



Workshop Report

ACSI SUSTAINABILITY SUMMIT

April 17-18, 2008
White Point Beach Resort, White Point Beach, Nova Scotia



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1. Detailed workshop proceedings

Thursday, April 17, 2008

The day opened with a group exercise and introductions. The workshop was attended by approximately 65 people, and was facilitated by Sarah Brooks, Mike Purcell and John Purkis from The Natural Step Canada and John Colton and Edith Callaghan from the Centre for Rural Sustainability.

Following introductions, Clare Levin, ACSI project coordinator, gave a brief overview of ACSI – where we started and what we have done over the last year. A copy of this presentation is available on the ACSI website.

Special Presentations

Bart Robinson – The Natural Step to a Sustainable Canmore

Bart Robinson is the Program Director of the Bow Valley Sustainability Hub in Canmore, AB. He spoke about The Natural Step to a Sustainable Canmore, Canmore's early adopter program. His presentation is available on the ACSI website. A few highlights of the presentation were:

- Sustainability in Canmore became an issue partly because of geographical constraints – they are located in a valley and have limited space for expansion. Wildlife and natural surroundings are also an important part of life in Canmore.
- They decided to use The Natural Step and recruited people and organizations from the community to participate in a program supported by the Town of Canmore. They began with 9 early adopter organizations.
- The Canmore early adopters made similar commitments to those made by the ACSI Sustainability Partners and followed the ABCD planning process for their training.
- Bart shared a case study of the Rocky Mountain Flatbread Company – the presentation includes an overview of their baseline analysis, their sustainability vision, their action plan, and some of their outcomes.
- Some key conclusions from the early adopter process in Canmore: 1- TNS provides a clear understanding of what sustainability actually is, and a well-structured overview of the whole field of sustainability; 2- TNS includes a planning process that lets you be smart in deciding which actions you take and when to take them; 3- TNS moves sustainability closer to the heart of your business.

Dr. Sofie Adolfsson – Sustainability Initiatives in Sweden

Dr. Sofie Adolfsson is a Senior Sustainability Advisor with Boverket, the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning in Sweden. Sofie spoke about some of the sustainability initiatives happening at the national level in Sweden. Her presentation is available on the ACSI website. A few highlights of the presentation were:

- Sofie gave an overview of some of the factors affecting sustainable development in Sweden including geography, population, political structure, etc.
- Sweden's national strategy on sustainable development outlines four strategic challenges: 1- building sustainable communities; 2- encouraging good health on equal terms; 3- meeting the demographic challenge; 4- encouraging sustainable growth.



- Sweden's commitment to sustainability really came out of their commitment to the Local Agenda 21, outlined in 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit.
- Municipalities in Sweden play an essential role in implementing and supporting sustainability initiatives.
- Sofie shared the results of three different sustainability projects in Sweden: The Dialogue project, Sustainable Municipalities, and Ethics & Energy.

Dr. Karen Beazley – Sustainable watersheds, landscapes and seascapes: Finding common ground for collaborative efforts

Dr. Karen Beazley is the Director and an Associate Professor at the School for Resource and Environmental Studies at Dalhousie University. Karen gave an evening presentation about collaborative movements toward sustainability. Her presentation is available on the ACSI website. A few highlights of the presentation were:

- Karen began by showing some mapping of the human appropriation of the net primary productivity of the land and some of the ecological consequences of that, including impacts on land, water, and other ecosystems, as well as the productivity, resilience, and socio-economic viability of communities.
- Karen shared some of the work of Two Countries, One Forest, an organization working collaboratively on conservation in the Northern Appalachian/Acadian ecoregion. Two Countries, One Forest has done some very interesting mapping of the human footprint on the land, and the ecological sensitivity and importance of the land.
- The importance of collaborating and working together on sustainability cannot be over-emphasized.

Breakout sessions

Two breakout sessions were held on Thursday, April 17, one on organizational change, and the other on strategic sustainability planning. A brief overview of these sessions is included here, and presentations and handouts from the sessions are available on the ACSI website.

