

Fishing for the Future II: Tracking the Coastal Communities Network from First Beginnings to Economic Sustainability

Project 1.3

Paula Romanow, Mount Saint Vincent University

Ishbel Munro, Executive Director, Coastal Communities Network

October 6, 2008

Funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada



Coastal · Communities · Network



Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network
Partenariat sur l'économie sociale et la durabilité



Introduction

This project seeks to explore the process that the Coastal Communities Network has undergone from its inception 15 years ago, through its ensuing history, to its current place as the largest rural advocacy group in Nova Scotia.

It also is exploring models and best practices which will enable the CCN to shift from a strictly not-for-profit model towards one which will employ the idea of social entrepreneurship in an attempt to create economic viability and sustainability for itself in the future.

In short, this proposed project is providing an excellent case study of the birth and evolution of an organization which fits squarely into the concept of the social economy.



Coastal · Communities · Network



**Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network
Partenariat sur l'économie sociale et la durabilité**

Bridging, Bonding, and Building / Renforcement des liens et des capacités

Background and Rationale

This research is examining the potential ways in which an organization which falls squarely into the realm of the social economy can move away from the trap of being totally dependent on government grants and project-based funding and, through methods of social entrepreneurship, become economically self-sustaining.

Community/University Collaboration (partnership)

The Coastal Communities Network is the project's community partner. It is a volunteer association of 240 community-based organizations ranging from community development agencies, both community and government-based, to fishing, agricultural, First Nations, and African Nova Scotian groups, to churches, unions, and other community groups and organizations.

It came into being as the result of the *Fishing for the Future* conference held in February of 1992 in response to the collapse of the ground fishery. Although initially created to deal with the on-going crisis in coastal Nova Scotian communities, in the ensuing 15 years it has grown to become the voice of rural and small town Nova Scotia as a whole.

The CCN's mission is to provide a forum to encourage dialogue, share information, create strategies and undertake actions that promote the survival and development of Nova Scotia's coastal and rural communities.

Project Methodology

The objectives of this project are to:

- 1) develop a history of the CCN from its creation in February, 1992 to its current state;
- 2) create an asset map of what the CCN has that it might be able to leverage into revenue streams (e.g., facilitation expertise, mediation services, research, etc.);
- 3) identify best practices from existing social entrepreneurial literature and organizations that may be used by the CCN to make the shift from a “not-for-profit” funding model to a social entrepreneurial one; and,
- 4) combine the three previous goals to create a social economy case study of how a not-for-profit-organization is formed, grows, and then moves toward a social entrepreneurship model in an attempt to become self-sustaining.

Project Methodology

These goals are being achieved through the following:

- 1) ***Semi-structured interviews*** with CCN stakeholders past and present, as well as stakeholders outside the organization focusing on the history of the CCN, as well as identifying external perceptions of the CCN by stakeholders in government, other community groups, and rural communities. Approximately 40 interviews were conducted.
- 2) ***A focus group*** was held during the CCN's 2008 AGM. The session focused on members' perceptions of what the CCN's goals are and/or should be, as well as identifying tangible assets that the CCN might be able to leverage into revenue streams.
- 3) ***A review of CCN meeting minutes, publications, policy documents and other relevant documents.*** This review is focusing mainly on the history of the CCN.
- 4) ***A literature review.*** exploring the literature (including organizational websites etc.) surrounding the idea of social entrepreneurship as well as best practices in creating such an organization, and the social economy especially in the Canadian context.

Deliverables (completed & planned)

Completed:

- **Presentation made to the CCN 2008 Annual General Meeting, Tatamagouche, NS, April 20, 2008**
- **Presentation made to the *What's Working in Community Development* conference in Wolfville, NS – 23-25 June, 2008**

Planned:

- **Final Report for CCN**
- **CCN History Document**
- **Articles to**
 - **Journal of Rural Sociology**
 - **Journal of Rural and Community Development**
 - **CCNews**

How Students Benefited from the Project

The graduate students involved in this project are learning the following skills:

- **How to conduct a literature review**
- **How to conduct a document review**
- **How to conduct research interviews**
- **How to analyze interview transcripts**

Conclusions and Next Steps

**The project is currently in the data analysis stage.
This is expected to take another month.**

**Upon completion of the analysis, a final report will
be written. This report will inform an
operational review to be undertaken by the
CCN to determine its future role.**