

Meeting the Future on Our Own Terms

Final Report of the Northern BC Economic Vision and Strategy Project II (NEV2)

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Last, we would like to thank our families who supported our work and who understood the time away from home as we worked for people across this vast area of northern BC.
Project Team, Prince George, April 2012.

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Introduction:

In 2003 and 2004, the Community Development Institute (CDI) at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) conducted a series of interviews, town hall meetings, and focus groups as part of a large *Northern BC Economic Development Vision and Strategy* (NEV) project. The NEV project was supported by Western Economic Diversification Canada and had significant impacts on the way northern BC approaches community and economic development issues.

The economic downturn of 2008/2009 provided an opportunity to examine whether the research results of the NEV and the *From Planning to Action* projects of the UNBC CDI had been incorporated into local government strategic thinking. It provided an opportunity to examine how northern BC's smaller local governments are making choices respecting what they think are the best coping strategies so that they are poised, equipped, and ready to take advantage of the next economic upswing.

In the case of northern BC, our small local governments are additionally challenged by a lack of capacity, models, and resources to make these choices and decisions. For such local governments, the downturn represents a generalized form of economic emergency of the type that has befallen a number of northern communities over the last three decades as a result of mine or mill closures, or the through the loss of public sector offices and employment.

While building on the knowledge base of the NEV and Planning to Action projects, the NEV2 project allows us to document the choices and decisions that local governments across northern BC are making as they respond to the economic downturn. The NEV2 project stands on its own as an independent research project with a unique questionnaire, it adds value to research work already in place for northern BC, and it is of relevance to rural and small town local government contexts across Canada.

The NEV2 project seeks to:

- 1) Document the choices and decisions that local governments across northern BC are making as they respond to the economic downturn, and
- 2) Track the impacts of those choices and decisions as the economy begins to recover, so as to
- 3) Develop recommendations on how different levels of government can and should respond to dramatic economic pressures.

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Part One: Summary of themes from Round One interviews

Development priorities

Issues

Two core issues emerge from our interview work. These included:

- Economic diversification, and
- Protection from uncertainties of the resource cycle.

In the discussion of these development priorities, it was very interesting that previously important topic areas such as tourism were much less prevalent in this round of discussions. Continuing to be important was bolstering the role of local service sectors to both capture more local benefit from the existing economic activities, but also to build upon examples seen in northern BC of growing and expanding the service sector as an economic contributor unto itself.

One of the challenges between economic diversification and amelioration of the resource cycle is that many emergent provincial policy, debate, or funding areas often were not at the core of local priorities. A common example would include the biomass and bio-energy initiatives of 2009. In many cases, communities were investing significantly with respect to their time and limited staff resources without a yet developed comprehensive framework for assessing the potential benefits they might realize versus the potential costs they might have to bear.

Through the middle of the recession, the goals of local development priorities were now clearly focused at two levels:

- The first was on retention of current people and existing businesses.
- It was only after attention to this level, that priorities addressed the notion of attracting additional people and economic sectors.

Messages

The key message from the discussion of development priorities was that they were often lacking a coherent linkage to local assets and aspirations. In other words, they were not necessarily well rooted in places. The continuing addition of new priority areas, with shifting funding opportunities, highlighted a lack of commitment to the long-term processes necessary for economic change.

Actions

Development priorities were being mobilized in a number of ways. These include:

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- Securing a community fibre supply (either as part of a community forest or as part of a bio-energy type initiative).
- Councils were keenly engaged in education and dialogue with a variety of economic development forums so as to identify options that may be available for their communities.
- Many local councils were developing a more engaged working relationship with the local and regional business community.
- Many local government offices were engaged in identifying land use planning or land use designations, for potential future economic attraction of significant industrial interests. In some cases this included the identification and assembly of large blocks of industrial ready lands.
- Most local governments were maintaining connections with local economic development organizations and were working to bolster their relationships with regional economic development organizations in order to participate in broad initiatives that could bring local benefit.
- Many local governments were assessing their property tax regimes to make sure that there is a fair balance between residential, business, and industrial taxation plans.
- Some local governments were also exploring the opportunities for providing tax and other incentives that are now available through legislation like the Municipal Charter as a mechanism to attract economic activity.

