



CENTRE FOR LOCAL PROSPERITY
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Local Prosperity 2016 Miramichi

November 3-6, 2016

Miramichi, New Brunswick

Conference Proceedings

The **2016 Local Prosperity Conference: A Regional Conference on New Economics for Rural Canada** took place in Miramichi, New Brunswick from November 3-6, 2016. Held across several venues, the conference included keynote talks, panel conversations, information tables, discussions, and networking topic tables, relating to the environmental and economic challenges and opportunities communities in Atlantic Canada face. Approximately 35 speakers presented materials across a broad spectrum of economic sectors and topics to about 80 delegates. Most speaker's slide decks are available of the LocalProsperity website.

"I have been to a bucket load of conferences in the last 30 years and I have to tell you – that was probably the most inspirational and most needed of all of the conferences I have ever attended. Worth every dollar and minute! We need more of that."

Conference Attendee

Opening Honour Song

On Friday morning, **George Paul**, of the Metepenagiag First Nation, NB, opened the conference by singing Kepmite'tmnej, a Mi'kmaw Honour Song.

Keynote Presentations

David Orr, the Paul Sears Distinguished Professor of Environmental Studies and Politics at Oberlin College, and **Michael Shuman**, Director of Community Portals for Mission Markets and a Fellow at Cutting Edge Capital and Post-Carbon Institute, gave the keynote presentations. Both speakers made

urgent cases for environmentally friendly and sustainable economies. Building local, community-based industries were central to both presentations.

On Thursday evening at the Carrefour Beausoleil, Orr gave the opening keynote address, “***Dangerous Years: Climate Change & the Long Emergency and the Way Forward***.” Presenting climate change as an extraordinary challenge to western culture and to global stability, he outlined the importance of local community resilience. Orr connected sustainability to economic and democratic institutions, and placed communities and neighborhoods at the heart of his vision for transforming society, the economy, and politics.

The presentation opened by stressing the significance of climate change. Referring to it as “a civilizational crisis” and a “threat to human tenure on the planet,” Orr argued that climate change was not only environmental, but also connected to geopolitics and economics. Technological revolutions and the ongoing threat of nuclear war have had unintended and not-yet-realized consequences. The politicization of the dialogue about environmental issues has further intensified this threat. Orr stressed that climate change should not be debated as “an issue of belief” but rather a “matter of physics and chemistry.” This ongoing debate has contributed a situation where the threats from climate change are more severe than were expected. Orr used the war in Syria to emphasize this severity. Long-term droughts moved farmers off the land, resulting in prolonged conflicts. He added, there is a “direct line between raising the thermostat of the earth and political and economic turmoil.”

To counter the vast threats from climate change, Orr suggested thinking both locally and globally, recognizing that small changes can have large effects. While it is urgent that these issues are addressed, Orr was hopeful because local economies can be the “heart of the change,” driving national and international processes. This requires a rapid transformation supported with technology and with political will. People, economies, communities, and governments have to act in new ways. Economic thinking should consider the ecosystem, something ignored in classical economics. He warned that the price of ignoring the environment would be wars, diseases, and instability. At the same time, however, local sustainability initiatives have shown that incorporating environmental considerations into business models leads to better economics.

Orr presented his work with the Oberlin Project as an example of the local economic benefits of incorporating sustainability into community plans. The project began, in the late 1990s, as a joint-effort by the city and the college to become carbon neutral, while still driving the local economy. This was a successful experiment in creating a thriving, sustainable, and environmentally friendly community.

Under Orr’s guidance, the college began constructing a green building, the Adam Joseph Lewis Center. This opened in 2000 and became a “laboratory for sustainability”; a place to train people interested in sustainable economics. In 2008-09, the project spread to the entire city, with task forces

in sustainability and initiatives to transform the local economy and reduce poverty. As part of this the college built a new hotel to double as a public space, functioning as a conference center, commercial district, jazz club, in addition to a seventy-room hotel. This hotel became an anchor institution, investing in and helping to rebuild the local economy. This has material consequences: the hotel brings people and money to the town, and drives local agriculture by buying local food. This was reproduced throughout Oberlin, and now 70% of the food in the local economy is grown in an area of 10-15 miles around the city.

Anchor institutions also have intellectual consequences. The meetings in this public space aim to drive the conversation about sustainability. This is connected to Orr's broader vision for the Oberlin Project, to develop anchor institutions (colleges, universities, hospitals complexes, sports teams, etc.) in various communities that invest in local sustainability. These institutions can teach the public the science of climate change, making sure that local decisions are made following scientific evidence. Such institutions all have significant investing power, and Orr suggested, this should be redirected towards three key sustainability issues: changing food systems; energy use; and infrastructure. By educating the public and promoting sustainability, these institutions can change the course of political discussions. By buying locally and drawing people to the community, these institutions can rebuild local economies.

Orr concluded his keynote by returning to the politics of sustainability, suggesting this must be an issue supported across the political spectrum. Bringing people together requires fixing the "national mis-dialogue between liberals and conservatives." Investing in sustainable local economies will help the environment. At the same time, by reducing poverty, these investments can be used to eliminate nationally funded welfare projects. Orr quoted conservative philosopher Edmund Burke, noting the current generation's obligations to "transition between distant past and distant future." These obligations require conserving traditions, creating systems to ensure justice and fairness, and integrating environmental concerns with economic ones. For Orr, it is the local community that can best respond to the "fierce urgency of now," and rebuild sustainable, local economies. He concluded on a hopeful note, by thanking the conference attendees "for not being too late."

