

# Setting the Stage Conference Report

Sustainability Options for Resource-Based Communities in Alberta

## Conference Academics

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*funded by ...*



*with the communities of ...*



*and the participation of ...*



July 25, 2011

**Athabasca River Basin Research Institute**

Athabasca University

Athabasca, Alberta

Canada

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## **Introduction**

We would like to acknowledge and thank the administration and staff of the Town of Hinton for hosting the event and making us feel most welcome, and the Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) for funding the conference.

The *Setting the Stage* conference represents Phase 1 of this project. The main objective of the conference was to turn generalised themes and ideas into focused research. The conference gave us the opportunity to ascertain the communities' priorities, so that we would then be able to better align Grande Cache and Hinton's requirements with the research capabilities of Athabasca University and NorQuest College, and work collaboratively toward positive outcomes for the overall project.

The event gave the stakeholders in both communities and academics the opportunity to establish a realistic research and community package agenda. In itself, the agenda makes an explicit statement of what these communities want and what the academic community could provide.

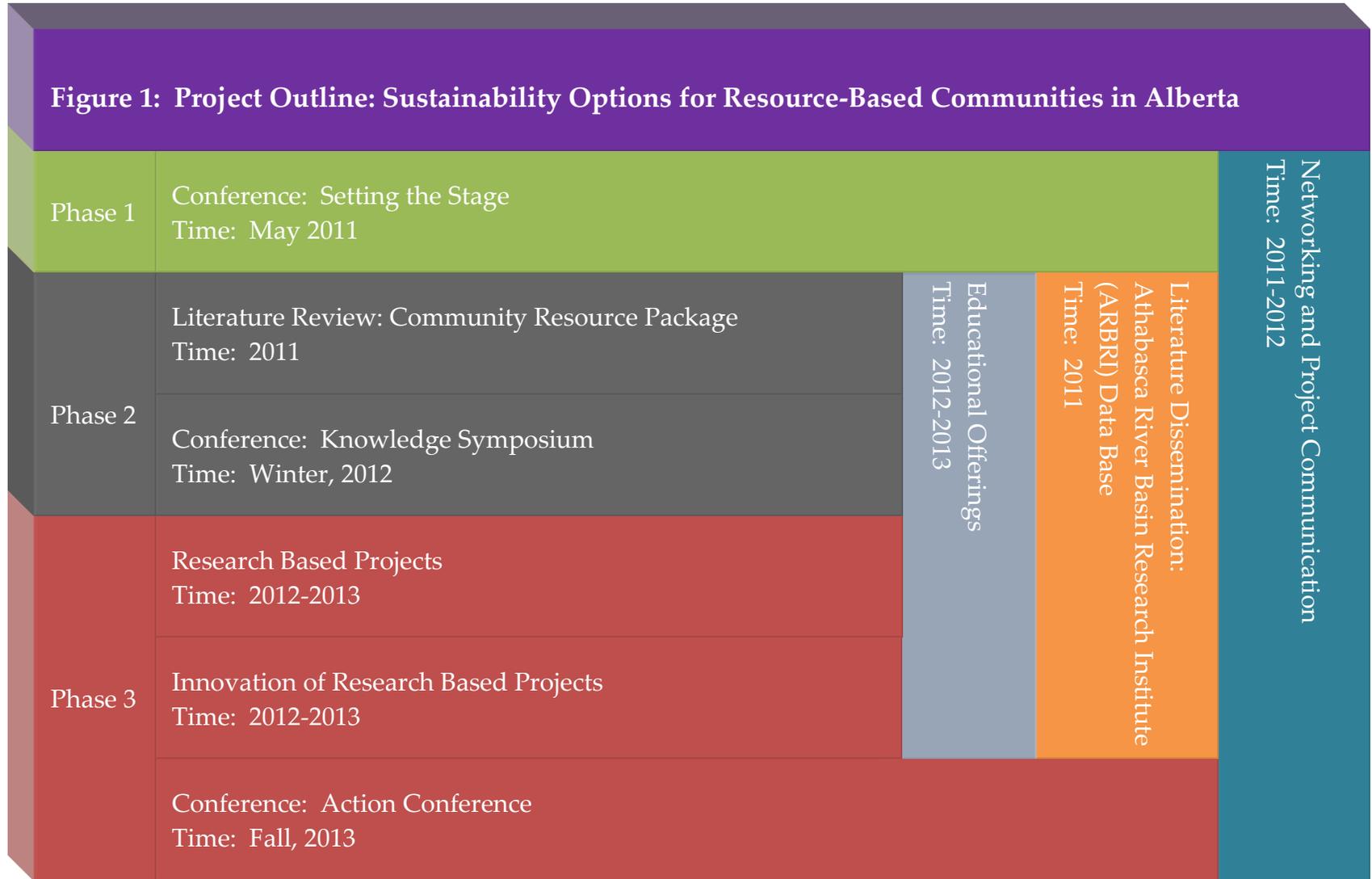
This report comprises the background to the conference, the methodology used, and the contextual factors and research issues arising from the conference.

