

Changing the Culture

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3. Changing the Culture

Over the past decade, experience under the Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia (i.e. 'Action Plan') has demonstrated that the potential for creating change on the ground via a transformational document revolves around four basic ingredients:

1. Start with a unifying concept that makes sense (e.g. 'design with nature' goal);
2. Develop a science-based and pragmatic methodology for undertaking technical analyses (e.g. water balance);
3. Create a web-based calculation tool that has a user-friendly interface (e.g. Water Balance Model for BC); and
4. Implement a multi-audience outreach and continuing education program (OCEP) that provides consistent messaging.

A fifth ingredient is patience. It takes time to incrementally change the practitioner culture and implement a new way of doing business.

Moving from Education to Implementation: Figure 6 below is adapted from the Guidebook. It illustrates how education leads to implementation. This mind-map is guiding Action Plan program delivery. The Guidebook also explains that facilitating institutional change is a function of three principles:

- **Principle #1: Melt the Opposition** – Obtain commitment from key stakeholders to support change (i.e. new values and beliefs).
- **Principle #2: Implement the Change** – A good idea is immediate, but preparation for implementation can take 5 to 10 years. Change will then take place quickly.
- **Principle #3: Re-Freeze** – Reinforce new values and institutionalize the change.

Principle #1 is accomplished through a collaborative decision process that builds consensus and aligns all levels of government. This process commenced five years prior to release of the Stormwater Planning: A Guidebook for British Columbia in 2002 when the Union of British Columbia Municipalities convened a focus group workshop. This set in motion a chain of outcomes that culminated in release of Guidebook.



Figure 6

Changing the Culture: First, Inform & Educate

Building on the understanding embodied in Figure 6, changing the culture is a five-step process:

- First, Inform & Educate
- Second, Empower a Team
- Third, Define the Goal
- Four, Build the Vision
- Fifth, Create a Legacy

Convene for Action

For the past decade, the Action Plan has been building local government and practitioner capacity to implement The New Business As Usual in BC. The grass-roots approach is captured by this sound-bite: *Capitalize on 'teachable moments' to inform and educate.*

When 'convening for action',
we build capacity through a 3-step process:

1. **Challenge** practitioners and others to step back from existing paradigms
2. **Inform** them regarding alternatives
3. **Provide** the tools and experience to develop land and use water differently

A Made in BC Process: "We have developed and implemented a 'made in BC' process that we call Convening for Action in BC," states Raymond Fung, Past-Chair of the Water Sustainability Committee. "When we gather, it is for a purpose. There must be an action item or an outcome. Our aim is to move from talk to action by developing tools, providing training, and building capacity."



South Okanagan Regional Pilot: "The South Okanagan Regional Growth Strategy provided the first opportunity to test the 'convening for action' approach. That experience has been adapted in Metro Vancouver and on Vancouver Island. Cross-fertilization between and within regions means that local governments can continually build on the experience of others; and they can take turns leapfrogging ahead," concludes Raymond Fung.

Build Capacity

"In 2002, the steering committee decided the Guidebook would be *outcome-oriented*. The emphasis is on HOW to move from planning to action. It engages practitioners to strive for holistic solutions," continues Ted van der Gulik. "Our outcome-oriented approach to community design has been keyed to a 'top down and bottom up' strategy that couples a provincial policy framework with on-the-ground practitioner education."

When 'building capacity',
we create a picture of the desired future:

1. **Vision:** What we want our communities to look like in 50 years
2. **Goal:** Design with nature to achieve settlement change in balance with ecology
3. **Strategy:** What we are going to do better or differently to get from here to there

Settlement Change in Balance with Ecology:

"Through outreach and education, our vision is to influence land and water practitioners to learn about and implement land use practices that better balance settlement activity and ecological assets in local and regional landscapes. The key principle is that settlement and ecology are equal values and they must be as much in balance as possible for the wellbeing of human and natural systems," concludes van der Gulik.

Local Government Gets It: "Every September, my Ministry meets with the Mayors and Councils of local governments at their annual conference. These sharing sessions provide us with insight as to how they think. Over the past five years, we have been observing a cultural change taking root," states Glen Brown, an Executive Director in the Ministry of Community & Rural Development.

"They are walking the talk. We see a definite effort to move towards the new understanding of how to provide sustainable infrastructure and green solutions in an economically viable way. Local government buy-in is reflected in their recent grant applications for senior government funding."

Changing the Culture: Second, Empower a Team

Figure 7 shows the logos of the primary partners and partnerships who (that) are collaborating and working as a team under the umbrella of the Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia. The members of the team share a vision for improving the way communities develop land and use water.

Program Delivery Role of BCWWA

At the centre of this network of land and water practitioners is the Water Sustainability Committee (WSC) of the BCWWA. The WSC is the managing partner and is responsible for providing leadership, facilitation and organizational services for Action Plan program delivery.

