SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN A COASTAL CONTEXT
The Case of Alert Bay, British Columbia

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Kelly Vodden

Fifteen years after Gro Harlem Brundtland issued the challenge of sustainable development to the world we continue to struggle with its meaning. Debates cover the spectrum ranging from eco-centric "strong sustainability" to business-as-usual "weak sustainability" interpretations. Despite this definitional ambiguity the essence of the concept — the need to link the economic, social and ecological imperatives of development — has become widely agreed upon. Many have now turned their attention to the question of implementation. How can the ideal of sustainable development be translated into reality?

The answer to this question is both general (global) and context specific (local) and varies according to the definition of sustainability adopted. The following paper accepts the Brundtland Commission definition, development that allows "the economic and social needs of current generations to be met without compromising the welfare of future generations" (Rees, 1990: 435; WCED, 1987). Basic principles that must be followed for development to meet this broad guideline have been identified by the Brundtland report and in other subsequent works. Strategies for putting these principles into practice are dependent on places and people in diverse circumstances. Case studies, therefore, are a useful tool in examining the "how" questions of sustainable development.

The following case study presents sustainable community economic development (SCED) as one path for achieving sustainable development within the setting of a fishing-dependent First Nations community along Canada's Pacific coastline. The study is based on the author's Masters research at Simon Fraser University (Vodden, 1999a) as well as subsequent related research and development projects (1999–2001). The purpose of the initial study was to examine if and how a fishing-dependent community (Alert Bay, British Columbia) can utilize fisheries co-management as one component of an overall SCED strategy. Subsequent research has examined the role of the tourism, non-timber forest products and non-profit sectors in community transition (Vodden, 2001; Mitchell et al, 2001).

Resource depletion, job loss and community decline have brought the challenge of sustainable development in the fishing industry and fishing communities to the forefront in Canada and around the globe. Research results have shown that one strategy essential for sustainability in this setting is fisheries co-management. Results also suggest that activities in the fisheries sector alone will not result in community sustainability. Diversification through the pursuit of multiple sectors and strategies within an overall approach of SCED is required, along with attention to matters such as protecting and strengthening informal economies, strategic planning, stewardship and capacity building. Thus the pursuit of sustainable development requires integration of multiple components, reflected in the evaluative framework presented below.

SCED: Evaluating a Local Approach to Sustainable Development

"Community Economic Development (CED) is a process by which communities can initiate and generate their own solutions to their common economic problems and thereby build long-term community capacity and foster the integration of economic, social and environmental objectives" (McRobie and Ross, 1987: 1). CED emphasizes local involvement in, and control of, the development process. As an alternative development approach it gives precedence to communities over the interests of consumers or shareholders that drive conventional economic development. It is also distinct from local economic development (LED), which is focused on local communities but emphasizes narrowly defined economic objectives, is less participatory and dominated by local elites (Boothroyd and Davis, 1991; Bryant, 1999; Gill and Reed, 1999).

SCED combines the principles of sustainable development and CED. In doing so SCED emphasizes the realities of the natural world (limitations on our ability to utilize the environment as a source of resources and as an assimilator of human-generated wastes), along with the local social, cultural and economic realities that are brought into the development process through meaningful public participation. The overall goals of SCED are ecosystem *and* community health. While increasingly emphasizing ecological considerations, CED has tended to focus on human-centered values such as social justice, poverty and self-reliance (Vodden, 1997;

FIGURE 1   Research Framework

Sustainable Future   *Unsustainable Future*

Bryant, 1999). SCED shares the principles of CED while placing paramount importance on ecological sustainability.

During the course of this research a framework was developed for evaluating the degree and mechanisms through which communities such as Alert Bay are pursuing sustainable development through SCED. SCED was broken down into four components, creating an analytical framework that includes: (1) guiding principles, (2) recommended process steps, (3) potential elements of a CED and/or co-management plan (strategies and activities) and 4) factors that contribute to the success or failure of local efforts (see Figure 1).

For each component "checklists" of indicators or criteria were developed to compare themes from the literature with case study results (see Table 1). Refer to Vodden (1999a) for additional details on each component and related checklists.

Principles of SCED

In attempting to establish best practices and build a "theory" of CED researchers have searched for commonalities among case studies.

Based on this research, along with dialogue between communities and practitioners, a number of guiding principles for CED have been identified. Perhaps the most fundamental of these are self-reliance and community control, along with equity and broad-based public involvement in economic development planning and decision-making. Additional principles include: capacity building; collaboration; integration; collective benefits; long-term planning and action; and community-building (Schultz, 1995; Lauer, 1993; Dauncey, 1988; Boothroyd and Davis, 1991; Wismer & Pell, 1981). SCED further requires an ongoing effort to meet the primary principle of living within ecological limits, with individuals, organizations and communities continually seeking new ways to practice stewardship and environmental responsibility (Aspen Institute, 1996). In total 16 principle of SCED were identified from a literature review (see Table 1), along with criteria for each which could be used to determine if the principle was being adhered to by the study community.

The SCED Process

A flawed development process can destroy a community's chances of success in working toward a sustainable future. Common pitfalls include over-reliance on government, letting the tools (e.g. a government program) determine the strategy pursued, following a development fad not suited to a community's unique attributes and capabilities or overlooking the capacity of an organization or community to undertake and manage projects. Civic leaders may be too anxious to get results quickly, rely too heavily on the "local elite" and/or devote insufficient time or resources to planning and public participation (Blakely, 1989). Each of these mistakes can be avoided through a carefully designed planning process. While proper planning is important, Edwards (1994: 15) adds that without tangible results and immediate rewards the momentum required for action can be lost, advocating "the right mix of rousing old-fashioned sleeves-up community work and what some would consider unproductive high-brow visioning."

