

Regenerative Tobermory

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 May 10, 2009**

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Building and reweaving a resilient and self-reliant community.

This report is based on our first impressions of Tobermory. These impressions emerged from April 17 – 20, 2009, when we made a two and a half day visit to the Northern Bruce peninsula. Our visit included extensive meetings with community members, a walking tour of the town of Tobermory, a four-hour workshop, and connection with the land.

For two weeks, we've reflected upon the beauty, space, energy, head and heart of Tobermory. As a living system, this community (or groups of communities) is seeking to re-define itself in the face of massive change. The case for change is profound, and is manifesting in one of the most painful of ways. The people (and residents) of Tobermory must find ways to turn the direction of its path towards sustainability and re-generation. Tobermory is on the edge in so many ways: it is on the obvious edge between the land and water – and that contrast provides a magnificent and spiritual respite that so many seek during the glorious days of summer. The less obvious edges are well known to those who call Tobermory their home, and those who claim "survivor" as a key attribute to those who live here. The edge that the town finds itself perched upon is survival, and the hope to return to a thriving community where generations will continue to raise their families in the values this town holds most dear: hope, courage, strength, faith, tenacity, and resourcefulness.

Currently, the lens of survival is focused inward and within the boundaries of the township. While there are numerous issues facing our global human population, we believe that the intersection of global economic collapse, climate change and peak oil must be factored in to all future decisions made. These combined global crises will underpin Tobermory's ability to sustain the 900+ residents.

This report considers the following:

1. what's going well
2. the challenges Tobermory faces
3. our recommendations
4. the immediate action

While all of the issues are inextricably connected, we have created four areas of focus: Social/Community Design, Environment/Ecological Design, Economic Design, and the collective conscious and unconscious Beliefs that join community members together.

We use the word "design" because underlying all human activity whether conscious or unconscious our daily activities are designed. Up until now, much of the way North American communities have developed has been haphazard, and mainly based on individual developer's initiative with short term bottom line results being of primary importance. Due to the three crisis points of global economic collapse, climate change and peak oil, we believe that communities must become more strategic and holistic in how they choose to grow and evolve into the future. By design...

What we aim to do is identify areas where Tobermory can strategically implement design that will move this community exponentially to a place of resilience and self-reliance.

What's going well...Tobermory has many strengths

Social/Community

Family is the foundation of this community. All of the founding families, including First Nations, maintain presence and residence in Tobermory/Bury St. Edmunds/Saugeen (Bruce Peninsula) with a strong pride and commitment to their heritage, the land and the health and welfare of their future generations. Many are proud that their children have created or found full-time employment in the area, and share the commitment to stay.

The community has pockets of empowered leadership which both rallies resources and energy towards ends, and against each other. There is a growing appetite for a vision that could bring all of the community interests together, and a willingness to open up and listen to the issues.

Near the center of town, there is a community space which is becoming a gathering place. The health clinic and primary school are in close proximity to each other, and this has the beginnings of a community "hub".

Government interest and participation seems to be shifting from a federal perspective to include grass-roots interests in what is good for the community.

Environment/Ecology

The rich and thriving ecology of the Bruce has deep physical and spiritual qualities that attract many to it – for recreation, for rejuvenation, and for refuge. The Federal Government and UNESCO see the wisdom of conserving this land for future generations by purchasing land tracks as they become available, and by special designation. With this strategy, there is a short-term cost affecting the economic viability of living off of the land in a large scale way. It is also wise to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy (trade-offs) in light of new economic and environmental crises.

Economics

Whereas, Bury St. Edmunds was founded as a lumber town with robust shipping throughout the Great Lakes and Georgian Bay, Tobermory earns its keep as booming tourist town for 12 weeks of the year. Many who live in the township year round must rely upon government sources (employment income, pensions, etc.) to provide sufficient income for their families. Some residents have developed multiple streams of income to counteract the town's dependency on a seasonal economy.

Beliefs

This town has hope, and the people have a faith in each other, in their own resourcefulness, strength, tenacity, and courage to overcome adversity. They understand that they cannot waste time pointing fingers of blame at each other, and are fully owning the creation of the future that they want to create together.

The challenges Tobermory faces...

Social/Community

There is no sense of a vibrant, year round, central hub for the community where people can engage with one another.

Which begs the question "Is there actually a Tobermory community?"