The BCWWA has entered into Memoranda of Understanding with three Vancouver Island regional districts (Capital Region, Nanaimo and Cowichan Valley) on behalf of the Action Plan to facilitate implementation of program elements.

Breadth of Strategic Partnerships

The Action Plan comprises elements that holistically link water management with land use, development and resource protection.

To advance implementation of a fully integrated Action Plan, the WSC has built a partnership network that extends beyond those core partners identified in Figure 7. Partnerships are categorized under three 'threads' to reflect the breadth of roles that the WSC plays under the Action Plan umbrella. These threads are:

- **Initiator** – where the WSC is the vehicle for direct action.
- **Collaborator** – where the WSC is the vehicle provider for others.
- **Educator** – where the WSC spans boundaries as the connector of initiatives or is an education facilitator.

The WSC is building a 'partnership architecture' that solidifies commitment to achieving practical outcomes under the umbrella of the Action Plan.



Figure 7 – Strategic Partnerships under the Action Plan Umbrella

Changing the Culture: Third, Define the Goal

Figure 8 below defines what the 'design with nature' goal means from a local government perspective. The graphic is both a backdrop and a mind-map for all outreach and continuing education program elements delivered under the umbrella of the Water Sustainability Action Plan.

Design with Nature

"We adapted the 'design with nature' paradigm from the title of the seminal book by Ian McHarg, published in 1969. Our experience is that it is intuitive, it resonates, and it serves as a focal point for changing the land ethic for the better," explains Raymond Fung, current Chair of the Green Infrastructure Partnership.

"Designing with nature captures the essence of climate change adaptation. Adaptation is about responding to the changes that will inevitably occur. Adaptation is at the community level and is therefore about collaboration."

Evolution of the Design with Nature Mind-Map:

"The Inter-Governmental Partnership used the 'design with nature' branding for the first time at the Union of BC Municipalities Conference in September 2003. The occasion was the formal launch of the Water Balance Model," continues Raymond Fung.

"In May 2005, the Green Infrastructure Partnership developed the original version of Figure 8. We essentially adapted Smart Growth principles, albeit in action-oriented sound-bites. The catalyst for developing this mind-map was a consultation workshop with the Metro Vancouver Regional Engineers Advisory Committee."

In 2008, two developments contributed to further evolution of the 'design with nature' definition. First, the Metro Vancouver Regional Board appointed a community-based Reference Panel with a mandate to provide independent review and recommendations to guide the Metro Vancouver Integrated Liquid Waste & Resource Management Plan. Secondly, the Province released Living Water Smart. The combination of the two provided inspiration for the version presented below.

Collaboration, a 'Design with Nature' approach, and re-use of resources are keys to climate change adaptation

- Develop compact, complete communities
- Increase transportation options
- Re-use and recycle water, energy and nutrients from liquid wastes
- Protect and restore urban 'green' space
- Strive for a lighter 'hydrologic footprint'
- Achieve higher levels of stream, wetland and marine environment protection



Figure 8

Changing the Culture: Fourth, Build the Vision

Figure 9 below conceptualizes the ‘convening for action’ process. Three objectives are building blocks for a long-term process of change:

- **Achievable and Affordable Goals:** Apply a science-based approach to create a shared vision for protecting or improving the health of individual watersheds over time.
- **Participatory Decision Process:** Build stakeholder consensus and support for implementing change; and agree on expectations and performance targets.
- **Commitment from Everyone:** Take action to holistically integrate water management with land development practices.

A key learning from the Guidebook and Beyond the Guidebook 2007 implementation experience is the importance of grounding the discussion: Simply put, examples inform policy.

Bridging to Innovation

The ultimate objective when *Convening for Action* is to build an informed ‘community of interest’ so that over time it will evolve into a ‘community of practice’. The inherent challenge lies in moving from talk to action. Leading and implementing change requires bridging of the gap between interest (talk) and practice (action).

Bridging the gap is primarily a people matter, not a technical one. Elected representatives and others are already aware of the technical solutions, including the legislative and financial elements, which are necessary to achieve the vision for communities in balance with ecology.

Bridging the gap between interest and practice involves motivating people to engage in ways that provide sufficient meaning to inspire them and lead to action.

Starting in 2005, *Convening for Action* programs on Vancouver Island, in Metro Vancouver and in the South Okanagan have shown what can be accomplished through peer-based education.



Figure 9

Changing the Culture: Five, Create a Legacy

Figure 10 below captures the essence of what it takes to create a lasting legacy. It depends on influencing individuals and organizations to make choices for the greater good – which is why British Columbia has been following an educational rather than prescriptive path.

Cumulative Benefits

“As the *Convening for Action* process has been evolving over the years, we have looked at the world of local government through the eyes of elected representatives and senior managers,” states Glen Brown.

“Recognizing that the individual property or development application is a primary lens for local government decisions, our emphasis is on how to implement affordable changes in development practices at the site scale.”

“Case study experience has led us to this synopsis: start with a shared vision; draw a picture of what the community can look like; and create the legacy one property at a time. It is about cumulative benefits.”

