

**LOCAL ECONOMIES, LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNITY:  
DEFINING COMMUNITY IN NOVA SCOTIA**

By

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**Canada**

Local economies, local governance and community:

Defining community in Nova Scotia

by Frank J. Fawson

**Abstract:** Rural communities in Nova Scotia are in crisis. Globalization, centralization, amalgamations and urbanization have all weakened local communities. Corporate capitalism's influence largely dominates the economic and political aspects of local community. This study discusses whether local control of resources, governed by more participatory democracy, with collective community action built on human relationships of trust, can help reshape more self-reliant communities. Observations over a ten year period of a rural community in Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia are all considered in the discussion of local economies, local governance and community.

May 3, 2006

## **Dedication**

To all the Nova Scotians, Maritimers and Atlantic Canadians who have left and will have to leave the richness of their home communities (goin' down the road), in search of meaningful lives and economic security.

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## **Preface**

This paper is very much a work in progress. In one respect, it is completion of a three year course of study. But these past three years of study are, in part, a reflection of my connection to place. This connection can best be described by images of landscape. Perhaps my most favourite place is standing on that inter-tidal zone where gently rolling hills disappear into the sea. Where the solid ground beneath my feet becomes an ever changing fluid expanse of sea before me, only rivaled by the magnitude of the sky above. Where at the most distant sight, sea meets sky creating a seemingly limitless horizon while the rhythmic pulse of the ocean waves meditate the mind. Mi'kmaq traditionalists believe one needs to nurture and seek balance in all four houses: the Spiritual, the Physical, the Intellectual and the Emotional. It is the times I spend near the ocean that enriches and balances me best in all four houses. For me, this is the starting point for the part I play in building my community.

The following study outlines the importance of local economies, local governance and local community. Economic and political decision-making needs to be made at the local level. But I have learned through living in rural Nova Scotia over the past ten years that strengthening the social aspect of community is the critical point of beginning. Nurturing relationships of trust through the acceptance of, and involvement in, local practices and customs is preliminary to the building of local economies and governance. This research work has helped me to articulate so many thoughts, I have had over the years, of how and where we can start the work of strengthening community. There are a number of people I would like to thank for encouraging me.

The Atlantic Canada Studies program specifically, and more generally Saint Mary's University, provided the structure, organization and place. Students and



professors alike all motivated me to ground my many thoughts and opinions in the written word. This work incorporates all the many wonderful discussions we had over the years. Dr. Gene Barrett not only provided encouragement, but guided me toward framing the discussion within an organizational structure to better convey my thoughts. Errol Sharpe, as professor and friend, also provided valuable feedback and encouragement.

The people of Lunenburg County have given me a community to call home. Their sharing and caring offers me the greatest hope for the future. Maintaining and nurturing community is no easy task amidst the affluence and mobility of our society today. The opportunity for me to participate in, and learn from, my own local community is both invaluable and a humbling honour.

Individuals closest to you are often the most important factor in completion of challenging projects such as these. My brother Jim offered greatly appreciated photocopying services. Good friends and neighbours, Beth Munroe and Peggie Graham, provided editing and support. My partner, Wynne Jordan, who had returned to university studies before me, was my first and foremost motivator. From her suggestion three years ago I do a Masters in Atlantic Canada Studies, through listening to the endless chatter of my thoughts prematurely seeping out of my mouth, to the many quiet moments of encouragement, I thank you.

## **Introduction**

**Thesis:** Can local economies, local governance and community, built on greater social capital, create stronger more self-reliant communities with a greater measure of control over their destiny?

The interplay between local economies, local governance and community is central to the crisis facing an increasing number of rural communities in Nova Scotia.

Traditional Native Americans believed they were charged with the responsibility of caring for Mother Earth, and they recognized the wisdom for that task would come from lessons learned from the natural world. The analogy of a bee hive could be useful. Bees are one of the few insects that socially organize, like humans, to collectively achieve their goal of sustaining their home community, the hive. Bees' activities take place locally, largely within a few miles' range of their hive. The collection of a local resource, nectar, which is converted into honey can be viewed as their economy. The bees' interdependence with the local community is most evident through their contribution to local pollination. Governance within a beehive functions for the survival of the home. The queen may appear like a matriarch, but, that could have more to do with the fact that she is the only one to lay eggs, necessary for the survival of the hive. The male drone's non-working role appears to be of limited value leading to a forced banishment from the hive for some as winter approaches. The female worker bees' variety of tasks throughout their lives range from house cleaning and feeding the young to guard duty and, finally, the important task of gathering nectar. Structured roles within the hive collectively support strengthening their community, through communal as opposed to competitive activities. The discovery of an abundant source of nectar is communicated to the hive by

the performance of an in flight dance in front of the hive. Competition is also reduced as the hive's size reaches capacity and prepares to become two. Ultimately all the bees' activities work to nurture and strengthen their community. (Morse, 1980).

Just as, for bees, co-operation and community building are essential for survival, so too is the case for humans. Kirkpatrick Sale argues that the very survival of the human species may depend on our responsible stewardship of our shared home, the natural world. He believes our political, economic and social institutions all seem to lack the necessary wisdom to prevent an ecological crisis. Sale thinks the best hope is to begin the transition toward a brighter future through collectively rebuilding communities, which are both in touch with, and responsible for, their own small part of the planet. (1991, p.151)

Community is the fabric for the collective action of individuals. "Community is a mediating structure between individuals/families and their social, economic, political and natural environments" (Barrett, 2005, p.20). An important step toward greater local economic self reliance would be wresting greater control of community resources from disembedded corporate interests and centralized governments. Since economic decision-making is always closely tied to political decision-making, building forms of local broad-based participatory democracy has the potential to empower local communities. The task of strengthening both local economies and local governance may best be met in the context of a defined community of committed individuals. Forsey believes the work of rebuilding community begins at the local level, where it can provide "the opportunity and the challenge of reconnecting with each other and with our environment, in recognition of what Native people refer to as 'all our relations'" (Forsey, 1993, p.9). The argument will be put forth herein that locally controlled economies, local participatory governance and

the building community social capital are all necessary for people to take control of their futures and avoid the crisis that some believe is already upon us.

This research work considers what is essential for meaningful local community as an alternative to the impact of government-sponsored corporate globalization. It is a broad holistic perspective broken into three definable topics. Consideration of one area, without reflection on the others at the same time, would be inadequate for the purposes of this study. For example, political decisions to allow corporate resource extraction would have both short-term and long-term economic impacts in a given community. Long-term economic and environmental impacts would be key determining factors in the overall social well-being of any community. The three closely related topic areas are woven together under the umbrella of what can be considered local. Conscious of the overlap and inseparable connections, I have organized the conceptual material in the Literature Review in three separate chapters: 1 Local Economies, 2 Local Governance and 3 Local Community. Each of the three chapters ends with a review of works relevant to the Maritime region. The empirical discussion in Chapter 4 Case Study: Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia, selects observations of one rural community in respect to the discussion in Chapters 1-3. The chapters will attempt to respond to the following questions:

Chapter 1: Local Economies. Do private property rights act to deny local communities their heritage, and often essential livelihoods from local resources, when they are controlled from outside the community?

Chapter 2: Local Governance explores the need for participatory decision-making as the next evolution in democracy. Is governance hollow without economic decision-making? Could Native American demands for land claims settlements (an economic base) with self-government (local participatory decision-making) provide a contemporary model?

Despite the limitations, do present day municipal governments, the closest level of government to the people, still offer the greatest potential for participatory democracy?

Chapter 3: Local Community. What is the importance of local? Is individualism at risk? What are some of the difficulties of human relationships within communities? How do we put parameters around community in an urban setting? Is the role of women fundamental to building community?

Chapter 4: Case Study: Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia is a study of this rural community in respect to the three topic areas during the period from 1996 to 2005.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

## **Methodology**

The conceptual work contained in the Literature Review includes many non-academic type references. Several of the primary sources I have chosen to use in this thesis stand outside academia. For example, the writer Wendell Berry turned his back on a full-time career teaching at the university level in the United States during the 1960s. He implies that academia has largely failed farming communities in his country. Berry is a writer who chose to return to his Kentucky family property to farm. Most of his published essays on the demise of community come from this point of view and are found in news-stand journals such as *Orion*, *The Progressive*, and *Harpers* and in his many books. Like other authors cited in this work, his writings often tend to generalize, as opposed to specify, in regards to community.

I have chosen to utilize these sources for two reasons: First, they attempt to view the issue from a holistic perspective in which the economic, governance and social aspects of any given community are largely inseparable. Secondly, these writers are viewed by many as an alternative voice in the media, influencing the formulation of public opinion on the possibilities of community for the future. They could be referred to as the bridge between the theory and the practice of community building.

