



Sustainable Communities in Canada's Oil Sands Regions: The Oil Sands Leadership Initiative's Collaborative Approach

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Abstract: The Canadian oil sands industry is using collaboration to drive innovation and address challenges in oil sands development. An early innovator and leader of successful collaboration is the Oil Sands Leadership Initiative (OSLI). OSLI is a collaborative network of oil sands companies including ConocoPhillips Canada, Shell Canada, Statoil, Suncor Energy Inc., Nexen Inc., and Total E&P Canada, all operating in Canada's oil sands located in northern Alberta. OSLI's objective is to achieve step-change performance improvements in environmental, social, and economic sustainability. To support its efforts, OSLI created four working groups focussing on water management, land stewardship, technology breakthrough, and sustainable communities. This paper reports on the activities of the Sustainable Communities Working Group and its sustainable communities initiative.

The objective of the sustainable communities initiative is to foster strong, collaborative partnerships among industry, communities and other stakeholders in the oil sands region, based on a shared vision of safe, healthy and sustainable communities. To achieve this objective, an innovative approach has been developed that promotes "authentic collaboration." It features relationships built on trust, joint decision-making, shared responsibility and accountability to each other. This paper discusses this approach and outlines some of the essential lessons learned in its development and implementation.

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The Sustainable Communities Working group members are as follows:

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Introduction

The Oil Sands Leadership Initiative (OSLI) is a collaborative network of six like-minded companies operating in Canada’s oil sands region. Sharing an interest in innovation and strong and faster action on issues arising from current oil sands extraction methods, OSLI member companies have been working together on a voluntary basis since 2008. In 2010, OSLI was formally founded, and a Charter was signed to guide collaborative efforts aimed at achieving step-change improvements in environmental, social and economic sustainability. Original founding members included ConocoPhillips Canada, Statoil Canada, Suncor Energy Inc., Nexen Inc., and Total E&P Canada. Shell Canada joined OSLI in 2011. Each company develops its own assets individually, but collaborates in non-competitive areas.

OSLI has been addressing four strategic areas where it believes companies can make a significant difference by working together: water management, land stewardship, technological breakthrough, and sustainable communities. This paper provides an overview of OSLI’s sustainable communities initiative, including a description of the approach used and a discussion of the essential lessons learned in striving for social sustainability. The paper also describes two pilot projects launched as part of the work that involve the “authentic collaboration” of OSLI’s Sustainable Communities Working Group members with two communities populated primarily by Aboriginal peoples in northern Alberta, Canada and other partners and stakeholders. “Aboriginal peoples” is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. The Canadian constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people: Indians (commonly referred to as First Nations), Métis and Inuit. These are three distinct peoples with unique histories, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs (<http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100013785>).

Our understanding of social sustainability is inspired by the definition of sustainable development quoted in *Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland Report. This definition states:

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
(Brundtland, 1987) G.H. *Our Common Future*. World Commission on Environment and Development. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987)

OSLI recognized that collaborative work relationships that are multi-dimensional and multi-directional can be effective vehicles to meet social, environmental and economic performance challenges. OSLI has focused its initiatives on supporting step-changes in performance in all three sectors. Social sustainability is one of the three key dimensions of “sustainable development”, the other two being environmental and economic, that are closely intertwined. What happens in the economy and the environment has impact on the human social condition and vice versa. This recognition has formed the basis of sustainable

development activity globally and locally and has informed the development of OSLL's sustainable communities initiative.

The literature on partnerships in general, and collaboration in particular, suggests that a continuum of partnerships exists. On one end are very superficial partnerships, designed to do little more than keep each of the participants informed about the actions or intentions of the others. At the opposite end are authentic collaborations in which each participant contributes various resources, engages in decision-making and is accountable to the others. Various models have been developed which feature different types of partnership and/or collaborative approaches, each with distinct costs, benefits and trade-offs. There is a growing awareness in the business management literature that inter-sectoral collaboration, such as businesses pooling resources and expertise, is the only way that corporations will thrive in an increasingly complex globalized market. As well, cross-sectoral collaboration involving businesses, non-profits, and governments has also been seen as an important way to address complex social problems. The emerging model employed by the sustainable communities initiative focus on the importance of context and environment (Bedwell et al., 2011; Bryson and Crosby, 2006; Clarke and Fuller, 2011) the evolving nature of partnerships (Bedwell et al., 2011), and the changes brought about by collaboration for individual players and the collective entity. Effective collaboration manages complexity (Verdecho et al., 2011), and recognizes the need for specific skills and knowledge (Bedwell et al., 2011; Austin, 2000), as well as the need to address power and resource imbalances among partners (Bryson and Crosby, 2006).