SCED Strategies

To put the principles of SCED into practice various strategies for community renewal and enhancement have been employed by communities. Blakely (1989) points out that multiple strategies can and should be combined, with those strategies most appropriate for the socio-economic circumstances being pursued. Fourteen functional strategies for SCED were identified from a literature review. Two additional strategies were identified through the case study research (formation of joint ventures/business partnerships and lobbying senior governments for increased resources and control[1]). A second method of conceptualizing CED options and opportunities is by economic sector. In Alert Bay and elsewhere, organizations and their leaders tend to describe CED efforts more commonly by sector than by the functionally based strategies described in the literature and listed in Table 1. Integration of the two approaches (functional and sectoral) is essential. For each sector multiple strategies can be pursued (e.g. training and business development) while functional strategies such as human resources development can in turn be applied to multiple sectors in the community economy.

One key strategy (community resource management) and activities in two major sectors (fishing and tourism) are examined in the case study below. Natural resources in British Columbia are managed almost exclusively by senior governments; forests primarily by the Province of BC and fisheries by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (formerly Department of Fisheries and Oceans). Local communities, particularly First Nations, are demanding a greater say and taking on increased responsibilities in resource management. At the same time it is generally acknowledged that the agencies currently responsible for resource management hold necessary resources, infrastructure, expertise/information and an ability to view the overall scenario from a distance which can contribute to setting conservation objectives and/or facilitating co-operation across jurisdictions. Communities often do not have the capacity, or in many cases the desire, to take over all of these responsibilities. Therefore, partnerships among government agencies (including First Nations governments) and other stakeholders are required.

Terms used to describe this type of partnership include "community management," "co-management" and "co-operative management." Each implies a distinct set of relationships. The first suggests that the majority of the responsibility and control lies in the hands of the community. The second suggests that all parties share some decision-making authority and/or manage-
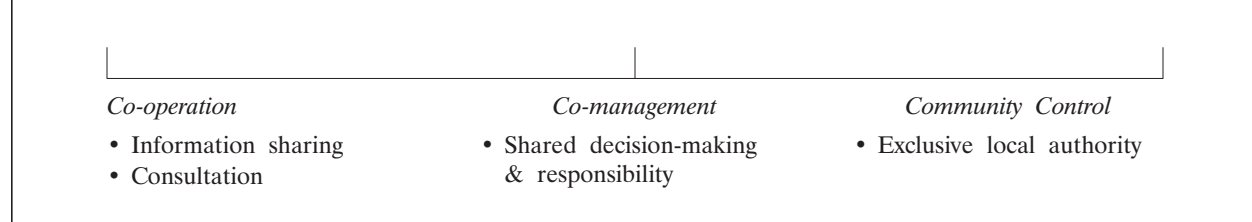
TABLE 1   Evaluation Framework and Checklists for SCED

1. Principles	2. Process Steps	3. Strategies	4. Success Factors

1. Living within ecological limits
2. Stewardship
3. Self-reliance/community control
4. Fairness and equity
5. Public involvement
6. Economic viability
7. Capacity building
8. Long-term planning
9. Diversity
10. Collaboration/co-operation
11. Integration
12. Qualitative development
13. Recognition of the informal economy
14. Collective benefits
15. Community building
16. Entrepreneurialism
	1. Identify issue/need
	2. Identify leader/core leadership group
	3. Build community support/involvement
	4. Create/select development organizations
	5. Research other communities' experiences
	6. Design and implement planning process
	7. Ensure resources are in place
	8. Establish a vision
	9. Community profile
	10. Identify/confirm issues and opportunities
	11. Assess local capacity/readiness
	12. Set long-term goals
	13. Determine how success will be measured
	14. Create a strategy (with targets, goals etc.)
	15. Create local partnerships
	16. Raise funds locally, then generate additional resources required
	17. Implement project action plans
	18. Develop human resources
	19. Evaluate progress and, if necessary, adapt
	20. Build on successes
		1. Encouraging entrepreneurship
		2. Human resource development
		3. Work sharing
		4. Reducing economic leakage
		5. Strengthening the informal economy
		6. Business recruitment
		7. Increasing local ownership
		8. Environmental improvements
		9. Physical infrastructure improvements
		10. Celebrating local identity and culture
		11. Quality of life improvements
		12. Community resource management
		13. Business retention/assistance
		14. Environmental business management
		15. Other
		  • lobbying
		  • joint ventures
			1. Economic/financial: e.g. local business success rates/economic health; diversity; local ownership; supply and demand networks; informal (non-cash) economic base; ability to generate/access capital
			
			2. Social/organizational: sense of community identity; amenities; social cohesion/collective spirit; range and health of community organizations
			
			3. Human: clear and appropriate leadership; education opportunities; labour force readiness and availability; management, marketing and technical/professional skills; entrepreneurial spirit; active citizens
			
			4. Ecological: protected areas; environmental health; productivity of natural resources; unique natural features; stewardship ethic
			
			5. Other: infrastructure, adaptability, external support

ment responsibility, in a true partnership. The latter simply implies some level of communication or co-operation. One Aboriginal fisherman put it this way: "to DFO cooperative management means: we decide, you co-operate" (Gallaugher et al, 1997). The roles communities can play range from being informed and offering comment regarding proposed policies or programs, to sharing real decision-making authority with a management agency, to having the sole responsibility to make, implement and enforce decisions (see Figure 2). Co-operative management lies on the left side of this continuum of arrangements, co-management in the middle and community management on the right (Pinkerton, 1989).

