

Brief Research Proposal – Fred Campbell

Building the Seventh Wave of NL Participatory Development Support Communications for Community Sustainability in Rural NL

Project Objectives

- To draw lessons from six previous waves of participatory development support communications for community sustainability in NL
- To consult and collaborate with community partners to build on these lessons with the intent of rebuilding development support communications in rural NL (with a main focus on western NL)

Background

This project will focus on participatory development support communications for community sustainability. This includes support for a self-empowerment, self-help process of adult education/community development that advances sustainability efforts in rural NL communities. Roseland (2000) suggests that a sustainable community is “a community that uses its resources to meet current needs while ensuring that adequate resources are available for future generations... Decision-making in a sustainable community stems from a rich civic life and shared information among community members.”

Learning within a community education context, participatory communications, and participatory decision-making as discussed by Roseland above share a respect for local knowledge and local ways of doing things. “In both education and communications, learners and facilitators are peers in a long process of self-development and social awareness, mobilizing individuals to analyse and plan for their own future and the future of their communities” (Campbell, 1996). Learning is seen as a lifelong activity that relies on all citizens and agencies for support in a process which develops long term community benefit as well as individual development. “Promoting learning - not teaching - the premise is that people best learn skills by doing, in an environment which stresses not failure but rather self-motivated improvement” (Campbell, 1995).

Development support communications is practised worldwide (which practices we will identify during the research) but our primary focus is to actively support community sustainability in rural NL. We are beginning with a participatory process of community media special events (see attachment) because they are unique to rural NL and because I have three decades of experience and documentation.

Community communication special events have been facilitated in Newfoundland and Labrador NL) in six distinct periods. Different financial supports have determined the time frame of the duration of each period but I have proposed that these six periods include:

1. 1979 - 1989: *Memorial University (MUN) extension service television transmitter projects.*
2. 1989 - 1991: *MUN extension support for groups utilizing cable television community channels.*
3. 1993 - 2003: *Federal government supported participatory communication.*
4. 2004 - 2008: *Discrete community radio projects funded by a variety of sources.*
5. 2009 - 2013: *NL Rural Secretariat and Ryakuga Communications community radio projects.*
6. 2014 - 2019: *Collaboration with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador and discrete community radio projects funded by a variety of sources*

(See attached Six Periods of Community Communication Special Events in Newfoundland and Labrador document for details.)

Informed by Open Systems Theory thinking (Emery, F 1974, Emery, M. 1993); Kovats, 2013) and prompted by concern for the sustainability of rural NL communities, we are trying to solve the puzzle of why, after a rich and unique history, NL participatory development support communications projects for community stability have stalled and, more importantly, what together can we do about it. This project is collaborative, with locally chosen committees and partners, so it will undoubtedly provide other communication methodologies and pieces to the puzzle. Nevertheless, I have done my best to outline the project at this early time.

Research Questions:

My (and our) approach is positive, much in the spirit of the 2019 Cottage Conference in Norris Point: Telling a New Rural Story: Mobilizing Assets for Vibrant Communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. And again, we are proposing a collaborative project with a committee and local partners who will have their own ideas on what questions should be asked (building on the project objectives noted above).

My approach will be informed by what I learned at the Open Systems Theory course in Newcastle, Australia last year. The course was led by Merrelyn Emery and Peter Amerin with Merrelyn's books as required reading (Emery, M 1993 and Emery M, 1999). Focusing on the participative strategic planning approach, I would want to work with local people in rural, coastal communities in an active process of deciding what would be an achievable and desirable future and the potential role of participatory communications. The Search Conference design is simple but detailed and often begins with collectively deciding what are the significant local events of, say, the past ten years.

Methods

Drawing from Open Systems Theory as noted above, this research would proceed according to the theory and practice of Participatory Action Research (Keahey, 2020) and Adult/Popular Education. In addition, I will draw on the Sustainable Development Goals to assess the contributions of participatory development support communications for community sustainability in NL.

The methodology would take lessons learned (particularly participatory evaluations) from earlier western NL projects, such as Communication for Survival (Gilbert and Campbell, 1997), Sharing Our Future (Campbell, 2002) and Enlarging the Circle (Campbell, 2003). The process would not be rigid and actively adapt to the needs of local communities.

Timetable

<p>Year 1 (Sept 2020 – Aug 2021)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning hubs launched • Conduct comprehensive literature review. • Apply for GC-REB ethics clearance. • Complete mandatory/elective courses. • Select case study communities, develop partnerships
<p>Year 2 (Sept 2021 – Aug 2022)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete mandatory/elective courses. • Implement communication assessments. • Complete comprehensive examination and final proposal. • Travel to case study communities for PAR.
<p>Year 3 (Sept 2022 – Aug 2023)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel to case study communities for PAR. • Continue data analysis. • Begin dissertation writing.
<p>Year 4 (Sept 2023 – Aug 2024)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete data analysis. • Dissertation writing & defense. • Report-back to communities.

Note: A September 1, 2020 start is important as the Grenfell learning hubs will be launched at this time in St. George’s and Port Saunders and it is expected that this project will be connected to this process.

Relevance to NL

The project focuses on an active approach to the sustainability of NL rural communities and a unique NL process of participatory development support communications projects for community sustainability.

Supervisor and Disciplines

Kelly Vodden is the proposed main supervisor. Her disciplinary connections include Geography, Community Development, and Environmental Policy. Additional supervisory committee members will be sought from one or more of the following fields: Education, Journalism, and Communication Technology.

Potential Committee Members and External Partners

The first goal of this project is to identify a committee (Kelly and I have discussed possibilities drawn from the disciplines above) and find willing partners. We have discussed an additional academic supervisor in Education with a concern for community, such as Dr. Barbara Barter or Dr. Michael Corbett. We have also discussed the possibility of a Mi’Kmaq leader. I have been working on collaborative, community communications projects in the region (from Ramea to St. Anthony) for 30 years but adapting to change is certainly a constant and we want to ensure our project is something partners are comfortable with and are positive in approach so this will take some time to confirm.

Grenfell is active in outreach activity and it would seem to make sense to consider selecting partners engaged in these initiatives. In particular, Grenfell is launching learning hubs in St. George's and Port Saunders, in conjunction with community partners. These represent logical focal points for efforts related to study objective #2. Partners will be finalized upon my acceptance to the program as I would rather not make direct contact (and raise expectations) until this project is approved.

References

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