Budget

The key issue in the budget discussions concerned a general recognition of the key linkage between civic infrastructure, local services, and the viability and sustainability of the community itself. Questions now focused upon the timing for facility or service investments rather than cutting of funding resources to those facilities or services. This is a significant transition from the earlier NEV project where many local governments were focused upon “driving down the cost for business” by reducing the costs of local government.

Issues

The critical key issue for local governments was how to sustain existing facilities and key services so as to retain people and businesses. They recognized that this was also important in providing a foundation for potentially attracting people and businesses.

A second key issue in local government debate about budgets concerns quality-of-life investments, with the focus upon long-term debt associated with constructing large civic “multiplex” type facilities. The focus of these debates is upon providing a kick start to local

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reinvestment and economic diversification as well as a quality-of-life investment for the recruitment and retention of workers.

Goals

A key goal in local government budget discussions involved the need to maintain the attractiveness of the community to both people and economic investors. A second key goal was for local governments to maintain their already lean, but very professional, local government staff (and staff levels) so that they could be responsive to economic development and community development opportunities and pressures as they may arise. This can be seen as recognition that in order to be effective managers, local governments must themselves be viable.

Challenge areas

In debating budget issues, many local governments are confronting the fact that their civic infrastructure is forty to sixty years old and will soon hit a period where significant infrastructure replacement costs will need to be managed. Little budgetary planning, or saving, has been available in order to prepare for this period. This concern is especially critical for those northern BC local governments managing “instant towns”. In these places, the civic infrastructure is uniformly one age and will all come up for renewal at almost the same time.

A second challenge in local government debate, especially around significant borrowing or investments, has to do with the identification of singular projects as “silver bullets” to kick start local economic development, economic diversification, or to back stop quality-of-life investments. The Planning to Action project had identified that community and economic development needs more than singular silver bullet initiatives. As well, that previous project also identified that “pulling all of your eggs from one basket and putting them straight away into one other basket” is also not the most viable path to successful community and economic development.

Actions

Many local governments were focusing upon modest (two to four percent) budget increases in order to maintain a pace with inflation. This was seen as critical because the cost for basic service delivery was of course being affected by inflation. To not stay on par with the rate of inflation would mean the need to cut already limited economic and community development supports.

Many local governments were struggling to find ways to extend the activities of their already busy local government staff without running the risk of burning that staff out, or losing that staff to larger southern BC local governments.

To date, local governments across northern BC have been exercising a relatively limited use of their borrowing power so as to manage the long-term debt that they might be taking on. They are also being cautious in borrowing in order to protect their short-term manoeuvrability through

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the global economic downturn. Where there are debates about borrowing, they tend to be focused on local governments that have identified significantly large and costly projects. One of the key differences noted in our interviews is between those local governments who have access to programs such as “Fair Share” and those local governments which do not.

In consideration of local budgets and tax regimes, care is being given to the role of local businesses as they contribute across the community to a number of economic sectors.

Links to *NEV* issues

The NEV project identified four critical sets of issues for moving forward in community and economic development. These four areas were:

- Scaling up,
- Construction of robust community development foundations,
- Investment in four key infrastructure areas, and
- Attention to four bottom lines (economy, society, environment, and culture) for evaluating potential activities and developments.

Messages

The interviews identified two key messages as running central to the attention being paid to the important NEV process issues.

- The first had to do with the fact that all four issue areas identified in the NEV project are now recognized by the participating local governments. They recognize the importance of these issues even if they are not yet able to mobilize activities under each of these topics.
- The second message from the participants is that community development and quality-of-life investments are central to economic and community sustainability.

Issues and actions

Scaling up

It was recognized that scaling up is a challenge for small local government offices given their limited staff resources and time commitments to other duties. However, interviewees argued that the economic downturn provided a critical opportunity for building and solidifying larger partnerships and working relationships because they could not do necessary activities on their own.