Collaboration is about organizations working together to achieve something greater than what could be achieved if each acted alone. Bruce Mau describes the nature and value of collaboration this way:

Collaborate: the space between people working together is filled with conflict, friction, strife, exhilaration, delight and vast creative potential.

(<http://www.brucemaudesign.com/4817/112450/work/incomplete-manifesto-for-growth> accessed May 28, 2012)

The word collaboration can be used to describe the “act” of working together, however the quality, depth, intensity and effectiveness of any collaboration can vary greatly. David Amano’s perspective on authentic collaboration is insightful:

And when you hear the word "collaboration" do you envision a group of people holding hands and singing Kum Ba Ya in perfect unison? To some people this is the textbook definition of collaboration. But to others who have collaborated to create something worthy—we know it's messy business. It's not neat and tidy. It's organized chaos in some ways. Authentic collaboration is more like a mosh pit than a carefully rehearsed waltz. Make no mistake, even a mosh pit has a code of ethics and boundaries. But anyone who's ever been in one (I have) will tell you that the people in mosh pits are the nicest you'll ever meet.

(http://darmano.typepad.com/logic_emotion/2007/04/collaborate_the.html accessed May 28, 2012).

Within the work of sustainable communities, an authentic model of collaboration has evolved and been adopted to advance social sustainability. Authentic collaboration emphasizes a holistic approach, and requires active commitment and engagement of all participants. As Amano notes, such an approach can be challenging and even “messy” since these kinds of relationships are uncommon and those involved often struggle to figure out what is expected of them and how to participate.

Context: Canada's Oil Sands Region and the Pilot Communities

In order to understand the nature and scope of the sustainable communities initiative, it is important to have an appreciation of the oil sands region, including its location, its communities and the industry operating within it. Located in northern Alberta, the Canadian oil sands region contains proven reserves of 170 billion barrels of bitumen that are economically recoverable using today's technologies. This makes them the third largest estimated proven oil reserve in the world, after Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. Furthermore, since the 1990s, the scope and pace of oil sands activity has increased at a dramatic pace with capital investments multiplying eight-fold within a decade (figure 1) They are projected to continue at an accelerated pace for many years with the industry projecting a long-term presence in the region.

This has led to both incredible opportunities as well as complex challenges for communities and companies alike. A number of industry leaders from like-minded oil sands companies began to consider what changes needed to be made. They soon realized that the benefits of working together would far outweigh what could be accomplished by working alone. They envisioned a new approach that would allow companies to develop their assets individually while collaborating in non-competitive areas. This eventually led to the formation of OSLI and the creation of their collaborative network.

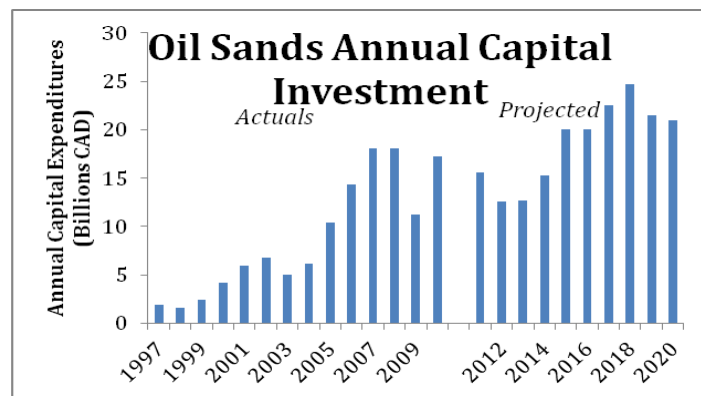


Fig.1 Actual (1997 – 2010) and projected (2011 – 2020) level of annual oil sands capital investment. Source: Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers 2010 Statistical Handbook for actual values; Canadian Energy Research Institute 2011 Canadian Oil Sands Supply Costs and Development Projects for projected values.

The Canadian oil sands are located in northern Alberta (figure 2), where communities, outside of the major center of Fort McMurray, tend to be relatively remote and the area sparsely populated. Populations of local communities in the area range from 500 to 2000 inhabitants, with significant percentages of young people (15-35 years). Communities are largely comprised of Aboriginal peoples.

