



Youth in Community Economic Development

Falls Brook Centre



Acknowledgement and Thanks

This project was funded by Coast Capital Savings Credit Union, the Muttart Foundation, Human Resources and Social Development Canada and Industry Canada.

We would like to thank all of the funders of this project, the participants, staff and volunteers who helped provide direction. We look forward to continuing feedback, comments and suggestions.

Thank you to the following people who contributed to our research. There are many others who pointed us in the right direction, thanks to you as well.

Marc Nisbet, Allysha Larsen, Keith Jorgenson, Ola Nuga, Jennifer Morris, Jean Arnold, Doug Ragan, Maeve Lydon, Larry Jorgenson, Melanie Sondergaard, Anne Docherty, Doug Docherty, Megan Myres, Linda Myres, Éric Stephenson, Marie-Camille Lalande, Jane Rabinowicz, Michele Cherot, Linda Geggie, Tim Ewanchuck, and Joy Illington.

Compiled by Farrar Brodhead and Robin June Hood. Produced by the Canadian CED Network 2006.
Graphics and Design by Oliver Luke Delorie and Stewart Hertzog.





Strengthening Canada's Communities / Des communautés plus fortes au Canada

Youth in Community Economic Development

Falls Brook Centre

Falls Brook Centre is an education and training centre in rural New Brunswick. It strives to put the values of sustainable living into practice. The 400 acres on-site are certified organic by OCIA, New Brunswick. Along with organic farm land, a forestry museum and woodlot that is Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified, other on-site activities include solar and wind energy systems, a small conference centre, herbariums, tree nurseries, non-timber forest

product plantings for mushrooms and ginseng, and restoration sites that provide the basis for many outreach programs and an opportunity to revive the local economy on a small sustainable scale.

This profile is one of fifteen stories examining youth involvement in community economic development (CED). The profiles have been produced as part of the Canadian CED Network's efforts to encourage effective practices in youth leadership and engagement to enhance the social and economic conditions of Canada's communities.

This work was supported by Coast Capital Savings Credit Union, the Muttart Foundation, Social Development Canada, and Industrv Canada.

Falls Brook's vision statement reads: "Falls Brook Centre communicates and demonstrates appropriate sustainable resource stewardship for rural community revitalization to inspire and enable people and societies to make a conscious transition towards ecological, economic and societal renewal. Through the development and promotion of meaningful demonstrations, we hope to show it is possible to live more lightly in our environment while contributing positively to the local economy".

FBC works on a range of regional and international programs that are primarily youth led and that support local communities and organizations building a more sustainable future.

Context

Falls Brook Centre is located in South Knowlesville on 400 acres of Acadian forest and farmland in rural New Brunswick. Located in a rural area 'that young people tend to leave,' in an era where the traditional economic drivers of the region, forestry and agriculture are in decline, FBC promotes sustainable practices in forestry and agriculture through organic gardens, orchards, forest trails and ecological certification.

History

Falls Brook Centre had its origins after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Leading up to the Earth Summit, Jean Arnold, the Executive Director, participated on an NGO Steering Committee with the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). “A full two years of presenting papers, making speeches, organizing conferences, and participating in all levels of policy dialogue culminated in the decision that it was critical to dedicate at least 50% of the work to proving ‘on the ground’ that what we advocate for is possible in practice. It is important that, as a Canadian non-governmental organization, we work locally on environmental issues rooted in the Canadian reality but that also impact other communities around the world.” With this philosophy and vision shared by a group of New Brunswick environmentalists, Falls Brook Centre was formed in 1992.

When we asked Jean Arnold about the origins of Fall Brook Centre she replied:

“As the result of the Rio Summit in 1992, we decided to purchase a piece of land, and then we began to practice, to become involved in everything that we were advocating. So that was an attractive aspect for young people who are seeking their life path within a sustainability framework. We’ve always been a place that has attracted young people, and the areas that we’re involved in are all brand-new. For instance, we are involved in organic agriculture – we’re certified organic, we train inspectors; the same with good forest management, and again with renewable energy and community economic development.

Fall Brook Centre is a place where young people in New Brunswick go to get hands on experience... Jean Arnold explains:

“We started getting young people just coming here, and that still happens a lot because we’re a place-based operation. We’re also part of the WWOOF movement — the Willing Workers on Organic Farms. People can come here to work and be part of the system in exchange for room

and board. So that brings another sweep of people who are experimenting with life.”

