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ENGAGING YOUTH FOR SUSTAINABLE COASTAL COMMUNITY ECONOMIES

Raïsa Mirza, Department of Geography
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Author: Raïsa Mirza
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Questions and comments are welcomed and can be sent to either Raïsa Mirza or Kelly Vodden at the addresses below:

Raïsa Mirza
Masters Candidate, Department of Geography,
Memorial University
(709) 737- 8981
raisamirza@gmail.com

Kelly Vodden
Professor, Department of Geography,
Memorial University
(709) 737-8981
kvodden@mun.ca

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Introduction

Declining birth rates and an aging population will pose a challenge in sustaining economic growth in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, as in most provinces in Canada and OECD countries. Demographic challenges are particularly acute in rural regions. A report by the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation points out that "a strong rural Canada is crucial for a strong economic and social Canada. This strength comes from the ability of rural people to self-organize" (Reimer and Apedaile, 2000). Community economic development (CED) has been described as "people organizing themselves to take action in the community where they live to create economic opportunities on a sustainable basis" (Goldenberg, 2008).

A vibrant and engaged rural youth populace is thus crucial for the transformation of the economy of the province as it moves forward. However, the fisheries collapse compounded with few economic opportunities in rural areas has resulted in a net out-migration of youth from rural areas (YRAS, 2009). This has led to an unprecedented loss of local conservation and economic knowledge and potential, important for future development of these sectors. Research has shown that "youth place a high priority on protection of the environment and sustainable regional development" (YRAS, 2009). However, civic engagement among youth is at an all-time low while seniors in rural areas are becoming over-burdened with community-level duties (Gallagher et al., 2007). In the context of the social economy, especially within the conservation and resource management sectors local knowledge is crucial for sustainable future economic growth and to find new solutions for local environmental and economic problems that have roots in past actions and behaviours. Cross-generational knowledge sharing has been proven to be an effective way to foster innovation in sustainable resource management and local development in many parts of the world (SISC, 2009).

This report seeks to address the need for increased understanding of the interplays that exist between the engagement of rural youth, their relationship with and understanding of their local environment and how building more capacity and knowledge about their locales can increase the resilience of rural communities. The report provides a background on the state of youth, youth engagement and programs to increase youth engagement in general, and insights on increasing their involvement in environmental stewardship, conservation and the 'green economy'. Despite the proliferation of youth engagement programs at community organisation levels, there are very few examples of governments trying to effectively engage youth in determining their own futures. Furthermore, although much literature exists on the importance and benefits of intergenerational knowledge programs, few specific best practices were found to make a strong case for this practice. The report concludes with the acknowledgement that more detailed and long-term research needs to be undertaken on youth perceptions of environmental stewardship, linking intergenerational knowledge and increased community development.

Methods

This report is part of a series of investigations into different aspects of community engagement in Newfoundland and Labrador. In collaboration with the Rural Secretariat in Grand Falls-Windsor- Baie Verte- Harbour Breton, a research entitled "Developing Innovative Approaches for Community Engagement" was undertaken on community engagement and developing innovative approaches to increase the engagement of traditionally under-represented populations in rural areas- youth and young families. The current report, addressed a different- although related subject- in doing a study of the current status and perception of youth of local

environmental stewardship and how this could increase community capacity and economic possibility for rural areas.

In the Fall of 2011, a series of interviews were conducted with 45 people:
- 20 members from communities in the Grand Falls-Windsor- Baie Verte- Harbour Breton Region(specifically in a few towns in Coast of Bays, within the town Grand Falls-Windsor and town of Springdale);
- 14 members of the Provincial Rural Secretariat;
- 6 youth from different regions in Newfoundland;
- 5 professionals in various organisations and official functions;

Focus Group Discussions were also conducted in collaboration with the Rural Secretariat project. This involved five classes at the College of the North Atlantic (CNA), including a total of 95 students. The classes varied. Two were Business Development classes, two social psychology classes and one Regional and Community Development class. The age of the students also varied from late teens (18-19) to mature adults (75 in one class). The vast majority were under the age of 30. First, depending on the number of students in the classes, the students were broken up into smaller groups and asked to answer the question: 'To me, Grand Falls-Windsor is…'. A discussion followed and included subjects ranging from engagement in planning processes, to youth retention and the environment.

Rural Youth in NL

Who are they?
"Youth is a process of definition and redefinition, a negotiation enacted between young people and their families, their peers and the institutions in the wider society" (Jones and Wallace, 1992). Identifying "young people" is problematic because of the huge age range that exists in most assumptions about them. Youth—either as a social or demographic category—is neither a homogeneous generation nor a statistical age group (Alexander, 2008; Bonder, 2000). Instead, youth is a time of transition important to an individual's identity formation. Currently, social scientists studying youth are placing less importance on age groupings and focusing more on the roles youth play in their own communities. This report focuses on youth issues that generally encompass the ages of 15-30 and will specify wherever possible which age groups are implied.

A culturally predominant image of rural youth as apathetic and uninvolved in their communities belies the fact that all youth are "involved and impacted by action within their community" (Brodhead, 2006). Indeed, it is the way we define youth in our communities as either citizens or 'citizens in the making' that largely determines their role in community leadership (Alexander, 2008). In addition to these negative societal assumptions, youth struggle with structural inequalities, and face additional barriers to development and action when their skills and contributions go unrecognized. The transition of youth is made more difficult for many in the face of economic uncertainty and a changing labor market (Alexander, 2008).

Newfoundland youth from across the province, Fort McMurray, AB, and Ottawa, ON (two cities with large numbers of migrant youth from NL) aged 18-30 years reporting to the Canadian Policy Research Networks and Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy (YRAS) identified many critical junctions that impacted their lives as they took on the rights and responsibilities of adult citizenship:

1.   **Turning 18:** What they have learned about governance and citizenship and how they have practiced being a young citizen in their school, family and community life has readied them for the life decisions they will make, as well as how they choose to participate in society. Youth in rural communities should ideally be engaged before this age so they approach adulthood with a strong sense of belonging and having already participated as leaders.

2.   **Education:** Deciding what to study directly influences a career path. This period typically requires support and resources to facilitate access to quality education and training, preferably in the province. The choices made can influence place of residence, career and financial stability. Facilitation or mentorship of youth to study subjects that will be of use to the community or communally deciding to fund the partial education of a young person who will make a commitment to returning to the community can be strategies for attraction.

3.   **Employment:** Young people enter the labor market hoping to make a livelihood. They aspire to acquire skills to grow their careers. Stable, well-paid jobs are important to building a life in Newfoundland and Labrador. Providing entry-level employment opportunities, internships and support in starting businesses or co-operatives can be successful initiatives to attract new graduates back to the community.

4.   **Family Formation:** In this period, many young people decide where they will live and form long-term partnerships. Many begin to have families. The availability of services like education, health care, transportation, affordable housing and early childhood development become important factors in their decision-making. The presence of a strong social network or sense of community during their childhood years can encourage a family to move to rural communities which are deemed "safer" and "cheaper" than urban centres.

5.   **Pursuing Life Goals:** Young people begin to build and ascertain their desired quality of life. Establishing social and business relationships, engaging in various aspects of community life including participation in diverse cultural activities, and enjoying the province's environment are significant activities for many young people.

These, along with the high school years (typically 12-16), are critical junctures in a youth person's life as identified by youth themselves. Communities should be aware of these different cycles in the evolution of youth as they will be interested in different aspects of community development and will participate in different ways. If at all critical junctions, the youth is able to "feel connected" to their community, there is a very likelihood that they will settle permanently in the region.