The empirical part of this research contained in Chapter 4 stems from ten years of active involvement in community activities. Engaging with the community in this fashion was done without any consideration of these experiential activities becoming part of a research project. What became data for the empirical research included in this work were my perceptions of my earlier experiential engagement within the community. It is only through reflection on these experiences, within the context of the conceptual material, that I have been able to identify barriers and opportunities for social change at

the community level. This auto ethnographic methodology is defined by Ellis as: “research, story, writing, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political” (2004, p. xix) I recognize the potential subjective bias in this technique and the importance of triangulating one’s research through the use of complementary techniques. To this end, my work has been supplemented with unobtrusive measures such as archival research and secondary statistics.

The practice of building community is in the doing. Theoretical abstractions can only offer signposts, at best. The work of community-building must also be a continuum from what presently exists within any given community. My relationship to the South Shore of Nova Scotia, from Halifax proper to Lunenburg County, reaches back to the late 1960s. In 1996, after a two year search, I relocated with my family from Halifax to Lunenburg County, to the small community of Dayspring just outside the town of Bridgewater. One of my underlying goals in moving there was to better understand how one might contribute to building social capital within a community, while supporting local economies and promoting local governance. Impressions were formed from my involvement in community activities of a wide variety, including both formal and informal social functions. Community fundraising events, public meetings, and conversations on doorsteps and in local stores have all shaped my perceptions. These activities overlap and interweave with my personal life as a member of this community. These activities have also provided unexpected personal opportunities for growth. I have directly experienced the “springboard effect of civil society” developing “communicative literacy – leadership skills, debating skills, risk-taking skills, active listening skills, [and] interpersonal skills” (Barrett, 2005, p. 17). I recognize and value my role in the

community and do not claim to be an objective observer or offer an unbiased perception of my community.

The community activities discussed in Chapter 4 revolves around the three primary aspects of this research work. Promoting local economies was pursued through volunteer work which included six years serving on the Board of Directors of LaHave River Credit Union, including two as president, and a number of years acting as delegate to a provincial credit union decision-making forum. For the practice of local governance, I became keenly involved in municipal government through openly offering alternative public opinions, as well as through running for councillor in municipal elections in 1997, 2000 and in 2004. Being an active member of the Dayspring and District Volunteer Fire Department became the largest time commitment for me, and has perhaps provided the most intimate experience of building social relations within the local community. Access to this primary local community organization, made up of largely working class individuals, was facilitated by the fortuitous match between my skills as a licensed carpenter and their never-ending need for building repairs. Outside of repair work, my other activities within the fire department have included firefighting and emergency training, active involvement in local fundraising events, positions on the Board of Commissioners and as president of the executive. My participation in many of these activities continues to this day, remaining challenging, rewarding, and at times frustrating, not unlike the dynamics found within most families.



## **Literature Review**

### **1. Local Economies**

#### **A. key issue**

Individual, family and community economic independence are largely absent in free market globalized economies. The overwhelming majority of control over economies in the world is in the hands of a small number of wealthy white men. “They have created an economic system ... that is designed to serve a very efficient system of production and consumption and to discourage people from developing the capability to look after themselves” (McRobie, 1982, para. 3). Individuals and communities have given up much of their ability to provide meaningful self-reliant work, in exchange for the promise of income security from disembedded corporate economies. The irony in this arrangement is, “[t]he ideal of the owners of capital is production without employment,” while employees feel, “their ideal is income without work” (1982, para. 3). “The destruction of the community begins when its economy is made – not dependent (for no community has ever been entirely independent) – but subject to a larger external economy” (Berry, 1992, p.126). External economies with the primary focus of profit can be destructive to community. Goodwin argues, “[i]ndividual and social well-being is the goal of an organized society, and the economy should serve that” (Goodwin, 2006, para. 5). Local economic decision-making is, for the most part, not made by and for the local community.

The control of local economies is defined by ownership of the community’s resource base. In turn, ownership of resources is defined by private property law, in concert with capitalist free market economic systems. Capitalism encourages the extraction of community natural resources, which are converted into profitable

commodities. Individual private property owners, with little connection to the community, are often the major beneficiaries. Whether the resources of a community should be considered privately owned, as the wealth of an individual, or commonly held, to first meet the needs of community residents, is central to the question of control of local economies. “The notion that land can be a personal possession, or that it can be used for one’s personal benefit rather than the benefit of one’s group as a whole, is a comparatively recent and isolated cultural development” (Burch, 2000, p. 156). Private ownership of resources does not give priority to community needs.

Legalizing individual ownership of the resource base encourages excessive exploitation and conversion to personal wealth. Too often the personal wealth flows outside the community, but even when that isn’t the case, the distribution of wealth is typically very inequitable. Also, there is almost no consideration of the rights of future generations to these community resources, nor of the long-term liability from the pollution that may be generated. The lasting effects of pollution can long outlive the resource extraction period, leaving communities with extensive liabilities at a later date. Because the full environmental cost to communities of extracting resources is rarely paid, it only serves to increase the wealth flowing to private property owners. Manufacturing production processes often utilize large quantities of clean water or air, leaving pollution in their wake. These community resources, which are considered part of the public domain, are often utilized without being fully restored, or without full compensation paid to the community. The pollution may contribute to environmental problems such as climate change, which is like an accrued debt generated from the past uses of clean air, which we are all now being forced to pay. Unfortunately, this remedial work will not likely be repaid proportionally by those who have profited the most from the use of these

resources. National economic policy tends to support removing control of resources from the local community.

### **B. origins of problems**

Centralized colonial-style decision-making over the use of local resources in Canada has a long history. “With economic colonization ... [f]arming began to replace hunting and gathering, and monetary exchange began to replace co-operative production and consumption. ... [D]ecision-making authority was removed to inaccessible London [UK], [or] Ottawa” (M’Gonigle, 1989, p. 69). Centralizing control of resources followed a similar pattern in areas where farming was not suitable. In Jacob’s *The Economy of Regions*, she suggests that stagnant rural economies are “supply regions [or] ‘colonial’ economies. ... [I]mperial powers have typically shaped conquered territories into regions supplying a narrow range of rural or resource goods for distant markets” (1997, pp. 112, 111). Resource use decision-making external to communities has a tendency to disrupt the communal management of local resources. Eurocentric perspectives of local resource use have also been blind to traditional holistic Native resource management models, which sustained the peoples of the Americas for thousands of years without depletion. The true value and lessons of Native American knowledge were ignored by our European ancestors and continue to remain largely undiscovered. “The world has yet to utilize fully the gifts of the American Indians” (Weatherford, 1988, p. 254). M’Gonigle writes of a small number of environmentalists, along with Native activists, who have come to “challenge the mounting failures of the dominant culture’s de-spiritualized belief system, and the corporate and bureaucratic institutions built upon it” (1989, p. 72). Private

ownership of a community's resource base and centralized decision-making are fully utilized by capitalist free market globalization.

The loss of community control over the local resource base is closely related to the adoption of capitalism as a primary economic system in the western world. Free market capitalism was built on the argument that humans are, first and foremost, motivated by their own needs and desires. Karl Polanyi lived, taught and wrote in the turbulent years of the twentieth century characterized by the two world wars. Some of his thoughts and writings were of the eighteenth century origins of capitalism in England, and the adoption of the unseen self-regulating hand of the market in the nineteenth century. Polanyi felt market economies created a new type of society after labour and land were made into commodities for sale. Selfish human behaviour, motivated by the “[f]ear of starvation with the worker, [and the] lure of profit with the employer, would keep the vast establishment running.” But Polanyi found the individual to be:

acting on remarkably ‘mixed’ motives, not excluding those of duty toward himself and others – and maybe, secretly, even enjoying work for its own sake. ... Honor and pride, civic obligation and moral duty, even self-respect and common decency, were now deemed irrelevant to production. ... At the price of impoverishing the individual, it [free market economies] enriched society. Today, we are faced with the vital task of restoring the fullness of life to the person. (1971, pp. 61-73)

The task of Polanyi's day remains largely the same today. The prominent market economy now is commonly referred to as globalization. In a reactionary way, globalization is encouraging the resurgence of local economies. “[A]ny local economy activist knows that global trends are driving the emergence of local economies. ... Their work is essentially a process of growing things in the cracks in globalization's façade.” Many people are beginning to realize strong community-based economies are the best protection against the fluctuations of global market economies. “Exactly because of their

diversity and variety, local economies fly in the face of the simplifying forces of globalization.” Self-reliance and quality of life, with less material consumption, are features of ecologically sustainable communities. “What local-economy theory is about is a new sort of economic development that honors ecological realities and finds efficiencies in small-scale, shared knowledge at the community level” (2003, sec. Globalization and Community Economies). It is a response to a much larger economic system many feel no longer offers them security.

