

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS REPORT

- *Future-Orientated • Investment-Focused • People-Focused • Acts with Integrity • Resilient •*
- *Understands Needs • Understands Community • Deep and Wide • Build Connections •*
- *Sees the Need • Influence • Strength in People • Service • Openness • Integrity • Engaged •*
- *Diverse • Creative • Able to Leverage Support • Able to Leverage Resources • Gives Back •*
- *Builds Capacity • Builds Community • Relationship Builder • Welcoming • Accountable •*
- *Trustworthy • Accessible • A Strong Voice • Transparent • Compassionate • Inclusive • Caring •*
- *Cost Effective • Provides Value • Collaborative • Adaptable • Genuine • Efficient • Values-driven •*
- *Responsive • Creative • Results-Focused • Resolution-Oriented • Dedicated • Supportive • Skilled •*
- *Committed to Helping People • Tenacious • Passionate • Authentic • Well Managed • Thoughtful •*
- *Leadership • Social Change • Bottom-Line Focused • Nimble • Engaged • Active • Helping • Stable •*
- *Builds Trust • Inclusive • Visionary • Prevention-Focused • Flexible • Adaptive • Client-focused •*



**new
DIRECTIONS**

Building a Shared Narrative for BC's Non-Profit Sector

THIS PROJECT WAS PREPARED BY THE NEW DIRECTIONS PARTNERS WITH FUNDING SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE BC CENTRE FOR NON-PROFIT MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY. IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS PROJECT OR WOULD LIKE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT ONE OF THE PROJECT PARTNERS. COPIES OF THIS REPORT CAN BE FOUND ON THE NEW DIRECTIONS WEBSITE (www.bcnonprofits.ca) AS WELL AS ON THE SPARC BC WEBSITE (www.sparc.bc.ca).

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BC Centre for Non-Profit
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Community Conversations Report

2015

Background

About the New Directions Project

BC non-profits represent a significant economic force and have a remarkable story to tell. The BC Non-Profit Sector is rich and diverse. Its 27,000 organizations reflect the values of our society and play a pivotal role in building and defining our communities, and our province.

And yet the people who make up these organizations and networks rarely have the opportunity to come together across their causes and communities to discover each other. This kind of opportunity sparked the Next Steps Network cross-sector meetings in Vancouver in 2012. Fifty British Columbians, who participated in the Imagine Canada 2011 Summit identifying Non-Profit Sector strategic priorities, wanted to follow-up on the lead priority identified—developing a foundational sector narrative—the idea leading to this project’s Community Conversations.

The New Direction Building a Shared Narrative for BC’s Non-Profit Sector which was implemented over an 18 month period included:

- A rich and extensive survey of the non-profit sector in BC and a subsequent report highlighting the feedback received through the survey;
- The development of a report entitled “Collectively Speaking” which describes the collective impact of the non-profit sector in BC and is based on the stories and feedback shared through the survey; and,
- Insights gained through 15 community conversations and learning events held throughout BC and which are documented in the Community Conversations report provided here.

Funded by the BC Centre for Non-Profit Management and Sustainability and supported by an advisory Reference Group from the sector, the New Directions Project partners are Vancity Community Foundation, the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC), Voluntary Organizations Consortium of BC (VOCBC) and Volunteer BC (VOLBC).



All aspects of this project have been guided by the following principles:

Inclusivity—welcoming all BC non-profits to be part of the project;

Diversity—Reflecting non-profits of all types, sizes and regions;

Bottom-up approach—Recognizing that community engagement and input is fundamental and essential to the success of this project;

Working together—Building a shared understanding and informed sector perspective to promote the development of a shared BC non-profit narrative.

Working within the framework of these principles as project partners we have ensured that the project reports are a fair reflection of the rich and diverse input we have received through:

- the Project Reference Group,
- the Next Steps Network,
- the 348 participants in 15 Community Conversations, and
- the 1,865 BC Non-Profit Sector Survey responses.

The information presented here is intended to facilitate the development of a BC Non-Profit Sector narrative and to continue to maintain the link to the country-wide initiative led by Imagine Canada to develop a national foundational narrative (Narrative Tool Kit: www.imaginecanada.ca/resources-and-tools/narrative) so that BC's Non-Profit Sector may be more connected nationally as well as regionally and locally. This information is available on the New Directions website (www.bcnonprofits.ca) to enable people in our sector to use the project's tools and resources to promote increased awareness and support for the on-going work and understanding of the contribution of BC non-profits.

Background

About the Community Conversations

Beginning in November 2013 the project's Community Conversations and Learning Events welcomed close to 350 participants and engaged non-profits in 15 communities.

Community Conversations were held in:

- Campbell River (November 2013)
- Duncan (November 2013)
- Victoria (November 2013)
- Prince George (December 2013)
- Coquitlam (January 2014)
- Kelowna (January 2014)
- Richmond (March 2014)
- Cranbrook (March 2014)
- Nelson (March 2014)
- Revelstoke (March 2014)
- Vernon (March 2014)
- Abbotsford (March 2014)
- Vancouver (UBC students, November 2014)
- Williams Lake (December 2014)
- Terrace (April 2015)

Design Guidelines and Tools

These Community Conversations were designed according to the project principles with a number of specific criteria in mind:

- hosting conversations locally in communities throughout BC;
- inviting participants from a broad spectrum of organizations;
- designing a process that would allow the conversations to continuously develop and build on each successive event, and to create a shared delivery model of training and dialogue;
- developing key questions which enabled participants to engage with each other and focus the discussion towards advancing a broad understanding of the Non-Profit Sector and the subsequent development of a shared narrative.

By working with local volunteer centres and other local hosts, the Department of Justice (delivering training in Criminal Records Review) and AVRBC, the Administrators of Volunteer Resources BC, (delivering training in Risk Management), we were able to group training locations, pool our resources and share costs. From an original plan to have five strategically located conversations, we instead conducted fifteen (15) events by May 2015 by leveraging shared events throughout the province.

The outline and questions that guided the conversations:

Introduction

- Brief description of the New Directions Project and purpose of holding Community Conversations
- Brief overview of BC Non-Profit Sector Survey results

Engaging Community

- Identifying places of engagement on a community map
- Identifying participants top 3 choices using a deck of cards naming non-profit:
 - a) Strengths & Core Values
 - b) Challenges
 - c) Future Directions



Conversation 1—Who we are:

- What is the sector comprised of?

Conversation 2—How might we work together to improve communications that benefit:

- individuals?
- organizations?
- the sector as a whole?

“An amazing diversity of non-profits contribute to our society and economy. They reflect what is core to our lives and our communities.”

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION PARTICIPANTS

The 348 conversation participants represented a wide diversity of non-profits.



TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	348
Those identifying non-profit type	
Total	224
Social Services	83
Health	33
Philanthropy and Voluntarism	25
Culture and Arts	20
Sports and Recreation	19
Education	12
Religion	12
Law, Advocacy and Politics	11
Development and Housing	5
Environment	4
OTHER PARTICIPANTS	124
Non-profit type not identified	60
Post-secondary students	61
Municipal governments	3

Sixty-one students are identified as conversation participants. About 60 UBC students participated in a conversation designed to engage and hear from youth.

Of the 224 participants identifying a non-profit representation, close to one-half represented Health and Social Service organizations. In order, the next largest group of participants represented Philanthropic and Voluntarism organizations, Culture and Arts, and Recreation and Sport.

Conversation participants reported that they met and contributed to their communities in all types of places. Their hubs and networks, as they identified their places of engagement on the maps of each of their communities, were impressive. For example, in Vernon participants identified 49 places of engagement.