What emerged is that there are numerous groups, "silos" or "cliques" with little opportunity for integration and embracing diversity. This has led to competing initiatives that have diffused efforts, energy and resources. It also has the potential to create power struggles where some community members are empowered as leaders, while others create resistance, or disengage completely, with a tendency to default to confusion and lack of interest or caring - Not my problem!

On a fundamental level, when the settlers first came to the region, they found themselves co-existing with another community of people, the First Nations. In 1902, the Federal Government created the Saugeen (Bruce Peninsula) Indian Reserve and cordoned off the nomadic tribe. The community is built on a history of mistreatment of the First Nations peoples' way of life. The Federal Government's subsequent attempts to seemingly make amends has fractured the First Nations culture and way of life, and creating unnecessary and competing separation of geography, of interest, of community.

There is a sense that Parks Canada has to respond to federal priorities, and as a result is unable to hear the needs of the community. This has created a lack of trust by community members with Parks Canada, resulting in missed opportunities for meaningful co-creation and collaboration in the region.

With young, year-round residents leaving to find higher paying work, the capacity for local care of an aging populous in the form of independent living, emergency care, hospital, is diminished.

A limited work season and low pay contributes to a lack of self-worth, depression and/or substance abuse.

It is difficult to get a sense of what Tobermory wants for its future. Some community members are subsisting, while others are seeking luxury. Some want a year round economy, others a more robust tourist season, and others, no tourism at all.

The core of the community is operating from a place of subsistence / protection. Until this is fully acknowledged and addressed any attempt to make Tobermory a key destination place will appear "grafted" on and will be hard to sustain.

Environment/Ecology

This is a fragile environment with rare and remarkable examples of biodiversity. Nature can take care of herself. We are part of this environment. We need to pay attention to and take our responsibility for our impact. It shows up in the quality and quantity of our resources available.

The carrying capacity of the land in terms of being able to meet basic human needs such as water may have become exceeded. Community members find that their wells are brackish, and fill with brown water that requires thousands of dollars of filtering equipment. The municipal landfill is home to everything that is considered waste. There is a limit to the amount of waste that the land can handle. Parks Canada and other environmental groups have a mission to conserve wildlife and nature. This mission pushes out local people from being able to grow food on the land. There is only a certain amount of land, and choices will need to be made.

The community is dependent upon one local source for food. Much of the food at Peacock's supermarket is brought in from parts of Southern Ontario, North America, and abroad. The supermarket receives deliveries twice a week, going up to five times per week in peak tourist season. As the cost of fuel increases, the cost of goods will also increase. Food will continue to be more and more expensive as it is imported into the community/region.

The local fishing rights were returned to the First Nations people who are not fishing the waters commercially. Local non-natives are not permitted to fish the waters, and are not permitted to work on the First Nations people's boats.

Historically, travel in the area was via boat or horse or canoe. Now, travel in the region is dependent upon individually owned, fossil fuel dependent vehicles. There is limited public transportation. The town's evolving design has been like suburbia, several spread out subdivisions. Many of the buildings are non-winterized summer season cottages that are difficult to get to, and to heat. Any future public transportation plan is complicated by this lay-out.

There is no comprehensive alternative energy plan for the community. A proposed wind farm project is raising concerns about health impacts, and its installation will require a trade off for farmland that will be needed for future food production.

Economics

The response to Tobermory's economy is viewed through a narrow lens with separate, short and mid-term solutions. Tobermory's primary economic base is the seasonal tourist industry. As the effect of the global economic crisis and peak oil develops the tourism industry may drop off. There is no system in place to ensure economic resilience if this were to occur, with the exception of government funds. Additionally where there could be a vibrant community hub, the emphasis has been placed upon meeting the needs of the tourist industry.

A cheap abundant supply of oil has afforded the opportunity to ship goods and food into the community from around the world. This has created a disconnection with the economic history of the land. Knowledge and skills developed over generations, of how to produce food and other necessary items, are almost completely lost, and will die with the current elder population, both First Nations and European Settler descendants.

The community is comprised of groups of people separated by economics. For example retirees from urban areas who have no or little need to work, in contrast to young community members who have to work two, minimum wage jobs during the tourist season to make enough money for the year.