Organizational Change

John Purkis and Edith Callaghan delivered this session. The session focused on the seven sustainability blunders outlined by Bob Doppelt in his book *Leading Change Toward Sustainability*. The seven blunders are:

1. Patriarchal thinking that leads to a false sense of security
2. "Siloed" approach to environmental and socioeconomic issues
3. No clear vision of sustainability
4. Confusion over cause and effect
5. Lack of Information
6. Insufficient mechanism for learning
7. Failure to Institutionalize Sustainability

John and Edith reviewed each blunder, as well as the solutions/interventions to each. The participants then broke into groups according to the blunder that was most relevant to their organization and brainstormed solutions.



Strategic Sustainability Planning (The ‘D’ Step)

Mike Purcell led this session. The session was focused on the ‘D’ step of The Natural Step’s planning framework (Down to Action). Mike began with a brief review of the full ABCD process, and then focused on the D step, including the three strategic questions, which are:

1. Does the action idea move us in the right direction with regards to the four System Conditions? (Are there any tradeoffs? How might we modify the action idea to deal with those tradeoffs?)
2. Does the action idea provide a stepping stone for future improvements?
3. Does the action idea provide an adequate return on investment (financial, political, social etc.) to seed further investments?

In a large group, the participants then ran through an example of applying the D step to the statement “all new fleet vehicle replacements will be hybrids”. Then they broke into smaller groups and practiced applying the D step to other potential initiatives.

Friday, April 18, 2008

Special Presentations

Karen Miner – Governance and Sustainability at Mountain Equipment Co-op

Karen Miner is a Board Member of Mountain Equipment Co-op. She shared MEC’s approach to sustainability, including a focus on sustainable operations, product sustainability, ethical sourcing, and community involvement. Karen also gave an overview of the MEC Futures Project, a project designed to remodel planning and governance processes and embed future thinking throughout the organization. As part of the Futures Project, MEC developed a Charter and a set of long term goals, one of which is “to foster change in the marketplace toward environmental, social and economic sustainability”.

For more information about the material in Karen’s presentation and about MEC’s sustainability activities, please see the MEC website, www.mec.ca, and click on the Sustainability tab.

- The MEC Charter and video on the MEC Futures Project can be found by following links to About MEC, About our coop, and then MEC Charter
- The Accountability Report can be found by clicking on the Sustainability tab and then the link to the Accountability Report.
- More information on The Big Wild program can be found at <http://www.thebigwild.org/>

Bart Robinson – Municipal and Community Engagement: Principles and Practices

Bart Robinson is the Program Director of the Bow Valley Sustainability Hub in Canmore, AB. He shared some of his experiences and recommendations around the process of community engagement. His presentation is available on the ACSI website. A few highlights of the presentation were:

- The municipal level is an excellent level to provide appropriate engagement opportunities for citizens. This engagement is critical to developing buy-in to sustainability and the community effort, building trust in the municipality’s actions and intentions, and getting help to do the necessary work.



- It's important to engage a number of different areas, and each requires somewhat of a different approach. These areas include senior city officials (Mayor, Council and senior staff), municipal staff, community leaders, and the community at large.
- There are a number of different tools that can be used to engage these sectors, including sustainability training and education, a community visioning process, a sustainability centre or hub, special events, and public meetings.
- Communities with the greatest and most diverse citizen involvement are strong and resilient communities. Engaging citizens is essential for innovative, flexible, smart decision-making on the path towards a new, sustainable future

Breakout sessions

Two breakout sessions were held on Friday, April 18, one on sustainable governance systems, and the other on building regional momentum around sustainability. A brief overview of these sessions is included here, and presentations and handouts from the sessions are available on the ACSI website.

Sustainable Governance Systems

This session was led by John Purkis. Participants reviewed traditional hierarchical decision-making processes and then examined some more open governance and decision-making structures. The five dominant characteristics of sustainable governance systems were reviewed. They are governance systems that:

1. Follow a vision and set of principles focused on conserving the environment and enhancing socio-economic well-being.
2. Continually produce and widely distribute information necessary for expanding the knowledge base and for measuring progress toward the core purpose.
3. Engage all those affected by the activities of the organization.
4. Equitably share the resources and wealth generated by the organization.
5. Provide people with the freedom and authority to act within an agreed- upon framework.

