1999, the community attracted the investment of an \$11 million hotel for the heli-skiing market.

### **Indicators**

The success of Revelstoke's economic development visioning and planning is measured by several key indicators. Unemployment is down to 7-8% having ranged from 12-13% for many years after reaching a high of 25% in 1986. The number of new business licenses indicates economic growth. Bucking the provincial trend, there have not been any recent shutdowns within the local forest industry, an indicator of economic resiliency.

### **Project Effectiveness**

In 1986 Revelstoke hired a Community Economic Development officer, a move that was unusual for a community of its size. The officer was able to evaluate the feasibility of many of the ideas that were generated in the initial economic development visioning process. Revelstoke has undertaken three separate planning and visioning processes since 1985, and this has helped the community to work together in resolving conflict. Project success has helped to rebuild community pride, self-assurance, and confidence. The local population is now about 8,200 people.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

Since developing the Strategy in 1986, the economy has strengthened and diversified to 25% forestry, 25% railway and other transportation, 25% tourism, and 25% service industry. The number of tourists has increased with the establishment of the Railroad Museum. Hotel bed availability is up and there are 8 to 10 new bed and breakfasts. The locally controlled Tree Farm License has provided a more reliable supply of wood for three local mills, which were founding partners in the venture with the City of Revelstoke. The community forest and associated ventures have brought into the community \$40 million in capital. In addition, 100 new jobs have been created by the value-added mill, which processes wood waste that was previously burned.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

The Revelstoke Economic Development Strategy incorporates social values through a focus on local control of resources, and increasing value added products in the forest industry. Local job creation is fundamental to this planning endeavor. Local resources are being used with a recognition of the necessity to plan for economic and ecological sustainability.

## **Challenges**

Securing funding for projects has proven to be a challenge. Many of the major chartered banks have strict lending policies. In response to this challenge the Community Futures in Revelstoke initiated a loan fund for start-up businesses. The credit union hired a loan officer with commercial loan experience, and 30% of their lending is now commercial. The Columbia Basin Trust was formed in 1996 and its support helped to provide additional funding opportunities in the region.

When the Economic Development Strategy was put forward, some people did not support the initiative and changing their attitudes proved to be a major challenge.

## **Advice to Others**

Those involved in Revelstoke's Economic Development Strategy recognize the importance of community capacity building. While it has been important to secure funding to hire paid staff such as a Community Economic Development officer and a tourism coordinator, volunteers are also a critical part of the equation.

Rebuilding community confidence has been an important factor in Revelstoke's economic resurgence. Revelstoke started from the ground up in their visioning and planning, looking first to themselves for the knowledge of how to turn things around in their community.

## **Source**

- Interview with Geoff Battersby, former Mayor of Revelstoke
- Input from Alan Mason, March 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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### **More Information**

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## **Saddle Tree Manufacturing Cooperative**

### **Summary**

The Saddle-Tree Manufacturing Cooperative is an initiative based in Houston, BC that engages physically and socially marginalized adults and youth from the community in the manufacturing of saddletrees. Structured as a workers cooperative, the employees are able to work and earn a wage while ensuring that their needs are accommodated. In addition to providing employment, it is anticipated that the project will help build self-esteem and pride among the individuals involved.

### **Getting Started**

Saddletrees are the frames or moulds used for making saddles for horseback riding. Traditionally, these frames have been constructed out of wood. However, a resident in the Houston area has developed a new technique for making saddletrees using carbon composite. The product has been well received in the industry and a market for these carbon-based saddletrees has been confirmed. The inventor has been anxious to increase production of the saddletrees but has no interest in the manufacturing side of this endeavour.

The Nadina Community Futures Development Corporation (NCF) operates in the region helping to strengthen communities economically and socially, by assisting small businesses to expand or get started. NCF recognised that there were insufficient employment opportunities in the community for members with disabilities. Saddletree manufacturing presented a potential means for involving these marginalized workers, so NCF pursued the idea with the inventor.

The inventor agreed to turn the production over to NCF so long as the proprietary rights to the invention were not compromised. In 1999, a proposal was submitted to the BC Ministry of Community Development, Cooperatives and Volunteers and \$45,000 was received in seed funding. A Board of Directors from the community was established to begin developing a factory for manufacturing saddletrees run by the disabled community.

### **Project Description**

Currently, the Board is the process of finalizing an agreement with the inventor. A space has been rented for the factory and a project manager has tentatively been hired. It is expected that five or six workers will be required initially, although the workforce may double within a year of being in operation. Being a cooperative, these workers will all be owners of the factory. A separate board of directors will

oversee the company's financial management, allowing workers the option of being a director of the organization as well.

The factory will begin by manufacturing carbon composite saddletrees for sale throughout Canada, Germany, US and Australia. Over the next few years, they aim to develop two or three new product lines.

### **Community Involvement**

Due to the complex nature of dealing with the proprietary rights for the invention and establishing a cooperative factory, it has been a challenge at times to maintain community momentum and involvement in the project. Originally, NCF had planned to merely facilitate the relationship between the inventor and a community organization that would run the project. Houston Community Services (HCS), a local organization that used to administer a number of programs with the disabled community, was initially engaged to organize and manage the initiative. However, NCF resumed the lead role after the mandate of HCS was modified by the Province. The commitment of the Board of Directors has been key to maintaining the community-driven nature of this project. The Coordinator from NCF expects that the community's involvement will be much less of an issue once the factory is in operation.

### **Indicators & Project Effectiveness**

As a community-driven business enterprise, the Saddle-Tree Manufacturing Cooperative has two sets of indicators by which to evaluate its success. On the one hand, the success of the business will be demonstrated in the straight sales figures, how it diversifies and creates spin-offs, stabilizes and gains market share. On the other hand, from more of a community perspective, the project will be assessed on the basis of its effects on the workers and their well-being. Specific indicators will look at the participation of workers as directors in the co-op, their personal self-esteem and self-sufficiency. The number of inquiries and level of interest about the worker-owned plant will also be monitored. Additionally, although difficult to measure, the project also hopes to impact how the broader community views their disabled members and understands their capabilities.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

The Cooperative will provide employment for people with disabilities who were previously on social assistance. The project will inject money into the local economy, but it also may attract other manufacturing plants to the area. Within five to seven years, it is expected that the area will have developed a strong labour force with experience working with carbon composites. Transportation of finished products to Japan has proven to be faster and less expensive from Houston, BC than it is from Vancouver as ships departing from Prince Rupert are one and a half days closer to Japan.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

The project's aim of developing meaningful work for people with disabilities is important in that it benefits the individual workers, and also raises the visibility and exposure of people with disabilities to the general public, helping to overcome fear and prejudice. To address environmental impacts, the company is working with a member of the Science Council of BC to ensure that solvents and cleaners minimize damage to the environment. Extensive research has also been conducted into the environmental and safety impacts of carbon composite technology and the manufacturing process. To ensure that any worker will be safe at the factory, regardless of disability or special circumstance, designers have gone to great lengths to make certain that all fumes and materials are harmless. They have also confirmed that minimum waste is produced and that it is non-toxic.