In an attempt to increase tourism, attractive marketing campaigns and branding, such as "Tobermory, diving capital of Canada", have been adopted. With the community primarily focused on satisfying needs for subsistence and protection, fulfilling promises like these in an authentic way are difficult. The result is empty promises and marketing slogans, rather than authentic Tobermory.

Beliefs

Whereas this town has hope, and the people have a faith in each other, in their own resourcefulness, strength, tenacity, and courage to overcome adversity, there are many who live in fear. They believe that they can only make ends meet with government benefits, and they can only succeed or survive at the expense of a neighbour. Anyone who is successful is brought down to size, both through self-limiting, and community beliefs about what's possible, "tall poppy" syndrome: "I knew your Father".

And for many, who sought out this beautiful and rich land as a place to grow their families and to live with nature, who find they don't have the time or the energy to be one with it. At what cost...

Our Recommendations

Due to the three crisis points of global economic collapse, climate change and peak oil, we believe that communities must become more strategic and holistic in how they choose to grow and evolve into the future. What we aim to do is identify areas where Tobermory can strategically implement design that will move this community exponentially to a place of resilience and self-reliance.

Social/ Community	Long Term Vision	Next Steps	Mid Term Milestones
Creating community & embracing diversity (alignment)	A vibrant, integrated year round engaged community committed to a shared purpose...	(HP)Design the Tobermory community alliance - how we want to be with each other (trust, respect, camaraderie) (HP)Team "Coaching" activities as a ritual part of the Team Tobermory meetings (team toxins, creativity)	
	All families are inter-connected and sharing in the history and the future of the region	Establish "Family Weekend"	
Communication	Proficient in maintaining and building connection from a place of acceptance and no judgment	Skills training on connection, meeting people where they are, listening to understand, powerful questions, feedback (based upon non-violent communication, Anatomy of Peace, and coaching principles)	
	ability to use conflict as an opportunity for discovery and growth (creativity)	Conflict-resolution process; conflict-opportunity process	
	the community created their own news through a thriving community generated media: broadcast video, Internet and print		

Social/ Community	Long Term Vision	Next Steps	Mid Term Milestones
Leadership Empowerment	Participation of all year round residents in Tobermory governance	Community inventory of skills, knowledge, and strengths Establish pods: projects, leadership, learning teams, etc. Establish team Tobermory partners (weekly support system, a.k.a. peer coaching) Skills training on how to run meetings, hold space, and empowering leadership	
	Leadership team empowered to make decisions on behalf of the community for the sake of the vision and shared purpose.	Representatives from key stakeholders involved in the leadership team, and committed to detach as necessary Initiative to engage Federal interests in local grass-root programs (lobbying)	
Personal Responsibility	Individuals and the community operates from a place of fearlessness, and is/are accountable for their actions and beliefs	Anatomy of Peace/Four Agreements discussion groups Being present to what is	
	Individuals have personal resilience for change	Health and wellness/preventative mindset/ commitment to self care	
Celebration: Art & Creativity	Committed to Authentic multi & cross disciplinary art forms that provoke and inspire natural expression of self	Creativity workshop: Tobermory resources Native arts/wisdom weekend School includes arts program (non-comparative creativity)	
Local, Bio-regional and Global Outreach	Tobermory is part of a resilient local, bio-regional and global network, and a model of regenerative leadership systems	Identify needs at a local level (youth, elderly, year round, etc.) as an input to the Regional Sustainability Plan	

Environment / Ecological Design	Long Term Vision	Next Steps	Mid term Milestones
Ecological Approach to Whole Systems Design	Balanced approach to conservation and regeneration that meets the needs of the natural environment, local community, and global well-being		Whole systems training Facilitate ongoing discussions with Federal interests to balance needs of conservation and regeneration
Water	Sustainable, clean drinking water for all year round resident. Sustainable, clean drinking water for visitors and summer residents.	Water study that examines water use and quality.	Implement rainwater harvesting and gray and black water systems to alleviate demand on water.
Food	Local non-petrochemical food production	Identify available arable land, community gardens Education in regenerative food growing practices (permaculture)	Re-skill in canning and preserving (taught by elders)
	Surplus food exported as uniquely Tobermory added value food products	Identify unique added value food products through creativity exercises, and Native Wisdom weekend	
Energy	Sufficient renewable energy sources for heating and lighting	Research health impacts of Wind Farms and evaluate trade-offs for the land use Evaluate pros/cons of alternate energy sources. (HP) Create an extensive Energy Descent Plan	(P)Community commitment to weatherization program
Transportation	Reliable, and accessible public transportation network throughout the region powered by renewable energy		Establish break-out group to evaluate transportation needs and develop an extensive Transportation plan for the community.