What are their priorities?

Youth are socially, economically, and politically active Canadians and are more likely than seniors to volunteer for an organization or participate in political demonstrations. Youth are motivated to volunteer in their communities for a variety of reasons, often in areas of coaching, officiating, and fundraising (O'Neill, 2007). Youth value activities that have personal meaning and those that result in skill development. Youth practice 'consumer citizenship' (Pattie *et al.* 2004) and exhibit deep concern about their communities and country (McKinnon *et al.* 2007).

There exists a broad body of literature that identifies shared values of youth from around the world that shows the youth of NL are not alone in prioritizing opportunities for participation, meaningful skill development, quality of life, and access to services & information (YRAS, 2009;

Davies, 2008;). However, the rural youth of NL differ from their urban counterparts in that they are:

·   Less likely to rate comfortable wages as a top-level priority than those living in cities;
·   Less likely to rate transition between school and work as a top-level priority;
·   More likely to rate improving the quality of environmentally sustainable services a top-level priority (CPRN Final Report, 2010)..

A Youth Summit held in St. John's (2008) was attended by 140 youth from the province who developed policy recommendations for the retention and attraction of youth to NL. The majority (4 of 7) of policy directions and actions of the final YRAS "related to supporting the building capacity of youth while increasing sustainable economic futures and ensuring environmental protection of the province's natural resources" (YRAS, 2009). The youth delegates placed a high level of importance on the environment, however "it's connection to youth retention and attraction is indirect" (Youth Summit Report, 2008). The Community and Policy Research Networks (CPRN) Final Report did recommend comprehensive green innovation priorities including: energy conservation and the development of renewable resources, province-wide recycling and composting programmes, increased food security for rural areas, promotion of eco-tourism, creating a green economy, and broadening environmental safeguards that protect the province's natural resources (YRAS, 2009).

NL Youth desire to increase their involvement with public policy development, community planning and democratic processes. A principal concern for youth futures in rural NL is the sustainability and diversity of their economic options, and as such they desire long-term economic development strategies that focus on environmentally-friendly entrepreneurship (YRAS, 2009). Another criteria for youth retention in rural areas is access to services in their region and the overall quality of life in their communities; increased youth retention and engagement is required for the maintenance and strengthening of these services for the benefit of all regions and communities in NL. Many believe that the strong sense of community, relative safety, access to the outdoors, and lifestyle differences are important for rural youth, but what are their reasons for engaging their communities?

Figure 1: Why young people volunteer

	Age 15 - 19 (n=26)	Age 20 - 29 (n=30)	Age 30 - 34 (n=19)
Personal satisfaction	85%	87%	84%
Fun	58%	37%	53%
Personal benefits	23%	40%	16%
Something to do	15%	17%	11%
Influence of others	0%	3%	16%

Source: Locke, F. and P.M. Rowe. 2006

Youth aged 15-24 years show the highest volunteerism rate in the province (40%), despite a sometimes significant disconnect between their political priorities and the formal agendas of provincial and federal governments (Skelton and Valentine, 2003). The majority of volunteers identify 'personal satisfaction' as the reason they engage their communities, and it is therefore of little surprise that youth tend to move away from areas that they perceive to be unable to offer suitable lifestyle choices (Davies, 2006). In this context of youth engagement, individual and communal perceptions of place become vitally important for the survival of rural communities.

Rural Youth and the Environment
Rural youth in NL as a population have a special relationship with the land, nature, and climate; the seasons shape their social, economic, and cultural lives. Understanding youth in rural NL requires study of how they develop and negotiate their identity in different spaces (home, school, community, trails, at sea, etc.) and how their activities are shaping these environments. Importantly, when youth "critically read their… environment, they are rendering strategic opportunities for themselves and others that are afforded within that environment"

Strong social networks and a physical connection with the land produces a "feeling of belonging" (Osler and Starkey, 2005) for rural youth that forms an integral part of their citizenship. Alexander (2008) "outlines the importance of a young person's sense of belonging in the construction of a personal and highly specific 'civic identity'". For example, the youth's community involvement is enhanced when rural regions are believed to be rich in social, cultural, and/or natural resources. However, an individual's "spatial awareness may be dulled in places that are familiar" (Hung, 2011) resulting in a 'greener pastures' mentality that weakens youth involvement in their communities. A complex understanding of place is therefore required to refresh a community's capacity to "see through a scene and its many processes" (Clay, 1994).

Hung's (2011) work on youth-environment relations builds on concepts of 'geographical imagination' (Harvey, 1975), 'pedagogy of place' (Haymes, 1995), 'critical pedagogy of place' (Gruenewald, 2003), and 'spatial imaginary' (Wolford, 2004) with research that shows how youth perceive social and spatial relations, how this connects with imagined alternatives to existing conditions, and how they engage socially and politically in their communities. Hung (2011) states "young people's experiences, perception, and attachment to different places inform the strategies and stances of their social and political activities". Undoubtedly, a youth's biography is in part determined by the places they have been and their relationship with these surroundings. It is then a youth that is most fully aware of the social, spatial, political and economic forces on their communities that can best help to produce and maintain these spaces.

Environmental protection is a priority of rural youth in NL who connect benefits of a rural lifestyle and quality of life with the province's unique environment (CPRN Final Report, 2010). Youth see sustainability as a source of jobs (e.g. recycling, green technologies, and eco-tourism) and as the basis to secure viable lifestyles for their future. Instead of viewing environmental concerns as 'constraints on development', rural youth identify "critical resources in development to be conserved and protected" (Hamilton *et al.* 2000). Youth are keenly aware that their communities must develop a stronger understanding of the economic value of their natural resources and have called on NL officials to move away from single-resource dependency and help diversify the economy in rural areas (Pini and Mckenzie, 2006). However, a study of youth perceptions of their role in environmental stewardship in a remote coastal community showed that despite an attachment and appreciation of the pristine local environment, there was little discussion or acknowledgement of the need for "youth themselves to be *actively* involved in environmental stewardship" because they would leave the community to pursue economic opportunities elsewhere. (Hood *et al.* 2009) Further discussion with youth showed that "although many of them argued that they would be leaving the community in search of work, many also suggested that they will return home frequently to visit family and friends, and to engage in outdoor activities such as hunting and fishing that they could not find in other, larger, more urban places." Others also planned to return to live in the community permanently upon retirement "to enjoy the abundance of outdoor activities that the community offers, such as snowmobiling, hunting and fishing". (*ibid.*, p.621)

During interviews conducted at College of the North Atlantic - Grand Falls-Windsor, youth also spoke of wanting to leave but that they "would probably return to the community to visit their family and to enjoy the quiet". "I don't want to live here, but the nature is beautiful - there is lots of space for everyone". Although most were enthusiastic about the environmental beauty of the region and thought that it might be a possible draw for tourists, many were also very protective of their local environment - the Exploits River and the walking trails surrounding it - admitting to getting upset when they saw tourists fishing "their" river, or crowding "their" walking trail. In fact, during group discussions on local assets, some students spoke of trails that other were not aware of - when asked where these trails were located, they would not reveal their location for fear that "if everyone knows about it, then there will be too many people on them". Some people intended to "bring my [their] kids back so they can experience it, you know, it's fun-- hiking, fishing..." (Interviews, 2011)

