Saskatchewan Ecomuseum Initiative

Sask RCE Symposium - May 8, 2014

Glenn Sutter
RSM Curator of Human Ecology
Sustainability and Museums

Museums need to become better at addressing the holistic cultural realities of our communities. Their most significant role is in their ability to stimulate creativity, reflection and dialogue within and across society.

Douglas Worts, Linkedin Group on *Fostering a Culture of Sustainability*, 2011
A Museum needs to be “a locally-embedded problem-solver, in tune with the challenges and aspirations of the community.”

Role of Heritage

Without a commitment to heritage, our attempts to live sustainably “will remain rootless and bear short-lived results. Ecomuseums are one of the best ways to bring people to consciousness…”

Hundreds around the world, but only a few in Canada
"...an agreement by which a local community takes care of a place."
An Ecomuseum

Gives community residents “a dynamic way in which to preserve, interpret, and manage their heritage for sustainable development.”

An Ecomuseum

A locally-driven, place-based organization that encourages sustainable community development, based on heritage conservation and interpretation.

Saskatchewan Ecomuseums Initiative – Nov. 2013
Potential Outcomes

• Social cohesion, conflict resolution & awareness - via sense-of-place mapping, project planning, learning opportunities, etc.

• Conservation & interpretation of local heritage - via restoration projects, interpretive trails & maps that showcase past cultures, current industries, important wildlife areas, etc.

• Environmental monitoring - via school programs, citizen science, research projects, etc.

• Enhanced tourism - via cultural programs, extension activities, website, etc.
Sask Ecomuseum Initiative
SK Ecomuseums Initiative

Steering Committee
- RSM/PCS (chair)
- Museums Assoc of Sask
- Heritage Sask
- SaskCulture
- Heritage Canada

Demonstration Sites
- Val Marie
- Nipawin/Twin Lakes
- North Central Regina
- Wolseley

Museum Community

MAS Committee on Museums and Sustainability

GOS Cultural Policy

UN Global Network of RCEs (over 120 sites)

Sask Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) on Education for Sustainable Development

Research Committee

Core project

Core project
Government of Saskatchewan
- Growth & Opportunities
- Improving QOL
- Responsive & Responsible Government

Parks, Culture & Sport
- Heritage resources
- Creative arts and culture
- Tourism

Royal Sask Museum
- Sustainability Education
- Biodiversity
A Basis for Action & Research

Logan and Sutter
(IJIM, 4:11-26, 2012)
Learning Outcomes!

A Basis for Action & Research

Head
Heart
Hands

Logan and Sutter
(IJIM, 4:11-26, 2012)
Feb 2013 Workshop

Planning Framework ➔ Principles, Focus, Demonstration Sites
Aggressive program development
Step away and pursue other priorities
Continue to provide advice to interested communities
Aggressive program development
× Step away and pursue other priorities
✓ Continue to provide advice to interested communities
Torch River Forest Twin Lakes
Eco Museum

Organizational Overview
For Discussion Purposes
Stakeholders

- Twin Lakes Planning District
- Town of Nipawin EDC
- Twin Lakes Convention & Tourism Bureau
- Friends of the Torch River Forrest
- Ministry of Environment
- UN RCE
- U of R
- U of S
- Chamber of Commerce?
- Cumberland College
- MLA Fred Bradshaw (delegate)
- MP Randy Hoback (delegate)
- SIAST
- First Nations
- ?
- ?
- ?
- ?
Board of Directors

- Town of Nipawin
- Twin Lakes District Planning Commission
- Twin Lakes Convention & Tourism Bureau
- First Nations
- Friends of the Torch River Forest
- Ministry of Parks Culture & Sport Advisory
- U of R
- UN RCE
Academic

• Curriculum development
  – On-site, aimed at K-12
  – Outdoor classroom once this is in place
  – Eventually attract other schools from the region
    • Wanuskewin of the Northeast

• Heritage sites and record of local histories and cultures

• Environmental impact studies
  – Logging, biodiversity inventories
  – Forest management & restorative justice training, e.g., Hayes Development
Restorative Justice

• Healing in the forest
  – Youth, War Veterans, People currently in conflict
  – Community taking charge of their justice system, e.g., Hollow Water of the northeast
Economic