Balance Requires Measurement

“A reality is that we manage what we can measure,” observes Tim Pringle, Director of Special Programs for the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia.



“While we are very good at measuring settlement, mainly in financial terms, we have not been that effective in quantifying the ecological implications and/or impacts associated with the rapid pace of development that BC has been experiencing. This disconnect in measuring what matters has resulted in an unbalanced approach when making development decisions.”

Change the Land Ethic: “If we were in fact measuring ecological values, there would be more ‘weights’ on the ecology side of the balance scale; thus leading to more informed conclusions and hence different decisions,” states Pringle.

“As communities develop and/or redevelop, the desired outcome in 'designing with nature' is that settlement change will be in balance with ecology. It is all about changing the land ethic.”



Figure 10

Vision and Task

“A vision without a task is but a dream.
A task without a vision is but drudgery.
A vision with a task is the hope of the world.”

Source: Church inscription
Suffolk, England, 1786

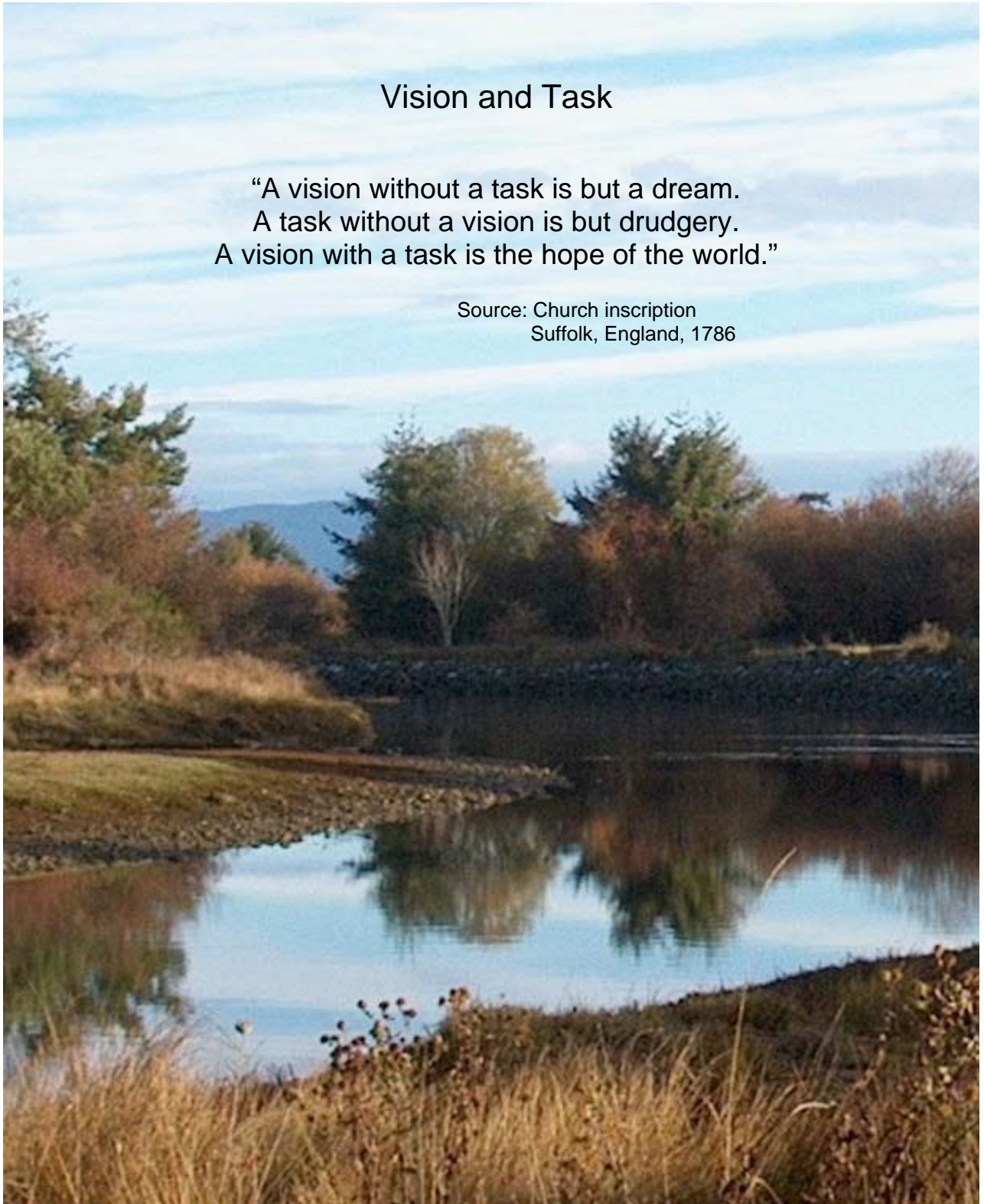


Photo Credit: Jim Dumont