



# COMMUNITY EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE  
WHISTLER. IT'S OUR NATURE PROGRAMME  
WHISTLER, BC

SARAH M<sup>c</sup>JANNET

SEPTEMBER 2003

SCHOOL OF COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PLANNING  
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A PROFESSIONAL PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

**MASTER OF ARTS (PLANNING)**

IN

**THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**School of Community and Regional Planning**

*We accept this project as conforming  
to the required standard*

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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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*'No person is an island; I certainly am not.'*

*-David Orr*

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The following professional project represents a major component of the degree requirements for the Master's Planning Programme at UBC's School of Community and Regional Planning. As a capstone project, it is intended to provide experience in the execution of a real-world planning study, offering an extended opportunity to further develop skills in project design, research, analysis and the formulation of context-specific recommendations.

To fulfill these requirements, this planning study offers a review and assessment of the education component of the community sustainability initiative, *Whistler. It's Our Nature* (WION). WION is a community programme designed to promote and support sustainability in the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW), BC. Aptly recognizing that achieving sustainability depends on strategic planning and education in an effort to affect long-term change, the WION programme was initiated by a partnership of Whistler organizations known as the 'Early Adopters' in late 2001. WION is founded on The Natural Step (TNS) Framework, a planning process and guide for strategic action that is based on developing a shared understanding of first-order principles or conditions for sustainability.

### Objectives

Acknowledging that the WION programme is in its infancy, this project offers a *preliminary programme assessment* and explores the Resort Municipality's strategy to facilitate the transition from sustainability awareness to understanding and action. The project specifically aims to:

1. **Assess and identify gaps and opportunities in WION programme planning, content, delivery and outreach;**



2. Recommend strategies and actions to enhance educational programming in a manner that fits with the Resort Municipality's strategic goals and sustainability framework (The Natural Step); and,
3. Explore opportunities for active citizen engagement to improve future community outreach and further efforts to build a 'learning community'.

### Evaluation Criteria

The community education component of the WION programme is considered with respect to programme planning and organization, content development, delivery and outreach activities. The discussion refers to how well WION 'sets the stage', 'develops the [sustainability] story' and 'extends the dialogue' in the overall promotion and support of sustainable community practices. Evaluation criteria, conceived of as a synthesis of thematic principles and recommendations for community education and sustainability, establish parameters by which to assess programme performance. Key principles and strategies for environmental learning and sustainability, distilled from the national *Framework for Environmental Education and Sustainability in Canada* (Government of Canada: 2002) are used to compliment criteria based on community objectives and priorities.

### Assessment Results

WION, within the parameters of its mandate to promote and support overall sustainability in the RMOW, has done a remarkable job in building awareness of and for sustainability in Whistler. While direction was set out

in early guiding documents, WION has specifically established a clear and compelling need for change, and has begun to provide practical tools and guidance to help citizens, schools and businesses incorporate sustainable practices in their daily lives. The planning and organization of the WION programme has reflected a logical and thoughtful approach to building awareness and offering practical support services to elicit action. WION's network of Early Adopters and 'in-service' TNS sustainability training has provided significant institutional support necessary to facilitate the development and implementation of WION programme activities and resources. The WCS has also made a respectable attempt to translate and incorporate Whistler's sustainability compass, The Natural Step framework and its supporting System Conditions, for wider dissemination and use.

Despite WION's positive contribution to the promotion of sustainability in Whistler, the community programme has a long journey ahead in successfully supporting sustainable practices in the Resort Municipality. Limited funding has prevented the implementation of many of the WION planned support activities, undermining the promotional and awareness building efforts to date. As the WION programme 'resurfaces', it will be important to draw clear linkages between this programme, and the development and adoption of RMOW's Comprehensive Sustainability Plan.

Enabling individuals, community-based organizations and institutions to take action is an important next step in WION programme evolution. To do this, programme activities and resources should focus on 'decision-making for sustainability', and civic leadership and responsibility. Encouraging individuals and organizations to get involved and to initiate and promote change requires that they are integral part of programme development and implementation. By enabling and encouraging participation through leadership development and support, the community will be more inclined to engage. An increased focus on community leadership development and



capacity building (especially with respect to youth) may empower people to do more at the grassroots level.

Although WCS has acknowledged Whistler's contribution to global unsustainable society in an attempt to draw clear linkages between global consequences and local actions, a much more focused and explicit reference to actions and outcomes, and trade-offs in daily decision-making scenarios would deepen the notion of what it means to live sustainably. Increased neighbourhood dialogue may help to refocus what have predominantly been 'expert-focused' promotional activities to a renewed focus on local sustainability efforts and 'practioners' – those everyday people who, in their own ways, are contributing to the realization of a more sustainable Whistler. The use of transformative experiences for learning, primarily by doing, is one step to transform static awareness campaigns into meaningful opportunities for lifelong learning to better support sustainable change.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations for programmatic improvements and future community outreach efforts draw on key strategies, principles and practice for community sustainability education, organizational learning, participatory planning and community engagement:

1. **Explicitly acknowledge and promote sustainability education and community learning as an additional strategic WION objective with key indicators to model and measure progress.**
2. **Establish an official WCS-directed sustainability education network and initiate a community-wide forum on sustainability education to extend the dialogue and direct the development of:**

- a. **A collective vision for sustainability education in Whistler;**
- b. **Guiding principles and objectives for community learning that can be applied in informal and formal educational settings;**
- c. **A map of existing efforts and partnerships; and,**
- d. **A plan for future educational programming and implementation.**

3. **Develop a Community Engagement Work Plan to strategize and direct future outreach efforts.**
4. **Consider the development of a Community Service-Learning Pilot Programme to target and support youth leadership development as a key TNS support service.**





## 1 LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AWARE</b>	Association of Whistler Area Residents for the Environment
<b>CSP</b>	Comprehensive Sustainability Plan
<b>FAST</b>	Functional Area Sustainability Team
<b>LEED</b>	Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design
<b>HIT</b>	Habitat Improvement Team
<b>PAN</b>	Protected Area Network [Strategy]
<b>RMOW</b>	Resort Municipality of Whistler
<b>SLRD</b>	Squamish Lillooet Regional District
<b>WB</b>	Whistler-Blackcomb
<b>WCC</b>	Whistler Chamber of Commerce
<b>WES</b>	Whistler Environmental Strategy
<b>WIOF</b>	Whistler. It's Our Future
<b>WION</b>	Whistler. It's Our Nature
<b>WORCA</b>	Whistler Off-Road Cycling Association

**E**ducation, as an essential tool for promoting and managing societal change, is integral to the successful implementation of sustainability planning initiatives. The adoption of sustainable practices, at both individual and institutional levels, necessarily depends on education that is participatory and inclusive, promotes a compelling vision of the need for change, and is embedded in community policies and plans in a strategically planned and coordinated manner. While few dispute the fundamental importance of education in the quest to facilitate change, community education is often under-resourced and lacking highly participatory and transformative experiences to meaningfully engage a target citizenship.

The dimensions, opportunities and challenges of successfully developing and implementing community sustainability education initiatives are examined in this case-study. This study offers a detailed review and assessment of the ongoing community education component of the Whistler. It's Our Nature (WION) programme in the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW), B.C. The following assessment considers the sustainability planning framework on which it is based, gauges WION's overall effectiveness in sustainability promotion and support, and, provides programmatic recommendations to further support and engage the Whistler community.

### Whistler

Located in the coastal mountains of Southwest British Columbia, the RMOW is one of four member municipalities in the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District connected by Highway 99 along the scenic 'Sea to Sky' corridor. Home to 10,000 permanent residents, the municipality supports a four-season internationally renowned resort enterprise that directly fuels the provincial economy (Government of BC: 2003). Each year, over two million visitors flock to Whistler's alpine ski areas, golf courses, hotels, restaurants and retail operations, effectually contributing more than one



billion dollars annually to the BC economy; this represents approximately ten percent of all tourist spending in the province (Gordon: 2003).

**Living sustainably and responding to widespread community change will require individuals and organizations in Whistler to think and act differently. In light of resource constraints, how might WION effectively engage community members to build learning capacity within Whistler and to build support for future knowledge development, sharing and community action for sustainability?**

reconciling ecological, social and environmental issues, the RMOW is undertaking comprehensive hallmark event planning for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. The 2010 Winter Games will bring diverse economic development opportunities to the resort municipality and neighbouring communities along the corridor, but will also come hand in hand with increasing development pressures, and the very real risk of degrading natural community assets.

The community of Whistler is poised for change as it navigates the challenges brought on by its success as a 'world-class destination resort'. As the resort municipality rapidly reaches the limits of a self-imposed growth cap, it must mitigate associated consequences of escalating housing costs and property values and address the fundamental undermining of the natural systems that draw visitors to the community in the first place. To add to the complexity and challenge of

## Sustainability

To proactively direct future change, the resort municipality has embraced the concept of sustainability along with other prominent North American resorts such as Aspen, Vail, and Banff (Gordon: 2003). In 1997, the RMOW began to examine priorities for social, environmental and economic sustainability. Today, the RMOW is completing the final phases of a community-wide strategic visioning process to guide the development and implementation of a Comprehensive Sustainability Plan (CSP). The CSP planning initiative has involved redefining Whistler's vision for the future, establishing community sustainability priorities and directions and developing action plans to ensure their achievement.

## Education

At a most basic level, living sustainably and responding to widespread community change will require individuals and organizations in Whistler to think and act differently. The RMOW and other WION partners have recognized that community education must therefore play a critical role in realizing Whistler's vision for sustainability. Acknowledging that Whistler is far from sustainable, the RMOW's refrain to become a model for sustainability has been replaced by more recent rhetoric that promotes the community's long

**Learning is the cornerstone of a successful environmental sustainability strategy for Whistler... We need to pursue a comprehensive approach to environmental sustainability education and foster opportunities for partners to provide innovative and meaningful education experiences.**

(WES: 1999)



journey towards sustainability. So while the RMOW continues to build on early successes and what is seen as progressive planning by many other mountain resort communities, Whistler still has much work ahead in promoting and supporting sustainable practices through education and community engagement. Fortunately, sustainability education is being addressed on a number of fronts by partners and organizations in the broader community. Some of these specific education projects and activities, highlighted in Section 2, are acknowledged as making notable contributions to the promotion of sustainability education in Whistler. The education component of the WION programme, however, as the only programme addressing overall sustainability promotion and support, is the main focus of the planning study.

In light of the municipality's commitment to supporting sustainable practices and recent efforts to 'jumpstart' WION promotional and support services, there is a timely opportunity to reflect on past sustainability education programming and to suggest innovative ideas for future enhancement. This programme assessment is designed to inform and contribute to upcoming programme planning efforts as the Whistler Centre for Sustainability (WCS) resumes WION community education and outreach activities.