A significant success story since the NEV project has been the degree to which local governments and local First Nations governments have now been working together or creating a foundation for dialogue together. This is one of the most significant transformations in local

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government operations noted since the NEV project. These local government and local First Nations government relationships have either been regularized and formalized, or moved to a foundation for routine dialogue.

A second significant transition relative to scaling up is that local government interviewees have increased the scope of their vision. In other words, it is now much easier for them to be able to see the interconnectedness of investments and economic activities across northern BC.

Community Development foundations

Through the economic downturn, local governments were working hard to protect and secure existing local services, and to ensure that critical infrastructure for residents, businesses, and industrial interests were maintained as were quality-of-life infrastructures.

Four key infrastructures

While mindful of the need for a skilled workforce in order to attract economic opportunities, and the desire to benefit from training workers ‘closer to home, local governments have a relatively limited role to play in *human infrastructure* investments. They can focus upon the skills development of their own staff. They can also support the voluntary and not-for-profit sectors as these organizations provide a great deal of local capacity and leadership development.

Local governments have been undertaking *physical infrastructure* investments. Although many of the more significant physical infrastructure investments depend largely upon the involvement of other levels of government for funding, and assistance, local governments have nonetheless been pushing for significant investments in areas such as airport upgrades, power line extensions, and transportation. They have also been active continuing to push for support for upgrading local physical infrastructure such as sewer and water systems, and local road networks.

Local governments have also been playing a helping role in supporting and extending existing *economic development infrastructures*. In particular, their role in regional economic discussion has been of importance. Another important transformation since the NEV project has been the extent of support available through a local economic development officer. During the NEV project, many smaller local governments across northern BC did not have a professional economic development officer, and such tasks often fell to the responsibility of council or staff. Now, most local governments across northern BC have access to a professional economic development officer, and investments from Northern Development Initiatives Trust and from other local resources such as community forests, have been critical in bolstering this economic development infrastructure component.

Local governments are investing strongly in *community development infrastructure*. This includes support for community groups, the voluntary sector, and the civic quality-of-life infrastructure that such groups use to support their activities. The long term funding supports for this sector are under significant pressure however. This is due in part to the fiscal demands of

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tight taxation regimes as well as the on-going operational liabilities associated with this type of infrastructure investment.

Four bottom lines

Local governments report placing greater general attention and attentiveness to the four bottom lines of economy, society, environment, and culture identified in the NEV project. Local governments were now recognizing the importance of maintaining consistent attention to these four sets of bottom lines throughout the year and have thus been able to bring some stability to the ebbs and flows of their investments and attention in them.

Links to *Planning to Action* issues

In the Planning to Action project, the participants drew upon their long experience with economic development processes and identified three key areas of activity:

- The first had to do with creating and understanding the *foundations* and assets of local community and economic development.
- From this strong foundation, the middle part of the planning exercise was about identifying *options* and “blue sky” possibilities for the local and regional community and economy.
- Once those first two components were in place and secure, the third critical step identified was to have a robust, sustained, and supported *implementation* strategy that would be monitored and evaluated.

Changes

Since the NEV project, there has been a set of significant changes with respect to local governments and activities within the Planning to Action framework. Local governments now understand in a much more clear way the importance of having a robust set of inventories and foundations of information on which to evaluate potential opportunities. Local governments also appear to exercise a much more grounded approach to thinking about the blue sky options available to them and their local area. Unfortunately, local governments continue to be challenged with respect to supports, especially fiscal, for comprehensive implementation strategies.

Generally, the most significant change since the Planning to Action project was undertaken is a more fundamental level of realism amongst local government decision-makers. They now understand that it is important to track and to quantify their assets for leveraging community development and economic development. They situate this understanding against recognition that they must critique their economic options against the realities of what they can build on and where they can go.

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Issues

There was a clear recognition of a need to quantify and understand their assets and community development and economic development aspirations. There was also a clear recognition of the links between these assets and aspirations and an ability to mobilize economic potential.

Goals

Local government participants described the realistic identification and appraisal of their development foundations, and the need to create sensible and step-wise plans in order to address opportunities and challenges. They also identified that there is no funding available to waste, and so their decisions must be built upon this sound framework.

Actions

Many local governments are actively engaged in inventories of assets and infrastructure.