These examples point to the relative cultural and personal importance placed emotionally for the local environment by NL rural youth. Although they leave communities to pursue greater economic opportunities, a tie to the land remains strong. However, these anecdotes also portray a lack of personal engagement and responsibility towards the maintenance of the local environment and its intangible benefits. Hood et al. (2009) suggest several reasons for this disengagement towards a natural and cultural value they so highly prize:
- A relative feeling of powerlessness vis-à-vis changing the environment (nature will prevail attitude);
- Not seeing or understanding their role in environmental stewardship because they will not be permanent residents;
- Few community-wide efforts to engage youth in environmental concerns through long-term economic development planning or waste management thus even when interested, youth cannot find an opportunity to participate;
- Few opportunities to voice their opinion on development that might negatively affect the environment;

Overall, Hood et al. (2009) believe that "disengagement" is a result of the local socioeconomic situation. They also argue that "engaging youth in long-term environmental stewardship activities require investment at a young age to become aware and involved in environmental stewardship activities" (*ibid*.p.622) This might also increase the likelihood of their participating in some form of "virtual stewardship" to engage youth who are away from the community to keep participating in local community development issues. "If people can remain connected socially through electronic media, it is also possible for them to retain a sense of connection to the physical environment through electronic media" (*ibid*., p.624). This connection to the community *can* contribute to youth choosing to return to their communities after having pursued education and initial work experiences. Furthermore, an early engagement in environmental stewardship and youth participation in community economic development (CED)- along with a strong mentorship component and career guidance- can increase the likelihood of youth choosing to study subjects related to sustainable development, or the green economy in order to live in their home communities while contributing to its development and maintaining a decent standard of living. (Peaslee and Hahn., 2011)

Youth Engagement
We have seen that youth are an active and passionate component of our communities, however the economic and demographic realities of rural NL require full engagement of these young citizens. Hall *et al.* (2000) describes engagement as "an arena in which relations linking individuals to their wider community, social and political contexts are continually discussed,

reworked an contested".   Levels of youth engagement--as with any community group--can range from contact with information dissemination to full partnerships with the empowering responsibilities of funding decisions, monitoring, and evaluation (Scottish Executive, 2006). Leadership skills and other benefits of higher-order engagement derive from meaningful and sustained community "involvement of a young person in an activity focusing outside the self" (CEYE, 2007).   The challenge for rural NL is to sufficiently engage youth in such activities to maintain or even grow current capacities.

A citizen's engagement can be modeled based on specific characteristics of **self**, **social**, and **system**.   This tiered model can be conceptualized as "(1) Individuals; (2) Who have relationships with other people; (3) Who live and work in environments and system" (CEYE, 2007).   Individual or "self" factors include values, temperament, and interests; social factors include peer pressure, socialization opportunities, and mentorship; system factors cover school attendance, organization affiliations, community membership, and nationality.   Ideally, these factors may favour new engagement opportunities or sustain existing engagements.   Contrarily, these factors may present barriers that inhibit a citizen's engagement. With this model of engagement, youth emerge as distinct from the general community with unique self, social, and system factors that are specific to a time and place.

Engaging youth--whether they are in or out of school--requires challenging and meaningful work on issues in the communities around them (Currie, 2004). Some universally-relevant activities include: working with children and the elderly, tackling environmental and social problems, increasing recreational opportunities, and advocating for better schools. However, engagement activities cannot be prescribed and Barnard et al. (2003) warns that "organizations need to offer flexible [and] relevant volunteer opportunities" in order to engage youth. Youth benefit from hands-on, growth-oriented engagement that supplies achievable goals and tangible benefits. Youth "want involvement, innovation, and impact" (Barnard *et al.* 2003).

As discussed below, family and community interactions are important predictors for youth engagement activities. The following two figures show (1) the relative importance of information sources in determining youth volunteerism, and (2) the proportion of youth in predominant volunteer organizations:

Figure 2: Sources of information that led to past volunteer positions for Newfoundland youth.
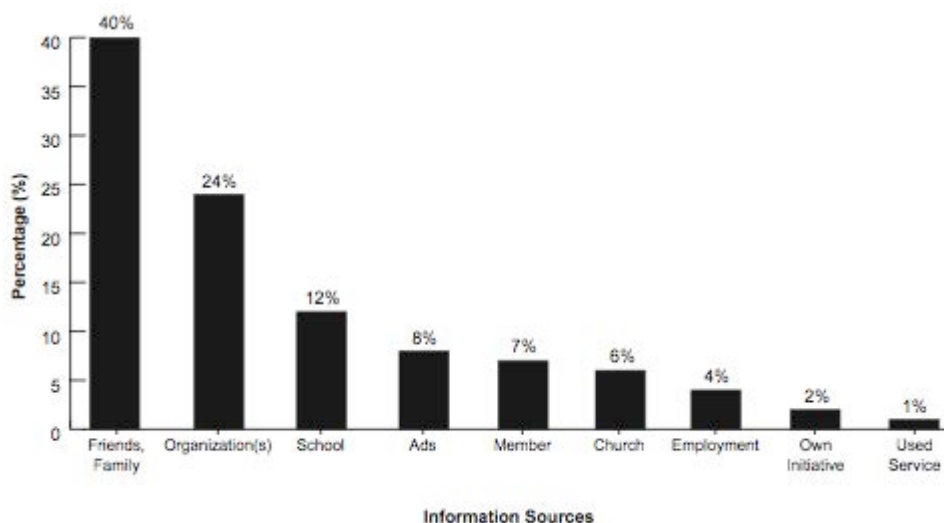
Source: Locke, F. and P.M. Rowe. 2006

Figure 3: Types of organizations with which young volunteers are involved.

Organization Type	Rural Age 15 - 19 (n=82 orgs)	Rural Age 20-29 (n=68 orgs)	Rural Age 30-34 (n=54 orgs)	Total Rural (n=204 orgs)	Urban (n=27 orgs)
Child, youth, and family	39%	22%	26%	30%	37%
Education and school	17%	13%	11%	14%	19%
Health	10%	15%	11%	12%	11%
Recreation and sports	10%	10%	13%	11%	4%
Municipal	2%	6%	9%	5%	4%
Church	9%	6%	2%	6%	11%
Other[17]	13%	28%	28%	22%	15%

Source: Locke, F. and P.M. Rowe. 2006

Community development projects benefit from youth involvement in any engagement activity, from communications to decision making. Engaging youth at an early age promotes leadership skills and development activities. The following are opportunities for youth engagement in public participation:

Information - youth may be relatively skilled in the production/publication of fact sheets, web sites, and open houses used to disseminate information of public interest.
Consultation - youth represent a vocal and articulate public sector that can provide useful feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions
Involvement - youth are energetic and passionate about issues that concern them; youth participation and leadership in workshops strengthen decision-making processes
Collaboration - youth bring the unique skills and perspectives of their generation that strengthens significance of consensus-building and the results of participatory decision-making
Empowerment - youth can be strong community leaders; giving youth real responsibilities such as reporting and decision-making powers builds leadership skills

Challenges of Rural Areas

Demographic Changes

The population of Newfoundland and Labrador's rural communities is decreasing as out-migration--particularly by rural youth--affects the overall development of the province (Locke and Rowe, 2006). Out-migration peaked in the 1990s with the collapse of the cod fishery, while 2007 recorded the greatest number of people moving into the province for 30 years (Youth Summit Report, 2008). The global financial crisis--which began in 2008--hit NL youth in the

province and across Canada. As a result, a population of young displaced workers has returned to the province and is competing with young people just entering the job market (CPRN, 2009). Additionally, the aging and increasingly urban population of NL presents significant challenges to rural communities.

