

August 1 , 2003



Sound Bites

The newsletter with a vision of regional food sustainability

Volume 2 Issue 12

Symposium Report **Non-Timber Forest Products & Small Scale Food Processing** **May 29-31, Bamfield, B.C.**

The West Coast Learning Network and the Bamfield Huu-ay-aht Community Forest Society sponsored the three-day symposium on non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and small-scale food processing business opportunities for Bamfield residents. The symposium was facilitated by **Tim Brigham**, NTFPs expert, **Frank Moreland**, Project Coordinator for the Small Scale Food Processor Association (SSFPA), and **Sandra Mark**, SSFPA Consultant. Bamfield community members discussed many reasons for coming together:

- to ensure the Community Forest project succeeds;
- to create activities that bring economic diversity and prosperity to Bamfield, especially in the winter time;
- to diversify the economic drivers in the community;
- to open dialogue with First Nations and learn from First Nations about traditional uses of NTFPs;
- to ensure Community Forest tenure succeeds;
- to extend the activities of the “learning communities”;
- to find ways to retain year-round residents; and
- to buffer the effects of external forces.

Community Vision: Where Do We Want To Be In 5 years?

Symposium participants expressed their hope for more stability in their community through enhancing community resources. This includes creating more educational and employment opportunities for residents as well as finding ways to attract more people to live in or visit Bamfield. For example, Bamfield has a community of educators that could facilitate educational programs about NTFPs and small-scale food sustainability in collaboration with the Huu-ay-aht Community Forest Society. The community could share ideas and show items created with NTFPs at festivals or other community gatherings. The community also wants to have a greater number of small businesses, rather than one big “saviour” business, because diversity can bring stability. Importantly, Bamfield residents envision employment opportunities that give people income and personal satisfaction with the least amount of change to the fabric of the community.

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Dennis Morgan beside a culturally modified tree



Sound Bites

BAMFIELD: “A great place to live, but a hard place to make a living.”

OUR ASSETS

Bamfield has a wonderful array of assets that were discussed by participants. These assets encompass the entire community and surrounding area.

Community Character:

- creative people
- commitment to place
- independent spirit
- people with broad base of knowledge
- less stress, less noise, slower pace (time to smell the flowers)
- lifestyle based on place: “Tides out, table is set”

Culture/History:

- Huu-ay-aht First Nations and their culture, history, traditions, and local knowledge
- have a lot to learn from First Nations
- “image” or story

Human Resources:

- many educators
- diversity of skills & leaders

Natural Resources:

- ocean and its resources
- forest surrounding Bamfield
- bird watching, fossils
- potential for more eco-tourism
- development has not destroyed beauty of Bamfield

Community Resources & Institutions:

- excellent learning atmosphere
- infrastructure—marine station, government docks, boardwalk, small fishery, community school, food safe kitchen, community hall
- Community Futures in Port Alberni
- good relations between First Nations and non-First Nations communities
- good relations with other communities (Uclulet, Tofino, Port Alberni)

Economic Activity & Existing Businesses:

- Internet
- many small businesses
- fishing is still some of the best on West Coast
- working with eco-tourism people

Associations:

- Community Forest
- resources associated with community school
- Chamber of Commerce
- community events—organization
- Community Affairs Society
- West Coast Learning Centre
- Bamfield Business Development Office
- Community Futures in Port Alberni

CHALLENGES: WITHIN US AND OUR COMMUNITY

Participants spoke openly about a number of challenges faced in developing NTFPs and small-scale food processing. These challenges include:

- “beating the dead whale” attitude
- housing
- motivating ourselves and our community
- old issues, internal feuding
- limited markets within Bamfield
- inertia—inability to overcome it
- apathy—need powerful catalysts in order to reach critical mass
- connecting with external markets



- community communication—not speaking directly to people’s needs/ wants
- transportation costs
- community as a whole vs community of individuals (individually independent instead of community independent)
- short-term visitors
- taking willing money from tourists

EXTERNAL BARRIERS

There are also several external barriers which participants noted: provincial decreases; lack of financing for training, business development, etc.; infrastructure (e.g., no regular bus service, pubs and restaurants closed); and the gravel logging road from Port Alberni to Bamfield.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The participants were asked to identify concrete steps to begin a community economic development process. These suggestions will be used as building blocks for the emerging steering group to achieve some early wins, which in turn can build greater interest and involvement.

- 🚶 SSFPA to provide report of this event in a “Sound Bites” format for electronic and print distribution.
- 🚶 Call people together after the summer rush to consider the implications of the report.
- 🚶 Review business incubator ideas.
- 🚶 Consider Bob’s store as an incubator retail to take over by a group.
- 🚶 West side pedestrians survey (from *Lady Rose*) re: goods and services that visitors would purchase.
- 🚶 West Coast Learning Network to research what training to bring to town.
- 🚶 Find out what other Learning Community Centres are doing.
- 🚶 Use the Internet for international tourists and follow-up sales.

Commerce: Goods and Services

Some of the first wins for Bamfield in these sectors could be support for small-scale business, and this is a pivotal strategy for SSFPA.

- 🚶 Help people use margins software (SSFPA).
- 🚶 Promote mushroom festival (Jim).
- 🚶 One web page with Chamber of Commerce and Bamfield associations.
- 🚶 Tim Brigham to act as resource person on NTFPs.

Product Mixes

The participants considered the many assets of Bamfield, and made suggestions for product combinations that could ‘brand’ Bamfield.