• Tourism
  – Ecotourism, e.g., birdwatching
  – Hunting, fishing, guiding
  – Canoeing

• Non-timber forest products
  – Mushrooms, berries
  – Local and provincial markets
  – Cooperatives
Economic

• Professional retreats
• Tourism
  – Ecotourism, e.g., birdwatching
  – Hunting, fishing, guiding
  – Canoeing
• Non-timber forest products
  – Mushrooms, berries
  – Local and provincial markets
  – Cooperatives
Economic

• Catalyst for sustainable socio-economic development of all kinds

• Vision is to involve the community, the academy, industry, and government in a sustainable way (for now and for the future)

• Shift from isolated disciplines to a more interdisciplinary approach; away from the ivory tower, top-down to a more “wholistic” methodology
Challenges

• Forestry Dept interested in clear-cut. Rationale is based on mistletoe and risk of forest fire; economics not a big part of it
  – Government says that no contractor will remove mistletoe, do fire-smarting, or do selective cutting
    • Hayes Development is interested
    • An opportunity for small local mills
  – Community concerns have caught the attention of Government, the Academy, and industry
  – So what do we do as individuals and a collective? Adapt and conform, or question and transform?

• Aim is to maintain the health of the forest and transform society
Save The Torch River Forest
We need Your Comments
By Feb 23 2013
Tell pat.mackasey@gov.sk.ca
No Clear Cutting The TRPF
An Ecomuseum in the Making.

Prairie Winds and Silver Sage
Where is PWSS?

- Val Marie, Saskatchewan
- 1.5 hrs south of Swift Current.
- 20 min from the Montana/Saskatchewan Border
- Adjacent to one of SK National Parks (other is PA)
What is PWSS?

- Restored Brick Schoolhouse
- Gift Shop
- Bookstore
- Coffee Shop/Snack bar
- Native Prairie Garden
- Art Gallery
- Venue
- Ecomuseum

Photos by Alais Nevert

Photos by Pam Woodland
Who is involved?

- Board of volunteers (6 members)
- One part-time manager
- Two summer staff
  - Backgrounds range from painters, photographers, entrepreneurs, local residents, parks staff, prairie learning center staff, prairie conservation action plan staff.
  - Range from 20-65 years of age.
- Members are creative, passionate and hard working group and have turned running a business into a fun event.
- People with one shared interest – providing Val Marie with a successfully run multifaceted organization.
- In kind support is provided by Parks Canada and the Village of Val Marie.
Ecomuseum Planning Consultations

- Ecomuseum presentation by Glenn Sutter at PWSS 2012 AGM
- Hiring of Hugh Henry from Swift Current to aid in first steps in ecomuseum development (2012-2013)
- Fall 2013 – open ecomuseum meeting facilitated by Glenn to determine:
  - What would you like to see in the village or region in 5, 10, and 20 years, and what Val Marie might be like in the future, given current trends?
  - Why would you like to see the positive change?
  - What is your level of interest in the ecomuseum concept?
  - How would you be willing to contribute to it?
Work Completed

Before

After
Programs

Events

- Art Openings – Meet the artists (annually)
- Museum Opening
- Musical performances
  - The Wardens (2013)
  - Julia Lynx (May 2014)
- Margaret Atwood and Graeme Gibson tour of Federal Pastures (2013)

Prairie Winds Presentations (2013)

- Mushrooms in GNP – Parks Staff
- Bird ecology study related to fire and grazing – University of Manitoba
- Black footed ferret reintroduction and black tailed prairie dog research – Calgary Zoo
- Swift Fox Reintroduction Program – Parks Canada Staff
- Burrowing owl status in Canada – Geoff Holroyd (retired from Canadian Wildlife Service)
Awareness

- “Val Marie's Prairie Wind and Silver Sage moves toward eco-museum model” Prairie Post, April 2012.
Next Steps...

- Creating a place that people want to be.
- Increasing awareness of who we are and what we offer.
- Continue to work on projects that peak our interest and passion.
- Continue to form partnerships with other organizations in the area.
- Follow our curiosity to explore new ideas and think outside the box.
Next Steps...

• Look out for each other and lend a hand when needed (between organizations and within).
• Allow Val Marie to be, the spirit of the place is unique.

Photo by Alais Nevert
Questions?