NL possesses a relatively low population and construction density, which is realized by small communities scattered over large geographic areas. These rural areas are mostly made up of series of service centres in the form of small coastal towns, towns where recent economic and social change "make shared social membership – a status and identity common to all – problematic, and no longer something to be taken for granted" (Hall *et al.* 1999). Rural communities also face a declining tax base where taxes are increasingly allotted to infrastructure needs. Many communities have seen the traditional foundations of their economies eroded away and are now struggling with the loss or reduction of local services.

In situations where individuals are still socially (if not economically) connected with each other, share a sense of belonging, and closely identify with the area in which they live, volunteers spend countless hours working to improve their communities. However, these largely untrained volunteers practise traditional leadership techniques that "pose severe limitations in today's reality of rapid change" (Ayres, 2005). Locke and Rowe (2006) caution:

> *"Unless new volunteers can be successfully recruited and leadership skills developed, there will, in the foreseeable future, be even greater expectations placed on those engaged in community service activities, resulting in higher levels of stress and burnout and potentially, the shutting down of programs and services."*

Community Leadership

Newfoundland and Labrador has a celebrated history of volunteerism and 'giving back' activities across the nonprofit sector. Tradition, however is not immune to the social consequences of declining youth populations and even organizations with strong leadership are losing their capacity "to replenish their skill base and social networks" (Davies, 2008).

Rowe (2002) investigating the 'Leadership Gap' found that while many volunteers contribute to the public benefit, there is a real and growing concern "that people are becoming more reluctant to assume positions of responsibility". Civic burdens are increasingly being shouldered by a dedicated minority of senior and youth leaders, and this dependence is a potential threat to community sustainability. An obvious example of Leadership Gap can be found in municipal governments across NL; incorporated in the 1970s, some municipalities now have difficulty "finding enough people to run for council" (Locke and Rowe, 2010).

Davies (2009) investigated the importance of leadership development in building the capacity of rural communities. This research identified the importance of both *transactional* leadership (individual training programmes) and *transformational* leadership (collaborative community development) to retaining a community's capacity. Transactional leadership programmes seek to educate selected individuals in the use of project management tools. These formal training programmes assume that effective leadership requires "individuals competent in a number of pre-determined leadership tasks". Transformational leadership on the other hand seeks development goals that intend substantive change (Rada, 1999). Davies (2009) found that all projects in rural communities required transactional leadership skills of grant writing and project management, however the projects that used transformational leadership approaches "enhanced socio-economic vibrancy of the community". Indeed, community and business representatives that were interviewed argued against prescribed leadership development,

stating "these training programmes have had little impact in securing the socio-economic viability of rural communities" (Davies, 2009).

Canada needs the talents of all its citizens and investing in youth is therefore a prerequisite to maintaining a strong democracy. McKinnon et al. (2007) encourage "all of us--young people and older adults--[to] open our minds, revisit our definitions and diversify our research tools. By finding common language and fashioning new ways of engaging together, as Canadians, we can realize a more just, prosperous and caring Canada".

Community development projects currently employ collaborative, consensus-building approaches to address the changing needs of rural communities. However, the creation of sustainable communities requires a comprehensive understanding of space and preparation for change and cannot rely on traditional leadership models or capacity frameworks (Horlings and Padt, 2011). It should be noted that radical social change is not uncommon in NL history and community leadership has already experienced several major shifts since the early 20th century: charitable, paternalistic approach → advocacy, fight for social justice → consumer involvement and consumer-driven organizations → networks and coalitions → consultative and collaborative government processes (Locke and Rowe, 2010).

Creating plans and geographical practices must be "tied to principles of mutual respect and advantage rather than to politics of exploitation and domination" (Harvey, 2005). These principles emerge naturally when youth and adults work collectively to reimage and reimagine a more just society and can significantly influence community leaders as agents of change (Hung, 2011). Horlings and Padt (2011) identify four leadership principles similarly important to sustainable community development: the X-factor (personal qualities, motives and values), vital space (fostering flexible roles and coalitions), shared leadership (working across organizational boundaries), and bricolage (institutional networking arrangements).

Challenges for Youth Engagement

In this era of rapid cultural and technological change, today's decision-making environment exhibits important differences from previous generation's experiences:
Diversity of populations - there are few opportunities for people to communicate with each other or gain an understanding of another's perspectives
Cynicism - youth feel uninvolved in public issues because they feel powerless to make a difference or feel the decision has already been made
Polarisation - if youth have not been admitted into community decision making, they are more likely to act without regard to the community's broader concerns
Individualism - Land use and benefits planning suffers when community leaders address individual stakeholder needs over those of the broader community
Role of elected officials - The expectation that elected officials can, or even should, solve today's complex public issues is not only unrealistic, it sets the foundation for ultimate failure (Heifetz and Sinder 1988).

Recent literature on youth and civic (dis)engagement aims to understand why youth are not engaged and to determine how to encourage participation (Bucy, 2003; Iyengar & Jackman, 2003; Putnam, 2000). However, this problem is not one-sided. Adults who believe that youth cannot or will not contribute substantively to decision-making processes create barriers to youth involvement and investment in youth initiatives. Despite NL youth ranking among the most active volunteer sectors in the province, adults do not typically view youth as effective decision-

makers and rarely create opportunities for young people to take responsibility. Furthermore, disadvantaged youth are portrayed in the policy arena "as being to blame for their lack of engagement with conceptions of citizenship" (Alexander, 2008). Instead, social and institutional structures of inequality are more widely understood factors that determine youth civic participation, "providing opportunities for some youth while limiting possibilities for others" (Bell, 2005). Decision makers must employ best practices in youth engagement to remove barriers to sustainable communities such as prejudice and exclusion.

Two distinctive approaches of understanding youth citizenship have emerged: one views youth as future citizens and focuses on skill development for future responsibilities, the other approach views youth as existing citizens and strives to incorporate elements of engagement into their lives (Bell, 2005). A modern concern for emerging community leaders is the burden of responsibility demanded of their rarefied talents. Brodhead (2006) describes two inevitable outcomes of these situations: (1) young leaders are given responsibilities without the support or time to gain necessary skills, and (2) overworked volunteers burn out before their time.

The profile of youth participation by so-called "Generation Y" (born after 1979) is complex and ultimately incomplete (McKinnon *et al.* 2007). Despite more formal education and training than their elders, many members of Generation Y fail to grasp the functioning of government and political institutions and do not make connections between politics and their day-to-day lives. What is known is that youth want to participate in meaningful activities, and many volunteer organizations in NL cannot ensure positive experiences for them (Locke and Rowe, 2010). Turnover and the reputation of the transience of youth are well known and documented challenges to working with youth (Brodhead, 2006). As young people are figuring out who they are and where they want to be, frequent change and movement can be expected. Struggling organizations may need to redesign their orientation and training, create flexible time slots for engagement, or secure resources to reimburse the costs of volunteering. Unfortunately, established attitudes and current organizational structures do not support youth and adult partnerships in community development. Unproductive attitudes and lack of support for inter-generational partnerships to change may be the most significant test of youth inclusion within the governance of organizations and communities.

Youth and CED profiles demonstrate that youth can and do offer substantial contributions to decision-making processes. Certainly, involving young people in organizational governance represents one of the most innovative strategies in community development. Here it is noted that structural inequalities at the political level have created concerns that youth engagement through Youth Advisory Councils provides politicians with more than is provided to the youth involved (Brodhead, 2006). Still today, few communities in Canada possess the funding, procedures, or infrastructure to normalize routine youth participation in civil society. A persistent engagement infrastructure would increase development efficiency and enable the development of stronger community partnerships.