## **Overview: Sustainability Options for Resource-Based Communities in Alberta**

The initial purpose of this project was to create a dialogue with the residents of the towns of Grande Cache and Hinton about their vision of sustainable communities for the future. They responded with their ideas, suggestions and plans. This feedback has provided Grande Cache and Hinton with the focus and impetus to move forward with a clear vision and options to advance a more socially, environmentally and economically (SEE) sustainable future. As part of the goal of advancing socio-economic well being and environmental quality in a mutually supportive manner, the communities have partnered with the research and management resources of Athabasca University who will provide the necessary resources to explore the socio-economic diversification options for achievability, and provide a "success focussed" roadmap to implementing the options and ideas. Hinton's then designated post-secondary institution, NorQuest College, was a participating partner, providing administrative support for the group. This project is expected to create a knowledge base that could be replicated by other resource-based communities seeking to develop their own long-term sustainability plan. The Setting the Stage Conference is the first step in this journey.

A preliminary outline of the project can be seen in Figure 1. This outline is not static, but dynamic in nature and will evolve as the project progresses.

**Figure 1: Project Outline: Sustainability Options for Resource-Based Communities in Alberta**



## The Setting the Stage Conference

This one-day conference was the first Phase in this Three-Phase project. The goal of the conference was to allow collaboration with key stakeholders and researchers to formalize critical factors and research issues for Phase 2 of the project.

There were 24 attendees representing the municipalities, local business, education, and provincial government organizations. Robin Campbell, Member of Legislative Assembly (West Yellowhead), also attended for part of the day.

The conference was divided into morning and afternoon sessions. The first session began with a presentation of the history and objectives of the project by Dr. Aris Solomon of Athabasca University, the project lead. Bernie Kreiner, Town Manager of Hinton and Darren Ottaway, CAO of Grande Cache presented their vision statements for the sustainability issues that they wish to address and the results of their consultations with citizens through polling and focus groups. Dr. Shirley Pasioka of NorQuest College presented the background on its position as the post-secondary institution in Hinton and their involvement as collaborator in this project. Lastly, researchers from Athabasca University, Drs. Deborah Hurst, Lorna Stefanick, Michael Gismondi and Aris Solomon on behalf of both himself and Dr. Pat Fahy, presented their research interests (see Research Profiles in the Appendix).

The afternoon sessions began with a series of focus group discussions. The topics for the sessions were economic and social issues. Each group met for an hour and then switched to the other topic.

The final session was a presentation of agreed lists of priorities compiled by the group leaders derived from the focus group discussions. This provided us with contextual factors and research issues.

The objectives of this networking conference were to:

- Establish and define contextual factors and research issues with the stakeholders from the towns of Grande Cache and Hinton and the researchers and administrators of Athabasca University and NorQuest College;
- Establish a process that should ultimately produce the best options for sustainable activities, roadmaps and supports to advance key sustainability initiatives within the communities;
- Establish and encourage relationship building and greater collaboration between stakeholders; and
- Provide greater definition for Phases 2 and 3 of the project.

## The Methodology

The researchers began by making a normative decision to divide the participants into two self-selecting focus groups; one group was to focus on economic issues and the other on social issues. After one hour, the groups exchanged and discussed the alternate topic. This was to allow for parallel sessions with two academics leading the discussion for each of the focus groups.

### Why did we use this approach?

- The sustainability reports from both communities strongly suggested that the issues they wanted to address were broadly economic and social in character;
- The discussions based on economic and social issues would be broad enough as a basis for dialogue to encapsulate most views;
- Smaller groups would provide every individual the maximum opportunity to express their opinion, thereby enabling us to record the maximum amount of views from the participants;
- Having small groups would avoid the possibility of a minority of participants within a larger, single group dominating the agenda; and
- The hope was that similar contextual factors and research issues would emerge from the two groups, thereby validating the proposed research agenda.

During the focus group meetings, one academic in each group took notes while the other summarised the discussion on a flip chart; both kept the discussion moving and on topic. Both focus group discussions were recorded on digital recorders for future transcription. The project co-ordinator was the only person on the team who attended all four meetings at some point, thereby providing a macro view.

The three data sources (the academic notes, the flip charts and recordings) were reviewed and discussed by the research team. From the discussions, the team arrived at the following list of contextual factors and research issues for Phase 2 of the project.

### Summary Findings: Contextual Factors Underpinning the Research Issues

The focus groups in both topic areas provided a consensus of three distinct and overlapping contextual factors:

- **The boom-bust business cycle of resource dependency;**
- **Minimal economic diversification; and**
- **Desire to move toward, social, environmental and economic (SEE) sustainability.**

