



COWICHAN VISIONS 2020

2004

Preliminary Results

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FOCUS ON THE FUTURE



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Interim Project Report provides details of the progress made to date with respect to the re-visiting of the visions established in 1992 for the Cowichan Region. The report is a complete record of the input received from those residents who responded to the Community Survey and from the presentations and discussions that took place at the Community Forum.

The project was broken down into four stages:

Stage 1 Launch of the Cowichan Visions 2020 initiative and the creation of the Community Steering Committee

Stage 2 A Community Survey

Stage 3 A Community Forum

Stage 4 Action Planning

The process was specifically designed to be non-partisan and community driven. The Steering Committee members represented a cross-section of community interests from throughout the Cowichan Region.

Several significant economic and social changes had occurred in the region since 1992. These include, but were not limited to the restructuring of the coastal forest industry, the closure of several sawmills over the past three years, the ongoing First Nations Treaty negotiations and the increase of commuter residents living in the Cowichan Region but working in either Victoria or Nanaimo. These changes supported the decision to determine if the visions created in 1992 were in need of revision.

The approach used was similar to the one taken in 1992. A Community Survey was developed and a Community Forum was planned. In designing the 2004 survey the Committee made a conscious decision to design a “qualitative survey” with open-ended questions, rather than a “quantitative survey” with multiple choices of pre-determined responses. This decision was made to ensure that the input provided was without bias.

Two hundred forty one completed surveys were coded and analysed and themes were developed in a discussion paper, which was used as the basis for discussion at the Community Forum. Approximately 125 people attended the Community Forum, which was held over a day and a half in June 2004.

Amongst the highlights of the Forum were the presentations made by the various municipalities, the regional district and Cowichan Tribes. They highlighted their successes since 1992 and shared their plans for the future. David Baxter, the Executive Director of the Urban Futures Institute, was the keynote speaker for the event.

Participants at the Forum decided that before they could ratify the Vision Statements, they felt that additional input should be solicited from community-minded organizations that represented the community as a whole in the specific themes that were under discussion.

The next steps in the process will be to complete the facilitation of the interaction with the community groups and the preparation for another Community Forum in January 2005.

Staff at FutureCorp Cowichan managed the administration of the project with significant assistance from three participants in a Job Creation Partnership agreement that was approved with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. An extension of the contract has been submitted to seek continuing assistance in the action-planning process and the preparations for the January Community Forum.



REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

In the fall of 2003, the Community Development Committee of FutureCorp Cowichan determined it was time to revisit the Visions that were established in 1992, when the community came together for the first time under the banner of Cowichan Visions 2020.

Invitations were sent out to community-minded organizations and community stakeholders to seek support for this initiative and the response was both widespread and enthusiastic. The Cowichan Visions 2020 Community Steering Committee was formed and the task of establishing a process, and planning the component parts, was underway.

It was agreed that the basic approach taken twelve years ago was still applicable and that the project include both a Community Survey and a Community Forum.

The Steering Committee wrestled with the changes that had taken place since 1992 to ensure community residents were given the broadest opportunity to create their own vision. The result of those lengthy discussions was to develop a qualitative survey as opposed to the quantitative approach used in 1992. It was the position of the Steering Committee that if the objective of the survey was to solicit and encourage open-minded responses, the survey could not be compromised to a tick-box format which would lead respondents to pre-determined responses.

While it was acknowledged that completing the survey would be a time-consuming exercise, the results of the survey were most gratifying. The responses were rich with fresh and insightful thoughts from respondents representing all areas of our region.

The survey contents were reviewed to determine themes which became the basis of the discussion paper used at the Community Forum.

Despite the enticement of sunny early summer weather, the Community Forum was well attended and those who did give of their time over the two days contributed significantly to the success of this vital part of the visioning process.

A highlight of the Forum was the presentations made by the four municipalities, the regional district and Cowichan Tribes. It was most satisfying as chair of the event to welcome representation from each of these six organizations. It was the first time ever that representatives of local government made presentations on progress in their respective communities at the same time and in the same venue.