Below are lists of issues that present challenges for the voluntary sector in Newfoundland and Labrador today (from Locke and Rowe, 2010):
Financial issues
Financial instability and sustainability of organizations; makes planning for the future virtually impossible
Competition for funding
Pressure to fundraise
Demand for greater accountability
Financial management and accounting skills

Legal liability, risk management and high costs of insurance
Cost of volunteer programs (i.e. coordinating and managing)

Human resource issues (paid staff and volunteers)
Employee turnover
Training opportunities for staff, boards and volunteers
Employee salaries and benefits such as health and pension plans
Leadership development and succession planning
Increasing demand on volunteers and volunteer burnout
Volunteers, especially in rural areas, sometimes feel abused by criticism from non-volunteers
Competition for volunteers and problems engaging youth
Changing demographics and decreased citizen involvement
Coordinating and managing volunteers
High cost of volunteering (e.g., transportation and the expectation to contribute financially)

General voluntary sector issues
Lack of recognition and appreciation for the voluntary sector
Lack of respect for organizations and volunteers in some positions
Grant application procedures are onerous, and government often reduces funding requests
Collaboration with the federal and provincial governments, municipalities, foundations, private sector and the public is essential
Insurance costs remain high even with the tax eliminated
Government funding to organizations often makes it difficult to speak out, as organizations may fear their funding could be in jeopardy
Communications, accessing information, sharing resources and best practice

Loss of Local Environmental Knowledge

· **Changes in Land Use**
Destructuration can be explained as the gradual and unplanned introduction of various forms of land use that lead to: loss of potential, difficult cohabitation of uses and populations, waste of resources, environmental degradation, land management problems, premature aging of infrastructure and increased management costs (Vezina *et al.* 2003). In rural regions, rural regions manifest destructuration in degraded forests, urban sprawl, increasing truck traffic on rural roads, tourist/resident conflicts, under-funded services, etc. Often, these communities are located near major towns or have seen a sudden increase in their population numbers due to new economic opportunities in the region. The Coast of Bays in Central Newfoundland is a region where increasing opportunities in the aquaculture industry and the associated population growth is putting pressure on the existing physical and social infrastructure of communities. While young people leave rural communities, retirees, families and tourists have been moving into many areas increasing the demand for recreational opportunities such as hiking or snowmobiling paths. Furthermore, lands located near the ocean or near ponds can become homes or cabins creating land use conflicts. Finally, historically outport and remote coastal communities had to be self-sufficient in terms of food resources. However, with fewer youth choosing to remain in rural communities and a decreasing interest in (and need for) farming, many arable lands are being left fallow. In many communities, knowledge of local wild plants and the location of the best berry pastures or hunting grounds are being lost with the older generations.

· **Changing Priorities**

"Devitalization can be defined as a process leading to a progressive [...] decline in socioeconomic activity within a given spatial entity, the effects of which primarily impact upon demographics, land occupancy, habitat, service infrastructures, quality of life, and future outlook" (Dugas, 1991). With the cod fishery collapse in the 1990s, youth rarely look towards the ocean and its resources to make a living as was the tradition in previous generations. Furthermore, they are wary of building economic success upon any individual natural resource, urging for the diversification of the economy (YRAS, 2009). Most youth expect to migrate out of their towns to make a living. This changing economic and social dynamic has reduced the amount of knowledge that youth will have regarding their local environment as compared to previous generations who often made a living off the land and the sea. The local environment and the land is seen much more as a "provider of recreational options than something to make a living off of" and "pristine environments are being destroyed by ATV fanatics wanting to experience the wilderness". (Interviews, 2011)

· **Changing Family/Community interactions**

Living in the time of a major generational shift that is characterized by an aging boomer cohort and an increase in the median age to 39, citizens have become more individualistic, educated, and less deferential to authority (Wong, 2009). While the national agenda is currently dominated by the boomer generation, intergenerational issues such as succession planning

"Being at the cusp of a major generational shift characterized by a large aging boomer cohort and a dramatic increase in the median age to 39, succession planning will involve many challenges as a result of intergenerational issues. […] Citizens have become increasingly less deferential to authority, and more individualistic, educated, informed and diverse. While social changes may explain the gloomy expectations for the next generation, addressing issues such as transparency, legitimacy, and efficiency in government should be the focus rather than the current preoccupation with trust. The overwhelmingly pessimistic outlook for the future can be attributed to the frustrations associated with a national agenda dominated by the interests and concerns of the boomer generation, which seems to perpetuate cynicism." (Wong, 2009)

Evidence gathered by the Community Services Council of Newfoundland and Labrador (CSC) indicates that youth may not be interested in traditional social organizations such as service clubs and church auxiliaries. This may partly be due to the breakdown of traditional family structures and a decrease in the time spent with the family unit. If, as McKinnon et al. (2007) suggest, "family context can influence youth perceptions and attitudes about participation" and that "the family plays an important role in the transmission of knowledge and values"- changes in family dynamics can be causing the loss of environmental knowledge and changing the nature of youth engagement in communities due to "a lack of opportunities to acquire civic knowledge about their communities" (Hung, 2011). Arnot and Dillabough (2000) also address the "gendered nature of citizenship and argue that it has a profound effect on who can participate, who believes they can participate, and what forms of participation are allowed by whom".

Results from CPRN's dialogues and youth workshops lend credence to the argument that many young people feel that they lack the knowledge and skills to engage in the formal political arena. In fact, participants in the March 2007 Youth Workshop felt burdened (and sometimes overwhelmed) by their perceptions of elders' expectations that they must fix the mistakes of previous generations (CPRN, 2007). Several referred to climate changes as an example. As one participant described it, "we're told to fix things but the tools we get are a few nails and no

hammer" (CPRN, 2007). Llewellyn and colleagues emphasize that there has been little attention given to the question about what skills are required to make political knowledge useful. CPRN, 2007 is not included in Bibl.

Their findings from focus groups, interviews and questionnaires lead them to conclude that "youth do not possess skills for political action." In fact, these authors argue that most of the skills taught "are situated as hypothetical or without application beyond the school walls" (Llewellyn *et al.* 2007; McKinnon *et al.* 2007).

Sustainable Community Economic Development

Understanding the notion of community
A growing focus for public policy-making institutions, non-governmental organizations and local programs and initiatives alike, the "community" has been deemed as an essential component of increased economic, cultural and economic status for societies around the world. In rich or poorer nations concepts such as community engagement, community based research, community-based conservation often lead to a grander goal of community development.

The village 'community' was believed to be the foundational unit for active citizenship and democratic practice through the emphasis on shared voluntary work. This communal work, it was argued, endued the sense of common purpose, social unity, individual restraint and responsible action to the community thus making those engaged in the work to become responsible democratic citizens. In parallel, the movement positioned itself as a non-state actor capable of coordinating activities and programs that did not use up state resources and created an efficient and harmonious social sphere (Burchardt, 2011). In a period of post-war Britain, rural communities emerged as being able to forge the ideal society and of re-building the country through voluntary service and collective action.

Kaufman (1959) speaks of the community as an "interactional model" explicitly making the criteria of "community action" as essential in order to negotiate between community and non-community. In this understanding, action towards an agreed upon goal is essential for a community's existence and provides the roots in understanding the present-day need of 'engaging communities' in policies and common projects.

Thus, since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and cemented after WWI, three prevailing conceptual notions of 'community' emerged as separate entities (Kaufman, 1959; Agrawal and Gibson, 1999):
·   Community as a social unit of which space is an integral part;
·   Community as a social structure indicative of a way of life;
·   Community as people with shared norms that act together in common concerns of life.