OIL SANDS REGIONS



Figure 2 Map of oil sands areas and proximity of local communities

Given this context, OSLI and two communities recognized the opportunity to work together which formed the basis of the work of Sustainable Communities, which is described below.

The Sustainable Communities Initiative

The sustainable communities initiative began with “grass roots” conversations involving OSLI’s Sustainable Communities Working Group members and community “influencers,” (elders, community members and elected officials) as well as other key stakeholders (e.g. government, health care, law enforcement and education). Coming together to have conversations without a set agenda helped to open a broad dialogue about our respective relationships and the future of communities.

As a result of initial conversations, it became clear that a focus on the future of children and youth in communities could be the foundation upon which partners could to build a shared vision. Broad based support was expressed for working together in engaging youth in their own and their community’s future.

From its inception, the sustainable communities initiative has sought to foster strong, collaborative and productive relationships with communities, other partners and stakeholders. This has involved working at multiple levels – from OSLI member companies learning how to work together

collaboratively, to OSLI member companies, communities and other partners also learning how to work together collaboratively.

In the process, the sustainable communities initiative has developed norms among the partners including shared responsibility for the initiative, shared risks and joint accountability. These kinds of norms are essential to transform existing relationships and set the stage to enable more creative planning for a shared vision of the future. As the sustainable communities initiative has developed, the partners have come to value and recognize the potential for their collaboration to have long term, “game changing” implications for social sustainability.

This experience has driven participants to reflect on the value of different perspectives, and enabled a collaborative environment to grow by taking intentional steps to alter existing ways to think, process, experience and take action. Furthermore, it has encouraged industry and its partners to recognize that authentic collaboration means that no one participant has the power to create an effective approach in isolation. This initiative is premised on the notion of “co-creation,” where all participants in the relationship have some responsibility and are accountable to each other.

Methodologies and Tools

There has been an intentional and systematic selection, adoption and or adaptation of tools to support the work being done in the sustainable communities initiative. There has also been a recognition that interconnected systems between community and partners are complex. The tools selected for use in the sustainable communities initiative reflect a fundamental principle of ‘Doing with, NOT To’ those involved in the collaboration. This principle has helped guide the sustainable communities initiative and led to the incorporation of essential learnings and best practices from other initiatives. It has also provided the environment needed to foster collaboration.

Some of the methodologies and tools used in the sustainable communities initiative are highlighted below.

The VSP Tool (Carleton University, Centre for Initiatives on Children, Youth and Community, 2008): The VSP Tool is a diagnostic and planning tool for sustainable community initiatives, is providing valuable theoretical scaffolding for OSLI’s sustainable community’s initiative. VSP stands for “values, structures, and processes.” The tool enables everyone - from the corporate to community level - to focus on the basic elements of change that research has shown contribute to successful initiatives. It provides guidance in how to leverage those elements, while considering the specific circumstances of the oil sands region, of industry and of each pilot community. Through a systematic, yet highly iterative process, the VSP Tool helped everyone involved thoughtfully pay attention to the importance of co-creating a shared vision that was meaningful to all parties. The VSP was especially helpful to avoid the pitfalls of getting stuck on a “values dialogue” in which groups come together to identify common values but struggle to get beyond talking about them, to implementation. It helped guide the discussion and decision-making that led to the creation of appropriate and workable structures and processes that everyone could support and work within.

Currently, the SCWG and the pilot communities are routinely using the VSP acronym and integrating the tool in their planning, assessment and problem-solving processes.

The VitalSmarts Influencer Training (2008) has been used to help the sustainable communities initiative understand how to challenge and change hearts, minds and behaviours for sustainable

results. Senior OSLI executives, SCWG members, community board members, and youth participants in the Janvier pilot have received “influencer training.” The “six sources of influence” are being used to plan and develop ways to achieve the nature and level of behavioural change required for this initiative to reach its broader sustainability goals.

Experiential Learning Strategies and Techniques: The concept of experiential learning is learning by doing. The sustainable communities initiative has implemented experiential learning strategies to ground the work in practice. Whether it is through community, industry or other partners’ cultures, the concepts of experiential learning provide a common language, and foster the development of the group to be able to consciously enable thinking, and practice desired changes together. This has also accelerated the desired skills and behaviours for everyone.

Connecting through Technology:

The SCWG team, its partners and pilot communities are spread out over a vast geographic area. We intentionally meet in person monthly, and have protocols for regular teleconferences, Skype/video connections, email correspondence and text messaging. Through this work, we are all learning to use technology effectively as it has been a valuable part of capacity growth for industry, partners and community members alike.

