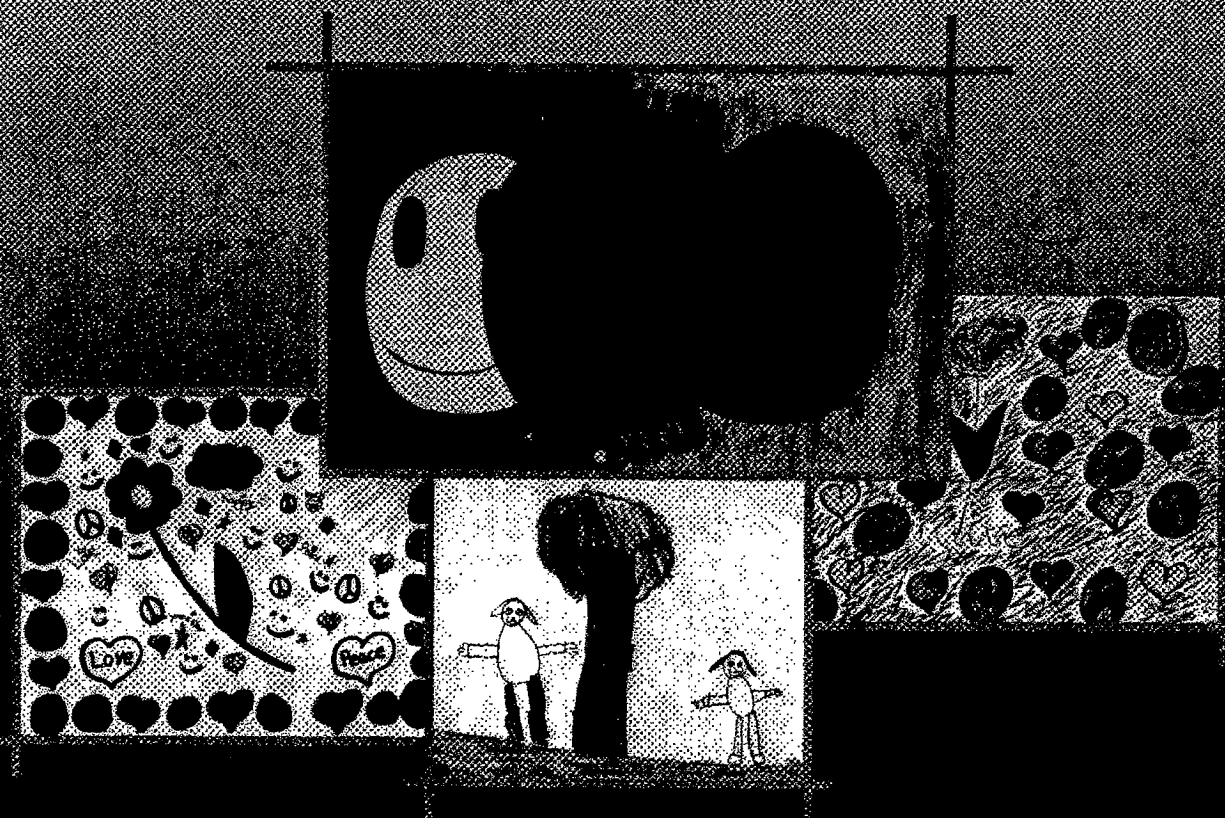


Building tomorrow

vision 2000



multi-year community action plan for annapolis and digby counties

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Western Valley
Development Authority

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PROVINCE HOUSE



1. Five things I like about
- there is lots of
- school
nets and.

school



2. What I think my town will look like in ten years (2009):
I would like it to look
like Las Vegas.

NS
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building tomorrow

multi-year community action plan for Annapolis and Digby counties

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building tomorrow

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Introduction

The Western Valley Development Authority (WVDA) was created in 1994, the first of fourteen Regional Development Authorities (RDAs) in Nova Scotia. Forged as a partnership between the province, the federal government, the seven municipalities in Annapolis and Digby Counties, and the people that live in the region, this was the beginning of what has become one of Canada's most successful examples of community-driven economic development.

At the WVDA's inception, the region faced the collapse of its largest industry, the fisheries, and the closure of the largest employer, CFB Cornwallis.

Unemployment reached 18% in some areas, while the average

income was 20% below the provincial norm. Instead of resulting in despair, these simultaneous crises prompted a renewed sense of determination. The commitment from the community to take control of its own destiny has resulted in an economic rebirth that is unparalleled in Atlantic Canada. In the past five years, business start-ups have jumped by 20% and unemployment rates have dropped by 8%, and almost half of existing businesses are undertaking major expansions.

Driving this economic transformation is a focus on tools that work -- adaptation to new technologies, networked decision-making structures and an underlying commitment to sustainable development. It is this integrated approach to

community building and innovation that has garnered the region national and international recognition as a leader in community economic development.

Building on our diverse cultural heritage, the WVDA will work with the community to create a vital, prosperous, and self-reliant region where all people have ample opportunity for a full and satisfying life.

- Mission Statement of the WVDA

introduction

What is vision 2000?

The WVDA's work is directed by continuous dialogue with the community. We believe that a community that builds its vision together also builds its capacity to realize that vision. This approach has built a cooperative, productive local work environment in which organizations and businesses see each other as long-term allies and effective partners in building a viable future.

The WVDA's "Five-Year Community Action Plan", released in 1995, set the agenda for the agency's work. What follows is the result of an extensive series of community consultations designed to set the tone for not only the next five years, but for the long term future of the region. These consultations revealed a genuine commitment to making the Western Valley's social, cultural and economic life sustainable in every way.

From November 1998 through March 1999, the WVDA facilitated twenty-three "Vision 2000" meetings in firehalls, legions, and community centres throughout the region. A total of 534 participants shared what they value about life in the Western Valley, their hopes for the region's future, and what actions need to be taken. Participants told us their priorities, and identified the organizations and individuals who could help undertake this work.

"It is about building a shared sense of purpose and direction within the community, and building the momentum needed to move confidently into the new millennium."

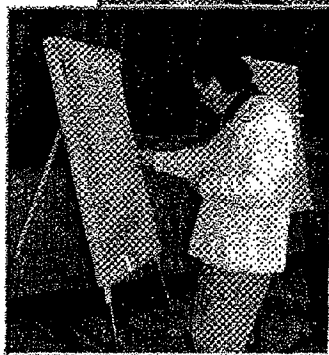
Building on the momentum of Vision 2000, the WVDA hosted nine community meetings in the Spring of 1999 focused on strengthening the role of culture in community building. Also in the Spring of 1999, the WVDA partnered with Nova Scotia Power to identify the specific issues and opportunities facing the business community. To get a feel for the local "Business Pulse", 400 surveys reached businesses of all sizes, and 36 in-depth interviews were conducted with the

region's major employers. Finally, the WVDA carried out a pilot project, unique in Canada, to enable community members to contribute the process via the Internet through an on-line dialogue.

The purpose of all this was not to simply

create a document, or an attempt to pin down the future. It is about building a shared sense of purpose and direction within the community, and building the momentum needed to move confidently into the new millennium. Although the

ideas, expertise, concerns, and dreams that were shared during the process form the basis of this document, it will be continually adapted to the changing needs of the community. This vision will guide the work of the WVDA in coming years, and will lay the foundations for the work that we, as a community, must undertake together.



vision 2000

what is vision 2000?

what is vision 2000?

Shortly after the WVDA's creation in 1994, the agency adopted a five-year plan of action. In late 1998, nearing completion of that plan, the WVDA Board of Directors began to explore ways in which a new long-term action plan could be developed.

Since Community Economic Development (CED) is based on the idea that the community directs and channels economic development activity, it was clear that the new plan had to be built around widespread community consultation and input. But how was the WVDA to ensure that all voices were heard? Community input into decision-making is as old as the democracy of ancient Athens, where all citizens would gather in two groups on opposite hillsides. To decide a controversial issue, these two groups would yell and scream at each other as loudly as possible, with the decision going to the loudest group.

Other, more sedate models seemed better suited to the work of the WVDA. The use of decals and stickers in what's been termed "dotmocracy", pioneered by the City of Louisville in the 1980's, seemed a better fit, as did the concept of "macaroni" (or participatory) democracy in planning exercises often used in the international relief and development community. In addition, the WVDA felt that formal meetings would stifle creativity and openness, and that a "church basement dinner" feeling would put people most at ease.

With these thoughts in mind, the WVDA held nearly twenty public meetings in communities around the region. These meetings were held in pairs - a brainstorming, idea-generating meeting held first, follow 2-3 weeks later by a meeting to refine and prioritize the suggestions coming out of the first meeting. Literally hundreds of pages of concrete, goal-oriented economic development suggestions and ideas came out of these meetings.



To ensure the broadest possible participation, a number of additional meetings were held, to gather the thoughts and ideas of groups within our community that, for a variety of reasons, have traditionally felt excluded from the decision-making process, or who have seen their input and perspectives downplayed in other times and places. To this end, a number of consultations (similar in structure to the other community meetings) were held with members of the

African-Nova Scotian community, with women's organizations, and with the chief and members of the Bear River Band Council.

what is vision 2000?

what is vision 2000?

From these consultations, a first draft of a new long-term action plan for the WVDA was created. But some gaps existed in that plan - for example, in areas requiring specialized knowledge, like information technology. Additional consultations were carried out in these areas to ensure a well-rounded, fully operational plan of action.

In information technology, a series of on-line consultations and dialogues were held, targeting those already active in the IT sector. This discussion allowed the WVDA to fine tune actions related to technology development, e-commerce and telecommunications, among others.

A local consultant was employed by the WVDA to engage in specialized consultations focusing on the arts and cultural industries sector. A number of additional community meetings addressing this issue were held with local artisans, and a series of arts and culture action items proposed for the region.

To ensure adequate business input, and to address the specialized needs of the private sector, the WVDA teamed up with Nova Scotia Power and Consumer Research Associates Inc. to carry out a detailed survey of businesses in the Western Valley region. Specific attention was paid to issues that would help in the formulation of the new long-term action plan.

All of this material was reviewed with local municipal councils, and then subjected to detailed review by the community volunteers of the WVDA Board of Directors. The final version of the action

plan is clearly a community-based, community-driven and community-owned document and a valuable roadmap for the WVDA's activities in the coming years.

Now that the plan has been released, the WVDA hopes it does not gather dust

in filing cabinets and backrooms, but rather becomes a living record of our community's vision for economic development. In the coming months and years, the WVDA and many community organizations will continue to visit with the document, to consult with the community, and to refine and redirect action for economic development as the community sees fit.



Summary of goals & priorities by sector

business development

goal: To develop a climate which supports local business development, entrepreneurship, investment and the attraction of new business.

- priorities:**
- Business Support
 - Business Promotion
 - Retail Services
 - Manufacturing & Processing
 - Export Development
 - Entrepreneurship

environment

goal: To promote environmental stewardship practices which preserve the region's biological diversity and ecological heritage.

- priorities:**
- Conservation, Preservation and Habitat Restoration
 - Environmental Technologies

human resources development

goal: To create a climate in which all residents have access to training, employment and economic opportunities, and can be full participants in the shaping of our future.

- priorities:**
- Equity & Equality
 - Youth
 - Volunteer Sector
 - Skills Development, Education & Training

infrastructure & facilities

goal: To establish a long-term plan to address the priorities for improved local infrastructure and facilities.

- priorities:**
- Telecommunications
 - Health Care & Delivery
 - Tourism & Recreation
 - Transportation
 - Energy

summary of goals & priorities by sector

goal: To develop a community-based plan for natural resource management that includes processing of those resources in the local area.

priorities: Resource Management
Product & Market Development

goal: To create opportunities for greater community participation and cooperation and to raise the profile of the region to the international community.

priorities: Community Networking
Capacity Building
External Networking

goal: To develop and promote cultural heritage and tourism attractions.

priorities: Cultural Industries
Festivals & Events
Tourism Promotion
Packages & Product Development
Heritage Promotion

goal: To create a climate which supports the growth of the high technology sector.

priorities: Communications Technologies
Research, Development & Training

Business development

goal: Develop a climate which supports local business development, entrepreneurship, investment and the attraction of new businesses

introduction

The Western Valley region has a long and productive history of entrepreneurship, and a willingness to adapt to changes in the economic climate. Since weathering the blows of the fisheries downturn and the closure of CFB Cornwallis, the community has renewed its commitment to growing businesses from the ground up, and building on existing resources and expertise within the region. The resulting economic turnaround bears tribute to that commitment, and to the resiliency and resourcefulness of the region's people.



The WVDA and Nova Scotia Power jointly carried out a "Business Pulse" survey, which revealed that business confidence is growing dramatically. Many locally-grown businesses have undergone rapid expansions in size, productivity, number of employees, and markets in recent years. These businesses have embraced the new global economy, building strong markets in the U.S., Europe, Asia, and in numerous other areas around the world. In fact, one in five local companies export more than 75% of their goods and services. The WVDA aims to accelerate opportunities for growth through an export development strategy for the Western Valley.

This includes efforts to lead trade missions, promote opportunities for federal and provincial trade missions. Utilizing digital technology, the WVDA will set up a list serve in which opportunities relevant to the business community will be distributed rapidly.