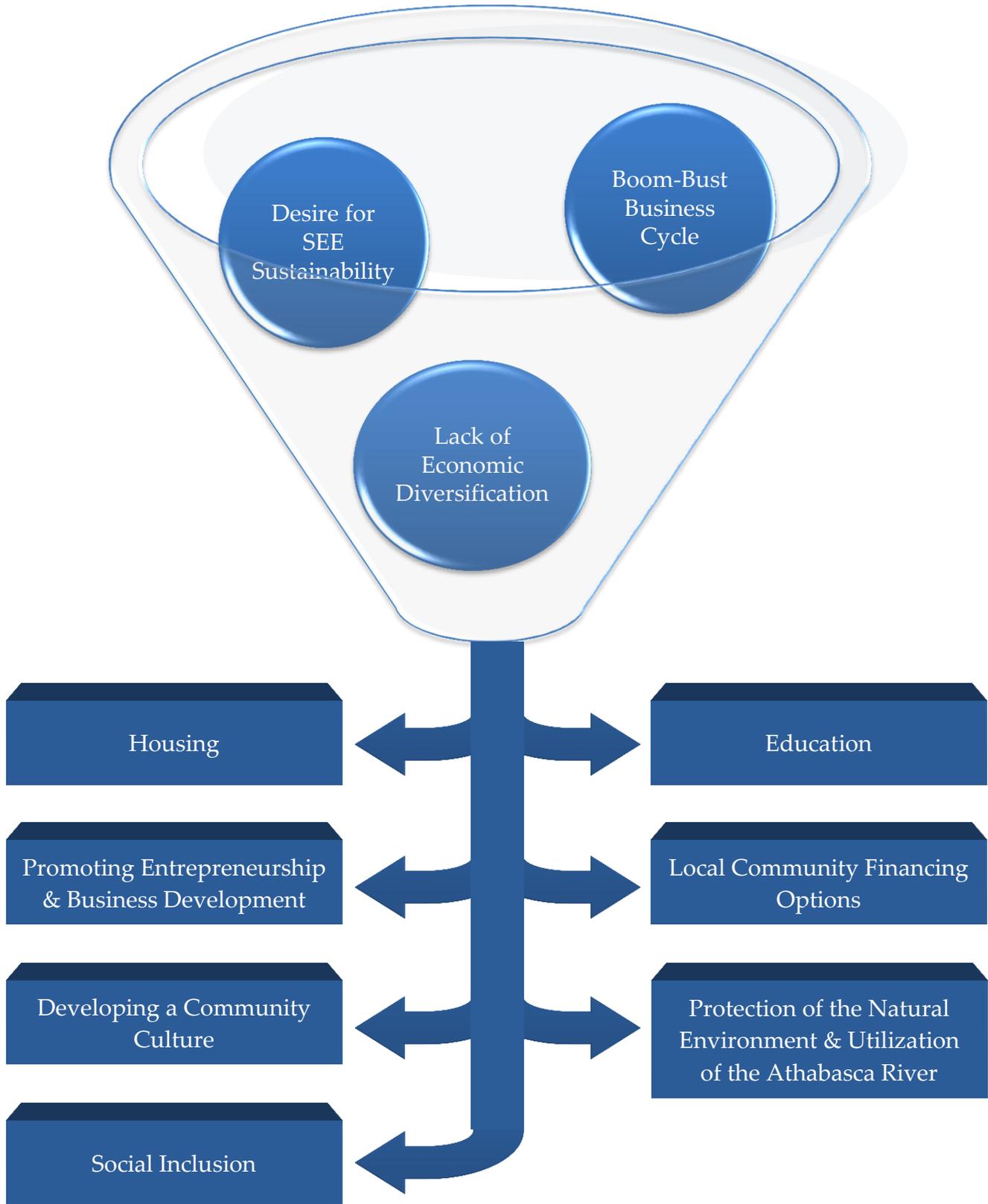
Resource-based communities, such as Grande Cache and Hinton, are subject to the fluctuations of the resource industries business cycles (the so-called “boom and bust”). The overwhelming consensus was that diversification in conjunction with sustainability in the wider context would reduce the economic and social effects of these cycles on both communities.

The analysis of the focus group discussions highlighted seven primary issues, one of which could be further sub-divided into four related issues. All of these should be considered in light of the three contextual factors listed above:

- **Housing**
- **Education**
- **Promoting Entrepreneurship and Business Development**
  - **Entrepreneurship**
  - **Tourism**
  - **Community Branding**
  - **Knowledge Based Economy**
  - **Local Community Financing Options**
- **Developing a Community Culture**
- **Protection of the Natural Environment and the Utilization of the Athabasca River**
- **Social Inclusion**

The important relationship between the contextual factors and issues can be seen in Figure 2 (page 8) which shows how the factors flow into the issues.

**Figure 2: Contextual Factors and Issues**



## Issues Emerging from the Workshops

The focus groups made the following points, which taken together created the context from which the research issues were drawn:

- Both communities are severely affected by resource business cycles;
- Neither community is sufficiently economically diversified;
- Both communities share the desire to be both environmentally and socio-economically sustainable;
- During economic downturns, people leave the communities creating a vacuum and, on the upturn, people immigrate in large numbers creating pressure on the communities' infrastructure;
- Ameliorating the effects of the upturns and downturns in business cycles would be advantageous; and
- Diversifying the local economy would mitigate the cyclical nature of their current resource-based economy.

## Indicative overriding research questions:

- How have other resource-based communities diversified their economies to support social, economic and ecological sustainability in their communities?
- What opportunities exist for the diversification of resources within the two communities and how might we best determine what those are?
- What are the criteria for defining and attracting the most “beneficial” industries to the local communities that support all facets of sustainability?
- What opportunities exist for research into new business strategies that not only meet consumer demand, but also shape or drive market demand for services, products, or technologies that enhance sustainability?
- How do the communities attract a mixture of diversified industries and other commercial activities that would improve environmental quality and community socio-economic wellbeing in mutually affirmative ways based on SEE sustainability principles?