Another priority has been to contract local suppliers for the raw materials of manufacturing. However, the project will have to use suppliers from outside the region – one in Ontario and another in the US, as local suppliers are not available. There is hope that, in the future, success of the cooperative will incite people in the region to provide these services.

### **Challenges**

Organizing the Board of Directors for the project was not easy, as it was important to have a balance of people and skills involved. While it was necessary to have people with experience in business and manufacturing, it was also essential to have individuals who recognized the social values of the project.

The idea of a worker cooperative was also met with some scepticism. Houston and Smithers are heavily industrialized and unionised communities, and a worker co-op is a new and untested idea. It took more than a year and a half to overcome these challenges and put together the Board of Directors.

Working with an entrepreneur/inventor was a challenge for the Board as well as government funders. There were intellectual property rights that had to be dealt with sensitively and much of the information required on funding applications could not be released. Proprietary rights as well as the non-traditional model of management for the plant, contributed to problems for the project in securing start-up funding.

### **Support**

The project has received funding support from the BC Ministry of Community Development, Cooperatives and Volunteers as well as start-up money from Western Economic Diversification. The ongoing support and commitment of the community Board of Directors has also been crucial in bringing this project to fruition.

Continued support from the community, in the form of flexibility and tolerance, will be necessary to sustain the project efforts, particularly in the industrial section of town where the plant will be located. It is hoped that the Town Council will endorse the project if zoning issues arise. Community investors may also be needed to assist the co-op financially and offset unforeseen costs.

### **Advice to Others**

Other communities are advised to explore projects such as the Saddle-Tree Manufacturing Cooperative. The community is at an advantage where an original idea already exists, as was the case in Houston. However, the Project Coordinator with NCF also pointed out the potential for communities to develop an entrepreneurial idea on their own.

The workers cooperative model offers flexibility in work schedules to allow for a broader range of employees. Moreover, in providing ownership as well as work, cooperatives can provide an added source of empowerment.

### **Source**

- Interview by Jerry Botti, March 2002
- Written by Clare Mochrie

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## **Shellfish Development Initiative**

### **Summary**

Shellfish growers are often small-scale investors or family-run businesses. The profit margin is not big in the industry. There has been limited expansion of the Shellfish industry in BC in the past 15 years, and existing farmers have not been able to expand their farms, for several reasons including government regulations and lack of community support for the growth of the industry. Over a period of three years, beginning in 1999, the BC Shellfish Growers Association offered workshops and training for potential new entrants to the industry in new growth areas along the North Coast and northern Vancouver Island.

### **Getting Started**

The BC Shellfish Growers Association offers a number of services to members including networking meetings with other farmers, the option to buy a group package for insurance, and coverage by the association for the clean-up bond required by the government. About 150 of the approximately 260 growers in BC are members of the Association. Association members produce about 80% of the product in BC.

The training program coordinator had a background in adult education and realized the potential for teaching shellfish farming, a process which has not been undertaken before. The Association office fields hundreds of calls from people in coastal communities in BC interested in learning more about the potential of the industry. This has increased with the downturn of logging and fishing. The office does not have the capacity to field these calls on an on-going basis, but felt that by getting financial support for community workshops, the information would be passed on to communities.

### **Project Description**

The Shellfish Development Association hosted a series of 20 workshops in the North Coast and northern Vancouver Island region to promote shellfish to new entrants to the industry. These workshops were held in the communities over a three-year period. A grant from the Ministry of Community Development, Cooperatives and Volunteers supported a number of workshops and presentations that were hosted to promote the industry and to let applicants know more of the reality of the shellfish farming.

The goal was to increase the understanding of what is entailed in the industry, and its many challenges. The application process that new entrants must make to government is very difficult to undertake without any training. On the application,

plans and farming methods such as husbandry and feeding need to be outlined in detail. For someone who is brand new to the industry it is a difficult task to take on with no training.

Another program that was run in the summer of 2000 was a 10-day training program that was offered to a group of First Nations people from Bella Bella. They had been traditional clam diggers, but with diminishing clam resources, they were looking for new livelihoods. Traditionally they are harvesters not cultivators, and it is a significant change to stay in one place and harvest for the year rather than travelling seasonally. A group visited and worked on farms on Vancouver Island and down the coast to Washington. This included visits to a number of successful First Nations shellfish farming operations in Washington State. The group returned to Bella Bella enthusiastic about the Shellfish industry, and presented what they had learned to the Band Council.

The band has recently formed a unique co-operative venture with their wild diggers whereby they invest a portion of funds earned in the wild dig towards clam seed to enhance their beaches. The community is slow to embrace shellfish tenures as they have concerns about how that would affect treaty negotiations, so have instead moved ahead with developing clam “pilot” beaches for now.

### **Community Involvement**

The programs were well received in the communities. The Association is the only group doing this kind of training, and the emphasis is hands-on and practical, which appealed to those who participated. Some people would only attend one workshop and develop an awareness that the industry was not for them, while others would remain interested and attend more workshops.

People who were involved in fishing and forestry have earned large amounts of money in the past. This will never be duplicated, and an owner of a shellfish farm is not a big wage earner. People need to learn that wages are lower than fishing and forestry jobs. However, more people are coming to realize that the fishing and logging industries are not coming back so they are looking at different options. For fishermen it can be a good industry to work in because of their experience with, and love of, the ocean and an understanding of nature. People who have been fishermen and who have had their fishing license bought out could potentially invest in a shellfish farm, because the initial capital investment required is modest.

### **Indicators**

Success for the training program can be measured in a number of ways. Successful training does not necessarily mean more people entering the industry. The trainers also consider it a success if a workshop participant gains an understanding that they are not suited for working in the industry, rather than going out and investing

their life savings before gaining this understanding. To make the decision they cannot have training only in the classroom, they need to meet the farmers. For some people this becomes the inspiration they need to move ahead with their choice, and reinforces the importance of the hands-on component of the program.

### **Project Effectiveness**

The trainers who offered the workshops in the communities were all shellfish farmers. The project coordinator felt it was very important to involve active farmers rather than academics in the training. As well, people would be given tours of farms, and usually the coordinator would pick farms run by people who used to be fishermen, because many of the workshop participants were fishermen. Using examples of successful farmers using their fishing gear was helpful. The workshop trainers also made sure that the participants understood that these workshops were being held to support new entrants and to also raise money to help fund a Shellfish Association government lobbyist working to help keep the industry viable in BC.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

The industry is growing. About 50 new applicants are in development and 20 have been approved. This growth tends to be in more remote areas (northern Vancouver Island and the North Coast), because many of the more accessible areas are not approved for growth (Shellfish farming is not permitted in the Island Trusts area). Some training program participants were successful in developing new farms, although the extent of this has not been researched and documented.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

Water quality is very closely tied the shellfish industry. Farmers know the future of their industry depends on the condition of the water resource. The water requirements are important because shellfish are filter feeders. The existence of a shellfish industry is an indicator of a healthy ecosystem and clean waterways. Without a clean environment, the shellfish industry cannot survive. The priority initiatives of the BCSGA include water quality activities and programs and the development of an industry driven Environmental Management System, including Codes of Practice.