Community involvement in resource management can have a range of benefits, including: better and more informed decisions; increased stakeholder commitment to implementation and enforcement; resolution of differing points of view early on in the process resulting in reduced

FIGURE 2   Continuum of community involvement in resource management

Co-operation   *Co-management*   *Community Control*

• Information sharing   • Shared decision-making   • Exclusive local authority
• Consultation   & responsibility

FIGURE 3   Co-management: A Critical Strategy for Sustainable Development in Resource-dependent Communities

Sustainable Development

Sustainable Fisheries

SCED

Fisheries Co-management
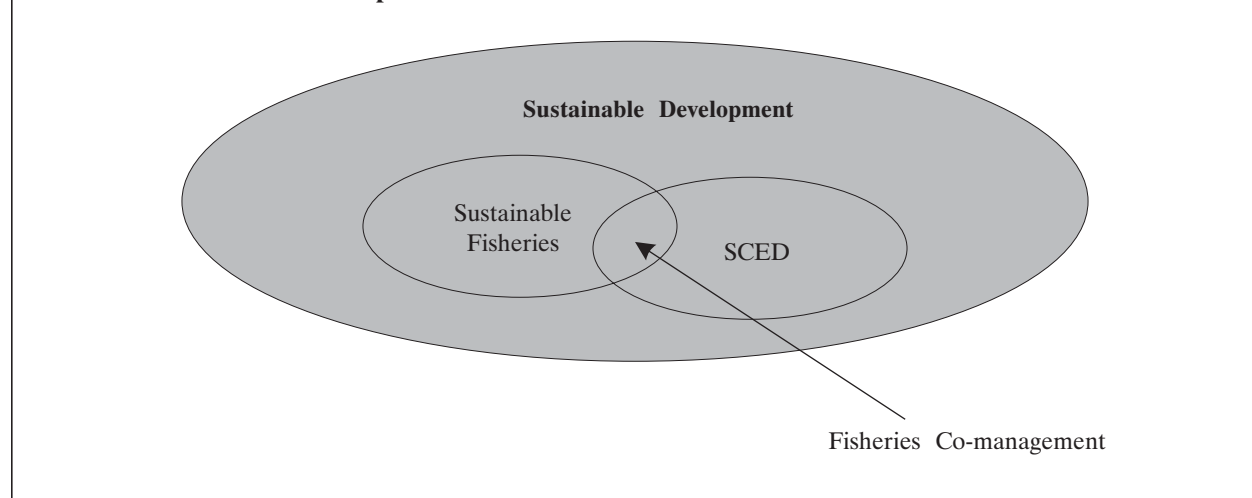
conflict and uncertainty over resource use; and increased public awareness and understanding (Gale, 1996). Like SCED, co-management is a strategy for addressing the trend toward centralization of production and control with decentralized decision-making. It can also encourage and facilitate resource conservation. Fishermen are often willing to place restrictions on themselves and undertake conservation programs when they consider the programs legitimate and have played an integral part in program planning and design.

Case studies further demonstrate that community members are likely to bring objectives such as sustainable employment and quality of life to the negotiating table, along with the more traditional resource management goals of economic viability for the industry and appropriate levels of harvest. In the long term the interests of resource-dependent communities and the resources they depend upon are compatible, making fishermen and other community members and organizations good candidates to act as stewards of fisheries resources and to make decisions in the interest of sustainability. Without local involvement in fisheries management neither self-reliance nor sustainable development will be achieved for fishing-dependent communities. Thus, the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987: 63) recommends "decentralizing the management of resources upon which local communities depend, and giving communities an effective say over the use of these resources."

Success Factors

The fourth component of the evaluation framework for SCED is factors of success or failure. While every community has unique challenges and capabilities, favourable conditions for success have been identified based on les-

sons from development theory and community experience. Determining the presence (or absence) of these success factors in a community can help community members and SCED practitioners assess the likelihood of their goals being achieved. These conditions can be grouped and assessed under various categories of community capacity, including economic, social/ organizational, ecological, and human resources. For more on success factors and assessing community capacity see Vodden (1999a) or Markey et al (2001).

Case Study Context: Alert Bay and the BC Fisheries Crisis

The 1990s were a difficult decade for the BC fishery. By 1996 prices and revenues in the salmon fishery had fallen to less than half of what they were in the late 1980s (Gislason et al, 1996). World supply had increased, due in large part to a growing global aquaculture industry, while returns of many BC salmon stocks were declining. Poor ocean survival rates, over-harvesting, habitat destruction, and management cutbacks were among the factors to blame. Strict conservation measures were put in place to protect threatened stocks, including closures and reductions in fishing times (Gallaugher and Vodden, 1999).

In 1996 BC fishing communities were hit with an economic disaster. The federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans announced the Pacific Salmon Revitalization Strategy. Known as "the Mifflin Plan" after the fisheries Minister of the day (Fred Mifflin), the Plan aimed to conserve resources and increase economic viability within the fishing fleet. It was to accomplish this primarily through a 50% reduction in the size of the salmon fleet. Specific measures included a voluntary license retirement or "buyback" program, a requirement to choose a single gear type and fishing area for each vessel (many fishermen had fished coast-wide in the past), and a provision for those who could afford to invest further in the industry to purchase additional licenses, allowing them to fish with multiple gear-types and/or in more than one area (known as "license stacking").

From 1995 to 1996 employment related to the salmon fishery in BC declined by over 30%, decreasing by more than 50% by the end of the decade (DFO, 1998; 2000). Of the estimated 10,000 jobs lost, many disappeared perma-

nently as a result of the new policy. Others were associated with salmon catches that hit levels lower than any since the late 1950s. Thousands of jobs had been lost, particularly in remote First Nations communities highly dependent on the fishery for their livelihoods but unable to invest in license stacking. Yet many questioned whether the federal Plan would achieve its economic and conservation objectives (Gislason et al, 1996). Communities were angry that they had not been consulted and that the impacts on BC coastal communities had not been adequately considered. Further, the fleet reduction plan had not been coupled with an adjustment and transition program despite the $3 billion investment made to mitigate community impacts of the east coast cod crisis (Markey et al, 2000). Job losses in the fishery were compounded by further declines in the forest and public sectors. BC coastal communities were declared to be in a state of crisis. It is in this context, in the midst of a dramatic need for alternative approaches, that the research project on SCED in Alert Bay was launched.