## Research Issues

The following discussion of the seven research issues (Housing, Education, Promoting Entrepreneurship and Business Development, Local Community Financing Options, Developing a Community Culture, Protection of the Natural Environment and the Utilization of the Athabasca River and Social Inclusion) flow from, and are tightly linked to, the contextual factors considered above (Business Cycle, Economic Diversification and SEE Sustainability).

### 1. Housing

The lack of affordable quality homes is considered a barrier for attracting people to live and work in both communities.

Indicative discussion issues raised:

- Affordable housing is regarded as a precursor to recruiting and retaining new employees and long-term residents in both communities;
- Starter housing is regarded as overpriced and quality seldom meets expectations;
- Many young people have high incomes and expectations, but little capital;
- Those arriving from another province often have difficulty in acquiring a mortgage;
- Neighbourhood planning and design needs to be revisited on the basis of sustainability principles - there is currently a high demand for larger houses; and
- Work camps discourage the development of community.

Indicative research questions:

- How can the construction of affordable quality homes, well designed for the climate and environmentally efficient, be facilitated in a resource-based economy?
- What kinds of planning and regulatory tools can be used by municipalities to encourage sustainable design of neighbourhoods and buildings?
- How can house purchases be accommodated for new people moving to the communities?

### 2. Education

Quality educational programs are considered vital in developing, attracting and keeping youth and professionals in the community.

### Indicative discussion issues raised:

- The current primary and secondary school systems do not provide sufficient choice for professional parents with respect to programming for their children;
- Both communities lack a physical post-secondary institution, inhibiting on-going education locally;
- Young adults do not understand the benefits of higher education as unionized workers can command relatively high incomes without post-secondary education;
- By comparison, governments in other countries are diversifying their resource-based communities by encouraging and demanding that students continue their education;
- Adults have little opportunity to continue their education because of work and family demands;
- Could educational opportunities be created that take advantage of both communities geographic proximity to Jasper National Park; and
- Research and graduate study opportunities relating to resource knowledge could be further developed.

### Indicative research questions:

- What are the best options for providing more choice in primary and secondary education?
- What are the best options for these communities to encourage greater participation in higher education?
- Can the communities provide niche education, perhaps based on emerging sustainability trends in resource industries, and can they capitalize on being near a world heritage national park?

## **3. Promoting Entrepreneurship and Business Development**

The following four research issues: Entrepreneurship; Tourism; Community Branding and Knowledge Based Economy are considered strategies for reducing the effects of business cycles on both communities. The contextual factor of SEE sustainability was considered very important for this issue.

### **3.1 Entrepreneurship**

The development of an entrepreneurship culture (social/business/sustainability entrepreneurship) is regarded as essential in stabilising the communities against the cyclical nature of the coal, gas and timber industries.

### Indicative discussion issues raised:

- Both communities have a built-in yet untapped resource of senior workers who are at the end of their careers and are unable to continue to work due to injury and declining health issues. These workers maintain a wealth of knowledge that could be tapped and utilized to assist entrepreneurs;
- Look for exemplars of best practices in sustainable, diversification-driven entrepreneurship such as the business culture in Jasper, which is very different to that of Hinton or Grande Cache; the Michigan government program, which encourages investment and entrepreneurship; the Centre for Social Innovation at Waterloo University; or other U.S. and British examples of sustainability entrepreneurship;
- Attract entrepreneurs and industry to the area by providing enabling conditions, such as: financial incentives; access to resources; supportive environmental, social and municipal policy;
- Entrepreneurial opportunities could exist if the communities encouraged their resource industries and the business community to align with knowledge based industries and research, such as clean coal, wind energy, sustainable power generation, alternative uses for the forest floor, biodiversity for farming with new products like morels (mushrooms), pine beetle challenges and other opportunities;
- Other entrepreneurial opportunities might exist within the resource-based industries, for example, services and products that are currently purchased by these industries from outside could be provided by local entrepreneurs; and
- Entrepreneurial opportunities may exist for green or alternative industries within existing resources (forest, coal mining, and industry waste).

### Indicative research questions:

- How can an entrepreneurial spirit be fostered in a resource-based economy to create greater socio-economic diversity and stability?
- How have other resource-based communities diversified their economies and attracted more entrepreneurial risk takers and innovators? What might sustainable entrepreneurship look like?
- What other forms of entrepreneurial opportunities for innovation and social enterprise exist for both communities?

## 3.2 Tourism

Tourism is considered the one industry in particular, which could be further developed to mitigate the effects of resource-based business cycles.

#### Indicative discussion issues raised:

- Tourism is regarded as a default when the resource industry is in the downturn, but these programs (tourist attractions, specialized facilities, theme parks) do not necessarily attract tourists;
- Communities that provide high quality recreational and entertainment facilities attract and retain residents and pull tourists to the region;
- Opportunities may exist for growth in tourism for both communities;
- Both communities border the Rockies;
- The communities are popular quadding and recreational vehicle (RV) destinations, however these activities cause damage to the environment; and
- Developing tourism in the area including improving/rebranding the highway between the communities may help in attracting visitors. The highway between Grande Cache and Grande Prairie is better than the highway between Hinton and Grande Cache.

