

**Implementing the Community Action Guide
Session Notes Recorded by Mary Roscoe,
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C&NN 2008 Grassroots Gathering
September 17 – 19, 2008**

Opening and Background

Cheryl Charles, C&NN President and CEO, first asked the group participants: what do you want to achieve in this session?

- Participant from Alaska: process, best mileage, and how to get something done after people leave the summit workshop in Anchorage in December. Bob Peart commented that they called a similar event a “dialogue”.
- Molly Stevens from Austin: practical next steps – the ability to translate the session into an organizational framework.
- Participant from Illinois: I’ve been doing things alone and I would like to find people to work with who want the same thing. Answers: Get in touch with Chicago Wilderness. C&NN can help.

Cheryl talked about the background of the C&NN Action Guide and information about downloading the guide from the web site to a CD. Regional movements can put their logo on it. The Report on the Movement is also available on the web site and has excellent information.

Processes described in the Community Action Guide come from years of extensive experience and the work of John Gardner. John Parr developed the content of the community action guide – there is a sense of profound appreciation for his work. The process described in the action guide works. It is based on proven experience and has been successful over several years. At the same time, we can adapt it. We can gather the stakeholders as broad and wide as we can and make our work credible.

Some documents referenced in the presentations are on the CD with the conference material.

Cheryl noted that there is a qualitative difference between initiatives starting with a legislative piece and those starting with other goals.

The group participants heard four outstanding approaches and stories about implementing an initiative.

Four Pictures

Marilyn Wyzga – New Hampshire

An initiative started in New Hampshire November 2006 through Fish and Game. In the beginning initiative, Marilyn became the “accidental initiative facilitator” – a serendipitous accident. An event with Francis Kuo and Cheryl Charles inspired a short term effort leading to a two year commitment. Fifteen percent of Marilyn’s position is allocated to a multi-year effort.

The first summit was in May 2007. Due to limited space they could only invite 100 people. They wanted to represent different interest groups – education, environment, recreation, health, built environment, media/culture. Cheryl gave the keynote at the summit. The participants were across sectors, specialties, and strata. Organizations and individuals were invited to join the initiative. Decisions are made by with consensus – “I can live with that”.

The coalition looked at the community profiles – the concerns – and created an impact feasibility grid, giving priority to efforts with the highest impact and feasibility. The priorities were messaging, development of a steering committee, and communication with the public. There was an offer to host another event with Richard Louv in that took place the following November with 700-1000 people. Richard’s talk was followed by strategic planning sessions in the afternoon.

Keys to success

- As a facilitator or convener, Marilyn doesn’t have to know it all.
- The First Lady in New Hampshire is a pediatrician that specializes in obesity – the initiative has good connections.
- They have a developed a strength-based structure.
- The initiative has a communication plan.

Current Status

The coalition has working groups. There is a collaborative leadership team – see the different organizational documents on the CD. As a coalition they have rules of engagement and a work plan. A coalition is the smallest organization in New Hampshire with rules of engagement (by-laws). “Healthy Eating and Active Living” is a parallel initiative.

Bob Peart – British Columbia

Bob’s primary message was that the C&NN Community Action Guide works.

Phases and timeline

1. **January 2006** - Engaging the community, generating a buzz, mapping the community, creating connections, creating an initiating committee, identifying and creating a stakeholder group, planning a kick-off event
2. Develop Strategies and Products and kick off and public event -- **February 2007 Dialogue on Children, Families, and Nature**. Follow-up includes creating a vision, current realities trends and activities, setting community priorities, developing an action plan, and implementing plan elements, community outreach.

3. Implementation steps (steering committee, task groups, coordinator), governance structure (**in process of organizing a BC Nature-Child Coalition with support from provincial government**), stakeholder involvement - **Get Outside! It's our Nature: March 5-8, 2009 in Victoria BC**. Other activities include monitoring and assessment, funding options/resources, celebrating and reporting - **September 2007 – forward**.

