

Our Way Forward: Sharing Knowledge and Building Capacity for Regional Development

Action Plan

Contents

Background to the Conference	1
In Attendance	1
Theme 1: Regional Governance	2-3
Theme 2: Fisheries and Port	3-5
Theme 3: Tourism	5-6
Theme 4: Entrepreneurship	6-7
Our Way Forward: Summary	8
Participants	9
Acknowledgements	
Final Remarks	10



Background to the Conference

Our Way Forward was organized to help shift the prevailing dialogue from challenges to opportunities in the Great Northern Peninsula region. Hosted by the Town of St. Anthony in collaboration with Grenfell Campus, Memorial University, the aim of this conference was to provide a platform for discussion and to create a space for action to support the growth and development of the Great Northern Peninsula. It was held at Grenfell Historic Properties in St. Anthony, NL and featured speakers and panelists from local communities and across Canada. Activities were organized around four key themes based on current and potential strengths of the region: Regional Governance; Fisheries and the Port; Tourism; and Entrepreneurship/Innovation.

The Harris Centre's Population Project released 'Regional Population Projections for Labrador and the Northern Peninsula 2016-2036' in March. In some regions where population decline was projected, the report affirmed fears that without action, low births, an aging demographic, and outmigration could pose significant challenges. In the Great Northern Peninsula, where it is projected that the population could decline by approximately 44% by 2036, discussions in media and on the ground began to question the seemingly inevitable 'Great Northern Decline'.

This report provides a summary of challenges, opportunities, and action items that emerged over the course of the conference. It includes thoughts voiced during presentations, panel sessions, and round-table discussions with community members/representatives, industry representatives and academics.

The conference also included a number of youth engagement events: a coding workshop at White Hills Academy with 40 Grade 7 students; 20 Enterprise students participating in a business canvas workshop; and six students on a panel responding to the question "Why stay in St. Anthony?" Throughout the week, proceedings were broadcast on radio and online via St. Anthony LIVE! 102.5 FM.

Along with the conference, a discussion of food security issues on the Northern Peninsula was led by Food First, NL, and a successful radio-athon was held in conjunction with the Grenfell Foundation.

In Attendance

From November 15-18, 97 individuals attended presentations and 60 White Hills Academy students participated in activities related to the conference. Many more listened in locally via St. Anthony Live! at 102.5FM or over the internet at ryakuga.ca. Presenters and participants hailed from across Newfoundland and Labrador and from other provinces including British Columbia and Ontario.

Theme 1: Regional Governance

Keynote Speaker: Ryan Gibson (University of Guelph)

Presenters: Sheila Fitzgerald (Mayor, Roddickton), Karen Oldford (President, MNL), Kelly Vodden (Grenfell Campus), Andy Morgans (Municipal Affairs)

Panelists: Ern Simms (Mayor, St. Anthony), Dale Colbourne (Mayor, St. Lunenburg), Keith Billiard (Mayor, Flowers Cove), Gerry Gros (Mayor, Anchor Point)

Challenges

Challenges voiced with regards to regional governance in rural NL included: ability to staff municipal offices; lack of an inability to construct and maintain infrastructure (waste, water treatment, roads,); non-incorporated communities; retaining of youth and young professionals; financial constraints at the municipal level; need for business/industry incentives; and the need for policies to stimulate immigration. It was also felt that a political will for change is needed and that the concepts of government and governance must be understood as different.

Keynote

Ryan Gibson, in his presentation, discussed opportunities presented by collaborative governance in regional development. Citing examples such as WaterWolf RRT in Manitoba and Upper Madawaska in New Brunswick, he suggested that a regional governance pilot initiative in the Northern Peninsula region could be an opportunity for the Northern Peninsula to: a) provide advice to government decision makers, b) create an inclusive forum in the region for discussions of chal-

lenges and opportunities, and c) give feedback on how government can develop/support innovative regional collaboration.