## Analytical Approach to Sustainability & Education

This project is based on three foundational assertions, revealing the broader analytical approach to the WION programme assessment:

- **Both 'sustainability,' and notions of what constitutes 'good' planning, reside in contested terrain – defined, often ambiguously, by a spectrum of individuals, agencies and institutions.** As the new

planning 'buzzword' of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the term sustainability represents a gamut of philosophies surrounding the idea living within the productive capacity of nature. While a review of the sustainability debate is beyond the scope of this project, in this context, the concept of sustainability is referenced as sustaining life by maintaining an ecological-bottom line and securing a satisfying quality of life for everyone (Wackernagel & Rees: 1996). This definition is supported by the concept of sustainability forwarded by TNS, as discussed in Section Two.

- **Education is a necessary and integral component of sustainability planning, decision-making and citizenship development.** Sustainability education is needed now, more than ever, to respond to our changing social, ecological and economic realities (Gudz: 2003) and to rectify the real possibility that "we are becoming more ignorant of the things we must know to live well and sustainably upon the earth (Orr: 1994). Despite the notion that sustainable practices and good community-based decisions depend on an educated citizenry (McKeown: 2002), far too often, community education is an under funded, if not altogether forgotten, planning priority. This assessment acknowledges the important idea that communities and their educational systems need to dovetail their sustainability efforts (McKeown: 2002).
- **Education and learning are interactive processes that involve actively experiencing, sharing and developing knowledge** (Doyle 2001). Unfortunately, rather than engaging learners to respond in a productive multi-way dialogue, it is not uncommon to find that learners are positioned as "passive receptacles of words and ideas" (Fromm 1978). In this way, plans are 'communicated' to an affected public as part of static awareness campaigns that do not go beyond presenting just 'the facts':



*Most information campaigns transfer messages from experts to the public in a manner that rarely promotes deliberation, community involvement or critical thinking... Information is not knowledge, knowledge is not understanding, and understanding is not wise action (Moore 2002).*

As a result, citizens lack the active engagement in participatory and transformative learning experiences needed to reinforce the connections between decisions, actions, and outcomes.

## Objectives

This analysis is guided by several important objectives, ultimately contributing to the fundamental project objective of strengthening WION community education programming and outreach in the RMOW. Transformative programming ideas and outreach are required to effectively promote the shift in individual and collective thinking to incorporate sustainable practices into everyday decision making. Three means to contribute to this fundamental objective are to:

1. **Assess and identify contributions, gaps and opportunities in WION programme planning, content, delivery and outreach;**
2. **Recommend strategies and actions to enhance future educational programming in a manner that fits with the Resort**

**This analysis draws on the fundamental idea of education and learning as an interactive process that involves both process and product, as well as actively experiencing, sharing and developing knowledge.**

**Municipality's strategic goals and sustainability framework (The Natural Step); and,**

3. **Explore opportunities for active citizen engagement to improve community outreach and further efforts to build a 'learning community'.**

## Intended Audience

The analysis and accompanying recommendations are intended and designed for a broad community audience – for municipal partners involved in the development and implementation of WION initiatives, for community organizations and educators who contribute to the often under-recognized responsibility of building learning communities, and for residents of Whistler who will take a lead role as 'compass keepers' and 'change agents' in charting a more sustainable course for the resort municipality. The designation of such a broad audience speaks to recognition of the need for a collaborative and coordinated approach to community sustainability education – operating at multiple institutional levels and in both formal and informal settings. There is also an opportunity to consider WION assessment results and recommendations in relation to future community education surrounding the development and adoption of the RMOW's Comprehensive Sustainability Plan described in Section 2.

Following a presentation of evaluation methods that have guided this critical programme review, a contextual summary of sustainability education initiatives in the RMOW is presented to set the stage for the analysis.



## Project Design

The following programme assessment is based on a systematic approach to critically review the *planning, content and delivery* of the community education component of the WION programme. The observed programme planning process, resource materials and community activities are primary focal points. The eight-step structured and iterative analytical process posited by Bardach (2000) has been used to demonstrate good practice in project planning and evaluation. Bardach's analytical framework involves basic qualitative methods to shape the project design and evaluation. The eight-step process has been modified to reflect the specific analytical context within which the professional planning project has unfolded. This seven-step modified framework is shown below:

### 1. Frame the Analysis

The project was initiated by framing the analysis and establishing an understanding of key issues that have influenced the current state of sustainability planning and education in the RMOW.

### 2. Identify Objectives

A set of fundamental and means objectives were established to structure the overall project direction and desired outcomes, and guide the collection and analysis of information.

### 3. Assemble Evidence

A 'fact base' was established by sourcing relevant information to produce a summary map showcasing significant sustainability planning activities in the Resort Municipality. Key municipal plans, strategies and public information materials have been used to develop an understanding of Whistler's strategic direction for sustainability planning and development, and to guide the assessment and formulation of program recommendations. Informal consultations were also conducted with RMOW staff. While

the review does attempt to gauge programme effectiveness from a community planning perspective, it has not explicitly involved gathering community feedback through formal interviews or surveys of RMOW residents and visitors.

## 4. Define Evaluation Criteria

Several key questions were initially used to broadly direct the programme review and assessment:

- (1) *What are the WION programming successes in terms of community education?*
- (2) *Where do significant programming gaps exist that can be resolved to better engage community and broaden outreach efforts?*
- (3) *How might the WION education programme help to make explicit the important connections between actions and outcomes, to promote knowledge development and sharing, and to build learning capacity within the community?*

A series of evaluation criteria was then developed to establish parameters by which to explicitly assess programme performance. Due to a lack of comprehensive 'prefabricated' evaluation tools for community sustainability education, criteria was specifically cultivated for the project. This evaluation criteria was conceived of as a synthesis of thematic principles and recommendations for community education and sustainability.

A variety of resources were considered and used to guide the criteria development. Most notably, key principles and strategies for environmental learning and sustainability were distilled from the national Framework for Environmental Education and





*Sustainability in Canada* (Government of Canada: 2002). The framework is a national strategy and action plan developed in a three year Canada-wide consultation involving over 5500 educators, academics, organisations, government agencies and individuals. This extensive consultation incorporated participants' front-line efforts, best practices and grass-roots experiences to establish a vision from which partners can develop their own action plans for sustainability education. The framework specifically presents a set of principles to guide sustainability education initiatives for knowledge development and sharing, capacity building and creating support structures for sustainable living. Providing valuable high-level requirements for education, the framework acknowledges learning as a value-based endeavour, gives visibility to and validates existing efforts, and offers good insight to strengthen learning activities and outreach. However, the national framework is not designed as an evaluative tool, nor does it completely succeed in providing a fully developed strategy that can be implemented in all community-specific situations; in acknowledgement of these issues, additional sources were considered in developing programme evaluation criteria that suited the project objectives. Other valuable resources include: The RMOW's very own criteria for sustainable destination resort communities (Flint et al: 2002) to ensure alignment with community values and goals; DiBella and Nevis' (1998) integrated strategies for building learning capacities in organizations; Richardson and Wolfe's (2001) compilation of ideas for the development of lifelong learning opportunities; and, Evan and Hoffman's (2000) notions of situated learning and engagement in 'communities of practice'. The resulting 'compilation' of criteria is presented in Section 3.

## 5. Conduct the Analysis

WION educational components were systematically considered in relation to the evaluation criteria proposed at the beginning of Section 4. The discussion was organized according to how well WION 'set the stage', 'developed the [sustainability] story' and 'extended the dialogue' in the overall promotion and support of sustainable practices. WION programme contributions, gaps and areas of opportunity for future enhancement were highlighted and summarized in terms of the planning and integration of community education, knowledge development and sharing, building capacity and supporting sustainable living.

## 6. Identify Programme Enhancements

Based on the critical review results, the key 'areas of opportunity' were followed by a series of recommendations suggesting fundamental first order priorities for the development of support services and best practices for improved community engagement and action.

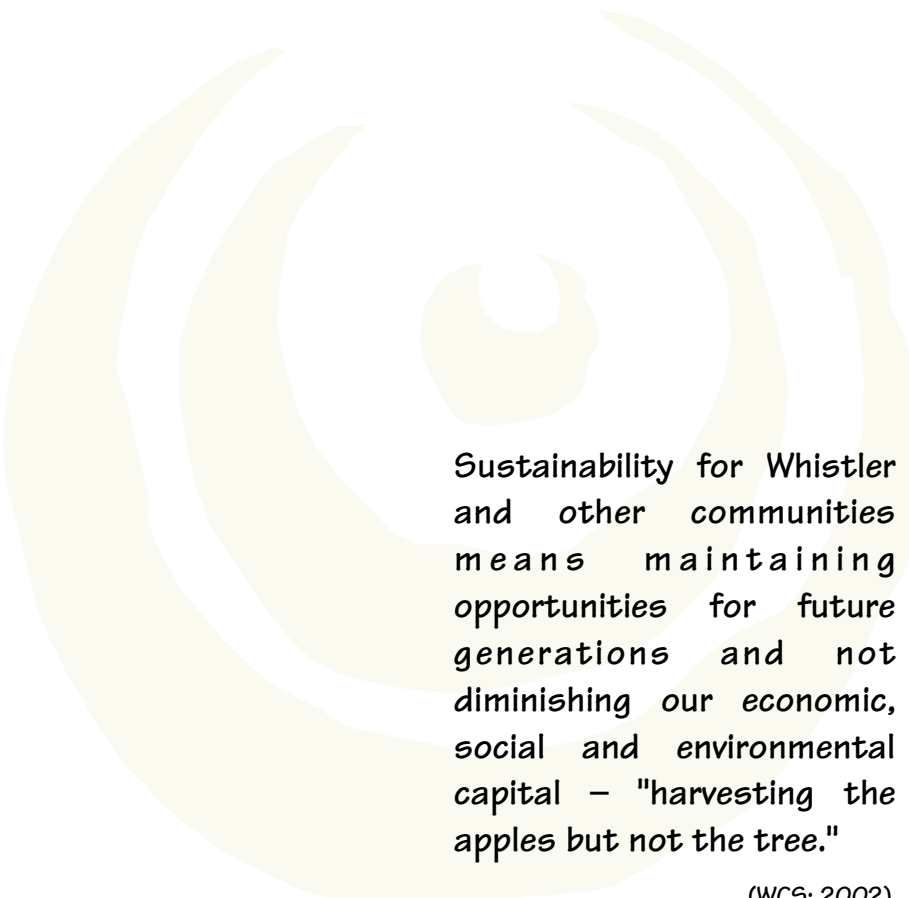
## 7. Share the Story

The final assessment, recommendations and project reflections were brought together to create this final project report for presentation.

Before presenting the detailed WION programme assessment and consequent recommendations, the analysis is further framed by a review of the larger sustainability planning context in the RMOW. As noted earlier, this brief review offers an understanding of Whistler's strategic direction for sustainability planning and development and formally introduces the Whistler Centre for Sustainability, as well as, the WION programme.