It was exciting, interesting and awe-inspiring to see and hear the progress they have made since the last Visions 2020 held in 1992. They also shared their plans for the future. It was a wonderful kick-off to our Forum.

David Baxter's presentation is well documented within the more complete Forum Report but the value he added to the discussions and debates throughout the Forum were stimulating and helpful to the participants as they thought in terms of how they would like to see the quality of life in their community in the year 2020.

The breakout sessions uncovered many interesting and varied thoughts and our thanks go to those who volunteered to facilitate those sessions, a difficult but vital part of trying to reach a consensus on how participants thought the Vision Statements should read.

The consensus at the end of the deliberations was that the initiative required more input from community-minded groups, directly related to the various topics that were under discussion. Once this work had been done, the Forum participants felt they would be better prepared to ratify Vision Statements and they recommended another Community Forum be held in January 2005 to complete this objective.

While not all of the objectives set for the project have been completed, good progress has been made. The time and effort contributed by many residents of the Region has been outstanding.

The completed tasks have provided a true sense of how much people care about their community and the passion they have to ensure that the quality of life in 2020 is the best it can be. They wanted to share their thoughts and to be a part of the visioning process.

My personal thanks to my colleagues on the Community Steering Committee, the corporate, government and municipal partners who have contributed significantly to the project, to those who took considerable time to voice their feelings both in the survey and at the forum, the volunteers who stepped forward to assume important roles at critical times and to the staff and contract participants at FutureCorp Cowichan who worked tirelessly to ensure that everyone had an opportunity to participate and to ensure that those who did participate had their thoughts heard.

I look forward to the next steps in the process and to sharing with you my final report early in 2005 what the revisited Community Vision for the Cowichan Region is.

Respectfully submitted

Patricia Foster
Chair, Cowichan Visions 2020 Steering Committee



PROJECT OVERVIEW

Introduction

In October 2003, FutureCorp Cowichan launched a community visioning process called Cowichan Visions 2020. The objective was to involve residents of the Cowichan Region in creating a vision for their community, the community they would like to be living in, in the year 2020.

The process was specifically designed to be non-partisan and community-driven. It was an opportunity created by the community, for the community. While there was sincere hope that municipal, provincial and federal government agencies would support and adopt the community vision resulting from the process, the overriding aim of the initiative was that community members would take part in implementing their vision.

The process unfolded in stages:

- Stage 1: Launch of the Cowichan Visions 2020 initiative and creation of a Community Steering Committee
- Stage 2: Community Survey (April-May, 2004)
- Stage 3: Community Forum (June 18 & 19, 2004)
- Stage 4: Action Planning (June – December 2004)

The plan was for the community vision to be confirmed at the community forum, based on input received through the community survey. Most importantly, community members were to be given the opportunity to be hands-on in developing and implementing Action Plans to ensure the vision adopted in 2004 is achieved by the year 2020.

Background

The 2004 version of Cowichan Visions 2020 builds on the highly successful 1992 initiative, and follows a similar format of community survey and community forum.

The vision created in 1992 for the Cowichan Region was:

**All Cowichan residents, through consensus,
take responsibility for a caring, safe, prosperous, sustainable
community ensuring opportunities for future generations.**

In addition to the overall vision for the Region, community members created a set of visions for each of six key discussion areas:

Economy: Full cost accounting gives the Cowichan Region a strong flexible and diversified economy with a reputation for excellence, innovation and employment for all

Environment: Cowichan Region residents take responsibility for their natural resources and maintain their environment by appropriately locating industry, commerce and housing

Housing: The Cowichan Region offers a diversity of housing, accessible and affordable to a wide range of age and income groups

Parks & Recreation: The Cowichan Region enjoys an appropriate amount of accessible park space with quality recreational opportunities for all

Transportation: Cowichan Region residents have a variety of accessible and environmentally acceptable modes of transportation

Health, Education and Social Services: Cowichan Region residents take responsibility for a community concept fostering life-long wellness of body, mind and spirit while preserving dignity and equality for all.