Private resource ownership dominates over communal resource management in rural communities. “As modernity encroaches on traditional communities, one of the first things to go has been communal property” (Barrett, 2005, p. 12). It may not be coincidental that development of the nation state and capitalism parallel the rise of private ownership of community resources. The Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 ended the Thirty Years War in Europe. Christians fighting each other over religious beliefs and territory was costly. Distinct national borders began to outline control of land and the economic benefits of its natural resources. In western countries this evolved into the modern-day secular nation state. Societal structures have perpetuated hierarchal inequities, where individuals with any amount of physical wealth almost always own and control part of the resource base. Those who own much more than their share often have extended powers over others’ lives. This correlation didn’t go unnoticed through the ages by peoples of a large number of different cultures and religious beliefs from around the world. Many Christians, Jews, Muslims and most aboriginals all believed land and its resources were a gift from a higher power to be shared in order to meet everyone’s basic needs.

The natural resources of a community define and sustain its local economy. Relationships with the land began to change centuries ago in Western Europe.

Individualism supported a growing number of private landowners ready to exploit the communities of their natural resources for personal wealth accumulation. John Locke, in the late seventeenth century, argued that the land's resources had no value until an individual with their own labour converts it to something useful, making it their own private property (1937, p. 5). This was Locke's way to justify, for his wealthy elite business class, extinguishing common rights to the use of a community's resource base in favour of capitalist rights of private property ownership. Allan Engler identifies the transformation that took place in his book *Apostles of Greed*:

[C]apitalist property developed by destroying traditional communal rights to land... Before capitalism, property meant a right to things – land...which one used and possessed as one's own or shared with designated others...Property rights were established by legal documents, memory and custom...By making legal title the only claim to property and then creating a market in titles to property, capitalism broke the tie between use and property...Property became capital. (1995, pp.9-10)

The privatization of community resources, at root, is about wealth accumulation and power.

[E]arly Europeans set forth with vigor to acquire and technologically control the American landscape while seeking individual and monetary self-interest. Three centuries later, the land is still more likely to be owned than known, controlled without being fully understood, and loved only for its instrumental value. (Vitek, 1996, p. 1)

Private ownership can be contrasted with the philosophy of the common Native American economic system in place at the time of European contact.

[M]y right to be responsible is really a question of identity (both individual and collective) more than it is a question of an individualized property right. ... Identity ... requires a relationship with territory land not a relationship based on control of that territory. (Monture-Angus, 2002, p. 36)

Relationships are the key. Monture-Angus defines right relationships, as the basis of an economic system which largely excluded European style private property rights.

Traditional Native American economies are based on balance and harmony while European derived capitalism is based on competition.

Monture-Angus recognizes the difficulties between Canadians and Aboriginal peoples, and demands “an examination of the meaning of the concepts we are building our relationship with.” For example, the fear of Native sovereignty and land claims settlements is “grounded in western notions of individualized property rights.” There is no question an essential aspect of Native self-determination is control of resources in a land base which can provide economic self-reliance. However, Monture-Angus argues Aboriginal peoples can best determine their relationship with the land which may combine the spiritual with a type of communal resource management. Private ownership and, yet undefined, Native concepts of communal ownership need not exclude each other. (2002, pp. 33-36) Greater equity, conservation and even efficiency may be achieved because the traditional holistic Native approach does not separate the political, economic, spiritual or social aspects of life. In fact, many environmentalists feel Native models of collective ownership could enhance resource management, thus providing answers for the ecological limits presently being faced. Collective property rights compared to either public or private property rights have “advantages of smallness and decentralization.” Communal property rights “addresses central questions of ownership and management in a way that achieves the goals of equity and conservation – and, very likely, efficiency – in a manner superior to either state or private property forms” (Usher, 1993, p. 102).

Native American communities in Canada today function within a capitalist economy, but in their own distinctive communal way. Reserve lands and resources continue to be held communally with their use managed for the collective benefit of the community. Providing the basic necessities of food and shelter to all are integral to their

worldview. The traditional Mi'kmaq of Atlantic Canada would distribute meat throughout the community when a deer, moose or bear was taken. A thread of the same communal attitude extends to recent times. Despite now having refrigeration in most homes, wild foods are still often shared within the community. Communal ownership also extends to essential services such as housing (Knockwood-Morris, 2005). If substantial progress were to be made by our governments on Native land claims issues, a model of communal ownership would likely be the first choice of many Native communities. But the communal aspect is perhaps the greatest barrier to government agreement. Individual private property rights often place the control of community resources in the hands of those with little direct connection to the community.

Disembedded corporate economies can have many negative impacts on rural communities. Globalization proponents support the principle of comparative advantage with production specialization for export trade. But, “[t]rade today is not free and it is not about an exchange of goods between countries, it is about a monopolistic corporate takeover that destroys smaller businesses, communities, and even large industrial towns” (Norberg-Hodge, 1996, para. 8). Globalization supporters also maintain that free market forces will eventually bring greater wealth and well-being to all. Berry argues that disembedded corporate economies can be highly destructive, “an enemy to the natural world, to human health and freedom, to industrial workers, and to farmers and to others in the land-use economies; and furthermore, that it is inherently an enemy to good work and good economic practice” (Berry, 2001, para. 28). Disembedded corporate economies place the priority of profits over the long-term social, economic and the environmental welfare of a community.



The jobs-versus- the-environment debate has been highly divisive in many rural communities. The corporate extraction of nonrenewable resources, and the over-harvesting of renewable resources, often provides above-average wages, until the local resources are depleted. “[T]he great, centralized economic entities of our time do not come into rural places in order to improve them by ‘creating jobs.’ They come to take as much of value as they can take, as cheaply and as quickly as they can take it” (Berry, 1996, p. 77). Natural resources are converted into commodities for profit. The self-interest motivation of free market economies promises the best outcome for our communities. However, the outcome too often favours so-called production efficiencies with less employment. “Whatever else this structure leads to, it is not to a harmonious society. This is one of the characteristics of modern economic life, a structure that says we must eliminate people from the process of production” (McRobie, 1982, para. 4). Later, if machines or workers elsewhere can be found to do the same work more cheaply, the originally promised job wages can quickly disappear. Highly mechanized, capital-intensive technology, which requires less human labour, often replaces local intermediate technology which can maintain community jobs. Responsibility for the welfare of the people of the community, or the ecology of the place, is not a high priority for corporate interests. “Those large economies, in their understanding and in their accounting, have excluded any concern for the land and the people” (Berry, 2005, para. 7).

Government policies in many countries continue to support disembodied economies of globalized food production and distribution over producers for the local economy. Free market economies hold the myth that lower shelf prices are due to greater efficiencies, disguising the support of government subsidies. “[T]he largest 10 percent of [United States] farms received nearly two-thirds of the federal subsidies handed out in

2000 – some \$17 billion.” Small farmers supplying food to their local market find their own tax dollars unfairly subsidizing global food producers. “If government policies instead served to level the playing field, local food systems could once again supply the majority of people’s food needs everywhere, just as they did not so long ago” (Norberg-Hodge, 2002, pp. 8, 16). The underlying issue remains. Many of the costs of global trade are hidden. “The public also picks up most of the tab for the costly infrastructure requirements for large-scale global enterprises – including long-distance transport networks, instantaneous global communication facilities and centralized energy infrastructures.” Jules Pretty goes further, stating “[y]ou actually pay three times for your food: once over the counter; twice through your taxes, which are used largely to support [industrial] farming; and thrice to clean up the mess caused by this method.” Despite all the direct and indirect corporate subsidies, which have been squeezing small producers out of existence, smaller farms remain “anywhere from 200 to 1,000 percent more productive per acre than larger farms” (2002, pp. 73-77). The global free market economies may pretend to stand on the principle of competition, but much of the corporate food industry could not compete with the local food industry and would disappear without heavy government subsidies. Yet proponents of a highly globalized economy “see the corporation as an efficient and indispensable institution” and “argue for the removal of existing restraints on corporate activity, so that they can more effectively carry on their good work.” But if diversity is as important to economies as it is to the natural world, local economies by nature are more diversified. Food security is also greater with the local economy, without the many global economy costs to the environment, rural livelihoods, people’s health, and the sense of connection to community (2002, pp. 93, 99-100).