While sympathetic to the argument that heterogeneity is a part of communities, Liepins (2000) points to an argument that 'community' is still valuable in that "it distinguishes our knowledge of what community is to what we would like it to be".
1.   'Community' is a social construct and depends on the way that people live out their personal and collective definitions of 'community'. People within and adjacent to a community in question can hold various positions. Furthermore, people beyond a given community can be powerful in "constructing or constraining understandings about it".

2.   "People will develop shared *meanings*" about how they are connected in a community. We can come to comprehend their meaning of 'community' through the analysis of their beliefs and the ways they express their connection in local oral and written narratives.

3.   The way people enact 'community' relations and construct their meanings of 'community' are based on "a range of processes or practices that connect people with key activities, institutions and spaces". Practices can be those that are both accepted and contested and will range between formal and informal processes.

4.   "Communities will be embodied through specific spaces and structures". Thus, the people, meanings and practices that define a 'community' will take on physical forms as key sites or organizational spaces.

The idea that communities can somehow provide people a channel through which to engage with each other and to negotiate power dynamics with authorities outside of this space remains crucial to the understanding of the term. Thus, "rather than passively suffer the consequences of external pressures, community development approaches provide useful strategies and frameworks for communities to take proactive measures to prepare for and build a better future." (Reimer, 2006) Within this framework, strong levels of cohesion can result in stronger and more internally resilient communities.

Defining Community Economic Development (CED) and Socio-Ecological System Resilience
"CED can be defined as action by people locally to create economic opportunities and enhance social conditions in their communities on a sustainable and inclusive basis, particularly with those who are most disadvantaged" (Brodhead, 2006). Community economic development (CED) has been described as "people organizing themselves to take action in the community where they live to create economic opportunities on a sustainable basis" (Goldenberg, 2008). Tied to this concept are the very important notions of "local action", "creating economic opportunities", "enhancing social conditions", "sustainability" and "inclusiveness". CED is the action of creating a resilient community.

Resiliency in ecosystems refers to its ability to tolerate shocks and rebuilt itself when needed. However, since humans depend on ecological systems around us and continuously impact the ecosystems in which we live, socio-ecological resilience is associated with the linked social and ecological systems. "Resilience" as applied to ecosystems, or to integrated systems of people and the natural environment, has three defining characteristics:
- The amount of change the system can undergo and still retain the same controls on function and structure
- The degree to which the system is capable of self-organization
- The ability to build and increase the capacity for learning and adaptation
(Resilience Alliance, 2012)

Understanding the role of youth in the socio-ecological resilience of rural communities

Folke et al. (2003, 2005) explored the dimensions and the nature of governance that enable adaptive ecosystem-based management and identified the four critical factors for dealing with social-ecological dynamics during periods of rapid change and reorganization, like those presently occurring in many rural communities in NL:
1. Learning to live with change and uncertainty.
2. Combining different types of knowledge for learning.

3. Creating opportunities for self-organization toward social-ecological resilience.
4. Nurturing sources of resilience for renewal and reorganization. (Pahl-Wostl, 2007)

Resilient communities have different assets that contribute to their continued resiliency: social, economic, natural and cultural capital can be understood in ways that make these crucial for youth engagement and the development and survival of rural communities.

· **Social Capital**
Lee et al. (2005) have described the importance of the concept of social capital in an attempt to capture the 'intangibles', or non-economic aspects of society, that promote economic growth or more widely positive development' and further argue that , the amount of capital built depends on the quality and quantity of   interactions' and that a strong sense of shared identity is an aspect of social capital that a community can mobilise for developmental benefits'. Thus, situations where leaders are networking to create opportunities for communities to come together through effective engagement to consolidate their identity as a unit can allow rural communities to move forward in goal setting and in setting an agenda for future development.

Foster-Fishman et al. (2009) described that a "sense of community fosters shared norms among neighbours and helps to connect neighbours together so they can collectively work together for change". During interviews of current community leaders in NL, a shared characteristic emerged. Leaders are people who have been engaged in community processes from an early age and 'feel a sense of pride' in the region, who leave to increase their own capacity through education but who see an inherent value of their community and so will choose to go back. Horlings and Padt (2011) view leadership as "crucial in reinventing regions and branching out from old 'economic' path to something new in order to create more sustainable regional development". Creating conditions where leaders are emerging from rural communities, in part through effective engagement processes, is vital to the future development of rural Newfoundland.

However, leadership capacity building programs are not enough. Foster-Fishman et al. (2009) described that a "sense of community fosters shared norms among neighbours and helps to connect neighbours together so they can collectively work together for change". It is to be noted that effective community building also needs followers who will be engaged in the efforts identified by those in leadership roles because change is more likely to occur when a broad citizen base become organized (Foster-Fishman et al. 2009). Thus, effective citizen engagement must be a process in which both leaders' vision for the region and their inherent skills are built upon but where collective civic 'sense of community' or pride in place is valued to create conditions for vibrant and resilient rural communities.

In their study of low-income neighbourhood community engagement practices, Foster-Fishman et al. (2009) noted that two factors- neighbourhood capacity and neighbourhood readiness- influenced residents who were more likely to become engaged and to report that their community was engaged. They posited that when individuals have strong social ties with each other and believe that working together can make a difference, a general expectation within the community to pursue efforts to improve local conditions can emerge. This can become a social trap where communities with weak ties between members do not get involved which leads to less engagement. Foster-Fishman et al. (2009) state that "self-identified leaders in our sample really do view themselves as neighborhood leaders. They do not necessarily require others in the neighborhood to be active to impel them toward engagement, nor do they wait until problems are severe; they primarily need to have the skills and, presumably, the self-efficacy to use these skills." Thus, strong leadership in contexts where the community at large is absent

from the civic process is essential to mobilize communities around issues, often through the formation of essential partnerships and to bring a sense of hope to the community. In these processes, youth are serious assets to the community and should be viewed as equal partners in deciding and creating change to their communities.

"Learning to share authority in decision-making is central to effective collaborative engagement processes, because collaboration- unlike consultation- requires all participants to take responsibility and accountability for their decisions" (NRTEE-PPF, 2010) This concept is important for rural communities that are having trouble engaging youth. During interviews, many people and youth felt that "many leaders were unwilling to pass on the torch", "youth were engaged in a way that was tokenistic, without valuing their opinion and without offering them a fair chance at making their ideas heard and implemented" (Interviews, 2011) Youth are social assets for the community and should be effectively engaged because they must take responsibility and be accountable for their decisions and visions.

