

PROFILE FOR
COMMUNITY
ACTION
SERIES

EXTRACT

A large, stylized sun graphic with a spiral center and wavy rays, rendered in black and grey tones. The sun is the central focus of the cover.

Climate Change: A Profile for Community Action

A Companion to Harmony Foundation of Canada's
Community Action Workshop Manual

HARMONY FOUNDATION



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Extract from: Climate Change: A Profile for Community Action

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Introduction

Congratulations on taking an important step towards fighting climate change. Knowledge is power, and by understanding what climate change is all about, you can decide how your community can best add its efforts to the initiatives taking place across Canada and around the world.

You'll find this Profile tells you what you need to know about climate change in clear, accessible language. The **Overview** explains what climate change is, what causes it, and what impacts it could have here in Canada and around the world. A short glossary defines any technical terms that are used. At the back of the Profile, the Climate Change Cheat Sheet summarizes everything in a handy three-page format.

You'll also find inspiration in the pages that follow. The **Success Stories** provide a wealth of ideas on how communities can take action on climate change. Read about what groups across Canada and internationally have done to reduce their local greenhouse gas emissions through transportation, energy, industrial emissions, greenspace, agriculture and educational initiatives. You'll also discover lots of resources for further information in each of these areas.

The **Personal Action Checklist** at the back of this publication has some excellent suggestions on changes you can make in your own life to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

If this Profile motivates you to action, you may want to consider some of the other publications and programs that Harmony Foundation offers. *Climate Change: Profile for Community Action* is only the tip of the iceberg – there is an array of tools available to you through Harmony's **Building Sustainable Societies** program, outlined below.

The Program

As the diagram on page 3 illustrates, *Building Sustainable Societies* is a three-tiered program composed of training sessions, community action workshops, and local initiatives. The goal of the program is to provide community groups with the necessary knowledge and project planning skills to launch local climate change projects.

The Training Session

In our Training Sessions, we prepare community group representatives to run Community Action Workshops, by familiarizing you with the activities and facilitation techniques in our *Community Action Workshop Manual*. Call us to find out if we'll be offering one in your region in the near future.

The Community Action Workshop

The Workshop provides your group with an opportunity to work together to learn more about a selected environmental issue, identify community assets and needs, articulate a vision to solve a particular problem of your choice, and develop an action strategy. Above all, it is an opportunity for your group to work as a team. You'll find a more detailed description and agenda for the Workshop on page 4.

The *Community Action Workshop Manual*

This *Manual* is an ideal companion to the Profile you are now holding. While the Profile provides you with a clear understanding of climate change, the *Community Action Workshop Manual* shows you how to take effective local action through a simple and tested project planning framework. Together, the *Community Action Workshop Manual* and *Climate Change: A Profile for Community Action* provide you with everything you need to tackle climate change.

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We hope you'll find a wealth of ideas and information in *Climate Change: A Profile for Community Action* and that you are inspired to act on the knowledge you will gain. Good luck in all your present and future endeavours, and remember that education is the starting point for global change.

As Margaret Mead famously remarked, never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world – in fact it's the only thing that ever has.

Guiding Principles

The design and content of Harmony Foundation's Training Sessions and Community Action Workshops are based on the following educational principles:

Values-Based

An examination of values provides the foundation required to effectively understand one's own and other's world views. From this understanding participants can consciously and conscientiously benefit from various perspectives and actions to generate innovative solutions.

Experiential

Experience is at the base of learning. The experiential learning cycle involves concrete experience, reflection on the experience, concept building and application, and it challenges people to risk beyond their current level of thinking and acting.

Holistic and Multi-disciplinary

Holistic education involves the whole person. It appeals to all dimensions of an individual (i.e., emotional, spiritual, intellectual, physical). A multi-disciplinary approach promotes learning through the integration of subjects. Effective social change education programs examine the interrelationships amongst many fields of study and amongst the various elements of societies.

Systemic

Understanding the systemic relationships between individuals, societies and the environment contributes to an integrated approach to problem solving. Everything we do affects something or someone else.

Cooperative

Cooperative learning is interdependent; we learn with each other and from each other. Both the facilitator and the participants contribute to the educational process.

Based on Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is a process, not a result. Critical thinkers aim to identify and challenge their own assumptions and knowledge about a particular topic or issue, along with information presented to them. They are open to forming new ways of viewing an issue and generating innovative solutions.