Where Community Conversation Non-Profits Engage with Community:

Acreages	Early learning & literacy	Performing arts centres
Animal rescue centres	Elks lodges	Police facilities / RCMP
Aquariums	Facebook	Preschools
Art galleries	Farm / equestrian centres	Public events/fundraisers
Arts centres	Food banks	Ranches
Barns / stables	Forests	Recycling depots
Beaches	Friendship centres	Residential care facilities
Bird sanctuaries	Gardens	Resorts
Bowling alleys	Grocery stores	Restaurants
Building sites	Group homes	School district offices
Buses	Hockey arenas	Schools
Cars	Homeless shelters	Seniors centres
Chambers of commerce	Homes	Skating rinks
Child centres	Hospitals	Ski hills
Childcare centres	ICBC offices	Soccer fields
Churches	Legions	Soup kitchens
City halls	Libraries	SPCA facilities
Coffee Shops	Local business offices	Stadiums
Colleges	Lounges	Streets
Community / Rec. centres	Malls and plazas	Swimming pools
Community Futures	Museums	Telephone
Community gymnasiums	Nature reserves	Theatres
Computer centres	Neighbourhood houses	Thrift stores
Court facilities	Non-Profit offices	Trails
Cultural centres	Online	Treatment centres
Disaster sites	Parades	Volunteer centres
	Parks	Women’s centres

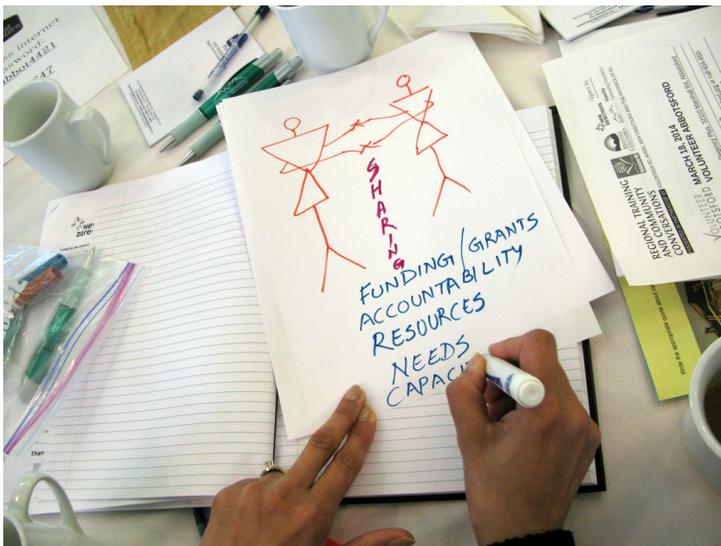
Conversation participants talked about the wide range of services and opportunities that non-profit organizations provide in their communities, their regions and the province. Participants in Duncan said that community non-profits reflected local values and priorities, a theme that was repeated in many other locations. Participants also talked about the values and strengths of their organizations in terms such as enriching, caring, strengthening, and connecting.



Participants emphasized in different ways that non-profits build community. In Kelowna for example participants said “that our identity as Canadians is expressed in the whole range of what people do in the non-profit sector”.

“But there are challenges in making the non-profit sector visible and its contribution understood.”

Participants in Nelson said that one of their main challenges is demonstrating the benefits and impacts of their work and having the public and others understand it. Many participants recognized that non-profits often communicate using their own terminology and operate in their own “silos”. In Terrace participants said that it was important for the public to become more aware of what non-profits provide, and for non-profits to become more aware of and get to know other non-profits in their community.



Many participants emphasized the importance of inviting and engaging a diversity of community non-profits to build understanding together from the bottom up. Talking about making others aware of the non-profit contribution to community led to comments like those in Cranbrook and Revelstoke, describing community non-profits as “humble to their own detriment”.

Participants also talked about non-profit “invisibility” as a serious issue. In Abbotsford and Prince George participants recognized that they had to find ways to be

more visible to each other, to funders and to the public in general. They said they need more skills, resources, support and networking to make that happen.

They all recognize that most non-profits operate largely in a reactive manner and face constant challenges, such as keeping talented staff, and the competition amongst non-profits for limited resources. They also emphasized that there is little time or support for the kind of thinking and action that could advance a broad understanding of the Non-Profit Sector.

Participants said non-profits need media expertise and support in communication and marketing. Some said that demonstrating value is the language of business and that non-profits have to learn those skills and use that language. Participants like those in Williams Lake emphasized the importance of educating non-profits about their sector and the impact it has in communities and of developing the tools and resources non-profits need to help to build understanding.

“Working Together is Better”

This discussion led participants in Richmond and other communities to talk about the importance of networking—reaching out to other non-profits. Many participants identified non-profit networks and welcomed opportunities to put networks to work creatively to communicate with each other. Participants like those in Victoria also talked about the importance of networking hubs because they have a key role in building and connecting non-profit networks.



Many participants wondered what organizations they could connect and work with, and, like those in Campbell River, emphasized that working together required leadership and support.

Overall, participants recognized that they had to “work to work together, to build trust” across organizations and in the community. They pointed out that “Non-profits were better (working) together” (Kelowna conversation) and that they should explore new partnerships with other non-profits—or with private or public sector

organizations. Many recognized that non-profits didn’t have the equivalent of a trade association to elevate the sector and provide a vehicle for a “common voice”. They said non-profits need to get beyond their current point in development as a sector and move forward together.

In Coquitlam they talked about the need to reach out to umbrella groups to help pull the sector together and get the message out about its impact. In Cranbrook participants thought it would help

to have a provincial umbrella association and referred to the role of Imagine Canada nationally. In Cranbrook and Vernon participants identified their Social Planning Council (SPC) as a good resource and support for working together.

Similarly, participants in Revelstoke, Nelson and Cranbrook referred to the Columbia Basin Trust (CBT) as a possible resource / connection to support working together (although since it is a funder non-profits compete for CBT resources).

“Reframe How We Think of Ourselves”

Many participants said that non-profits need to identify and promote their strengths, that they should invite government and business to join them in community, rather than the other way around. They said non-profits have lost their place at the decision-making table and that needs to be changed (Nelson conversation). Non-profits needed to “reframe how they think about themselves” (Kelowna conversation).

In general Community Conversation participants were happy to see “energy directed at creating a more cohesive sector” (Duncan conversation) and recognized the importance of discussing and sharing common interests, challenges and solutions. Many participants echoed the comments made in Cranbrook, that the sector needed a facilitating not a controlling provincial organization to help with advocacy, resourcing and public awareness.



Moving Forward Together: **CONNECT WITH OTHER NON-PROFITS AND TAKE ACTION**

Here is a summary of the recommendations that Community Conversation participants made, and the preliminary steps this Project has helped to initiate:

NETWORKING SUPPORT

Participants said:

- Work together to use resources more effectively, to develop a more cohesive, effective sector.
- Umbrella organizations reach out, support and connect with small community non-profits; while non-profits identify and reach out to these networking hubs (such as Volunteer Centres, Board Voice & AVRBC).
- Consider developing a network of networks for the Non-Profit Sector (like the Ontario Non-Profit Network).

Preliminary Steps:

- Provincially a number of organizations are working towards the registration of a collaborative non-profit network for BC.
- Non-profits in communities are planning & taking steps like those in Abbotsford and Vernon to establish local and regional networks.
- Links and support between local government and community non-profits are strengthening in some areas, including Williams Lake where there is local support for non-profits such as gaming funds the municipality receives from the BC Government.

TRAINING & COMMUNICATION

Participants said:

- Support communication / media training.
- Support training in “demonstrating value”.
- Develop a sector communication / marketing plan; encourage / push organizations to “think on a bigger scale”, “get the message out about the sector broadly in terms of—who we are, why we matter, what communities are because of non-profits”.