### **Challenges**

There are a number of challenges associated with developing the shellfish industry. The shellfish business requires a high literacy level, and there is an extensive amount of paperwork associated with the production process. Many students involved in the training program lacked basic literacy and math skills, which are essential for running a business. It can be a long process for adults, who have many other commitments, to upgrade basic skills, and it is too much to develop these skills in a short course. Access to capital funding is another challenge for potential

farmers. Interested people are often not asset rich and their ability to borrow is limited.

Shellfish farmers rent the water where they grow shellfish from the government. There is a small profit margin in the industry, so increased rents could be a major barrier to new and existing farmers. As well, in some areas, there are First Nations treaty issues that need to be resolved before tenure can be offered. This is another challenge for new farmers who would like to enter the industry.

### **Innovation**

While many of the training programs offered by the BC Shellfish Growers are not being offered elsewhere, one particular program was particularly unique. The Association developed a training course that was offered to people from the Vietnamese immigrant community on Vancouver Island. This was done in partnership with the Multicultural Association in Campbell River and the Shellfish Growers Association. The training program, which included business training and hands-on training in farming, was offered to 12 Vietnamese immigrants through an interpreter. This program was a success and many of the participants were interested in starting their own farm. Of the 12 participants, 5 are now owner-operators of farms, either on new sites or by purchasing existing farms.

### **Support and Legacy**

Education and training programs are not being offered because funding for new programs has not been available. However one idea that is being developed by the BC Shellfish Association is the creation of a training farm. Ideally this would be in an accessible area (such as the Comox area) for people to visit and understand shellfish farming better. New entrants could be trained on the farm, which could also have educational value for the general public. New technology training could be demonstrated to existing growers as well. Right now there is only one grower in the Prince Rupert area, and operating in seclusion makes it difficult to learn about new techniques.

### **Advice to Others**

- Training should be offered through the Industry Association rather than through academic organizations so that courses are current and relevant.
- The industry is not hi-tech so that it can be accessible to many people, but training needs to be hands-on and practical.

### **Source**

- Interview with Roberta Stevenson, March 2002
- BC Shellfish Growers Association Website <http://www.bcsga.ca/>
- Written by Maggie Julian

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**More Information**

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## **Sunshine Coast Wood Innovation Centre**

### **Summary**

There are about 60 woodworkers in total on the Sunshine Coast, between Port Mellon and Egmont. Many woodworkers and wood processing businesses are owner-operated and have limited access to capital, markets and design services. A plan for a Sunshine Coast Wood Innovation Centre is being developed to increase employment opportunities within the value-added wood industry.

### **Getting Started**

A Woodworkers Coop has been in existence since June 1998 and so there is already an awareness of the extent of Coast-wide woodworking activities. One catalyst to develop a Wood Innovation Centre was the realization in recent years that a 'glass ceiling' existed for individual woodworkers, where their production levels could not increase beyond that of a one-man shop. With their existing set-ups, woodworkers lack the ability to increase their productivity without compromising quality. There are four or five pieces of key equipment that most woodworkers could benefit from, but that no one currently has.

This led to the idea of a Sunshine Coast shared equipment use facility. A potential site in an abandoned highway works yard was identified in Upper Gibsons. The site already has one large and one small building that would be suitable for the facility, and three-phase power that is needed for large machinery. It is hoped that the site can be obtained at a low cost.

Community Futures got involved, supporting the idea as a viable economic development project. A Taskforce consisting of representatives from the wood co-op, the regional government, economic development groups, a post-secondary educational institution and the B.C. Paraplegic Association, was started to support the development of plans. This involved a more detailed outline of what needed to be done to establish the shared use facility: what do woodworkers need, what would they use, and how much would they use it. A study and survey was conducted to gauge the level of interest in the area. The proposal was presented to the coast-wide Economic Development Partnership. The proposal has been selected as one of three projects that are being moved forward by the Partnership because it is coast-wide and has potential for success. Start-up costs are initially estimated at \$500,000 to \$700,000, including a costly finishing area for products. The actual amount may be different, depending on the ultimate plan for the site.

Quesnel has a Wood Enterprise Centre, where a number of pieces of equipment are shared. In February 2001, with the idea for a Sunshine Coast Wood Innovation Centre in mind, three taskforce representatives visited the Wood Innovation Centre in Quesnel to learn about their facility and experiences in getting it set up.

### **Project Description**

A grant from Forest Renewal BC supported the feasibility study. Based on the results of the coast woodworkers survey, some baseline costs were calculated to estimate equipment needs. It was determined that if the facility were running at full capacity (4 wood workers, 7 hours a day, 5 days a week), it would be operationally profitable and able to pay off its debt. The challenge now is determining how to support the project as it goes from start-up to full capacity. Presently, a business plan determining the most feasible way to get the Centre operating is being developed by the Taskforce to present to the CFDC and the Sunshine Coast Economic Development Partnership. The Taskforce is not raising funds at this point. Instead, they are identifying potential funding sources. The site also needs to be secured and is not yet up for sale.

### **Community Involvement**

Community Futures and the Coast-wide Economic Development Partnership are partners in this project, with CFDC playing a ‘secretariat role’.

There is support for the concept from Woodworkers. Forty woodworkers agreed to participate in a survey, with about 32 submitting responses, an 80% response rate. Few people thought they would set up their shops in the facility, but that is not the intention of the Centre. People thought having access to higher end equipment was important and useful, and there are four or five pieces of equipment that were identified as higher priority for most of the woodworkers. Of the 32 responses, only 3 people thought they would never use the Centre, while others thought they could make use of it anywhere between two or three hours a month to 15 per month, including one full-time tenant.

### **Indicators**

Some indicators of project success are levels of support from the local artisans and from elected representatives. Securing financial support will be another indicator of success as it is anticipated it will cost between \$300,000 and \$600,000 to get the Wood Innovation Centre set up.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

The Wood Innovation Centre (WIC) would allow woodworkers to increase their efficiency, leveraging time to produce more products. This could mean that someone who is working part-time might be able to work full-time, and someone who is working full-time could hire someone else to help if their productivity is

increasing. It could also create more work by commissioning students or woodworkers in slack periods, to come in and make pieces for the Centre to sell. The initial survey of woodworkers was only an estimate of time that woodworkers would spend at the Centre, so it is difficult to estimate how much new employment will be created. It is projected that two new jobs will be created initially and there could be as many as five eventually.