Residents of the Western Valley recognize the inherent wealth that exists in the form of our natural resources. They have expressed a strong desire to reverse the historical trend to ship these resources out of the region to be processed elsewhere. New opportunities must be created to add value to our resources by processing and manufacturing products from our forests, waters, and lands at the local level. Local ownership of these resources is a key goal of residents.

The community is also interested in pursuing new areas of business

development, including multi-media developments in feature film production, sound recording, CD ROMS, radio and television. New opportunities presented by telecommunications and information technologies will play an integral role in ensuring that businesses in this area have the tools to thrive at the local level and in the global marketplace.

The residents of the region have made it clear that the WVDA should continue its efforts to create a climate that is attractive to new businesses, while maintaining its strong support for local entrepreneurs. While we continue efforts to build a sustainable local economy, we must also send a message to the world that the Western Valley is an excellent place to do business.

"Residents of the Western Valley recognize the inherent wealth that exists in the form of our natural resources."

business development

business development

business support

Ensuring that local entrepreneurs and existing businesses have access to a strong system of support is essential. The WVDA will continue to provide "first stop" services to businesses and to explore areas with business development potential. The WVDA must also serve as an advocate on behalf of the business community to increase the level of investment and financing available to local entrepreneurs. An emphasis is also needed in promoting the area to new businesses, and ensuring that the level of business activity and employment continues to grow in a sustainable manner.

To support business development, the WVDA will pursue:

Prepare and distribute a guide to business funding agencies

Prepare and distribute a guide to government resources and information

Update and distribute the WVDA's guide on training and education available to employers and employees

The creation of local investment cooperatives

The development of a strategy to support a broader, more diversified, "year-round" economy

Programs to attract new businesses

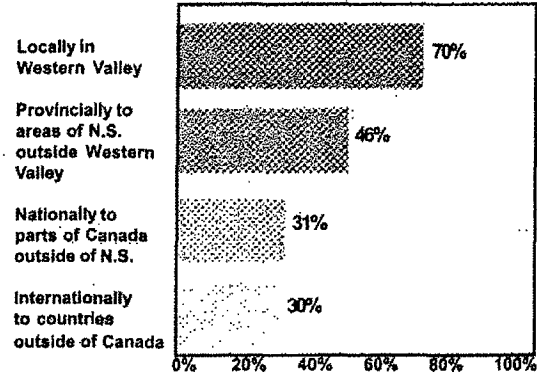
Promotion of the area as an excellent business location

Opportunities to increase local business linkages and networking

Opportunities to broaden awareness of business activity within the Western Valley

Create and maintain an email list-serve to rapidly distribute information, announcements and stories relevant to the business community

Target Markets for Western Valley Businesses



retail services

The retail services available in the Western Valley play an important role in keeping money circulating within the community. The major threats to these sectors include competition from urban-based retail and, in some cases, service franchises. Western Valley residents would like the WVDA to explore new ways to support local small retail and service businesses.

The WVDA will support the retail sector by undertaking the following:

Facilitate efforts among retailers to develop coordinated and complimentary operating hours, with an eye to increasing hours during the tourist season

Publish a hard copy and on-line business directory.

Assist farmers market associations to explore ways to expand the market season, improve facilities, diversify programs and increase usage

business development

manufacturing & processing

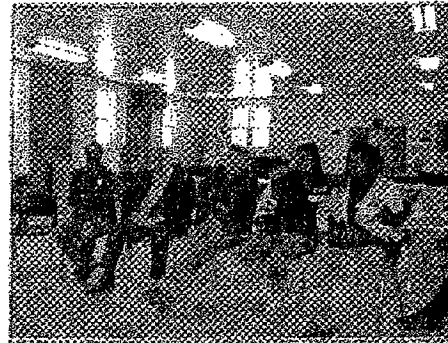
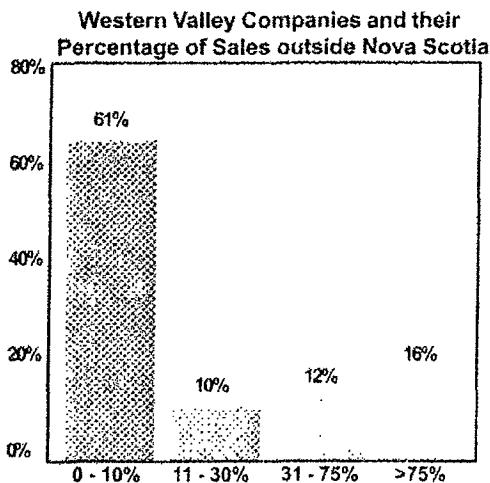
Manufacturing is clearly a way to increase local benefits from existing industries, especially in the areas of value-adding to the region's primary resource products. Manufacturing industries are also vital to creating a broad base of employment opportunities.

The WVDA will encourage the growth of the manufacturing sector by undertaking the following actions:

Explore and identify key manufacturing and processing opportunities, such as:

- lumber by-product industries (ie production of medium density fibreboard and chipboard)
- products and businesses which utilize natural gas
- bottling of spring water
- processing of recyclables not currently within the collections system
- mink-pelt slippers (utilizing low quality pelts)
- processing of crops such as cranberries
- clothing, outerwear

Explore co-operative marketing opportunities for 'cottage industry', ie small scale manufacturing and niche products



export development

The rapid growth of the global economy has forced local businesses to take a proactive approach to export marketing. Specialized products and skills developed in this region have the potential to become major successes in international markets.

The WVDA will continue work with local businesses to develop and expand export market opportunities through the following actions:

Develop and implement an export marketing strategy

Assist local businesses in identifying and accessing key international markets

Promote and support local participation federal and provincial trade missions

Pursue opportunities for WVDA-led trade missions to markets that are not the target of federal or provincial programs, or to markets where Western Valley companies have unique strengths

Work with businesses, investors and government to facilitate new trade partnerships

Play an advocacy role in increasing the level of government support for local export development initiatives

business development

business development

entrepreneurship

Innovation and business growth driven by entrepreneurs and small enterprises in the Western Valley impact positively on the overall economy and health of our communities. There are many organizations in the region that are well placed to support this sector, such as Annapolis Ventures, Growth Opportunities and the Jodrey Centre. The WVDA can also play an important strategic role in strengthening local business start-ups and expansions.

To support entrepreneurial development, the WVDA will:

Offer information services to individuals wishing to start an enterprise

Assist entrepreneurs in developing their businesses through "first stop" counselling

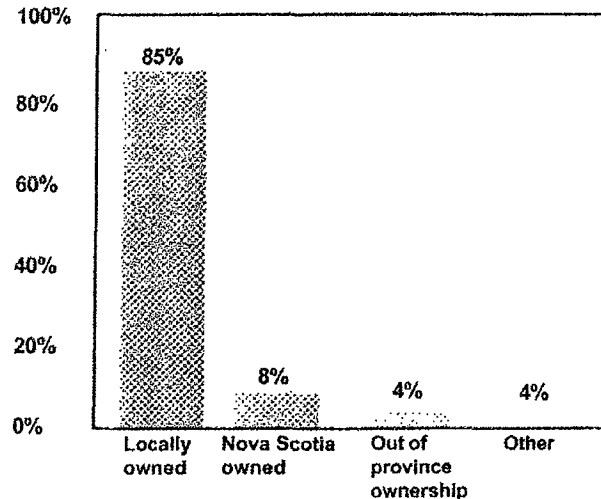
Aid entrepreneurs in identifying appropriate assistance

Explore and identify new business opportunities. Ideas identified through community consultations include:

- self-contained beach-front cottages for both summer and winter rentals
- equipment rentals (ie. sports, gardening, bicycles, boats, vehicles, etc.) for all seasons
- specialty and niche market shops (esp. quality crafts/art)
- boat tours in the Annapolis Basin/St. Mary's Bay/Bay of Fundy
- heritage and organic seeds (ie catalogue seed company)

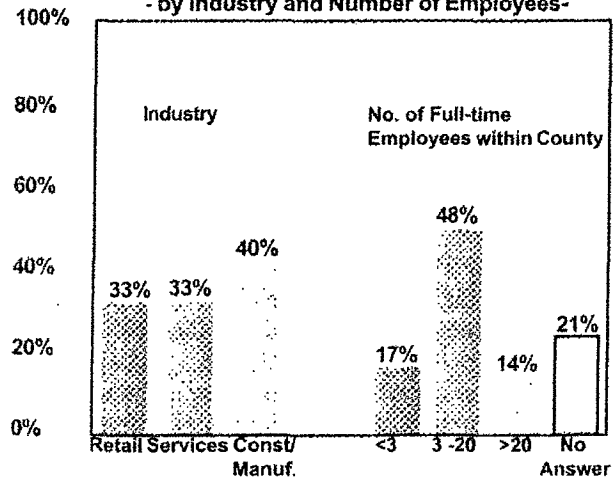
Develop business recognition and promotion programs

Ownership of Western Valley Businesses



Respondents to the Western Valley Business Pulse Survey

- by Industry and Number of Employees -



Environment

goal: To promote environmental stewardship practices which preserve the region's biological diversity and ecological heritage.

Introduction

For ten thousand years, the natural environment of the Western valley region has been the central focus of our economy, of our activity and of our quality of life. We have learned through bitter experience the necessity of protecting our biosphere, of preserving our biological diversity and ecological uniqueness. Economic opportunity in our region rests upon our continued ability to protect and utilize our resources in a sustainable fashion, and to make our own regional contribution to addressing global environmental challenges.

Since the mid-1980s, it has been widely acknowledged that environmental health and economic opportunity are intimately connected. Given our ancient and modern links to land and sea, Western Valley residents understand this better than most. From the collapse of the ground fishery, to the boom and bust cycle of forestry, to the destruction of habitat and ecosystem on the Annapolis River, our region has borne witness to the folly of decisions made by those insufficiently aware of the link between the human and natural environments. Communities across the Western Valley region are united by a desire to see future economic activity carried out in a way that protects, preserves and promotes our ecological heritage.

Rather than seeing the WVDA carry out specific environmental initiatives, the residents of our region wish to see environmental ethics and concepts of sustainability incorporated into every decision that our agency makes, and into every discussion about our region's future. They also expect to see this commitment articulated to the larger world in a forceful and effective manner.



In addition to this general commitment, however, communities across the Western Valley have expressed a heartfelt desire to see actions and projects that enhance their ability to interact with and enjoy the

many benefits of our region's natural environment, and to find ways to share these experiences with others. The residents also expect action that will further protect our threatened and endangered environment. In some instances, this is a question of bricks and mortar - we must build systems to ensure that we do not further contaminate our own home. In other instances, more direct action must be taken to correct past mistakes, to clean up after ourselves, and to ensure that such damage does not take place again.

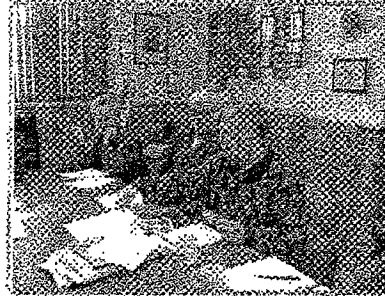
The communities of the Western Valley region embrace the concept of sustainable development at its most fundamental level; if we do not practice positive stewardship of our environmental inheritance, we will never build an economic future, for ourselves - or for our descendants.

"Economic opportunity in our region rests upon our continued ability to protect and utilize our resources in a sustainable fashion, and to make our own regional contribution to addressing global environmental challenges."

environment

conservation, preservation and habitat restoration

The Western Valley region is home to a unique range of plant and animal species, both aquatic and terrestrial. The survival of this biodiversity plays an invaluable role in supporting both quality of life and long-term economic viability.



The WVDA will support efforts to preserve and protect our natural environment by:

Working with industry partners to develop codes of ethics which protect endangered or vulnerable species (ie. Whale Watching Code of Ethics)

Encouraging the development of natural science education programs and guided nature tours

Supporting efforts to broaden awareness and understanding of our natural environment through the development of promotional materials and educational programs



Encouraging the development of policies to protect key natural areas and wilderness habitats

Assisting groups interested in undertaking wildlife habitat restoration programs

Working with target industries to implement environmentally safe practices in the area of waste disposal; encourage practices to eliminate the dumping of waste into the marine environment

Assisting organizations involved in stream and river habitat restoration and fish re-population efforts

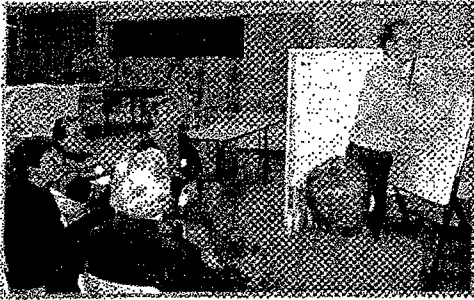
Assisting in the development of an air quality monitoring and improvement program, and a strategy to reduce green house gas emissions.