They are also undertaking strategies to better connect with residents and businesses. In some cases, this includes survey work, in others more informal mechanisms for dialogue are underway.

Challenges

The Planning to Action framework continues to be challenged with respect to the implementation aspect of the process. In this case, local governments are still under resourced relative to the community and economic development tasks which increasingly seem to fall to them to solve. The limitations of the provincial government in responding to every single local governments' community and economic development needs, highlights the importance to better resource local places to manage their own complete Planning to Action processes.

Relationship to senior government priorities and programs

When compared to the circumstances of local governments during the NEV project, two significant transformations have occurred in their relationship to senior government priorities and programs:

- The first has to do with an acceleration of the changes, even chaos, of senior government program identification, design, and delivery. Not only is there the challenge of having these distant governments set program orientation and priorities, but those orientations and priorities are susceptible to change, cancellation, renewal, and revision with greater rapidity.
- The good news is that local governments are now applying a great deal of creativity and maturity in their engagement with senior government programs and priority funding

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areas. In terms of creativity, this means carefully matching the opportunities available through senior government programs to larger goals identified by the local government and community. In terms of maturity, this is very much captured by a “think before you leap” ethos relative to whether a local government should take up each and every opportunity being posited by the senior government programs.

Goals

In evaluating their potential for taking up senior government priorities, programs, and funding, local governments are maintaining a clear focus on the need to create and hold a steady course towards robust community development and local economic development. With limited local resources (funds, time, staff, etc.), they are recognizing the need for a more balanced and longer term approach in governing their take up of those senior government priorities and program supports.

Actions

Local governments are increasingly applying robust community development and economic development plans in order to help them stay focused on addressing core needs and moving on core priorities. This focus ensures that they do not dissipate their relatively scarce resources of time, funds, and energies.

Challenges

The challenge continues to be the reactive nature of policy and program development by senior levels of government. There continues to be a reliance on the ‘silver bullet’ solution to complex problems as well as a reluctance to tailor programs to better reflect population and geography.

Future

In general, there were two broad perspectives among local government respondents around the potential future for community and economic development. These two broad perspectives focused upon:

- That the future will be rosy. With respect to the notion that the future will be rosy, the general recognition is that there are current economic strengths in the resource sector and that these have the potential for significant future resource sector booms. In this case, local governments have focused their experience upon preparing to mitigate the potential negative aspects of such upswings and booms.
- That the future will be rosy, but that it mostly because of the difficult time we have had for close to a decade.

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In those circumstances where local governments have struggled with community and economic development for a longer period, their understanding of a more optimistic future is the result of an experience, hard won, with pushing for successes across a host of economic sectors. They are very much learning how to prosper and how to be flexible in taking up opportunities and addressing challenges.

In both of the respective portraits of future circumstances, local governments are exercising a much more even handed view around both positive and negative consequences of their (and their local economy's) actions. These views do reflect some of the different sub-regional experiences across northern BC and how local governments have been responding.

Persistent challenges with respect to the future of community and economic development now tend to be well recognized:

- Local governments understand that despite aggressive agendas on economic diversification, they are still individually and collectively strongly tied to significant single economic factors. In the central interior and northwest, it is forestry and the transportation corridor and the port. In the northeast, it is the oil and gas sector. The positive development since the NEV project is that they recognize the degree to which they are impacted by these economic circumstances and they are being creative about the scope of activities they can undertake on their own to address and compensate for that.
- An additional persistent challenge is that new and innovative economic activities, the addition of new economic sectors, and the diversification across economic opportunities in existing sectors runs the peril of having their successes compared to those of the past economy. In this case, high and steady wages, significant benefits, and high levels of employment from successful past economies are the measuring sticks. Anything less, is often viewed as a partial success or indeed a failure.

Summary

Having consulted again with people in the communities of northern BC, we have found a very optimistic set of results. Following the work of the CDI, its NEV project, and its Planning for Action project, we have found that local communities and local governments have indeed transformed. To date, they have a much better understanding of their circumstances, their histories, and their opportunities in a fast paced global economy. They are now better prepared, and better connected. They have a level of readiness to react that they did not have previously. All of these transitions continue through this NEV2 project to be reinforced and bolstered. We fully expect this level of readiness to be enhanced through the future.