The Cowichan Valley Regional District, FutureCorp Cowichan, the local HRSDC office and numerous other community organizations adopted the community vision.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of the original Visions 2020 process was the sense of community that grew as a result of the consultation and the conference itself. Over 1,000 people took part in the process through surveys, interviews and the conference, and all became engaged by taking responsibility through the part they played in creating the kind of community they envisioned.

The commitment of participants led to the formation of the Visions 2020 Round Tables, one for each of the six key discussion areas, composed of volunteers who wanted to work towards implementing actions that would achieve the visions.

In the fall of 2003, it was determined that it was time to revisit the collective visions, to see what has been accomplished, to recognize those accomplishments, to take a fresh look at our community, to see if there is a need to revise any of the 1992 visions, and to continue to plan for the year 2020.

This is particularly important in the wake of several significant economic and social impacts. These include, but are not limited to:

- the restructuring of the coastal forest industry
- the closure of several sawmills over the past three years
- the ongoing First Nations Treaty negotiations
- the increase of commuter residents living here but working in Victoria and Nanaimo
- the new Community Charter
- the significant changes to the delivery of health, education and social services, with corresponding cutbacks in funding available to community groups and organizations
- an aging population

In general, local residents seem to be feeling that much is happening in their communities over which they have little control. The community visioning process is designed to enable residents to create their own vision for their community, and to start developing action plans to work towards that vision, whatever political, economic or social climate they are in.

Another change that took place was to include Ladysmith in the region this time. In 1992 the Cowichan Region was determined to be the area served by the Cowichan Business Development Centre. In 2004, the Cowichan Region was defined as the area served by the Cowichan Valley Regional District.

Methodology

The Community Steering Committee designed a survey to provide Cowichan residents with an opportunity to speak out on issues they believe affect the quality of life in the Region. Originally, the Committee intended to use the 1992 survey. However, it quickly became apparent that the 1992 survey reflected priorities and issues that were prevalent at the time, but might not be as pertinent in 2004.

The Steering Committee therefore decided to design a new survey that would provide residents with a fresh slate, and an opportunity to identify the issues that were of the most importance to them, rather than create a survey that reflected the committee's assumptions about residents' concerns and priorities.

In designing the 2004 survey, the Steering Committee wanted to:

- Get creative thoughts and new ideas from Cowichan residents
- Identify key themes and issues of concern to Cowichan residents that would provide a starting point for discussions at the community forum in June

This resulted in a conscious decision to design a 'qualitative survey' with open-ended questions, rather than a 'quantitative survey' with multiple choices of pre-determined responses.

As stated in the background section, there were significant changes in the key areas of Health, Education and Social Services. To reflect these changes in the 2004 survey, the Steering Committee decided to re-visit the groupings of certain 1992 subjects.

The outcome of this review was an increase in the number of key discussion areas from six to nine.

There were two primary changes. Firstly, the previous Health, Education and Social Services section became three distinct sections under the headings of Education and Training, Health Services and Community and Social Services. Secondly the Environment section in 1992 became the Natural Environment and the Built Environment in 2004. The Parks and Recreation section was also altered to become Recreation and Culture.

Surveys were distributed throughout the Cowichan Valley Regional District through The Cowichan Valley Citizen newspaper and, in Ladysmith, Cedar and area, through The Harbour City Star. Both newspapers offered free delivery to households in all areas of the Cowichan Valley Regional District.

Responses were coded and tabulated and themes emerged for each of the key discussion areas. The discussion paper that was created for the community forum was based on those themes. As it was in 1992, the intent was to arrive at an overall community vision, and individual vision statements for each of the key discussion areas.

Project Goal and Objectives

Goal

To revisit the community vision developed by the community in 1992 through a process that builds community capacity and engages local residents to take responsibility for realizing the vision.