## 2. COMMUNITY PLANNING CONTEXT



**Sustainability for Whistler and other communities means maintaining opportunities for future generations and not diminishing our economic, social and environmental capital – "harvesting the apples but not the tree."**

(WCS: 2002)

**W**histler. *It's Our Nature* is a community programme designed to promote sustainability in the Resort Municipality. Aptly recognizing that achieving sustainability depends on strategic planning and education in an effort to affect long-term change, the WION programme was initiated by a partnership of Whistler organizations known as the 'Early Adopters' in late 2001. Although community education is not WION's official 'raison d'être', educational activities play an important role in encouraging "businesses, households and other organizations to practice sustainability, including using The Natural Step framework as their "sustainability compass" (WCS: 2002). As a community-wide 'umbrella programme', WION comprises a spectrum of Early Adopter-sponsored initiatives. For example, as one of the major partners, the RMOW has developed an environmental management system, and is currently developing a sustainability indicator and reporting framework to implement and monitor more sustainable municipal operations.

**Whistler's "Early Adopters" of The Natural Step Framework are Tourism Whistler; Resort Municipality of Whistler, Fairmont Chateau Whistler; Whistler Blackcomb, Whistler Fotosource (representing small business) and the Association of Whistler Area Residents for the Environment (AWARE)** (<http://www.whistleritsournature.ca/>)

The community programme is managed and administered by the Whistler Centre for Sustainability. The WCS is a non-profit 'virtual centre' funded by the RMOW, Tourism Whistler, volunteer and in-kind contributions from Early Adopter organizations as well as external sources. The Centre's vision is that of a catalyst in the 'quest for a more sustainable Whistler' and is closely tied to the positioning of the Resort Municipality as a leader in



## 2. COMMUNITY PLANNING CONTEXT

community sustainability initiatives globally (WCS Business Plan Excerpt: 2000). The WCS specifically aims to “promote and support the creation of sustainable practices through research, education, training, monitoring and sharing of information first within Whistler and then showcasing Whistler as a model for the global community” (WCS: 2002). Promotional services to inspire and encourage, as well as support services to offer practical assistance to clarify and simplify sustainable community practices, are intended for audiences both *internal* (Whistler households, schools and businesses) and *external* (Visitors and Whistler’s supply chain) (WCS Business Plan Excerpt: 2000).

### TNS – A Community Sustainability Compass

The foundation upon which the WION community programme and educational activities is based is *The Natural Step* (TNS) Framework, a ‘sustainability compass’ that utilizes “a science and systems-based approach to organizational planning for sustainability. It provides a practical set of design criteria that can be used to direct social, environmental, and economic actions” (TNS Canada: 2002). TNS was founded in 1989 by Dr. Karl-Henrik Robert, a Swiss medical doctor, in response to his growing concerns about public health risks from exposure to increasing toxins in the environment and resource use practices. Now used by over 100 organizations in Europe, the United States and Canada, TNS has gained considerable support and use.

The TNS systems-based approach involves visioning, goal setting, and developing realistic strategies for moving forward (TNS Canada: 2002). This is done using (1) a shared understanding of sustainability; (2) four system conditions or first-order principles seen as minimum requirements for sustainability; (3) a visioning process from which communities can ‘backcast’; and (4) an analysis of current practices to assess how to move forward to develop targets, action plans and to measure results (Figure 1).

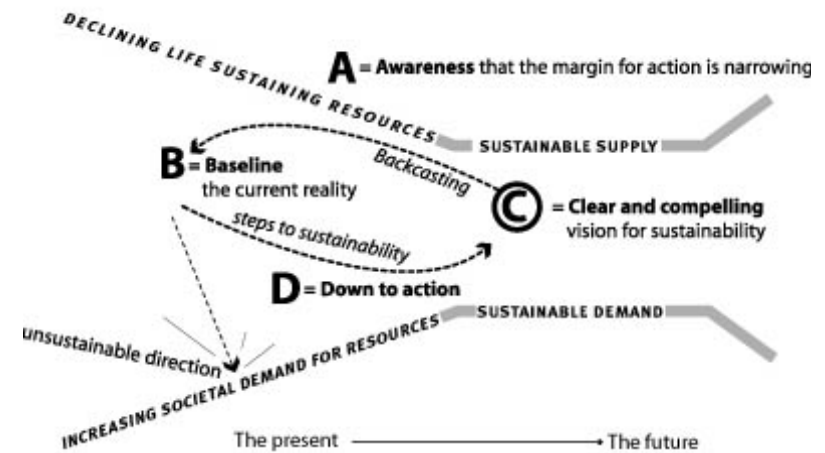


Figure 1 – The Natural Step Framework (TNS Canada)

The TNS System Conditions for sustainability state that, “For society to be sustainable, the ecosphere must not be systematically subject to: (1) Increasing concentrations of substances from the earth’s crust; (2) Increasing concentrations of substances produced by society; (3) Impoverishing physical manipulation or over-harvesting; and, (4) Resources must be used efficiently and fairly to meet basic human needs worldwide (Broman et al: 2000).



Source: WCS: 2002





## 2. COMMUNITY PLANNING CONTEXT

TNS provides a common language or mental model that is concrete and sufficiently frames the concept of sustainability. Contrasted with many other environmental planning models, TNS forwards an unambiguous definition of sustainability providing the overview for the whole system, instead of 'getting lost in the details'. Broman et al (2000) argue that the TNS Framework allows citizens to 'think upstream' in terms of cause and effect and to recognize that what happens in one part of a system affects every other part. TNS is not prescriptive in that it does not specify particular steps or goals; rather, it is used for setting decision-criteria and developing and implementing strategies that align with the principles for sustainability.

### Programme Status

To raise awareness and encourage participation at the wider community level, in late 2001 the WION programme was officially launched and has incorporated the following materials and activities to date:

- A Sustainability Symposium in December 2000 at the Fairmont Chateau Whistler;
- Two-day 'Level I' TNS training workshops for approximately 40 trainers within Early Adopter organizations;
- Ten-week 'Level II' TNS training with approximately 15 trainers;
- A multi-media show and website to tell Whistler's story;
- The Leadership through Sustainable Innovation Speakers' Series (October 2001 to March 2002);
- A community network of sustainability facilitators to provide guidance about



sustainability and The Natural Step Framework;

- Community, Household, School and Business Sustainability Toolkits; and,
- Ongoing newsletters, updates, training workshops, public awareness and school programs.

Since the initiation of a community sustainability visioning process, *Whistler. It's our Future* (WIOF), in mid 2002, the WION community sustainability programme has taken a 'backseat' role. As resources were redirected towards WIOF and the 2010 Winter Olympic Games bid, the WION programme has effectively been on hold as resources and energy are used to complete the development of a Comprehensive Sustainability Plan, acknowledged by Whistler Council as the municipality's top priority (Ogilvie: 2002).

There are new signs, however, that WION education programme activities will soon be resurrected. Funding has been secured for further community education activities. As these new funding sources for the WION programme materialize, a part-time programme coordinator will develop workshops, and organize another Speaker Series. In response to the sense that the WION programme has perhaps 'lost ground' due to the loss of funding and visibility, WION partners may return to more awareness building activities (such as another Speaker Series) before developing future workshops and other support services. Other learning and educational initiatives have been recently developed:

- Monthly lunch-hour "learning circles", hosted by the municipality, are now used to expand the network of 'sustainability practioners' (individuals responsible for integrating sustainability principles/practices into their workplace or community) and to increase participants' knowledge and understanding of sustainability issues and solutions. The goal of the Sustainability Learning and Understanding Group (SLUG), which was modelled after the SLUG Vancouver group, is



## 2. COMMUNITY PLANNING CONTEXT

to facilitate learning opportunities where sustainability practitioners can share ideas, challenges and successes and to continue building capacity of a core group of committed individuals. Meeting topics are open and address such topics as social sustainability, purchasing policies, best practices, and dealing with trade offs in decision-making.

- The Whistler Chamber of Commerce is also addressing local sustainability issues and has recently began developing ideas for a 'Learning Communities Initiative'. This initiative will explore the idea of Whistler as a demonstration learning community, the creation of a centralized learning network, support for other RMOW initiatives and the development of a trained volunteer base. Mutual learning opportunities and incentives to encourage local residents to participate in knowledge development and sharing exercises may also play a part in the initiative (personal correspondence: August 2003).

### Whistler's Larger 'Sustainability Story'

The WION programme has directly grown out of a series of planning decisions and actions designed to help the RMOW write a new story about its future. Whistler's 'sustainability story' often begins with the acknowledgement: *Whistler is not sustainable*. In spite of many who call into question the very premise of a sustainable 'mountain resort community' (or what some argue as the irreconcilable resource requirements of the resort industry within fragile alpine ecosystems with a finite carrying capacity), the Resort Municipality has slowly begun to alter its course. In the late 1990s, Whistler began to refocus its thinking as the community neared the capacity dictated by its 1989 growth policy. To deal with the challenges of its own success as a thriving destination resort, the RMOW was quickly pushed to come to terms with the idea that to maintain its 'success', the community must sustain the functioning integrity of the natural systems on which its economy depends. Determined to become a model for sustainability, the community has begun to assume a leadership role in the

promotion and support of local and regional sustainability. This has involved the incremental process of developing a very different collective vision and management plan for its future.

### Sustainability in Action

While many communities lack explicit sustainability and action plans on which to base education planning strategies, Whistler is a progressive exception. The following sustainability planning 'snapshot' presents significant municipal planning activities in Whistler over the last five years. **Figure 2 - Sustainability Planning in the RMOW** specifically illustrates how the WION community program fits into the larger strategic planning context.

1997.

The early visioning document, *Whistler 2002: Charting a Course for the Future*, outlines the community's vision for sustainability. Five key priorities for planning are identified: 'Building a stronger resort community'; 'Enhancing the Whistler experience'; 'Moving towards environmental sustainability'; 'Achieving financial sustainability'; and, 'Contributing to the success of the region'.

1999.

*Whistler Environmental Strategy* (WES), a long-term strategy and work plan for environmental sustainability, specifically addresses sustainability education and research, and establishes strategic goals and guidelines in relation to environmental stewardship (WES Chapter 15). This strategy was developed by a community-based environmental advisory group and recently revised to incorporate TNS principles for sustainability at the highest strategic level.