The challenge for these now prepared local governments is that it appears that senior governments have not yet been able to keep pace with these transitions. While the global economy continues to move at a high pace and the evidence increasingly suggests that flexible, responsive, and innovative reactions are needed in local communities, senior governments'

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ability to support and provide the necessary tools for community development and community economic development are presently lagging.

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Round Two: Policy recommendations for senior government

In this round we met with CAOs, members of local Councils, Regional Districts, economic development officers, and economic development organizations. Using the information gathered from the first round of the NEV2 consultations, we were looking for policy recommendations that we could share with the senior government. Specifically, we were looking for suggestions around supports (economic and policy) that can be offered to local governments for economic transition, community viability, and sustainability.

Policy development and coordination

Policy development in BC has, since the early 1980s, been more reactive than proactive in nature. For example, the provincial government's RuralBC Secretariat has played, and continues to play, a key role in helping communities that have experienced sudden economic crisis. The Pine Beetle Epidemic Response Branch has helped communities to manage the effects of the Mountain Pine Beetle infestation. While welcome supports to communities, these organizations are by their nature reactive. Participants clearly identified the need for stable, long-term policy and strategies with clearly stated goals and objectives that recognized the assets and aspirations of their communities. This includes recognition of the continuing importance that resource exploitation, and thus resource producing communities, will have in the future economic well-being of the province.

There is a great deal of scepticism about planning processes and strategies. However, there is recognition that in the absence of a comprehensive provincial plan that maximizes the return on resource exploitation, while supporting resource communities, policy and budgetary decisions will continue to be made in a "vacuum". To avoid "reinventing the wheel", the government should draw on the large body of work complete by regional groups, such as the Beetle Action Coalitions, as a starting point for discussion.

Recommendations

- 1) The province develop a comprehensive long-term strategy for non-metropolitan community development and economic development.
- 2) That all government policy development includes a "Rural and Small Town Lens".
- 3) That the role of the RuralBC Secretariat be extended across government. With the specific task of being refined to a point of contact for rural and small town communities.
- 4) That all policy and budgetary decisions enunciate benchmarks for rural and small town BC – both today and looking forward to the future.
- 5) That the provincial government, through the Union of BC Municipalities, provide supports for local governments to maintain up-to-date asset inventories and development strategies.

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*This could be similar to the five year cycles of Official Community Plans.

Reform of the grant system

Participants expressed a great deal of frustration when it came to the issue of the development and operation of grants from senior levels of government.

“Grants take a huge amount of administration time. There are many opportunities but so much time is spent on the grants. Many reporting requirements are attached to them. Staff needs to be constantly managing the grants.”

“We have reached the point where we are no longer able to administer more grants. We just don’t have the people.”

“It takes a lot of time to actually get money even after approval. If we didn’t have the money to float it until the money arrives, the project (we undertook) wouldn’t have happened.”

“There is little recognition of the fact that we live in a northern climate. One grant we received required us to be completed before the end of the fiscal year. We received confirmation of the grant after the asphalt plant had left for the winter and they don’t start up again until June.”

“Too many of the grants are oversubscribed. You can’t not apply for them, but it consumes a huge amount of resources with very little chance of success.”

“Matching grants are a problem for us. Even if we raised taxes by fifty percent, we wouldn’t get more than \$80,000. One large infrastructure grant and we’re tapped out.”

- 1) That senior government recognize the limited ability of small communities to participate in matching funding programs.
- 2) That government exclude communities with populations under 5,000 from requirements for providing matching funds in all grant programs.
- 3) That grant funding includes monies for the administration of grants.
- 4) That government recognize the need to simplify and streamline grant reporting processes.
- 5) That government develop a letter of intent phase for all grant applications. Thus reducing the resources that local governments expend on oversubscribed programs.

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Being ready for opportunities

Much of the economic stimulus money was aimed at “shovel ready” projects. Many smaller communities were at a disadvantage, especially when it came to larger infrastructure projects, due to the need to have studies completed prior to the grant applications.