Activities in CED

FBC organizes its work into four main program areas; forest stewardship, sustainable agriculture, appropriate technology and community development. Its location on 400 acres of farm and forest land provides a large land base for demonstration and training in sustainable woodlot management, organic agriculture and alternative technology. In addition FBC runs a forestry museum, an arbor-etum, a herbarium, 7 kilometers of trails and a solar and wind powered conference centre. FBC is able to accommodate up to 25 people on-site and provides a catering service using organic foods as well as operating several co-ops on-site. The majority of these ventures are youth-led and many were initiated by young entrepreneurs.

Forest Stewardship

Falls Brook Centre has been instrumental in facilitating forest certification via the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) at a regional and international level. Young staff also implement international programs on climate change, solar electrification, organic agriculture and Analog Forestry. Falls Brook Centre is active at the policy level with environmental NGOs and other partners on the national and international stage. They are also the New Brunswick representatives for the Canadian Organic Growers (COG) and the Atlantic Council for International Co-operation (ACIC), the Canadian focal point for the International Analog Forestry Network (IAFN) and they house the North American office of the Environment Liaison Centre International (ELCI).

FBC belongs to a woodlot owner co-operative that is managed according to International Forest Stewardship guidelines. That is a group certification system of woodlot owners who are certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, all of these woodlot owners got certified organic as a block.

Sustainable Agriculture

The Organic Agriculture program has deep roots at Falls Brook Centre. The first garden was built in 1990. Since then, FBC has branched out to encompass 1 hectare (2.5 acres) of certified organic vegetables, fruit orchards, mushrooms, herbs, flowers, greenhouses, seeds, and heritage gardens. When working abroad, FBC's youth interns encourage rural communities to attain food self-sufficiency, and bring many ideas back to try out at the centre. Currently the agriculture program is working on a proposal to run an organic agriculture apprenticeship program. FBC is also currently developing a program where young people who want to learn and do research on an organic farm will have an opportunity to spend a year doing research for a particular farmer, go to school at the community college to receive some academic credits, while being apprenticed on an organic farm.

FBC provides organic inspector training on 5 acres of produce that is certified organic. They run community-supported agriculture and provide small workshops and conferences, and a group of young women run an organic catering business. They also have a small mushroom-growing activity where organic certified Shiitakes mushrooms are sold to high-end restaurants.

Community Development

FBC's website states, "We endeavour to create social and economic benefits to community members while not harming the environment." FBC runs education programs in the local schools as well as numerous international internship programs.

Local programs offered in schools include numerous global classroom and community initiatives, learning tours to Central America, a Healthy Living Ambassador project, an inter-school peer education program on healthy communities and a youth climate change challenge. A Children's Parliament is also run by Falls Brook Centre in conjunction

with School District 14. It consists of elected members from local elementary schools who meet on a bi-monthly basis to discuss global issues such as the environment, good governance, children's rights and responsibilities, democracy and decision-making processes. The venture is ultimately intended to provide students with a forum in which they can voice their concerns, as well as to facilitate children's participation in decision-making. The Children's Parliament is partnered with a similar Children's Parliament in India providing the children on both sides of the world to learn about each other.

FBC's philosophy allows young people to experiment with more sustainable ways of living and working on the land. In the process of this experimentation several cooperatives have emerged. A Housing Co-op exists as a system in the houses. FBC has two straw-bale houses and the Forest Museum is also of straw-bale. Jean recounts, "It was built with the idea that one of the major drawbacks for young people entering an alternative workforce as opposed to going for the "big bucks," is the cost of housing. So if we built a house with the best intentions, recycled produce, and straw-bale, what would it actually cost to build a house? We built this first house for \$15,000 as a sort of demonstration that with a starter home there are alternatives to going massively into debt. Everything runs along those kinds of contained experiments."

Currently there are 15 or 16 young people living on-site. With another 18 formal interns arriving by the summer the numbers will reach 30 to 40 people on-site. Jean adds, "It's a bit of a challenge because when you have that many people living and working together there's another whole suite of skills that have to be worked out."

There is a car co-op at FBC where people can purchase a share in the co-op for \$500, alleviating the need for everybody to have vehicles. They have the beginnings of a small scale bio-diesel facility, with the support of a Canadian

CED Network Work Experience Program internship. A young man is developing this facility so that they will be able to reduce their reliance on gas.