Situated within a Global Context

Community-based initiatives are central to effective environmental and social action, yet they must be understood within regional, national and global contexts in order to effectively bring about long-term change. Societal change must happen at all levels in order for initiatives to be truly supported by and integrated into societies.

An Overview of Climate Change

Purpose

This section provides an introduction to climate change: what it is, what causes it, what impacts it could have (both internationally and in Canada), and how governments, corporations, communities and individuals can begin to tackle the issue.

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The remainder of the Overview (pp. 8-16) covers the following topics:

- The Heat's On*
 - Do We Need a Crystal Ball?*
 - Who's Emitting What?*
 - Who Will Pay the Price?*
 - Implications for Canada*
 - Working Together for Change*
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Community Success Stories

Purpose

In the following pages, you'll find lots of inspiring "success stories" – descriptions of projects that community groups across Canada and around the world have undertaken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We've chosen examples of projects on transportation, energy, industrial emissions, greenspace, agriculture, and education; and everything from small-scale, inexpensive initiatives to quite ambitious undertakings. Read on!

Introduction

We hope you'll find the success stories that follow provide you with inspiration, coupled with plenty of practical, nitty-gritty detail. Each of the profiles outlines the project, who was involved, what it cost, how long it took, what made it successful, what problems the organizers encountered ... all the information you'll need to determine whether your group could undertake something similar.

You'll also find a selection of excellent resources to turn to for more information at the beginning of each section. Below, you'll find some general resources on climate change you may find helpful.

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Pages 20-65 provide 23 Canadian and International Success Stories in the following categories:

- Transportation*
- Energy*
- Industrial Emissions*
- Greenspace*
- Agriculture*
- Education*

Samples from three Success Stories follow.

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Bicycle Crossings

Le Monde à Bicyclette, Montreal

Goal of Project:

To get cyclists across the St. Lawrence River, between Montreal and the South Shore.

Number of People-hours Involved:

Tens of thousands of hours. Most of the work was done by a core group of a few volunteers.

Length of Project:

About 10 years, all told.

Budget:

No specific budget for the project; Le Monde à Bicyclette's annual operating budget has varied widely over the years, peaking at \$48,000.

Partnerships Involved:

The bike group South Shore by Bicycle.

Major Funders:

River crossings were paid for by municipal and federal governments.

In 1999, Bicycling magazine named Montreal the best cycling city in North America, citing its extensive bike paths, its thousands of convenient bike parking racks, its regulation requiring all new buildings to have bike parking facilities, and the cycling culture in the city (170,000 people in the greater Montreal area use their bicycles as their main means of transport). Montreal has Le Monde à Bicyclette to thank for that award.

In 1975, remembers Robert Silverman, Le Monde à Bicyclette's cofounder and president, there were no cycling facilities. He and other cycling enthusiasts got together to change that. For 25 years, the group has fought tirelessly to promote and secure facilities for cycling. It won the right for cyclists to bring bikes on the subway, and it worked to have bike paths created. But its greatest achievement, says Silverman, was getting cyclists across the St. Lawrence River so they could travel between Montreal and the South Shore.

At the time, bicycles weren't allowed on the bridges and tunnels crossing the river, which the group thought was unacceptable. At first it staged "cyclodramas" to draw people's attention to the issue. Once, the group attempted to fly across the water with fake wings on their bikes. Once the group put bikes in a canoe and paddled across the water. One Easter Sunday a group member dressed as Moses and the rest of the group stood at the riverbank, asking Moses to part the water for them so that they could cross. Such dramas drew great media attention and public awareness. But they didn't get bicycles across the river.

So the group changed its tactics, and began getting letters of support. These proved surprisingly easy to obtain, remembers Silverman, because the idea of bicycle access wasn't a threat to cars. The group had a great cause, found sympathetic councillors, and presented civil liberty as well as ecological, economic and health benefit arguments.

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Ultimately, the letters succeeded and resolutions were passed in support of a connection from Notre Dame Island to the South Shore by all 14 South Shore municipalities and by 18 provincial MNAs and 17 federal MPs in the region (there already was a bridge leading to Notre Dame from Montreal that cyclists could use). The City of Montreal and the provincial Ministry of Sports, Recreation and Fishing constructed a \$600,000 causeway for cyclists and pedestrians connecting Notre Dame Island to the South Shore, which opened in May 1990 – nine years after the group started lobbying for it.

Cyclists are now also able to cross the river at Nuns Island, using Champlain Bridge, and money has been allocated for a bike lane on Jacques Cartier Bridge. As well, there are two privately run pedestrian/cyclist ferries that take people across the river.