Shuman's keynote address, "Four Rules for Local Prosperity," presented on Friday morning at the MEAC, outlined new guidelines for building strong community economies. Building on Orr's presentation, Shuman reiterated that it was urgent to create a sustainable future. To do this it was "necessary, if not sufficient, for us to embrace a low-energy, low-carbon economy at the local level, model it, and spread it worldwide." For Shuman, a local approach is the only way to avoid a crisis. Reframing economic development is necessary for building this local, sustainable future. Too often – and particularly in Atlantic Canada – he suggested, economic developers focus on attraction and retention of new, outside businesses, while ignoring local ones. This is ineffective and inefficient

because of opportunity costs: it is less expensive and more productive to help local businesses. Refocusing on local business will have long-term benefits for sustainability and economic development. But Shuman stressed that this is critical in the short-term as well. Empirical evidence shows that jobs, income, wealth, and tax bases all increase with investment in local businesses. He drew on the example of Lou Stein, an Appalachian West Virginia, economic developer who instead of attempting to attract new businesses, worked with existing ones, simply asking, “how can I help?” From this Shuman listed four rules of economic prosperity: 1) maximize the percentage of jobs in your economy that exist in locally owned businesses; 2) maximize local self-reliance; 3) spread models of triple bottom line (TBL) success – that is not just defining success with regards to profits, but also for the environment and for the workers; and, 4) creating an entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Rule one, maximizing jobs in locally owned businesses is based on the premise that “ownership matters.” Shuman drew on over two-dozen studies to show that money spent in a locally owned business has between two and four times the economic impact as that spent in an outside business. Communities with a lot of local businesses have the highest per capita income growth rate. Echoing one of Orr’s conclusions, he stressed that locally owned businesses are the best method to reduce poverty and raise incomes.

The second rule, maximizing local self-reliance, was informed by the work of urban theorist, Jane Jacobs, who argued that the best way to participate in a local economy is from a position of strength. Strong local economies can engage in other markets. The key to this success is becoming self-reliant. To support this, Shuman described the Austrian town of Gussing, calling it a ‘rural success story.’ Beginning by developing wood from the old forestry industry into a heating system, Gussing required fewer energy imports. These savings were used to invest in a second energy business. This process was repeated over and over for twenty years, and Gussing today runs fifty energy businesses that employ 1000 people (in a 3000-person town). Starting with local import-replacements, Gussing became a global energy powerhouse.

Spreading TBL businesses, the third rule, requires centering the environment in economic plans. Following this, economic development and social responsibility should coexist. Shuman described ‘benefit corporations,’ distinguished by B-Corps labels, that are accredited based on regular surveys to benchmark and map social progress towards higher and higher degrees of social responsibility. He noted that the same criteria evaluated in the B-Corps survey are indicators of economic development. These are corporations that pay their workforce more, creating workers that can spend more in the locally. By buying local goods and services these corporations also bolster the local economy. By stressing efficiency, these corporations consume less energy and water, and place fewer stresses on the local natural resource base. All of this creates a situation that Shuman called “win-win-win” when you “do high levels of social responsibility.”

Creating an entrepreneurial ecosystem was Shuman's fourth rule. He listed '6 Ps' to do this: planning; people; partners; purse; purchasing; policymaking. Planning is to improve efficiency, and to identify and solve areas where people buy outside goods and services (what Shuman calls "leaks" that need to be "plugged"). People can create the necessary ecosystem by supporting entrepreneurs and encouraging a new generation to lead these leak-plugging businesses. Partners contribute to local entrepreneurship through collaboration, creating networks of local business that are more competitive as a team than alone. The purse refers to harnessing savings locally, which will have both short-term and long-term effects for local businesses. Purchasing refers to buying locally. 'Local first' campaigns are one way to encourage this. Regarding policymaking, Shuman identified himself as a minimalist. In his outline, governments should have one objective: to "stop destroying local businesses." This returned to his criticism of economic developers that privilege outside businesses over local ones. He stressed that current governments have "anti-local biases," and subsidy programs are the least generous towards local businesses. In attempting to attract new business, governments throw their money away and ignore the ones most likely to impact their communities.

For Atlantic Canada, Shuman argued that if these steps create even a 10% shift towards greater self-reliance it would have positive effects on the economy. If the four Atlantic Provinces replaced 10% of imports – through import-substitution and local production – it would create 43,000 jobs, \$2.5B in new wages, and \$219M in new tax money. This massive job creation cannot be done by a single corporate attraction. Rather, Shuman emphasized, it has to be done through nurturing, developing, and supporting thousands of small, local businesses. He identified the potential top categories of import replacement in Atlantic Canada: local manufacturing; retail and wholesale jobs; professional services; food; and FIRE (finance, insurance, and real estate). In addition to building the local economy, establishing these types of jobs can encourage people who were raised in Atlantic Canada but educated elsewhere to return to the region. Import substitution requires reframing economic and consumer activities to local needs. This can sustain local economies and privilege environmental issues.