Preliminary steps:

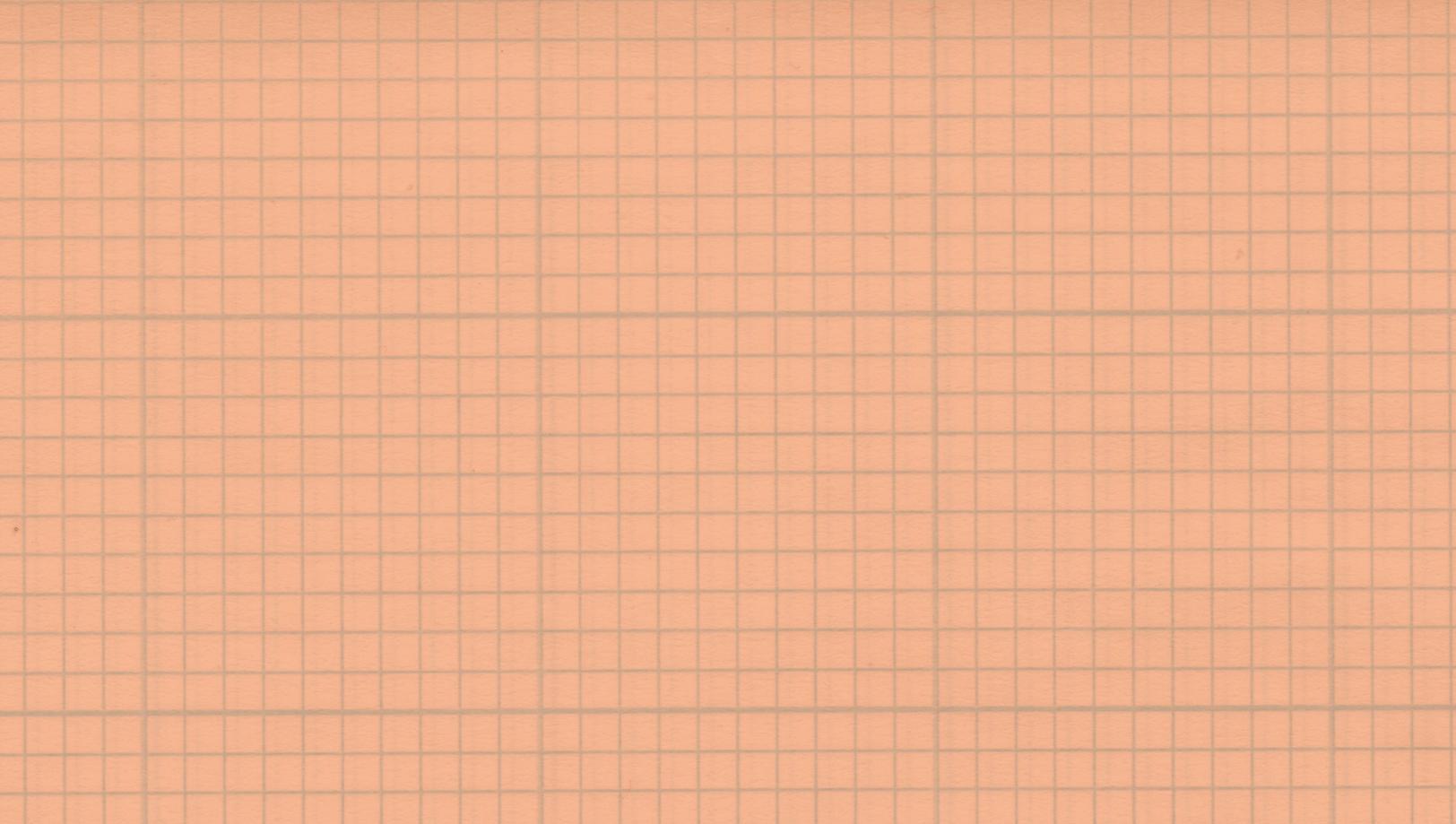
- LIRN (Learn Initiative for Rural and Northern BC), a collaborative initiative coordinated by SPARC BC provides training in rural and northern communities. The project partners are exploring the possibility of continuing to advance community conversations through this venue.
- We are also providing resources and tools which are the raw material for BC non-profits to use in describing their impact, building understanding and advancing the development of a BC non-profit narrative.

Conclusion – Invitation and Commitment to Take Action:

We welcome your thoughts and feedback and invite you to join your colleagues in continuing to build understanding about the work and impact of non-profit organizations across BC. Please:

- Visit our website, bcnonprofit.ca to check for updates and see who you recognize from your community. Call them up and find out more;
- Subscribe to our e-bulletin to learn what is happening and to take part in opportunities;
- Participate in our Next Steps Network meeting in person, on the phone or SKYPE;
- Sign-up for a LIRN workshop through SPARC BC;
- Share your ideas, ask questions, let us know of your issues and up-coming events. The community conversations can continue and new links between groups can grow with your help.





The Report

15 Community Conversations

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- Leadership • Social Change • Problem Solver • Engaged • Active • Helping • Stable •
- Builds Public Confidence • Flexible • Adaptive • Client-focused •
- Strong Stewards • Empathetic • Excellent • Service-oriented • Driven by Service •
- Forward Thinking • Positive • Accessible • Energetic • Humble •
- Compassionate • Bridge Builder • Problem Solver • Skilled • Impactful •
- Respectful • Culturally Responsive • Leadership • Grass Roots •
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1. Campbell River Community Conversation

Campbell River Community Conversation

Campbell River hosted the first of the community conversations organized by the New Directions for BC Non-profits project—piloting the way the conversations were to be designed and presented. The Campbell River meeting was held on November 26, 2013.

Campbell River had one of the most diverse sector representations, with 30 participants including: Social Services (10), Volunteerism (5), Sport (3), Recreation (2), Health (2), Education (2), Arts (2), Environment (1), Housing (1), Religion (1), and Law (1).

“See Each Other”

- In this small community the participants attending generally knew the make-up of the non-profits in the area and were familiar with each other, but all participants did not know each other or each other’s organizations well.
- They said non-profits in their community were in the business of “connecting people through needs, interests and causes.”

“Talk Together”

Participants found the opportunity to talk broadly together about the sector in their community “interesting and thought-provoking.”

- They were curious about the project, and recognized the importance of networking and sharing ideas and goals, but wondered “how such desired collaboration could be achieved.”
- Participants emphasized that “working together” requires support and leadership, and most were fully occupied in the business of running their own organizations.
- They said community non-profits were “understaffed and underfunded.” (The host, Volunteer Campbell River, was being administered off the side of a municipal employee’s desk, at the time.

“Talk about Sector Impacts Locally and Provincially”

Participants talked about the overall impact their organization made in Campbell River—making a difference to people’s quality of life.

- They recognized that non-profits contribute to every community in BC and reflected the needs and priorities of individual communities.

Conclusion

Campbell River participants were engaged in the discussion, valued the concept of working together across the sector and recognized the value and diversity of non-profits in their area. They were also looking for leadership, support and resources to facilitate “working together” locally.

(As a result of this first conversation presenters simplified the discussion materials to promote, improve and give more time to participant discussion in the events that followed.)

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- Forward Thinking • Positive • Accountable • Collaborative • Meritocratic • Humble •
- Compassionate • Bridge Builder • Problem Solver • Impactful •
- Respectful • Culturally Responsive • Lead by Example • Honors Roots •
- Future-Orientated • Investment-Focused • People-Focused • Acts with Integrity • Resilient •



2. Duncan Community Conversation

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Duncan Community Conversation

The Duncan community conversation was held on November 27, 2013. Some of the discussion tools had been reduced and simplified to prompt discussion and as a result the conversation flowed more readily in comparison to the first conversation which was held in Campbell River.

The 28 participants represented more than one community and had a wide range of perspectives: Volunteerism (8), Social Services (7), Arts (6), Health (2), Religion (2), Sport (1), Recreation (1), and unknown (1).