Those wins required thousands of hours of effort, over many years. The struggle consumed the small core group of activists. “It was our life,” recalls Silverman. “We were boiling mad all the time.” To fund its activities, the group got some government grants and sold t-shirts and calendars. Over the past few years, the group has become smaller, largely because it has achieved many of its initial goals and many bicycle commuting facilities now exist.

The greatest roadblock to these changes, according to Silverman, was government opposition at the time, based on resistance to seeing the world in a different way. Slowly, attitudes began to change. Government officials started to see more people biking, including their own children. As well, they began to see the tourist value of having bike facilities and bike lanes. As society’s attitudes changed, so did the officials’. Now, the government is much more progressive and the current mayor is himself a cyclist.

But what hasn’t changed is Silverman’s dedication to the cause. While he feels good about the accomplishments the group has had, he’s not satisfied. He wants to increase bike access on the commuter train and get bike racks on buses. How does he keep going? “Cyclefrustrations – that’s the fuel.”

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Gowlland Range

Citizens Action to Save the Environment Society, Victoria

Goal of Project:

To preserve an area of land outside Victoria, British Columbia.

Number of People-hours Involved:

Thousands of hours on CASES' part alone.

Length of Project:

Initial work on the project began in the 1970s, and CASES became involved in 1988. A provincial park to protect the area was created in 1994.

Budget:

It cost \$17.7 million to buy the land in order to create the park. The provincial government paid the bulk of this.

Partnerships Involved:

Sierra Club of BC helped with lobbying and public efforts, the Capital Regional District donated a 65-hectare portion of a regional park to the provincial park, the provincial government donated lands to the regional government for the creation of another regional park, and the Nature Conservancy of Canada aided in the negotiations.

Major Funders:

The provincial government; the Nature Conservancy of Canada contributed \$2 million, made possible by a major donation from Westcoast Energy Inc.; FAMA Estates Ltd. donated \$1 million worth of property; the Capital Regional District gave \$750,000; the District of Central Saanich gave \$250,000.

Just outside Victoria, BC, there's a special place that is home to cougars, blacktailed deer, killer whales, river otters, seals, cloud sponges, and over a hundred bird species, including blue herons, bald eagles, and peregrine falcons. It's an area of grassy meadows, rocky knolls and old-growth forest.

Long-term resident and former Highlands District Mayor Bob McMinn and his wife Nancy began trying to interest the Directors of the Capital Regional District in preserving the Gowlland area in the 1970s. It took more than twenty years and the threat of development to move area residents, governments and environmental groups to create a provincial park.

In 1980, First National, the developer that owned the land, put in a proposal to build a 650-unit subdivision on 1,467 acres. Residents were not happy about it. "We felt that it was a valuable ecosystem and should be preserved. And the only way we could see that happening would be to make it a provincial park," recalls Derrick Mallard, co-founder of Citizens Action to Save the Environment Society (CASES). It took many years, but the combined effort of Mayor McMinn and the Highlands Council, some provincial politicians, CASES, and other environmental groups, proved successful.

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It was a long battle. While proponents were able to garner public support through public awareness campaigns, media coverage and numerous public meetings, the project was complicated by the number of players involved. A substantial portion of the land in question was owned by First National, so in order for the area to become a park, they would have to sell the property.

In the end, after much negotiation, letter-writing and committee meetings, that's what happened. The provincial government contributed most of the funds to purchase the land from the developer, although the Nature Conservancy of Canada and local governments also made significant contributions. The creation of Gowlland Tod was also helped by a bit of good timing. The provincial government had committed to establishing a Commonwealth Nature Legacy to commemorate the Commonwealth Games held in Victoria in 1994; the park accounted for the bulk of that legacy. Several MLAs, including the Environment Minister, also rallied support for the park.

According to Bob McMinn, the use of the Nature Conservancy as a negotiator was a new development in this type of action, and pioneered the use of Third Party Covenant to create parkland. The Capital Regional District relinquished part of a regional park and received another parcel of land in exchange from the provincial government. The municipalities of Central Saanich, Saanich and Highlands District made changes to zoning densities.

The final result was a 1,200-hectare park, smaller than the proponents originally hoped to preserve, but still a great achievement. First National's subdivision proposal was scaled back substantially, and the balance of the land became park. The key to success was cooperation between local governments, residents and environmental groups, according to Mallard: "The avoidance of confrontation helped to win the day." McMinn credits receptive politicians and active citizens, and says the story "reinforces the notion that people should get off their butts and take action."