Reframing towards local ownership and local growth requires, what Shuman called, local 'pollinators' – a private business that seeds and strengthens the local economy. These pollinators should be self-sustaining, and can foster partnerships and local investment in their communities. Once established, these pollinators can nurture thousands of other businesses and can create synergies not possible in one-off initiatives. He concluded by encouraging Atlantic Canada to be the place that builds these networks of pollinators, closing his talk by asking "why not you? Why not now? Why not here?"

Plenary Session Speakers

The conference's first plenary session was **Gregory Heming's** "*Propriety as Public Policy: A Way Forward for Rural Canada*." Heming, a municipal councilor in Annapolis, NS, outlined the importance of anchoring economic and policy issues in local communities. Like the keynote presentations, Heming stressed the urgency of addressing climate change, and of prioritizing small economic producers, rather than global corporations. And like the keynotes, he was hopeful because the conference talks and attendees were united in their commitment to finding solutions. Heming encouraged the audience to visualize a person that they admired – "a perfect individual that works from the heart." He suggested that society should evolve according to the visualized behaviour, to better respond to the challenges we face.

From this "exercise in hope," and from reflecting on one of his close friends, Heming generalized that the principles of beauty, simplicity, and fairness must inform all of our decisions, whether dealing with economic development and community building or daily interactions and conversations. Beauty underscores the interconnectedness of all life. Simplicity drew on one of Einstein's principles, that "everything should be as simple as possible, but not simple." Simplicity is particularly important given that technological capacities have led to such dramatic and unintended consequences. For Heming, fairness was a concept that needed to be worked into economic development strategies: "whatever we are doing we are trying to create an economy, a distribution system, a financial system that's fair." Inspired by Janet Stein, a University of Toronto professor of conflict management, Heming explained that these principles require prioritizing something other than the politics of efficiency. Public policy discussions need to be inclusive of all forms of life, and reflective of community values.

Heming then outlined an 'ethics of place,' based on respecting people, animals and nature. This ethic drew on Wendell Barry's – a Kentucky farmer and activist – seven suggestions: 1) for every proposed change or innovation ask what will this do to your community; 2) always include local nature, land, water, air, and native creatures within the membership of the community; 3) always ask how local needs might be supplied by local sources; 4) always supply local needs first; 5) develop properly scaled value added industries for local products; 6) see that the old and the young take care of one another; 7) always be aware of economic value of neighborly acts. These rules lead to economic thinking based on propriety rather than prosperity. Propriety suggests practices that are appropriate to for the local economy, based in particular places and contexts, and respecting and valuing collective interests. Such an ethics of place resists the anti-local biases present in orthodox economic thinking. While this is a subtle change, it is one that takes "courage." Local businesses and municipal

governments have to make efforts to incorporate new ideas, and need the courage to make sure all members of the community share and support the ethic based on beauty, simplicity, and fairness.

Karen Foster, a Dalhousie sociology professor, then gave a “**Progress Report on the Atlantic Regional Import Replacement Study.**” Based on joint research with the Centre for Local Prosperity, this session outlined the local attitudes towards and the potential of import replacement. The eighteen-month study aimed to “investigate the lives of imports and exports in rural communities,” and involved two parts. The first, done in collaboration with Michael Shuman, was analyzing economic data with computer software. The second prong was four case studies of Atlantic Canadian communities (Burin Peninsula, NL, Miramichi, NB, Shelburne, NS, and Souris, PEI). In each community, the researchers held two focus groups – one with business and government representatives, and another with members of the broader community. Ultimately, Foster aimed to weave the material into a focused set of recommendations to take back to the communities, adding that this “won’t be just another study ... these rural communities have become rightfully skeptical of what just another study can do for them”

Shuman’s data, using IMPLAN, analyzed how self-reliant the region was, based on how much local demand was met with local production. Based on dozens of sectors, Foster used New Brunswick as an example. Of the nearly \$43B spent on products and services, only \$23B was spent on those that were locally produced. This means that \$19B, or 45% of the money, was leaking out of the local economy. IMPLAN projected what a 10% shift towards self-reliance would do to the local economy. The results are very significant. Replacing 10% of imports with local production would create 14K jobs, almost \$1B of new labour income (money to workers through wages), and \$84M for provinces in indirect business taxes.

Foster then asked why haven’t these leaks already been plugged. The traditional explanation is that rural populations are risk averse, hampered by bureaucratic red tape, and particularly vulnerable to large corporations moving in and stealing local businesses. But, she asks, asks if these are satisfactory explanations, adding that “we have to get the whole story right in order to know who can change it and how.” These concerns and questions informed the two sets of focus groups. The business-government groups explored what constrains and enables businesses looking to procure their supplies locally, and what constrains and enables new entrepreneurs who are thinking of creating an import-replacement business. The community groups studied how ordinary rural people meet their consumption needs, whether or not they reconcile their desire to sustain local businesses with factors like convenience, cost-saving, and brand preferences, and how they think the local econ could improve.