Alert Bay is located within the territory of the 'Namgis First Nation on Cormorant Island in British Columbia's central coast region (Figure 4). The community of approximately 1,275 residents[2] (Statistics Canada, 2001) includes a municipality, three reserves and a fourth reserve-like area set aside for "all bands in common" and occupied by residents originating from outlying Kwakwaka'wakw[3] villages. Aboriginal peoples make up more than two-thirds of the community's Census population.[4]

Fishing has traditionally played a central role in the Alert Bay economy. A provincially commissioned study (Gislason et al, 1996) listed Alert Bay as one of the communities most severely impacted by recent events, reporting a loss of 63 jobs in the area in 1996 alone (11% of total employment and 28% of employment in the salmon industry). Prior to 1996 the community relied on the salmon fishery alone for 39% of community employment (32% post-1996). Still other Alert Bay fishermen harvest species other than salmon. By 1998, 100 fishing jobs had been lost (20% of total employment). First Nations fishermen were disproportionately impacted, exacerbating the already significant differential between levels of economic prosperity within the Island's Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal/reserve and municipal populations (Vodden, 1999b). Fishing job losses also exacer-

FIGURE 4   Location of Cormorant Island (Alert Bay)

bated a trend in the community toward increased dependence on governments for employment and income.

The impacts of these changes run far deeper than economics. Like many other resource towns, the identity of the community of Alert Bay and its residents is intimately connected with its source of livelihood. Fishing is a way of life. The result is economic but also emotional, psychological and spiritual dependence. Pinkerton (1989) points out that for First Nations people fishing is necessary for: (a) food and wealth distribution among extended family and community; (b) cultural expression, with links to ancestors and a food source supply for feasts; (c) socialization as skills and responsibilities are passed on to the younger generation; and (d) transportation to neighbouring villages and food fishing/gathering grounds. Gislason et al (1996: 7-4) add, "It is a bond that ties the community together." Thus when Minister Mifflin announced the fleet reduction program local papers predicted "Death by Mifflin."

A key reason for selecting Alert Bay as a case study was that organizations and governments in the community had demonstrated a

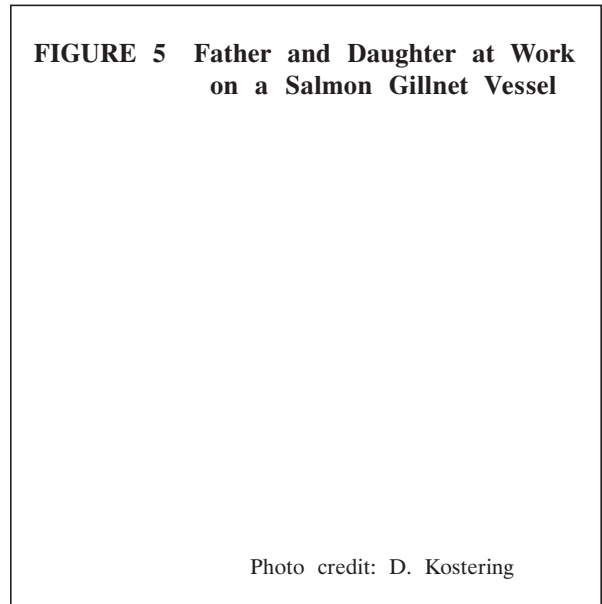**FIGURE 5   Father and Daughter at Work on a Salmon Gillnet Vessel**

Photo credit: D. Kostering

commitment to and active involvement in SCED and fisheries co-management. Despite the crisis the community's history and expressed values suggested they would work towards a solution that incorporated the principles of sustainability. In

June 1996 the Village of Alert Bay announced an economic development strategy that stated:

> Our vision is to become a community of healthy, happy individuals who are sustained by the resources of our adjacent environment and who are active in the process which works to sustain that environment. We endorse the British Columbia Round Table on the Environment and Economy's definition of sustainable development.... To achieve the above vision of ourselves as a community in balance with our environment, we must create a situation where we can become responsible for and have the right to harvest, process, manufacture and sell products created from the resources of the land and marine base. Our strategy stems from a vision of co-management....

The 'Namgis (previously Nimpkish) First Nation has also shown a historical commitment to CED. Wismer and Pell (1981) cite the Nimpkish Integrated Development Approach (NIDA), created in the 1970s, as an exemplar Canadian CED program. This five-year plan for educational, cultural, social and economic development included annual goals and objectives approved by the entire community in open meetings. NIDA's integrated, long-term, co-ordinated approach was considered to be "unique and innovative" for its time. Outcomes included an independent band-administered school, U'mista Cultural Centre and the 'Namgis Salmon Enhancement Program, all a continuing source of community pride. Many of the individuals who received training and experience in the early days of NIDA remain in positions of community leadership. The plan provided a foundation for CED activity that has continued for nearly three decades.

In total 11 Alert Bay organizations involved in CED and resource management activities were identified during the course of this study. Their accomplishments and challenges and the lessons to be learned are presented below using the SCED evaluation framework combined with illustrations from activities in two major sectors of the local economy: fisheries and tourism. Data collection methods included secondary source review, participant observation and in-depth interviews. Pattern searching played a critical role in data analysis, along with triangulation of responses from multiple data sources, peer and community review.

Principles of Development

Using a defined set of criteria levels of compliance with each of the principles of SCED were investigated for three Cormorant Island governments and for the community as a whole (Figure 6). Findings suggest that Alert Bay organizations generally espouse a philosophy consistent with the principles of sustainable development, and more specifically SCED. According to interview respondents, all of the SCED principles are important and relevant to their organizations and community. Several respondents pointed out that First Nations culture is particularly compatible with the SCED approach exemplified by these principles. Strong compliance with the principles of stewardship, diversity, collaboration and community building is exhibited by the community's activities. Stewardship initiatives are guided by a close relationship with the surrounding environment, a concept described by the Kwakwaka'wakw as Aweena K'ola — living at one with the land and sea.