Recent discussions on CBC Radio (Tremonte, 2005) suggest the pursuit of individual health and the ecological health of the planet are connected in complicated ways disguised by global trade. The overall costs of globally traded food can be much more than the price tag. European consumers of organically grown Brazilian soy products, as a substitute for meat, may have a false sense of global ecological awareness. The soy plantations in Brazil have been replacing grazing lands for cattle at an alarming rate. This has led to an increase in the demand for agricultural land, fuelling greater deforestation and illegal logging of the Amazon rainforest. If the Amazon rainforests are the lungs of the planet, then this deforestation, as a result of westerners' food choices, will have future consequences for our own health and well-being. The increasing popularity of organic food as healthy for oneself and the planet is now heavily marketed by the global food industry. Corporate marketing of organic food in large Canadian grocery chains results in the majority now being imported from California.

Non-organic food security is also an issue. The present global food industry can only maintain about three days of food supply in Canada. Laurie Stalbrand of the Toronto Food Policy Council believes we need to begin to make ethical choices in our food consumption. Buy local where possible, Fair Trade where not, she says. She promotes defining true food sustainability by looking for labels such as the Food Alliance Certified, which broadly considers workers and animals rights, habitat, conservation and pesticide impacts (Tremonte, 2005). Organic foods might be generally thought of as healthy and ecologically sustainable by consumers, but long distance transport can compromise both quality and sustainability. The impending energy crisis provides a strong environmental argument for buying local. The externalized transportation costs of the global food industry contribute to pollution believed to be responsible for global

warming. “Speeding up the transport of goods facilitates centralized production, with the result that in Europe, for example, some packages now have sixteen languages on them” (Norberg-Hodge, 1996, para. 37). The urbanization of peoples around the world has reduced the local production of food and is another symptom of globalization.

The urban migration of rural peoples has been heightened by governments’ favour of centralized corporate economies over embedded local economies. The problem is visibly acute in third world cities. The surrounding slums and shanty towns house the unemployed and poor. Many have come from rural areas in search of work, which often leaves them in a perpetual state of poverty. “[U]nless productive city jobs do exist, displaced people are left in the lurch. In some cases the displaced people migrate to cities that have little to offer them but idleness and either doles or poverty without doles” (Jacobs, 1997 pp. 114-115). Too often this is the outcome of being forced from a more self-reliant existence in a rural community, where they may have grown some of their own food, to the promise of urban work and lifestyles in an industrial economy. They then become part of a huge pool of cheap labour, highly vulnerable to the economic cycles of free market capitalism. According to Berry, the urban migration of farmers in developed countries has taken place for similar reasons:

The farm-to-city migration has obviously produced advantages to the corporate economy. The absent farmers have had to be replaced by machinery, petroleum, chemicals, credit, and other expensive goods and services from the agribusiness economy which ought not to be confused with the economy of what used to be called farming. (1990c, p. 123)

American rural residents who have been replaced often become desperately unemployed as part of the urban poor. “[I]n a large mid-western city ... a major occupation of the police force there is to keep the ‘permanently unemployable’ confined in their own part of town” (1990c, p. 124). Even in a wealthy country like the United States, freedom can be

compromised by global corporate economies which offer jobs with adequate incomes for only a few.

In Chapter 1 of the Literature Review the discussion has been focused on Local Economies. Concepts of local resource ownership contrasting private with communal ownership have been reviewed. The true cost of disembodied global corporate economies is highlighted by examples from the food industry. In the following section the discussion will look at possible alternatives local embedded economies.

### **C. alternatives**

Embedded economic structures share, to a greater extent, in the fate of a community's future. Locally owned businesses offer a greater degree of assurance that community needs will be considered first. Local economies are built on the premise that every individual considers the community's best interests, because they are often inseparable from one's own or one's neighbour's best interests. Berry applies this thinking to farming. "It has become increasingly clear that the way we farm affects the local community, and that the economy of the local community affects the way we farm; that the way we farm affects the health and integrity of the local ecosystem, and that the farm is intricately dependent, even economically, upon the health of the local ecosystem" (2005, para. 6). Sale argues that an economy which strengthens local community "would be an economy that depended on a minimum number of goods and the minimum amount of environmental disruption along with the maximum use of renewable resources and the maximum use of human labour and ingenuity (1991, p. 69). The local economy is seen by both Perkins and Sale as an alternative to the instability and unpredictable nature of global free market economies:

Stronger community-based economies not only help people to survive the vicissitudes of world market fluctuations, they hold the seed of more fundamental economic transformation. ... Communities which can meet their own needs need the global economy less. ... Working toward self-sufficiency involves fostering the development, preservation, and appreciation of the skills needed to live our lives with more quality and less material consumption. (Perkins, 2003, para. 3-7)

Local self-reliant economies tend to be better insulated from the boom and bust cycles of the market, transportation costs are minimized, food requires less preservatives and it generally encourages a collective responsibility for one's community (Sale, 1991, pp.76-78).

Perkins also raises two important issues in a valid critique of stronger local economies. Firstly, consumer prices are usually higher, and secondly, there would be fewer imported goods. “[T]he impact of these price increases on those who are most vulnerable economically must be a concern for anyone advocating local-economy sovereignty” and “the implications of reduced trade for international and North-South equity are also very problematic” (Perkins, 2000, p. 184). The problems Perkins puts forth cannot be dismissed easily but the present situation, with globalized trade as the dominant player, has also done little to deal with the underlying causes of these equity problems at home or abroad. The impact on those who can least afford price increases in their own communities could be assisted through social programs established at the community level. Greater reliance on a local economy where we are “producing more ourselves would allow the South to keep more of its resources, labor, and production for itself” (Norberg-Hodge, 2002, p. 113). Self-reliance is the key, but not without equitable interdependence between all communities, particularly within regional economies.

Vibrant regional economies with cities as their central nuclei have existed for centuries. Jacobs believes there are economic forces at work which are very predictable

for both the urban and rural parts of what she calls city regions. She believes, city import-replacing creates a process “that shifts and enlarges city markets, rapidly increases city jobs, spurs development and use of rural labor-saving technology, multiplies and diversifies city enterprises, and generates capital – all simultaneously.” But not all cities generate regions. Cultural or administrative capitals, or transportation and depot centers, may not be involved in replacing the cities’ imports with local production. Jacob’s city regions “are not defined by natural boundaries, because they are wholly the artifacts of the cities at their nuclei. The boundaries move outward or halt, only as city economic energy dictates.” This in turn draws rural people to the increased jobs in the city, at the same time demand for rural resources is increasing, which in turn demands the implementation of labour saving technology in rural areas. “Any region with an innovative and import-replacing city of its own becomes capable of producing amply and diversely for its own people and producers as well as for others, again no matter what its given natural attributes” (1997, pp. 116, 119). The economies of both rural and urban parts of the city regions are interdependent. What is perhaps not clear in Jacob’s analysis is an equitable economic relationship between the centre and the periphery of her city regions. Many rural communities are viewed by urban centres as a place from which to draw resources and to which to export wastes.

In order to make the relationships between urban and rural communities more equitable, many changes will need to happen where the majority now resides, in urban communities. The flow of huge quantities of resources to cities and the outflow of wastes is unsustainable. “The growing number of people living in cities is matched by massive increases in the resources they consume and the pollution they create. Cities rely on their ability to import resources and export their waste. This open loop cannot be sustained”

(Box, 2004). Over consumption with low levels of self-reliance are hallmarks of western society. While conservation is always the first step in lowering consumption, cities could produce more of the food and energy they consume. Community gardens could help to geographically define urban neighbourhoods. The possibilities for alternative urban energy production are limitless. Thermal solar is well proven technology. Wind and building-integrated photo voltaic systems, where collectors replace necessary building materials such as roofing, are rapidly becoming healthier alternatives for the planet, while generating economic savings. Rain water collection and the re-use of grey water are practical and simple technologies. Extraction of methane gas from human sewage is used effectively in parts of the world. User pay principles could also be a motivator for some of these consumption lowering changes. Extra costs could apply to additional bags of garbage. Charges could be levied on private automobile use in urban core areas, with the revenues generated directed toward subsidizing public transportation. In London, such changes reduced traffic by 20 percent and in Copenhagen “bikes for public use.... are financed through advertising on wheel surfaces and bicycle frames” (2004). All of these measures could eventually enhance the lives of urban dwellers by building small-scale community economies to better serve the needs of people in both urban and rural communities.