The fight to create the provincial park was a very public effort for all. But it had a personal element for those who lived in the area and fought to maintain the landscape. Says Derrick Mallard, "We used the area ourselves to observe the plant life there, the mushrooms, the fish trying to get up Tod Creek. We would sit for hours watching the eagles, and the turkey vultures when they were around. We just enjoyed it as a peaceful area." And now future generations can enjoy it as well.

Contact Information:

CASES is no longer active. For information on the Gowlland Range, contact:
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tel: 250-479-3191 / fax: 250-479-0546
email: bcoffice@natureconservancy.ca
www.bc.natureconservancy.ca

Solar Electrification Pilot Project

Solar Electric Light Fund, Uganda

Goal of Project:

To install solar home systems in 100 homes in rural Uganda

Number of People-hours Involved:

Unknown

Length of Project:

After the homes were built in 1996, they were fitted with solar home systems.

Budget:

Unknown

Partnerships Involved:

Habitat for Humanity International built the homes in which the solar home systems were installed; Solar Energy for Africa, a Ugandan company, supplied the systems; Energy Alternatives Africa, a Kenyan company, provided technical assistance and project monitoring.

Things are looking bright for a group of homeowners in Uganda who have traded expensive, polluting energy sources for solar electric power.

In a pilot project, 100 rural Ugandan homes were equipped with solar home systems financed by the Solar Electric Light Fund (SELF), an American charitable organization. Rural homeowners, being off the power grid, normally rely on kerosene, candles, and dry-cell batteries for power. "In some cases, they're using car batteries to watch television," says Bob Freling, SELF's executive director.

The new solar home systems have a 50-watt solar panel that converts sunlight to clean electricity. They have a battery that stores the electricity, a charge controller that protects the battery from being overcharged or over discharged, lighting, and switches. Solar systems today are cheap, efficient, dependable, environmentally friendly, and cheaper to maintain than fuel and thermal generators.

The project has benefited homeowners in several ways. Because solar power replaced kerosene, it has improved people's health. Burning kerosene hurts the lungs and the eyes and is a major reason respiratory illnesses are so common in the developing world. The project also has had social benefits, because having electric light enables people to gather with friends in the evening, read with their children, or even work.

Of course, the project has had a strong environmental benefit as well. "We're using what is arguably the cleanest source of electricity: solar electricity. There's no burning of fossil fuels, so it is really allowing these people to participate in a higher quality of life without damaging the environment," says Freling.

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The program was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy's office of solar energy conversion, but it relied on local partnerships for success. Habitat for Humanity International built the homes. Solar Energy for Africa trained technicians, educated homeowners, and installed and serviced the systems. Energy Alternatives Africa provided technical assistance, training, and project supervision and monitoring. SELF trained Habitat for Humanity International's Uganda personnel in solar pilot project management, financed the technical training and co-ordinated the project.

"We could never had achieved the success we have without having the community involved, both in terms of fiscal responsibility and in terms of technical ownership," Freling says.

It was important to SELF that the systems were made affordable. Because each system cost the equivalent of about \$600 Cdn, people were given three- to five-year loans where monthly payments were the same as what a family would spend on other energy sources. Habitat for Humanity's Uganda office, which operates a home-building credit program, collects monthly instalment payments from the users. That money goes into a revolving credit fund to purchase additional solar systems, and help even more people.

Today, the project's impact has gone well beyond the initial 100 homeowners. Not only have additional households purchased systems from Habitat for Humanity, but the Ugandan government has launched a national solar electric lighting program. Freling isn't too surprised; the group is often a catalyst for further action, he says.

At the same time, photovoltaic rural electrification is becoming a commonly accepted idea: the World Bank, USAID, the U.S. Department of Energy, European development agencies, the Asian Development Bank, and numerous donors and commercial lending institutions worldwide are all launching solar initiatives.

The Solar Electric Light Fund was founded in 1990 to promote, develop, and facilitate solar rural electrification and energy self-sufficiency in developing countries. The group has developed pilot projects in China, India, Vietnam, South Africa, Brazil, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Uganda, Tanzania and the Solomon Islands.

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*The final two sections of the **Profile** contain Fast Facts on Climate Change and a Personal Action Checklist which provide practical actions each of us can take to help address Climate Change.*
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Building Sustainable Societies is made possible by the following sponsors, who share our commitment to the principles of leadership, innovation and excellence in environmental education and community capacity building:

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