The use of social media vehicles such as Facebook, video blogging, and info graphics is being planned and adopted to:

- Share information,
- Engage and mobilize community members and other partners,
- Enable youth to share the value their culture holds for them, with other communities, and other youth in the world.

Going forward we will continue to explore and use innovative tools, approaches and strategies to help us achieve our shared vision.

Pilot Projects in Janvier and Fort Chipewyan Alberta

Communities in the oil sands region are relatively remote and the area is sparsely populated. Outside of the city of Fort McMurray itself, communities range in size from several hundred to several thousand inhabitants. This profile reflects the situation of the two Aboriginal communities, Janvier and Fort Chipewyan, currently participating in the sustainable communities initiative’s pilot projects.

Janvier (and the Formation of Sekweha)

The sustainable communities initiative launched the Janvier pilot in 2010, following extensive formal and informal conversations, dialogue and workshops with youth and community members. Prior to the formal launch of the pilot, a working group comprised of community members formed and began to meet with OSLI and other potential partners to explore ways to address issues and advance ideas regarding youth in the community. Community members including youth were asked directly what they felt should be focused on, what they dreamed of for their community, and how they could help.

A core idea was to engage and empower the youth of the community in identifying, planning, and carrying out activities. Over time, more formalized organizational structures and operational processes have evolved. The vision of a safe and healthy community where people want to live, work and raise their children was formulated.

The objective of broad participation of community members and partners (including OSLI) began in the first pilot community, with a keen focus on:

1. Participation and involvement of the entire community. In realizing this, programs would be planned and delivered in various locations around the community (school, a multi-use complex, as well as extensions to other communities) in order to raise awareness and encourage participation and engagement;
2. Converting mutually agreed upon priorities into concrete projects initiated by community members, in particular youth, along with other partners;
3. The establishment of a community board (which includes partners) determines which projects to implement as well as the budget (not any one partner or community member).

Janvier now has a non-profit society, "Sekweha," ("for the youth" in Dene) which is responsible for community-driven programming related to youth. Sekweha is overseen by a volunteer board comprised of community members. Partners, including representatives of local community services (e.g. health, police, education), along with OSLI and Carleton University are ex-officio members of the Board. The Sekweha youth team includes a community coordinator, a youth team leader, youth workers and volunteers. Where possible, Sekweha works with other community partners and looks for opportunities to enrich programs and services to better meet the needs of children and youth. In the beginning, Sekweha was nomadic, offering after-school, evening, and weekend programming at various locations within and outside of the community. It is now based in a new Youth Centre building located in the community. Sekweha works with community youth to design and deliver a range of programs and activities, including cultural and recreational events, cultural camps, and school-focused activities. This includes the co-creation of a "StartSmart" program that readies students to begin their school day in a positive way in conjunction with the school. The philosophy, development and implementation of the StartSmart program is a good example of the collaborative approach being developed in the sustainable communities initiative that stresses co-creation, respect for community values and aspirations, joint decision-making and accountability.

Cultural connections are being implemented to provide opportunities to connect cultural norms within the community, and to other communities through sharing in person as well as through technology. This includes collective storytelling, videos, photo essays and presentations that engage the children and youth of the community.

Fort Chipewyan and the Formation of LAYC:

The Fort Chipewyan conversation began in 2011 when sustainable communities initiative met with community members to share information about the work of the sustainable communities initiative, the Janvier pilot and to explore Fort Chipewyan's interest in engaging in a similar process. With a shared interest in involving youth in their own, and their community's, future through leadership and engagement, a community board has been formed including representation from youth, community members and key stakeholders in the community. A series of workshops, training sessions, and strategic planning sessions have led to events within the community, inspired by youth, such as a fun fair at the local school, cultural activities, and a swimming excursion among others.

There is an ongoing dialogue on other ways in which the existing community structure and capacity can be supportive in furthering a community initiative, focused on engaging youth in their and their community's future. As this initiative is one year in the making, OSLI has been working with existing community structures and processes. There is a lot of excitement for this initiative. Youth have embraced this type of approach, and are actively engaged in planning for the future.

Currently, the community board has applied for not-for-profit society status and plans are underway to hire a local coordinator and youth workers. This has resulted in the creation of a youth group called Lake Athabasca Youth Council, commonly referred to as "LAYC."

As no two communities are alike, it is important to note that the second pilot is not a clone of the first but uses the tools and processes to determine what is important to the community as well as the other partners, to find the best way to move forward collaboratively.