Schumacher’s *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics As If People Mattered* remains popular today as an alternative blueprint to centralized disembedded economies. It is based on the principle of simplicity. “[S]ince consumption is merely a means to human well-being, the aim should be to obtain the maximum of well-being with the minimum of consumption” (1978, pp. 47-48). When human needs are considered first, local production for local needs from small autonomous units is the most efficient and



ecologically sustainable economic system. Schumacher also saw the need for large scale unity and co-ordination, indicating there was a need for “many different structures, both small ones and large ones, some exclusive and some comprehensive. ... For constructive work, the principal task is always the restoration of some kind of balance” for “[t]oday, we suffer from an almost universal idolatry of giantism” (1978, p.54). In regards to the reality of large corporate business, Schumacher felt the present system of extracting tax after the fact from corporate profits bred resentment; it was better to create new patterns of ownership where a percentage of public ownership of the means of production existed. He justified public ownership on the grounds that “large amounts of public funds have been and are being spent on what’s generally called the ‘infrastructure’ and the benefits go largely to private enterprise free of charge” (1978, p. 229). The same situation exists today in most of the world. Transportation, education, training, water and sewer, and roads all form part of the infrastructure, largely paid for by public monies which enhance business profits and private wealth substantially. These are some of the same subsidies of globalized corporate trade to which Norbert-Hodge (2002) refers. Other writers see local economies as somewhat of a hybrid corporate/public enterprise.

On the other hand, Shuman believes greater local self-sufficiency can be achieved through community corporations. “Community corporations hold out the possibility that the benefits of each sphere – the efficiency of the market and the social-mindedness of the public sector – can be realized without the liabilities of either.” But he feels it is essential to retain local control. Any expansion of economic activity should be targeted carefully at those people, institutions and businesses that have a long term commitment to the community. In addition, he maintains that federal aid “almost always undermines community self-reliance. A community dependent on federal dollars loses control of its

economic future” (1998, pp. 27, 55, 152). Governments do have the ability to control or diffuse local initiatives depending on how they use the public funds they have in their hands. Both the federal and provincial governments in Canada are involved in local economic development as part of globalized free market economies. Increasingly, people are losing hope that the state can ameliorate the socially disruptive tendencies of free market capitalism and in opposition are looking for alternative solutions.

McRobie argues that small scale technology is where community solutions will be found. “[T]echnology is not a fixed or given factor in economic development; rather, it is an instrument capable, if we so will, of being altered to adapt itself harmoniously to the economic, social, and cultural conditions of any country or community.” Smaller human-scale technologies can “make people more productive, giving them precedence over the production of goods.” Local value added production of raw materials tends to utilize smaller-scale technologies which create greater decentralized employment. “Large-scale capital and the energy-intensive technologies ... clearly do not provide solutions to ... problems of mushrooming urban growth and increasing underemployment and unemployment.” A greater degree of self-reliance, with “technologies that enable communities and countries to make things for themselves, are really the only route left toward creating employment and gaining economic independence” (1982, para. 6, 11). The issue of where control of the employed technology lies is critical.

We need to create for ourselves ... technologies that are small, simple, capital saving, and nonviolent.... The alternative is to redistribute economic power, to give back to communities, families, and local groups the power that has gradually been taken from them. (1982, para. 30)

Norberg-Hodge believes food, a necessity of life, provides a starting point for control of production and consumption, creating an important local economic closed loop. “If the

goal is to provide the most benefits to the most people, a shift toward local food would be an important first step” (2002, p.79).

Locally producing, distributing and consuming a daily necessity of life provides a measure of security from global market economies. *Coming Into the Foodshed* outlines a local foodshed similar to the concept of a community watershed. It is a response to “a global food system structured around a market economy that is geared to the proliferation of commodities and the destruction of the local” (Kloppenburg, 1996, p. 114). By keeping food local, within one’s foodshed, a more equitable exchange can benefit both producer and consumer while lowering the environmental impact. In contrast, the global food economy, relying on market forces, invariably costs producers, consumers and the environment. “The historical extension of market relations has deeply eroded the obligations of mutuality, reciprocity, and equity that ought to characterize all elements of human interaction” (1996, p. 115). The local food economy is put forth as a morally superior alternative to the profit-oriented market economy. Both the production and consumption of food becomes a vehicle for rebuilding community, by way of nurturing trusting relationships between individuals who have been distanced from each other, by the commodification of food within global economies. Local food economies serve as a place for a transition from the global to the local, “[g]iven the centrality of food in our lives and its capacity to connect us materially and spiritually to one another and to the earth.” The underlying premise is fundamentally about creating a new local economy, as opposed to challenging the global economy to make a transition toward becoming more attuned to human and ecological needs. “We understand the foodshed as a framework for both thought and action,” local action that is strongly connected to place. “We need to keep place firmly in our minds and beneath our feet as we talk and walk our way toward a

transformed future” (1996, p. 122). If you are what you eat, then being committed to place demands eating local whenever possible to support those engaged in producing local food. One very old model for local economies is co-operatives.

Co-operatives have a long history of collective community responsibility. In many instances, they have sprung from local economic situations as a response to corporate free market economies showing little priority for meeting human needs. Co-ops’ distinctive difference from corporations is their democratic structure. Decision-making in corporations is made by share holders. Typically, the more shares owned by an individual the more votes. In contrast, each co-op member gets one vote regardless how many shares or how large her investment. “[C]o-ops focus on an individual’s rights and responsibilities within a communal framework. ... Co-operators are ... congregations of people who believe in working together to realize their individual potential.” Consumer co-ops provide retail goods, credit unions banking services, housing co-ops provide shelter, while farmers act collectively through co-ops around the world. But workers organizing themselves to provide greater control over their livelihoods and their workplace have the greatest potential to bring control of economies to the community level. Worker co-ops are typically small and local but the scale can be large as well. “Mondragon Cooperacion Cooperativa ... is a huge hi-tech industrial multinational based in the Basque region of Spain.” (1996, pp. 2-3). Mondragon employs more than 66,000 people (Ransom, 2004, p. 19). A significant portion of the employees in 15,000 U.S. worker co-ops own 9 percent of the country’s corporate equity (Alperovitz, 2000, p.172). The 2004 film, *The Take*, looks at the economic collapse of Argentina in 2001. Mass unemployment and plant shutdowns motivated workers to occupy and begin to operate factories as worker co-ops in order to “reclaim their work, their dignity and their

democracy” (Lewis, 2005). Despite their tendency to smallness “[c]o-operatives directly employ about 100 million people worldwide – more than the 86 million employed by corporations.” In Canada “some 40 percent of Canadians are members of at least one co-op” (Ransom, 2004, pp. 18-19). The magnitude of the co-operative movement is huge despite a lack of government support relative to the proportion of local economies the movement sustains. Even international Fair Trade type co-operatives, which operate in a globalized trading fashion, garner little support in comparison to the privately owned, for profit, corporate sector.

The concepts and alternatives discussed in this section can now be taken in consideration of economies in the Maritimes. Major transformations in the primary resource sectors have taken place since World War II. But as corporate economies fail to provide sufficient jobs, alternatives in the Maritimes are becoming successful.

#### **D. local economies in the Maritime Region**

One of the biggest problems for rural Maritime communities is providing a way for individuals to make a living. Out migration from the three eastern provinces has been a reality for generations of Maritimers. Destinations have included the ‘Boston states’, popular during the first half of the twentieth century, and ‘TO’ during the 1960s and 1970s. Today Cape Bretoners joke of a larger part of their extended families now living in Fort McMurray, as opposed to back home on the island. Cliff Murphy, head of the Building Trades Council in Cape Breton said, "We had about 1,700 people in the building trades last year working in Alberta, and that would roughly mean about \$3 million coming back into the economy of Cape Breton each week" (CBC.ca News, 2006). “Through the past hundred years and more, hundreds of thousands of Maritimers have

been forced to move elsewhere to find work”. Milsom refers to the generations of Maritimers who have left as economic refugees (2003, p. 151). The primary traditional Maritime resource sectors of farming, fishing and forestry are all now largely controlled by the corporate sector. The use of large, capital intensive, labour saving technologies in the major Maritime resource sectors over the last century gave control of local resources, local economies, and the possibility of greater local self-reliance to the board rooms of corporations profiting from the industrial economy, at the expense of what could be a sustaining community resource base.