The Centre also increases the potential for collaborative work. Recently, Community Futures was in the market for a new Boardroom table capable of seating 20 with a total of 25 chairs. Their first source was a set from an office supply catalogue. On the suggestion of a member of the Wood Innovation Centre task force, two woodworkers collaborated (one working on the table, and one the set of chairs) and were able to fill the contract locally for less money (approximately 25% saving), and provided a higher quality product.

The WIC will also have a retail storefront on site. In addition, the potential for an Artisan's Village is being explored. The Coastal Cultural Alliance, a network of Sunshine Coast artisans, is considering their involvement in the project. This could help build a broader foundation of support for the project, potentially promoting further collaboration within the arts community. It also broadens the financial foundation for the storefront component because more tenants would be paying rent in the area. It could be challenging for a wood product store to survive on its own and broadening into more arts and crafts sales also broadens the client base.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

The project is focused on value-added production of local wood where possible. The Sunshine Coast has a range of different species and quality of wood available, including high quality old-growth woods. The log sorting businesses in the Howe Sound area bring in wood from most areas on the BC Coast. More value can be captured from the forest resources because of the access to this wood, and the number of skilled woodworkers on the Sunshine Coast.

The Wood Innovation Centre is also linking to potential education partners. The Centre could be developed as an educational facility through partnerships with Capilano College and the BC Institute of Technology. The high schools could also use the facility to gain experience on some kinds of equipment.

### **Challenges**

One of the challenges is an aversion to risk and change within the woodworker community. Many woodworkers have accepted their level of work as the status quo and haven't thought about increased productivity. There was some concern that the Centre could increase local competition because some woodworkers have already made investments in equipment and question why others should profit from a

cooperative arrangement. The fact that people outside of the woodworking industry are supporting the initiative has raised this concern among individuals. Project leaders counter this by arguing that Sunshine Coast woodworkers would be in a better position to compete with the Vancouver market. Limited time availability has been a challenge for the project, especially with respect to finishing the surveys and feasibility study to meet funding deadlines.

### **Innovation**

The Quesnel Wood Enterprise Centre is focused on secondary production, turning raw wood into products such as laminated posts. The Sunshine Coast Wood Innovation Centre will take local wood and imported wood and turn it into finished consumer products (tertiary production). There are similar shared use facilities in the United States but nothing similar in Canada.

### **Support**

The Wood Enterprise Centre in Quesnel conducted research before setting up, and that research has been helpful for the Sunshine Coast, allowing them to move along more quickly in their feasibility work. The CFDC of the North Cariboo also has a library of resource materials, about half of which relates to the Wood Enterprise Centre.

### **Legacy**

There are a number of financing possibilities that are being looked at to get the Wood Innovation Centre up and running. One possibility is for woodworkers to cooperatively purchase a piece of equipment. The purchasers could use the equipment at a reduced rate at the innovation Centre, while non-purchasers could also rent it out at a slightly higher rate. Any profit would be shared between the purchasers and the Centre. Another option is get support for the Coast forest industry for materials or land, as a way of strengthening ties between the forest industry and value-added producers.

Another possibility is to sell shares (say for \$200) to Sunshine Coast residents. This would then entitle them to a discount on purchases, to an amount surpassing their initial investment, at the Centre. In this way, they would have advanced the development of the Centre and helped to strengthen the local economy, while getting discount products. Another option is to establish an organization that would allow supporters to get a charitable donation credit. The Coast Cultural Alliance is applying for that status. Similar to the United Way model, it could be possible for the Coastal Cultural Alliance to dedicate donated funds towards a particular element, such as the Wood Innovation Centre. It is also possible that further revenue could be raised through wood sales to local woodworkers, and through user fees for public use of the facility.

### **Advice to Others**

- You need to have a concentration of shared use facility potential users in an area, whether it is weavers, woodworkers or ceramic artists.
- Go out and talk to the people, find out their level of interest, and get their support for the project. Use both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (focus group) methods for getting input on the project.
- Project development takes time. Expectations of a fast project and immediate results are both naïve and guarantee disappointment, disenfranchisement and diminishment of trust.
- Start thinking about where you can get funding early. There may be opportunities to link into existing infrastructure, like locating a warehouse next to a mill that has power.
- Start small and grow, don't expect to reach the project goal right away.
- Commit to enhanced businesses not competition creation.
- Consider including business services, such as bookkeeping, employee management, business training and marketing, to enhance collaboration efforts between crafters. Woodworkers might not be able to afford to market their own products, but collaborative efforts could be developed.

### **Source**

- Interview with Peter Moonen, March 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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### **More Information**

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## **Tumbler Ridge Community Resource Board Plan**

### **Summary**

The coal industry has been the backbone of the regional economy in Tumbler Ridge for many years. 2001 marked the twentieth anniversary of this community that was developed when coal fields were discovered in the seventies.

In August 2000, the international market for coal collapsed, and one of the two operating mines near Tumbler Ridge, Quintette, shut down laying off 480 of its 550 employees. The remaining employees were to work for three years on reclamation work, but received layoff notices for September 2001. Bullmoose (Teck Corporation) continues to mine coal, employing approximately 300 workers. They are now the largest employer in the community.

### **Getting Started**

When the main employer left town, Tumbler Ridge began an economic development planning initiative with both a short and long-term timeframe. The process began by identifying community assets. The town was less than 20 years old with an ample supply of new, affordable, quality housing and a desire and need for the community to diversify, in order to achieve economic stability. A transition plan with a two to four year outlook was developed. The long-term plan has a ten-year time frame with a focus on the mid-way five-year point.

An initial economic diversification study was conducted with public input, resulting in the identification of 60 potential projects were identified. From this initial study, the potential projects were narrowed down to a top ten list. Industry also provided valuable input on potential project feasibility. This helped to spur the creation of the Community Resource Board Plan.

### **Project Description**

Long-term economic diversification planning in Tumbler Ridge is now being developed through the Community Resource Board Plan. The mission statement of the Board includes the desire to 'strengthen and diversify our economy by balancing industrial and environmental responsibility and sustainability'. The main goal of the Community Resource Board is the attraction, establishment, and development of industry. The planning process is in the fledgling stage, with industries and projects being identified. Potential sectors identified for development include gas, forestry, mining, power generation, tourism, service industry, retail, education, e-commerce, and health. The District of Tumbler Ridge Community Resource Board is facilitating

a needs identification process. The Municipal Council plays an important role in bringing parties together, and lobbying government for project support.

The process and content development of each industry proposal is project dependent. The document that outlines the Community Resource Board Plan tries to remain fluid, with projects being added for consideration while others are dropped if they are determined to be unfeasible.

One project under development is a power generation project. Wind turbines have been proposed for an area that is now an inactive mine. The Municipality has said it is willing to assist in coordinating funding opportunities through the federal government and municipal Green Power initiative. They are also trying to bring crown corporations such as BC Hydro on-side with the project, and are working to secure permission to construct and operate the windmills.