## 2. COMMUNITY PLANNING CONTEXT

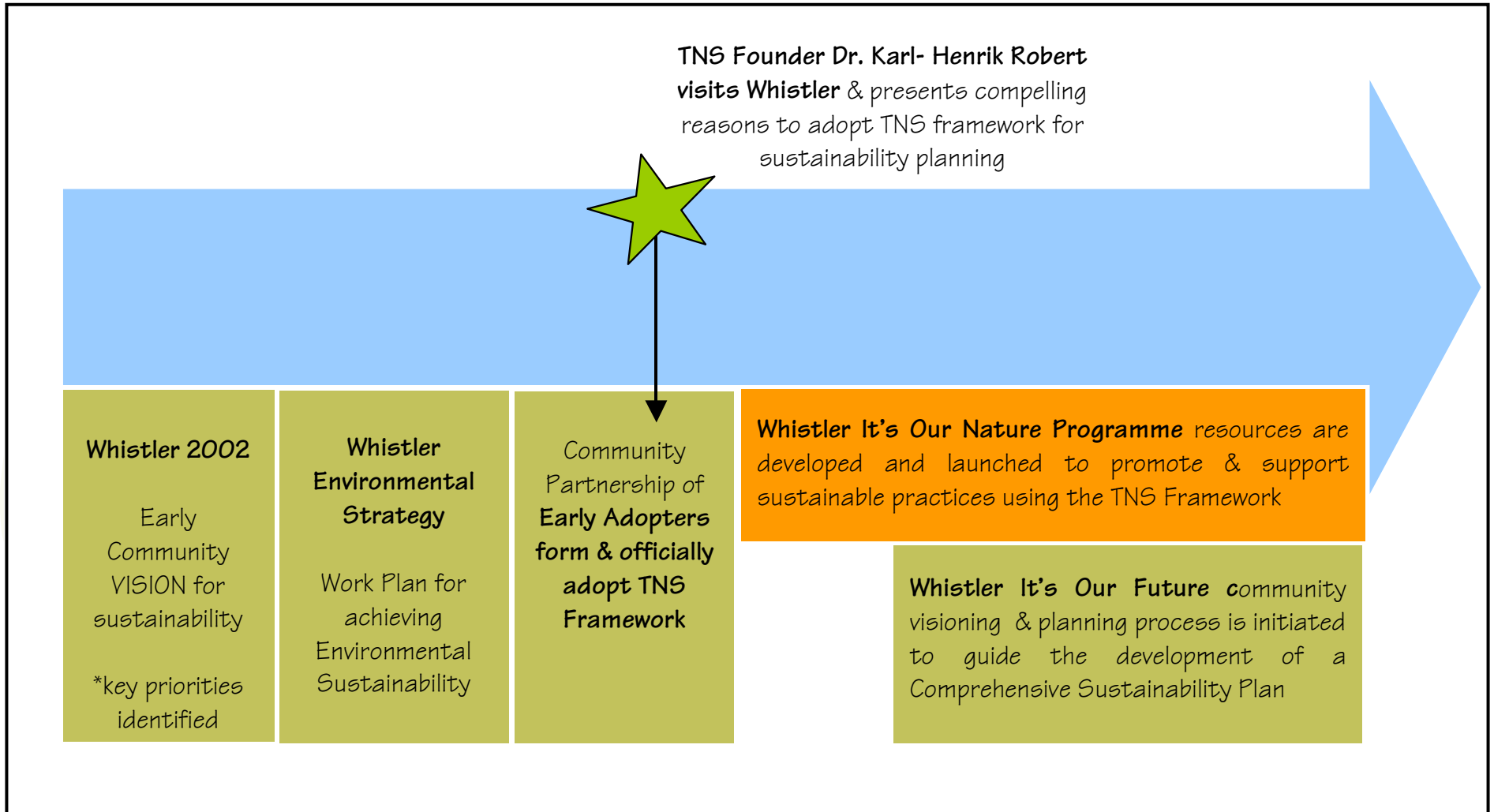


Figure 2. Sustainability Planning in the RMOW



## 2. COMMUNITY PLANNING CONTEXT

### 2000.

Whistler's "Early Adopters" and community leaders adopt The Natural Step Framework (TNS) – an educational and planning framework that now serves as the community's "sustainability compass." The Framework is based on a shared understanding of four system conditions for sustainability, a visioning process for determining future targets, and an analysis of current conditions in order to "backcast" and devise action and monitoring plans (see **TNS – A Community Sustainability Compass** on Page 8).

### 2001.

In December, the Whistler. *It's Our Nature* program is launched to promote and support a sustainable Whistler. Coordinated by the non-profit Whistler Centre for Sustainability, the community program provides TNS educational toolkits (booklet and CD) and training for core Early Adopter organizations to spur residents, businesses and schools to make practical and immediate changes in their lives and day-to-day operations. A community sustainability toolkit co-produced with The Natural Step Canada, as well as the web site, provide additional community resources.

### 2002.

In June the RMOW launched Phase I of Whistler. *It's our Future*: a planning program and visioning process to guide strategic community planning efforts. The first phase of the project involved the determination of criteria for a successful and sustainable resort community against which future visions will be measured.

### 2003.

The strategic visioning process and associated public consultation (Phase II) is currently underway. Based on community input from Phase I, the

RMOW has collectively developed and modeled a set of future community scenarios using the sustainability visioning tool, QUEST, used specifically to showcase anticipated outcomes of the scenario. Community workshops are scheduled for October 2003 to identify a publicly supported and preferred scenario. Phase III will culminate in the development of a draft *Comprehensive Sustainability Plan* (CSP) - a plan intended to go beyond earlier visioning documents to prioritize actions and allow the municipality to move ahead with its sustainability goals. The draft CSP, planned for Council review in 2004, will address important relationships such as growth management, housing, land use, physical infrastructure and services, transportation, health services, education and tourism. Individual planning policies, such as the Transportation Demand Management Strategy, will necessarily be aligned with the CSP. Once completed, the CSP

will consolidate and replace existing policy documents such as the Comprehensive Development Plan and Whistler 2002, eventually becoming part of the RMOW's Official Community Plan.

**Whistler's Comprehensive Sustainability Plan will establish a commonly held vision and overarching plan for sustainability to manage and direct future change.**

### Highlighting Initial Successes

Municipal planning activities have led to a number of positive achievements in Whistler since the community began to strategically plan using TNS principles for sustainability. These initial successes are qualified as planning initiatives that have gone beyond awareness building to target and elicit action. To recognize some of these existing efforts and celebrate early successes, several outcomes are briefly acknowledged below:

#### **Municipal Organization (RMOW)**



## 2. COMMUNITY PLANNING CONTEXT

- Establishment of a full-time sustainability coordinator position in the strategic planning department to initiate internal sustainability training and development;
- Creation of *Functional Area Sustainability Teams* (FAST) tasked with the responsibility of incorporating sustainability principles in daily operations;
- Development of environmental management and reporting systems based on sustainability indicators;
- Delivery of annual sustainability training for all municipal staff (85-90% of all staff have completed training to date (Gordon: 2003));
- Initiation of new operational policies and bylaws requiring the use of more sustainable materials and processes (Proposed Water conservation strategy including 'low-flow' household fixture Bylaw; use of electric bicycles and carts for municipal employees; pesticide-free landscaping, maintenance and push-mower pilot programme and a purchasing policy); and,
- Continued development of nature conservation initiatives such as the creation of the *Protected Area Network Strategy* (PAN Strategy).

### **Community-Wide Action**

- Whistler Housing Authority — Creation of employee restricted housing units and the use of green building technologies in new employee housing projects in Spring Creek and Beaver Flats;
- Tourism Whistler — Initiation of new LEED-certified conference centre renovations (92% materials recycled and diverted from the landfill); operation of daily staff vanpool; elimination of paper distribution using member 'extranet' system;
- Fairmont Chateau — Certified BC Hydro 'Power smart' partner

(lighting retrofitting has reduced emissions by 50 tonnes of greenhouse gases annually); material recycling and composting; staff sustainability education and training; initiation of EcoMeet guest services;

- AWARE — 'Raising AWAREness' monthly sustainability articles in Whistler Question; proposed Soo Valley 'Olympic Wildlife Refuge'; sponsor of a compost demonstration shed at the Spring Creek Elementary; fundraising for community education materials; and,
- Whistler-Blackcomb — Development of Habitat Improvement Teams (HIT); independent power generation project; upgrading WB maintenance vehicles to fuel-efficient engines; erosion control projects; expansion of material recycling.

### **Regional Partnerships**

- Development of a Solid Waste Management Plan; approval of a privately-funded centralized composting facility in Squamish to divert organic wastes from the municipal landfill; (partnership between SLRD and Carney's Waste Systems);
- Transportation demand management planning that has led to dramatic increases in ridership with future routes planned for Squamish to Whistler; and,
- Initiation of First Nations outreach activities (transit to Mount Currie; trail crews, proposed Friendship Centre and partnerships with the RMOW).

Following this brief introduction of the WCS and the WION programme, the next section develops an integrated assessment of the educational components of the WION programme according to a set of criteria for sustainability education and outreach.



### 3. ASSESSMENT

The following assessment is presented in two parts. The first part presents key criteria by which the community education component of the WION programme is evaluated; the resulting assessment is discussed in the second. Programme elements that have positively contributed to the promotion and support of sustainable practices are highlighted. Critical WION programming gaps and subsequent opportunities for improvement are also identified. A series of recommendations suggest best practices for improved community engagement and action.

#### Evaluation Framework & Key Criteria

The specific consideration of WION programme planning and organization, content development, delivery and outreach is intended to identify key programme components and to provide clarity about how these elements contribute to the overall promotion and support sustainable practices. These assessment elements and relationships are diagrammatically illustrated in **Figure 3 - Programme Assessment Elements**. Assessment components are then summarized together in the context of the WION programme as a whole.

The criteria illustrated below represent an integration of key themes and principles for sustainability education, criteria for effective and participatory community involvement, as well as, articulated community objectives drawn from relevant RMOW working documents (Whistler 2002; WES and the background report, 'Characteristics of Sustainable Destination Resort Communities'). Key evaluative themes for sustainability education include such concepts as the promotion of lifelong transformative learning, systems thinking, integrated approaches to learning, recognition of different ways of knowing and wider citizenship education. These criteria have been developed drawing from a variety of sources, most notably, the Framework for Environmental Learning and Sustainability (Government of Canada: 2002).