The community, however, pursues many principles, to only a limited degree. These include living within ecological limits, self-reliance, economic viability, integration, long-term planning, public participation, recognition of the informal economy and entrepreneurialism. Most organizations in Alert Bay do not have an environmental monitoring program to determine when ecological limits may be reached. Further, support for entrepreneurial activity is limited (see below). The pursuit of self-reliance is advanced by treaty negotiation efforts but hindered by continuing reliance on goods, services and capital from governments and other sources outside the community. Keeping in mind that applying the principles of SCED is no easy task, it was determined overall that there is a medium level of compliance with the principles of SCED in Alert Bay. The absence of a planning and monitoring process, discussed further below, significantly impacted this evaluation.

Interview respondents agreed that adopting an explicit set of guiding principles for development is a useful process: "There has to be guiding principles in everything you do. I think that's understood, but it's not written anywhere. It should be." Results generally supported the importance of each of the SCED principles identified in the literature and confirm that belief in the principles of SCED is an important founda-

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FIGURE 6 Compliance with SCED Principles

	'Namgis First Nation	Village of Alert Bay	Tribal Council	Community Overall
1. Living within ecological limits	●	●	●	●
2. Stewardship	✓	●	✓	✓
3. Self-reliance/community control	●	●	●	●
4. Fairness and equity	✓	●	●	●
5. Public involvement	●	●	●	●
6. Economic viability	●	●	●	●
7. Capacity building	✓	●	●	●
8. Long-term planning	●	●	●	●
9. Diversity	✓	✓	✓	✓
10. Collaboration/co-operation	✓	✓	✓	✓
11. Integration	●	●	●	●
12. Qualitative development	●	●	✓	✓
13. Recognition of the informal economy	●	●	●	●
14. Collective benefits	?	✓	✓	✓
15. Community building	✓	✓	✓	✓
16. Entrepreneurialism	●	●	✓	●
OVERALL COMPLIANCE	●	●	●	●

✓ = Medium to high level of activity in support of this principle; ● = Limited or low to medium degree; ? = response not available (conflicting or insufficient evidence).

tion for the success and sustainability of CED strategies and initiatives.

A challenge associated with these principles is that they can conflict with one another. Principles must in these cases be prioritized or otherwise reconciled. Conflicts arise, for example, between the principles of entrepreneurialism and collective well-being. Despite an historic preference within the 'Namgis First Nation for the band-run business model (vs. self-employment) CED efforts increasingly attempt to balance these two approaches. A bias toward "collective efforts" can stifle those of an individual attempting to provide opportunities for individual and community self-reliance. The costs of entrepreneurial activity that is not balanced with social, cultural and environmental considerations, on the other hand, are well known. Further research is needed into these conflicts and methods of reconciliation. In the meantime communities and others who attempt to put these principles into action must make difficult trade-offs and determine themselves which principles are of greatest priority.

FIGURE 7 Culture Is an Integral Part of Community Life

Photo credit: K. Vodden

Several respondents suggested that the SCED philosophy in Alert Bay is rooted in the Kwakwaka'wakw culture. Culture and tradition was a recurring theme throughout the study and, it was felt, should be added to the original list

of SCED principles. Results also suggest the precautionary approach, increasingly common in resource management, should become an operating principle of SCED more generally.

CED Process

Research results indicate a lack of commitment to the CED planning process among Cormorant Island community leaders. CED has been implemented in recent years on a project-by-project basis and planning that has occurred has been done by individual organizations. In part this may be due to distrust of, and skepticism about, planning as it has been practised in the past. Past planning efforts typically involved government money spent to bring in an outside consultant who wrote a report that "sat on the shelf" and was never implemented. Further, a participatory CED process requires significant resources (particularly human and financial) and a spirit of co-operation/social cohesion. These factors were determined to be lacking to some degree in Alert Bay, making planning a difficult task. Nevertheless respondents were critical of their organizations and representatives for not making a more concentrated effort to devise a CED plan (including fisheries aspects). It was noted that the absence of a common vision was a significant barrier to success. The importance of fully involving all local interests in the planning process through two-way communication and consensus building and of assessing the community's readiness for change was also demonstrated.

Significant steps were taken in 1999, however, toward developing a community-wide CED strategy and addressing deficiencies identified in co-operation, co-ordination and integrated, long-term planning. Local organizations, municipal and First Nations governments hosted a public meeting originally intended to address the possible loss of the community's credit union. Organizers soon realized that this specific problem was best discussed as part of the broader community situation. Presentations were made regarding development initiatives underway and the current status of community well-being. Speakers described funding programs available to assist with CED activities and a summary of the research discussed in this article was presented. Participants broke into groups to discuss their vision for the future, strengths, challenges and steps that should be taken in the areas of health, education, recreation, social services, business, finance, transportation, tourism, culture and environment.

A follow-up meeting was held later that year, resulting in the formation of five community working groups (Employment, Health, Tourism, Environment and Community Relations) charged with undertaking activities and facilitating information sharing among organizations in the community with a interest in each area. Although limited in their ability to implement projects these volunteer groups continue to meet on a periodic basis.

In September 1999 'Namgis First Nation and the Village of Alert Bay signed the Alert Bay Accord. In recognition that the two governments "have historically worked together to promote a better standard of living for all the residents of Cormorant Island" they resolved to co-ordinate their efforts to revitalize the economy, obtain community and government support for these efforts and "preserve and enhance the unique environment, heritage and other qualities of Alert Bay which are important to the community and the well-being of its inhabitants."

Despite these improvements in planning and co-operation an overall strategy for SCED has yet to be developed. After two years of planning the 'Namgis First Nation continues to work on an economic development strategy of its own that will be widely accepted, replacing the now 30 year-old NIDA plan. In part due to endogenous constraints discussed below, progress has been slow.

Strategies and Activities

Multiple SCED strategies are being employed in Alert Bay, as illustrated in Table 2. Most common are training and human resource development, environmental improvements, celebrating local identity and culture and community resource management, endeavours reflective of the community's high level of commitment to their people and place.