“Those departments are under stress, they don’t have resources to help effectively in a timely manner. These key departments need to be ready to help us when we need the help.”

“Even when we are ready to move, there is no one in Victoria to pick up the phone.”

“We need council to encourage us to do studies so that we have the information ready to go for grant proposals, and so things are ‘shovel ready’ when approval happens. Turn around times for many grants are really fast.”

“I wish there was a place that we could go to for credible, independent information.”

- 1) That government properly resource provincial ministries and departments so that they can respond the needs of communities in a timely manner.
- 2) That government expand support for studies to make projects “shovel” ready.
- 3) That government provide support, as well as fiscal and human capacity, for small communities to undertake large infrastructure programs.
- 4) That the provincial government create an office within the RuralBC Secretariat to support small communities at all stages of government grant funding processes.
- 5) That government create an information repository for studies, strategies, and other information related to community and economic development that can be accessed by local government offices so as to accumulate knowledge rather than “reinventing the wheel”.

Investment in the Four Infrastructures:

While communities have worked hard at supporting investment in the four infrastructures, need is far outstripping ability to invest. Infrastructure investment is made all the more complicated by the lack of a comprehensive and credible needs assessment of potential “new” economies.

“Many of the communities, especially the ‘instant towns’, are at or near the end of infrastructure life.”

“Because everything was built at once, everything is literally wearing out at the same time.”

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“We need a way to create our own grant writers and economic development officers. Hiring people from down south is just not working.”

“We need the ability to train our workers here so they will stay here once they get jobs.”

Recommendations

- 1) That the provincial government, working with local and regional governments, identify key infrastructure needs for the “next” economy.
- 2) That government enshrine in legislation the requirement for communities to maintain reserve funds for sewer and water replacement.
- 3) That the provincial government extend the Economic Development Capacity Building and Grant Writer support programs pioneered by the Northern Development Initiative Trust to all rural and small town communities in BC. This must include targeted training monies for supporting the professional development of grant writers and economic development officers.
- 4) That senior levels of government commit to fiscal support for skills training programs that recognize the advantages to training individuals closer to home.
- 5) While continuing to fund the building of “quality-of-life” community development infrastructure, government recognize the need for operational funding for this infrastructure.

A Fair Share today and a Fund for the future

As the nature of the resource industries in our communities has changed, from primarily forest dependence to mining and oil and gas, communities’ abilities to raise revenues to cover the local costs of resource exploitation developments has diminished. At one time a community could just extend its municipal boundaries, to include the nearby sawmill or mine, to cover local infrastructure needs. Today, with the loss of appurtenancy in forestry and the fact that mining and oil and gas activity takes place far from the community, local governments are faced with an increasing burden on local infrastructure while dealing with constraints on their ability to raise revenues. In north eastern BC, the provincial government recognized the changing nature of the relationship between local government and the resource industry with the signing of a resource sharing MOU known as the Fair Share Agreement.

Beyond the immediate funding concerns, many participants expressed concern about the fiscal impact of the changes now being witnessed in resource industries. While resource exploitation, such as forestry and fisheries, have been seen historically as ‘renewable’ resources; oil, gas, and mining are based on non-renewable resources. As such, the money from these resources is, like the resources themselves, finite. While there is great support for using these monies to address

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present needs, there is recognition of the need to dedicate a portion of these funds to support economic diversification and savings for the future.

Recommendation

- 1) That the province undertakes an exploration of extending the Fair Share Agreement to all resource dependent communities in BC.
- 2) That the province establishes a Transition Trust Fund similar to the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund.