Building Regional Momentum

This session was led by Mike Purcell and John Colton. The session focused on the Atlantic region as a whole. Participants backcast from a vision of a region that is successfully transitioning towards sustainability. They reviewed where the greatest violations of the TNS sustainability principles are occurring and identified two high priority sectors (transportation and energy) based on that assessment. The participants then brainstormed some high level strategic actions that ACSI partners could take to move the region further in the right direction.

Sustainability Partner Updates

Each sustainability partner organization had prepared a short report on the highlights of their ACSI activities over the last year in advance of the Summit. These reports were given at three different intervals over the two days. This report includes a few highlights from each partner report. Full case studies and detailed information about the activities and outcomes for each partner will be available in the ACSI final report, expected to be released in June 2008. Also, a



number of the partners prepared PowerPoint presentations summarizing their activities, and these are available on the ACSI website.

Aliant

- They have completed a number of employee education and awareness-building activities (e.g. TNS e-learning, internal website on sustainability, lunch and learn sessions, employee resource library)
- They are continuing with their community engagement projects (e.g. Aliant Pioneers volunteers, Backpacks for Kids, sponsorship of environmental/sustainability projects).
- Some successes include reducing paper usage by 18% in a year, undertaking over 400 energy efficiency projects, a baseline carbon footprint study, introduction of hybrid vehicles in their fleet, and green procurement initiatives and working with vendors and suppliers.

Antigonish Sustainable Development

- Over 500 people in the area (town and county) have been engaged through the *Antigonish 2020 Foresight* vision process over the past 2 years, an extensive community consultation. The process uses the four sustainability pillars (environment, economy, culture society) approach.
- Through a community-based steering group, Antigonish Sustainable Development (ASD) has developed a vision statement and 4 strategic goals to be achieved in the next 3 years through a framework entitled "Framework for Antigonish as a Leading Sustainable Community".
- ASD works with 20 local early adopter organizations, the largest early adopter group in Canada, through a one year charter started in November 2007. These organizations have already implemented "quick-hit" best practices and are developing their own sustainability action plans. The next stage, the Early Minority Champion stage, will be launched in June 2008 with more organizations moving towards sustainability through a charter.

Bathurst Sustainable Development

- The City of Bathurst has officially signed on to participate in ACSI as a result of Bathurst Sustainable Development's activities and encouragement.
- BSD is continuing to work with the City on things like climate change, sustainable transportation, green procurement, parks management, etc.
- The City has developed a sustainability vision statement that incorporates TNS.

Halifax Regional Municipality

- They have found the last year with ACSI very helpful for developing action-oriented movements within the municipality. They have firmed up their governance framework, and sustainability is now a corporate priority for HRM.
- They are in the process of developing a sustainability filter that will be used across the municipality for decision-making.
- They have a sustainability transition team in place and are taking action across a number of areas, including procurement, crime prevention, green buildings, community visioning and internal sustainability training and education.

Halifax Shambhala Centre

- ACSI was really helpful for focusing on sustainability. TNS was a very helpful framework. TNS was introduced to the community through educational workshops. A TNS building and operations baseline assessment was completed.
- A variety of actions to green their building and operations were undertaken. They developed a statement of sustainability, objectives and a multi-year action plan. A sustainability website is up and running.



- Next steps are to deepen the sustainability understanding, commitment and actions within the Halifax Centre, Shambhala International Centres and with other faith and community groups. They are working to implement sustainability filters as an organizational decision-making tool.

iNova Credit Union

- Awareness of sustainability throughout iNova has been significantly increased, with 100% of the staff and board having completed the TNS e-learning course
- iNova facilitated an MOU between Conserve NS and all credit unions in the province to offer the Energuide loan program to support energy efficiency projects. They are looking to partner further with others to develop more sustainability products and services.
- Their sustainability plan is close to completion, and they are working on a green procurement policy as well.

Jacques Whitford

- They have done a lot of work internally on sustainability, and this has helped them with marketing, recruitment, client offerings, etc. Sustainability is starting to become business as usual for them.
- They have a corporate sustainability pledge and about 700-800 employees (out of 1600 total) have taken it – the names of the signatories are published and much of senior management has signed.
- January 2008 their baseline assessment report was released, and July 2008 is the target for their first corporate sustainability report.