This work is still in progress, and Foster is still analyzing the data, but she identified several recurring themes. One of these was that rural ways of life matter to people. Policy makers, politicians,

journalists, and developers must take this fact into account, and resist their tendency to assume urban models are analogue to positive change. One of the goals of the project, and the conference more broadly, was to “take off some of the blinders of orthodox economic development thought.” A second theme was complicating the belief that rural populations are too risk-averse to start new businesses and change policy. The study’s results show that rather than being risk-averse, rural entrepreneurs struggle to deal with levers of power. This problem was exacerbated by the fact that – by size, influence, and connections – large corporations are better equipped to navigate regulatory bureaucracies. The community groups have shown that when people are too afraid it is because they are misinformed; an inexpensive and easy way to counter this is through educating entrepreneurs about how government can help them. A third theme was that people are often unaware of local alternatives, and do not consider services as imports. Raising awareness, and attracting professionals to rural communities could be a way to keep money circulating locally. The fourth theme, Foster identified was that importance of tourism in thinking about development opportunities. While rural communities cannot compete with urban centres in attracting people with the promise of jobs, they can offer a beautiful, quiet, and different pace of life. These themes all point to the importance of meeting local demand, and providing people and businesses with information and incentives to buy locally. To do this, however, it is imperative that rules and regulations work for small businesses, and that rural entrepreneurs band together to identify common interests and lobby government.

On Saturday, **Robert Cervelli**, from the Centre for Local Prosperity, and **Gordon Slade**, from Fogo Island’s Shorefast Foundation, gave a **plenary address**: “***New Ground Rules for Utilizing and Restoring our Natural Resources.***” Both Cervelli and Slade made cases for the importance of recapturing local control of natural resources, using them sustainably and for the benefit of the entire community.

Drawing on his education in forestry, and picking up threads from Orr’s keynote address, Cervelli stressed the importance of talking about resources “in the context of narrative.” Narrative was an important thread throughout the conference, stressing that changing how we think and talk about economic development can alter economic systems. Rather than simply stressing profit, efficiency, and growth, new narratives need to be produced that consider environmental and social concerns. For Cervelli, this requires replacing euphemistic industrial language (‘raw materials’ and ‘tonnage’) with “a new kind of language” that builds in cultural and environmental assets. Over time, shifting this narrative will give more respect to the natural resources, and improve the rhetorical and commercial value of the resources.

To create this new language, Cervelli outlined a set of six ground rules to evaluate resource-related activities. The first rule was that harvest technology should be appropriately scaled for the restorative use of the resource. That means that harvest methods should further the health of the

ecosystem, instead of only thinking about the cost of extraction. The second rule was that the market usage of that harvest should increase in per unit value. This requires a deeper respect for the resources that are harvested, and long-term efforts to improve the value and the sustainability of the harvested resources. The third rule was that harvesting and processing should be locally owned. To do this, Cervelli suggested locally owned processing plants, co-ops, and associations to create value and to maximize returns to the community. As this happens, it will also encourage local stewardship of the resource. The fourth rule was that the resource itself should be locally controlled. This means having communities that care and protect the access and use of the resources. In turn, this gives communities even more incentives to manage the resource with future generations in mind. The fifth rule was to supply local needs first, and only then consider export. This is basic import-replacement logic, and places the local community at the centre of economic and environmental planning. The sixth rule was to use resources in a way that increase local social capital. For Cervelli, this means that when there is increasing value there should also be “spinoff benefits” – more innovation and more entrepreneurial initiatives. These six rules all point to ways to increase the money, resources, and goods that remain local. In conclusion, Cervelli noted that implementing these rules and changing the narrative around resource extraction requires a long-term view, pointing towards the First Nation approach of considering effect on the next seven generations (140 years) in whatever you do.

Gordon Slade built on these rules, and discussed the innovations and successes that the Shorefast foundation enabled on Fogo Island. Calling it a “good news story,” Slade described “business-minded ways to achieve social ends.” Shorefast is a charitable foundation that channels commercial profits into other ventures on Fogo Island, supporting a variety of programs and institutions that sustain and support local economy and local producers. Based on the belief in value of rural communities, the foundation was central in reviving a community on the verge of death.

The best-known project in this effort is the Fogo Island Inn. This 29-room, 5-star Inn was built to be relevant to people on the island and special to visitors. The furniture was all built by local artisans, in collaboration with designers from around the world. In addition to attracting tourists, the Inn provides a heritage library, art gallery, boardrooms, and film houses available to community. Surplus revenues from the Inn are redirected to the Shorefast Foundation, and then back into the community.

Fogo Island Fish is another social enterprise on the island. This cooperative fish processing plant supplies fish to restaurants in St. John’s and on the mainland. Fish goes directly from the fisher to the plant to the consumer, without wholesalers or merchants in between. This means that fishers are paid fairly, and each part of the supply chain understands how money is spent (traditionally an unclear process in Newfoundland). Like the Inn, all profits made by the co-op are sent back to the foundation charity, and reinvested in the community.

These successful social enterprises have enabled the Foundation to invest in a geology and ocean-education programs. Environmental protection is central to this, as the programs aim to teach children and future fishers about how to maintain a healthy ecosystem. In turn, Slade hoped, this local education will provide government scientists with better local knowledge and data, and allow community-input in environmental policies. Circulating profits back into the community, and a generous \$1M donation, has also led to the creation of the Business Assistance Fund, to provide up to a \$25K loan from the Foundation to anyone that that wanted to start a small business that could support the community.