Opportunities

In terms of opportunities, attendees felt that technology and natural areas could be assets in the development of any regional governance models and/or pilots in the Northern Peninsula. In particular, broadband capabilities, internet, and access to other communication technologies were seen as potential assets for regional cooperation and development. The flexibility of 'region' as a concept was seen as a potential opportunity because ambiguity may allow for the communities to define their region as they would like to see it. Attendees also noted that opportunities lie in the region's human capital, particularly community leaders and members who "have the passion to see change".

Action Items

In terms of actions, participants emphasized the need for intra-regional collaboration and decentralization of control. They suggested that an overall shift in thought valuing the interests of regions over those of single communities should be promoted. Intra-regional collaboration would require the engagement of many actors including: local stakeholders; local community groups; engagement of individuals with expertise (local, academic, policy, industry); as well as community members. Communication would need to be facilitated through networks between communities and between communities and the provincial government. These would be necessary to discuss topics such as: collaboration in provisioning of services; resource management (natural, human, cultural); economic development strategies (across sectors, industries, etc.); and taxation. It was also suggested that communities seeking to form regional networks should create systems or platforms for the communication of shared goals, ideas, and challenges so that common issues

Theme 2: Fisheries and Port

Keynote Speaker: Carey Bonnell (Marine Institute)

Panelists: Sam Elliot (SABRI), Caroline Davis (St. Anthony Seafoods)

and focuses may be identified. As part of this, participation of residents in decision-making must be encouraged, goals must be communicated to the public, access issues must be considered. Youth were suggested as key in this. It was also mentioned that case studies for regional governance should be researched and used as templates for any potential pilots in the Northern Peninsula (e.g. Iceland, Greenstone Ontario). Asset mapping was also suggested as an important exercise in the pursuit of regional governance.

13 actionable opportunities were derived from discussions related to regional governance over the course of the conference:

- Youth engagement
- Develop fair tax system and structure for regional governance
- Identify alternative revenue sources
- Increase stakeholder engagement and participation
- Establish a new regional institution (pilot, start small)
- Learning from successful case studies/models elsewhere
- Awareness-raising activities (communicate current problems/issues and need for solutions)
- Changing mindset from focus on problems to solutions
- Joint/combined service delivery (various options—beyond what is already being done)
- Build political will
- Identify common issues to concentrate on
- Use of technology to enable rural governance
- Inventory of resources and current services

Challenges

As part of the fisheries theme, participants voiced challenges related to: the natural environment (ecological shifts related to climate change, lack of predictability of stocks, predation); technology (disease outbreak in aquaculture, the cost of automation, infrastructure); policies (waste products, lack of industry incentives); labour issues related to harvesters and processors such as ageing, lack of interest in the industry, wages, seasonality of work); and industry issues (competitiveness, inputs, regulations).

Keynote Perspective

As part of his presentation, Carey Bonnell of the Marine Institute offered a snapshot of the seafood sector and global trends influencing the sector in NL, including population growth and increased demand for seafood products. He suggested that the Northern Peninsula region has a number of advantages for building on existing markets including: critical mass in shrimp processing sector; world class cold storage operations and transshipment facility (EIMSKIP); strategic proximity to recovering Northern cod resource; and emerging opportunities with other recovering seafood resources (e.g. Gulf redfish, Atlantic halibut). To build on these advantages, Bonnell recommended the following be considered in pursuit of growth of the regional seafood industry: provision for infrastructure and services needed to support the region as a hub of the Northern Shrimp fishery; align the value chain to support opportunities

around groundfish recovery (e.g. cod); become an innovation hub implementing practices that focus on quality products (instead of quantity) and better utilization of available resources; assess best practices used elsewhere to strengthen the inshore fleet; and focus on the needs of future generations by attracting and maintaining youth interest in the fisheries. Overall, he suggested that the Northern Peninsula has the potential to play a significant role in fisheries of the future, but that a value-based approach must be adopted.