Case Study: Youth Centre in Harbour Breton
The Youth Centre in Harbour Breton is a dynamic and youth-focused organisation in the community that is a model for youth engagement in the province. The Board itself is composed 50% of youth, aged 12-17 from the community and youth are thus able to direct what programs and ideas should be worked on and funded. Youth are involved at every level of the organisation but leaders are keen to point out that informal structures are important in gaining the trust of youth. In the end, the organisation relies heavily on youth volunteers to be accountable for their actions and their programs. Staff will invest time and energy in fostering relationships with youth and the community and as a result, see many of them taking on increased responsibility and build their own confidence levels. To engage youth, it is necessary to give them responsibility and trust, they pick up quickly when other organisations don't allow for real dialogue and thus are 'turned off' from traditional engagement processes which are often viewed as 'tokenistic' and 'patronizing'. The Youth Centre is also involved in many community partnerships--- in fact, they are viewed as essential, to be able to continue the work of the centre as they allow for scarce resources within the community to be shared between organisations to achieve a better community. Inter-generational knowledge transfers are important and the CYN and organisations dedicated to seniors healthy living have numerous projects working together to achieve similar goals of community development. (Interviews, 2011)

· **Economic Capital**

Although rural areas are often perceived and represented as places without the ability to help people create serious livelihoods, natural resources, small but skilled and hard-working population and quality of life make these regions attractive for many reasons:

i. Youth benefit from leaving the community to pursue an education and other experiences. Rural communities need educated and knowledgeable youth to become community and business leaders. By making the community an attractive place to raise children and a place where they can enjoy a good standard of living and a high quality of life- for example, through the provision of low income housing; mentoring and business assistance programs for entrepreneurship and through a strong social cohesion and network, rural communities can have an economic advantage over their urban counterpart; (Reimer and Bollman, 2004)

ii. Rural communities are perceived as being safer than urban cities- a community asset. During interviews with youth, many considered moving back to Grand Falls-Windsor to raise their family

because they believe the community was safer than bigger cities. (Interviews, 2011; Reimer and Bollman, 2004)

iii. "David Freshwater, among others, has suggested that successful rural communities in the future will have a manufacturing base (except for those with potential tourism attractions). Jack Stabler argues that tradable services will also provide a strong economic base. Peter Apedaile argues that rural communities will become a habitat economy -- a friendly locally-based environment in which to live without being tied to the hustle and bustle economic imperative of the metro economy." (Reimer and Bollman, 2004)

iv. A pristine local environment is an asset to rural communities as more people are placing higher value on a clean environment for increased quality of life for their families. Identifying the environmental assets that are vulnerable and protecting them while promoting a sustainable use of the wide natural resources of rural communities can attract many youth to these areas; (*ibid.*, p.3))

v. Many rural communities are seeing an influx of retirees, families and foreign tourists- all looking for areas rich in natural resources, safe and that provide recreational opportunities. This influx can create new job opportunities for young people. However, an increase in population also means an increase in housing prices so affordable housing must be taken into consideration (Peaslee and Hahn, 2011).

vi. Rural development strategies should reflect regional assets, including the natural environment. Industries such as green technology, biotechnology, biomedical research, specialty value-added food production, organic food production, and tourism should be considered and present and upcoming economic opportunities should be communicated to youth in local high schools (Peaslee and Hahn, 2011).

vii. Partnerships with local organisations and businesses can play a key role in increasing youth engagement with the community- while contributing to learning and economic outcomes. In rural Maine for example, a high school "formed a partnership with regional colleges to create a community-based aquaculture program. Students raise fish, maintain a hydroponic greenhouse, farm mussels, sell bait, and are engaged in a drift study with local fishermen. Case study data suggest that the program has been effective in realizing its goal of increasing school attendance, decreasing dropout rates, and enhancing students' educational and career aspirations" (Peaslee and Hahn, 2011). Similar types of partnerships and civic ecology education increases the sense of pride and community of youth, helps them understand the importance of natural resources and connects different generations in knowledge sharing for the goal of community development.

· **Natural Capital**

Newfoundland and Labrador is a province blessed with many natural resources which has and continues to contribute to the development of the provincial economy. Despite the collapse of the cod stocks and the closure of the fishery in the 1990s, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have many resources to be proud of. The vast wildnerness, bogs and oceans have created a unique landscape and culture for people of the province.

Although the province is pursuing much oil and gas development, mining; forestry and the recently approved Lower Churchill hydroelectric power generation project, it is uniquely positioned to become a leader in the green economy sector. Wind turbines have been installed

in three sites across the province, with the potential of dozens and even hundreds more being installed in other sites to provide clean energy to the province and for potential export (Centre for Energy, 2012). New and sustainable developments in green technology should be explored for rural areas to make use of their natural capital while maintaining a sustainable and diversified economy. Exploring ideas of food security through the creation of community farms that use community-generated waste for compost, biofuel production using algea, building underwater current-powered turbines are all ideas that harness the environment while engaging youth in new areas of economic growth.

Eco-tourism is a fast growing industry in the province. National Geographic has twice named Newfoundland's Avalon Peninsula in their "top" coastal and adventure destinations (2010, 2012). The international growing recognition of the island's vast resources is an opportunity for youth in rural areas to engage in building eco-tourism companies that will support the protection of the environment while increasing the development of communities across the province.

Environmental knowledge and understanding of the systems at play in the natural world of the province are crucial for increased economic development that is innovative and sustainable. In order to increase the interest for these fields in youth, engagement and knowledge mobilisation in local environmental stewardship must be prioritized by rural communities. "Rural local governments need to recognize that they cannot ignore the skills, knowledge, resources and commitment of their own citizens nor fail to utilize these to further local natural resource management" (Pini and Mckenzie, 2006).

"Civic ecology emerges from the actions of local residents wanting to make a difference in the social and natural environment of their community and is recognizable when both people and the environment benefit measurably and memorably from these actions." (Krasny *et al.* 2010) This concept can be harnessed for NL's rural communities in that it is through the engagement of youth from an early age that local environmental stewardship will take place and will "foster social attributes of resilient social-ecological systems, including volunteer engagement and social connectedness. Civic ecology education refers to the learning, as well as the social and ecosystem outcomes that occur when young people and other novices engage alongside experienced adults in civic ecology practice" (Krasny *et al.* 2010) The engagement of humans with nature in can foster community well-being and restore communities (Tidball & Krasny, 2007). "Today's post☐industrial society challenges regions to invest in new forms of sustainability. They can do so by developing 'eco☐economic innovations' based on regional qualities and the availability of local and regional assets such as water, landscape quality and forest. Strengthening the uniqueness of each region makes them more sustainable and less vulnerable to over☐exploitation and momentary competition among each other" (Horlings and Padt, 2011).

Mobilizing Local Knowledge

Folke et al. (2003) point out that social learning is essential for building up the experience needed to cope with uncertainty and change. They emphasize that " ... knowledge generation in itself is not sufficient for building adaptive capacity [...] to meet the challenge of navigating nature's dynamics ... " and conclude that " ... learning how to sustain social-ecological systems in a world of continuous change needs an institutional and social context within which to develop and act." (Pahl-Wostl, 2007.) By recognizing that citizens have vested interests in their communities and want to be involved, community leaders should seek to engage citizens in the public space.

This is particularly true in the stewardship field. As we have seen, rural youth place a high value on the environment. Often, their ties to the rural communities where they grew up are strongly linked to their experience of a pristine environment in which they can continue to exercise recreational and some cultural practices such as hunting. However, research by Hood et al. (2011) suggested that there was little discussion or acknowledgement of the need for "youth themselves to be *actively* involved in environmental stewardship" because they would leave the community to pursue economic opportunities elsewhere. Paradoxically, these youth often identified the natural environment as their main reason for possibly returning to the community, whether for vacation, to raise a family or retirement. There is an assumption that local environments will remain static throughout the years however, there is a greater need for integration of youth into local environmental stewardship action. "For civic ecology practices to endure, they must continue to integrate new participants, including young people. Civic ecology education refers to the learning and to the social and ecological outcomes that occur when youth and others become engaged in civic ecology practices" (Krasny *et al.* 2010). "Because civic ecology education involves the integration of novice learners into communities of more experienced civic ecologists, socio-cultural theories that emphasize learning as participation in communities of practice are relevant" (Wenger *et al.* 2002; Krasny *et al.* 2010).