Alert Bay residents see opportunities for their community in sectors such as tourism, value-added processing of marine and forest resources, research and education, forestry and the arts. Opportunities have also been identified in fisheries, shellfish aquaculture and housing.

Of these sectors, Cormorant Island organizations are most actively pursuing fisheries, tourism and education, research and information management (the "knowledge sector"). Alert Bay organizations have not abandoned the community's

TABLE 2   SCED Strategies Pursued in Alert Bay

CED Strategy	Number of Organizations Pursuing (n = 11)		
	Medium to high level of activity	Low to medium activity level	Total
1. Encouraging entrepreneurship[5]	2	2	4
2. Training, education (human resource development)	9	1	10
3. Work sharing	–	1	1
4. Reducing economic leakage	–	3	3
5. Strengthening the informal economy	2	4	6
6. Business recruitment	–	–	–
7. Increasing local ownership	2	2	4
8. Environmental improvements	6	3	9
9. Physical infrastructure improvements	2	3	5
10. Celebrating local identity and culture	5	3	8
11. Quality of life improvements	3	3	6
12. Community resource management	5	2	7
13. Business retention/assistance	–	1	1
14. Environmental business management	3	2	5
16. Other			
• lobbying	4	1	5
• joint ventures			

roots in the fishing industry but are seeking to diversify, increase local control and add value to the rich natural resources of the region. Activities within two sectors, tourism and fisheries, are discussed further below. Efforts in ecologically and culturally sensitive tourism development and fisheries co-management provide a cogent illustration of the community's commitment to the ecological, social, cultural and economic imperatives of sustainable development.

Eco-Cultural Tourism Development

The tourism sector has played a long-time role in the Alert Bay economy. The community offers attractions of two types: (1) history and culture and (2) an ecologically diverse and relatively pristine natural environment. Fortunately for Alert Bay residents involved in the tourism sector, demand for wilderness and cultural experiences are among the segments of highest growth in BC tourism.[6]

Alert Bay was an important trading centre for early residents of the BC coast and has a rich First Nations culture and heritage. The Island is a launching point and service centre for many people who visit the surrounding area

FIGURE 8   G. Cook's Tours Demonstrates Cedar Bark Stripping and Weaving

Photo credit: K. Vodden

by boat where numerous archaeological sites, abandoned villages, totem poles, rock art and Big Houses (Gukwdzi) can be seen or visited (LUCO, 1998).

The area is well known not only for Kwakwaka'wakw culture but also for outdoor activities such as whale watching, sea kayaking, sport fishing, nature tours and diving. Until recently, however, there have not been First Nations firms providing these services. Today a range of Aboriginal tourism products, services, and culturally-related attractions are being offered to visitors, including U'mista Cultural Centre, dance performances in a traditional-style Big House, interpreted walking tours of totem poles and culturally modified trees, boating, fishing and kayaking tours and works created by world-renowned Native artists.

Once the principal form of local transportation, the traditional canoe experienced a revival along the Pacific coast in the 1990s. In Alert Bay the dugout cedar canoe Galuda was constructed in 1992/93. Several others have since been crafted for cultural and educational use. Tourism products have been developed by two First Nations-owned companies, Numas Aboriginal Tours and Waas Eco-Cultural Adventures, which incorporate experiences paddling these "vessels of knowledge" (Neel, 1995).

With over 10,000[7] visitors each year, U'mista Cultural Centre is a focal point for tourism in Alert Bay. In 1995 U'mista Cultural Society created a Web site for worldwide marketing of local art and Kwakwaka'wakw products. In

FIGURE 10 U'mista Cultural Centre

Photo credit: K. Vodden

1996/97, U'mista facilitated the construction of a Kwakwaka'wakw theme park exhibit in the Netherlands, employing eight Alert Bay residents (Wilson, 1998; Sanborn, 1999). During the opening ceremonies 17 Kwakwaka'wakw participated and, in 1998, six Alert Bay youth were hired to dance, sing, and share stories for a five-week period. For participating community members it was an enriching experience not soon to be forgotten (Speck, 1999).

In 1998 an estimated 35 Alert Bay residents earned a significant portion of their incomes from culturally related activities (arts and tourism), contributing to employment and cultural revival. The number of jobs in these sectors has continued to grow. Several new First Nations tourism businesses have been launched and a host of initiatives undertaken by nine of the 11 organizations referred to above (Table 3). The Aboriginal tourism industry is expected to expand further in the future as new products are developed and residents receive training and experience.

Despite enthusiasm for tourism as a "postproductivist" and non-extractive endeavour, tourism activities are not intrinsically sustainable. Careful planning, along with co-ordination and caution, is needed to curtail the negative impacts that can result from tourism development, including cultural exploitation and ecological disturbance. In alignment with the principles of SCED, attempts are being made in Alert Bay to ensure that tourism development is conducted in an ecologically and culturally sensitive manner

FIGURE 9   "History by Canoe" Tour, Waas Eco-Cultural Adventures

Photo credit: Waas Eco-Cultural Adventures

TABLE 3 Alert Bay tourism initiatives, 1998–2001

- "Aboriginal Cultural Eco-Tourism on the North Island and Mainland Coast of BC" report
- Information exchange on sustainable tourism development with Simon Fraser University community tourism planning students
- Conference on Aboriginal Eco-tourism
- Aboriginal tourism training programs
- Conversion of fishing vessels for tourism operation
- Pilot project for Aboriginal tourism development in British Columbia
- Self-guided walking trail around Cormorant Island
- Tourism Alert Bay and Alert Bay Adventures marketing initiatives
- Attraction of pocket cruise ships
- Tourism infrastructure development (transfer of wharf facilities from federal government to the Village of Alert Bay, sewage treatment installation)
- Gwakawe Campground developed
- Youth training and outdoor recreation initiatives, including outdoor leadership training, equipment (canoe and kayak) purchases, Nimpkish Valley camp development

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that makes positive contributions to these important aspects of community as well contributing much-needed economic and social benefits such as opportunities for youth employment and engagement.