Continuous Capacity Building

In keeping with its collective vision, the sustainable communities initiative has translated concepts such as continuous capacity building into practice. Large objectives such as learning how to dream and plan together collaboratively are very important but hold the danger of being overlooked, as it sounds simple. By utilizing the concept of continuous capacity growth, and growing a stronger connection of all partners (including youth), the partners continue to grow the capacity to dream and plan collaboratively. Through this capacity building, Experiential Learning concepts are being transformed into on-the-land programming within the communities and their schools, and community based economic growth ideas are now being co-planned.

Leadership capability is another example of continuous capacity building, where focused attention is placed both on individual and collective leadership. This is evident in the inclusion of youth team liaisons (who are youth themselves) that engage and provide support to the youth involved in both pilot communities, as well as participate directly in the sustainable communities initiative work. Ensuring that youth perspectives and contributions are valued and acted on as part of the overall plan has proven to be invaluable throughout the sustainable communities initiative.

The Youth Liaison Team works with a coach to develop their individual and collective leadership, facilitation and communication skills (identified vital behaviours), which they model through supporting the youth in the pilots. The older youth in the pilot communities are then encouraged to model these new skills in their interactions with younger participants.

Meaningful Metrics

The 'business case' for social sustainability in oil sands communities is about more than building good relationships, meeting corporate social responsibility obligations, growing a local labour force and workforce participation opportunities, or just 'doing the right thing for kids and communities. Societal needs and aspirations are intertwined with, and are as vital as, economic and environmental sustainability. Early investment in the positive development of children and youth by working with communities is an integral part of growing capacity to meet all of these intertwined needs and realize collective aspirations. Executing a paradigm shift from transactional to transformative relationship building and collaborations, as well as progress toward sustainability can be measures may include:

- the nature of common ground and shared values and vision that has been developed among those involved in the collaboration;
- the existence and use of meaningful, innovative structures and processes for collaborating being put into place, maintained and expanded with the addition of new partners;
- the nature and extent of independence of youth and their involvement in community-building initiatives;
- demonstrated leadership of youth and community board members in their interaction with others and the extent to which vital behaviours for change have been adopted;
- the extent and nature of capacity growth to work collaboratively and address social sustainability issues;
- the nature of conversations and actions on economic growth that foster long term sustainability;
- the support and involvement of local businesses; and
- sharing with story of progression through collective storytelling, videos, photo essays, and presentations that involve community members of all ages, SCWG, and other partners.

Essential Lessons Learned

As the initiative has progressed, we have taken the time to reflect on structures, process and practices that are helping to reach overarching goals of social sustainability. In this paper, we highlight some of the essential lessons we are learning.

Invest in Authentic Collaboration

Authentic collaboration requires more than financial resources. It requires knowledge, skills, experience and the willingness of all parties to learn how to collaborate, as well as how to switch from collaborative processes to their standard way of being when they are outside of the collaboration. One of the major lessons SCWG has taken away from this experience is that collaboration is a skill that is learned - by community, by industry, by all partners and participants - as well as a necessary precondition for meaningful engagement and progress. In practical terms this indicated an ongoing need for training and skills development related to working in an authentic collaboration. As a result, opportunities for active engagement and strategic planning have been approached for all parties collectively, so they have the same language, understand the required practices and acquire the skills needed to function in a collaborative manner. For example, issues related to governance, codes of conduct, budgets, planning, and communication all had to be critically assessed and appropriate structures and processes developed. Accepting these and putting new skills into practice has required the commitment, patience, and dedication of those involved. However, even with training, change in the way people interact does not happen quickly. Like any desired behavioural change, it has to be learned and practiced on an ongoing basis for it to become embedded in every day actions.

Going forward, the sustainable communities initiative will continue to invest in knowledge and skills development in a deliberate way, devoting the time and resources required. In particular, coaching, modelling and mentoring are being emphasized as new members join and other partners become engaged. Training resources and materials are being prepared based on lessons learned so far. These are being used in the sustainable communities initiative as they move forward toward the goal of sustainable communities.

Trust is the Foundation

Trust is the foundation of working together. We have learned that we have to communicate ideas effectively, share responsibility for decision-making and be accountable to each other. While it is easy to describe the elements of authentic collaboration in theory, putting them into practice is a challenge. It requires people to take a leap of faith and stretch beyond their 'comfort zones' as they learn to shift their thinking, actions and practices.