Farming of potatoes is a regional example of small-scale technologies changed to large scale corporate industrial technologies. Manual harvesting of potatoes “kept the farms small, labour-intensive, and unspecialized.” The highly mechanized harvesting technology introduced in the 1950s moved control away from local independent farmers (Murphy, 1987). In the three decades following World War II, McLaughlin reveals that the government was “pleased ... to hasten the industrialization of potato farming” in New Brunswick (1987). In Prince Edward Island “there used to be hundreds of villages that were essentially self-sufficient in the basic necessities of life. Until recently there were hundreds of multi-crop farms, but now virtually nothing is produced except for potatoes grown on a few large farms” (McRobie, 1982, para. 17). Embedded local economies were transformed, in part by government policy, or lack thereof, into disembedded corporate economies. Murphy states that from 1951 to 1981, eighty percent of New Brunswick’s farms disappeared (1987). These trends in agriculture in the region continue in more recent times. “Between 1996 and 2001, 512 Nova Scotian family farms have gone out of business” (Coastal Communities Network, 2005). The following Table 1

provides information on the period 1971-1999, outlining some of the economic reasons for the decline in Nova Scotia.

Table 1. Summary of Indicators, Viability Threshold, Estimates and Results, N.S.

Indicator	Level	Trends and Results	Viability Threshold	Formula
1. Total farm cash receipts	Province	Increase of 12% over 28 years	Not a GPI indicator	sum of all farm cash receipts
2. Net farm income	Province	Decline of 46% over 28 years	No threshold set	total farm cash receipts – total farm operating expenses
3. Expense to income ratio (%)	Province and farm	Increase from 83% to 90% over 28 years	Less than 80%	(total farm operating expense and depreciation / total farm cash receipts) * 100
4. Return on investment (%)	Farm	Currently ranges from 9.7% to less than zero for surveyed farms	More than 5%	[(net income - value of unpaid labour) / (total assets - total liabilities)] * 100
5. Debt to net income ratio (%)	Province and farm	Increase from 300 to 900% over 28 years	Less than 600%	(total farm debt / total net income) * 100
6. Direct payments to producers and dependency ratio(%)	Province	Subsidies down but dependency ratio increase from 15% to 35% over 28 years.	Less than 20%	Dependency ratio = (total direct payments by government / total net farm income) * 100

The Nova Scotia Genuine Progress Index, Soils and Agriculture Account  
 Executive Summary: Farm Economic Viability in Nova Scotia, 2001  
 Source: GPI Atlantic, [www.gpiatlantic.org](http://www.gpiatlantic.org)

Murphy adds that perhaps “the most serious social cost is the hardest one to measure: the abandonment of an ideal of rural community” (Murphy, 1987). The fishery bears a similar pattern of economic transformation.

Governments on both sides of the North Atlantic have had a keen interest in the rich fishing resource off the east coast of Canada for centuries. Open access to a common-property resource has contributed to the divisive nature of the industry as different players pursued their own economic gain. But the profit which could be had from harvesting the fish was limited by the technology used for the catch. The industrialization of fishing was more possible after the introduction of trawlers and seiners in the first half of the

twentieth century. The late 1920s saw a virtual ban on trawlers, which wasn't lifted until after the second World War (Gough, 2001). The 1950s was the period during which the Canadian government began to invest heavily in the industry. Writing in 1984, Barrett notes that hundreds of millions of public dollars were invested "through just the last couple of decades." He goes on to argue that the corporate sector increasingly employed "ecologically disastrous fishing technologies to harvest as much resource as quickly as possible." With the advantage of hindsight it now appears that the pursuit of profit has taken precedence over long term sustainability of the resource. And the profits were not built on efficiency, relative to the small boat fishery, but on vertical integration and government subsidies. In comparison, the inshore, non-corporate fishery was able to manage the common property resource in a much more co-operative, community-minded fashion, dispelling the notion that arguments and over-harvesting would be the norm at the community level (Barrett, 1984). The social costs in coastal communities are similar to those in farming communities. Long-standing Atlantic Canadian lifestyles are threatened in coastal communities that continue to rely on incomes from independent fishers. Forestry is another sector suffering from over-harvesting.

Like the fishery, the forests were seen as a very valuable resource to early European settlers. Eighteenth and nineteenth centuries British North American colonies like Nova Scotia fulfilled their role of providing a steady supply of raw materials to fuel British industrialization. A wealthy Nova Scotia mercantile class emerged to conduct the business of exploiting the natural resources, with a wooden shipbuilding/trading economy providing the means of transport. Tall straight white pines were tagged early as the property of the crown to supply the British navy with masts for their sailing ships. No doubt site specific over-harvesting took place during this period but "[s]ince the Second



World War the forest-management policy of the provincial government has been towards providing cheap feedstock to the pulp and paper mills controlled by multi-national companies” (Burrill, 1987a). “Meeting the needs of the pulp and paper industry has meant growing corporate control of the resource and the use of highly mechanized woodcutting technology” (McMahon, 1987). Expensive machinery designed for clear-cut harvesting, as opposed to the more ecologically sound selective harvesting methods, has contributed to depletion of the resource.

In 1958, 24 percent of Nova Scotia’s forested area had trees more than 80 years old, and 8 percent had trees at least 100 years old. Today, less than 2 percent of forested area has trees more than 80 years old, while only 0.2 percent has trees at least 100 years old. (Coastal Communities Network, 2005)

The corporate goal of profit through the industrialization of the forestry sector took place, as it did in both the farming and fishing sectors.

The pattern of disembedded corporate takeover of the three primary Atlantic Canadian resource sectors – farming, fishing and forestry – reflects the globalized aspects of the economy in the region. Direct and indirect government subsidies, corporate control of the resource, the pretense of higher efficiency, the promise of local employment, technology which replaces jobs, over-harvesting and ecological damage all play a part in the interests of corporate profit-taking, thus eroding the long term sustainability of communities. The Coastal Communities News reports that small farms in Nova Scotia are in need of capital and land-use policies to stop the loss of agricultural land to residential and recreational development. And in the fishery sector, “even as landed values have increased, the number of people active in the harvesting sector has fallen. This reflects a concentration of control – almost across the board – of our fisheries resources in the hands of larger operators.” The newsletter also suggests there could be

an impending crisis in the woods due to over harvesting. The overall perspective for much of the province, outside the urban areas, is an economic and social crisis (Coastal Communities News, 2003). Economic survival in so much of rural Nova Scotia “has been based on the integration of agriculture, fishing, and woodcutting with intermittent periods of wage employment” (McMahon, 1987). The industrialization of these sectors has greatly reduced the access of rural residents to a variety of local resources, which have provided incomes sustaining individuals and communities in the past. However, alternatives are taking root in the cracks and crevices of the corporate global economy.

Celebrating the successes in rural Nova Scotia communities forms part of the education of alternatives, as promoted by the Coastal Communities Network. In the Annapolis Valley, a farmer’s co-op has successfully marketed eating apples as opposed to apples which “go to low-yield commodity products like juice. ... The co-op has worked to develop new varieties of high-end apples, and has helped give producers control of their future.” A Guysborough inshore fishermen’s organization was formed on “the twin themes of democratic representation and the sustainability of fisheries resources and harvesting methods.” Working democratically in their common interest, the small boat fishers have organized management plans for the inshore harvesters (Coastal Communities Network, 2005). Finewood Flooring in Cape Breton employs 17 people. The owner estimates eighty cents of every dollar his firm spends stays in the community (Pate, 2005). The hardwood floor, which is produced and sold around the world, is a good example of value-added manufacturing of a local resource which generates local employment. It would also be useful to look at economic models which propose to return more to the local community than the corporate sector.

Co-operatives have proven viable in the region. The Cheticamp, N.S. co-operative has been quite successful at revitalizing the community. It can be attributed to strong leadership, a homogenous largely Acadian population, a history of adult education, a strong desire to survive and, lastly, marginality, an important factor which may determine success or failure in other communities (Barrett, 1993). Cheticamp offers a full grocery store with bakery, hardware and building supply sections next door to the local credit union. “[T]he co-op has helped keep millions in the community.” In fact, the long-time manager has “worked tirelessly to help local fish harvesters and plant workers take cooperative ownership of a local fish plant” (Coastal Communities Network, 2005). Another recent success in the region is the worker co-operative Just Us Coffee Roasters Co-op. “The idea of starting the worker co-op grew from a commitment of a group of friends and family members who wanted to own their own business, which contributed to their personal satisfaction and desire for a more just society.” The Annapolis Valley business is committed to a fair return for farmers in the third world, but the fact it is a worker co-op as well makes it unique in the region. After eight years, four of the original five founding members remain with seven full-time and seasonal part-time employees (MacLean, 2005).