“See Each Other”

- Non-profits from Sooke attended (because the cost of the accompanying training sessions was much lower in Duncan than in Victoria) as well as non-profits from Chemainus and Ladysmith.
- About half of the participants knew each other well, and the other half did not. Overall most of the organizations they represented were amongst the more well-known non-profits in these areas, and they represented a wide range of types of organizations (although no environmental organizations were present).
- The variety of places of engagement participants ranged from local government offices, to farm/equestrian centres, reported by recreation centres, hospitals, church halls, retail outlets, private homes, and more. They were well aware of their varied roles in “building and engaging the community” and the “many hats” they wore.
- They recognized that they were in the business of “caring and meeting needs”, enriching community quality of life, and working effectively and creatively to solve problems.
- They saw themselves as a reflection of their communities’ values and priorities.
- This group had a high proportion of volunteer centre representatives who are in the business of looking across the types of organizations in their community. Many participants were well aware of the diversity in their sector locally and, more broadly across British Columbia.

“Talk Together”

- Participants were very respectful of each other, and recognized the importance of their diverse roles in community life.
- They emphasized the importance of including and reflecting diversity locally, and more broadly in the sector.
- For example, participants noted that some perspectives were missing in the room – such as the “environment” perspective.
- Participants also pointed out that sports associations were not well represented in the survey response. (Sports represented about 5% of this project’s BC Non-Profit Survey Wave 1 responses as presented to this group in the conversation introduction.)
- Participants were happy to see “energy directed at creating a more cohesive sector” and recognized the importance of discussing and “sharing common interests.”

- Some had hoped that this session could present a finalized solution to “speaking with one voice” while recognizing the diversity of purpose in the sector.
- However, they recognized the need to include an array of voices in building a non-profit narrative, and the need to build understanding together from the bottom up.

“Talk about Sector Impacts Locally and Provincially”

- Participants talked more about more how they could improve their impact stories. For example they talked about the need for media expertise and training, such as story-telling workshops, as well as opportunities (such as this experience) and space to come together for conversation.
- They noted that they could work together and share a “common cloud”; a central point for gathering and dispersing information, and shared best-practices, resources, etc.
- Participants also talked about the need for non-profit communication hubs, such as Volunteer Centres, Board Voice, and the Administrators of Volunteer Resources of BC.

Conclusion

Participants were aware of the impact and significance of non-profits in their community, and generally about the impact of the sector more broadly. They wanted training, examples and opportunities to improve their ability to communicate those impacts.

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3. Victoria Community Conversation

Victoria Community Conversation

The Victoria community conversation was held on November 28, 2013.

There were a total of 30 participants, representing the following types of organizations: Health (8), Social Services (7), Education (4), Volunteerism (2), Law (2), Recreation (2), Environment (2), Housing (2) and Arts & Culture (1).

“See Each Other”

- The participants were mainly from the City of Victoria with a few from surrounding areas (Sidney, Saanich and Sooke), and they represented a fairly wide range of perspectives. (One of the housing associations was also a religious organization).
- Many of the participants were familiar with each other, representing many of the more well-known non-profit organizations in the city, but there were also “new” faces in the room.
- Participants reported a variety of places of engagement but these places were less varied than those demonstrated in the 2 previous conversations held in smaller communities.
- In general, they recognized the non-profit sector as being comprised of “volunteers, mentors, donors, and experienced people who were “passionate about what they provide.”
- Participants stated that non-profits locally reflected the values of their community, that the sector represented the diversity and richness of life in the Victoria area.

“Talk Together”

- Participants indicated that they were familiar with the concept of identifying common ideas across the sector, and thought that “New Directions” was about exploring “newer” directions.
- They said the discussion reminded them of the sector’s shared challenges, and that it was very helpful to share ideas and have an opportunity to network—that more networking would be beneficial.
- Participants were aware of the breadth of the non-profit sector locally and provincially, but some noted that “the idea that the sector (in all its diversity) needing to bind together was a revelation, a new idea—and some hadn’t thought along those lines.”
- This idea sparked “campaign ideas” as well, such as a ripple effect PR campaign—demonstrating the ripple effect of non-profits efforts locally.
- Another campaign idea was an interactive puzzle game – pieces of the puzzle of community coming together through different images (perspectives). (You choose certain interests and it brings up different pictures; look behind puzzle areas and find a sector initiative/solution; re-arrange the puzzle pieces etc. and receive a virtual trophy if you finish the puzzle.)

“Talk about Sector Impacts Locally and Provincially”

- Participants talked about ways to network creatively and communicate non-profit challenges, solutions and stories.

- They identified the importance of supporting networking hubs such as Volunteer Centres, Board Voice, and the Administrators of Volunteer Resources of BC as a key part in building non-profit networks.
- Participants recognized the varied ways non-profits impact community, saying that non-profits create enriched, empowered, engaged communities.
- They also noted that by working together they could use resources more effectively, but recognized that “connecting” took time and non-profits were all operating with scarce resources.

Conclusion

They were aware of the impact and significance of non-profits in their community (particularly of the non-profits in their sub-sector), and generally about the impact of the sector more broadly. They identified working together / networking as a means to increasing and communicating the impact of non-profits, but recognized that networking also took time and effort.

• Future-Orientated • Investment-Focused • People-Focused • Acts with Integrity • Resilient •
• Understands Needs • Understands Community • Deep and Wide • Build Connections •
• Sees the Need • Influence • Strength in People • Service • Openness • Integrity • Engaged •
• Diverse • Creative • Able to Leverage Support • Able to Leverage Resources • Gives Back •
• Builds Capacity • Builds Community • Relationship Builder • Welcoming • Accountable •
• Trustworthy • Accessible • A Strong Voice • Transparent • Compassionate • Inclusive • Caring •
• Cost Effective • Provides Value • Collaborative • Adaptable • Genuine • Efficient • Values-driven •
• Responsive • Creative • Collaborative • Dedicated • Supportive • Skilled •
• Committed to Helping People • Authentic • Well Managed • Thoughtful •
• Leadership • Social Change • Impactful • Engaged • Active • Helping • Stable •
• Builds Public Confidence • Flexible • Adaptive • Client-focused •
• Strong Stewards • Empathetic • Community-oriented • Driven by Service •
• Forward Thinking • Positive • Action-oriented • Synergistic • Humble •
• Compassionate • Bridge Builder • Problem Solver • Thoughtful • Impactful •
• Respectful • Culturally Responsive • Leader • Grass Roots •
• Future-Orientated • Investment-Focused • Acts with Integrity • Resilient •
• Understands Needs • Understands Community • Deep and Wide • Build Connections •
• Sees the Need • Influence • Strength in People • Service • Openness • Integrity • Engaged •



4. Prince George Community Conversation

• Diverse • Creative • Able to Leverage Support • Able to Leverage Resources • Gives Back •
• Builds Capacity • Builds Community • Relationship Builder • Welcoming • Accountable •
• Trustworthy • Accessible • A Strong Voice • Transparent • Compassionate • Inclusive • Caring •
• Cost Effective • Provides Value • Collaborative • Adaptable • Genuine • Efficient • Values-driven •

Prince George Community Conversation

The Prince George community conversation was held on December 2, 2013.

The 29 participants represented the following types of organizations: Social Services (9), Health (9), Recreation (6), Religious organizations (2), and Business and Professional Development organization (1), as well as 1 municipal government representative and 1 UNBC student.

“See Each Other”

- This conversation was well-attended and sparked a lively discussion.
- Although no Arts or Environment representatives were present, there was a range of perspectives in the room including a larger percentage of representatives from Recreation. There were also a number of people who had not met each other in the community.
- Participants reported a range of places of engagement, such as: swimming pool, bowling alley, call centre, church hall, city hall, fields, hospital, schools, and senior residences.
- Participants saw those in the non-profit sector in Prince George as “diverse groups of individuals with unique motivations”, and as members of the “community benefits sector”—rather than the non-profit sector.
- Those associated with organizations providing services saw themselves as “givers of time”, and “meeting community needs.”
- Broadly speaking, participants said that Prince George 'community benefit' organizations represented the whole community—“We are you.”