Objectives

- Conduct a community consultation through an extensive survey of local residents
- Publish and distribute a discussion paper summarizing findings of the consultation phase
- Hold a two-day community forum at which residents will use the discussion paper to develop:
- A collective overall community vision for the quality of life they would like to have in their community in the year 2020
- Separate visions for each of the nine key areas which affect the quality of life in the Cowichan Region (housing, transportation, natural environment, built environment, education & training, health services, community & social services, the economy, recreation & culture)
- Recognize the progress made towards the vision created in 1992
- Facilitate the creation of action plans to achieve the visions arrived at during the Community Forum

Community Involvement

A key objective of the initiative was to provide as widespread an opportunity to regional residents on a completely random basis to ensure the input to the Survey and at the Forum was without bias. Public involvement was critical to the success of the process and this was sought in the following ways:

- 20,000 Surveys printed and distributed as a newspaper insert to all areas of the region.
- 250 E-mails sent out to a wide variety of contacts
- 150 Brochures distributed throughout the region
- 30 Posters erected throughout the Cowichan region
- Regular ads in local newspapers and on local radio.
- 25 Drop-off boxes for the survey established at key locations
- 20 Face-to-face interviews completed to gather survey input
- 9 Presentations made to municipal bodies, service clubs and community-minded organizations
- 6 Media releases distributed to all media outlets throughout the region
- 5 Information booths set-up at various community events and locations

Further community involvement is planned to ensure that the vision statements presented for ratification at the Community Forum in January 2005 reflect the broadest and most complete input from the Cowichan Region as a whole.

Founding members of the Cowichan Visions 2020 Community Steering Committee

Town of Lake Cowichan
City of Duncan
United Way
Salvation Army
NorskeCanada
Overwaitea Foods
Cowichan Green Community
Providence Farm
Penelekut Band
Cowichan Centre
R.C.M.P.
Cowichan Valley Regional
District
Canadian Mental Health
Association
FutureCorp Cowichan

Administration

The idea to revisit the 1992 Vision Statements was initiated by the FutureCorp Cowichan Community Development Committee.

They cast a wide net within the community to invite participation on the 2004 Cowichan Visions 2020 Community Steering Committee. The founding members of the committee represented a broad cross section of the community and included the following:

The Purpose of the Steering Committee, as stated in the Terms of Reference, was:

“Cowichan Visions 2020 is an initiative that will bring the community together to create a collective vision for the Cowichan Region in the year 2020. The process will revisit the original vision created in 1992, celebrate progress towards it, and create an updated vision. FutureCorp Cowichan will provide leadership in this community visioning process. The role of the Steering Committee is to assist FutureCorp Cowichan in developing and delivering the 2003 Cowichan Visions 2020 community visioning initiative by bringing a broad community perspective to the process.”

The members of the Steering Committee were all volunteers, led by their elected chair, Patricia Foster.

A number of sub-committees were formed including a Survey Committee, a Communications Committee, a Sponsorship Committee and a Forum Logistics Committee.

The staffing requirements for the project were managed by FutureCorp Cowichan under the leadership of General Manager Joanna Winter.

FutureCorp provided meeting facilities and secretarial support to the project. They also made application for assistance under a Human Resources & Skills Development Canada Job Creation Partnership agreement to staff a project team.

A coordinator was hired and HRSDC approved the JCP agreement, which allowed for the hiring of three participants to fill the roles of Research Assistant, Communications Assistant and Community Relations Assistant for the project.

The key tasks undertaken by the participants included the analysis of the survey, the reporting of survey results, arranging the Community Forum and preparing this Interim Project Report.

FutureCorp Cowichan also provided key marketing and accounting resources to ensure satisfactory completion of the first three phases of the project.

NEXT STEPS

Short-term (next six months)

1. Engage community-minded groups and individuals in consultation & round table discussions to further develop themes.
2. Hold a Community/Public Forum in January, as requested by those who attended the June 2004 Community Forum, for the purpose of updating progress and confirming overall Community Vision and Visions for individual themes.
3. Report to community on outcome of January 2005 Forum by e-mail to participants and by posting on Visions 2020 web-site www.visions2020.cowichan.net

Medium term (next 1-3 years)

1. Keep community informed on a regular basis through an electronic newsletter to a database of registered individuals and organizations.
2. Become a clearing house for information on groups and initiatives actively involved in furthering the growth and development of the region in a way that is both positive and consistent with the visions established at the January 2005 Forum.

Long term (Over 3 years)

To be determined