The Centre has a food co-op for dry foods, and a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) co-op for agriculture products. In the CSA a certain amount of money a week/month is contributed for vegetables. With the dry food co-op, everyone identifies what they want in order to reduce the costs of whatever product they're getting. The products can range from soap, to toothpaste, to beans, to rice, to honey, and so on. FBC is very committed to organic and fair-trade products. Jean recounts that the co-ops are always evolving, and are constantly being re-invigorated. Currently a young man is running 'a Black Jack Boot Co-op', where he and some friends are importing boots and shoes from a Co-op in Mexico. They then sell these boots on-line.

Jean explains their CED philosophy; "One of the purposes here is that every project that we have needs to spin out and, where possible, needs to be able to establish a community economic development aspect to it. For instance with the bio-diesel, my hope is now that we've got a little bit of money from the Canadian CED Network and we've got the time to have a staffer who is set up we can ask questions like, "Where are we going to get the supplies/how are we going to set up the systems?" This purpose is with the hope that a small business will develop for somebody in this community/area. Maybe they only work there 3 days a week and have an additional source of income as supplemental. But hopefully independent small businesses will eventually evolve, as did the agriculture person, with their small business selling organic heirloom seeds. Maybe we are not tackling it in a strictly community economic development fashion, but each business that spins off here should aim to support 2 or 3 other people. We need to create jobs wherever possible in a 'new economy', one that respects place and the community around

It is my opinion that we should, as a society, be experimenting with how we might live a little bit more equitably on the planet. You can only spend so much time in a frenzy of anger as a system at large, and we all do spend some time with that. But our approach here is, "okay so that's as bad as it is, but how are we going to tackle things differently? What are the solutions?" Because of this we tend not to get so burnt out, we are always trying to implement something that is clearly a component of a better way forward. And many of the people who come through here then go off and get hired on somewhere else. But the majority always leave having really bonded to the idea of some sort of exploration of the path of sustainability, and whatever that means is obviously the challenge of our time.

— Jean Arnold

it. Some of them are run on a co-op basis and some of them on a private basis, but eventually more people may be able to provide employment to a couple of others while still being able to earn a living and contribute to a vibrant rural community."

FBC is a transformational education centre that has programs and sends 10 - 20 interns every year to India, Mexico and Central America. Many different groups in the Maritimes visit the centre for trainings in solar energy. There are intercultural aspects brought through this international program and many internship programs being run by other Maritime organizations send youth for orientations and cultural training.

Katimavik and Canada World Youth are two organizations that send young people to visit FBC for special events.

Youth Inclusion in CED

Falls Brook Centre has two board members under the age of thirty, at the staffing level many of the activities are youth-led, and most of the core staff are

under 32. When asked about FBC's approach to youth inclusion Jean responded;

"These are all fairly new areas [sustainability, alternative energy, organic farming practices etc] so one of the attractions for young people that come here is that there are really no barriers to them quickly becoming "experts in their field" – particularly because there aren't a lot of people functioning at a policy or practical level in these areas. Then we were also lucky because we started to design and build our buildings so that they would either have as much renewable energy as we could afford, or they would have ecologically light footprints types of aspects. Then we were nominated for the Canadian Housing Award for sustainable housing for youth, which we won. We were lucky because CIDA started the idea of having youth internships, and that provided us with a formal way of having people come here and to get up to speed on the topics of sustainability, alternative energy, organic farming practices and so on. Then the participants would go overseas, and if we had been successful with fundraising they would be able to come back and be a staff person, take on a project, and write a proposal for something that was their dream. I always try to encourage the concept that Falls Brook Centre is here to offer the possibility of walking along a path that asks, "What does a sustainable rural community/viable/economic/culturally/environmentally sensitive look like?" Or "What is your dream of that?" So we have several young people who have decided to move from urban areas to re-locate here, to build their own houses, and put together their own ideas and ways of working. They're experimenting, I suppose, with the ecological footprint, but also how to un-learn the individualism of our times, to ask, how do things function at a governance level on a co-operative basis, in all areas?

Part of this search is assisted by their overseas experience. For example, we work with an Indigenous Coffee

Producers Co-op in Mexico, so the young people go down there. They see how an Indigenous Co-op system works and they get exposure to other realities which then help inform and balance... Like, 'Wow, somebody can actually live like that and be happy and productive.' The DFAIT internships gave us the ability to send people to European organizations, and so then we were able to say, "Okay so we're working with an Indigenous organic and fair-trade coffee and production system in Mexico, but now we're also sending interns to work at the organic standards setting organization which has its global headquarters in Bonn, Germany." It becomes possible for the participants to observe how it works at the policy-making, the standard setting and the criteria indicator levels from people who are actually doing the job."