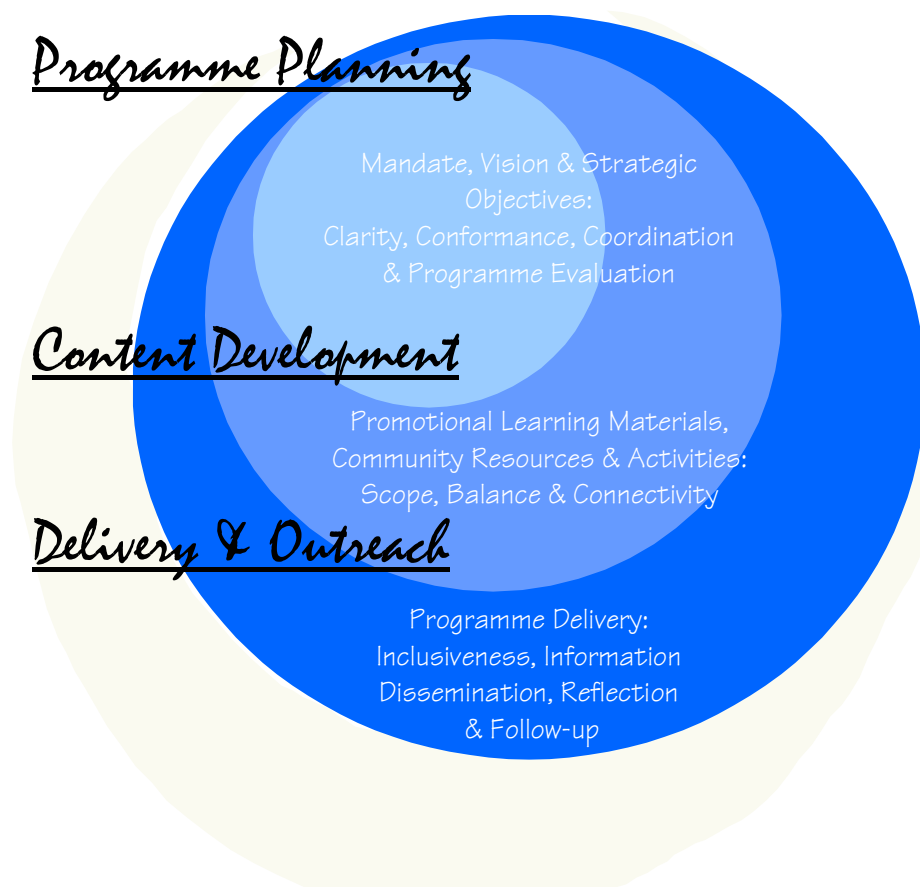


Figure 3— Programme Assessment Elements



## CRITERIA KEY

### I. Planning & Organization - 'Setting the Stage'

- a. Establishment and clarity of strategic vision, objectives and principles for developing and delivering community sustainability education;
- b. Conformance with wider community values, visions & strategic priorities;
- c. Effective coordination of programme activities & institutional support (sustainable funding and partnerships);
- d. Development of community support systems & capacity building for educators and learners; and,
- e. Institution of mechanisms for continuous programme assessment & evaluation.

### II. Content Development - 'Developing the Story'

- a. Appropriate scope and balance of learning materials to build substantial knowledge base for sustainability;
- b. Promotion of lifelong learning, citizenship education & community responsibility; and,
- c. Consideration of connections among issues, trade offs and understanding of impacts.

### III. Delivery & Outreach - 'Extending the Dialogue'

- a. Active engagement of broad cross section of community;
- b. Respect for and inclusion of local peoples & their knowledge;
- c. Provision of transformative and experiential learning opportunities; and,
- d. Facilitation of broad sharing of knowledge, ideas & follow-up activities.

## Programme Contributions, Gaps & Opportunities

The next section explores WION programme contributions and gaps in relation to the key criteria noted on the left. The discussion refers to how well WION 'sets the stage', 'develops the [sustainability] story' and 'extends the dialogue' in the overall promotion and support of sustainable community practices. The assessment is based on an overall performance judgement represented by either a 'thumbs up' or 'thumbs down' symbol, avoiding complications associated with a complex rating scheme. The intent of using positive or negative symbols is to offer a 'net judgement' – one that simply captures the assessment results. While there are inherent challenges in substantively measuring programme effectiveness at such an early stage of implementation, an attempt is made nonetheless to conduct a high-level assessment in an effort to reveal prominent educational contributions and gaps.

### I. PLANNING & ORGANIZATION

#### 1a. Establishment and clarity of strategic vision, objectives and principles for community sustainability education.



The WCS has established a clear and progressive vision, mission and a series of strategic objectives. WCS's vision is to become a catalyst for change within the community and within a more sustainable world beyond municipal boundaries. The WCS formally acknowledges Whistler's connection and contribution to an unsustainable global society, which effectively begins to focus community attention on the interconnectedness of actions and outcomes at both global and local levels. The WCS also recognizes



### 3. ASSESSMENT

Whistler's international profile and influence as an opportunity to become a leader in community sustainability initiatives.



**The WCS clearly defines its mandate to promote and support sustainable practices in the community: Promotional Services designed to inspire and encourage; and, Support Services offering practical assistance to clarify and simplify more sustainable practices** (through workshops, toolkits and technical advice). This two-fold mandate reflects a logical coordination of programming to first build awareness (Level 1) and to subsequently build support for actions by translating community awareness into engagement and action (Level 2). In particular, the creation of a compelling vision of the need for change through 'inspirational' means using emotive messaging is a great starting point. Barriers and benefits to change are indicated as a key focal point of the overall promotion of sustainable practices - this is an important step in supporting engagement efforts (related discussion is presented in the Recommendations Section 5).



**While it is acknowledged that the WION mandate is for overall sustainability promotion and support, the way in which promotional activities dovetail with support services has not been fully developed.** The WCS Business Plan differentiates promotional efforts, designed to follow a social marketing approach for largely communications-based activities, from support services following a 'sector-specific' approach to reach target internal and external audiences. However, how will the WCS know when to initiate support services once an appropriate level of commitment is achieved? What does this commitment look like (i.e. What indicators could be used to monitor this)? Although the WCS recognizes the need to develop support services in a staged manner that matches funding availability, specific milestones have

not been established or draw a clear connection back to the key indicators for WCS Strategic Objectives. There is also an opportunity to consider the creation of a 'cross-sectoral' approach to new community partnerships – partnering local government, educators, institutions, the private sector and non-governmental organizations. One such possibility includes a community-service learning programme for sustainability. This is discussed in more detail in Section 5.



**Four strategic objectives are articulated and well defined using key indicators.** These objectives involve: expanding the network of individuals and organizations engaging in sustainable practices; making progress towards sustainability; infusing sustainability values in customer perceptions; and, increasing the social and financial capacity of the WCS) The use of indicators ensures that each objective is measurable and allows for the identification of performance improvements. Unfortunately, little of this organizational information is presented in its entirety on the WION website or in other resources. To further increase credibility and transparency, these strategic objectives and their indicators could also be presented in public materials and on the WION website.



**While the strategic objectives above may be implicitly based on an objectives hierarchy, they are not explicitly framed or organized as fundamental versus means objectives.** This is to say that there is no differentiation between broad high-level objectives and lower-level 'means' by which to achieve them. It may be that the educational component of the WION programme implicitly represents a 'means' objective (in this case, the primary tool by which to achieve the other more fundamental objectives). However, explicit learning objectives, outcomes and principles for community education are not articulated as 'sub-level' means objectives.





### 3. ASSESSMENT

Desired outcomes and performance indicators for environmental learning and sustainability should be fully articulated and mapped. This could be done to show how individual promotional and support activities might fit into a larger community education plan for the RMOW's CSP.

#### 1b. Conformance with wider community values, visions & strategic priorities.

👍 Although WION is not designed to specifically implement WES or Whistler 2002 goals, the community education component of WION generally conforms with most of the strategic environmental education goals presented in the Whistler Environmental Strategy Chapter 15 work plan: *Furthering Environmental Sustainability Education & Research* (RMOW 2002). Although the WES focus strictly pertains to environmental sustainability education, this is one of the only 'official' community documents that specifically addresses sustainability education strategies. A revised edition has incorporated specific TNS principles and criteria for sustainability to provide a common language for sustainability planning decisions.

👍 WION programme is consistent with sustainability values and TNS principles adopted by RMOW partners and Early Adopters;

👍 WION resources present information about the practical meaning of TNS principles and TNS System Conditions (see Evaluation Sub-Section 2a);

👍 Multi-media methods and interpretive learning activities were developed and presented in various forums; and,

👍 WION resources highlight ecosystem function in relation to the system conditions 1-4, but have not, on their own, offered an improved understanding of local ecosystem structure and function – as well as connections to place (see Evaluation Sub-Section 3c).

👍 The WCS has established a Code of Conduct that clearly articulates programming goals to carry out the WION mission. This Code of Conduct essentially represents a statement of values and commitment, enhancing credibility and promoting the notion of leading by example. Key themes include demonstrating leadership, advocacy, ethics and transparency, a focus on applied solutions that conform to TNS system conditions, inclusivity, positivity, and sharing challenges and successes.


#### 1c. Effective coordination of programme activities & institutional support (sustainable funding and partnerships).


👍 The partnership network of Early Adopters has provided significant institutional support in the development and implementation of the WION programme and ultimately the WCS itself. Based on the commitment of these core organizations that adopted and forwarded the compelling story of Dr. Karl-Henrik Robert and the TNS Framework he founded, WION came to fruition. The establishment of the Early Adopter group allows partners to draw on the experiences of others and to collaboratively develop and share resources. There is a critical need to continually enhance the level of communication between these organizations to ensure that these partnerships are nurtured and supported to in turn




### 3. ASSESSMENT

sustain the larger WCS and WION initiatives.


 **A lack of resources, and the overshadowing of the WION programme with other municipal planning initiatives (WIOF as well as 2010 Olympic Games Bid) compromised efforts to effectively dovetail promotional and support services in the two-fold approach initially developed by the WCS.** As a result, sustainability promotion (the development and distribution of the household toolkits and community festivals or celebrations) was not adequately followed-up by the spectrum of outreach and support services necessary to translate awareness to community engagement and action. While the transition to sustainability is often characterized as a slow paradigm shift, this lack of immediate follow-up may have reduced the effectiveness of initial promotional efforts. Sustainability promotion will need to be further developed to garner greater community support and inspire people to act.

 **While some support services for internal Whistler audiences have not been advanced according to plan, several 'organic' community activities have begun to occur.** These recently developed activities include the SLUG sessions described in Section 2, Grade 7 sustainability workshops and speech competition at Myrtle Philip School, and new organizations that are integrating TNS into their business (Slope Side Supply; Whistler Housing Authority; Delta Suites Hotel and the Whistler Community Services Society). Internal support services yet to be implemented include resident and household engagement activities such as sustainability study groups, training sessions and newsletters; a small business charter recognition programme; and, the 'Kids on Earth' school and youth programme for curriculum development. For external audiences, executive and corporate

programming, conference services and a supply chain registry and trade fair have yet to be initiated.

 **Despite best efforts to distinguish WION from the Whistler. It's Our Future (WIOF) programme through media communications and resources, the two initiatives were potentially confused and may have overwhelmed citizens by all the planning activities and consultation underway.** WIOF's parallel visioning and consultation process was initiated shortly after the WION programme launch in late 2001. The close ties between the names, while perhaps made to link the WION programme with the community visioning process, may have done more to confuse the public. Strategic communications efforts were needed to better highlight the two initiatives – their distinct but related purposes and desired outcomes.


#### 1d. Development of community support systems & capacity building for educators and learners.

 **The delivery of TNS sustainability training for Early Adopter organizations, prior to the community-wide WION programme launch, was a great way to build capacity in a core group that can later provide leadership and act as ambassadors to the rest of the resort municipality.** Sustainability training within the RMOW in 2001 and 2002 has resulted in the training of approximately 85% of staff. Approximately 15 Early Adopter trainers also completed TNS Level II workshops, allowing them to in turn deliver training within their organizations (Gordon: 2003). This 'peer-to-peer' model of capacity building has been positively perceived and recognized (Federation of Canadian Municipalities:




2002). While Level I and II training enables organizations to continue internal learning and communication efforts, there is an opportunity to further detail organizational incentives for continued 'buy-in' and continued learning, to incorporate TNS and sustainability principles into every day decision making.