Conclusion

The fundamental change from the original NEV project is that local communities have a much more realistic vision for the future. They understand that economic transition needs to be evaluated against the 4 "bottom lines" of community, economy, environment, and culture. As we found in the NEV project, communities understand that our natural and community resources continue to be of high value. The struggle continues to be how communities should re-bundle these assets to meet their community's aspirations today and into the future. Senior levels of government must provide the appropriate support to communities so that these communities may take advantage of development opportunities on their own terms. Our advice continues to be that communities must: "***Re-orient to readiness*** by understanding the role of the ***region in the world*** while also ***grounding our strategies*** in a real, in-depth analysis of our local and regional ***assets and aspirations.***"

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Appendix One: Travel interview schedule

Travel Schedule 2009

Monday, September 14 – Chetwynd /Tumbler Ridge
Tuesday, September 15 - Fort St. John
Wednesday, September 16 – Fort Nelson
Saturday, September 19 – Atlin
Monday, September 21 – Dease Lake
Tuesday, September 22 – Stewart
Wednesday, September 23 – Terrace
Thursday, September 24 – Kitimat
Friday, September 25 – Prince Rupert
Wednesday, October 07 – McBride
Thursday, October 08 – Valemount
Wednesday, October 14 - Burns Lake
Thursday, October 15 – Vanderhoof/ Ft. St. James
Thursday, October 29 - Quesnel
Friday, October 30 – Williams Lake
Saturday, October 31 - Clearwater

Travel Schedule 2010

Wednesday, May 19 – Ft. Nelson
Thursday, May 27 – Quesnel/Williams Lake
Friday, May 28 – 100 Mile House
Tuesday, June 08 – Old Massett
Wednesday, June 09 – Port Clements
Thursday, June 10 – Queen Charlotte
Tuesday, June 15 - Prince Rupert

Travel Schedule 2011

March 28 - Chetwynd/Tumbler Ridge
March 29 - Dawson Creek/Fort St. John
March 30 - Hudson's Hope/Mackenzie
April 01 - Vanderhoof/ Fort St. James
April 05 - Fraser Lake
April 06 - Kitimat/Terrace
April 07 - Houston/Smithers/ Telkwa
April 08 - Granisle/Burns Lake
April 18 - McBride/Valemount

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Appendix Two: Round One interview script

Northern BC Economic Development Vision and Strategy Project – update (NEV2)

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Interviewee contact information: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Notes:

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Northern BC Economic Development Vision and Strategy Project – update (NEV2)

Our research project is focused on:

How are local governments across northern BC responding to the 2008/2009 economic downturn?

I would now like to ask you questions organized around a series of topics

The first questions are about the development priorities of the local government.

What are they?

How were they determined?

Was there public or stakeholder input? (inclusion?)

Is there a formal plan or documentation of these development priorities?

Copies available?

The next questions concern the local government budgets.

Was spending/taxation increased/decreased?

Was there variation there across tax categories?

What rationales were used for the choices?

Were choices linked to the development priorities?

Was more use made of municipal borrowing?

From which institutions?

Are there any key areas of budget challenges for the local government?

Are these longstanding / result of the economic downturn / combination?

The next questions concern issues raised in the NEV project – these issues include:

- Partnerships

- Scaling up

- Building community development foundations

- Investing in the 4 infrastructures (physical, human, community, economic)

- Evaluating development against 4 bottom lines (econ., soc., envir., cultural)

Were NEV issues integrated into choices/decision-making?

On development priorities / budgets?

What sources of information have been most useful?

Have partnerships (First Nations, other local governments, regional economic development organizations, NGOs, etc.) been used to address challenges / opportunities?

How?

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The next questions concern issues raised in support of economic development planning.
(‘Planning to Action’ issues)

Has the local government made use of inventories or related data in building community / economic development foundations?

Was new information acquired / Was existing information updated?

Has the local government made investments in building information sources to support community/economic development foundations?

Was new information acquired / Was existing information updated?

Has the local government made investments in implementation actions / processes?

Are these new forms of implementation processes?

The next questions concern the relationship between local government choices and decision making so that they are equipped and ready to take advantage of the next economic upswing with Provincial or Federal Government Priorities / Programs.

Has your local government been able to take advantage of funding/policy supports created by the Provincial Government?

(examples: Spirit Square, Olympics, Green Energy, Act Now)

Describe all that are relevant.

What have been the benefits to your local government?

What have been the challenges with the support program from a local government perspective?

Has your local government been able to take advantage of funding/policy supports created by the Federal Government? (examples: CEDI, Community Adjustment Fund)

Describe all that are relevant.