Opportunities

Participants suggested there were both local and global opportunities for the continued growth of fisheries and port-related development in St. Anthony and the Northern Peninsula. At the local scale, the presence of EIMSKIP, seafood processing facilities, the continued presence of naturally-occurring seafood populations in the area (e.g. Northern Shrimp), and the Cold Storage in St. Anthony were mentioned. Participants thought there were important global opportunities including the CETA agreement (which may allow access to European markets) and global demand for seafood and existing markets in countries such as the USA, China, and Japan were seen as opportunities for growth of local businesses.

Participants felt that there were opportunities for use of fish byproducts (for small-scale craft production, nutraceutical, etc.), and that, if interest in the industry could be promoted among youth, opportunities for young people to become employed in seafood harvesting and processing would emerge as older generations retire. Technological advancements such as land-based aquaculture, technology allowing extending cod shelf-life, and utilization of bycatch were mentioned as viable opportunities for greater seafood production.

Action Items

Participants suggested that actions should be taken to mobilize local capacity and seek out

global partners. There was a call to focus on regional strengths in the fishery such as geographic location, proximity to northern fish stocks, etc. while also establishing relationships with global supply chains. It was suggested that case study regions, such as Iceland and Fogo Island, be considered as best practices for future development of fisheries in the Northern Peninsula. Partnerships with industries in these regions could be considered. Participants also suggested that opportunities for the integration between harvester, supplier, and consumer be researched for possible applications in the region. Participants suggested that a revival of local interest in the finishing industry would be necessary through increased communication, incentive programs, private and government investments, and provisioning for higher wages. Another action item which arose through discussion was the need for research around fisheries opportunities and partnerships between the marine institute, government, and communities for generating that research. There was also a push for policy and practice changes favouring quality products and strong marketing over quantity.

10 actionable opportunities were derived from discussions around fisheries over the course of the conference:

- Value-added fish opportunities (full utilization, by-product use, waste diversion, nutraceuticals)
- Exploring Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) with Europe through the Eimskip connection
- Connecting fish harvesters to consumers
- Branding fish products (communicating/publishing opportunities, marketing)
- Technology development and use (mechanization, value chain, processing, harvesting, marketing)
- Mitigating seasonal challenges and labour issues (low wages, migrant worker accommo-

ation, training, etc.)

- Encouraging research on fish industries (best practices, case studies, land-based aquaculture, alternative uses, nutraceutical)
- Modernization of fishing policy (sustainable quotas, access to raw materials, marketing, waste management)
- Investment in quality instead of quantity (marketing, products, research, tourism, restaurants, etc.)
- Facilitating regional connections (Marine institute, government, places of best practice, industry/business)

Theme 3: Tourism

Keynote Speaker: John Hull (Thompson Rivers University)

Panelists: Terry Hedderson (The Daily Catch), Andre Myers (Viking Trail Tourism Association), Mark Lamswood (Western DMO), Greg Wood (Grenfell Campus), Leanna Butters (Grenfell Campus), Desmond McDonald (Grenfell Heritage Inn and Suites)

Challenges

Tourism-related challenges mentioned at the conference included the cost of access to transportation options for tourists in the Northern Peninsula. Concerns about the cost of flights to and from the St. Anthony airport were mentioned in particular.

Keynote

John Hull of Thompson Rivers University shared a number of case studies as best practices for tourism development in NL. Each of the case

studies selected developed successful tourism programming and marketing campaigns by playing up their rural and/or natural assets. In Iceland, for instance, participatory geographic information system mapping of local, cultural, and potential tourism assets contributed to the growth of tourism in the country. Dr. Hull also spoke of access to affordable and convenient airport services to and from Iceland as an important draw for tourists. Overall, by employing a regional strategy in partnership with the Icelandic Tourism Research Centre, annual tourism growth in Iceland is now 22% and 8,000 new jobs have been created since 2011. Hull suggested that through regional and multi-sectoral cooperation, the Northern Peninsula region could cultivate a more vibrant tourism sector.