A Duke Energy Pipeline extension project is undergoing an environmental review that began in January 2002. As well Western Canadian Coal is looking to develop a new coal project for Tumbler Ridge based upon the Wolverine Coal tenures. The initial mine site would create about 300 jobs and produce about 2 million tonnes of coal per year. The project is currently under environmental review and could be in production as early as the fall of 2003. There is potential for a second site associated with Brazion group of properties to be developed later in 2004.

Another proposed project is the expansion of wood processing in Tumbler Ridge. The Dawson Creek Forest District is looking at smaller forest licenses, and a local milling project in Tumbler Ridge could link to the small-scale tenures.

### **Project Effectiveness**

As this economic diversification project is still in the planning stages, there is not yet any significant impact on the local economy or way to measure the project's effectiveness. It had been hoped the Duke Energy Pipeline would be the first project off the ground, but it has now been delayed to late fall 2002.

### **Indicators**

When the Quintette mine shut down, one of the threats to the community was a shrinking population. Population and school enrollment (as the working population tends to have more school age children) have become important indicators of economic growth in Tumbler Ridge.

## ENROLLMENT FIGURES IN TUMBLER RIDGE SCHOOLS

	TR Secondary School	TR Elementary	Claude Galobois	Total
September 2001	200	197	Closed	397
June 2001	201	201		402
September 2000	206	194		400
June 2000	280	189		469
September 1999	300	180		480
June 1999	286	189	148	623
September 1998	282	232	146	660
June 1998	298	244	189	731
September 1997	329	309	223	861
June 1997	332	320	246	898
September 1996	336	328	242	906

### Social and Environmental Values

The Community Resource Board Plan incorporates a number of different projects, each unique in terms of the values that are expressed. The initiative recognizes that Tumbler Ridge is a resource community, and that to be socially and economically sustainable, the community needs to tap into the resources available and use them in a sustainable way. Resource development is seen as the ‘meat and potatoes’ of economic diversification, while other initiatives, such as tourism, are the ‘gravy’. Creating jobs is a fundamental objective of the project, as a strong tax base is needed for the community to sustain itself.

In terms of the values that are expressed, each project is different. For instance, the power generation project that is proposed is ‘environmentally-friendly’ focusing on low-emission, renewable energy production. It involves taking a site with an existing mining footprint and utilizing it for a new project. It will use the hydro transmission lines that used to serve the mine to take power out to the grid for sale.

### Challenges

The Community Resource Board suggests that there are a number of generalized barriers that many of the projects proposed under the CRB Plan face. International competition and prices for resources have serious impacts on the feasibility of projects. These are factors that are beyond the control of the community. Finding investors and dollars is critical. The right people with sufficient financial support are needed to move projects forward.

Contractors tend to hire their own people, and bring them into an area, creating no local employment. With many skilled craftsmen and tradespeople leaving town to

establish themselves elsewhere, and industry demand for a workforce that is moving towards high technology, securing qualified workers for new ventures is a challenge. Partnerships with government and industry to provide training opportunities for the local working population could be a way to address this challenge.

Constantly evolving provincial government regulations are sometimes a challenge for developing sectors. The CRB has found that it is difficult for projects to move forward when there is resistance from industry to invest in ever-changing technology and guidelines that are changed as technology develops. They believe governments can facilitate economic diversification and a stable investment environment by helping to create regulations with a long-term timeframe.

### **Innovation**

Project proponents see innovation as an essential ingredient for the Community Resource Board projects. In order to be attractive to industry there must be something unique or critical to industry's application. For example the windpower generating site needs wind, the fact that there is industrial access to the top of the mountain and a level construction base prepared where the prevailing winds blow is unique and attractive for a wind generation company to consider. Community innovation involves the identification of assets and marrying them with opportunities.

### **Support and Legacy**

The CRB would like industry to recognize the role industry plays in local economies. Companies and industries can start looking in their own backyard to develop opportunities, such as local training courses. Industry needs to be continually reminded of partnership opportunities that can play a Win-Win relationship for all participants.

### **Advice to Others**

- Creating a Community Resource Board type facilitation group is recommended as a solution for other rural communities.
- The power of planning and facilitation is incredible. One idea can grow to meet the needs of many and a diversified economy is a healthier economy.
- Be prepared to be patient! Facilitating economic diversification takes a lot of time, hard work and attention. Nothing comes together overnight and the vision is always changing. Just keep the end result in mind and slowly work toward these goals with conviction.

### **Source**

- Interview with Fred Banham, March 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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**More Information**

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## **Union Bay Waste to Wealth**

### **Summary**

Sewage treatment in rural areas of the Comox Valley has been problematic in several communities. Aging septic systems combined with a very high water table has resulted in aesthetic and health issues in several areas. The Union Bay Waste to Wealth project is a community-driven project that has focused on a solution to waste water problems that not only addresses the sewage issues but is also helping to create a healthier community.

### **Getting Started**

In 1997, the Regional District held a referendum to decide whether a septic system for the rural areas of the regional district could be developed. The referendum failed, leaving members of the Union Bay community frustrated. Some community members felt that the referendum had failed because there was limited community involvement, meaning no opportunity for trust to develop between residents and the Regional District. Meanwhile sewage often is running in ditches, and children are restricted in where they can play. Baines Sound, located just down the coast, provides more than half of the shellfish for the BC shellfish industry. Meanwhile the Union Bay foreshore has been closed for almost 10 years.

The Union Bay approach has developed a community response to the sewage problem. The chairperson of the Union Bay Improvement District felt there was an opportunity for citizens to respond after the local government attempt failed and a Standing Committee was created on how to deal with the sewage.

### **Project Description**

The system that is being proposed would keep septic tanks at individual houses in the more rural areas, but instead of being connected to a field, they would be linked to a sewage treatment system. Secondary sewage treatment would take place to meet the standards required by the Province. The gas station in Union Bay is on 25 acres of land, and the proposal includes linking the septic system of the gas station to the community system for rural residents. The treated sewage would be used on ground where hybrid poplars would be planted. These would be harvested every 10 years. For the more densely populated areas, the sewage treatment would take place right in Union Bay, with the proposed treatment plant to be built right across from the community hall.

### **Community Involvement**

The Union Bay Waste to Wealth project has focused on finding a sewage solution in a bottom-up, grassroots approach to developing a Liquid Waste Management Plan. It

began in January of 1998, when the Standing Committee was formed and the first of many community meetings was held. The committee members have logged more than 15,000 volunteer hours since the project began. The Comox Valley CARE (Citizens Action for Recycling and the Environment) society has also been able to provide some staff time to support research.