Outcomes and Evaluation

FBC has had numerous young people come to live and work at the Centre, to be introduced to a myriad of approaches to sustainable living. When we asked Jean about the impacts on their future work and lives she mentioned that two young people had moved to Victoria. We followed up and that afternoon found Peter Sundberg working across the hall from the Canadian CED Network offices as the Executive Director of City Green. Sonya Sundberg (they met and married at FBC!) now works at the Victoria Compost Education Centre. FBC would like to do a comprehensive longitudinal evaluation of their programs but has not yet had the funding to do so. Program and activity evaluations are however a regular component of all activities. When we asked Jean to recount some of the outcomes of FBC's work she responded, "On the practical level, we've pushed through net metering in New Brunswick. We've designed a net-metering policy for our local utility and energy department. One of our buildings houses the wind and solar net-metering systems, so people come to learn about how this system works, from young engineers, to local utility people, to policy people and international energy

experts. The New Brunswick University Engineering Department assists us with the technology and uses our facility as a training centre whereby students come here for training in renewable energy systems. Our whole renewable energy side has been successful. We're the New Brunswick node for The National Canadian Organic Growers organization. We led the Forest Stewardship standards for the Maritimes that was highly controversial, and we pulled it off. We've won numerous awards and have a very good anti-landmine education program. I haven't even touched on any of our international stuff! I think people would see us as fairly successful. All that success means to us is 'Okay, now the next hurdle.'

Success Factors and Lessons Learned

When we asked Jean Arnold to reflect on FBC's successes over the last decade she explained:

"I think our success is, being tucked away in this rural area, we have a lot of staff, we have a lot of interns, we have a lot of programs, and we always have something to show for it. So at the end of the day, when the funding runs out, we've still got our converted school bus that goes around and is run by the diesel and solar/wind applications on the roof, and it goes to schools promoting renewable energy and climate change solutions. We've still got our windmills and our solar panels. So I think, if I look back, I say that the successes are that we can actually draw from the resources that we've created. For instance next week we have three New Brunswick Ministers – the energy minister, the agriculture minister, and the environment minister – all coming out to visit. We get a lot of people who come out here and we show that the path of sustainability is fun and exciting. People like it – it looks nice. We're very focused on trying to support artists, we've got a couple of people who work here who are artists - so all of our things are painted and decorated. Our success is partly that

Lessons Learned

Falls Brook Centre works to implement their Mission by:

1. Creating and replicating demonstrations and models of sustainable development - The foundation for all activities is in the work they accomplish on the ground.

2. Researching and promoting sustainable production systems - We are learning more about the environment in which we live and are improving the tools and models that will assist communities to be stewards of the land.

3. Building community development and resilience - We are creating spaces for ourselves and for local communities to apply alternative social and economic models of a more sustainable society.

4. Bringing about progressive consumer change - Through increasing awareness and marketing, we are providing the public with opportunities to make choices that support the environment and local communities.

we're still here, and growing. We are the One Tonne Challenge delivery agent for our area, so we build local support. We are certified for careful land management practices, we know the rigour that it takes, we've got a renewable energy co-op, and we've gotten 2 or 3 little businesses started in the area... And in the meantime, I

suppose one of the nicest things about having so many young people is that we have very eclectic activities! Parties, dances, dress-ups, and so on! It's good for the soul."

There is a lot of learning happening on many levels at FBC. There is learning at the technical level, the organization level, the governance level, and all of it is through hands on experience. Young people learn about organic agriculture through planting a garden, they learn about co-ops through forming them.

Our thanks to Jean Arnold for sharing her valuable time to answer all of our questions.

Contact Information

Tegan Wong-Daugherty, Jean Arnold
Falls Brook Centre
125 South Knowlesville Road
Knowlesville, NB E7L 1B1

Telephone: (506) 375-8143
Fax: (506) 375-4221

www.fallsbrookcentre.ca

Published by

Canadian CED Network
211-620 View Street,
Victoria, BC V8W 1J6
Telephone (250) 386-9980
Toll free 1 (877) 202-2268
Fax (250) 386-9984

Emerging Leaders Coordinator
fbrodhead@ccednet-rcdec.ca

An electronic copy of this document
will be available on the CCEDNet
website: <http://www.ccedet-rcdec.ca/>

*Ce document est aussi disponible en
français.*

Copyright © 2006
Canadian CED Network

*This profile is contributing to the goals of the
Emerging Leaders committee of CCEDNet
which seeks to build leadership opportunities
for young people in CED. Thank you very
much to everyone that participated!*