Just Us! Coffee Roasters

- They have moved to incorporate purchasing into the sustainability team and they now have compostable cups and take-out containers.
- They are planning a staff sustainability education day in June 2008 and are working on a sustainability vision document.
- Next steps include more work on staff training and buy-in, developing short and long-term sustainability goals, and conducting an energy and environmental audit.

P'Lovers, the Environmental Store

- Continued with their Beans for Bags program and have diverted at least 7,000 bags diverted from use, and made a \$500 donation to an environmental organization (Ecology Action Centre) based on \$0.05 for each bag not used.
- They have had some good success with suppliers in reducing packaging and waste
- P'Lovers is continuing to look both inwards at their own operations and outwards at other mall tenants and their suppliers to have an impact.

City of Saint John, NB

Note that the city of Saint John was not able to attend the Summit, but provided a written update instead.

- The Vision 2015 final report - *Vision 2015 Our Saint John of the Future* was presented to Saint John Common Council on November 26, 2007. The Saint John Common Council received and endorsed the Community Vision Statement, Twenty Year Goals and Sustainability Principles for Saint John.
- They have started development of an integrated community sustainability plan looking 20-30 years into the future, using a whole systems approach and incorporating the City's sustainability principles in a decision-making framework.



- Planning to hold an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan Symposium in partnership with the International Centre for Sustainable Communities on June 4 and 5, 2008.

Stewardship and Outreach Section, Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources

- They developed a sustainability action plan with the 9 full time Stewardship and Outreach staff; used this as a starting point to increase awareness of the type of things that can be done with regard to sustainability
- They are building competency with staff through increased awareness and improved practices
- All staff have completed the sustainability 101 course from TNS
- They have incorporated a new performance standard called “use only sustainable practices in the workplace”

Town of Stratford, PEI

- The Town has done a lot of work on building awareness – e.g. TNS e-learning course for staff and council, developed a sustainability steering committee that includes residents as well
- They just completed a draft of a new decision-making framework that incorporates sustainability principles.
- Next steps include continuing to embed sustainability into the Town’s operations and plans, working on a green procurement/purchasing policy, looking at the development of more sustainable sub-divisions, and working to try to get some other PEI municipalities interested in sustainability and the ACSI

Town of Wolfville, NS

- Wolfville has been working on trying to incorporate sustainability projects into the town culture. They have lots of different initiatives but need to further develop their overall strategic approach.
- Active transportation, public transit and protecting agricultural lands and protected areas are key priorities. There are lots of excellent sustainability initiatives happening in their parks.
- Working on the development of a sustainability decision-making filter to further incorporate sustainability into all Town decisions.

Future of ACSI Session

Two informal meetings to discuss the future of ACSI, to which all participants were invited, were held on Wednesday and Thursday evenings during the Summit. These informal meetings helped to identify some next steps and members of a Steering Committee that would guide ACSI going forward. This information was then presented to all participants in the Future of ACSI session on Friday.

The members of the newly formed ACSI Steering Committee are:

Name	Organization
John Colton	Centre for Rural Sustainability
Edith Callaghan	Centre for Rural Sustainability
Julie Turcotte	Halifax Global
Justin Dearing	Ocean Net
Kuli Malhotra	Antigonish Sustainable Development
Keith Cossey	Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada - Rural Secretariat
Amelia Clarke	Sierra Club of Canada
Willy Robinson	iNOVA Credit Union
Tamara Lorincz	Nova Scotia Environmental Network



Clare Levin ACSI

The session presenters (John Colton, Kuli Malhotra and Amelia Clarke) then presented some of the specific next steps identified:

- April 30, the conference report and a reporting template for partners will be circulated
- the template should be completed by the partners and returned to ACSI by May 15
- by June 30 the Steering Committee will develop a strategic plan on ACSI next steps and a presentation that can be used for a funding pitch
- by June 30 a final report on the first year of ACSI, including partner case studies, will be made public

Other discussion and ideas generated as part of the session:

- other ways of marketing the partner stories could also be discussed (e.g. tip sheet idea)
- customize TNS sustainability toolkit booklet for fundraising purposes – perhaps have little stories about the partners inserted throughout and get sponsors for the document
- the template used the Halifax Shambhala Centre could be adapted as a template for all partners to complete
- create a regional vision and strategy for ACSI?
- develop sub-caucuses that could be issue- or geographically-based (e.g. municipalities, Halifax partners, sustainable procurement, etc.)
- target municipalities in other provinces

ACSI Aspirations

In order to get some guidance for the Steering Committee from the larger group, a list of potential aspirations for ACSI was presented. The group had the opportunity to add to this list, and then an opportunity to vote on which items they felt should be priorities. The results of that exercise are below:

Aspiration	+	-
Build capacity and competence	7	0
Expand the network	4	0
Funding base/financial sustainability	3	0
Sub-groups to expand the network (geographical or topical: e.g. Halifax, sustainable procurement, businesses, etc.)	3	0
Second cohort/early minority	2	0
Creating an ACSI Regional Vision and Strategy	3	1
Communications strategy (internal/external)	1	0
Make ACSI an NGO	1	0
Regional umbrella	1	0
Sustainability research	0	1
Provide leadership on public policy	0	5

Other ideas that were generated but did not receive any ratings:

- o Building networks within networks
- o Teach organizations (e.g. governance)
- o Embracing diversity
- o Best practices
- o Measurable outcomes
- o TNS connection
- o Resources for second cohort



- Atlantic Canada strategy as part of ACSI strategy
- Common voice/language/framework
- Home base
- Build on past successes

2. Workshop Feedback and Evaluation

Below are the key messages summarized from the feedback forms that participants completed at the close of the workshop.

Highlights of the Summit - key messages:

- Hearing the success stories and positive energy from the Partner reports were highlights for many. A number of people mentioned that they got new ideas as a result from hearing others present.
- People really enjoyed the presentations and connecting with the speakers.

Suggestions for changes - key messages:

- People felt that there was a lot of content in the two days and it would have been better to be more selective about the information provided or to hold it over 3 days.
- While participants commented that they enjoyed the White Point location, several people would like to see a more central location for all partners. People also mentioned holding it mid-week (e.g. Tuesday – Thursday) rather than at the end of the week.

What will you apply from the workshop - key messages:

- inspiration, ideas, networking, new relationships
- There were several mentions of Bart Robinson's presentations on the Canmore experience and on community engagement and ideas that people took from those presentations.

Things that were missing from the workshop - key messages:

- more time/information for networking (e.g. participant lists)
- more time and focus for the break out sessions

Things that were challenging or confusing - key messages:

- long days
- would like to have a refresher on the TNS language/terminology especially for new people or those returning who don't use it on a regular basis

How can The Centre for Rural Sustainability and/or ACSI support you in your ACSI initiative after April 2008 - key messages:

- Continue to share information among supporters and partners – use the website, develop marketing/promotional materials, format for peer-to-peer sharing, case studies, etc.
- Continue to offer training tools and coaching support.
- Recruit new members and provide more networking opportunities.



3. Next Steps

In the Next Steps session and informal meetings that took place at the ACSI Summit, there was a clear indication that current Sustainability Partners and new participating organizations want to see ACSI continue in some way. These sessions provided very useful input and feedback into the future development of ACSI, including striking an ACSI Steering Committee (members identified above). This steering committee will meet in May to start the visioning process for ACSI's next steps. By the end of June, the goal is to have a fully developed strategic plan for ACSI, including identifying funding support for the project going forward.

Until the future of ACSI is further clarified, it will continue to be housed and coordinated by the Centre for Rural Sustainability (CRS). CRS will work with the steering committee on the following deliverables:

- A workshop report on the proceedings of the Summit (April 30)
- A reporting template for partners will be developed to fully capture the stories of the partners (April 30)
- Partner template should be completed and returned to ACSI by mid-May
- The ACSI Steering Committee will develop a strategic plan on ACSI next steps and a presentation that can be used for a funding pitch (June 30)
- A final report on the first year of ACSI, including partner case studies, will be made public (June 30)

In addition, work will continue on our regular communications activities, such as updating the website and putting out the Sustainability Bulletin newsletter.

For further information please contact:
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