Supporting efforts to have the Annapolis River recognized as a National Heritage River

Supporting efforts to broaden awareness and appreciation of the regional ecology

Facilitating the development of an integrated approach to environmental management (ie. Bay of Fundy Ecological Program)

environmental technologies



Current efforts to protect the environment have helped fuel the growth of new business opportunities in the area of environmental technologies. A specific focus on reducing negative

impacts on the environment has led to the creation of new methods for energy generation and conservation, and innovative techniques for waste management. There have also been significant activity in the areas of environmental monitoring and digital mapping, serving to increase the community's ability to make informed and wise decisions regarding the management of the region's resources.

The WVDA will support the development of environmental technologies through the following actions:

Explore issues and business opportunities regarding the development of alternative energy sources

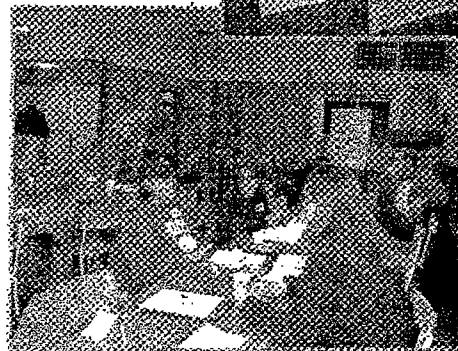
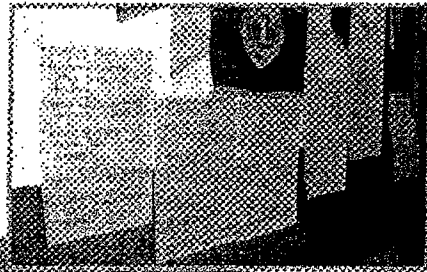
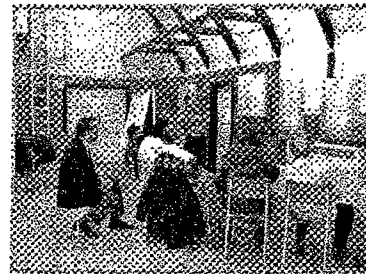
Explore business opportunities and markets for local industry by-products and other recyclable materials

Encourage the development of innovative waste management practices by industry, communities and municipalities

Explore opportunities to utilize digital mapping and remote sensing technologies in the monitoring and management of the region's ecosystems

Building on the success of the Bear River Solar Aquatic Treatment Facility, explore opportunities to develop and implement innovative wastewater treatment technologies

Pursue export market opportunities for locally developed environment technologies



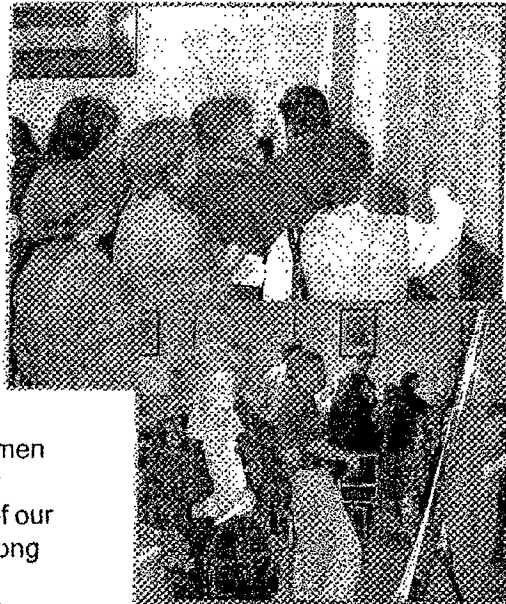
human resources

goal: To create a climate in which all residents have access to training, employment, and economic development opportunities, and can be full participants in the shaping of our future.

introduction

At the heart of Community Economic Development is people, and Western Valley residents realize that economic growth and development lie first and foremost with human resource growth and development. In the drive to become a part of the new "Knowledge Economy" of the 21st Century, this will be more true than ever.

At the same time, residents have acknowledged that not everyone has had equal access to the tools needed to fully participate in the changing economy. The African-Nova Scotian community has faced tremendous barriers to development and education; women have been marginalized from key decision-making roles for much of our history; the Mi'kmaq Nation has long been excluded from the broader community and its discussions; the Acadian community continues to face challenges in its efforts to preserve its language and culture; and literacy remains a challenge in our entire region. The obstacles, barriers, and prejudices that exist within our communities must not only be identified, they must be demolished. Economic success in the 21st Century will be defined by our ability to fully mobilize the human resources of our region, and to ensure that opportunities for growth are available to all members of our community.



Of special concern to residents of the Western Valley is the future of our young people. Many communities have stressed the necessity of providing opportunities for youth, and a desire to attract young people from other regions to our own. These young people are the entrepreneurs, the professionals, the workers and the community leaders of tomorrow.

Another concern of Western Valley communities is access to adequate health care, and the need for a strong group of health professionals to provide that care. Not only is health care a growing sector of the economy, it is one that impacts directly on community health and viability. Special attention must be paid to this area of human resource care and development.

In the end, human resources are not just a tool for the new economy, they ARE the new economy. The WVDA's strategies and actions must revolve around enhancing the region's human resource base, and helping it to achieve its full potential.

"Economic success in the 21st Century will be defined by our ability to fully mobilize the human resources of our region, and to ensure that opportunities for growth are available to all members of our community."

human resources



human resources

Human Resources

equity and equality

A healthy community is one in which all members have the opportunity to fulfill their potential. Members of the African Nova Scotian community, the women's community, aboriginal persons and persons with disabilities have all identified the need to remove barriers that have traditionally blocked access to decision-making structures and economic independence.

The WVDA must strive to develop and support new ways of working together for the full integration of all members of the community. Employers have a key role to play in supporting a labour force which reflects the racial and cultural diversity of our communities.

To support opportunities for greater equity, the WVDA will:

Encourage the school boards to create a greater presence of Black student support workers, teachers and educators in the school system, and to offer gender and racial sensitivity training in schools

Work with both private and public sector to practice employment equity practices

Support efforts to ensure that women have a strong voice in community economic development initiatives

Help develop a greater focus on Black-run business start-ups

Work towards the establishment of a mentoring program for young women

youth

Overcoming the exodus of youth from rural communities, and providing opportunities for young people who have left to return to the region, is key to future growth and development.

The WVDA will pursue opportunities for youth to stay and thrive within the region through the following actions:

Work with businesses to encourage the creation of entry level positions for youth

Encourage co-op work programs through local business and educational institutions

Work with community groups, businesses and schools to develop programs targeting youth employment and entrepreneurship

Help to organize "youth career fairs"



Support mentorship, apprenticeship and other training programs for young entrepreneurs

Explore incentives, such as a business scholarship

program, to keep youth in the area and attract youth back to the area

human resources

Human Resources

skills development, education and training

The success of the local economy hinges on the availability of a skilled and adaptable labour force. Quality training and mentorship programs at all levels will help build the strength of the region's human resources.

The WVDA will address the need for life-long learning through the following actions:

Partner with adult learning centres and literacy networks to promote opportunities for life-long learning, skills training, tutoring in traditional subjects, and literacy.

Work with educational and training institutes to develop programs which respond to a changing economy, reflecting both present and future employment opportunities

Work with Community Access Program (CAP) sites to offer on-line distance education programs

Encourage the establishment of skills development/mentorship programs which focus on traditional industries and heritage arts (e.g. boat-building)

volunteer sector

Volunteer activity is the backbone of community spirit and growth. Western Valley residents recognize that an effective volunteer sector can accomplish a great deal in terms of economic development, if it has a strong support system.

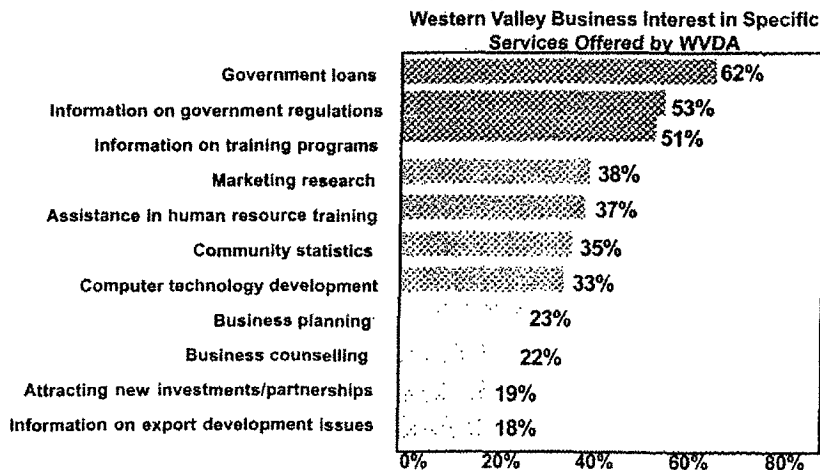
The WVDA will support community volunteerism through the following initiatives:

Work with volunteer organizations to develop effective management strategies

Co-ordinate opportunities for volunteer organizations to network and develop partnerships

Explore opportunities to create a volunteer bureau to match resources with organizations

Create a database of existing organizations, volunteers, skill inventories, resources and funding programs



Information technology

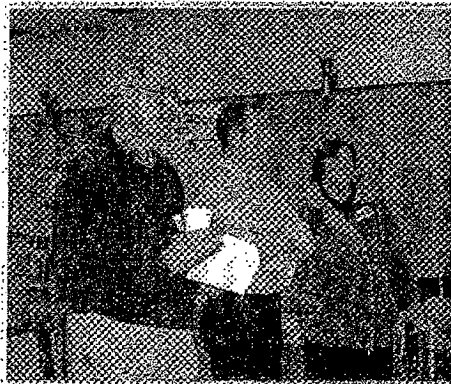
goal: To create a climate which supports the growth of the high technology sector

introduction

Within the last few years, our society has begun to experience one of the most profound economic transformations ever to occur. The Industrial Age is drawing to a close, and disappearing with it are traditional notions of labour, productivity and economics. The old rules no longer apply, and though we have yet to see the new rules emerge, it is clear that the new Information Age will be a vastly different time in which to live and work.

Communities within the Western Valley have been quick to take note of this fundamental change, and have taken many steps to embrace both new technologies and new ways of doing business. The region's successful Community Access Program (CAP) sites, and its strong presence in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technologies are evidence of a broader trend to explore, understand and adopt these new information tools. Western Valley residents, however, have emphasized the need to take this process further, to identify and explore more and better opportunities to use the new technology to improve the lives and economic well-being of community members.

In many instances, the specifics of this action are still unclear; many people are not completely versed in these new information tools and what they can accomplish. However, the region is linked in its understanding of the potential for growth and change that these tools represent. Their instruction to the WVDA is quite explicit: embrace this technology, promote it, build with it.



Just as clearly, however, this is not a drive to create technology for the sake of creating technology; the residents of the Western Valley region are seeking to identify and learn ways in which new technology can meet their unique needs, ways in which information tools can strengthen their way of

life without necessarily altering it completely. We seek to become a model of integrated technology use on our own terms. We can show the world how to become more like us, rather than us trying to become more like them.

Future action within the information technology arena must be weighed against this imperative. Economic development within this sector, to reflect the goals of the community, will enhance and protect that same community. It will build on our traditional strengths, skills and knowledge. It will allow us to preserve, protect and promote our culture and our way of life, and it will allow us to take what we do best to a larger audience in the new global community.

Around the world, rural communities are struggling with technological change and the information economy. The Western Valley seeks to provide them with a model and a mentor, and in doing so, to discover new economic opportunities.

Technology
Community
Access
Program
(CAP)

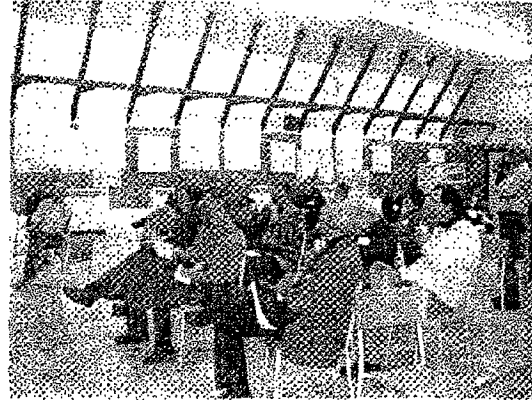
Western Valley residents are seeking to identify and explore more and better opportunities to use the new technology to improve the lives and economic well-being of community members.

information technology

community development

As the role of information technology continues to grow in all aspects of the economy, it is critical that all members of the community have access to these tools. The establishment of public access Internet and computer sites plays a key role in linking rural communities to the information highway.