Overview

The **Dialogue on Children, Families, and Nature in 2007** hosted a dialogue with 55 people facilitated by open space technology as a kick-off. They developed strategies and products and created a vision - check website. The initiative is now at the implementation stage – working with champions and working with government to bring them into the work. The initiative is working on the health link and water quality – they work with the existing agendas of organizations.

A second gathering, **Get Outside! It's our Nature: March 5-8, 2009 in Victoria BC** with Richard Louv, Louse Chawla, and others will launch an alliance. Richard Louv will meet with provincial government and help get key NGOs on board. The plan is to get the initiative in British Columbia solid and “march across Canada”.

The initiative used the logic model – they defined where they wanted to be and worked backyard. Bob spends one third of his time on the initiative. He describes his work as “flying above the ground level”. He's there as a champion for participating organizations – it has taken a year and a half to build the trust in his role. For more information contact Bob at bobpeart@shaw.ca.

Jeff Williamson -- Arizona

Arizona is growing by leaps and bounds, has extensive public land, and 70% of the population is from out of state and not always comfortable with nature – the heat and “things that bite.”

In the mid 1990s the numbers of kids coming to the zoo started to go up but they were losing kids' participation at an earlier age. They worked with scouting and YMCA to look at what was going on. Kids had aggressive behavior and lack of attention. The challenges were not just with the zoo, the world was changing.

A group of organizations that met to look at the changes in the culture invited Richard Louv for a presentation. Afterwards the phone rang off the hook with people asking what they could do – they felt they needed to get together, organize, and change behavior. A group started to meet once a week to ask where they were succeeding and failing. They began meeting every two weeks with a hundred people at the meetings - Jeff did not recommend this as a way of working effectively. Smaller topic groups formed to bring ideas to a central group – the leaders came from the working groups and are forming a 501 C3. The working group had challenges with language and forming a common purpose – they finally negotiated a mission, vision, and values – then created a series of strategies and programs of implementation.

Jeff noted that it is challenging for people to work in silos without an assessment of their programs. There is the need to recognize the reality of change and be willing to change with a common understanding of what needs to be done. The group now knows who is

doing what and who does what best – at the end of day there is a series of negotiations to work with the challenges of tradition, lack of change, prescriptions, and imperatives. They know they can't do it all at once. Advice: don't bring the media in until the program is in place.

Kalamazoo, Michigan – Jen Wright and Lisa Panich

Jen described the Kalamazoo initiative as just beginning. Kalamazoo has been working since 1960 to connect people with nature. In 2005 they had Richard Louv speak. They were inspired by the book and hosted 75 teachers in 2006 to talk about how to use their schoolyards and found consensus. They reached to other organizations. They found that it is effective to take the time to have a conversation with people about what they did as a child -- they continue to capitalize on this approach as they work on a community level. Kalamazoo is one of three communities in Michigan serving as a C&NN pilot community for implementing the processes in the C&NN Community Action Guide, with help from funding to C&NN from the Kellogg Foundation.

Lisa spoke about where things are currently. They are coming to the end of phase one – they have a generous community and know their community well. They started having lunches with community leaders – especially with the education community. They are hosting a breakfast to kick off the initiating committee. Richard Louv is coming in a month and then they will go from there. What they love about the guide is that it doesn't have to be followed exactly but is valuable. They are bringing a broad spectrum of people to the initiating committee and creating a buzz through public speaking and data collection including data related to obesity.

Close of Session

At the end of the break-out group, the community action guide was described with these reflections:

- Has big ideas
- Is a process that works
- Is flexible - not sequential
- Includes a diversity of participants and types of groups – not traditional stakeholders
- Helps you achieve what you want to do – alignment with other agendas i.e. government – improving productivity, redundancy.

It is advisable to employ facilitators' services as needed for important gatherings. Civic Results is willing to provide facilitators. A participant agreed and said that it is important to use a facilitator/catalyst – we need to keep our energy up and not use it up in the process.