#### 1e. Institution of mechanisms for continuous programme assessment & evaluation.

 No formal evaluation plan was in place to track the effectiveness or community response to the WION Household Toolkits or the Speaker Series (other than attendance). Evaluation mechanisms and measures for performance measurement are essential components of most well-developed community planning or management frameworks. To support the true development of a 'learning community', opportunities for reflection and evaluation processes are necessary to continually improve upon programme organization, resource development and delivery. Before initiating future promotional or support services, the WCS should find out whether the Toolkits and associated activities met the needs of the community.

## II. CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

### 2a. Appropriate scope and balance of learning materials to build substantial knowledge base for sustainability.

 All WION promotional material (Toolkits and Website) is based on the TNS framework espousing ecological 'systems thinking.' A systems-based scientifically grounded approach offers an important "conceptual framework for seeing interrelationships rather than isolated, well-defined things... systems thinking makes the full patterns clearer in order to help us understand how to change them effectively" (Gudz: 2003). To this end, WION resources provide sound and credible information, including practical tips and guidelines for meeting basic conditions for sustainability, a step-by-step strategy for taking personal action and a local resource directory.

 While WION promotional material provides useful analogies such as the TNS 'funnel' metaphor to describe society's narrowing manoeuvring room to deal with declining life-support systems, it is still easy for people to be overwhelmed by the science-based concepts and figures. The TNS System Conditions (WION's 'sustainability compass') take time to understand and learn. The Household Toolkit, which was mailed to over 3000 Whistler households, received mixed reviews. As one resident remarked in a Pique news article exploring municipal progress towards sustainability, "It's not that I don't think protecting the environment and using things well is important... I remember looking at [the Toolkit] and being overwhelmed. It was just too much. I think we put it in a drawer somewhere" (Ogilvie: 2003). This response speaks to the need to create opportunities for



### 3. ASSESSMENT

*'Generative Learning'*, which does not involve acquiring more and more information, but expanding our ability to produce results we truly want (Gudz: 2003).



**A predominant focus on scientific and technical knowledge has eclipsed important socio-cultural and economic issues and experiences that are equally part of creating a sustainable future.** For example, the Household Toolkits provide the reader with pages of fast facts and guidelines that address the ecological (and fundamental) components of the framework, but do not showcase a single action related to social sustainability or System Condition No. 4 – 'For society to be sustainable, resources must be used efficiently and fairly to meet basic human needs worldwide' (Broman et al: 2000). In Whistler, sustainability is as much about providing adequate affordable housing for staff within close proximity to the workplace as it is about protecting outlying natural areas from encroaching development or improving household energy efficiency. Addressing all aspects of sustainability is important to capture the complexity and interconnectedness of community issues. Knowledge development with respect to issues of justice, equity, peace and ethics could be enhanced and included within WION programme content. Addressing these issues can be done effectively through the use of storytelling, personal accounts or imagery to capture key messages and to explore personal values, trade-offs and the consequences of actions.

#### 2b. Promotion of lifelong learning, citizenship education & community responsibility.



The promotion of lifelong learning has been repeatedly noted as a key objective or strategy for sustainability education (as cited in the RMOW's early visioning document, Whistler 2002, the WES as well as the National Framework for Environmental Learning and Sustainability produced by the Government of Canada). **How this might be done is not clearly defined nor addressed in the WION programme but is a worthwhile consideration.** A relevant background technical report, outlining characteristics for sustainability resort communities used in the WIOF process, refers to awareness building and education as preliminary stages in a 'sustainability curve' which characterizes community progress towards sustainability (Flint et al: 2002). This representation does little to promote education as a continuum, or to describe how education at all levels (formal, informal) and for all generations can further Whistler's sustainability journey.




While WION resources do attempt to develop shared emotional connection among community members by citing the benefits of applying the TNS framework ('build local community!', 'take advantage of the opportunity to learn new ideas together with your family', and the idea that implementing sustainability is 'the right thing to do') **stronger and more compelling messaging could be developed.** The WION programme hints at notions of citizenship education and community responsibility, but does not explicitly address or nurture community mobilization or leadership development. By providing information and opportunities to take part meaningfully in decision-making (Chavis 1990), citizens can be empowered and become more committed to sustainable practices.




The creation of a responsible citizenship involves 'consciousness-raising' that purports a balance between individual needs and wants with the economic, social, and environmental limits of the resort community as a whole.


#### 2c. Consideration of connections among issues, trade offs and understanding of impacts.


 The WION Toolkit resources and Speaker Series effectively promote 'big picture' thinking by acknowledging the global nature of ecological sustainability issues. The WION website uses animated educational clips and pop up text windows to draw linkages between current unsustainable practices and their impacts on natural life-support systems. Basic scientific principles (minimum requirements for sustainability) are clearly portrayed (although are more effective on the animated website than in print). Links to the ecological footprint calculator developed by Wackernagel and Rees (1996) showcase ecological interconnections to encourage informed decisions about the impact of importing resources from elsewhere, or exporting wastes (WCS Website: 2002). The Speaker Series also provided a good breadth of discussion topics and invited dynamic speakers to tell their own local and personal sustainability stories. There is an added opportunity to promote the development of personal decision-making 'prowess' as it relates to making connections between decision alternatives (particularly in relation to consumer choices) and long-term tradeoffs — the notion of 'How to make decisions that count.'

### III. DELIVERY & OUTREACH

#### 3a. Active engagement of broad cross section of community.

 The WCS identified and prioritized target audiences and differentiated the unique position of two key target groups: Local audiences were presented as the first priority for sustainability promotion and support; selected external audiences (leisure and corporate guests, industry partners and the community's 'supply chain') were presented as the second priority. The development of learning or resource materials also reflected this designation, resulting in the initial creation of toolkits for intended local audiences: schools, households and businesses. Additional services planned for the Whistler business community have not been advanced due to resource constraints, limiting the breadth of community outreach.

 While the WCS set out goals to identify barriers and benefits to change in relation to promotional and support services for target audiences (by conducting focus groups and surveys) this has not been done to date.

 Early Adopter TNS training was not extended to interested educators in the formal education system (Howe Sound School District for example), despite the WCS' assertion that programming for youth will be one of the most important support services for Whistler audiences (WCS Business Plan excerpt: 2000). To build even greater community capacity, early TNS training and promotion for community educators may effectively broaden the dialogue beyond industry and municipal partners. This assessment recognizes that (1) the WCS outlined a well-developed





### 3. ASSESSMENT

series of promotional and support services for the delivery of key principles and messages and (2) TNS training was done before the development of the Business Plan. TNS training for formal educators and youth representation should be reconciled when the WION programme is resumed.



**The promotion of sustainable practices to 'inspire and encourage' at the Innovation Through Sustainability Speaker Series involved a diverse cross-section of external sustainability presenters, such as TNS founder Dr. Robèrt, Mathias Wackernagel, Ray Anderson, Janine Benyus, Bill Rees and others. While the speaker series attracted lots of community interest (over 300 people attended the presentations) the event was 'expert focused', lacking an infusion of local perspectives and experiences. Future promotional activities may benefit from the incorporation of local talents and resources to ground promotional and supporting activities in the local community. Community 'asset mapping' could be used to creatively map local resources. If identified and nurtured, people or organizations with knowledge and experiences to share, as well as a desire to contribute to the community, can be tremendous assets in local sustainability education activities.**



**Although WCS has not yet formally addressed communication and engagement strategies for key external audiences as originally planned, individual efforts by Early Adopter organizations are being made to better promote sustainable practices within the resort visitor target audience.** For example, the Fairmont Chateau Whistler has begun to indoctrinate hotel guests through an 'EcoMeet' program managed by guest services after finding in a recent survey that only 5% of guests were aware of the sustainability initiatives being adopted at the hotel (Ogilvie: 2003). While individual organizations are attempting to integrate

resort visitors into the process of creating a more sustainable Whistler, there is an important need to consolidate these efforts and collectively develop a community-wide visitor education and engagement strategy. A strategy of this kind would outline how visitors can actively contribute to the preservation of the resort destination experience so that the community can continue to support itself into the future.

#### 3b. Respect for and inclusion of local peoples & their knowledge.



**WION programming activities and resources lack a discernable acknowledgement of, or linkages to, issues of community diversity and heritage.** The WCS, as a self-described leader for sustainability promotion and support, is well-suited to reach out to local people and regional neighbours in an effort to collaboratively develop community education and outreach work plans. A wonderful opportunity might exist to co-develop sustainability education resources and activities with local communities and First Nations along the Sea to Sky corridor. Local partnerships of this kind have the potential to offer prospects to address difference, break down cultural barriers, and to become informed about different ways of knowing, learning and living for sustainability.



### 3. ASSESSMENT

#### 3c. Provision of transformative and experiential learning opportunities.



Because support services were not delivered immediately after the awareness-building phase, WION activities and materials to date have lacked highly interactive, experiential and transformative learning experiences. In this way, the programme has functioned more as a static awareness campaign with a one-way transfer of information from 'experts' or planners to the public. Because many of the support services were not established due to lack of resources, WION has not replicated or engaged the community in a complete and full learning cycle. A full learning cycle involves the development of interactive learning opportunities that support knowledge acquisition, dissemination and use; individuals can give meaning to information so that knowledge provides the basis for action (DiBella & Nevis: 1998). When community support services are teamed up with the awareness campaign right away, individuals and organizations might successfully apply sustainability principles to daily decisions and real-world scenarios so they are understood.

WCS efforts to engage learners in a productive multi-way dialogue should involve true deliberation and reflection to go beyond static awareness building that presents just 'the facts' and 'the benefits'. It will be important to balance WION messaging to instil and accent sustainability core values and principles

#### 3d. Communication & facilitation of broad sharing of knowledge, ideas & follow-up.



The WION programme was exceptionally coordinated with local media. The RMOW supported a large-spread colour Pique Newsmagazine insert that clearly presented programme information and advertised upcoming activities in addition to the WCS website. Several articles published in spring issues of 'Pique Newsmagazine' also presented excellent updates on community progress towards sustainability, and included interviews with front-line sustainability practitioners, many of whom work with Early Adopter organizations.



Opportunities to network and become informed through the Speaker Series and Sustainability Symposium were highly visible. This was due, in part, to their location at the Fairmont Chateau Whistler and the new arts centre/theatre venue, MY Place. The Speaker Series presentations were documented on film, and have received substantial 'air-time' on the local cable network. Proceedings from the symposium held on December 7, 2000, at the Chateau are also available on the WCS website to provide a summary 'snapshot' of Early Adopter progress. Reporting on early progress, designed to inform, inspire, validate and support existing efforts, and celebrate successes should continue to be a high priority. Reporting could also showcase existing challenges and barriers to sustainability in an effort to 'balance' reporting and performance measurement.