Opportunities

Opportunities voiced for the region included highlighting natural assets, such as rare plants, scenery and history. It was thought that these could support the development of resource-based tourism, educational tourism, and cultural tourism. Participants suggested that these assets could also be mobilized for the creation of experiential tourism opportunities including culinary, crafting, fishing, and boat tours. In this way, tapping into local knowledge and heritage could promote tourism and support the region. It was also suggested that exploration of opportunities to extend the tourism season on the Northern Peninsula through winter tourism and seasonal festivals could be considered. Access to accommodations was noted as an asset in St Anthony. It was thought that there was an opportunity in the area to add further capacity through the conversion of old buildings/homes into tourist accommodations. Other opportunities for tourism could lie in increased intra-provincial cooperation, such as the creation of tourism packages between initiatives and in different communities. Youth engagement was seen as an opportunity to increase technological use and expertise within tourism projects. And technology itself was suggested as an op-

portunity for extending the reach of existing tourism initiatives and marketing of these initiatives. Finally, community radio was suggested as another opportunity for intra-regional cooperation, such as through partnerships with other local radio stations.

Action Items

It was suggested that existing tourism initiatives in the region consider introducing experiential programs. For instance, Grenfell Handicrafts might run rug hooking workshops or ugly sticks could be made during the Mussel Festival. Mapping of existing tourist attractions could help communities partner for the provisioning of new tourist initiatives and help entrepreneurs identify gaps and opportunities for the development of new tourism ventures and/or experiences. Communication and marketing could be aided by technology such as social media and mapping programs. Engagement of youth could help further the use of technology for communication and marketing of existing and potential new ventures. Links between tourism and aquaculture/agriculture projects in the region were suggested. Overall, participants saw potential for the development of experiential tourism building on existing cultural, natural, and industry-related assets in the Northern Peninsula.

8 key actionable opportunities came from discussions related to tourism at the conference:

- Develop opportunities around resource and landscape assets to be supported by walking trails, experiential fisheries, geo-caching, and rare plants, etc.
- Develop tourism videos with local people
- Enhance the local Iceberg Festival
- Continue to develop the winter tourism market to local and provincial markets
- Increase evening entertainment in the local area
- Increase the offering of culinary experiences

and menu variation

- Develop packages to sell the existing assets and increase visitation
- Create a one stop shop for potential entrepreneurs

Theme 4: Entrepreneurship

Keynote Speakers: Heather Hall (University of Waterloo)

Presenters: Ken Carter (Grenfell Office of Engagement), Jacqui Walsh (Grenfell Campus), Jose Lam (Grenfell Campus), Nicole Helwig (Manager, Centre for Social Enterprise)

Challenges

A lack of cooperation between businesses, academic communities, government, and other support organizations poses a challenge for entrepreneurship, particularly in rural areas where start-up resources are not easily accessible. Also participants suggested that sustainability-related challenges often take priority over supporting entrepreneurship and developing new ideas. For example, communities that are unable to provide or struggle to maintain basic services may feel they cannot spend resources to support business support. This lack of resources was also linked to challenges in retaining youth and young professional in rural regions. At the community level, it was thought that negative perceptions of business that may be passed on generationally hamper start-up success. Deteriorating infrastructure and lack of funding opportunities may also pose problems for supporting entrepreneurship and innovation in the region.

Keynote

Heather Hall discussed opportunities for encour-

aging entrepreneurship and innovation in the Northern Peninsula region. Looking at case studies in Norway, Sweden, and Ontario, she provided four key steps for supporting innovation locally: build on local/regional assets; use regionalism as a surrogate for critical mass; foster a culture of innovation/entrepreneurship; and getting all hands on deck to support new ideas and commercialization. Dr. Hall suggested that building on existing economic, built, natural, social-cultural, human and political/institutional assets combined with both intra-regional and inter-community cooperation could help support new business ventures which would, in turn, help sustain the region.