This mentoring process is important because organizations in rural Newfoundland and Labrador must focus on outreach and retention practices that support the involvement of youth to cultivate a climate of sustainable civic participation and responsibility. "Young people need encouragement, trust, and appropriate training and supervision if they are to assume positions of responsibility that will build their leadership skills" (Locke and Rowe, 2006). Intergenerational programs are defined as "those interventions that aim to increase cooperation, interaction, or exchange between any two generations through the sharing of skills, knowledge or exchange between old and young" (MacCallum et al., 2010). In the context of the social economy, especially within the conservation and resource management sectors local knowledge is crucial for sustainable future economic growth and to find new solutions for local environmental and economic problems that have roots in past actions and behaviours. Cross-generational knowledge sharing has been proven to be an effective way to foster innovation in sustainable resource management and local development in many parts of the world (SISC, 2009).

Despite the very obvious benefit for engaging and mentoring of youth, Locke and Rowe (2010) point out that "some organizations continue to operate in very traditional ways and many may have had the same leaders for decades, do not wish or know how to change, or may not want to give up control. This may be unwelcoming to new recruits. It also points out the need for succession planning and relinquishing of responsibility." This is concurrent with many of the opinions with interviewees who felt that "many organisations were not welcoming to youth or their ideas", that community leaders must realize that "they are part of the reason why youth are not participating" and "that no one is willing to trust us". (Interviews, 2011)

Although "top down leaders" can be successful in acquiring new funding and projects for their community, their failure to engage their community and especially, the youth- who will decide whether the community survives or not in the future- will be detrimental to the community in the long-term (Davies, 2006). The recognition that mentorship is a critical part of youth engagement within CED is growing and some organizations have dedicated time for mentorship and knowledge-sharing as part of their programs (Brodhead, 2006. p.16) In fact, when mutually respectful youth- adult collaborations took place, "most frequently, adults concluded that their level of involvement in the work at hand increased because of their collaboration with youth [...]

...the emotional connection that youth bring to community and youth-oriented issues tends to spark adult interest in these issues." (Brodhead, 2006)

Strategies for Transforming Rural Youth

Newfoundland
The province of Newfoundland and Labrador has invested many resources engaging youth across the province, especially during the preparation of the Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy (2009). The YRAS was based on extensive engagement with youth 18-30 and concluded with the creation of an Office of Youth Engagement, which is responsible for the coordination of youth- related program and policy development. A set of Action Items emerged from the YRAS and is currently being implemented at the provincial level. The Office of Youth Engagement is unique in Canada. Despite an extensive consultation and collaboration and despite the creation and existence of various groups aimed at engaging youth from the province, many youth are still unaware of the opportunities that they have access to at a provincial level. During interviews, youth acknowledged that resources for entrepreneurship and capacity-building did exist but were unaware of where to find the information and who to talk to about them (Interviews, 2011).

As indicated, the youth surveyed during the YRAS process and during interviews for this project placed high value on the environment but were not sure about the link between environmental protection and youth attraction and retention. Although this report has tried to investigate this link, there is the necessity for in-depth understanding of how rural youth perceive their rural environment and how stewardship can be increased.

Quebec
Quebec's on-going campaign to increase the number of youth in rural areas includes a job-board and career center to match career preferences and available jobs in rural areas, the possibility of visiting the site and resources to settle into the community.

Nova Scotia
The Nova Scotia government, with funds from ACOA and the Federal government ran a brief pilot project that allowed young people from across Canada to visit the province and to be matched with opportunities in rural areas of the province. (ACOA, 2006)

Government of South Australia
The Government of South Australia hosts an "Office for Youth" responsible for the delivery of youth-related programs, invests in initiatives and instigates collaborative youth policy solutions. They are currently developing a plan for youth engagement and will soon have an Internet-based tool for young people in the region to collaborate on various programs and projects. Similar to the program in Newfoundland, all policy and program directions are provided by extensive consultations with youth in the region. (Govt. of South Australia, 2012)

A Vibrant and Engaged Youth

Identifying "young people" is problematic because of the huge age range that exists in most assumptions about them. Youth—either as a social or demographic category—is neither a homogeneous generation nor a statistical age group (Alexander, 2008; Bonder, 2000). A culturally predominant image of rural youth as apathetic and uninvolved in their communities belies the fact that all youth are "involved and impacted by action within their community" (Brodhead, 2006). Indeed, it is the way we define youth in our communities as either citizens or

'citizens in the making' that largely determines their role in community leadership (Alexander, 2008). A Youth Summit held in St. John's (2008) was attended by 140 youth from the province who developed policy recommendations for the retention and attraction of youth to NL. The majority (4 of 7) of policy directions and actions of the final YRAS "related to supporting the building capacity of youth while increasing sustainable economic futures and ensuring environmental protection of the province's natural resources" (YRAS, 2009).   The youth delegates placed a high level of importance on the environment, however "it's connection to youth retention and attraction is indirect" (Youth Summit Report, 2008). The Community and Policy Research Networks (CPRN) Final Report did recommend comprehensive green innovation priorities including: energy conservation and the development of renewable resources, province-wide recycling and composting programmes, increased food security for rural areas, promotion of eco-tourism, creating a green economy, and broadening environmental safeguards that protect the province's natural resources (YRAS, 2009).

Strong social networks and a physical connection with the land produces a "feeling of belonging" (Osler and Starkey, 2005) for rural youth that forms an integral part of their citizenship. Alexander (2008) "outlines the importance of a young person's sense of belonging in the construction of a personal and highly specific 'civic identity'". For example, the youth's community involvement is enhanced when rural regions are believed to be rich in social, cultural, and/or natural resources. Youth are keenly aware that their communities must develop a stronger understanding of the economic value of their natural resources and have called on NL officials to move away from single-resource dependency and help diversify the economy in rural areas (Pini and Mckenzie, 2006). However, a study of youth perceptions of their role in environmental stewardship in a remote coastal community showed that despite an attachment and appreciation of the pristine local environment, there was little discussion or acknowledgement of the need for "youth themselves to be *actively* involved in environmental stewardship" because they would leave the community to pursue economic opportunities elsewhere. (Hood *et al.* 2009)

Engaging youth--whether they are in or out of school--requires challenging and meaningful work on issues in the communities around them (Currie, 2004). Community development projects benefit from youth involvement in any engagement activity, from communications to decision making. Engaging youth at an early age promotes leadership skills and development activities. Creating plans and geographical practices must be "tied to principles of mutual respect and advantage rather than to politics of exploitation and domination" (Harvey, 2005). These principles emerge naturally when youth and adults work collectively to reimage and reimagine a more just society and can significantly influence community leaders as agents of change (Hung, 2011).

Youth and CED profiles demonstrate that youth can and do offer substantial contributions to decision-making processes. Certainly, involving young people in organizational governance represents one of the most innovative strategies in community development. Changes in land use, changing priorities and changes in family/community Interactions have caused a tremendous loss in the Local Environmental Knowledge in rural communities. However, a knowledge and stewardship of the environment is crucial for increased resiliency of social-ecological systems. In rural communities, leaders are often people who have been engaged in community processes from an early age and 'feel a sense of pride' in the region, who leave to increase their own capacity through education but who see an inherent value of their community and so will choose to go back. Foster-Fishman et al. (2009) posited that when individuals have strong social ties with each other and believe that working together can make a difference, a general expectation within the community to pursue efforts to improve local conditions can

emerge. Civic ecology education refers to the learning and to the social and ecological outcomes that occur when youth and others become engaged in civic ecology practices" (Krasny et al. 2010). Participating in community inter-generational driven programs can increase the sense of community and the social cohesion of youth. This can be a very large influence when making the choice whether to settle in rural or not.

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