To support the use of technology as a tool for community development, the WVDA will undertake the following actions:



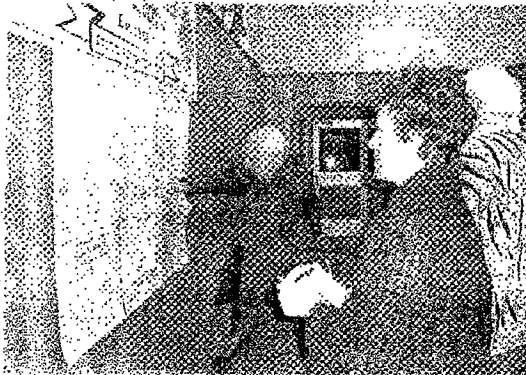
Spearhead efforts to establish the Western Valley as one of Canada's "Smart Communities"

Work with partner organizations to establish a "virtual" resource centre, in which local service agencies are networked through an Intranet system

Host web-based discussion forums on relevant community issues

Continue to promote the establishment of Community Access Program (CAP) sites throughout the region, including new sites focused on African Nova Scotian communities

Broaden awareness of CAP sites through promotions, including a CAP signage campaign



Develop accessible and affordable electronic communication links through the Western Valley Community Net

Partner with schools to support greater public access to facilities and training

Support the development of an "adaptive technology" program to increase the accessibility of CAP sites

Continue to work with CAP sites to expand programming to include:

- distance education
- job development
- skills training
- government service delivery
- electronic commerce

information technology

information technology

research, development and training

In order to take the lead in developing a Knowledge Economy, energy must be dedicated to supporting the foundations of the industry through research and development.

To support the long-term visibility and growth of the Knowledge Economy, the WVDA will:

Establish a task force focused on the development of the high-technology sector

Work with the Nova Scotia Community College Annapolis Valley Campus (formerly COGS) to facilitate partnerships with community groups and businesses in the areas of :

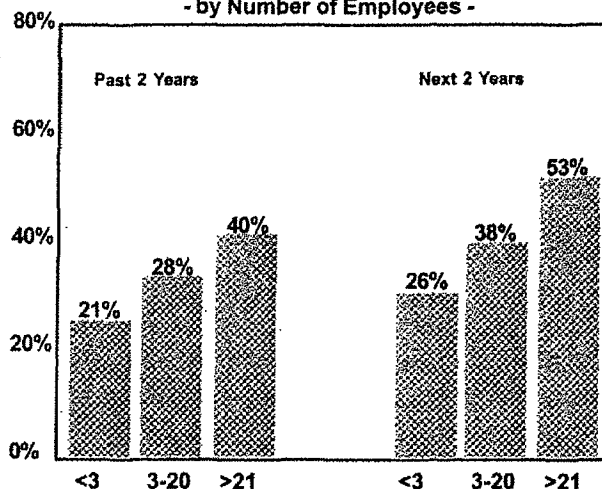
- business geographics
- cartography
- computer network management
- Geographic Information Systems
- programming

Explore opportunities to establish an aquaculture technology research and development centre

Assist in the development and promotion of educational software based on local expertise

Continue to develop GIS software which integrates business, statistical, and resource-based data in a digitized mapping format

Western Valley Companies Physical Expansion - by Number of Employees -



Continue to support the development and application of new environmental technologies, including water management and wastewater treatment facilities

Encourage Université Sainte-Anne to expand programming to include additional science and technology opportunities

Explore ways to increase access to technology training in communities throughout the region

Network community colleges, universities and community organizations to carry out technology assisted research (including GIS resource mapping or database development)

information technology

information technology

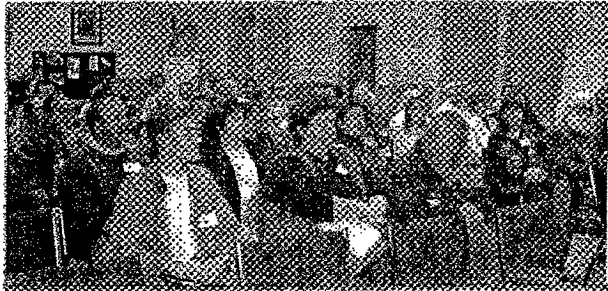
communications technologies



Communication represents the backbone of the information economy. It is important to ensure access to the tools of effective communication, while focusing on the development of quality content.

To support the effective use of communication technologies, the WVDA will:

Explore opportunities to establish a communication technologies centre



Identify resources whereby businesses can develop on-line commercial sites and catalogues

Assist local businesses in taking advantage of e-commerce technologies

Assist communities and organizations in developing a strong and integrated presence on the Internet

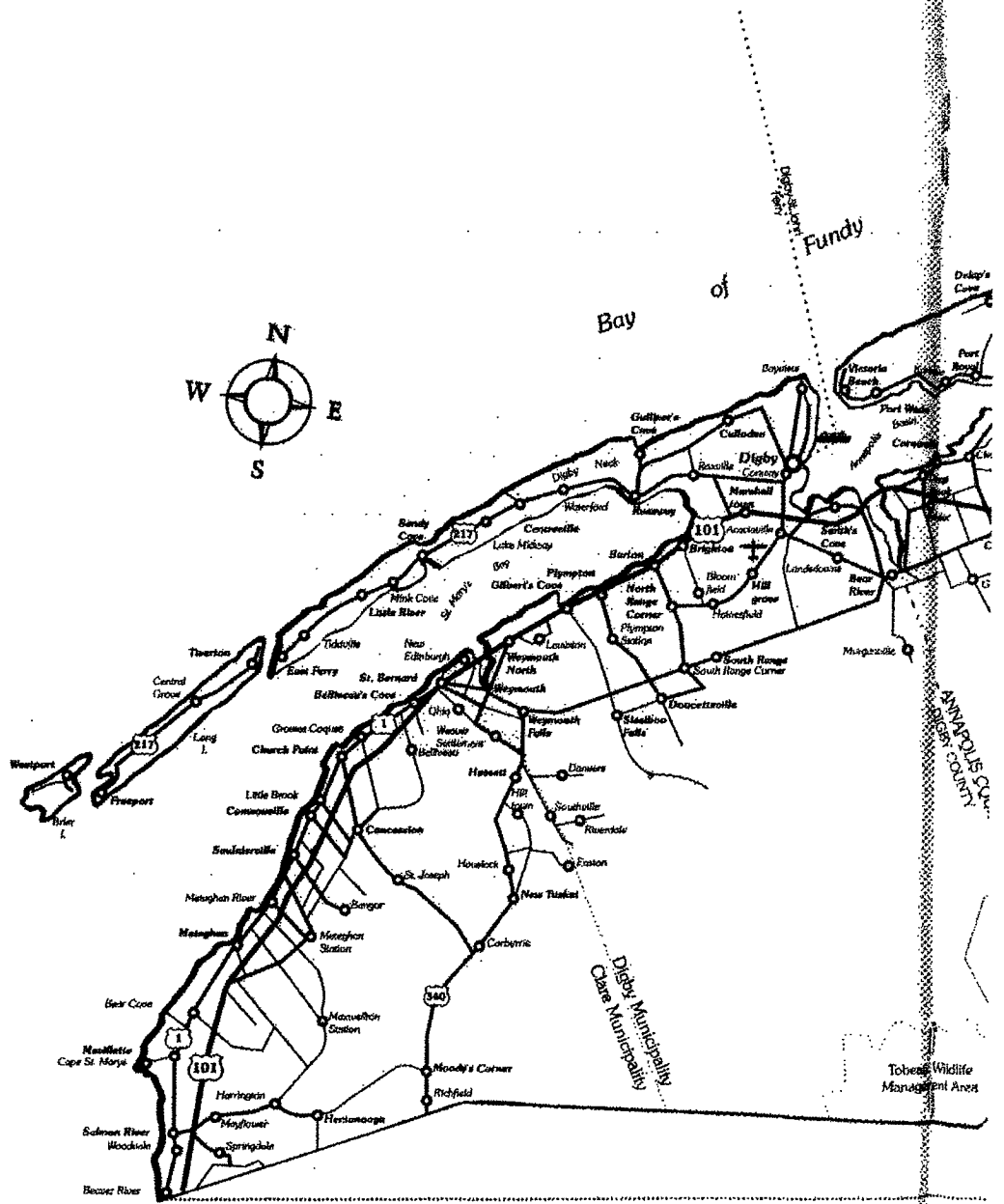


Increase tourism promotion and business attraction efforts on the Internet

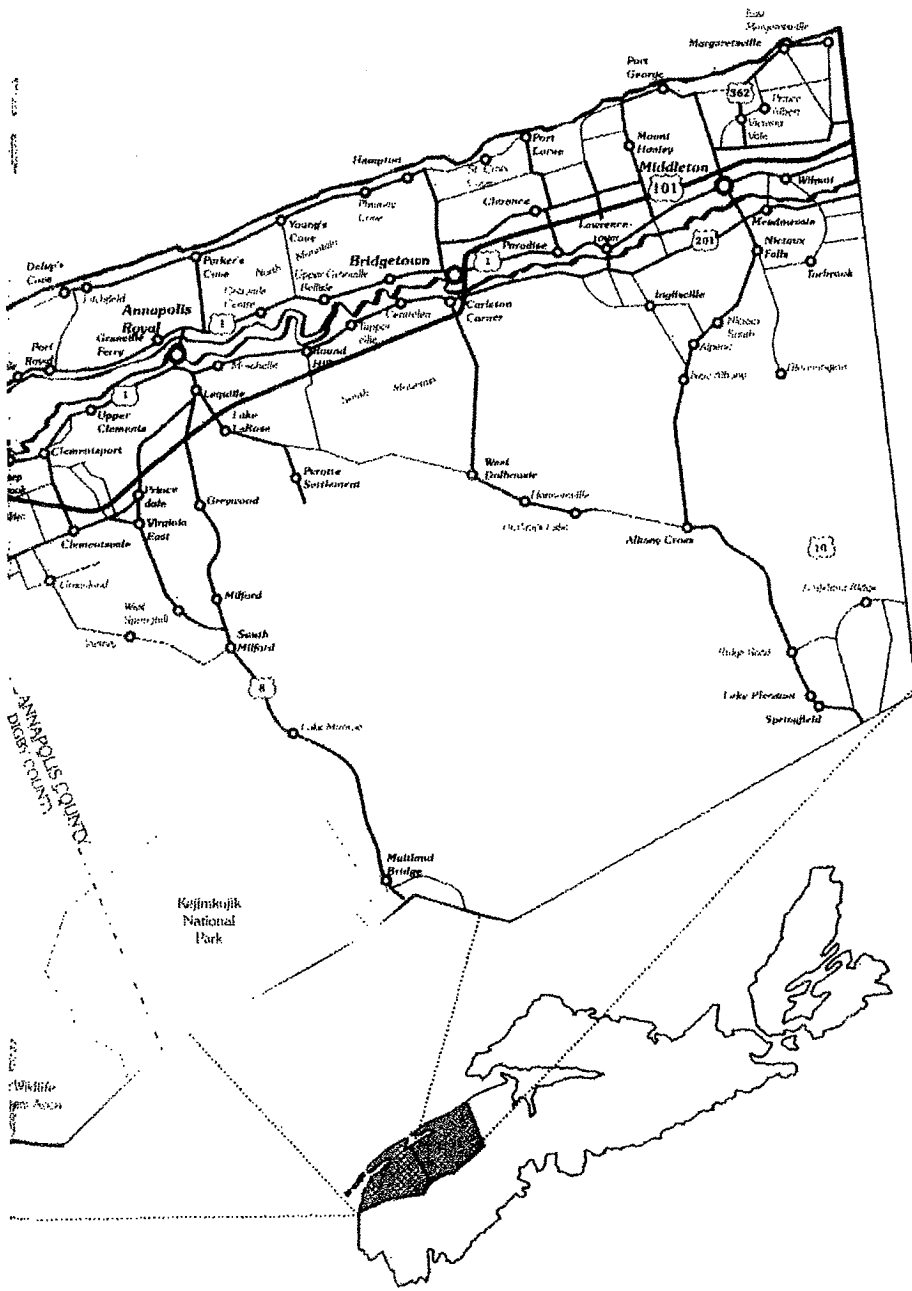
Develop multimedia packages to promote the tourism sector

The western valley region of nova scotia

western valley of nova scotia



the western valley region of nova scotia



Infrastructure and facilities

goal: To establish a long term plan to address the priorities for improved local infrastructure and facilities.

introduction

Economic activity is strongest where infrastructure exists to support it: fishermen require wharves, truck drivers need roads, and information technology relies on telecommunications systems.

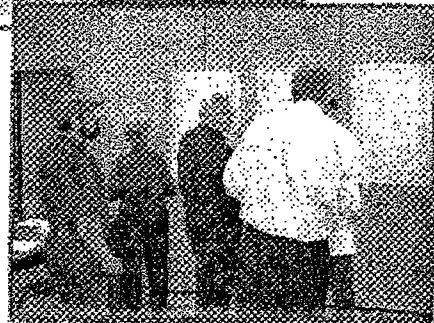
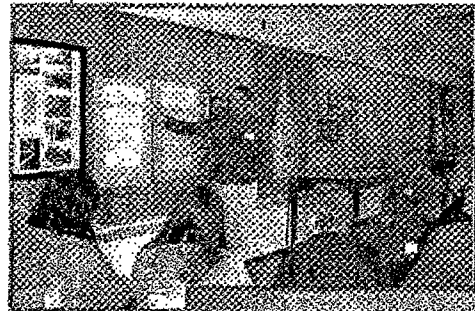
As the Western Valley looks towards the new century, residents see a very real need for the maintenance and improvement of our built environment.