#### Indicative research questions:

- How can tourism be developed in a resource-based economy to encourage greater economic stability and overcome any negativity associated with resource extraction?
- Resource based economic activity such as coal mining or logging can seriously detract from tourism. How have other communities regulated the use and restoration of natural resources in ways that maintain aesthetics, habitat, and tourism values required for visitor attraction?
- How have other tourist destinations balanced environmental protection with outdoor activities that can be environmentally destructive?
- Are there opportunities and economies of scale for both communities by outsourcing their tourist marketing?

### **3.3 Community Branding**

Community branding is believed to be a way of encouraging people to visit and relocate to the region. If the communities are seen as desirable places to live, this will attract people, business and tourism to the area. A major contextual factor in community branding is SEE sustainability.

#### Indicative discussion issues raised:

- Build on the quality of life within the communities;
- Communicate the benefits of living and working in both communities;

- Hinton has developed the Greenfield industrial park; and
- There is a desire to attract green industry to the area, such as software developers, but the social environment needs to be conducive to encourage them to stay.

#### Indicative research questions:

- How are local communities branded? What changes have resource-based communities taken to overcome negative identities?
- What makes a community a desirable place to live?
- What is the role of culture, social innovation and the social economy (service groups, not for profits, societies) in community development?

### 3.4 Knowledge Based Economy

Building a knowledge-based economy is regarded as a possible diversification strategy.

#### Indicative discussion issues raised:

- Individuals have a great deal of knowledge on the local resources of coal, gas and timber;
- Both communities want to make use of local resource knowledge, for example: clean coal, sustainable power and alternative uses for the forest floor; and
- Attracting people to the region with the right products, environment and opportunity as well as the social supports to encourage them to stay.

#### Indicative research questions:

- How are knowledge-based economies developed and sustained?
- Are there examples of rural knowledge based economies? What social and community attractors are key? Will these attractors mesh with the existing culture of the communities?
- How can the resource-based knowledge that individuals have gained over time be leveraged for the transition to sustainability knowledge based economy?

#### Potential crosscutting research projects:

There is also the possibility of merging research issues, for example: education and a knowledge-based economy could result in the following research question:

- How can a culture of knowledge and education be encouraged to transform Hinton and Grande Cache into Learning Communities, which would promote and support a sustainable, knowledge-based economy?

### 3.5 Local Community Financing Options

Community financing is considered an option for investing in local projects, keeping local money in the community and creating a sense of civic pride. This could reduce the effect of business cycles, reduce dependence on government grants or financing, help create diversification and, above all, provide economic and social stability.

Indicative discussion issues raised:

- Traditional banking is not working for the communities for financing and investing in new business and community projects;
- There are many people who want to invest “where their heart is” in their local communities but do not have the infrastructure to do so;
- Community financing may lead to greater civic pride;
- Options could include, local bonds, co-ops, community investment programs, angel investing opportunities, community based venture capital programs; and
- The Westlock railroad / grain elevator example was a major inspiration in the conversation.

Indicative research questions:

- What social ownership and social economy options are available for community financing?
- What examples are there of community-based local finance options?
- What infrastructure needs to be in place to enable and facilitate community investing?

## 4 Developing a Community Culture

The development of community culture was seen as essential in encouraging people to relocate and stay in the communities. The SEE sustainability contextual factor was regarded as being very important for this issue.

Indicative discussion issues raised:

- Identify the quality of life indicators needed to attract people to the community;
- Examine activities in other winter communities in other countries for ideas, such as establishing a town square as a central social meeting place;
- Enhancing healthcare in both communities, including better access to most services and specialists, is vital. For example, Grande Cache has a shortage of medical specialists and services;

- The male shift worker culture that dominates the social climate of both communities needs to change;
- Provide places for arts and cultural activities and organizations to establish and grow;
- Opportunities exist for sharing resources between non-profit organizations (NPOs) such as utilizing heritage buildings and financial/management resources;
- Provide training for people to manage NPOs;
- Promote and inspire sustainable local volunteerism and leadership; and
- Inspire and encourage diversification and embrace more variety of lifestyles and cultures, including immigrants and foreign workers within the general population of the community.

#### Indicative research questions:

- What strategies are other communities taking to engage social sustainability and social inclusiveness?
- What role would a “third place” (community/public space) play in developing community culture and identity?
- How are both communities accommodating increasingly diverse immigrant populations, particularly those located in Alberta and western Canada?
- What examples from other communities can be found that strengthen arts and volunteerism?
- What are the quality of life indicators that attract people to a community?

## 5 Protection of the Natural Environment and the Utilization of the Athabasca River

There is a view in both communities that their geographic locations, in the eastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains with easy access to nature and wilderness areas, offer potential for greater economic and community use. In Hinton, the Athabasca River is regarded as an underused community asset currently with potential for greater economic and community use. Grande Cache has world-class athletic competitions but must balance the environmental impact with the benefits.