“Talk Together”

- Participants readily recognized the value of “working together.”
- By working together they saw themselves as “growing community” and improving the understanding of the value of the community benefits sector.
- Those providing services suggested the slogan “Prince George cares—working together to put caring into action.”

“Talk about Sector Impacts Locally and Provincially”

- Participants also discussed challenges to working together even in the same sub-sector. They “needed spaces to come together for conversation and support / tools to overcome barriers to working together.”
- They said that they needed venues to socialize, share stories and connect.
- Participants also said they needed to raise the visibility of community benefit organizations in the community, and needed resources and support to be able to do that.

Conclusion

Participants in Prince George recognized:

- the diversity of the sector and its value to the whole community,
- the importance of community benefits organizations working together,
- the need for visibility and a positive image for the sector locally,
- the importance of this discussion.

They were energized participants and were ready to take action to move forward locally, but also stated they needed support to make that happen.

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- Responsive • Creative • Problem Solver • Dedicated • Supportive • Skilled •
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5. Coquitlam Community Conversation

Coquitlam Community Conversation

The Coquitlam community conversation was held on January 21, 2014.

There were a total of 7 participants, representing the following types of organizations: Social Services (3), Religious organizations (2), Philanthropy & Volunteerism (1), and Arts & Culture (1).

“See Each Other”

- Although there were relatively few participants, those who attended reported a range of places of engagement: such as museum, church, international disaster sites, food bank, therapeutic offices and warehouse.
- Participants saw their organizations as caring, responsive and community-driven, as well as compassionate, advocating for, and connecting with others.

“Talk Together”

- Participants noted the importance of volunteers.
- They said that some non-profits used many “tools for engaging the community and attracting volunteers and that “most organizations would benefit from attracting volunteers of different profiles and ages.”
- They also recognized that it was important “to create linkages in the (local) Tri Cities” area and to “achieve a more universal level of recognition of the sector, the agencies in the area and the work that is being done.” For example, non-profits could “pursue new kinds of partnerships (e.g. with organizations like Tourism BC).”
- However, participants asked “what organization(s) they should / could connect with” and wondered if there was a repository of non-profits in their area.
- Participants also emphasized the importance of continuing the work of capacity-building in communities.

“Talk about Sector Impacts Locally and Provincially”

- Participants pointed out that “small non-profits needed the help of larger umbrella organizations to get the message out about the sector more broadly in terms of who we are, why we matter, what would communities be without non-profits.”
- They pointed out that developing a sector-wide communication / marketing plan would be more effective than the typical ad hoc approach to dialogue and engagement in the non-profit sector.
- Participants said that a “very broad statement should be discussed and developed to capture the range of the sector” and to begin to bring about a “mind-shift” in the way the sector is understood.
- Some participants also thought that incentives / pressure should be added to encourage / push organizations to “think on a bigger scale, get out of their own bubble, and think about the sector as it engages community and impacts our world.”

Conclusion

Coquitlam non-profits talked about many of the same “ideas” or “themes” discussed in other community conversations: partnering or working together with diverse groups, developing communication tools with a broad perspective demonstrating the impact of non-profits locally and broadly in the world, the need for capacity building in the sector, and seeking the help of sector umbrella groups to get that work done.

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- Responsive • Creative • Problem Solver • Dedicated • Supportive • Skilled •
- Committed to Helping People • Empathetic • Excellent • Authentic • Well Managed • Thoughtful •
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- Builds Public Confidence • Flexible • Adaptable • Client-focused •
- Strong Stewards • Empathetic • Excellent • Service-oriented • Driven by Service •
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6. Kelowna Community Conversation

Kelowna Community Conversation

The Kelowna community conversation was held on January 28, 2014.

The 15 participants represented the following types of organizations: Social Services (5), Philanthropy & Volunteerism (4), Education (1), Health (2), Law (1), and Arts & Culture (1), as well as 1 representative from municipal government, the City of Kelowna.

“See Each Other”

- This conversation was smaller, the participants were mainly from the City of Kelowna, and they represented various non-profit perspectives (although there were no representatives from environment, religious or sport organizations).
- Most participants knew each other, representing many of the more well-known non-profit organizations in the city.
- Participants reported a range of places of engagement in Kelowna: such as hospital, music school, coffee shops, parks library, police station, preschool, gym, gardens, and pool.
- They saw themselves as “wanting to work to make a difference” and recognized that local “non-profits are not just social services”, but “are (reflective of) community / society”, and “part of our identity as Canadians is what we do in this sector—we build community.” They recognized that locally, and provincially the non-profit sector needed to do a “reframe around the sector”, that we needed to “market the sector effectively.”

“Talk Together”

- Participants recognized that in trying to explain the role of non-profits one of the first challenges was the fact that “non-profits don’t have an easy common language that could be shared with the community.”
- They noted that although it was difficult to explain the role of the sector in terms that others could understand—that it was important work and needed further consideration.
- However, many did not like the “non” in the term non-profit sector and pointed that out.
- Participants said that non-profits spent so much time looking for funding and describing themselves in a reactive manner that there was not a lot of “self-determination” in how they operated, or thought about themselves.
- They said that non-profits needed to “reframe how they thought about themselves.”
- Participants said that non-profits needed to think of their strengths. They recommended that non-profits invite government and business representatives to join them in community, rather than the other way around.
- Some noted that the non-profit sector seemed to be about to mature and realize its full identity, that the non-profits needed to get beyond their current point in development and discussion as a sector, and move forward together.

- Participants emphasized that non-profits need to “work to work together, to build trust (across organizations and in the community)”, and “to model the work that we do together.”
- They emphasized that “non-profits were better (working) together” but that non-profits don’t have the equivalent of a trade association to elevate the sector and provide a vehicle for a “common voice.”
- Participants pointed out that this community conversation grouping of non-profits was an amazing role model.

“Talk about Sector Impacts Locally and Provincially”

- Participants said that non-profits needed to leverage the support of umbrella groups to play a key role in facilitating and pulling the sector (which is composed of so many smaller organizations) together and communicating its role.
- The fact that non-profits are making a difference is important and that impact needs to be understood.
- They said that the majority of community residents have benefited from non-profits in their communities. (To demonstrate this we could black-out all the enrichment and services non-profits provide in a place—or we could show our impact by shining a light on all the ways people’s lives are enhanced by the efforts of non-profits.)
- They noted that demonstrating value is “business language”, and that the non-profit sector needs to use those skills and that language.”

Conclusion

Participants urged the group to act on this type of thinking. They referred to the Ontario Nonprofit Network as a great model of a network of networks. They noted that there seemed to be some coalescing of thought in the lower mainland but that non-profits in various regions of the province needed to coalesce as well. Participants emphasized that this message was and had to come from the grass-roots organizations, and that there had to be a strategy developed mutually to change the idea of the sector.

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7. Richmond Community Conversation

Richmond Community Conversation

The Richmond conversation was held on March 6, 2014.

There were about 50 participants from Richmond and other Greater Vancouver communities in attendance at this event.

“See Each Other”

- The participants identified about 25 places of engagement including: community centre, libraries, malls, churches, recreation centres, parks, schools, arts centre, agencies, hospital, DTES, arena, caring place, neighbourhood houses, volunteer centre, marine mammal rescue centre, soccer fields, ELSA classrooms, residential care facility, aquarium, and social services offices (in order of frequency).

“Talk Together”

- Participants described themselves as part of the community benefit or social profit sector and generally their role in the community as community connectors, integrators, advocates, educators, protectors, leaders, “awareness raisers”, and “fairness police.”
- They described what they do as combatting social isolation, noting that they provided referral services and community centre information; supported community health and fitness, newcomer integration and legal advocacy; provided youth and child care services, poverty advocacy and disability supports; provided environmental protection; promoted inclusion, and preserved community capital.