Due to their large size and lecture format, the Speaker Series did not involve small group discussions or deliberative break-out sessions for the wider public, as did the Sustainability



Symposium. However, each Speaker Series event was followed by a small more interactive session for Early Adopter organizations. Further opportunities to engage in dialogue, share stories and openly learn from failures are required to support the collaborative construction of knowledge, promote reflection and to provide insight in multiple perspectives (Evans and Hoffmann: 2000). Future interactive Early Adopter Sessions might be expanded and advertised to include interested public participants facilitate an even greater awareness-building session.

#### Key Areas of Opportunity

Building On Strengths... Remedying Weaknesses.

This assessment summary reiterates key areas of opportunity that form the basis for the consolidated programmatic recommendations that follow. Opportunity areas are depicted in relation to the criteria categories used in the programme assessment for programme planning and organization, content development, delivery and outreach. Key areas of opportunity are intended to build on programme strengths and to remedy existing gaps for improved community planning and integration, knowledge development and sharing, building capacity, and supporting sustainable community living.





### 3. ASSESSMENT

EVALUATION SUMMARY	👍	👎	OPPORTUNITY AREAS
<b>I PLANNING &amp; ORGANIZATION</b>			
A—Clarity of strategic vision, objectives + principles for sustainability education.	3	2	Development of specific learning objectives, indicators and actions to build and nurture RMOW's 'learning community' movement.
B—Conformance with community values & vision	5	1	
C—Effective coordination + support	2	2	Development of integrated approaches to coordinating WION activities with other municipal sustainability initiatives & to secure additional funding sources;
D—Support systems + capacity building	1	0	Increased validation and support of existing efforts and successes – by establishing local 'Sustainability in Action Awards', or developing community report cards as outlined in the Sustainability Symposium Break-Out Group discussion (Waldron: 2002); Build capacity of community educators (broaden internal Whistler target audience) in formal and informal education system; Cultivation of under-utilized Whistler 'assets' (both natural but particularly human capital).
E—Evaluation mechanisms for continuous improvement.	0	1	Mechanisms for continued programme evaluation and capitalizing on opportunities to reflect on past activities.
<b>II CONTENT DEVELOPMENT</b>			
A—Appropriate scope & balance	2	2	Further exploration & incorporation of resources and activities involving TNS System Condition 4.
B—Promotion of lifelong learning & citizenship	0	2	Strengthen the learning processes in workplaces.
C—Consider connections among issues & tradeoffs	1	0	
<b>III DELIVERY &amp; OUTREACH</b>			
A—Active engagement of community cross section	3	2	Incentive development and identification of specific barriers and benefits to community participation; Enabling and encouraging new partnerships with youth organizations for leadership development and empowerment.
B—Respect for & inclusion of local people	0	1	
C—Provision of transformative learning experiences	0	1	Increased programme focus on engagement and learning processes, not simply products; Development of cross-sectoral experiments permitting the establishment of partnerships between formal school educators, businesses, governments and local organizations, such as a community-service learning centre.
D—Broad sharing of Knowledge & ideas	3	1	Communication enhancements to nurture existing and expanding Early Adopter partnerships (ultimately to support a 'second wave' of TNS adopters through the Business Charter Program);



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In response to the opportunities and challenges described in Section Three, the following recommendations are presented as ideas for future programme planning and community engagement. While the WION programme mandate is to promote and support overall sustainability practices, these recommendations are focused and specifically intended to offer practical ideas to generate inclusive, engaging and transformative programming opportunities for sustainability education.

### RECOMMENDATION

1. Acknowledge and promote sustainability education and community learning as an additional strategic WION objective with key indicators to model and measure progress.

### SUPPORTING RATIONALE

Community education is an integral part of WION promotional and support services and is the primary tool for delivering TNS key messages, such as decision criteria and principles for sustainability. For this reason, community education and learning objectives should be explicitly considered and targeted. Too often learning is an inexplicit part of a planning process, and as such, is taken for granted.

Designating specific learning objectives, indicators of success and tools for evaluation are all key elements of building a 'learning community'. Example learning indicators might be: the number of target audiences that have received TNS training; the successful institution of programme evaluation mechanisms or feedback loops in all WION planning activities; or, the percentage of Whistler organizations and private sector businesses that have instituted workplace learning



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initiatives. WION planning and organizational processes will require a shift to 'institutionalize' or embed these learning objectives and goals.

### RECOMMENDATION

2. **Establish an official WCS-directed sustainability education network and initiate a community-wide forum on sustainability education to extend the dialogue and direct the development of:**
  - a. A collective vision for sustainability education in Whistler;
  - b. Guiding principles and objectives for community learning that can be applied in informal and formal educational settings;
  - c. A map of existing efforts and partnerships; and,
  - d. A plan for future educational programming and implementation.

### SUPPORTING RATIONALE

A process similar to that of the Early Adopters could be initially followed within the WCS to establish an official educational 'support network' to (1) promote information sharing and training and (2) to develop a consultation plan to direct the creation of a vision and guiding principles for sustainability education. A steering group of local environmental educators and sustainability practitioners could be convened and charged with the task of directing an educational forum for sustainability.

The initiation of a community-wide dialogue on sustainability education would allow WION to identify a common vision for community-focused learning for sustainability. Just as the Early TNS Adopters acknowledged that a coordinated, cooperative approach to sustainability is key, the development of a collective vision would provide direction for educators and organizations (within Early Adopters and beyond) to align their own sustainability education practices and to create supporting conditions for learning to take place. The forum for sustainability education could target the participation of a wide spectrum of interested stakeholders, and simultaneously involve mapping existing community education activities (from AWARE presentations and monthly meetings, WORCA trail maintenance education, Naturalist interpretive nature walks, to internal TNS training within Early Adopter organizations). This mapping would allow WION to acknowledge existing efforts, and learn from past educational endeavours as guiding principles are developed and publicly considered.

Once established, the Whistler-specific vision for community learning and sustainability education can be incorporated into organizations' operations and form the basis of new partnerships. Partnerships might be based on the sector-specific approach to promotion and support services already underway, or involve experimenting with 'cross-sectoral' experiments such as the service learning model that is further explored later in this Section. Potential collaborations with the Whistler Chamber of Commerce (WCC) and associated partners might be possible to develop a centralized learning network within the Resort Municipality. For example, the strategic promotion of community learning and sustainability education could be furthered through the online dissemination of information and resources on the WCS website. Community learning on-line forums, sustainability storytelling links, resource directories, or even downloadable 'Community Learning Log'



## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

templates could be provided on-line to help guide and provide a place to capture reflections and evaluation details for community-led tasks or sustainability projects. A WCS education network-sponsored on-line activity forum could also document ongoing community activities and provide contact information to allow interested participants to engage and get involved.

### RECOMMENDATION

#### 3. Develop a Community Engagement Work Plan to strategize and direct future outreach efforts.

##### SUPPORTING RATIONALE

The designation of sustainability education as a strategic WION objective, and the subsequent creation of a vision and supporting principles for sustainability education, could be further supported by a Community Engagement Work Plan to focus future outreach efforts. Community engagement is an ongoing interactive process characterized as a “powerful vehicle for bringing about environmental and behavioural changes (CDC: 1997). While WION identified and distinguished promotional and support services for both internal and external Whistler audiences, the Engagement Work Plan would explore and suggest more in-depth methods and strategies for broader community participation and action. Increased participation within a broader community audience, and the provision of more transformative learning experiences, will serve as a catalyst to effect changing policies and practices in Whistler homes, schools, businesses and the larger Squamish-Lillooet Regional District. Without the ability to effectively engage, educate and enable individuals and communities, WION promotional and support services for sustainability will lack meaning.

Creative, well-coordinated community engagement plans and effective outreach efforts are:

- Clear about the objectives and goals of the engagement effort and the target audiences;
- Focused at multiple levels to bring about systematic change (individuals, social networks and support systems, organizations, wider communities and public policy);
- Appropriate and consistent with a community's values, cultural framework & belief systems;
- Cognisant of social, political and ecologic networks and patterns within the community and recognize that individuals and groups operate in multiple environments (workplace, neighbourhood, larger communities that spill over and influence each other); and,
- Based on participation and civic engagement, self-determination and empowerment, capacity building, perceived costs and benefits, and stages of development or innovation (CDC: 1997).

The development of a Community Engagement Work Plan could involve:

1. A detailed assessment of past WION engagement activities;
2. The establishment of clear engagement objectives and minimum standards for community outreach (parameters of the engagement effort);



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3. Identification of key participants or audiences (scales of outreach);
4. A diagnosis of the community's readiness to engage in programme activities;
5. Identification of barriers (perceived obstacles) and incentives to participation; and,
6. Strategies for information dissemination, coordination, and milestones.

In practice, future WION community engagement would ideally respond to and incorporate key principles of community engagement that could be used to develop minimum standards for outreach. The following five engagement principles and best practices highlight valuable insights for community engagement (CDC: 1997).

### Participation & Civic Engagement

- Mobilizing the an entire Whistler community rather than engaging people on individualized basis can lead to more effective engagement. Fostering membership and developing shared emotional connection among community members can serve as a catalyst for change for engaging individuals in the community in decision-making and action.
- Whistler citizens are an integral part of programme development and implementation. Where people are involved in initiating and promoting change, it is likely to be more successful and permanent.
- Establishing relationships, building trust and working with formal and informal leaders will be important to seek commitment from community organizations.

### Empowerment

- Mobilizing Whistler individuals, community-based organizations and institutions involves enabling them to take action, influence and make decisions on critical issues. The community should be nurtured at all three levels of empowerment: the individual, the organization or group and the community.
- Communities and individuals need to own the issues, name the problem, identify action areas, plan and implement action strategies and evaluate outcomes. If Whistler individuals and organizations have information and there is an open process for accumulating and evaluating 'evidence,' their capacity to respond effectively to collective problems increases.

### Capacity Building

- Individuals and organizations need resources, knowledge, and skills above and beyond those they already bring to a problem before they can gain control, influence or become partners in community sustainability decision-making and action. Too often community leaders and planners are caught up in "selling" the idea/engagement effort without an accurate idea or provision of resources needed to support initiative over the long term (Florin et al: 1993 - CDC).

### Perceptions of Benefits & Costs

- Perceived benefits and costs dramatically influence participation: Participation occurs when those involved see their involvement and the issues as relevant and worth their time, and view the process as open and supportive. While communicating why participation is worthwhile is important; it does not guarantee participation. WION might reinforce personal benefits to involvement, including networking opportunities, access to information and resources, personal recognition, skill



## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

development, or the sense of contribution to helping to solve community problems.

- The purpose and goal of all WION engagement efforts and the desired audience should be clear. A willingness to address issues that the Whistler community identifies as important, even if these are not the ones originally anticipated, will show commitment. The identification of specific benefits and barriers to participation will allow for the creation of appropriate incentives

### Stages of Innovation/ Readiness for Change

- Individuals within the larger community are not necessarily at the same stage of readiness to adopt new ideas or change behaviours. Engagement strategies should therefore involve a diagnosis of where Whistler is in terms of readiness to adopt new strategies and the thoughtful matching of desired outcomes with appropriate community phases that begin with raising awareness, then transforming awareness into concern for a problem, followed by establishing a community education or intervention initiative and developing necessary infrastructure and support mechanisms.
- Mapping community assets and sustainability monitoring is a useful way for the WCS to develop a picture of 'how business is done' and to identify the individuals and groups whose support is necessary. Community engagement can only be sustained by identifying and mobilizing assets and developing capacities and resources for community decisions and actions.