#### Indicative discussion issues raised:

- The area has natural assets, for example, Hinton has extensive trail system and Grande Cache has unique, mountainside terrain;
- Community respect for the land and public spaces needs to be improved, for example, users appear to have little respect for public spaces such as the Boardwalk and Maxwell Lake;

- The emphasis in both communities currently has been on roads and driving; Hinton and Grande Cache should be more walkable and bike friendly communities;
- The relationship between the design of neighbourhoods and the environmental impact of the community must be examined;
- Improvements that have taken place in the area need to be highlighted. For example, a coalmine expansion that was attempted seven years ago was met with resistance from the environmental lobby, in part, because of the community's poor environmental record. Also, the creation of a "green" business park has been under reported and the Town's environmental efforts have been mostly ignored;
- The Athabasca River is seen as a potential catalyst for Hinton to attract more environmentally sound businesses without affecting the environment of the basin. Examples include the possibility of generation of electricity from the Athabasca River;
- The Athabasca River should be more accessible to the public; currently industry dominates access to the riverbanks area and there are few opportunities for public access or recreation;

#### Indicative research questions:

- How to capitalise on a public good in a sustainable manner?
- What is the best balance of recreation, environmental protection and commercial utilization of regional natural areas in both communities, or in the Athabasca River in the Hinton region?
- What changes can be made to benefit the community without affecting or imposing on the Athabasca River ecosystem or the natural terrain around Grande Cache?
- What municipal policy can be used to improve public access to the riverfront?

#### Potential crosscutting research projects:

- What research exists for using rivers for electrical energy generation?
- Are there examples of low-impact river and wilderness based tourism and tourism services? What opportunities exist for developing these in Hinton and Grande Cache?
- What does the literature indicate about any advantages or disadvantages of being a mountain-based tourist destination?

## 6 Social Inclusion

Some of the AU researchers and public members noted this as an area for further clarification and consultation, preferably with First Nation and Metis leaders and elders in the region. The contextual factor of SEE sustainability was considered very important for this issue.

### Indicative Discussion issues raised:

- The Aboriginal communities make up about 25 percent of the population in Grande Cache and 10-15 percent in Hinton. Many of the members live in co-ops outside of the communities.

### Indicative Research Questions:

- What kinds of sustainability driven Aboriginal community development and Aboriginal private development (in tourism or energy for example) is being conducted in other resource based communities?
- How have other municipalities collaborated with Aboriginal communities in order to integrate the value of social inclusiveness into sustainability planning?

## Next Steps

### Creation of an Information Database and Analysis of the scope of Suggested Research Issues:

- Identify and examine models being utilized within the various focus areas of research;
- Conduct a current state analysis of initiatives in other resource based communities underway across Alberta, Canada and perhaps internationally;
- Identify success factors for application in the Canadian, and specifically Alberta contexts; and
- Better understand how the policy environments in Alberta and Canada could affect and potentially increase the development of resource-based socio-sustainability innovation and enterprise.

### Pilot Projects: Design for Funding Opportunities:

- Target specific grant sources to fund a pilot initiative in the two municipalities addressing the kind of challenges discussed, such as community finance models, local energy, affordable housing, knowledge based community building.
- Identify research issues, which have the best potential for success;
- Assign lead researchers for issues;
- Target specific funding sources for Phases 2 and 3 of the project; and
- Prepare and submit applications for funding.

## Educational Offerings:

- To help prepare, facilitate and move forward on the changes implied by this project, Athabasca University will be offering educational modules to the municipalities, which would be linked to each community's needs to achieve their sustainability goals.

## Conclusions

Researchers with Athabasca University will work with colleagues and their networks to create an Information Database which will be used to construct a Community Resource package to present to the stakeholders at a follow up conference targeted for early 2012. The project would then progress to further investigate the costs/benefits of the recommendations and will be presented in a final Symposium in 2013 (please see Figure 1 on page 4 for details).

At the same time, we will explore the availability of funding for one or more collaborative pilot projects; these opportunities will need to be defined and refined in 2011.

The ultimate goal of this project is for the municipalities of Grande Cache and Hinton, and their research partners, to work toward creating sustainable cultural, social, and economical diversity where the peaks and valleys of their resource-based economies are mitigated, resulting in friendly, safe, and sustainable communities to live and work.

## Appendix: Conference Agenda

### Setting the Stage Networking Conference

May 13, 2011, Hinton, Alberta

The residents of the towns of Hinton and Grande Cache were asked for their vision of a sustainable community for the future. They responded with their ideas, suggestions and plans. This feedback has provided Hinton and Grande Cache with the focus and impetus to move forward with a clear vision and options to advance a more socially, environmentally and economically (SEE) sustainable future. As part of the goal of advancing greater diversification, the communities have partnered with the research and management resources of Athabasca University who will provide the necessary research to explore the economic diversification options for achievability, and provide a “success focussed” roadmap to implementing the options and ideas. Hinton’s designated community college, NorQuest College, is participating by providing administrative support for the group. This project is expected to create a knowledge base that will be replicable by other resource-based communities seeking to diversify or otherwise economically sustain themselves for the long-term. The *Setting the Stage Conference* is the first step in this journey.

The conference will include vision statements from Hinton and Grande Cache with contributions from researchers from Athabasca University. These will be followed by discussions and planning for the next Phase of the project.

This conference will represent the first step in developing a conceptual framework. As the title of this conference suggests, the event will be about setting the stage for a process that will ultimately produce the best options for sustainable activities, roadmaps and supports to advance key economic sustainability initiatives. By bringing together all key stakeholders to discuss in detail what the communities of Grande Cache and Hinton expect from the project the group will be able to better identify the best approaches to take in finding the best solutions.