In a period of federal and provincial downsizing and cost-cutting, more and more responsibility for infrastructure maintenance is being handed down to municipal structures and local community groups. In many instances, these groups have neither the finances nor the human resources to effectively administer these assets. In other instances, new infrastructure is required to support new economic opportunity, and again the burden falls on local interests to provide this infrastructure. From wharves to schools to health clinics to fiber optics and beyond, the local community is taking on a larger and larger role in ensuring that adequate infrastructure exists to do business. The WVDA must play a key role in helping the community adapt to this new role and these new responsibilities.

The facilities necessary for sports and recreation, for community consultation and protection, for

heritage preservation and education, also play an important part in the life of the community. They are a key factor in community health, and in the long-term viability of

communities. As we seek to develop our regional economy, we must be careful that we develop and maintain communities willing and able to support that economy.



"New infrastructure is required to support new economic opportunity, and again the burden falls on local interests to provide this infrastructure."

infrastructure and facilities

transportation

The viability of an export economy depends on the existence of a well-maintained transportation network. Ensuring access to quality transportation links is a fundamental part of the region's efforts to support economic, as well as the safety of Western Valley residents.

Recognizing the vital importance of transportation infrastructure, the WVDA will:

Work with government partners to improve road transportation infrastructure, including
the completion of Highways 101 between Digby and Weymouth
the addition of exits from Highway 101 to shoreline communities in Clare, as well as the addition of rest stops
the twinning of 101 in key areas
the widening of secondary roads to accommodate bicycles

Continue efforts to ensure that ferry services between Digby and Saint John are maintained

Work with local communities and government agencies towards the protection and maintenance of wharf facilities

Partner with municipalities to explore the viability of a public or privately run transportation system to serve a wide area of the Western Valley.



health

While many health care issues are related to human resources and education, others rely on the presence of top quality physical infrastructure, such as hospitals and clinics. The Western Valley region needs to maintain and expand its existing health-related infrastructure.

To ensure the necessary infrastructure is in place to support healthy communities, the WVDA will:

Support efforts to ensure adequate health care facilities are in place

Work with community groups to expand senior citizens' residences

energy

The Western Valley's ability to meet industrial energy requirements is necessary to attract, maintain and grow the manufacturing industry.

Residents will also benefit from varied and low-cost heating sources.

To ensure that local energy capacity meets demand, the WVDA will:

Pursue opportunities to bring natural gas to the area

Continue to support local efforts to establish community-based natural gas distribution franchises

Work with entrepreneurs to identify infrastructure necessary to exploit alternative energy sources

Work with businesses and Nova Scotia Power to ensure that power supplies meet industrial needs

infrastructure and facilities

infrastructure and facilities

tourism and recreation

As the tourism industry continues to grow in size and importance, the need for adequate infrastructure and facilities becomes even greater.

To support healthy communities and a viable tourism industry, the WVDA will:

Assist in the development of a series of trail systems

Actively support waterfront development initiatives in communities throughout the region

Support community efforts to develop main street and rural beautification programmes

Support community efforts to expand and improve recreational facilities

Partner with business and organizations to ensure infrastructure is in place to support tourism, including:

- ◁ rest areas
- ▷ parking
- ◁ RV dumping stations
- × phone booths

Assist organizations and communities in developing marinas

Assist groups wishing to develop heritage sites or parks



telecommunications

In the age of information technology, being able to communicate at lightening speed is essential. Ensuring that the necessary infrastructure — both physical and strategic — is in place to support the rapid exchange of information and ideas is an imperative for future growth.

The WVDA will seek to ensure a high technology infrastructure through the following actions:

Work with industry partners to install fibre optic and T1 lines

Work with MTT to complete the establishment of single-line, digital-switching technology in all communities in the region

Work with MTT to ensure new developments such as M-Powered are made available in the area as soon as possible

Explore opportunities to expand the use of cable for data transfer

Work with industry partners to ensure that broadcast and cellular signals are accessible in all areas of the region

natural resources

goal: Develop a community-based plan for natural resource management that includes processing of those resources in the local area.

introduction

From the fertile soils of the Annapolis River Valley and the waters of Saint Mary's Bay to the forests that blanket our region, the foundation of our economy has always been its natural resources.

At times this inherited capital has ebbed or grown with the natural cycles of our environment, and at times human greed or error has harmed our ability to harvest these resources, but they have remained the centrepiece of Western Valley life and economy. Today as always, we walk a delicate line between the use of these resources, and their protection for the use of future generations. The residents of the Western Valley region believe that careful, sustainable exploitation of these resources will provide economic opportunity for many generations to come.

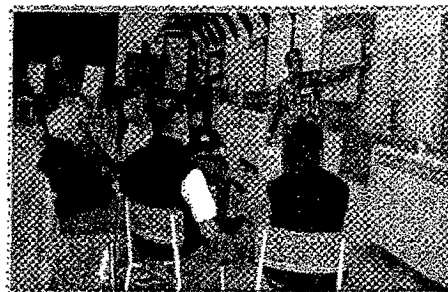
Indeed, it seems clear to residents of the region that our carrying capacity, our ability to generate wealth from our natural resources, is greater than that currently being exploited. New opportunities in farming, fishing, mining and forestry beckon for those who can adequately reconcile the twin concerns of economic growth and resource utilization.

"The residents of the Western Valley region believe that careful, sustainable exploitation of these resources will provide economic opportunity for many generations to come."

And while government resources and assistance may be unavailable due to the inadequacy of national programs and rules that do not recognize local situations and opportunities, these industries will grow regardless. Excess economic capacity exists within our natural resource base, and the job of the WVDA is to assist in bringing the necessary capital to bear in financing the opportunities this capacity provides.

In addition to careful, environmentally responsible expansion of the natural resource sector, however, tremendous economic growth can be achieved from adding value to our natural resources, to engaging in processing and finishing activities within our region. For the better part of this century, we have exported our natural resources, our raw materials, to other points around the globe, where they have made others wealthy. The residents of the Western Valley have no wish to become an urban industrial

centre. However, opportunities for value adding, for light manufacturing, for artisanal craftwork and for primary processing do exist within our region, and can be carried out in a way that both maintains and even enhances our unique culture and environment.



natural resources

natural resources

Natural Resources

resource management

The viability of our natural resources depends on a commitment to develop and implement sustainable management plans, both within each sector and in the context of the regional ecology as a whole.

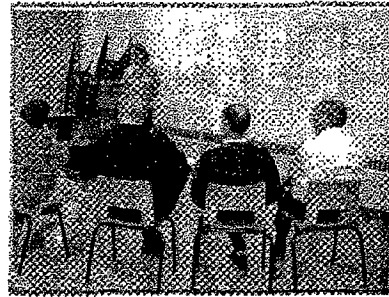
To support an integrated approach to the sustainable management of our natural resources, the WVDA will:

Assist in the development of sustainable management initiatives for the marine sector, the forestry sector, and other sectors as required

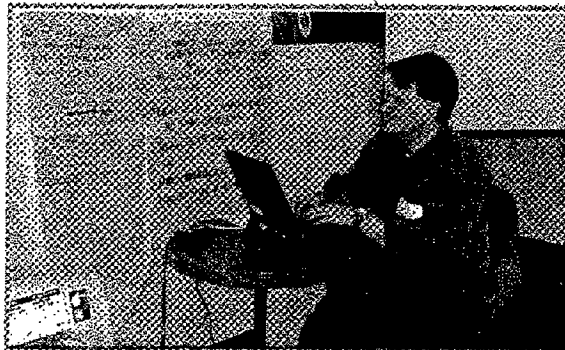
Facilitate discussion amongst representatives of the natural resource sectors to explore the creation of an integrated resource management plan

Support efforts to develop an ecological management plan for the Bay of Fundy

Collect data regarding natural resources, and use digital mapping technologies to develop an integrated system of natural resource data



Support the delivery of training programs focused on sustainable fisheries, forestry and agricultural harvesting practices



Support efforts to re-introduce traditional marine harvesting technologies such as hand lining and long lining

Develop sustainable forestry management, harvesting, and monitoring programs

Explore the feasibility of setting up a demonstration orchard of many old and rare varieties of apples that were grown in the region.

Support the growth and development of the Bay of Fundy Marine Resource Centre of Excellence

natural resources

product and market development

The natural resource sector has enormous potential to grow and develop in areas such as value-adding, processing, and manufacturing. Opportunities continue to open in the cultivation and harvesting of new products, and in the expansion of export and niche markets.

The WVDA will support the exploration of new growth areas within the natural resources sector by undertaking the following actions:

Explore the feasibility of harvesting under-utilized and niche market marine species, such as sea urchins

Identify opportunities to expand the cultivation and utilization of local hardwoods

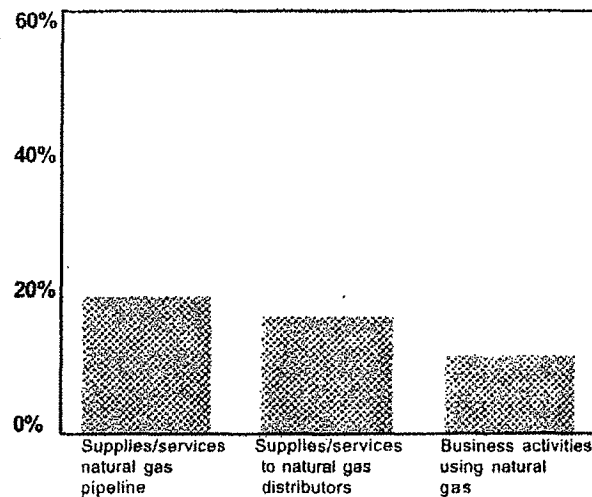
Work with the community to establish a community-managed and community-driven grain processing facility

Work with producers, growers and provincial representatives to identify business opportunities associated with the natural resource sectors

Identify opportunities to develop alternative and niche market crops and livestock, possibly including:

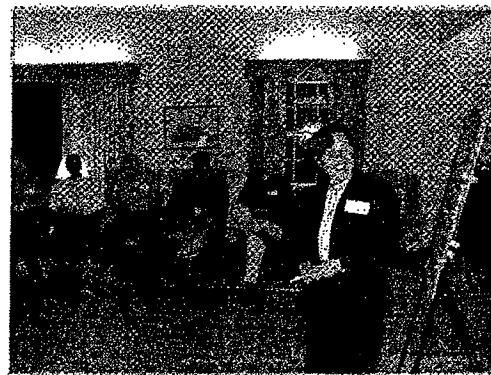
- hemp, berries (e.g. tayberries, raspberries, cranberries), wine grapes, organic crops, etc
- elk/red deer, organic livestock, etc
- grains and forage crops

Percentage of Western Valley Businesses that see opportunities for growth related to Natural Gas
- Significant/Some Opportunities -



Organize seminars, information sessions and conferences focused on agricultural opportunities

Identify opportunities associated with the use of the natural gas in agriculture, including expansion of the greenhouse industry



Partnerships and communications

goal: To create opportunities for greater community participation and co-operation amongst the local community, and to raise the profile of the region to the international community

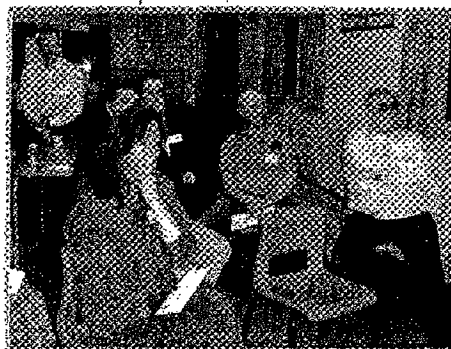
introduction

The Western Valley region is comprised of more than 40,000 people spread over 6,000 square kilometres, representing numerous culturally diverse and richly varied communities. Despite these apparent obstacles, however, communities have expressed a desire to participate in developing a common vision for our region, and a willingness to support each other's efforts to make that vision a reality.

While communities seek to work more closely together rather than compete for limited resources, this creates a need for more effective tools for communication. The WVDA and the community must work to build a deeper understanding of the unique aspirations and experiences of each element of our broader community.

"Despite an increasing usage of telecommunication tools, the most effective mechanism for communication is still in coming together as a community."

Residents expressed a need to acknowledge and celebrate our successes at the local level, and that those successes be shared with the world. By sending out consistently positive messages about the Western Valley region, the world is starting to pay attention. It is through sustained efforts to build partnerships at the provincial, national, and international level that this region has been recognized as a world model for sustainable Community Economic Development practices.



Despite an increasing usage of telecommunication tools, the most effective mechanism for communication is still in coming together as a community. More than 500 residents participated in the public consultation process that produced this document, and have expressed a keen desire to come together on a regular basis, to continue to build the sense of shared vision and community spirit.

partnerships and communications

capacity building

The effectiveness with which community organizations develop, implement and manage projects is built through experience, experimentation and time. Local community organizations have accumulated a wealth of community development knowledge. The use and enhancement of such knowledge increases the community capacity for further positive development.

The WVDA will focus efforts on expanding community capacity through the following actions:

Work with community groups to identify needs, goals and opportunities

Assist community groups in accessing the skills and resources necessary to realize their goals

Facilitate the development of strategic partnerships amongst community organizations

Assist community groups in project concept, development and design

community networking

The ability for communities in the Western Valley to communicate with one another— to share resources, discuss common issues, and exchange experiences and information— increases our understanding of the region's diversity. Improved co-ordination and cooperation also serve to build the strong and unified voice necessary to garner outside support.