Opportunities

Opportunities for entrepreneurship and innovation in the region included: local cultural and natural resource assets; perceived high quality of life and commitment to place that may encourage the return of young professionals and draw new residents/talent to the region; and linking better to existing services such as academic institutions. Other opportunities mentioned included; access to and development of technology (for communication, marketing, and sharing of product/producer information with consumers); the establishment of coalitions for lobbying on behalf of the region; and 'pitch competitions' for entrepreneurs.

Action Items

Youth engagement in programs encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation was voiced as a key action item. A need for more training opportunities in the Great Northern Peninsula region and as a mechanism for the sustaining of local cultural heritage practices was also suggested. To that end, opportunity identification was mentioned as an exercise that could be undertaken in the region to help inspire business ideas. This would need to be coupled with a system or platform for publicizing opportunities in the region. It was also mentioned that having a space for people to go to

help incubate and/or actualize their ideas could be useful. The study and celebration of successful businesses as examples and best practices was suggested as a means to help cultivate a culture of entrepreneurship as it might help motivate anyone looking to start a business. A mentorship program might also help motivate individuals interested in being entrepreneurs while giving them hands-on experience in running a business. Tax breaks, financial incentives, and practical resources to help support entrepreneurs should also be considered within the region.

10 key actionable opportunities came from discussions related to entrepreneurship:

- Engage and teach youth about entrepreneurship
- Celebrate successes so we can learn from local examples
- Identify assets and opportunities (along with people who can take advantage of them)
- Create a Fab Lab or meet up space where people can go to meet and talk entrepreneurship
- Identify tax or financial incentives
- Communicate and promote culture of innovation
- Acknowledge the social nature of innovation and enhance collaboration
- Promote commercialization and innovation skills for entrepreneurs
- Support firms interested in growth
- Promote risk taking mitigation

Our Way Forward

Areas for Collective Action

At the end of the conference, attendees were invited to participate in an agenda-setting workshop. Key actionable items derived from discussions around each theme were presented back to participants. Participants were then encouraged to work collaboratively to determine: which opportunity/opportunities were top priority; three steps that could be taken to build on each of the chosen opportunities, and individuals who could work together and make those steps happen. The goal of this workshop was to build on voiced opportunities and encourage action in communities of the Northern Peninsula.

The following is a summary of those discussions, including: top priority opportunity; three steps that will be taken in pursuit of each opportunity; and individuals who will be involved in facilitating each action.

Regional Governance: Establish a new regional institution (pilot)

Academic Rep: Kelly Vodden; Government Rep: Gerry Gros

Action 1: Find champions

Action 2: Conduct research on successful examples elsewhere and communicate to residents

Action 3: Inventory services within proposed pilot areas and associated costs

Action 4: Lobby for legislative change

Action 5: Call leader of all communities to meet and discuss

Fisheries and Port: Facilitating regional connection

Community Rep: Richard May/Ern Simms;

Government Rep: Nina Mitchelmore

Action 1: Discussion/awareness of new Northern products

Action 2: Research on possible initiatives

Action 3: Find a partner from Iceland

Tourism: Develop packages to sell the existing assets and increase visitation

Community Rep: Theresa Buden/Andre Myers; Business Rep, TBD; Academic Rep: Greg Wood; Government Rep: Lynn Dempster

Action 1: Develop a bucket list of assets in the area

Action 2: Rough out what a package looks like

Action 3: Make a link with individuals running tourist accommodations to see what is already being offered

Entrepreneurship: Engaging and teaching youth about entrepreneurship

Community Rep: Katie Flynn; Business Rep: SA-BRI; Government Reps: Curtis Richards, Theresa Burden, Carloyn Lavers; Grenfell Rep: Ken Carter

Action 1: Host entrepreneurship events e.g. coding camp, business boot camp, start up weekend (open to various age groups, target younger kids but also up to 35 as youth).