There is a three-stage provincial process for developing a Liquid Waste Management Plan. The Union Bay Plan is now in Stage Two and it will now go to a community referendum, hopefully in Fall 2002 although this is not compulsory. If the referendum passes, the Regional District has the go-ahead to begin taxing residents and building the system. All of the ideas incorporated into the plan came from the community, supported by volunteer research on how to make them happen.

There is a high level of support for the plan, because community members are informed and aware and have been involved from the beginning. Not everyone was supportive from the beginning, but involvement and education had allowed people to understand the plan, and support has built over time.

### **Indicators**

The identified indicators of project success include whether the ditches are clean and children are able to play nearby, whether the Department of Fisheries and Oceans shellfish ban is lifted from the beaches, whether the wetlands are attracting bird watchers, whether new businesses are linked to the development of the wetland, and whether the referendum is successful.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

The plans include the integration of economic goals as well. At present there are only three or four businesses in Union Bay, so even small economic development will be widely felt. It is anticipated that staff will be needed to run the treatment plant, so there will be some direct job creation. The Plan includes wetlands that incorporate a waterfall, and the habitat is anticipated to attract new bird and animal life. Project proponents recognize that birdwatching is a huge growth sector of tourism, and are proposing trail building to attract bird watchers. The treated sewage sludge will also be undergoing vermi-composting so it can be bagged and sold as compost.

Project leaders hope that the innovative sewage planning and potential economic spin-offs will help create a climate for entrepreneurs. The Improvement District is trying to put together a group of community residents to form an Economic Advisory Council, to help to facilitate economic opportunities. Union Bay needs seniors housing and if clean-up efforts are successful with a new treatment plant in place, the foreshores could be leased to pay for the development of the housing.

## **Social and Environmental Values**

The ideas and principles, including the environmental and social concerns addressed in the plan, all came from the community. About half a dozen public meetings were held to solicit input.

After secondary treatment the treated sewage would flow into wetlands, which would include some salmon-rearing channels, for tertiary treatment. In the past Coho and Chum salmon have been present in the community in prolific numbers. Streamkeepers, a volunteer-based community group focused on habitat restoration, have been working in recent years to boost the declining salmon populations. The plans are also integrated with a proposed golf course on which construction could start within a year.

## **Challenges**

Securing financing has been a challenge. Comox Valley CARE has helped Union Bay efforts by applying for a number of government and foundation grants on their behalf. Dealing with government bureaucracy has also been frustrating at times for project leaders, and they have developed an understanding that the Union Bay Waste to Wealth timeline has to be flexible for local and provincial government. Project leaders had hoped to have the referendum in 2000, but it has been delayed until 2002 because of external factors.

## **Innovation**

Union Bay is the first community in the Comox Valley to develop a community-based solution to sewage. However, project leaders emphasize they haven't reinvented the wheel in developing their plans. They learned from innovative liquid waste management examples in the State of Washington, Nova Scotia and Arizona. Now three or four other communities in the Comox Valley are also approaching a community-based solution to the issue, and Union Bay is happy to share information about both their process and the plan they developed.

## **Support**

Over \$300,000 have been injected into the community from foundations and the government and that has been critical for the project. At the same time, there has been a strong reliance on volunteer hours. Project proponents doubt the project would have the same kind of community ownership if they didn't have to struggle so hard to keep things moving.

## **Legacy**

If the referendum is passed, then the Regional District will be able to tax the population and implementation of the Liquid Waste Management Plan can begin. The referendum vote is expected in the fall of 2002. The Regional District will continue

to carry maintenance and operations costs and will be responsible for the ongoing management of the Liquid Waste Management system.

### **Advice to Others**

There have already been several communities in the Comox Valley that have expressed interest in learning more about the Union Bay participatory planning model. The community involvement and community ownership in the project are key ingredients of its success. The Union Bay Waste to Wealth project didn't begin with a blank page, much of their material was adopted from other sources. They recommend this approach for other communities.

Other success factors that have been identified include:

- Develop local project champions, it is critical to have a core group of people who are able to volunteer time to move the project forward.
- Support from local representation is helpful; having a provincial MLA that is in tune with local issues and is positive about the local process will make the job a lot easier.
- Involvement of community members is very important. Going to the church, coffee shop, pub, historical society and letting people know what's going on and listening to their concerns is crucial. The local champions may be the core group of people who can enable this.
- Make sure the community has a chance to say yes or no. The referendum is not mandatory, but project leaders see it as very important that people have a chance to vote. If people are going to be taxed, there needs to be a vote because the issues affect people directly.
- Talk the language of the people. It's important not to go outside of the community's experience and comfort zone so that people don't get alienated.
- It's important to recognize the regulatory framework, but in terms of visioning a solution don't be afraid to go outside the box of conventional solutions.
- Involve regulatory bodies that pass judgement in the process from the beginning. Even if they don't participate it's important that they get the minutes and know what is going on in the process.
- Always reserve a right to have a fight. Don't threaten this but be aware that the option to protest and get attention to the issue is in your back pocket.

### **Source:**

- Interview with Cliff Boldt, January 2002.
- Written by Maggie Julian

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*Copy of Stage 1 and 2 of the Liquid Waste Management Plan:*  
Graeme Feris, Regional District of Comox Strathcona

*Lessons Learned from BC Projects: Union Bay Waste to Wealth*

## **West Chilcotin Forest Products**

### **Summary**

In 1995, an innovative joint venture, West Chilcotin Forest Products, was launched between the Ulkatcho Indian Band, Carrier Chilcotin Ventures (Carrier Lumber) and CAT Resources Ltd., a group of 45 local investors. The project is located between Anahim and Nimpo Lake (west of Williams Lake), and involves both logging and value-added manufacturing. There are approximately 2000 people living in the area, including more than 900 from the Ulkatcho Indian Band.

### **Getting Started**

The development of the project was spurred by high unemployment in the area. With a local economy that centered around ranching and tourism, the economic base was limited. Unemployment was very high and young people were leaving the community to find opportunities elsewhere. Carrier Lumber closed down two saw mills in the area in 1987 and 1988, further contributing to the economic downturn. The Ulkatcho Indian Band had applied for forest tenure for a number of years without success. A joint venture was proposed, and negotiations began between the three partners that were completed a year later in 1994.

### **Project Description**

The goal of the Joint venture was not only to create a successful business operation but also to make a long-term difference in this struggling community. The Ulkatcho Indian Band, Carrier Chilcotin Ventures and CAT Resources Ltd. are each involved as equal partners, with each group putting forward two representatives for the Board of Directors. All financing to cover start-up costs were raised privately.

Yun Ka Whuten Holdings, a 100% band held company, was awarded the forest tenure license in 1994, but the volume is committed to the joint venture. The forest tenure was originally issued for 5 years, but the volume-based tenure of 140,000 m<sup>3</sup> has been renewed for another 20 years. A salvage license for 100,000 m<sup>3</sup> extends for at least until 2003.