#### Dates, Times and Accommodations

The conference will be on May 13, 2011 in the Hinton Town Office - Council Chambers at 131 Civic Centre Road. The conference will begin at 9:00 AM with complimentary lunch, coffee and dinner being served at the site.

The Nova Lodge in Hinton is offering special room rates for the conference, including complimentary breakfast. Delegates must ask for the special “Setting the Stage” room rates by May 1 at 1-877-865-4755 or email [hintonlodge@novahotels.ca](mailto:hintonlodge@novahotels.ca).

To confirm your participation in the conference, or if you have any questions, please contact:

Jim Sellers  
Project Coordinator, Athabasca University  
780-392-1210 [jsellers@athabascau.ca](mailto:jsellers@athabascau.ca)

## Setting the Stage Networking Conference

### Agenda:

#### Meet and Greet

May 12 at the Town Office Foyer, 131 Civic Centre Rd. beginning at 7:00 PM.

#### Morning Session

9:00 – 9:15	Opening Remarks
9:15 – 9:30	Current Position of Project
9:30 – 10:00	Sustainability Vision - Hinton
10:00 – 10:30	20/20 Vision - Grande Cache
10:30 – 10:40	Questions on presentations
10:40 – 11:00	<i>Mid morning break</i>

#### Research and Action Planning

11:00 – 11:10	Corporate Governance and Accountability -Dr. Aris Solomon, AU
11:10 – 11:20	Transformative Leadership Development - Dr. Deborah Hurst, AU
11:20 – 11:30	Community Transition - Dr. Lorna Stefanick, AU
11:30 – 11:40	Social Economy - Dr. Mike Gismondi, AU
11:40 – 11:50	Regional Education Involvement –Dr. Shirley Pasioka, NorQuest
11:50 – 12:00	Education and Training - Dr. Pat Fahy, AU
12:00 – 12:15	Questions and Discussions
12:15 – 1:30	<i>Lunch</i>

#### Afternoon Session

1:30 – 1:45	Introduction to afternoon sessions
1:50 – 2:30	Session one, break into two working groups (Economic, Social)
2:30 – 2:45	<i>Break</i>
2:45 – 3:25	Session two
3:25 – 3:40	<i>Break</i>
3:40 – 4:10	Discussion –Results of sessions, Priorities, Next Steps
4:10 – 4:30	Concluding remarks

## AU Speakers Biographies

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### **Dr. Patrick J. (Pat) Fahy**

#### **Professor, Centre for Distance Education**

Dr. Pat Fahy earned his B.Sc. at the University of Minnesota in 1970, his M.Ed. at the University of Alberta in 1972, and his Ph.D. at the University of Alberta in 1984. Pat joined the faculty of Athabasca University's Master of Distance Education program in 1996 after spending the previous five years as an account manager and regional manager with TRO Learning.

Before coming to AU, Pat was a high school teacher in Manitoba and for 20 years was with Alberta Advanced Education, mostly at the Alberta Vocational College (AVC) in Edmonton. There he spent five years as Chairman of the Adult Basic Education (ABE) department, and was Director of Research for six years. Pat also spent a year in the Alberta Department of Advanced Education, did some interesting private consulting in Western Canada and the NWT, and taught continuing education classes to adults at Grant MacEwan College and the Edmonton Public Schools Continuing Education Centre.

Pat was involved in developing, managing and evaluating computer-assisted and computer-managed learning projects throughout this period (using PLATO and other CAL and CML systems). He designed a package called *Math for New Readers*, which he delivered to various areas of Alberta, often using teleconference technology. While at AVC Pat served as president of both the Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL) and the Alberta Association for Adult Literacy (AAAL). He is a former president of ADETA (the Alberta Distance Education and Training Association.)

Pat's current research interests include the relationship between technology and productivity, and what constitutes "best" (or even good) practice where technology is used for interaction. He has been working on an approach for analyzing CMC interaction for some time, which he hopes will produce some principles for moderators. He has an ongoing interest in adult development programming (adult basic education, literacy, and English as a Second Language).



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### **Dr. Michael Gismondi**

#### **Director, Master of Arts, Integrated Studies**

Mike is Professor of Sociology and Global Studies at Athabasca University. He was until recently Director of AU's Master of Arts in Integrated Studies program. Mike is an Adjunct Professor of Sociology at the University of Alberta and a Research Fellow with the Centre for Research in Latin American and Caribbean Studies at York University. He is editor of the journal *Aurora: Interviews with Leading Thinkers and Writers*.

Mike lives in Athabasca and was for many years a town councilor. He is interested in the relationship between municipal government and the social economy. Mike's research focuses on local responses to globalization, northern development and public participation in environmental issues.

Mike is Co-Investigator and Steering Committee Member of the BC-Alberta Social Economy Research Alliance (BALTA) – an SSHRC funded regional research collaboration amongst community based organizations,



universities and colleges in Alberta and British Columbia, Canada, with an interest in the social economy. The terms ‘social economy’ – and ‘social enterprise’ and the range of organizations and activities associated with them are as old as the nation of Canada. They include co-operatives, credit unions, non-profit organizations and other types of enterprise. *BALTA has primarily focused its approach around definitions that emphasize the use of market-based practices for achieving social and ecological as well as economic aims.*

Mike has been leading the mapping and portraiture program within BC-Alberta Social Economy Research Alliance (BALTA) and researching social aspects of the transition to sustainability.