- 🚶 Providing things for people to do (e.g., celebrations).
- 🚶 Changing seasons change employment opportunities.
- 🚶 Producing in the winter for summer sales.
- 🚶 “I made it over the West Coast Trail” awards from Bamfield.
- 🚶 Selling Bamfield image (fishing, whales wilderness, “End of the Road”, West Coast Trail, First Nations, potential NTFPs).
- 🚶 Lodges and resorts as partners for activities.

Market Outside of Bamfield

For products created in Bamfield to be able to pay fair living wages, the sales must reach commercial volumes outside of Bamfield. The participants considered how this could be achieved.

- 🚶 Neighbouring communities. Can we take advantage of Tofino’s proximity? Collaborate with communities close to us.
- 🚶 Vancouver Island, Lower Mainland, and Pacific North West (Washington).
- 🚶 Germans and other Europeans do not stay long and they want the “cultural kick” of genuine products so we need to make sure they can buy them when they get home too.
- 🚶 Lodges and resorts; short-term cottage owners; Bamfield Marine Station students.
- 🚶 Hikers on West Coast Trail and the people who drop them off - what about buses?
- 🚶 *Lady Rose* - walking traffic.
- 🚶 Use the Internet for international tourists and follow-up sales.

Market Research

Participants made suggestions for research that could give valuable intelligence for any further action the citizens of Bamfield may decide to pursue.

- 🚶 Survey at trailhead, *Lady Rose* dock, tour operators, BMS, pub, local tours, Council.
- 🚶 Co-operative advertising opportunity to save costs.
- 🚶 Community/regional branding.
- 🚶 Survey of lodges and resorts for ideas for goods and services.

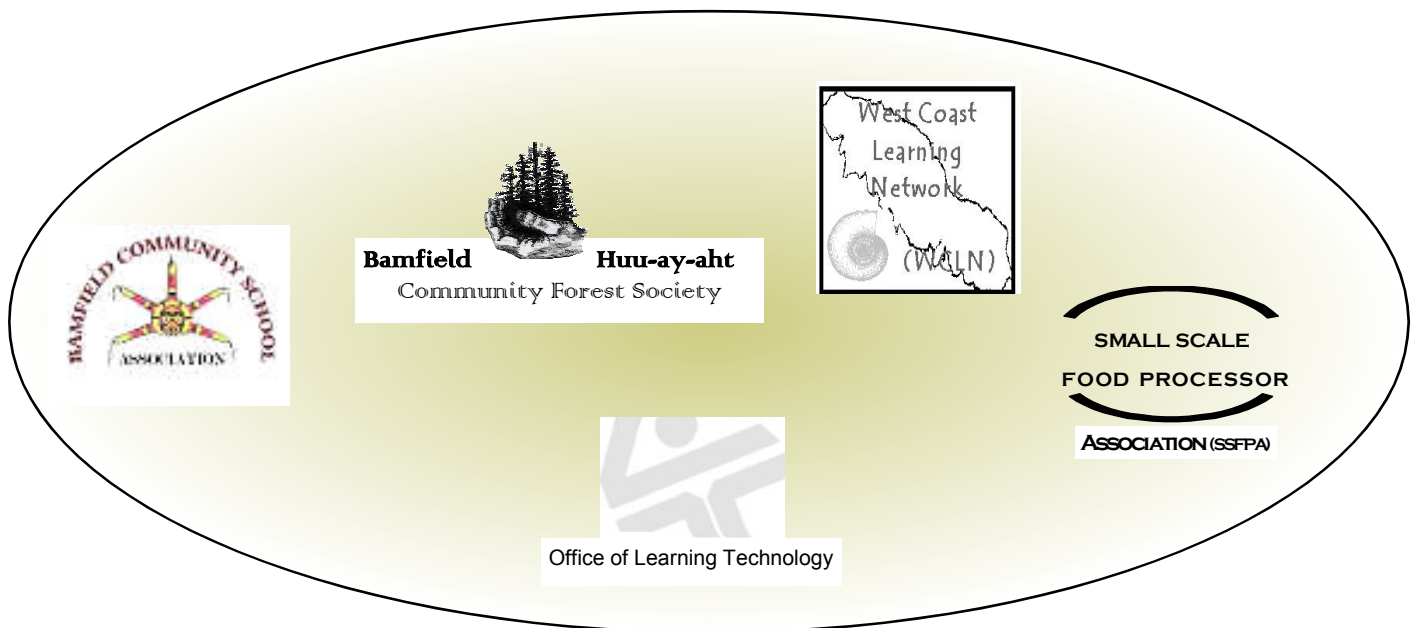
NEXT EASY STEPS

The participants agreed that there are lots of opportunities for community economic development. Developing NTFPs and small-scale food processing are certainly options. However, before specific projects are undertaken, work has to be done to build the relationships and capacity in the community to support entrepreneurship. People who are already doing things in the community need to be supported. Economists call these very important people 'human capital', and their participation increases success rates in community projects.

Participants brainstormed on the next steps that the community can take toward its vision. These steps include:

- 👤 plan a community dialogue about why community economic development should be happening, and the benefits to individuals
- 👤 engage the community through various forms of communication (e.g., listserv, pamphlets)
- 👤 encourage entrepreneurship
- 👤 inventory community assets
- 👤 create a database of community resources
- 👤 conduct a critical assessment of opportunities
- 👤 prepare information on business support services
- 👤 create a business incubator:
 - small group of people for discussion
 - inventory community capital
 - identify needs to move forward
 - use Virginia's time to research how to meet those needs
- 👤 build a co-operative business centre
- 👤 identify how to support initiatives
- 👤 WCLN - provide business skills training
- 👤 bring a friend to the next meeting

This symposium was made possible with the support of the following:



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