Given the context of further growth in the region, industry, communities and partners have recognized the importance of moving beyond transactional exchanges. However, they also recognized that for this to happen, trust has to be at the core of their relationships.

Below are some of the main lessons to consider for building trust:

1. Taking the time needed: We have learned that it is vital to take the time to build trust among the parties involved in the collaboration. Do not rush the process even if you feel external pressure to do so. Developing trust and mutual understanding requires patience, an investment of time and an intentional, systematic and respectful process. Opportunities for formal and informal dialogue can help parties to reach common ground. Working together on tangible tasks, such as planning and preparing a community dinner, can be a safe and comfortable starting point and can help people to build the confidence and skills to collaborate on a broader scale.

2. Collaborating on all activities: We have learned to be mindful of the way we think, speak and act, to ensure that everyone in the collaboration is empowered and valued for the contribution that they make. We have had to take care to ensure that a collaborative relationship is fostered in all our activities. For example, some language patterns and styles of speech, such as being directive, giving advice without asking permission, steering rather than navigating together, dampen the spirit and intent of collaboration. Asking open-ended questions and inviting dialogue, welcoming opportunities to work together, learning to build consensus and finding workable processes for joint decision-making are important. Acknowledging that *everyone* will grow and change by working collaboratively reinforces the importance and contribution of all. Additionally, those involved must reflect upon their own ways of thinking, speaking and acting to ensure that their behaviour reflects a collaborative approach.

3. Putting effective structures and processes in place: Participating and engaging in authentic collaboration requires that all participants be open to change. This may feel like the proverbial leap of faith. Supportive structures and processes are also needed to promote collective action. Reconciling and reconfiguring organizational policies and practices of those involved in the collaboration may be required so that true collaboration is possible in practice. For example, organizations may have to examine their own rules, regulations and policies related to things like travel and budgeting, and work with their colleagues to align these so that they facilitate rather than hinder collaboration.

4. Having faith that authentic collaboration "is worth it": Longstanding and accepted norms and patterns of interaction and behaviour are challenging to change as they may be deeply rooted in an organization's culture and working ideology. The partners have realized that working collaboratively has opened up huge possibilities for a step change toward social sustainability. In authentic collaboration, no one party has the power over the others, in budget or activity considerations. Innovation occurs within the context of norms and values of the model. The value is placed on the community as a whole, not on individual participants.

Innovative Tools and Processes toward a Sustainable Future

Community processes of engagement and consensus building have a great deal of value, and can be the communication model for multi-sectoral collaboration models. This means that no one party has the power over the others, in budget or activity considerations. Innovation occurs within the context of norms and values of the model. The value is placed on the community as a whole, not on individual participants.

Ensuring there is opportunity to innovate within the collaborative model is essential to success. This means that all partners need to resource it well, and have the support of their management/leadership.

Building on Shared Values

Lastly, developing a shared vision is essential to success. As partners represent institutions that are focused on their particular role and relationship with communities, developing a shared vision helps connect them to a broader, more holistic view, and see their specific role in relation to other organizations and the whole of communities. They have a shared vision for social sustainability that is dynamic. Revisiting, reflecting, adjusting the course where needed is part of the process.

It is important to acknowledge the challenge that exists when individuals working within this collaborative model, spend time on 'standard processes' within their own organization. The ability to shift between these two very different models is challenging, and needs attention to manage effectively.

Conclusion

We have learned that investment in authentic collaboration can enhance the possibilities for achieving social sustainability. Moreover, authentic collaboration is a worthy challenge and has immediate lessons and tangible benefits for industry, communities and their partners, in terms of the quality of relationships that develop amongst them. Those involved in the sustainable communities initiative have been careful to take the time to listen and learn about each other's needs and aspirations. With effective leadership, this departure point is starting to grow to a much wider focus on issues related to long term social sustainability including education, employability, environment and local economic growth. The results and benefits of these investments will continue to accrue and become increasingly evident over future generations. It is often assumed that people within small, remote communities are the ones who need help. Instead, in this initiative, we acknowledge that we need to learn from each other and build community together. The nature of this transformative change is that it requires everyone to shift their perspectives and acknowledge that each member has a valuable contribution as well as responsibility to the others.

The requirement to contribute and share responsibility with each other transfers directly in to engaging youth. Youth in communities have an amazing depth of understanding, and get involved in shaping the future when partners change their behaviours to enable further collaboration with and by youth. By combining this collaborative model with the concept of engaging youth in their own and their community's future, the sustainable communities initiative is able to dig deeper into a shared vision toward social sustainability.

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