The joint venture processes 60-65 million board feet of wood annually, and the studs that are manufactured by the WCFP mill have become a recognized product in international markets. Some customers in the eastern United States are requesting West Chilcotin studs over other competitors. Stephen James, the company's General Manager, says customers are more interested in the high quality of the product than the fact that West Chilcotin is a joint venture operation.

Customers also appreciate dealing with a smaller company. WCFP's sales team target their products to three main markets: 50% to the United States, 40% in Canada, and about 10% to Japan. According to James, demand remains high even in Japan, and every piece of wood that gets shipped overseas is sold.

### **Project Effectiveness**

The joint venture may have helped contribute to an atmosphere of cooperation among the different stakeholders in the area. The regional Commission on Resources and the Environment (CORE), one of a number of multistakeholder land use planning processes underway in BC in the early 1990s, was the only one in the Province that was successfully signed off.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

The joint venture has become an important factor in the local economy, currently providing the sole steady economic base in the community. The direct and indirect economic benefits to the area have been significant not only to the employees of the project, but also to the local stores, restaurants, and hotels.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

Social values are fundamental to the joint venture because of its focus on local employment creation and partnerships. The project intends to build a varied skill set and expertise and so focuses not only on logging operations, but also on wood processing, providing even more jobs. The project completed a certification process and was registered with ISO 14001 (environmental management systems) in October of 2001.

The Board of Directors are conscious that for the project to be environmentally and socially sustainable, logging must take place at a rate that is not higher than the rate of regrowth.

The company also recognizes that in the past the forest industry has done little to encourage a wider understanding of forestry practices. That is why the company now promotes education in the community. The management at the mill organizes the popular annual Forest Awareness Day, which has become a large community event with about 350 participants. The celebration includes educational logging tours, a mini tradeshow, and mill open house. The schools participate in education programs about the renewable resources base and silviculture practices.

WCFP gives back to the community in other ways. The company purchased property and equipment for a local playground and supports the Variety Club and the Anahim Search and Rescue Team. It also provides bursaries for post-secondary education.

## **Challenges**

Development of infrastructure to support the WCFP operations has not been easy. BC Hydro provides some electricity, but cannot meet all the energy supply needs. West Chilcotin FP supplements the power supply using a diesel generator, which adds a huge cost. Electricity generation costs 18 cents per kilowatt-hour. Similar projects on the grid would pay only five cents.

Also, road access is not always guaranteed. Highway 20, which provides access to the area from Williams Lake, is closed down 20 to 30 per cent of the year. When the ground de-frosts the road base becomes weak, and heavy traffic is virtually impossible from about mid-March to June. Project managers suggest that government support could be very helpful in the development of road infrastructure.

In 1998 the partnership built a \$750,000 value-added (remanufacture) plant. It is set-up to produce finger joint blocks and to upgrade low-grade wood products to higher grade. Until this year it has sat idle, due for the most part to the softwood lumber quota that limits the amount of processed wood that can be sold to the United States. Market conditions improved and the value-added plant finally began operations in the summer of 2001 for two months, but with the imposition of the 19+% softwood lumber tariff, the plant was shut down again.

## **Legacy**

The joint venture is an integral part of the local economy, providing employment for the Ulkatcho Indian Band as well as non-natives in the community. The project injects \$12 to \$14 million into the Anahim Lake and Nimpo Lake communities, and to date has operated profitably. The project creates local employment in the logging operations and the stud mill, with 120 people working in various capacities. Half of the employees are from the Ulkatcho Indian Band, meeting an important project goal.

## **Support**

Project managers suggest that external support could be very helpful in a number of areas, particularly in the development of infrastructure. Currently, for at least 25% of the year product cannot leave the community without significant additional costs due to lack of a reliable road system.

Developing a local power supply could provide another opportunity to create community employment and also benefit the joint venture. Most companies use dry kilns to dry their wood, but West Chilcotin uses an air dry method. Without a supply of natural gas, propane is the only fossil fuel alternative but costs are prohibitive. Co-generation (using wood waste and supplemented by natural gas) for power production is a possibility, but joint venture partners believe government

partnership and cooperation is needed. The capital cost is too big for West Chilcotin to move forward with alone. The province is losing money on its local power generation, producing electricity at a 22 to 24 cent cost, but selling it for 11 cents.

The partnership between Carrier Chilcotin Ventures, Ulkatcho Indian Band and CAT Resources Ltd. could be used as a model for other joint ventures in many other communities. The project is a success by any industry or community standard: it operates efficiently, uses little overhead, turns a profit, and has brought diverse groups together to working cooperatively for a common goal.

**Source**

- Interview with Stephen James, January 2002
- Written by Maggie Julian

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## **Whispering Pines/Clinton Natural Resources/Forestry Program**

### **Summary**

The Whispering Pines/Clinton Indian Band has developed a Natural Resources/Forestry Program at the community level. The program is intended to facilitate dialogue between the band, government and industry to ensure conservation and protection of natural resources within the band's traditional territories. Using forestry-related mapping techniques, the community is delineating cultural heritage areas and creating a database, with the goal of creating a traditional territory map with pertinent features identified. The maps and database will be used for monitoring off-reserve activity in traditional territories and assisting the band in making informed land use decisions in areas of management, planning and development.

### **Getting Started**

Natural resources are of fundamental importance to both the cultural heritage and economic capacity of the Whispering Pines/Clinton Indian Band, a First Nations community of approximately 100 people located outside of Kamloops. Expanded knowledge and skills in forestry will help to enable the band gain control of its land and manage its resources.

A natural resource trainer for the Shuswap Nation became aware of the community's need for training in forestry and resource management through a member of Whispering Pines/Clinton Indian Band. He thereby began work on developing a Natural Resource and Forest Management Plan through the First Nations Forestry Program. Then, he brought the idea of a forestry/natural resources program forward to the Chief and Council, and upon receiving their support, developed a proposal to receive funding.

### **Project Description**

The Forestry/Natural Resources Program aims to overlay forestry-type data with cultural heritage information using a mapping system called Microstation and Geographic Information System (GIS) Technology. The initiative involves a community-wide process of developing a cultural heritage database, showing what lands were used by Whispering Pines/Clinton Indian Band and how. It also involves using GIS technology to store and relay this information. Training on Microstation and GIS is provided as part of the program. Trainees are then encouraged to apply their skills in small resource-based projects.

### **Community Involvement**

The mapping of traditional territory and cultural heritage entails broad based community involvement. There are many sensitive issues related to the gathering, storing and accessing of this cultural information and the community-based nature of the process is critical to the project. A number of sessions have been organized in the small community of Whispering Pines around developing the database. A much broader scope of communities in the Shuswap Nation have been involved in the program through the training and employment opportunities. Ultimately, the process will engage all resource-based user groups within the band's traditional territory as well as licensees and tenure holders that impact the bands goals and objectives with respect to land use and planning.