Community Economic Development provides another vehicle for local economies. Investments in rural communities in the region can be difficult to come by. Urban areas and larger towns are tough competition for investment dollars. Nova Scotia’s Community Economic Development Investment Funds (CEDIFs) are “tools to develop rural life ... [b]ut local people must be made aware of them and learn how to use them” (Milsom, 2003, p. 109). CEDIFs offer provincial tax incentives to individuals who invest in approved provincial community business initiatives. In the early 1990s, private

woodlot owners in Yarmouth and Digby found they were having difficulty marketing their resource after a fire at a local sawmill. The West Nova Investment Co-op (WNIC) was formed utilizing the CEDIF under a co-op structure. By 1997 a joint venture was planned between WNIC and two area sawmills. This created Eagle Timber, 24 percent owned by WNIC, with investment coming from people in the local community. “The West Nova Investment Co-op is a rare example of ordinary citizens, community based companies, and government programs working in harmony for the benefit of all concerned” (Milsom, 2003, p. 24).

The Coastal Communities Network (CCN) has long been an advocate for community based co-management. They see this resource management structure as highly democratic, locally based and driven, while considering the sustainability of the industry and community in a social, economic and ecological context. “[C]ommunity based co-management is not about ... privatizing the industry in the hands of corporations. ... The CCN wishes to state clearly that a system of community based co-management must evolve if the local fishing communities of Nova Scotia are to survive and prosper” (Coastal Communities Network, 2003). There is one group which has the wisdom to decide on local resource use for the future well-being of their community and that is the people who live there (Milsom, 2005). All of these examples place a measure of economic control in the local community.

Chapter 4, Case Study: Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia will begin with section a, Local Economies. In comparison to some other rural communities in the Maritimes, the South Shore of Nova Scotia appears to be more inclined to private enterprise. Lunenburg County has major corporate employers such as Michelin, Highliner, Bowater and a new Walmart, but few collective type enterprises such as co-operatives. These disembedded

corporate economies can be contrasted with the small embedded local independent businesses. Lunenburg County's private enterprise fits well with Barrett's discussion of flexible specialization (Barrett, 1993). Michelin and Walmart may be less obvious in their use of local resources, but like other large corporations they take from the local community and often are supported or subsidized by governments. On the other hand, small local business offers much more to their own community. This will begin the discussion in Chapter 4, where we will look primarily at a community in Lunenburg County, which includes the towns of Bridgewater, Lunenburg, Mahone Bay and the rural municipality surrounding the towns. But first we will turn our attention to Chapter 2, Local Governance which concludes with a more specific look at local governance in the Maritime region.

## **2. Local Governance**

### **A. key issue**

Democracy is an ever evolving creature. In Canada today we have three levels of government: the federal, the provincial and the municipal. Despite the municipal having virtually no real power local government is where the greatest opportunity for the next stage in democracy's development lies. The present system of representative democracy we use is a twentieth century model. The next major evolution in western democracy will most likely be a form of participatory democracy. Looking back, we see democracy has never been a static entity. In Canada, only fifty years ago Native Americans did not have the right to vote, about one hundred years ago women did not have that right and some time before that only men who were landowners had the franchise. Even today, the existing representative style democracy in Canada limits voters to participation at the ballot box once every four years or so. Public cynicism of politicians and declining voter turnout with youth, in particular, are indicative of public frustration with the electoral system.

An important part of the solution, for this growing democratic deficit, is to open up meaningful ways for the public to participate in decision-making on an ongoing basis. And it is at the local community level that public knowledge of political and economic issues for decision-making will usually be the greatest. Validating local hands-on practical knowledge of one's community can stimulate public participation. Local decisions made slowly stand a better chance of being right, and when not, are more readily reversed or corrected. Engaging community members in their own process of local governance is the essence of participatory democracy. Of the three existing levels of government the municipal, which is closest to the people, holds the greatest hope for

participatory democracy. But, despite their appearance to the contrary, municipal governments actually have no powers. Municipal government in all of Canada is defined by the powers prescribed to the different levels of government through the constitution. The federal and provincial levels are alike in that they govern with minimal interference from the other levels. Municipal governments are little more than administrative bodies for the provinces. The history of Canadian local government is revealing.

The British centralized model of governance produced a largely powerless form of local government. Magnusson outlines the roots of Canadian municipal government, through the original British conception of community government as municipal corporations for local businessmen to pursue their cities' economic interests. Elected local government with little decision-making power was sanctioned later within a centralized state apparatus. The wide variety of liberal democratic traditions, patterned after the British model, designated local government to be a safe, enclosed space for citizen participation within the sovereign hierarchy of the state. Today, municipal government in many countries is seen, by community activists working for social change, as able to offer little control over local issues and offering only token public participation (1996, pp. 8-23). The principles of democracy assume that local government was designed to represent the interests of the community. To some extent this is demanded by the local community. Local government is an "impulse from below for political organization" which "has to be accommodated, contained or diffused in some way" by the state (Magnusson, 1985, p. 596).

In Canada today, local government is highly ambiguous. Distinctions can be made between what are referred to as rural or urban municipalities, with the loosely defined suburban somewhere in between. Everything from amalgamated mega-cities to small

towns can be considered urban. On the other hand, with the majority of the Canadians now living in urban areas, there are far fewer municipal governments representing a growing proportion of the population. For example, the two million residents of Toronto have only one local government while all rural residents in Atlantic Canada, which may be about one million people, would have dozens of distinct municipal governments.

Magnusson wonders why Canadian political theorists have paid so little attention to local government. Why have they so little power? And why are local issues and ideals, which can be realized only in communal institutions, shunted to the margins of political consciousness? “What we need is a full-blooded political theory of the local state that takes account of geographic diversity and historical change, and recognizes that the locality can be as real a political community as the nation” (1985, pp. 596-598). Local government, although a tool of the central state, sustains itself largely due to public demand. Local communities want local government.

### **B. origins of problem**

The true responsibility for any healthy democracy rests with the people. “[T]he very idea of democracy – the principles of citizen empowerment, of citizens being responsible for their own governance” can be most readily realized through active participation of a well informed citizen body (Carrel, 2001, p.18). But full participation in decision-making is more than just voting through popular participatory democracy tools such as referenda or plebiscites. Carrel notes that formulating the questions to be asked is the first important step in the process toward participatory democracy. Without early citizen involvement, referenda become little more than an extension of our ballot box elections every four years or so. From his experience in municipal government, he



knows that gaining the trust of the electorate takes time. “Once citizens begin to understand they have real power, their interest in participation increases” (2001, p. 37). Given the slow pace of institutional change, there will always be individuals and groups who don’t feel government structures offer enough opportunity for participation, choosing to organize outside of, and in opposition to, the centralized power of government.

Increasingly, voices from outside political institutions are challenging government policies and decision-making processes. These are people who are actively participating in defining the needs of their community. At the same time, government bureaucracies continue to be very adept at closing doors, while institutionalizing the less radical elements of any movement which may challenge the established order. “Capitalism tends to reshape resistances to fit the space it provides for them. It governs a state system in which the people of each country can engage in a show of self-government without disturbing the processes that determine their future” (Magnusson, 1996, p. 92). Or, as some leftist critics of the present Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela under Chavez would argue, “[w]hen the state pacifies and neutralizes the struggle and assumes a leading role for social movements, it reduces the movements to puppetry” (Dahlstrom, 2006). But groups organizing around women’s and Native’s issues, economic inequities, anti-war or environment issues, as with Greenpeace, all pursue their agendas both locally and on the international stage, outside direct control of government institutions.

“[S]ocial movements are a global phenomenon, even as the vast majority are local in scope and scale” (Conway, 2004, p.14). They grow quietly, mostly outside established political structures, often unnoticed or ignored by mainstream media controlled by large corporations, governments or other soft supporters of neo-liberalism. The fertility of

local social movements lies in their ability to be flexible, unfixed, hard to enclose, and positioned outside the structures of the state and capitalism (Magnusson, 1996, pp. 107, 160). Conway describes the importance of space on the local stage, “especially and ironically for politics in the era of globalization”:

At a time when citizens everywhere are experiencing alienation from the decisions of their national and sub-national governments, which claim powerlessness in the face of globalization, local places are becoming increasingly significant sites of struggle against the increasingly visible ravages of neo-liberal capitalist development. Local governments surely are not any more progressive, democratic or responsive to their citizens than any other governments, but the social effects of their decisions are immediate, concrete and visible. Moreover, the seat of government is near to where people live their everyday lives and thus is more accessible and susceptible to popular pressure. (2004, pp. 53-54)

Movements continue to open space locally beyond existing political structures, resisting attempts to be contained by the authority of the state. This is spontaneous localized global politics which can appear invisible, slowly percolating, and then raising its head through the action of protest when opportunity arises. These actions continue to raise political awareness at the local level.