Conclusion

Participants in this conversation recognized how important it was for non-profits locally to reach out to other social profit organizations, and to build trust among organizations. Working together, they said, depended on trust and honesty in relationships.

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8. Cranbrook Community Conversation

Cranbrook Community Conversation

The Cranbrook conversation, held on March 11, 2014, was one of the smaller conversations.

The 9 participants represented the following types of organizations: health (3), arts & culture (3), social services (2), and justice (1).

“See Each Other”

Participants described a wide variety of places of engagement from homes and offices, to businesses, arts facilities, schools, churches and institutions such as the hospital.

Strengths & Core Values

- Participants saw themselves as caring, enriching, innovative, productive and empowering. They regarded each other as “nice people—people who give above and beyond, are caring and have a social conscience.” They said people in the non-profit sector were mentors, volunteers, board members, and staff who are committed and passionate.

Challenges

- The challenges they reported facing included: competition among non-profits, responding to the complexity and pace of change, having the public and others understand what they do, building and maintaining support for their work, responding to changing community needs and priorities, and complicated or redundant reporting requirements.

“Talk Together”

Who are we? What is sector comprised of?

- The participants felt that, as non-profits, they filled gaps that business and government did not address in their community and, that essential activities and services simply would not be provided without them. They saw themselves as adding value to their community and emphasized that their focus was not about making money. They said they were about caring for others, enhancing quality of life, making people happy, creating major change in the community, and making things happen. Participants believed that they made their community safer, healthier and more empowered, and provided the “full gamut” of community activities and services.
- They saw their work as empowering, energizing, and full of personal satisfaction. Some felt working in the non-profit sector was easier than other types of work because they did “awesome things and their work was so energizing.” They believed that their work enriched their lives, but they recognized that the impact of their organizations and value of their work was often not recognized. They also said non-profits were “humble to their own detriment.”

“Sector Impacts Locally and Provincially”

- Participants said they wanted to “keep lifting things up”, doing their jobs better, and making improvements working with like-minded people.

Economic Impact

- They saw themselves as working to support their community, and helping to keep it alive economically (festivals, programs). They believed themselves to be part of a social contract with municipal government and business through the Chamber of Commerce, like many other small communities.

Conclusion and Future Directions

Improving Communications

- Participants concluded that local non-profits needed to communicate with each other more often and in better ways. They said that social planning committees were a good resource and that they could support non-profits who wanted to meet and work together. They also said that better use could be made of their online resource bases, recognizing that not all individuals were technologically literate. Ways to improve non-profit communication would need careful consideration.

Collaboration

- They also recognized that there were many silos in the non-profit sector, and that they needed to identify common interests and goals in order to work together more effectively. They pointed out the danger of just a few people trying to make this happen and that to be successful it would take many (if not all) non-profits getting together for it to work.
- Participants said that having a facilitating provincial umbrella association to help with advocacy, resourcing, and public awareness would be very helpful. They emphasized however that this type of organization should not be a controlling one—it would have to be ‘hands off’ and could act as a “clearing house to coordinate conversation but not be prescriptive.” They recognized that such an organization wouldn’t have an easy job because the goals and interests of groups and subsectors were so different. But they also saw the need to get a diversity of organizations together, including the arts and sports subsectors.
- Such an umbrella group they said could carry the message of the importance of the non-profit sector and be the voice to emphasize that the sector was not a ‘frill’. They saw a need for a strong voice advocating for the sector, and voiced a concern about the ability of national organizations like Imagine Canada to represent community non-profits while also acting in this broad role.

Messages: Slogan, Metaphor, Image

- Non-profits strengthen community like a bridge. Government builds structure, business adds the bells and whistles, and the non-profit sector fills the gaps doing whatever it takes to keep the bridge from collapsing. The participants in Cranbrook also drew an image of non-profits holding up the world with commitment and passion, with the sub-title “volunteers make the world go round.”

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9. Nelson Community Conversation

Nelson Community Conversation

The Nelson Community Conversation was held March 12, 2014.

A total of 13 participants attended this conversation representing 11 social service organizations. Participants came from both Nelson and Castlegar so some information was particular to each community.

“See Each Other”

- Participants identified about a dozen different venues where engagement takes place including: organization facilities/buildings, client homes, special event venues such as parks, etc., office buildings, childcare centre, women’s centre, neighbourhood house, as well as 11 locations in Nelson including housing, employment and advocacy spaces.

Strengths & Core Values

- Participants saw their organizations as enriching the community, as well as effective, caring, knowledgeable and empowering (in that order).

Challenges

- The main challenge these organizations identified was demonstrating the benefits and impacts of their work, and having the public and others understand them. Building and maintaining support for their work, competition among non-profits, responding to changing community needs and priorities, and complicated or redundant reporting requirements were also identified as challenges.
- A number of these difficulties were related to relations with government. They said that government had a “divide-and-conquer” mentality with respect to the non-profit sector and that government and funders appeared to “cut them loose and not care if they went down.” They said that government expected budgets to match their numbers but that the budget numbers provided were not realistic. Government expected the same level of service but with less funding non-profits could not provide them. Participants emphasized that they were spread too thin and had lost their place at the decision-making table.
- Some participants also pointed out that the expectations of the government led to burnout and turnover of staff as they tried to provide services and meet needs.

“Talk together”

Who are we? What is sector comprised of?

- These organizations saw themselves as young and the sector as immature. The lack of “big picture” thinking they said could be attributed in part to the breadth and diversity of the sector as well as the range in size and complexity of its organizations. However, participants concluded that non-profits must work together collaboratively to move forward.
- On the other hand, participants recognized that staff and volunteers care and are passionate about what they do—that working in the sector was a vocation for some.

Impact

- Participants said that non-profits do preventative work in communities and that costs for government services would increase if non-profits stopped doing what they do. They felt that business and government must understand that, without the caring and compassion of the sector, society would be a very different and poorer place.

Conclusion and Future Directions

Collaboration

- Participants pointed out that there was a need to build increased awareness among the public, to take coordinated action on issues, to find and keep talented people, to leverage new relationships and resources, and to strengthen the collective non-profit voice (in that order). They also saw value in convening at the regional level.

Improving Communications

- Participants felt there were opportunities to communicate using a cooperative model and thus have a collective voice outside of government. Participants said they wanted to see a cooperative model that organizations could use in designing their own structures and activities.
- Communications would be improved by going out in the community and being visible at community events. Developing better interagency interaction would also improve communication either through face to face meetings or through technology. (They said that there is often less stigma if needs could be met on line.)
- There is also a need for funders to talk together so that funding could make sense; they said that funding is currently piecemeal and the funding model breaks down if one funder pulls out.
- The group identified a number of metaphors, images and key points to describe their situation such as, the sector is elemental—earth, water, air, fire—to the health of communities. Another image was a road with cracks—non-profits are catching the overflow but are overfull and need help to deal with the flood. Participants also described a metaphor of non-profits as characters at a party: wearing an old outfit, holes in shoes, looking tired, selfless and spending time listening to each other while the government was in the back room, eating caviar and are only there because they have to be. Business they said was usually not present at all.
- Participants wanted to make the point that non-profits balance budgets and belong to a financially responsible sector. They also noted that non-profits need and have responsible financial managers.
- In conclusion, participants said they would like to see society focus on people and compassion. Caring what society will look like in the future means filling current gaps and helping to empower people.

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- Diverse • Creative • Able to Leverage Support • Able to Leverage Resources • Gives Back •
- Builds Capacity • Builds Community • Relationship Builder • Welcoming • Accountable •
- Trustworthy • Accessible • A Strong Voice • Transparent • Compassionate • Inclusive • Caring •
- Cost Effective • Provides Value • Collaborative • Adaptable • Genuine • Efficient • Values-driven •



10. Revelstoke Community Conversation

Revelstoke Community Conversation

The Revelstoke conversation was held on March 13, 2014.