What have been the benefits to your local government?

What have been the challenges with the support program from a local government perspective?

The last question is about the future.

What are your expectations respecting the future economy of the town, region, and northern BC?

Thank you for your time. Before we go, do you have any other comments or suggestions to offer on these matters or on matters not covered in the questions?

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Appendix Three: Round Two meeting outline

Hello, Thank you for agreeing to participate in the NEV2: the Recession Response Project.

Round One: Summary

Having consulted again with people in the communities of northern BC, we have found a very optimistic set of results. Following the work of the Community Development Institute, its NEV project, and its Planning for Action project, we have found that local communities and local governments have indeed transformed. To date, they have a much better understanding of their circumstances, their histories, and their opportunities in a fast paced global economy. They are now better prepared, and better connected. They have a level of readiness to react that they did not have previously. All of these transitions continue through this NEV2 project to be reinforced and bolstered. We fully expect this level of readiness to be enhanced through the future.

The challenge for these now prepared local governments is that it appears that senior governments have not yet been able to keep pace with these transitions. While the global economy continues to move at a high pace and flexible, responsive, and innovative reactions are needed in local communities, senior governments' ability to support and provide the necessary tools for community development and community economic development are presently lagging.

Round Two: Policy recommendations for senior government

In this round we would like to meet with CAOs, members of local Councils, Regional Districts, economic development officers and economic development organizations. We are looking for in this round is policy recommendations that we can share with the provincial government. Specifically we are looking for suggestions around supports (economic and policy) that can be offered to local governments for economic transition, community viability, and sustainability. The format of the meetings is for a small group discussion; and to be completed in no more than two hours. There are two parts to the process: a short overview of the NEV2 and the findings from Round One (about 20 minutes) with the remainder of the time in discussion around the development of the report recommendations for the policy paper.

Agenda

(10 minutes) Introductions

(20 minutes) Review of the findings from Round One consultations.

(Presentation is available at http://www.unbc.ca/assets/cdi/nev_2_presentation_oct_28.pdf)

(30 – 50 minutes) Discussion

- What policy supports should the provincial government provide to local government?
- What economic supports should the provincial government provide to local government?

(20 minutes) Summary

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Appendix Four: Consent form

Northern BC Economic Development Vision and Strategy Project – update (NEV2)
Interview Consent Form

Purpose – Against the backdrop of the economic downturn of 2008/2009, the purpose of this research is to learn more about how northern BC’s small local governments are making choices and decisions respecting what they think are the best coping strategies so that they are poised, equipped, and ready to take advantage of the next economic upswing.

How Respondents Were Chosen – Potential participants were selected from the publicly available lists of key community decision-makers. These individuals were selected based on their experiences with local government in northern BC communities. Participants will be asked to reflect on their experiences and knowledge of the choices being made and the rationales behind those choices.

Anonymity And Confidentiality - The names of participants will not be used in any reporting, nor will any information be published which may be used to identify individuals. All information shared in this interview will be held within strict confidence by the research team. All records will be kept in a locked room at UNBC and will be accessible only to the research team. The information will be kept until the final project report is complete. After this time, all information and materials related to the interview will be destroyed.

Potential Risks And Benefits - This project has been assessed by the UNBC Research Ethics Board. The project team does not consider there to be any risks to participation. We hope that by participating you will have a chance to share some of your own views and experiences on these important local decisions.

Voluntary Participation - Your participation in the interview is entirely voluntary and, as such, you may chose not to participate. If you participate, you may choose to not answer any questions that make you uncomfortable, and you have the right to end the interview at any time and have all the information you provided withdrawn from the study.

Research Results - In case of any questions that may arise from this research, please feel free to contact Dr. Greg Halseth (250-960-5826; halseth@unbc.ca) in the Geography Program at UNBC. The final project report will be distributed to all interviewees.

Complaints - Any complaints about this project should be directed to the Office of Research, UNBC (250) 960-5820; email is reb@unbc.ca.

I have read the above description of the study and I understand the conditions of my participation. My signature indicates that I agree to participate in this study.

(Name -please print)

(Signature)

(Date)