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### **Deborah Hurst, PhD**

**Associate Dean, Faculty of Business; Program Director, Executive MBA;**

**Associate Professor, Work and Organizational Studies**



Dr. Deborah Hurst is the Director of MBA programs at AU, a position she has held since 2008. She holds a leading role in corporate and inter-university relations, exploring professional development opportunities and new business courses and programs. She also spearheads the ongoing development and growth of Leadership and Management Development (LMD) courses and the Faculty’s professional development offerings at the graduate level.

In addition to her leadership role, Deborah is an associate professor researching areas of leadership development and cultural organization change. Her current projects include the emergence and institutionalization of on-line learning, exploring and measuring competency and soft skills development in the MBA, the impact of professional skills building workshops in providing a ‘full’ graduate student experience, and an update on how leaders spend their day in knowledge economy. Her work is a balance of applied and academic research that draws from a diverse background in her pursuit of this specialization.

Deborah obtained her BA from the University of Toronto, her MA and PhD. from the University of Alberta. Prior to completing her graduate education, Deborah worked over a 10 year period for General Motors of Canada Limited. While studying for her master’s degree Deborah provided research assistance to the non-profit Edmonton Social Planning Council and worked for the Alberta Public Service as a manager in Corporate Human Resources. These private, non-profit and public sector organizational experiences greatly inform Deborah’s research and teaching.

Deborah has been associated with Athabasca University, online executive MBA since 1995. Previous to joining AU full time in 2001, she taught for the School of Business, Acadia University, Faculty of Business, Memorial University of Newfoundland, and University of Alberta. Her many activities have allowed her to explore different course materials and delivery formats practically and academically. Her focus is in making educational opportunities more flexible, accessible and varied to greater numbers of people. To this end she has developed face-to-face and virtual learning programs for university and professional groups.

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**Aris Solomon, PhD****Associate Professor, Accounting**

Aris joined the faculty of Athabasca University in 2008 after four years as a Lecturer and then Senior Lecturer and Researcher at the University of Exeter, School of Business (UK) where his teachings included: Financial and Management Accounting at the undergraduate level and Corporate Governance and Corporate Social Responsibility at the undergraduate and post-graduate levels. He has also taught at Manchester University School of Accounting, Sheffield University Management School, The Open University Business School (UK) and Cardiff University Business School.



Aris earned his PhD from Sheffield University (An Investigation into a Conceptual Framework for Environmental Reporting). He also holds degrees from the following UK Universities: Middlesex University (BA Business Studies, Major Accounting); Westminster University (BA Business Studies Hons, Major Accounting); Essex University (MA Accounting and Finance). He is proud to say that his post-secondary education began at Langara College in Vancouver, British Columbia.

As a researcher, his main interests are Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Governance, the integration of accounting techniques and practices into corporate social responsibility and conceptual frameworks. He has acquired several research grants over the years amounting to just over C\$ 100,000.

Currently Aris is working on three other research projects. The first is a grant from The Nuffield Foundation in the UK which is looking at disclosure in private meetings between institutional investors and companies. The second is investigation the development of a new accounting statement that will look at the financial contribution that companies make to society. His most recent awarded, a grant of C\$ 50,000 has come from The Athabasca River Basin Institute (ARBI), an Athabasca University Research Centre to oversee the business section of the Athabasca River Basin Bibliography.

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**Dr. Lorna Stefanick, Ph.D.****Associate Professor and Coordinator  
BPA-Governance, Law and Management**

Dr. Lorna Stefanick earned her BA at the University of British Columbia, an MA at the University of Calgary, and her Ph.D. at Queen's University (Kingston). Lorna's association with Athabasca University is a long one. The first university course she registered in over 30 years ago was a distance course at AU. She worked at her degree for a number of years, eventually graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in international relations from UBC. Her master's degree from the University of Calgary was completed much the same way, part-time, in a program designed for working professionals. Lorna completed her Ph.D. in 1996 at Queens University and taught at both the Universities of Calgary and Lethbridge in their Political Science departments.



In 1999 Lorna joined the University of Alberta's local government program as Chief Editor and later as the Acting Director. Here she oversaw the development of courses and course components for the online environment. Her responsibilities included the development of national programs in Information Access and Protection of Privacy and Local Government Administration; the latter program won the 2003 CAUCE Award of Excellence Program Award. Aside from providing professional development for public administrators in two

important areas, this program work was particularly rewarding as it allowed remote adult learners to participate in an interactive instructional experience with students from across Canada. Lorna moved to AU in 2004 to assume leadership of its Governance program. She believes strongly that knowledge and skill development are not the preserve of society's elite; that we all collectively benefit when barriers to higher education are removed.

Lorna's research interests are as diverse as her teaching background. Her graduate work and early publications focused on environmental policy and environmental interest groups. In recent years, she has both published and made presentations on local government and community transitions to non resource-based economies, transnational environmental activism, administrative accountability, information access and privacy, and cyber communities.

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