There were 13 participants in this conversation from 8 different organizations. The participants represented: Arts & Culture (4), Volunteerism (3), Health (2), Social Service (2), Education (1), and Sports/Disabilities (1).

“See Each Other”

- The participants listed 26 places of engagement from their own facilities to public places, businesses, schools and other education facilities, private homes and places of recreation.
- Participants saw themselves as the heart of the city, nurturing the body and spirit of the community, the conscience, a valuable asset, and diverse. Like other communities they saw themselves providing services and programs that fill needs that government and business do not meet. They said that non-profits make community, that they enhance community well-being in many ways through diverse groups supporting arts, sport and society in general, etc.
- They described themselves as “humble to their own detriment”, dedicated, fiscally responsible and responsive, ambitious, experienced and willing to share. Their volunteers have a huge skill base and come from huge range of backgrounds in the sector. They are passionate they say because that is the only way for the work to get done. No one is making a ton of money but they all believe in what they are doing.
- Participants expressed the view that non-profits create a sense of community and are the glue holding community together. They felt that community could not exist without non-profits, that they *are* community.

Strengths and Core Values

- They identified core values of caring, enriching, strengthening, effectiveness and connecting (in that order).
- Some said that 10 to 15 years ago, they became good at taking care of themselves; they portrayed themselves as resilient, self-sufficient and “no longer looking to anyone else to help them.”

Challenges

- They saw principal challenges as competition among non-profits; having public and others understand their work; demonstrating the benefits and impacts of their work; building and maintaining support and responding to government priorities / policies, in that order. They observed that they never have time to celebrate successes and also thought that the sector may be bogged down in its diversity.
- They saw their non-urban setting as somewhat restrictive because relationships are very tight in a small town. They described their relationships as mutually supportive and collaborative on the one hand, while at the same time being in competition with each other. For example they all apply for CBT (Columbia Basin Trust) funding.

“Talk Together”

- They recognized the help of the CBT and how it links the sector in this community. They said that the CBT has improved the quality of non-profit programs and presentations. While they know they deliver many excellent projects and develop good proposals they feel they always have to justify their existence. But they recognized that when non-profits have stepped up to access CBT funding, they ultimately increased their skill level. Similarly some participants also talked about their discomfort at a CBT event engaging with each other, although they saw the value of engagement when the stories of non-profit success and impact became clear as a result of this event.

“Sector Impacts Locally and Provincially”

- Participants could see that together they help to change the community and make it a great place to live. They see themselves as building a better future. Some stated that without non-profits they would not want to live in Revelstoke.
- However participants emphasized that they had no time to communicate the impact of their work because they were so busy working. They said they needed more resources to communicate impact.
- Participants commented that urban groups likely had many opportunities to talk to funders, and thought that delivering services in a rural setting was different and more challenging. Some participants said they communicate well with their own target audience, but not with funders or government. They said that funders have a duty to communicate about non-profit work, yet do not provide enough money for the organizations they fund to communicate impact. The bigger conversation about impact was hard to have.

Future Direction and Conclusion

They saw their future directions as: building greater funder awareness and increased awareness among the public, finding and keep talented people, strengthening the sector’s collective voice, taking coordinated action on issues and leveraging new relationships and resources (in that order).

Participants discussed the question of “What communications would be needed and to whom?” They spoke about the importance of improving communications with multiple audiences, recognizing different audiences would need different messages. They ultimately concluded that it was important for them to work on public awareness together and to network locally and provincially, recognizing that this would be a real challenge. (They were burned out already and could not afford to put messages out to the wrong groups.) Participants concluded that help from a regional organization like CBT was necessary to provide support to regional non-profit umbrella groups so that they could network and improve communications.

The participants also thought of building on the local Volunteer Fair, to have a “talkfest” and take advantage of that opportunity for non-profit networking.

Slogan, Metaphor, Image

To communicate their message, participants visualized a big heart image with strong arms signifying empowerment, or a big heart with a number of activities undertaken by non-profits within the heart. They suggested the slogan: “Revelstoke Rocks” and thought that this had potential for a viral video.

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11. Vernon Community Conversation

Vernon Community Conversation

The Vernon conversation was held on March 14, 2014.

There were about 50 participants from several local communities in attendance but only 26 were recorded by name and organization. Of the 26, 22 organizations were represented: Social Service (13), Law (4), Education (4), Volunteerism (1), Religion (1), Environmental (1), as well as 2 representatives from a provincial law organization.

“See Each Other”

- They identified 49 locations as places of engagement in a number of different communities, ranging from meetings in an automobile to networking at community events. Participants thought it might be useful to explore whether so many places of engagement tend to isolate people and whether there are some key locations.

Strengths & Core Values

- Participants identified their strengths and core values as caring, enriching, innovative, empowering, effective, connecting and strengthening (in that order). Vernon was said to be very inclusive and participants pointed out that many non-profits sit together at meetings aided by the Vernon Social Planning Council.

Challenges

- Participants saw their challenges as having the public and others understand their work, competition among non-profits, building and maintaining support for their work, demonstrating the benefits and impacts of their work, complicated or redundant reporting, collaboration burn out, responding to complexity and pace of change (in that order).
- They identified a need for more strategic thinking but noted that it was hard to think and work together when non-profit groups are so diverse—it was a challenge to think as one sector. They said that often there is a lack of connection between different subsectors and competition for funding also made communication and collaboration more unlikely.
- They said there were also disadvantages in some small rural communities; there was less competition in small communities, but there were also fewer opportunities. Participants emphasized there were simply not enough resources in a small town. They also said that government funding was somewhat divisive, some non-profits received government funding and others did not.

“Talk together”

Who are we? What is sector composed of?

- Participants saw the sector as being composed of all age groups and as being very diverse, including: churches, sports, indigenous groups, food services, agriculture, all aspects of health and many more types of organizations. They also pointed out that all non-profits have boards of directors, devoted personnel and dedicated volunteers.
- However, they commented that non-profits were undervalued, under-resourced and underpaid, and that they were not recognized for their contribution.

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12. Abbotsford Community Conversation

Abbotsford Community Conversation

The Abbotsford community conversation was held March 18th, 2014.

About 30 participants attended this event, but only 17 of these indicated the type of organization they represented: Social Services (6), Health (4), Religion (4), Arts and Culture (2) and Philanthropy and Volunteerism (1).

“See Each Other”

- Participants indicated an enormous range of locations where engagement took place from homes to public places but also some very specific locations unique to the community, such as the Reach Gallery Museum and Trethewey House Heritage Site.

Strengths & Core Values

- Participants saw themselves as being innovative, caring, strengthening and effective (in that order). Connecting, empowering and enriching were also identified as non-profit qualities.

Challenges - Visibility

- Participants said that non-profit visibility was a big issue—including their visibility to funders. They said that non-profits lacked funds to advertise, and that some orientation as to who they were would help spark action. Some pointed out that part of the problem was that government often took credit for non-profit work. Beyond that they said that a central database of services would be very helpful even though 211 was supposed to be filling this role. Most agreed that a central hub of data identifying non-profit sub-sectors would be invaluable, although likely expensive to establish.

“Talk together”

Who are we? What is sector comprised of?

- Participants said that their organizations do much more than the community realizes. They pointed out that they were good service providers and innovators—often with few resources. They said non-profits are often the last resort for people when government cannot, or fails to help people who require assistance.
- They pointed out that local non-profits are front line, grassroots organizations. Many non-profits in Abbotsford they said deal with human service needs and support the health and wellness of its citizens. But they pointed out that accessibility was still a problem for non-profit clients. Participants explained that non-profits in their community try to fill in the gaps and care for people who fall through the cracks—yet non-profits themselves are almost invisible.
- Participants said that the sector’s considerable diversity made it hard to describe. They also noted that competition for resources was increasing; the sector was growing and new groups starting up often duplicated the efforts of current non-profits. They concluded non-profit innovation and collaboration were both a necessity and strength.