In 1999, the Island-wide Tourism Strategy Committee was created with the goal of creating a plan that will allow the community to take ownership of tourism rather than be over run by it. After years of "growing pains," says one member, the industry is now being given serious consideration due to downturns in the resource sectors. Both the Village of Alert Bay's 1990 Economic Development Strategy and 1996 Official Community Plan Review called for the development of "a clear tourism strategy to which all involved parties can provide their support (John Ronald and Associates: 25)." With a new sense of community acceptance of the tourism industry, steps have been taken to put such a Strategy into place. Additional requirements for the future include a tourism "code of ethics" for the community, which must address tourism policy issues such as First Nations protocol, regulation and carrying capacity. In the interim U'mista Cultural Centre provides visitors with protocol instructions when visiting cultural sites. Finally, the danger of over-reliance on tourism, creating a new single-sector dependence, must be acknowledged and avoided through continued diversification efforts.

Community Involvement in Fisheries Management

The Kwakwaka'wakw have always been a fishing people, actively practising harvesting and stewardship. This tradition has continued and expanded in new directions through the development of Alert Bay's traditional and commercial fisheries, with new residents, visitors and other resource users joining the Kwakwaka'wakw to make fisheries management in the region a complex and multifaceted challenge. Today there are five Alert Bay organizations involved in the fisheries sector. The most common activities undertaken by these organizations are habitat protection and restoration, lobbying in an attempt to influence fisheries policy, and education/communication (Table 4).

Research indicates widespread agreement on the need for increased community involvement in fisheries management and a preference for a regional co-management approach.

> We discussed the need for regional management of fishery resources and agreed that this approach is essential to both community and resource species survival....
>
> October 1998 letter to Fisheries Minister Anderson, signed by 'Namgis First Nation, Village of Alert Bay and other North Island fisheries interests

All interviewed felt their organizations should play a greater role in fisheries management, although one representative cautioned that

TABLE 4   Co-management Activities

Activity	Number of Organizations Pursuing (n = 5)		
	Medium to high level of activity	Low to medium activity level	Total
Stock assessment	2		2
Habitat assessment and monitoring	4		4
Habitat protection, restoration	4		4
Stock enhancement	2		2
Enforcement of harvesting	1		1
Setting harvest targets		2	2
Deciding on time/area of openings			
Allocation/licensing	1		1
Product marketing		2	2
Policy making			
— Decision making		2	2
— Lobbying	4		4
Education/communication	3	1	4
Other:			
— Funding fisheries projects			
— Training/work placement	2		2

the municipality should only get more involved if they are provided with advice from "competent local people" such as a local fisheries biologist. In part the desire of local organizations to get more involved in fisheries management is a response to the perceived inadequacy of the current management system and immediate need to fulfill management responsibilities no longer being met by government agencies:

> There is no stock assessment for herring in this area, one of the primary producers of the food chain and the DFO has decided that they don't have any money to do stock assessment for herring because its [*sic*] not commercially viable as a fishery.... So, yes, the community should become more involved in stock assessment.
>
> Up until about 1965 or 68 there were 21 patrol men with full enforcement powers ... We're down to four very short term seasonal patrol men. (Quoted from an interview respondent.)

Respondents believe that increased local involvement in fisheries management would improve sustainability of the fishery and local economy in the long-term through benefits such as greater local knowledge and sense of stewardship, ownership and responsibility; increased access to resources for local residents;

FIGURE 11 Mending the Nets, Alert Bay 1950s

Photo credit: Ilma Cook

stock rebuilding; improved decision-making and management (including longer term solutions); better information through the use of local knowledge; and higher compliance with management decisions. Other community benefits demonstrated by the case study include training, job creation, and community pride. Cultural values and the informal economy are also protected.

It was felt that local decision-makers tend to be more accountable than senior governments as they are closer to their constituents. At the same time several respondents expressed strong reservations about regional fisheries management, pointing to problems such as overcoming conflict/ difficulty in reaching consensus, lack of local expertise and the potential for money and greed to rule decisions. Mechanisms for accountability and monitoring built in to the co-management system were recommended to address these concerns.

Co-management activities in Alert Bay to date have contributed to a more sustainable fishery by striving to restore and maintain natural capital; speaking out on behalf of future generations; working to make the fishery more participatory, diverse, integrated, responsive and co-operative; and by linking local and scientific knowledge. These efforts, however, have been limited in their scope and scale and insufficient to fully address the fishery crisis. As with SCED, the community of Alert Bay appears to have a vision and philosophy that is in general alignment with sustainable fisheries and co-management principles. However, the community is at an early stage in its preparations for a significant co-management role and considerable barriers exist.

Local organizations are unable to address many issues due to the limited resources available to them. Despite agreement on the need for regional fisheries management and on many of the components of a regional management system, further discussion and, once again, a concerted co-operative planning process is needed if this vision is to become a reality. Further, a host of external factors ranging from changing ocean conditions to federal and provincial resource policies exist that are beyond the capabilities of any local group to address. Governments, particularly DFO, are considered reluctant to support a true co-management process — a major barrier to co-management efforts and, in turn, to addressing issues such as greater community control and self-reliance, economic viability, adjacency and

equitable sharing of costs, benefits and responsibilities. Local groups have not been able, nor can they be expected to, achieve sustainability in the fishery on their own. Instead they have made contributions that move fisheries further in this direction.

Despite the significant challenges faced, the success of co-management efforts in the fishing, tourism and other sectors is considered essential for the survival of the community and the marine and rainforest ecosystems of which it is a part. Residents of Alert Bay depend on outlying land and marine resources for their economic, cultural, physical, mental and spiritual well-being. The ecosystem surrounding Cormorant Island and resources within it are among the community's greatest strengths, provided they can be managed in a sustainable manner. Efforts to date have demonstrated that community involvement in the fisheries and tourism sectors can make valuable contributions to the sustainability of these industries. These contributions can be increased if the necessary capacity is built and barriers overcome, including a commitment from senior decision makers to the co-management concept envisioned.