Environment / Ecological Design	Long Term Vision	Next Steps	Mid term Milestones
Community Design/ Town Planning	Town plan that fosters integration, optimal well being and collaboration	(HP) Establish a temporary community hub (gathering place, meeting rooms) (HP) Mapping needs analysis of year round residents: essential carrying costs of town/community.	Mobilize to create a town community hub
			Re-investment plan for infrastructure (roads, bridges, wi-fi, etc) to facilitate ongoing industry, communication, and transportation
Solid Waste Plan	There is no waste; when oil goes, there will be no plastic.	Reduce consumption, especially of non-biodegradable materials.	Extensive community composting program.
Reskilling	Every community member makes a valuable contribution.	Gather and document skills and knowledge alive in elders and other community members (knitting, sewing, quilting).	Traditional and emerging knowledge and skills are shared across generations.

Economic Design	Long Term Vision	Next Steps	Mid Term Milestones
Re-localizing economy	The resilience of the community is strengthened by generating as many basic needs: shelter, food, clothing, medicine, water, within the community of region.	Mapping community members' needs.	Collaboration with other communities along the Bruce Peninsula (identification of needs: Wiarton, Lions Head) The North Bruce Peninsula is designed as a series of inter-dependent and inter-connected villages, where the population of the village is between 500 and 5000 people, that prioritize meeting their needs within the region before looking elsewhere - fostering an environment of mutuality and reciprocity.
	Independent of government subsidy/benefits	Scoping of how much government money in the form of benefits is being funneled into the community.	
Authentic Tobermory social enterprise and light industry	Community members are engaged in cooperative, co-creative social enterprise and light industry with emphasis on providing for immediate community and selling/trading surplus throughout the region. Industry measures success through the triple bottom line: people, profits and planet.		Co-create plan for cooperative enterprise.
	Tourism is attracted to the region not via marketing campaigns and slogans, but for the authentic way of life and being.		Focus on the well being and vibrancy of community residents.

Economic Design	Long Term Vision	Next Steps	Mid Term Milestones
Community bank & local currency	All members of the community live debt free.	(HP)Household book keeping program.	Through regular meeting of the household book keeping program members of the group are out of debt and are saving. The money saved is used to start the community micro loaning program/bank
	A local form of exchange is developed, this may be direct exchange (barter) or a form of local currency (scrip or time-banking). Community bank with micro lending.	See above	See above
Right Livelihood	Community members are working within their values and life purpose		Individuals have self awareness of values and life purpose
Prosperity versus Growth	Community chooses consciously	Distinguishing prosperity from growth and define which is needed at this time.	

Our Point of View...

of what need to be in place for the kind of change required to build community resilience

Our Beliefs	Long Term Vision
Shifting World-view: Collaborative win/win	We are interdependent and interconnected, together we everything is possible
Listening to and Reconnecting to Nature	We are part of the living system of nature, how do we meet our human needs in a way that supports nature's regenerative processes
Socially engaged spirituality	People have personal spiritual practices that inform their everyday activities
Awakening and Transformation of Consciousness	Everyone living in the community is on mission/purpose and has networks and avenues through which this is expressed
Personal & Planetary Healing (Health)	Community lives with the knowledge that their health is affected by the health of the planet and the planet's health is affected by ours.

Immediate action

Through the process of developing this report, we believe that the following actions are the required immediate next steps. There is much work to be done, and these activities will give the community a strong foundation for launching into resilience.

- Design the Tobermory community alliance - how we want to be with each other (trust, respect, camaraderie)
- Team "Coaching" activities as a ritual part of the Team Tobermory meetings (team toxins, creativity)
- Create an extensive Energy Descent Plan
- Establish a temporary community hub (gathering place, meeting rooms)
- Mapping needs analysis of year round residents: essential carrying costs of town/community.
- Household book keeping program

We would be honoured to continue the relationship with the Tobermory community as you proceed down this path. We hope that you find value in our observations, and the recommendations that we've provided.

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