Through supporting local producers, in commercially and environmentally successful ways, Slade described the Shorefast Foundation as following the Cervelli's guidelines. The emerging businesses on the Fogo Island all contribute to the community's revival, and make it more attractive to visitors and new initiatives. This is based local-stewardship of the resources, and increasing local influence in policy-making.

The conference also had two plenary panels, reflecting on themes and issues raised over the weekend. The first, "***Creating a Climate for Change – The role of local government and business in facing the global threat of climate disruption***" was a discussion between **Michael Shuman, David Orr, and Gregory Heming**. This panel focused on climate change as a significant threat, and the response to this threat as opportunities for cultural, social, political, and economic transformation. Heming acted as moderator, and stated his role was to focusing the other two panelists on linking local economies and climate change, an issue he deals with as a municipal councilor. Orr explained that this was a challenge because of the power wielded by large corporations. To resist this, it is necessary to understand what can be done locally, at both a governance-level and an important-replacement one. He repeated the theme of changing economic priorities, moving from profit-obsessed corporations to local ownership committed to sustainability and environmental science. Shuman echoed the need for local-focus, calling for increased decentralization in political and economic systems. Giving more power and responsibility to provinces and to local government would facilitate urgent and creative changes to political and economic systems. Heming aptly called this the "remunicipalization of government," which would increase power at the local level and better connect policy-makers to the people and businesses in the community. Making such changes would provide examples for communities looking to improve their economies, and would serve to change the narrative about economic development.

The question period focused on how to facilitate the transformations necessary to foster such climate-focused and locally centered changes. People were concerned with how to encourage cooperation between local producers who thought of themselves as competition, and how to inspire ownership and pollinator institutions. The presenters again stressed changing the language and

thinking used to frame these issues. Shuman pointed towards the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies, a network of local businesses that worked to build trust and identify ‘common ground’ within local businesses. Stressing that when people worked together new horizons could be opened. Localizing money, and investing in community businesses – and Orr added developing anchor institutions – will bring about new opportunities and benefits that will benefit entire regions, not just single businesses.

The **second plenary panel**, “*An Atlantic Region Conversation*” was made up of representatives from each Atlantic Canadian province, and explored the common issues and possible solutions in the local economies. Moderated by **Andy Horsnell** (the Chair at Centre for Local Prosperity), the panelist were: **Susan Machum** (St Thomas University); **Karen Foster** (Dalhousie University); **Phil Ferraro** (PEI ADAPT Council); and **Gordon Slade**, Shorefast Foundation. This was a wide-ranging discussion, described by Horsnell as attempting to bring the conference threads together into a coherent narrative.

Machum summarized the need to be inclusive in decision-making and in outcomes, to correct the historical marginalization of rural populations in decision-making processes. Part of this is taking a long-term view of economic development. People need to consider far-reaching trends for climate change and social justice, not just short-term profits. This means that climate change needs to be considered as an area that requires major social, economic, and political changes.

Ferraro outlined three takeaways, three suggestions, and three personal challenges. The takeaways from the conference were: we have to act now; we have to stop the bias against the local and the rural; and we have to consider propriety – doing what’s right – in policy decisions. The three suggestions for local action were to: stop thinking of rural lives as alternative; consider all businesses as social enterprises; and form a community or affinity group. The three challenges were: invest 1% of income in local community; pledge 10-20% of purchases as being local; and every day remind yourself to do a random act of kindness. These seemingly simple suggestions and actions, would all serve to change the narrative about local economies, and to establish rural communities within the mainstream of sustainable development.

Foster briefly introduced the concept of the economy as a performance, not just a space for consumption. If the economy is a performance made up of every day actions, then it is “infinitely possible to do it differently.” Foster suggested that community-supported agriculture and fishing are examples of rethinking these economic relationships, moving from a purely transactional performance to one based on reciprocity between producer and consumer, stewardship over resources, and fairness. This is a hopeful suggestion, meaning that individuals can work towards changing economic relationships through day-to-day activities.

Slade summarized the conference attendees as a “group of doers,” and was encouraged because rural populations and entrepreneurs cannot wait for government or large corporations to make the necessary changes; they have to come from the community itself. This requires looking to the future, and thinking about what kind of economy and what kind of community you want, and then working to make that happen, and working to make sure that opportunities are ethical and “proper.”

The question period and concluding remarks all further stressed the challenges in making these changes. The audience was concerned with how to convince people to buy local when it was often more expensive, how to define success, and how to convince policy-makers that these changes are necessary. All the panelists came back to the importance of replacing economic metrics and rhetoric with ideas that privileged inclusivity and sustainability. Encouraging people to buy local is not simply an economic issue about immediate cost, but one about long-term effects, about social and personal health, environmental costs, and community cohesion. This is a significant transformation, but the panelists all concluded by emphasizing that the conference attendees had already taken the first steps towards that goal.

