

SCENARIO PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Hosted by:
Southern Interior Beetle Action Coalition (SIBAC)
Kamloops, Monday May 25, 2009

Presenters: David Beurle, Innovative Leadership Australia; Gary Stewart, Rural Development Initiatives.

Dalyce Brandt, Coordinator with the SIBAC introduced presenters David Beurle of Innovative Leadership Australia, and Gary Stewart of Rural Development Initiatives, Oregon.

Opening Remarks

"This is a real International event. We have an Aussie and Yank, talking to a bunch of Cannuks!" David Beurle continued with an overview for the day.

About the "Futures Game"

The "Futures Game" was designed as an interactive way to help participants access some of the skills needed to guide their respective regions as they face specific challenges, and to act as a catalyst for new thinking and practices. The exercises were designed to give participants hands-on experience in making critical decisions, and give players the ability to see the outcomes of their decisions, played out over time.

Part 1: Leadership Exercise

Before starting the "Futures Game", Gary led the group through a quick leadership exercise, asking participants to list the characteristics of a good leader. The top characteristics from each table were noted (not in rank order):

- 1 Persuasiveness, well spoken, knowledgeable
- 2 Likable, friendly – why? To help develop support for ideas and trust
- 3 Visionary
- 4 Communicator, listener
- 5 Someone who actually 'leads'
- 6 Someone who likes to take the heat, owns the decision
- 7 Capacity building
- 8 Empowers others
- 9 Integrity
- 10 Inclusive
- 11 Innovative
- 12 Passionate
- 13 Decisive
- 14 A Motivator
- 15 Cares about the environment, generational perspective, looking to the future

Gary asked: "Do you see characteristics like these in your communities? What characteristics would you like to see?" Group discussion. *Note: Gary Stewart's presentation on leadership was scheduled for the afternoon and is not included in these notes.*

Part 2: The "Futures Game"

"Discussing the future is actually difficult for many people to do, so we looked at different tools to allow people to engage the future in a fun way." David introduced the Futures Game and provided the details of how to play.

"Consider you are the leaders in this part of the world [shows a map]. You have the responsibility and accountability to shape the decisions here. Think of it as a real exercise – you're in the hot seat. You are charged to make decisions that will affect this part of the world," David added.

The Futures Game is set in Western Australia, and David outlined the key details of the region necessary for playing the game (land, population and economic statistics) and provided groups with a detailed map and legend for the area.

The game begins in 2007. Issues for the region include: decreasing rural community populations (hard to raise taxes), governments technically bankrupt, trend toward smaller communities becoming smaller and larger communities becoming larger, large open farm land – wheat production, limited fresh water, groundwater turned saline due to clearing of natural vegetation (environmental issues) - possible solutions include digging drainage trenches or replanting native perennials, etc.

Each group studied their map. They were then provided with a decision sheet, and event card. Groups were asked to make a critical decision for their area considering all the information provided for the starting year 2007. After 10 minutes, participants returned their decision sheets and received a new map, visually showing the result of the decisions they had just made.

Game Process:

- 1 Review map, decision sheet (required to make decision A or B), and event card (outlining current world events that may have an impact on the decision and/or region)
- 2 Discuss and debate (10 minutes)
- 3 Select 1 of the 2 options noted and record the decision on the sheet
- 4 Hand in decision sheet, and receive a new map showing the impact of the decisions made

The above process repeated several times, taking participants from 2007 to 2030. A final map and a text decision tree outlining all possible decisions and outcomes were provided at the end of the game.

Futures Game Review

David commented on the strong parallels in the game play to the issues local leaders are facing today in this region around the Pine Beetle crisis. He commented that several years ago they were facing similar environmental issues in his region.

They developed a scenario planning process in order to bring people together to confront and build a shared future. The first question asked of the regional leaders was to make a list of the key drivers that would shape their future. The list was relatively easy to make, but as a leader, reconciling a diverse list is very difficult. In many cases, regional leaders fall back on old framework.

Scenario planning was used to help change the future. Looking at clusters of drivers,

new industries and markets, environmental changes, etc., the leaders were able to create different plausible forms of the future. Each possible future was outlined in detail. David commented, "There is no single future in front of you. Detailed regional planning is very powerful for the people who do it."

"We played this game with many people. When we asked people what scenario they would aspire to, 100% wanted 'harmony with prosperity.' However many teams took their regions into an opposite future, showing a disconnect between current decision making framework and intended outcomes."

David reviewed each of the groups end result, and a commented on the various possible outcomes of the game.

Impact of Scenario Planning

"People need a clear place to end up in order to make tough decisions toward the preferred future outcome," David said.

"After playing this game, what do you think are the key drivers shaping the future of your region? What do you think would be some the scenarios that would be plausible for your community? How would you articulate those scenarios in details?"

Groups answered the questions, and followed up with discussion. A list of drivers included (not in rank order):

- 1 Alberta oil
- 2 Changing demographics, elderly moving in, fewer younger people
- 3 Thompson Rivers University, positive influence on economy, top 10 cities for the future – Kamloops is in, in one of their criteria * get the report
- 4 Technology – more efficient mills
- 5 Pine Beetle on forestry industry
- 6 Relationships with First Nations, critical part about land usage
- 7 Environment, water, wildlife – one of the only places that seems to be living out environmental changes, global climate change – Australia signs are showing up, no water, bush fires, here pine beetle, water issues, winter rains
- 8 Skills level of people in the area
- 9 Scarcity of water
- 10 tourism
- 11 We haven't built a scenario to look out to see a possible future, in order to make changes now, need to plan for future here – Kelowna hillside development example (doesn't work – being so far from everything, 15km to milk, etc.)

Summary

"The degree of success depends on how leaders assimilate diverse drivers. It is the most important factor in guiding your community toward a future you want." David then asked: "What scenario are we drifting toward? Where are we currently heading?"

David indicated that most people will resist being told what to do. As a leader, scenario planning provides leaders a way to go out to the community with a range of possible futures, and ask which people would most prefer. There is power in making active choices, and people will typically zero in on one scenario of choice. This can reposition the framework for all decision making, and give the power to community leaders to move ahead toward that scenario.

“Clear themes are emerging across the world in scenario planning, which can be plotted on two axis: one is about the creative development of creative resources in the region. The other theme is about the creative utilization of natural resources. Both are important, otherwise you only have half the equation. The challenge for leaders is to look at all the drivers and find a way to work the two axis’s together.”

Participant Comments:

“Going through this exercise shows us the implications our current decisions will have on future generations and can allow us to prepare. This exercise was very useful.”

Tyrone Joseph, All Nations Trust Company.

“Fun and interesting. Personally I found it a bit intense, choosing the right decision. It was definitely a learning process of what could potentially happen to a community based on a decision made 20 years earlier.”

Alexis Welch, Community Future, Penticton.

“Very valuable. Interesting to see where you end up at the end of the day, based on decisions you made or didn’t make ... in this exercise, the paths are there in the end so you can see where you’d end up. It was really interesting to see those paths. The chart at the end was useful.”

Loni Parker, Columbia Shuswap Regional District.

“Valuable. There were no right or wrong answers, just different paths, and different outcomes. It was powerful to be able to see the different outcomes. “

Ron Oszust, CSRD

“People are craving interactive discussions. This game is abstract, but a lot of issues in the game are similar to real world situations. The game gives people a chance to have a meaningful dialogue about tough issues in their communities.”

David Beurle

Note: Participant comments edited for length.

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