Legal recognition of Aboriginal title and land claims settlement may hold the greatest promise that this vision will one day become a reality. Legal decisions in the 1990s have recognized the priority of Aboriginal food fishing rights over other uses of the fishery resource. Not only have Aboriginal rights to harvest not been extinguished but also First Nations have not relinquished their rights to manage the resources of their territories:

> Non-Aboriginal governments claimed a responsibility to govern the marine and other resources of our territories unlawfully and without any effort to negotiate with the Kwakiutl who had exercised their governance rights and responsibilities since time immemorial (KTFC, 1998: 6).

First Nations are not merely another "stakeholder" at the local level but a level of government with specific legal, traditional and cultural rights and obligations that must be recognized:

> ... any proposed activities within our traditional territories requires our consent. There have been many infringements upon our aboriginal title in the past for which we will be seeking compensation. We are not prepared to permit future

infringements without our consent being first obtained ('Namgis First Nation, 1999).

In a post-treaty environment senior governments will be obligated to co-operate with First Nations communities. Non-First Nations neighbours will also demand a say in decisions affecting their communities. Co-management arrangements and other collaborative CED initiatives can help establish productive working relationships between First Nations, provincial and federal governments and communities early in the process. One 'Namgis council member explained: "To me, as an Indian, a treaty is a treaty of peace, where we can work together in harmony, or co-management."

Unique community characteristics such as isolation and the Kwakwaka'wakw culture strengthen the interdependence between people, community and the surrounding environment. Thus the importance of natural resources to community well-being and of co-management as a SCED strategy in this context. Increasing self-determination, local ownership and control of natural resources was a central objective of the 'Namgis First Nation's pioneering CED efforts of the 1970s. Much has been learned and many projects launched since this time. Yet research findings demonstrate that the situation has not fundamentally changed. More than two decades later greater local control over development is still required.

Conclusions and Observations

The case of Alert Bay, British Columbia, supports literature review findings that while SCED is an important method for implementing sustainable development it is not easy to achieve. Efforts to date in this remote fishing village illustrate not only the potential for fisheries co-management and eco-cultural tourism as strategies for SCED, but also the associated challenges both internal (local) and external to the community. At the local level building social cohesion, improving skills, education and planning processes, creating organizational capacity and mechanisms for financing are critical steps to meeting the potential of SCED. Increased co-operation from senior governments is also essential.

The framework developed for evaluating SCED was demonstrated to be generally applicable for use in Alert Bay, with some modifications to methodology and framework components. With further development research suggests this framework can provide a useful tool for communities, governments and others seeking to evaluate or facilitate sustainable development in fishing dependent communities and elsewhere. One weakness of the internally focused assessment framework, however, was its inability to adequately account for the role of factors external to the community that influence the success of local efforts. Another was its complexity.

Cormorant Island shares many of the characteristics of fishing communities identified in the literature: isolation, small size, low education levels, attachment to fishing as a way of life, inadequate infrastructure and a labour force whose seasonal, declining incomes have been insulated by unemployment insurance. Key differences between the characteristics of fishing communities examined in the literature and Alert Bay include a younger average labour force age and a high level of interaction between First Nations and other non-First Nations cultures. While a younger labour force may be a positive workforce characteristic (Markey and Vodden, 1999), it has also meant that young people have been negatively affected by job losses in the fishery. Concerns about the health and well-being of youth in the community are prevalent.

Interaction between First Nations and non-First Nations residents and organizations is a feature of life in BC fishing communities. The case study highlighted associated challenges of cross-cultural understanding, satisfying legal rights and entitlements, uncertainty and relationship building. The importance of developing mechanisms for recognizing Aboriginal rights and title in co-management and SCED activities quickly became evident in the research and was therefore added to the success factors included in the original framework. What may be unique in BC to Alert Bay is the level of co-operation and goodwill between the First Nations and non-First Nations segments of the community, an important stepping stone toward sustainability from which lessons can be learned for other communities.

Over the years Alert Bay has accomplished a great deal in the field of SCED with limited resources. Residents have many ideas for the future and committed volunteers, staff and local organizations are striving to put these ideas into action. There is much more to be done and it is too early in a difficult process of adjustment to declare success. However, by undertaking a range of SCED activities in sectors such as tourism and community resource management, commu-

nity leaders and organizations have demonstrated a willingness to adapt to the changes in the fishing industry that threaten their community's survival. The case study of Alert Bay, BC demonstrates that SCED can play an important role in putting the theory of sustainable development into action within a coastal setting.

NOTES

1. While lobbying for outside government assistance may appear to conflict with CED's emphasis on local self-reliance Alert Bay community leaders maintain that compensation is due for government actions and mismanagement and support is necessary to assist with building a sustainable local economy. Efforts seeking this support have been successful to some degree, demonstrating the validity of this strategy.
2. Census figures exclude residents of unincorporated areas and Census undercount, which is significant on-reserve. Local figures indicate that the actual island population may be over 1,500.
3. Kwak'wala-speaking peoples, formerly known as Kwagiutl or Kwakiutl.
4. In Alert Bay the broad community, defined as all those who live on Cormorant Island, appears to be more relevant than the community defined as those living within municipal boundaries, or of the reserves. To a large extent it appears that residents of Cormorant Island identify themselves as members of the collective community of Alert Bay, although some residents clearly make a distinction between two communities on the Island: "Indian" and "White," reserve and non-reserve (Speck, 1987).
5. Including green business and social entrepreneurship.
6. Saturation in other areas is also expected to be a factor in future tourism growth for northern areas.
7. Approximately 5,000 of these are visitors. Others are members, local students etc. (U'mista Cultural Society, 1997).

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