To increase community networking opportunities, the WVDA will:

Support the development of community-based radio and television communication tools



Produce regional information packages targeting new residents to the area

Continue to promote local successes within the region

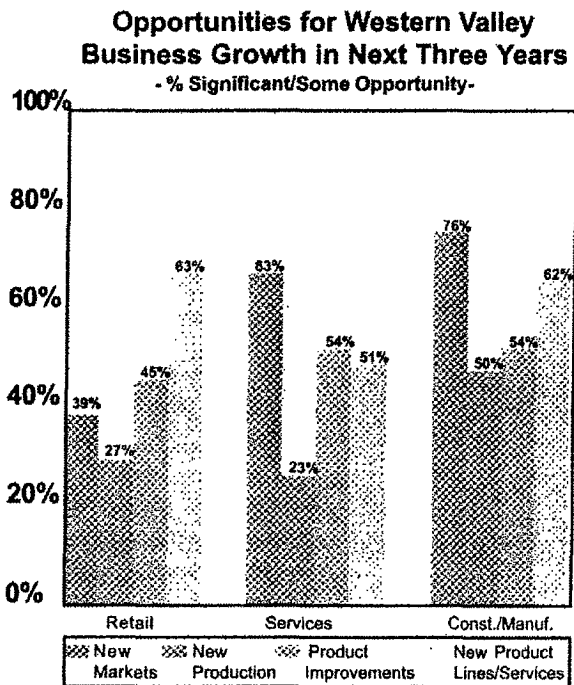
Develop and promote a community-managed Network Server

partnerships and communications

partnerships and communications

external networking

Many of the Western Valley's challenges and triumphs have captured the interest of the international community. This outside attention provides unique and unparalleled opportunities for the Western Valley to engage in creative new initiatives with partners around the world, all to the benefit of local efforts for economic development.



The WVDA will support external networking efforts by undertaking the following actions:

Facilitate links between Acadian businesses and communities, and other Francophone regions in Canada and around the world

Facilitate communications between community-based resource management groups and institutes around the Bay of Fundy

Facilitate exchanges with community economic development agencies from the North Atlantic region as part of UNESCO's Management of Social Transformations program

Encourage fisheries organizations to develop international partners to better address marketing and fisheries management issues

tourism, heritage and culture

goal: Develop and promote cultural heritage and tourism attractions.

introduction

This broad sector of the economy is an increasingly important one to Western Valley residents. The natural beauty of our region, the



history of our peoples and the way we express that heritage through arts and culture provide both a solid foundation for today's activities, and opportunities for future development. However, great care must be taken in order that our drive to grow and develop does

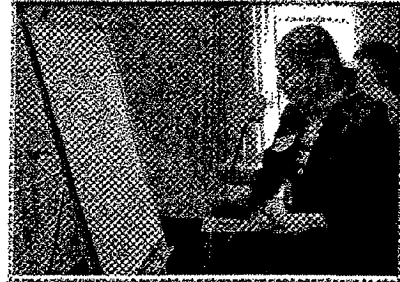
not end up destroying or eroding the very things that drew us to the Western Valley in the first place.

On the tourism front, area residents have expressed real interest in finding ways of expanding and enhancing the tourism experience. An even stronger focus on ecotourism, adventure tourism and historical tourism is stressed, as well as protection of the unique aspects of our local heritage and culture that make us a tourism destination. Trail development is a particular interest of area residents, including more active regional participation in "Rails to Trails" programs. In addition, special mention was made of the need to begin to extend the shoulders of our tourism season.

"Western Valley residents are united in their desire to preserve and protect our unique history, a history that is shared amongst diverse and storied peoples."

On the question of heritage, Western Valley residents are united in their desire to preserve and protect our unique history, a history that is shared amongst diverse and storied peoples.

Acadian, African-Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq residents in particular feel that their stories should be more widely celebrated



and acknowledged. Participants from all communities, both ethnic and geographic, believe that future economic opportunity will be strengthened and supported by a clear and full understanding of our heritage, and will benefit from efforts to retain and protect elements of that heritage.

The broad range of peoples and communities that make up the Western Valley region have given rise to a vibrant and valuable culture. In part, our culture is the personal expression of our heritage, our perspective, and our world view, and is meant for our own enlightenment and enjoyment. In another context, however, there is a part of our culture that speaks to the wider world, that is seen, experienced and appreciated by those outside the Western Valley. The WVDA's cultural initiatives should give equal weight to these two realities; we must provide cultural opportunities for the residents of this region, and we must also provide support to those who pursue economic opportunity related to sharing our culture with the broader world.

tourism, heritage and culture



tourism, heritage and culture

tourism, heritage and culture

cultural industries

Communities in the Western Valley region are becoming known as centres of unique and high quality cultural activity. It is imperative that these diverse cultural activities be nurtured and supported at all levels of development.

The WVDA will encourage the growth of cultural industries through the following actions:

Development of a strategy to increase the visibility and viability of the cultural sector

Establish an Cultural Action Team to lead in the implementation of the strategy

Assist in the establishment of an Acadian cultural centre

Take advantage of co-operative marketing initiatives and product development

Continue to develop opportunities for a local film, video and television industry

Explore opportunities to create a cultural investment foundation for the arts.

Provide organizational assistance to new Arts Councils in the region

Sponsor educational events focused on fundraising and sustainability of cultural activities

Work with groups in Middleton to explore opportunities to establish a centre for the arts

Encourage the adoption of a Provincial Cultural Policy, and work with Municipal Councils to explore the development of cultural policies at the local level

Encourage the involvement of Youth in cultural activities through Arts Infusion programs in schools and Arts Apprenticeship programs pairing youth with professional artists

Host a one-day conference for professional artists and craftspeople focused on sales, marketing, product development, and business skills

festivals and events

Beginning as community activities, celebrations and social occasions, local festivals and events contribute a great deal to welcoming visitors to the Western Valley. These community activities have the potential to become the trademark of the region.

The WVDA will support cultural tourism through the following actions:

Assist in the development of unique cultural events, such as the Annapolis Community Play project

Promote local music groups and musicians through local festivals

Support local efforts to co-ordinate festivals (Magnolia Festival, Cherry Blossom Carnival, Scallop Days Festival, Fêtes des Acadiens, etc)

Promote local events to visitors (theatre, dance, music, Musique Saint-Bernard)

Work with local groups to promote unique local events to visitors, including live theatre on the wharf and community bonfires.

tourism, heritage and culture

Source: *Western Valley* 2004

tourism promotion

Catering to the interests of a wide variety of visitors involves knowing what appeals and how to present a selection of choices. The industry recognizes that increased tourist understanding of the area means increased revenues. The geography and unique attributes of the Western Valley allow operators to target markets not only domestically, but also internationally. However, this requires a co-ordinating body to link efforts on target marketing the region as a product.

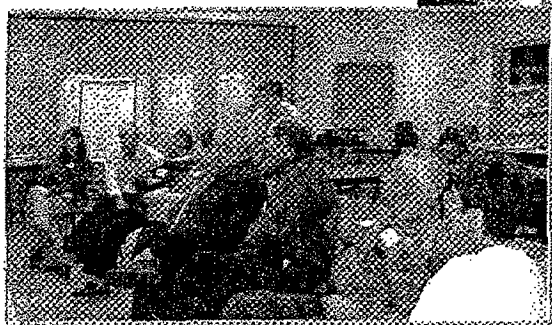
The WVDA will undertake the following actions:

Promote the creation of eco-tourism site locator maps with advertising for business

Assist in creation of pamphlets on accommodations, restaurants, retail stores, museums

Encourage web-page development targeting tourist markets

Encourage the creation of 1-800 information lines



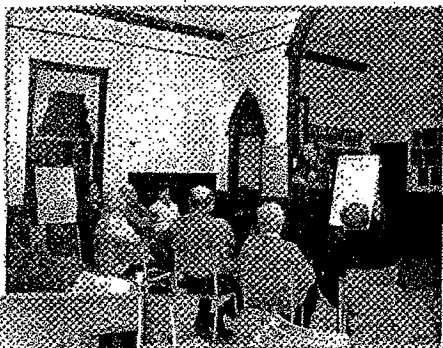
packages and product development

The expanded awareness of tourism as a viable industry for the region, has lead to increased interest and a flourish of innovations and entrepreneurship. A number of organizations offer services to assist with the implementation of these ideas.

The WVDA will undertake the following actions:

Work with the Port of Digby Cruise Association to attract cruise ships to the area

Work with Middleton to develop Riverside Park, possibly including improved waterfront access, walking paths, cultural or heritage festivals, a memorial gardens, equipment rentals, farmers' market, retails outlets, and other business opportunities



Support the implementation of the "Vision Clare 2004" action plan

Support plans to construct information kiosks at entrances to the District of Clare.

Explore the concept of a "Jelly Trail", linking cottage industries such as

homemade pickles, jams, jellies, hooked rugs, quilts and clothing in a coordinated promotional campaign for tourism.

tourism, heritage and culture

tourism, heritage and culture

heritage promotion

The Western Valley Region holds an unique place in the history of this country. In order to develop a strong vision for our future, we must protect, preserve and build on the foundations of our past. Through concerted efforts to deepen our understanding of our multicultural heritage, we will grow as a community while creating opportunities to share our heritage with the world.

The WVDA will support heritage promotion through the following actions:

Support and co-ordinate planning efforts for upcoming heritage commemorations marking 2004-5 (e.g. Port Royal 400th Anniversary, the 250th anniversary of the Deportation)

Assist groups in the development of events to celebrate Black Culture and Heritage

Support efforts to research, publish and promote local history and genealogy, including the genealogy of African Nova Scotian communities.

Pursue opportunities to link and promote cultural - heritage trails throughout the region, linking efforts to develop trails that highlight Acadian Genealogy, Black Heritage, Native Traditional Medicine, Loyalist Heritage, Natural History, and others

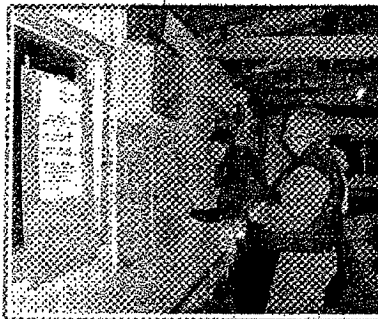
Pursue opportunities to establish a centre for Black Heritage and culture

Support the Bear River First Nations in its efforts to establish a Mi'kmaq cultural centre

Continue to develop websites promoting the region's heritage

Support efforts to develop and promote the New France site near Weymouth

Pursue opportunities to establish a heritage skills apprenticeship program



1999 business pulse western valley survey

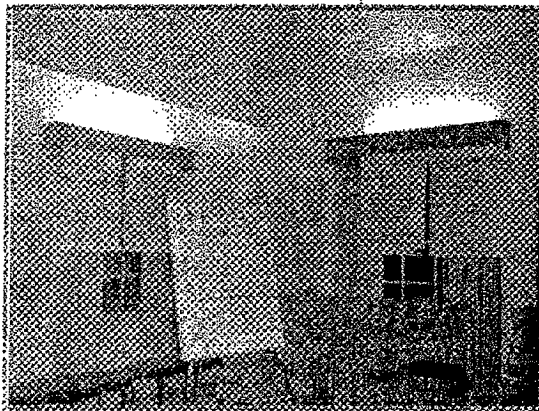
executive summary

The Western Valley has a diverse business community of companies that focus on a variety of sectors, and the vast majority are owned within Annapolis and Digby counties. Companies operating in the Western Valley region have a customer base that is primarily located within Nova Scotia, with their supplies coming from inside as well as outside the province.

About half of Western Valley businesses have experienced a growth in profitability over the past three years, and there is even greater optimism for future corporate profitability. Specifically, a strong majority of Western Valley businesses anticipate opportunities for corporate growth over the next three years in terms of new markets, as well as new product lines or services. Moreover, almost four in ten Western Valley companies have plans to expand their physical space over the next two years, while somewhat fewer intend to increase their employee base within the next twelve months.

Consistent with the optimism exhibited by many Annapolis and Digby county companies in terms of expected profitability over the next three years, one in four expect to expand the number of their employees over the next twelve months. About two-thirds foresee no change in their employee base over the next year, while just under one in ten are expecting a decrease.

Western Valley businesses are divided in terms of assessing their region as a place to do business, with employee costs, availability of land, access to local labour force, proximity to customers, and quality of educational facilities being viewed as among the region's greatest advantages. The most significant disadvantages of conducting business in the Western Valley were identified as cost of power, access to suppliers, availability of labour force training, and local tax rates.



Only a relatively small number of Western Valley businesses are convinced that the Sable natural gas development project offers important opportunities for expansion of the region's economy. Although, a sizable minority of Western Valley businesses report they would be at least somewhat

likely to use natural gas as a fuel option, if it were available.

There is sizable interest in obtaining information and utilizing services available through the Western Valley Development Authority (WVDA). Specifically, companies expressed the most interest in receiving information on government loan programs, information on government regulations, and information on training programs. It is important to note however, that at present there is only limited awareness of the WVDA among members of the region's business community.