Breakout Sessions

The conference had eight breakout sessions:

- 1. *Building Social Capital Pools, Social Financing and Impact in Entrepreneurial Ecosystems***
- 2. *Scaling our Food Supply***
- 3. *Energy: The Sources, Ownership, and Distribution***
- 4. *Rebuilding the Value Chain from our Forests***
- 5. *Arts, Culture, and Tourism***
- 6. *Government Power and Policy in the New Economy***
- 7. *Moving to Value-Added and Ethical Restoration of our Fisheries***
- 8. *Community-Based Enterprises.***

Panel #1: “Building Social Capital Pools, Social Financing and Impact in Entrepreneurial Ecosystems” explored new forms of social investments, outside of the traditional venture-capital, charitable foundation or loan models, suggesting how such investments could contribute to community survival. Moderated by **Dave Upton** (Common Goods Solutions), the panelists were: **Wendy Keats** (Co-Operative Enterprise Council of New Brunswick); **Jeff Harriman** (NB Securities Commission); and **Erika Shea** (New Dawn Enterprises).

Keats outlined social enterprise in New Brunswick, highlighting a shift to businesses that invest their profits into social, environmental, and cultural goals. In addition to being profitable, these enterprises provide goods and services to their communities, reduce costs to government, and offer potential for business development and job creation, often in rural areas. Demonstrating the success of these enterprises is crucial for promotion and education, encouraging others to invest locally.

Shea's presentation focused on New Dawn Enterprise's 40-year history in Cape Breton, and the investments generated by the CEDIF program, in place since 1999. By reinvesting all profits into the community New Dawn has expanded its holdings into community investment and innovation, helping to grow its existing companies, launch new businesses; and advance its community building initiatives.

Harriman presented on Community Economic Development Corporations (CEDC's), discussing many of the common questions about them.

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Panel #2: "Scaling our Food Supply" addressed the importance of distribution systems in the rural-urban supply chain. Each of the presentations demonstrated that the level of community involvement has a greater importance than the size of the project. Whether discussing food distribution networks, urban farming operations, training programs or healthy eating the goal was always to meet community needs and to address the fundamental disparities in income, land access, and other resources that challenge people with disabilities, low incomes and newcomers. Local food is a cornerstone for import replacement, entrepreneurship and community resiliency and this session provided working examples of how to enhance community resilience with social enterprises while creating food equity. These initiatives demonstrated to the conference participants examples of how we can provide important economic impacts while enhancing food sovereignty throughout the region. Chaired by **Phil Ferraro** (Institute for Bioregional Studies, Legacy Garden and Centre for Local Prosperity Advisor), the panelists were: **Rachel Scofield-Martin** (District Scolaire Francophone Sud); **Aaron Shantz** (Westmoreland Albert Food Security Action Group, NB); and **Sue Rickards** (Sunrise Partnership for Ag Dev and Education, NB).

Shantz's presentation – "**Local Food Supply – Resiliency Cornerstone**" laid out the steps necessary for communities to secure a reliable food supply. This transition requires education, community food centers, and creating an environment of respect and community leadership, and providing affordable, nutritious food to all community members.

Scofield-Martin summarized the work of the The District Solaire Francophone Sud, in South Eastern New-Brunswick. This organization offers a community project that brings local food in the school cafeteria.

Rickards presented on the Sunrise Partnership for Agriculture Development and Education.

This is a charitable, non-profit dedicated to offering diverse learning opportunities and work, for people on social assistance, in all aspects of the farm sector.

Ferraro gave examples of the community impact of improved food sovereignty. He described the Farm Centre’s Legacy Garden in Charlottetown; a three-year-old project with 150 community garden allotments, a community orchard and a goodwill garden that provides fresh organic food to charitable organizations

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Panel #3: “Energy: The Sources, Ownership, and Distribution” highlighted initiatives in Atlantic Canada for local energy production, distribution, and storage. The moderator was **Leon de Vreede** (Centre for Local Prosperity Advisor), and the panelists were: **Troy Jerome** (Mesgi’g Ugju’s’n Wind Farm Project, Campbellton, NB); **Greg Gaudet** (Summerside Electric Utility – smart grids, PEI); and **Eddie Oldfield** (QUEST NB Caucus Chair, NB).

Oldfield’s presentation focused on QUEST’s work in advancing Smart Energy Communities, reducing GHG emissions, and encouraging the adoption of clean technologies. To promote smart energy communities, QUEST, encourages the development and implementation of community energy plans, that define local priorities, drive economic development, manage future risks, and improve energy efficiency. In New Brunswick, QUEST acts as a connector, to bring together municipalities, utilities and energy service providers, and other key stakeholders to talk about CEPs, and to align with provincial and national programs.

de Vreede spoke about Energize Bridgewater, a community-wide initiative to accelerate the community’s transition towards a local energy economy. This program is an effort to study and reshape community energy culture, moving towards sustainability and increased knowledge and skills. This initiative also contributes to new energy partnerships, based out of the Living Energy Laboratory, an incubator to facilitate energy education, entrepreneurship, and collaboration.

Jerome’s presentation described the SEN’TI Environmental & Aboriginal Services group’s work and the importance of maximizing indigenous benefits from energy development. SEN’TI has a vision of pursuing & promoting quality development projects on a mission to create energy from renewable resources, inclusive of Bio-mass, Wind, Solar & Hydro energy. This work encourages Aboriginal groups to be involved in energy projects, incorporating territorial stewardship and Aboriginal nation building into energy projects. Financing energy projects leads to jobs, money, skill development, and gives bands increased influence with provincial politicians.