These five principles and practices for community engagement provide a useful resource for the development of an Engagement Work Plan. The extension of existing WION programme planning and organization could facilitate the creation of in-depth engagement strategies for both internal

and external target audiences identified already. Beyond households, schools, businesses, visitors and suppliers, the Engagement Work Plan might organize engagement strategies around affiliation or thematic partnerships. One example includes the establishment of a community service learning model unique to Whistler. This idea is explored below.

### RECOMMENDATION

4. Consider the development of a Community Service-Learning Pilot Programme to target & support youth leadership development as a key WION support service.

### SUPPORTING RATIONALE

A unique opportunity for community engagement and action in the RMOW may be the employment of a sustainability-oriented community service-learning pilot programme. A service-learning programme is essentially an organized service that formally partners students, community organizations, volunteers, local business and public agencies. Traditionally, service-learning is a required core component of students' formal course curriculum, where students receive credit in exchange for community 'in-service' work that is negotiated between the student, faculty sponsors and the community partner. The service-learning component provides a structured opportunity to extend students' learning beyond the classroom, expand their educational agenda, all while building reciprocal partnerships with the community. The service-learning model provides an active means to bridge formal education with community action and service.

In Whistler, where there is a perceived need to facilitate a deeper level of community engagement in relation to sustainability, a service-learning pilot programme could be used to develop and integrate TNS curricula at the elementary and high school level, paired with a community-wide service





## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

programme and mentoring and volunteering base. A programme of this kind could offer direct service to the Whistler community, and, in particular, further develop the role and scope of the Whistler Centre for Sustainability.

Community service learning offers a cross-sectoral approach to experiential education that can effectively encourage leadership, enable new innovative partnerships and develop mutual aid (Smith: 1992). Service-learning is based on the principle that community involvement is an invaluable component of the educational experience. Service-learning programmes, while all uniquely situated to respond to individual community service and learning needs, commonly involve students or volunteers in a minimum of fifteen 'in-service' hours per term, or approximately two hours per week. Civic-based service learning models are used to promote civic engagement, whereas problem-based models are used to engage participants in solving real community-based problems or in action research and monitoring. Regardless of the model, service-learning is conducted in a collaborative fashion to meet the needs of the community and the student learner.

Key requirements for a community service-learning programme would include:

- An organizational mission statement and the role of volunteers within the organization;
- Clear service and learning goals to engage people in responsible and challenging actions for the common good;
- Structured opportunities for people to reflect critically on their service experience;
- Training, supervision, monitoring, support, recognition, and evaluation to meet service and learning goals (Honnet and Poulen: 1989).

The creation of a successful service-learning pilot programme would necessarily require the services of a WCS coordinator and school liaison to

develop the programme business plan, secure funding and establish partnerships, and create service-learning protocol to effectively match service providers and service needs through a process that recognizes changing circumstances. This coordinator would also be responsible for the delivery of orientation sessions and regular meetings for participant supervision to monitor progress. Other considerations are the expansion of the service-learning programme to incorporate a more formal volunteering service (similar to Volunteer Vancouver) to expand the delivery of community sustainability services. Once the service-learning framework is established, there is an opportunity to involve participants beyond the schools to effectively further WCS outreach and community engagement.



## 5. KEY REFLECTIONS

### The 'Criteria Collage'

This detailed review and assessment was informed by the development and use of a 'collage' of criteria to evaluate WION programme planning and organization, content development and delivery and outreach. The synthesis of criteria, based on a number of informative resources including the *National Framework for Environmental Learning & Sustainability*, as well as key RMOW strategies for Environmental Education, (WES) has provided a structured approach to address the many facets of the WION initiative. The three-tiered evaluation approach revealed a degree of analytical overlap as many programme elements were considered in each 'evaluation tier' with respect to unique criteria. This contributed to the development a multi-layered assessment. While the assessment did not empirically consider how WION has performed according to its strategic objectives to date, it has offered a holistic preliminary overview that is hoped will contribute to a detailed understanding of WION's contributions towards the promotion and support of a sustainable Whistler.

Flint et al, in the 2002 report outlining '*Characteristics of Sustainable Destination Resort Communities*', critiques sustainability awareness building and education activities in the RMOW as broad, but not deep (2002). This is a revealing appraisal, but one that only partially reflects the results of the assessment conducted herein.

WION, within the parameters of its mandate to promote and support overall sustainability in Whistler, has done a remarkable job in building awareness of and for sustainability in Whistler. While early direction was set out in guiding documents such as Whistler 2002 and the subsequent WES work plan for environmental sustainability, WION has helped to establish a clear and compelling need for change, and has begun to provide practical tools and guidance to help citizens, schools and businesses incorporate sustainable practices in their daily lives. While not explicitly designated as a community education programme, and despite a lack of strategic objectives, key indicators or principles for sustainability education, the WION 'umbrella programme' has significantly contributed to community sustainability education efforts in Whistler.

The planning and organization of the WION programme has reflected a logical and thoughtful approach to building awareness and offering practical support services to elicit action, in spite of a lack of clarity surrounding how and when promotional and support services will be dovetailed each with the other. The identification of key internal and external audiences has allowed the WCS to begin to design audience-specific resources, which will in turn allow their unique learning needs to be acknowledged and further planned for in future programming. The WCS has also been able to target Whistler audiences on both an individualized basis (Toolkits, website) as well as the community as a whole (sustainability fair, speaker series, workplace TNS training in Early Adopter organizations). WION's partnership network of Early Adopters and 'in-service' TNS training





## 5. KEY REFLECTIONS

has provided significant institutional support that is necessary to facilitate the development and implementation of WION programme activities and resources; the need to further enhance, expand and nurture this partnership (and the WCS itself) cannot be overstated as organizations find new ways of becoming increasingly sustainable. The WCS has also made a noble attempt to translate and incorporate Whistler's sustainability compass, The Natural Step framework and its supporting System Conditions, for wider dissemination and use through Toolkit resources and the WCS website. Although the WCS website is drastically under-utilized in developing, sharing and celebrating 'Whistler's sustainability story', the speaker series (as well as the new learning circle lunch-hour sessions) have provided many opportunities for sharing and dialogue alongside many high-profile sustainability practitioners.

Despite WION's positive contributions to the promotion and support of sustainability in Whistler, the community programme has a long journey ahead in successfully supporting sustainable practices in the Resort Municipality. While lack of funding has prevented many of the WCS's planned support activities to be put in place, other gaps exist that should be addressed in future program planning and outreach.

Community members need to be further empowered to 'own' sustainability issues in Whistler. Enabling individuals, community-based organizations and institutions to take action is an important next step in WION programme evolution. To do this, programme activities and resources should focus on 'decision-making for sustainability', and civic leadership and responsibility. Encouraging individuals and organizations to get involved and to initiate and promote change requires that they are integral part of programme development and implementation. Many of these potential 'partners' are either (a) unconvinced that their contributions will make a difference; (b) waiting for an invitation to participate, or, c) are in need of a little help getting on their feet. WION resources and activities will function as a more

static awareness campaign as long as they remain focused on 'selling' information. However, by enabling and encouraging participation through leadership development and support, the community will be more inclined to become involved.

Increased neighbourhood-level engagement and participation could be a key target in the Community Engagement work plan, and could be modeled using the successful "HIT" (Habitat Improvement Team) initiative developed by Whistler-Blackcomb. The establishment of alternative "NIT" (Neighbourhood Improvement Teams) might be one way to support and build capacity within core neighbourhoods. NIT Teams represent a practical way to engage individuals and families to do the very thing that the WCS is asking local residents to do: "Involve yourself in sustainability projects and activities with neighbours and build local community" (WCS Household Toolkit: 2002). Level I TNS training, sustainability resources, and neighbourhood incentives could be provided to interested NIT teams who could then initiate and lead their own neighbourhood projects and outreach. The WCS could position itself to assist neighbourhood leaders or liaisons with information and project management. An increased focus on community leadership development and capacity building (especially with respect to youth) may empower people to do more at the grassroots level. In light of severe resource constraints, this is clearly a positive way to 'do more with less'.

Although WCS has acknowledged Whistler's contribution to global unsustainable society in an attempt to draw clear linkages between global consequences and local actions, a much more focused and explicit reference to actions and outcomes, and trade-offs in daily decision-making scenarios would deepen the notion of what it means to live sustainably in a community with limited resources and ecological carrying capacity. Moreover, current activities and outreach efforts have only gone so far as to briefly mention System Condition No. 4 – but have not addressed social



## 5. KEY REFLECTIONS

issues of equity or justice. This has been a major programming gap but one that could easily be resolved by initiating neighbourhood level dialogue about quality of life, and 'wants' versus 'needs'. Increased neighbourhood dialogue may also help to refocus what have predominantly been expert-focused promotional activities to a renewed focus on local sustainability efforts and 'practioners' – those everyday people that in their own ways are contributing to the realization of a more sustainable Whistler. The celebration of successes and the sharing of real-world challenges helps inform, inspire and promote collective problem-solving. Again, the WCS and Early Adopter partners should consider the web as a way to disseminate information and support further networking and community dialogue through on-line forums and a virtual, as well as actual resource center.

To use a common analogy prevalent in TNS literature, WION has perhaps most successfully promoted sustainable practices to Whistler's converted (those individuals and organizations that have been open and willing to adopt new strategies for sustainability) – these are the "low-hanging fruit". Although it is unlikely that many Whistler residents disagree with the tenets of the TNS framework (after all, it's 'the right thing to do'; and, 'a sustainable household is a healthy household' - WCS Household Toolkit: 2002). However, even with a more developed understanding of the TNS Framework for sustainability, they may still not be included to shift their daily practices. WION activities to date have not been held in vain, rather, they have promoted a common language and unambiguous concept of sustainability, and created a solid foundation for the next stage of community engagement.

Achieving sustainability in Whistler will require everyone to think and act differently, and to consider the larger trade-offs that will be required to sustain the natural, social and economic systems on which the community depends. This is the 'harder-sell', involving what some may find to be major 'inconveniences' and sacrifices. This becomes the bigger challenge: provoking

not just thought but action, encouraging people to deliberate and be thoughtful in their daily decision-making. Future programme initiatives, to be potentially effective, will require inclusive, participatory and creative programme planning, sustained funding and institutional support, and an approach drawing on generative or transformative and experiential learning. The use of transformative experiences for learning, primarily by doing, is one step to transform static awareness campaigns into meaningful opportunities for lifelong learning to better support sustainable change.



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**SARAH M<sup>c</sup>JANNET**

7—1535 12TH AVENUE WEST  
VANCOUVER BC V6J 2E2

`smcjannet@telus.net`