1999 business pulse
western valley survey

1999 business pulse western valley survey

1999 business pulse western valley survey

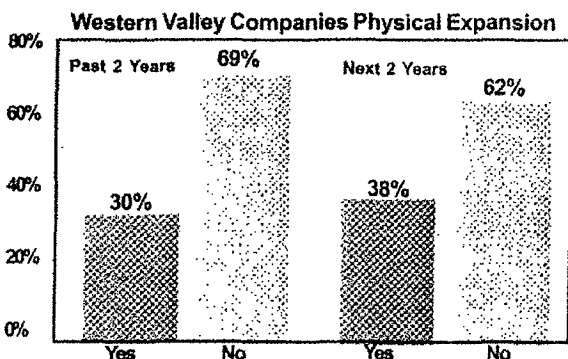
study conclusions

Western Valley has a diverse business community of companies that focus on a variety of sectors, and the vast majority are owned within Annapolis and Digby counties.

The companies surveyed in this study represent a cross section of Western Valley business sectors including retail, various services (such as tourism, business services, and health care services), construction, and manufacturing. Among surveyed Western Valley companies expressing an opinion, just over half have six or more full-time permanent employees, while just under half have five or fewer. In addition, more than eight in ten businesses are locally-owned (that is, within Annapolis and Digby counties).

The largest customer segment for Western Valley companies is consumers living within the province of Nova Scotia.

Overall, the largest customer segment for Western Valley companies is consumers, with seven in ten companies naming them as a major customer segment. More than four in ten identified companies involved in the retail and wholesale sectors as major customers, while a slightly smaller number of the businesses surveyed indicated that service sector and manufacturing companies and government are major customer segments.

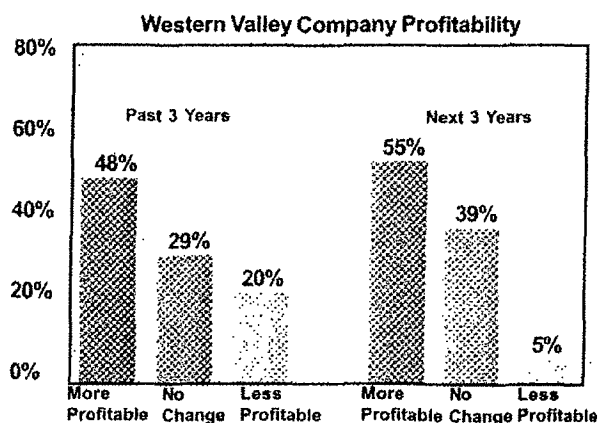


Supplies for businesses in the Western Valley region come from both within and outside the province.

Fully seven in ten firms surveyed listed business services companies as major suppliers. In addition, given that the construction/manufacturing sector is well represented in Annapolis and Digby counties, it is not surprising that raw materials companies also are identified by a majority of businesses as key suppliers. Components and manufacturing machinery are also important suppliers to businesses located in the Western Valley region.

The main business competition for Western Valley companies comes from other businesses in Annapolis and Digby counties.

One in two Western Valley companies indicate their main business competition comes from local companies operating within Annapolis and Digby counties, while one in five say their principal competition is from Nova Scotian companies outside the Western Valley region. Just over one in ten of the region's businesses compete mostly with Canadian companies located outside Nova Scotia, while less than one in ten compete mainly with international companies.



1999 business pulse western valley survey

by the staff of the western valley county

One-half of Western Valley companies report increased profitability over the past three years, and slightly more than half are optimistic about prospects for increased future profitability during the next three years.

One in two Annapolis and Digby county businesses report they have become more profitable over the past three years, three in ten have not experienced any change in their profitability, and two in ten have become less profitable. Companies operating in the Western Valley region are optimistic in terms of anticipated profitability over the next three years. More than half of the County's businesses expect to become more profitable during this period, four in ten anticipate no change in their profitability, while fewer than one in ten say they will become less profitable over the next three years. Six in ten Western Valley businesses believe there is at least some opportunity for their company to grow over the next three years by developing new markets or by introducing new product lines or services, about half view growth as emerging from product improvements, and just over one in three are optimistic that they can expand their business within the next three years by using new production technologies.

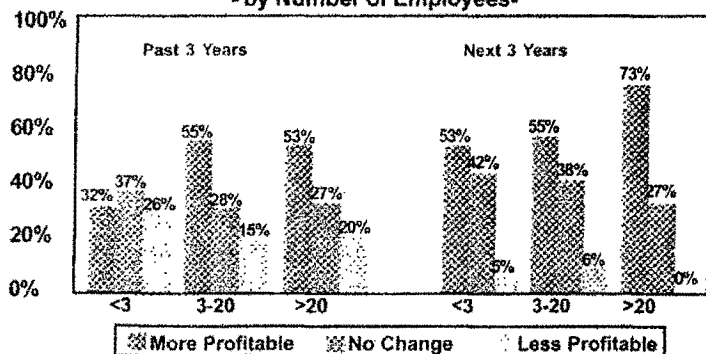
One in four Western Valley businesses expect to expand the number of their employees over the next twelve months.

Consistent with the optimism exhibited by many Annapolis and Digby county companies in terms of expected profitability over the next three years, one in four expect to expand the number of their employees over the next twelve months. About two-thirds foresee no change in their employee base, while fewer than one in ten expect a decrease. Retail sector businesses in the Western Valley region are less likely to anticipate growth in the number of their employees over the next twelve months.

Three in ten Western Valley businesses have undergone a physical expansion of their Annapolis/Digby county operations in the past two years.

Three in ten Western Valley businesses have undergone a physical expansion of their Annapolis/Digby county operations in the past two years, while almost four in ten are considering a physical expansion of their Western Valley operations at some point in the next two years. Businesses in the construction/manufacturing sector are most likely to have undergone a physical expansion in the past two years, and many service sector and construction/manufacturing companies plan for future physical expansions. The median average expected expansion is 4,000 square feet.

Western Valley Company Profitability
- by Number of Employees -



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Western Valley companies are divided in terms of assessing their region as a place to do business.

Businesses were asked to rate the extent to which they consider various factors as being an advantage or disadvantage of their Annapolis and/or Digby county operations. On the whole, the results were mixed, with many strong advantages identified, and, on the other hand, a significant number of important disadvantages also isolated. Overall, employee costs, availability of land, access to local labour force, proximity to customers, and quality of educational facilities were most widely identified as advantages of conducting business in the Western Valley region.

In contrast, cost of power, access to suppliers, availability of labour force training, and local tax rates were named as the principal disadvantages of the Western Valley as a business location. It is important to note, however, that in no instance did as many as one in four businesses consider these to be major disadvantages (the other companies felt they were only a minor disadvantage), indicating they are not major problem areas for most companies.

Only a relatively small number of Western Valley businesses are convinced that the Sable natural gas project offers important opportunities for development of the region's economy.

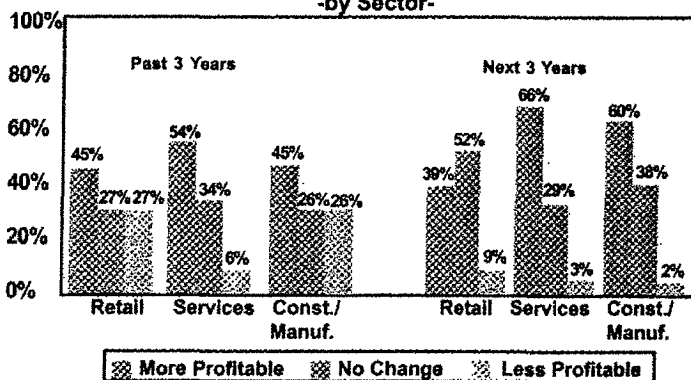
Businesses were asked to rate the extent to which they viewed opportunities for their company over the next few years, in terms of a number of specific Sable gas activities. Only a minority of businesses in Western Valley are optimistic about economic development prospects afforded by Sable natural gas coming onshore. Two in ten companies foresee either significant or some opportunities providing supplies and/or services for the construction of the natural gas pipeline, while a slightly smaller number anticipate opportunities providing supplies and services to natural gas distributors. One in ten companies say there will be opportunities developing new business activities using natural gas, or natural gas by-products.

In addition, four in ten companies report they would be at least somewhat likely to use natural gas if it were available.

There is sizable interest in obtaining information and utilizing services available through the Western Valley Development Authority.

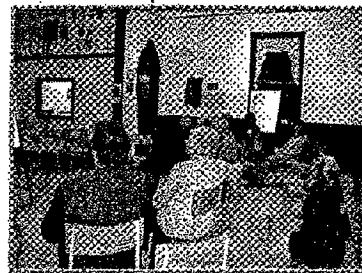
Businesses in Western Valley exhibit significant interest in receiving selected economic development-related information from the Western Valley Development Authority (WVDA). Specifically, companies expressed the most interest in receiving information on government loan programs, information on government regulations, and information on training programs. In contrast, there is relatively little interest in business planning information, business counselling, information about attracting new investments or partnerships, or information concerning export development issues.

Western Valley Company Profitability
-by Sector-



Western valley cultural strategy

This project was undertaken to create a strategy for developing the cultural sector of the Western Valley of Nova Scotia. Sponsored by the Western Valley Development Authority with support from Human Resources Development Canada, the project used a community development process. For the purposes of the project, the cultural sector is defined broadly as the group of individuals and organizations who are involved in expressing the various cultures of the community of the Western Valley. To be able to listen to what people in the region had to say about culture, meetings were held in nine communities throughout the Western Valley beginning in February, 1999. Over one hundred people attended these "Idea Growing" sessions. At each session, participants were asked to list activities and resources that they considered important to the cultural life of their communities. Participants were then asked what they wished would happen culturally in their communities and, finally, to list their priorities for development.



The mandate of the Western Valley Development Authority (WVDA) is to work with communities included in the area stretching from Wilmot in Annapolis County to Salmon River in the Region of Clare to generate economic activity that is sustainable. To accomplish this work, WVDA builds its development strategies by involving communities at every stage in the planning process.

The same community involvement model was used to carry out this strategy development. This plan, therefore, first considers factors affecting the development of the cultural life of the Western Valley region of Nova Scotia as a community and then on the challenges facing selected communities and organizations within the larger community.

Although the consultation meetings were information-gathering events, they were designed as opportunities for community members to begin to talk about culture and to discover more about the cultural life of their community. As a result of this discovery process, several initiatives have started from the Idea Growing sessions, namely, initial discussions

about the formation of an arts council for Middleton, the formation of an arts council in Digby and one for Digby Neck and The Islands. In addition, discussion has taken place with members of several cultural organizations in Annapolis Royal about the formation

of a Cultural Foundation to secure stable funding for the Town's cultural organizations.

Western Valley Cultural Strategy



western valley cultural strategy

western valley cultural strategy

To give more perspective to information gathered from community meetings, consultations were held with representatives of the Department of Education and Culture, Department of Economic Development and Tourism, professional artists and craftspeople, consultants at both the Southwest and Annapolis Valley Regional School Boards, representatives of Municipal governments in Digby, Clare and Annapolis Counties, and staff of local theatres and museums.

Information gathered indicates that people in the Western Valley have strong values associated with strengthening their diverse cultural life, including the recognition that cultural activities have the potential to increase community pride and cohesion.

There are, however, challenges to face. Though this is a growing sector, there is little public dialogue and knowledge about its importance. There are no policies regarding cultural development in any municipality in the Western Valley or for the Province of Nova Scotia and subsequently little infrastructure to support cultural education, events and activities. There are a variety of cultural resources in each community, yet many are unknown to the general population. There is also a lack of awareness of the resources available in other communities throughout the area. As a result, there is less support and participation among communities than is necessary to create sustainability. Strategic thinking is imperative to strengthening all cultural resources and many communities and organizations need assistance in developing this approach, especially to take advantage of cultural tourism opportunities. There are concerns in every community about the level of cultural education and involvement of youth. As a result of

community meetings, several initiatives to strengthen cultural life have occurred, among them, the establishment of arts councils in Digby and Digby Neck/The Islands and a decision to pursue the formation of a cultural foundation for the Western Valley.



Cultural activities do have tremendous untapped potential for Nova Scotia and for the Western Valley area in particular. The Nova Scotia Cultural Network has estimated that the cultural sector generates over three dollars in economic activity for every government dollar invested. In Nova Scotia, direct and indirect taxes, duties and the sale of

cultural goods is estimated to generate almost \$86 million in revenue to government alone. The cultural sector is creating jobs at a faster rate than any other sector of the provincial economy and culture's direct impact of the GDP of Nova Scotia was greater than fishing trapping, logging and forestry combined and almost as much as mining, quarrying, oil wells and agriculture combined. As well, the cost of creating a job in culture is 1/10th the cost of creating a job in manufacturing. Despite all these benefits, in 1999, Nova Scotia invests less in the arts and cultural industries than is the provincial average in Canada.

A cultural industries strategy written for the government of Ontario cautions that the long term viability of the arts and cultural sector is maintained only when it is valued for its intrinsic worth, that is, for the role it plays in enriching our lives, not only for economic value. A cultural tourism study prepared for the Nova Scotia government notes that the most successful events and festivals have strong and enthusiastic community support and involvement.