### **Indicators and Project Effectiveness**

The Natural Resource/Forestry Program is aimed at securing the cultural heritage of the Whispering Pines/Clinton Indian Band community and enhancing their economic capacity. Positive indicators for the project include gaining recognition by government and industry with respect to the land, acquiring legal rights/tenure to the land and resources, and the creating employment opportunities for the community. An additional indicator is the community's ability to negotiate and gain control over resource planning, development and management.

There have already been a number of offshoot initiatives from the program, including two small-scale projects in logging and fertilization. Four short-term employment positions were created through these projects and a number of additional jobs have been created for program administration. This year the program was successful in obtaining a Environmental Youth Crew program which provided employment for six community members to develop and build an interpretive trail for identifying contemporary forestry use with cultural and traditional use of the Secwepemc Peoples (this work includes signs placed along the trail with a completed brochure of the trail). The Project Manager's employment goal for this season is to create at least six to eight months of employment for a minimum of six community members.

### **Challenges**

Accessing resources has been the greatest challenge faced by the Natural Resource/Forestry Program. Lacking the funds to finance the program internally, much effort is exerted in securing and maintaining outside funding. Retaining local, qualified people to help in managing the program has also been difficult. In addition, although more individuals are becoming trained through the program, there remains a shortage of employment opportunities where trainees can apply their skills and gain experience. As a result, it is difficult to sustain the momentum around the program. The Project Manager emphasizes the importance of tangible results in the form of employment and training.

## **Innovation**

Many First Nations throughout British Columbia are engaged in the process of developing databases for their cultural heritage information. The project at Whispering Pines/Clinton Indian Band is distinct in that it uses Micro station, and GIS as an instrument in this process. Although the system is effective in this application, trainees of the program have fewer opportunities to apply their skills because the Microstation GIS is not widely used.

## **Support**

The Project is supported by a strong network within Whispering Pines/Clinton, the Shuswap Nation, as well as funding sources within the provincial and federal governments. It has benefited from an enthusiastic and consistent Chief and Council in Whispering Pines/Clinton as well as support from the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council. Other bands of the Shuswap have also been influential in extending awareness and building momentum around the project.

Sixteen of the seventeen bands of the Shuswap Nation meet regularly to discuss local initiatives such as the Natural Resource/Forestry Program. This group has assisted by hosting workshops, providing ideas, helping to address problems, and accessing funding.

Financial support from government has been obtained through the Sustainable Communities Fund of Natural Resource Canada, the BC Capacity Initiative, the Southern Interior Forest Extension and Research Partnership and Human Resources Development Canada.

## **Advice to Others**

The Project Manager in Whispering Pines/Clinton strongly advises other rural communities to undertake projects such as the Natural Resource/Forestry Program. The program also has much to offer communities looking to diversify their economies. Already, a number of small fisheries-dependent communities on Vancouver Island have expressed an interest in the Microstation GPS training to help them in broadening their resource base.

However, the highly sensitive nature of community mapping should not be overlooked. The Project Manager of the Natural Resource/Forestry Program stressed the importance of maintaining some distance from the personal conflicts within the community so as to be able to facilitate a more equitable and widely accepted process.

## **Source**

- Interview with Jeff Eustache, March 2002
- Written by Clare Mochrie

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**More Information**

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# Whistler Comprehensive Sustainability Plan

## Summary

The Whistler Comprehensive Sustainability Plan was initiated by the Whistler Municipal Council in November 2001 with the goal of moving the resort community towards a vision of sustainability. Community involvement is central to the project and will be an underlying component of the process. The project is currently at the beginning of Phase One.

## Getting Started

Whistler, a world class resort and ski destination, is located within two hours drive from Vancouver. It has experienced rapid growth over the past decade and is now reaching build-out. The resort community is subsequently at a critical crossroads in terms of its evolution. A process to develop a plan that will guide the resort community towards an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future is, therefore, being undertaken.

## Project Description

The project has been designed in four phases:

- Phase One aims to examine and define the characteristics of a successful destination resort community in the Whistler context and defines ‘sustainability’ for a successful destination resort community in the context of Whistler.
- Phase Two will then use the criteria developed in Phase 1 to evaluate the following scenarios and essentially define a sustainable future for Whistler:
  - based on the current Official Community Plan and Comprehensive Development Plan;
  - defined within its own boundaries; or
  - defined within the regional context.
- Phase Three will use the criteria for sustainability to develop objectives for the chosen scenario with appropriate principles and values, priorities, directions, etc.;
- Phase Four will develop a strategy to assist the resort community in implementing the plan.

To date, the project has focused on designing this project framework and forming a competent team of consultants to move the process forward. They are also developing a process for broad-based community involvement.

### **Community Involvement**

Although the project is being managed by municipal staff, there is strong emphasis on public involvement. Council represents the cross section of interests within the Whistler community and its members are aware that engaging the community in every aspect of the process will be key to the project's success. In the future, there are plans to establish an interactive website to enable the community to learn, review and comment on the project's development. Informal 'kitchen table' meetings, facilitated sessions and workshops will also be used to gain public input and participation.

In the first phase of the project, the community has provided input into selecting the consultants to make up the project team. Those short listed for the contract gave presentations at a public forum attended by approximately 200 full-time and weekend residents from the community. The public ranked and provided comments on the strengths and weaknesses of each team. Since no one team displayed all of the strengths that the community expressed as being important, a new team was formed, drawing on the key assets from several of the proposals.

### **Indicators & Project Effectiveness**

Indicators by which to monitor the progress and success of the project will be developed in the third phase of the project. At this stage, the single gauge of accomplishment is public sentiment, faith in the process, enthusiasm and participation.

### **Strengthening the Local Economy**

Economics constitutes one of the three legs of sustainability that will be used to guide future development in Whistler. The economy stands to be strengthened through the planning process wherein economic decisions will be framed within a long term perspective and a holistic notion of what is best for the resort community.

### **Social and Environmental Values**

The aim of the Whistler Comprehensive Sustainability Plan is essentially to articulate the social and environmental values of the community and incorporate them into a set of guiding principles and a process for the resort community's future. Phase One of the project, in particular, will focus on exploring the community's priorities in relation to sustainability as well as their vision for their resort community.

### **Challenges**

The selection process of consultants, mentioned previously, has raised the first challenge that the project has faced so far. Innovative thinking which led to an entirely new team being formed, was used to address the public split that occurred

with respect to which team was most appropriate. However, the process was delayed as a result.

### **Support**

As an initiative of Council, the Whistler Comprehensive Sustainability Plan has secure funding to carry out its mandate. External financing may be sought in the future in relation to special initiatives. Support has been shown by the resort community, through their interest and participation. This will be key to the project's continued success.

### **Advice to Others**

As the Whistler project is still in the initial stages of its development, it is too early to have advice to pass on to other communities looking to undertake a sustainability initiative.

### **Source**

- Interview with Mike Purcell, March 2002
- Written by Clare Mochrie

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### **More Information**

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