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Panel #4: “Rebuilding the Value Chain from our Forests” focused on de-commoditizing forestry resources and shifting the perception of forests — from low-grade feedstock for industrial ends to valuable resources — to better support a viable future for rural communities and the environment. The

panelists shared their experiences in enterprises that reimagined the forests, and that contributed to more sustainable futures for their communities. The panel was moderated by **Dale Prest** (Community Forests International, NB), and the panellists were: **Will Martin** (Woodscamp Technologies Inc., NS); **Mary Jane Rodger** (General Manager, Medway Community Forest, NS); and **Don Beamish** (General Manager, Larch Wood Enterprises, Margaret, NS).

Beamish's presentation focused on Larch Wood Enterprises. Established 2003, this company specializes in hand-making cutting boards made from sustainably managed local woodlots. They oversee the resource from log to finished product. In addition to their cutting boards, they sell and use the by-products – kindling, slabs, and sawdust – their process creates.

Rodger presented on Medway Community Forest Co-Operative Ltd (MCFC), and community forestry. Launching a 3-year pilot in 2015, the MCFC's mission is to support the local community through sustainable and ecologically based forest management. Based on community management, this project encourages education and outreach, while maximizing local economic benefits. This involves valuing multiple priorities, and combining industry with restoring the Acadian forest.

Prest's presentation explained Community Forest's International's (CFI) work to re-orient the forest value chain to account for climate change. Both internationally and in Atlantic Canada, CFI works to alter how woodlots are managed, to become as tools to fight against climate change. By channeling photosynthesis, CFI presents forests as a tool for removing carbon from the atmosphere. This view requires incentivizing landowners and managers to change their perception and use of trees. Carbon offsets are one such incentive to companies to invest in emission reduction.

Martin's presentation, "*Re-imagining the Value Chain in Forestry*," argued that mills, loggers, and landowners should work together to increase Nova Scotia's sustainable timber capacity.

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Panel #5: "Arts, Cultural and Tourism" had two sessions that focused primarily on the opportunities for growth and development of experiential tourism products in Atlantic Canada, as well as the opportunities to use technology, in particular social media and video content, to capture and promote tourism products (and all products) before, during and after the experience itself. It was moderated by **Adam Lordon** (former Municipal Councilor, City of Miramichi) and the panelists were: **Paul McGraw** (City of Miramichi, NB); **Lori McCarthy** (CodSounds.ca, NF); and **Genevieve Coates** (Generate Creative Consulting, NB).

McGraw was the first to speak and offered up some insight with his personal motto: "Every experience is a story, and every story is an experience." He also mentioned the importance from a community perspective that everything in your city or town will reflect on the experience visitors have from the kids playing in the park, to the shop keepers, to the condition of the buildings.

McCarthy was able to share a first-hand example of her successful experiential food business Cod Sounds, where she takes visitors foraging for food and then has a traditional “Boil Up,” cooking for them on the beach. This takes traditional Newfoundland food and culture and packages it for tourist consumption. The panel believes this can be replicated in other communities and other cultural aspects.

Coates shared the importance of embracing technology and the potential it has to enhance experiences, but also as a communication method. In smaller communities many people can be weary or uninterested in technological advances but they provide great opportunities to create efficiencies and savings, engage local audiences, and engage new ones.

Lordon spoke of the growth of video as a medium to communicate and share experiences – for tourism products and in general – especially when shared through social media. Video content can create awareness and a want in consumers. It is scalable based on budget constraints, and can reach audiences locally and at a distance. It also creates the opportunity for your customers to become sales people by sharing their story of the experience you provided.

During the discussion periods there was great conversations about how to get people in smaller rural local communities to understand and buy into the potential for experiential tourism products and technology. The panelists all agreed an inclusive, positive, non-confrontational approach is best. Also the importance of just starting, even on a very small scale, and allowing people to see the positive effects to create buy-in and encourage growth.

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Panel #6: “Government Power and Policy in the New Economy” was a town hall discussion on governance with **Rankin MacSween** (President, New Dawn Enterprises, Sydney, NS), **Gregory Heming** (Centre for Local Prosperity Senior Advisor, Annapolis County) and guests. This was an opportunity for municipal officials to weigh in on issues, and to express their vision and way forward for their community.

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Panel #7: “Moving to Value-Added and Ethical Restoration of our Fisheries” addressed the transition from large-scale extraction methods of fishing to new, sustainable methods based on cooperation and maximizing local value. The panel was moderated by **Gordon Slade** (Shorefast Foundation, NL), and the panelists were: **Tom Best** (Petty Harbour Fisherman's Cooperative, NF); **Craig Avery** (President, PEI Fishermen's Association), and **Justin Cantafio** (Afashionado, Halifax, NS).

Cantafio gave examples Afashionado’s of direct marketing to customers. Based on de-commodifying seafood and providing customers with a clear narrative about the how the product was

harvested and prepared, this approach holds a lot of promise that goes beyond restaurants in the value chain.