Accountability

- Participants thought that non-profits were financially accountable—more so than business and government, and in fact non-profits were always required to be accountable. They agreed that non-profits had heavy administrative demands as a result.

“Sector Impacts Locally and Provincially”

Volunteerism

- They said that volunteers fill gaps especially in areas such as sports, health, social services, etc. Participants saw themselves acting as connectors—between communities and volunteers. They pointed out a common misconception, that many in the community think they are paid for their time when in fact they are volunteers. The participants were very proud of their volunteers. They said that volunteers act as ambassadors to the community, increasing interest in volunteering and the actual number of volunteers.

Impact

- Participants were aware of the impact and significance of non-profits in their community, and generally about the impact of the sector more broadly. They saw a need for resources to communicate that to the public and to funders.

Conclusion and Future Directions

Collaboration

Many of the solutions that participants identified involved sharing ideas and resources. Participants said that civic government had a role to play in providing funding to improve non-profit collaboration. But they recognized that although everyone agreed with the idea of greater collaboration, no one was stepping up to fund it.

Improving Communications

Participants recognized the need to be more visible to one another as well as to the public. They were concerned their invisibility meant that only those looking for a specific service would be able to find it. Participants identified some clear messages and images that they all could use which might improve communications:

- Non-profits are ordinary people who want to make a difference.
- “Pay it back, pay it forward, make a difference.”
- A safety net for clients, with staff and volunteers holding the net.
- Helping hands, with a visual of big hands.
- Shared funding, grants, resources all under one umbrella (standing on a big heart).
- “A non-profit plants the seed that feeds the community in need.”

In the future participants said that they would need to focus on finding and keeping talented people, leveraging new relationships and resources, strengthening their collective voice, building increased awareness among the public, building greater funder awareness and taking coordinated action on issues.

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13. University of British Columbia Community Conversation

University of BC Community Conversation

The community conversation with UBC students through the Centre for Community Engaged Learning was held on November 19, 2014.

There were approximately 60 students and some staff in addition in attendance at this dinner discussion about BC non-profits generally and the New Directions project.

“See Each Other”

- The students were eager to learn about non-profits and the role of non-profits in community, as well as the job opportunities available in the sector. Students were familiar with a number of non-profits through their program at UBC, and their families and communities, and they spoke about their experiences. However they were most interested to learn about non-profits from experienced individuals volunteering and working in the non-profit sector.

“Talk Together”

- When asked about “important” non-profits the students generally identified local social, health and education non-profits.
- The students identified the most important non-profits to them individually: the Link program (teaching English), Global Citizens, Salvation Army, MITACS, Sea Shepard, SPCA, N-Step, Food Bank, Canadian Cancer Society, Vancouver Coastal Health, Mount Pleasant Health Initiatives, Performing Arts, UBC Learning Exchange and UBC.
- The most important non-profits for their families were identified as: UBC Learning Exchange, AMS Tutoring, Crabtree Saturday Family Activities Program, MOSAIC, DTES NH, BC Children’s Hospital, Heart and Stroke Festival, Family Services, SUCCESS, United Way, YMCA, Frog Hollow, and Community Centres.
- When asked to name the non-profits most important to their community they identified: Canadian Cancer Society, SPCA, Food Banks, VPSN LIFT Education, Health, Red Cross, Amnesty International, Equality organizations, Green Peace, Doctors Without Borders, Oxfam, Shelters, Covenant House, Neighbourhood Houses, and Immigration / Refugee Services.

Conclusion:

The students were engaged and interested in non-profits but were not familiar enough with the sector to comment on the New Directions project. However, their perspective was valuable and it was important to introduce and engage them in a more general discussion about the non-profit sector.

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14. Williams Lake Community Conversation

- Trustworthy • Accessible • A Strong Voice • Transparent • Compassionate • Inclusive • Caring •
- Cost Effective • Provides Value • Collaborative • Adaptable • Genuine • Efficient • Values-driven •

Williams Lake Community Conversation

The Williams Lake community conversation was held on December 3, 2014.

There were a total of 11 participants, representing the following types of organizations: Social Services (6), Health (1), Recreation (2), and Development and Housing (Community Development) (1), as well as 1 representative from municipal government, the City of Williams Lake.

“See Each Other”

- Those attending this conversation represented a few different types of non-profit organizations and the participants also knew each other.
- The participants reported a wide range of places of engagement in Williams Lake: such as various recreation and community centre spaces, schools, coffee shops, parks, hospitals, trails, private homes and public spaces.
- The main values they said their organizations expressed were caring and enriching; and they said their organizations were productive and effective in the services they provided.

“Talk Together”

- Participants recognized that trying to explain the role of non-profits in Williams Lake was one of the first challenges they faced (i.e., for the most part the public locally (and broadly) did not understand the sector.)
- They explained that non-profits often had their own language, and operated in their own silos (“individually-minded” culturally separated groups).
- They said the non-profit community was not totally visible to the general public (some non-profit activities were seen and many activities were not).
- Participants said that non-profits exhibited leadership, were community-minded and collaborative. They noted that volunteers in the sector in Williams Lake were the same busy under-paid and under-valued 150 people wearing many different non-profit hats and playing many different roles in varied organizations.
- The next greatest challenges they said the sector faced locally were complexity and rate of change, and the problem of finding and keeping talented staff.
- To address these challenges participants said that all non-profit organizations locally, regionally and provincially had to work to create greater public awareness of the sector. They also had to do a better job of attracting and retaining staff, as well as leveraging resources and relationships.

“Talk about Sector Impacts Locally and Provincially”

- Participants talked about the importance of educating non-profits about the overall sector and its impact—rebranding the sector.
- Respecting communication they talked about using success stories, short "elevator" non-profit impact pitches and vignettes, and placing sector profile pages weekly in the local newspaper.

- Participants noted the importance of using social media and of reaching out to and working with organizations like the Chamber of Commerce.
- Participants pointed out that the non-profit sector was the largest employer in the Cariboo-Chilcotin Region.

Conclusion:

The participants in this conversation said that the community non-profit sector in the Cariboo-Chilcotin was like a community orchestra looking for a volunteer conductor—a clear and useful image of the sector.

The discussion in Williams Lake about sector silos, the need for understanding and the need for support (volunteer conductor) was a strong message, resonating with many of the other messages voiced in community conversations around British Columbia.

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15. Terrace Community Conversation

Terrace Community Conversation

The Terrace community conversation was held on April 4, 2015.

There were a total of 38 participants, representing the following types of organizations: Social Services (11), Health (7), Culture (Culture and Recreation) (7), Religion (5), Voluntarism (2), Education (1), Sports (Culture and Recreation) (1), Law (1), as well as 1 representative from the local RCMP and 2 representatives from the local library.

“See Each Other”

- The participants identified an extremely wide range of local places of engagement including a range of public and private buildings, such as the Elks Lodge and private homes, community gyms, sport fields, gardens, and meeting places, as well as on-line sites.

“Talk Together”

- Participants agreed that local non-profits needed more volunteers and more educational opportunities for them.
- They agreed that non-profits needed to be more sustainable.
- Participants also emphasized that it was important that the public become more aware of what non-profits provide, and that non-profits become more aware of and get to know other non-profits in their community.

Conclusion

The participants in this conversation were enthusiastic about setting up a local network of non-profits as a result of this event.

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Helping non-profits thrive

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Volunteer BC


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STRATEGIES

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Community Foundation

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people. planning. positive change.

THIS REPORT IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF DR. CAROL MATUSICKY WHO PASSED AWAY ON DECEMBER 5, 2014—A DEDICATED COMMUNITY CHAMPION WHO BELIEVED IN POSSIBILITIES.

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