Action 2: Get student volunteer hours working in economic development and entrepreneurship-related organizations to expose them to opportunities.

Action 3: Provide “how to” information outlining the steps in starting a business.

Participants

Abdulai, Abdul-Rahim	Emke, Joyce	Mitchelmore, Nina
Ahmed, Redwan	Evans, Shem	Morgans, Andy
Alvarez, Abigail	Echikwonye, Ode	Myers, Andre
Alvarez, Melissa	FitzGerald, Shiela	Newell, Gary
Alyward, Erika	Forward, Marilyn	Noel, Boyd
Arsenault, Nick	Flynn, Katie	Noble, Glenda
Beckett, Elizabeth	Genge, Barb	Oldford, Karen
Bessey, Alonzo	Gibson, Ryan	Oppong, Abigail
Billard, Keith	Gill, Pamela	Pittman, Simon
Bonnell, Carey	Gros, Gerry	Pittman, Andrea
Borney, Wade	Hall, Heather	Randell, Cynthia
Bromley, Bernard	Hedderson, Terry	Reesor, Joyce
Bromley, Hannah	Helwig, Nicole	Renaud, Marie-Claude
Brooke, Warren	Hicks, Jared	Richards, Curtis
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Budgell, Len	Hull, John	Simms, Ernest
Campbell, Fred	Humby, Catherine	Simmonds, Maurice
Carter, Ken	Hynes, Natasha	Smithson, Laura
Colbourne, Dale	Islam, Mohammad Nazrul	St. George, Sean
Colbourne, Neil	Jenkins, Melissa	Storey, Keith
Crisby, Lavinia	Jones, Amy	Taylor, Terry
Cull, Dwayne	Kielley, Marc	Tierney, Mark
Curlew, Peggy Ann	Kinsella, Charlene	Villeneuve, Dan
Davis, John	Knudsen, Kier	Vodden, Kelly
Davis, Caroline	Lam, Jose	Walsh, Jacqui
Decker, Loretta	Lamswood, Mark	Warren, Brooke
Dempster, Lynn	Lavers, Carolyn	Wood, Greg
Dunphy, Paul	May, Richard	Wood, Jennifer
Earle, Marylin	Mamas, Mukhvpad hyay	Young, Kevin
Elliot, Sam	McDonald, Desmond	60 Enterprise and Grade 7 students
Emke, Ivan	Mcgrath, Charlene	from White Hills Academy



Acknowledgements and Closing Remarks

During a public meeting of St. Anthony Town Council held on November 22, 2016, Mayor Simms and Councilors passed a motion extending a sincere thank you and appreciation to all involved in making "Our Way Forward" a tremendous success.

The Grenfell Office of Engagement and Dr. Kelly Vodden of Grenfell's Environmental Policy Institute would also like to thank everyone who assisted in the event, with special thanks to the Town of St. Anthony and the Provincial Government, including the Office of Public Engagement and the Department of

Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development (BTCRD), for helping to organize the conference.

Funding for "Our Way Forward" was provided by: Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency; BTCRD; Grenfell's Scholarship in the Arts and Navigate Entrepreneurship Centre; and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

The event was hosted at the Grenfell Interpretation Centre thanks to Manager Cynthia Randell and her team.

"Our Way Forward" was broadcast on St. Anthony Live! at 102.5FM and over the internet by Fred Campbell of Ryakuga Grassroots Communications

with the support of Ivan Emke of Grenfell Campus.

"Our Way Forward" emerged from the SSHRC funded project, *Canadian Regional Development: A Critical Review Of Theory, Practice, And Potentials* (see <http://cdnregdev.ruralresilience.ca>)

This report was completed on November 28, 2016 thanks to Leanna Butters, with assistance from Amalie Romero, Abdul Rahim Abdulai, Shem Evans, Nazrul Islam, Abigail Oppong, Evodius Rutta, Nick Arsenault, and Ode Echikwonye.

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