Avery gave an overview of the PEIFA, its branding initiatives, and its marketing of PEI lobster to local, national, and international audiences. Marketing is at the forefront of the organization's and the lobster industry's objectives, in an attempt to push the industry forward. While expanding the markets for their stocks, this also helps fishers sell their own stock, and strengthen customer relationships.

Best's presentation shared Petty Harbour's involvement in value-added, ethical, and sustainable fisheries, and how it paralleled the community's economic history and the development of fishers' organization. He concluded by calling for collaboration between industry and government to better manage fish stocks and to allow communities to be more economically competitive, while also being ethical and sustainable.

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Panel #8: "Community-Based Enterprises" explored how community members have come together to create enterprises that engage local resources, capabilities and relationships to meet local needs and priorities, in a way that is equitable and financially sustainable. The four presentations demonstrated that startup and ongoing operation of community hubs can vary widely, according to the needs, resources, values, and aspirations of the founders and their stakeholders. **Andy Horsnell** (Centre for Local Prosperity Chair, CommonGood Solutions, NS) was the moderator and the panelists were: **Laurie Cook** (United Way Hubs Project, Musquodoboit Harbour, NS); **Julia Feltham** (Sackville Commons and Co-working); **Krysta Cowling** (Coopérative La Bikery Ltée., Moncton, NB); **Seth Asimakos** (Saint John Community Loan Fund, Social Enterprise Hub, NB).

Cowling presented on La Bikery, a community bicycle centre, offering bike rentals and a workshop space for bicycle maintenance and repairs, located in the heart of downtown Moncton. La Bikery was founded in 2012 by a community of cyclists, thinkers, do-ers, leaders, skill-sharers, and learners. It began when Chrissy Lorette, once a student and cyclist in Montréal and in Ottawa, moved back to Moncton. She was a frequent user of community bicycle centres and co-ops while away, and found she missed those spaces upon her return to Moncton. In the winter of 2011-2012, a local community meeting confirmed the thirst for a community bicycle centre in Greater Moncton – support for the project was strong and people were eager to contribute to the project. Research, business planning, fundraising and outreach followed. The City of Moncton allowed the developing co-operative to secure a space in a re-purposed fire station in downtown Moncton. After a summer of renovations, and with the help of many dedicated volunteers, La Bikery opened its doors in the fall of 2012.

Cook described the Old School Community Gathering Place. Located in a Heritage building in Musquodoboit Harbour, the Old School is a centre for arts, culture and innovation. Built in the 1920's,

it functioned as a school until 2006, when pupils were transferred to a new school. Eventually, the community acquired the building and, in 2011, it was designated an Historic Property. The Old School is now used by the community as a hub for musical performances, arts and culture, meetings, and Art Gallery and community-based innovation. The Art Gallery promotes and sells the work of local artists. Our music program features local musicians at the House Concerts and Coffee Houses. Space is available for local community members and entrepreneurs of all ages to meet, collaborate and attend workshops. With support from its key funder, United Way of Halifax, the Old School continues to build its local community capacity and leadership by promoting entrepreneurial skills, Eastern Shore heritage and arts & culture.

Feltham presented on the Sackville Commons and Co-working, a community co-working space in which profit-making exists in harmony with working for the social good. The space is a convergence of entrepreneurs, artists, artisans, non-profits and community groups working and sharing together to find and execute tangible solutions for today's social and economic challenges. It seeks to incubate innovative ideas, programs, services and companies that bring dignity and a sustainable future to people, the local community, Atlantic Canada and the planet. The Sackville Commons provides a shared workspace for like-minded independent entrepreneurs and change workers. Members get their own desk, an ergonomic work chair, vibrant environment, great coffee, affordable rates and the company from other workers. Located in the former Fire hall & Police station of Sackville, the not-for-profit cooperative is in the centre of town. Renovations were done in advance of a soft launch in late September 2016.

Asimakos presented on the Social Enterprise Hub, an initiative of the Saint John Community Loan Fund, the Social Enterprise Hub is a three-storey, 15,000 square foot building will be located in the heart of Saint John. On the ground floor there is a social enterprise cafeteria used for back to work training, and an Impact Market that features a range of social enterprise products. Micro-enterprises launched through the Loan Fund are clustered and focused on a lean start-up. A maker space has a 3D printer enabling early stage prototyping. On the second floor training occurs in rooms that can be collapsed and enlarged to accommodate larger community events and pitch presentations. On the third floor, the Saint John Learning Exchange provides a range of services focused on poverty reduction. The building is tied together with the latest technology enabling seamless communication for high-level productivity. Lead financial sponsors for the Hub include: Gerry Pond, the Sir James Dunn Foundation and the Regional Development Corporation.

Towards the end of the conference, Gordon Slade read the following inspirational poem, which captured the fact that conference attendees were already beginning to plan a number of projects which came out of their discussions with others.

*It's the dream we carry in secret
that something miraculous will happen,
that it must happen –
that time will open
that the heart will open
that doors will open
that the mountains will open
that springs will gush –
that the dream will open,
that one morning we will glide into
some little harbour we didn't know was there.*

"It's the Dream," Olav H. Hauge.
Read by Gordon Slade to close the conference,
having said that we are on a "Mission of Hope."