It takes more than money to make community life enjoyable and worthwhile. A recent paper prepared by the Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA) for its series of forums on Arts and Community stresses the growing recognition across Canada that creative expression and participation in the arts and cultural activities are powerful ways to build healthy communities with a strong sense of common ownership, responsibility and pride.

Cultural expression is the way people help others understand their values and their way of life. Some groups of people are more adept at explaining their culture than others, often because of training or education. This explanation happens in a variety of ways: through words with writing and drama, by using visual expression like art, sculpture, film and architecture and by actions such as the habits and rituals of everyday life. The cultural sector is a group of people, and sometimes businesses, who are involved in the expression of culture. Developing the strength of the cultural sector, therefore, means increasing communication and understanding among people and creating communities with strong identities, ready to reach out to the rest of the world with confidence.

vision and values

There is not yet a shared vision for the development of the cultural sector of the Western Valley as a regional community. The history and geography of the region contributes to an historic lack of dialogue as the Western Valley consists of many small communities surrounded and separated by rural areas, each with unique characteristics, and in the past, operating independently of one another. Although the challenges presented by economic change and the development work of the WVDA have increased

awareness of the need to reach out and work together, information collected during this project indicates that remnants of history remain and there still is less cooperation among communities than is ideal for cultural development. It will be difficult for communities and the whole region to move forward with cultural development work until even more communication and cooperation occurs.

Before any further development of the cultural sector occurs, it is important that a shared vision for the cultural life of the region be developed by people interested in taking a leadership role in the process and clearly articulating the future they want to see. To honour the information shared by participants throughout the region, the vision-creation needs to consider two key reasons for developing the cultural sector: for economic benefits and to strengthen communities.

Despite the lack of a unifying vision, participants in this project clearly articulated the values they want to anchor the development of the cultural life of their communities. Participants in every community want development to occur with the recognition and inclusion of the many cultures that make up the region's heritage. Kim Bays of Bear River conveyed this idea very eloquently:

"I am interested in keeping culture alive. All histories are interesting and help to blend the flavours of the present. I would like to see honest and genuine integration and appreciation of all the different cultures which make up the Bear River area. This would include appreciation and empathy, honour and distinction for our First Nation people, for African Canadian people, Jewish Canadians, Oriental people, as well as European Canadians. With appreciation and understanding of one another, we would hopefully lose fear."

western valley cultural strategy

western valley cultural strategy

Another value expressed very clearly in several community meetings was the need to cooperate with other communities, particularly when developing venues and other large projects. Participants in Middleton and Digby were most adamant that this cooperation be stressed, recognizing the need for small communities with relatively small budgets to develop ways to cooperate when developing cultural tourism marketing initiatives and strategies for increasing audiences for venues.

People in every community participating in this project gave strong recognition to the way cultural endeavours contribute positively to their quality of life.

Residents of Bridgetown recognized the role of cultural activities in increasing community pride and bridging gaps between small communities, citing the preservation of the lighthouse in Hampton as an example of an activity that can build communication and increase the understanding between residents of Hampton and Bridgetown. In Bear River, the Oakdene Centre is not only a multi purpose community and cultural centre; it represents a desire to preserve the Village's life. After the Oakdene School was closed, the Oakdene Centre was developed to keep the community interacting and recreating together.



Residents of Annapolis Royal want to share the many cultural resources they have by increasing efforts to build audiences, increase participation/visitation rates and increase the educational component of cultural organizations in the Town. This value of reaching out to others was also expressed by participants in Bear River who see the potential in sharing the many traditional skills residents have with young people and tourists.

Participants in the Tiverton meeting also voiced their desire to share skills inherent in the fishing heritage of the area, mentioning skills such as model boat building, net-mending and boat building as examples.

Participants in every community voiced concern about the education and involvement of youth in cultural activities. This was elegantly expressed by Dean Taylor, who attended the Bridgetown meeting:

"We need to give particular emphasis to our youth. We need their involvement. I say need because they have imagination, talent and vitality and stamina and we are missing out in not harnessing it for the benefit of everyone. Young people need to be a vital, contributing part of society...They need to tell us how we can fix ourselves as a society and one way-one key way they can do this is through the media of expression-drawing, music, painting, sculpture, writing, photography. These endeavours all require skills. So how do the youth learn these skills? By doing which is the best way to learn. And the rest of us need to help them, support them, advise them, argue with them, complain to them, praise them and thank them."

On-line consultation

To continue dialogue with community and provide input to Vision 2000, an interactive web page has been developed. The page was active for a period of four weeks. Eight categories were presented:

- » business development
- » environment
- » human resources
- » information technology
- » infrastructure and facilities
- » natural resources
- » partnerships and communications
- » tourism, heritage and culture.

Participants were given the option of responding to as many of the categories as they wished. There was an average of twenty statements per category and the participant could rate these statements from very important to not important.

Over thirty people responded with some answering all of the categories while others selected one or more of the categories they were most interested in. A total of 680 selections were identified and categorized.

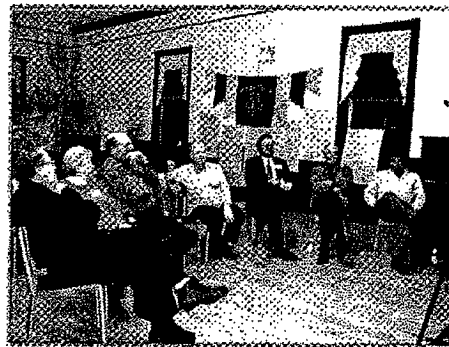
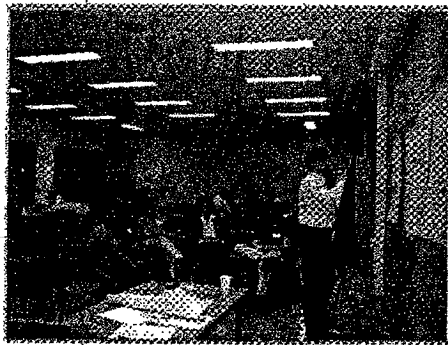
There were also a number of written comments that were received.

".... Solar septic plant in Bear River, now that's a community working together and everybody benefits!....some things to think about."

"...great to see this and to have input.."

The information received from the survey was analyzed and added to the data collected via the community meetings.

This process was also an opportunity to raise the profile of Community Access Sites by encouraging people to use CAP resources in developing a community vision.



on-line consultation

building tomorrow consultations

building tomorrow consultations

public meetings

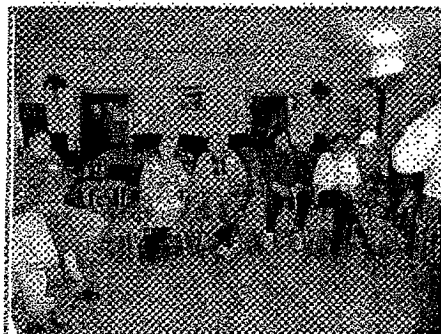
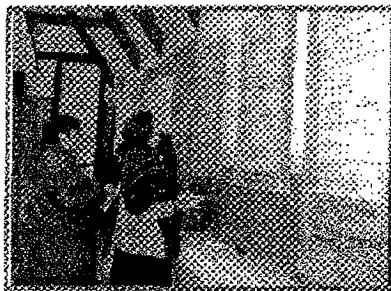
location	participants
Middleton 1	80
Middleton 2	51
Lawrencetown 1	17
Lawrencetown 2	19
Bridgetown 1	8
Bridgetown 2	9
Annapolis Royal 1	51
Annapolis Royal 2	23
Clementsport	11
Cornwallis	10
Digby 1	30
Digby 2	8
Sandy Cove 1	18
Sandy Cove 2	30
Weymouth 1	25
Weymouth 2	12
Church Point 1	17
Church Point 2	13
Saulnierville	43
Tiverton	8
Women's meeting	14
African Nova Scotia meeting 1	24
African Nova Scotia meeting 2	11
Bear River First Nation	2

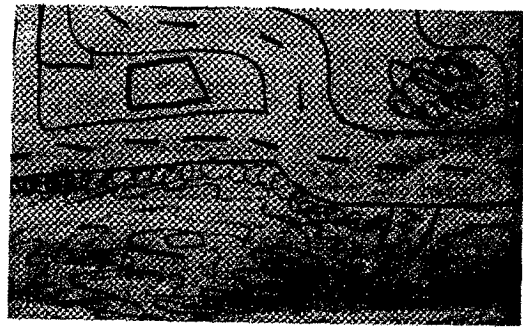
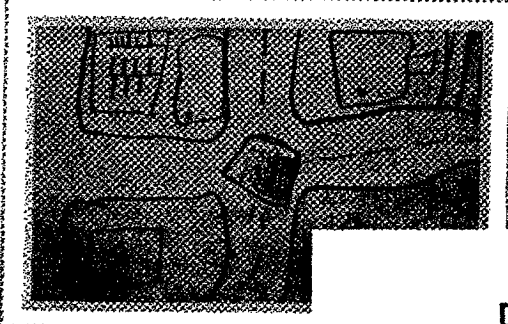
business pulse survey

face to face interviews with Western Valley Businesses	36
written surveys of Western Valley Businesses	400

culture sector consultations

activity	participants
Strengthening Culture conference held at Upper Clement's Park	50
9 Idea Growing sessions held in Western Valley communities	100
on-line consultations	
on-line participants	32





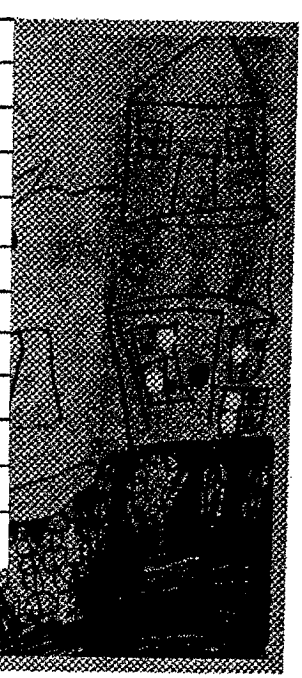
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3. Things I do + July 27, 2007
sometimes around in
their area

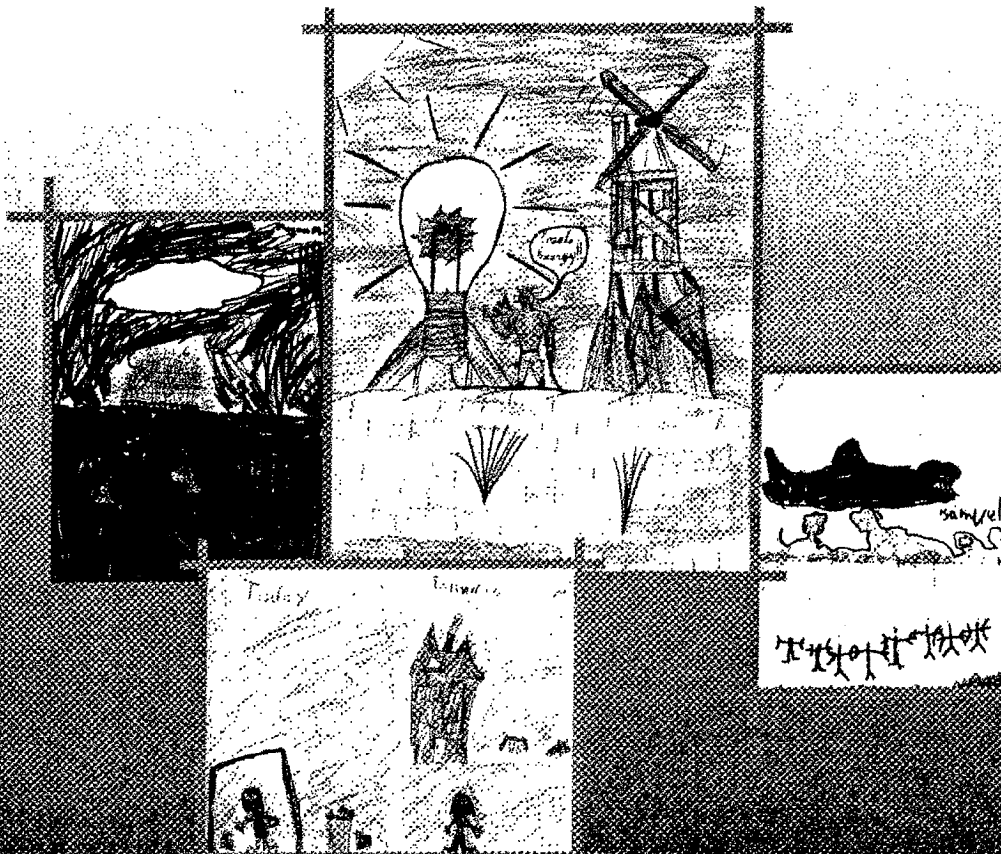
charts



Cat. No. 23 221-003



2. What I think my town will look like in ten years (2009):
new school, indoor pool, shopping mall, a zoo,
a better pet store, bigger library, more gift shops,
a bigger bookstore, a cinema, a playground



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