Conway argues for the long-term goals of raising awareness through the action of organizing. The education process of groups confirms the individual’s role as a conveyor of change within her defined community. Incorporating participatory decision-making in group processes can be long and slow, but individually empowering and rewarding for group strength. Participatory processes, in part, define the character of social movements, challenging wealth and power which continue to use hierarchical, non-participatory models for decision-making. She believes active participation alone can be empowering. It can be an important vehicle for raising awareness of broader social issues, or simply provide organizational skills and self-reliance. In either way, it can act as an important learning curve for the more disadvantaged participants in community groups. Participants

and the recipients of social movements need to have their knowledge validated to participate fully in reshaping their community, through the development of a growing social awareness. “Knowledge production is central to both the making and meaning of social movements” (2004, p. 56). For example, demands of the women’s movement for recognition of knowledge drawn from women’s experiences, based on their perception of the world, increasingly challenges the existing hierarchical patriarchal social order.

Governance from the bottom up is not unknown in North America.

Some Native Americans practised highly participatory models of governance when European colonies were just being established in the Americas. Long before the American Revolution, Iroquois leaders and notable non-Natives such as Ben Franklin advocated for an Iroquoian style federation of the British colonies. The Albany Plan of Union of 1754 “echoed both English and Iroquois precedents and, a generation later, would become a rough draft for the Articles of Confederation” (Grinde, 1991, p. 94). The authors put forth a convincing argument that “American democracy is a synthesis of Native American and European political theories,” and that the evolution and development of these ideas later “shaped the United States Constitution” (1991, pp. xxiv, xxii). In Iroquois society and among other eastern Aboriginal nations, individual freedoms came as a package demanding responsibility for active participation in the decision-making process. In fact, the Iroquois “did not respect submissive people who were cowed by authority” (1991, p. 28). Native Americans did not have a monopoly on these types of egalitarian values, but they were a prominent part of Iroquois society. Weatherford outlines the long list of things Native American cultures gave to the world, including a form of small scale participatory decision-making still relevant to the needs of local governance today.

Egalitarian democracy and liberty as we know them today owe little to Europe. They are not Greco-Roman derivatives somehow revived by the French in the eighteenth century. They entered modern thought as American Indian notions translated into European language and culture. (1988, p. 128)

The Iroquois Confederacy operated over a large area utilizing a state form of federalism bound together by strong kinship lines. Weatherford describes the Cherokee, one partner nation of the Confederacy, who believed possibilities for individual participation diminished after villages reached a population of more than five hundred individuals. They also believed that keeping government to a minimum would enhance personal freedom. Their extended clan system tied small communities together while maintaining a high degree of local autonomy. The absence of private property as part of the social contract of Natives nations was the most striking difference with the model adopted by the United States after the War of Independence. The benefit of this exclusion, for the Iroquois and other Native Americans with similar participatory models of governance, was that it created societies with a much more equitable distribution of their wealth (Grinde et al., 1991, pp. 33-34, 67). Most Native American reserve communities in Canada today utilize little, if any, participatory decision-making, although their governance model is decentralized to a greater extent than non-Native communities. While participatory democracy is important, a measure of both political and economic decision-making is necessary for local empowerment.

Political democracy without economic decision-making serves the interest of elites.

Swift indicates that democracy and capitalism are really at odds with each other:

The best of democratic theory assumes that some basic equality is necessary if citizens are going to exercise a more or less equal weight in shaping the direction of political life. Capitalism on the other hand with its ethos of 'possessive individualism' values above all the right to acquire as much property and wealth as possible. (2002, p. 61)

Political and economic decision-making are two critical aspects of a functioning healthy democracy. Those holding wealth and power, now and in the past, argue that economic decision-making should be outside political (government) decision-making. Swift argues that the tacit support for this position by nation states all over the world makes so-called democratic governments complicit in preventing the full development of democracy. In fact, these governments are often made up largely of an elite political class shaping public policy in conjunction with, and in the interests of, an elite business class. Democracy has been shaped by the wealthy, who own more than their share of private property. Their rhetoric uses the words ‘democracy’ and ‘capitalism’ interchangeably. Accordingly, Swift feels that the extent of democracy for an individual is determined by her/his wealth:

It is quickly becoming a question of either democratizing the economy or having a despotic economy sweep away the last vestiges of meaningful political democracy. While no one is about to take away your right to vote, whether or not you exercise that right will matter less and less. (2002, p. 68)

Many Native Americans recognize the importance of both political and economic decision-making at the local level.

Existing governance in Canadian Native communities today remains fundamentally a colonial Indian Act construct within a centralized state apparatus. “Self-government that only allows Aboriginal people to assume some but not all powers of Aboriginal governance actually operates to further imbed destructive colonial relationships in our communities” (Monture-Angus, 2002, p. 29). Monture Angus points out, that self-determination has been stalled by government irresponsibility in resolving related land claims issues. Natives have turned to expensive and time-consuming court action, encountering narrow Euro-Canadian concepts of private property in the justice system. The fundamental principle of one law of the land for all appears false when “the

government and courts are able to continue to side-step, in a complimentary fashion, their concurrent responsibilities” (2002, pp. 52-53). The enormous costs, human and otherwise, of dependency relationships between Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian state will not be put to rest until the inherent right to self determination, with a sustainable economic base (land settlements), built on right relationships, is complete (2002, pp. 21-39). Native demand for both self-government and land claim settlements highlight the inseparable relationship between local governance and local economies.

The under-pinning of demands for Aboriginal self-government have changed little in over three hundred years. Dorey, a Mi’kmaq writer, argues that “a land base and control over natural resources is required to exercise self-governance as we see it” (1994, p. 5). Control of the land’s resources is perhaps the most challenging issue of Native sovereignty for federal government negotiators. Centralized federal and provincial decision-making is the practised model throughout most of Canada. In recent years, municipal government type authority has been suggested as a model for Native self-government by federal bureaucrats, and flatly rejected by Natives. Because all municipal powers flow from provincial governments, it is little wonder Natives have shown no interest in the municipal model for self-government. In fact, by demanding that they have inherent rights, “First Nations have made far more progress than municipalities in asserting their legitimacy within confederation” (Carrel, 2001, p. 53). In the future, it may become obvious that Native models for self-government are the present cutting edge of empowerment and participatory democracy.

This section of the Literature Review has discussed Local Governance. Democracy is generally considered governance by the people. Whether through activism or native American models of governance participatory democracy best describes the underlying

public demand for what is lacking in our political system. The discussion also revealed the limited value of political ballot box decision-making without a measure of economic decision-making. We will now turn our attention to look at alternatives for local governance.

### **C. alternatives**

One indicator of the justice of any form of government can be measured by the treatment of minorities. While the United States was expanding westward in the nineteenth century, at the expense of Native Americans, early European feminists and Marxists were comparing the matriarchal Iroquois system of governance to oppressive patriarchal European models of the day. Euro-American treaty negotiators (usually male) were perplexed and alarmed, and attempted at times to reject the pivotal role of women in Native political systems. Women's role in shaping the oral society was invisible to writers schooled in European patriarchal societies. Native women actively nominated leaders and could impeach them for misconduct. Women's approval was usually required to declare war and they generally acted as advisors. They also owned all household goods except men's clothing, weapons, and hunting tools (Grinde, 1991, pp. 136, 221-230). Iroquois decision-making flowed from the community or band level upwards. Bands representatives would gather at larger Council meetings for more broad based decision-making, but would still seek the consent of community members on important issues. Seasonal gatherings took place for participatory political decision-making in combination with economic, social and spiritual exchanges

The idea of decentralized political and economic decision-making, as Native self-government demands, has also become attractive to non-native communities and

environmental activists. Many advocate that ecological sustainability demands a decentralized Native-type perspective where the “primary locus of social decision-making should be a natural unit of territory, one both defined ecologically (for example a large watershed) and culturally (the inhabitants of that unit).” Local community decision-making functions best within a “participatory ecological region” as an alternative to “the omnipotent state.” This is “the tension between which is at the heart of the quest for sustainable development” (McGonigle, 1989, p. 82). The realization of decentralized decision-making, either for Native or non-Native communities, faces heavily entrenched centralized decision-making at the federal and provincial levels of government in Canada. In fact, collaborative Native and non-Native local co-management resource agreements, with decentralized political and economic decision-making, have worked. “[T]his is precisely what ecologists ... have been saying for years – that good economic policy and the national interest do in fact lie in this direction.” McGonigle points out that, if movement in this direction were to occur, it would necessitate a third level of government which recognizes Native land title and local non-Native inhabitants' rights to be equal partners in decision-making. This type of empowered model for local government could answer the demands for greater community based decision-making in both Native and non-Native communities alike (1989, pp. 87, 97). Engaging everyone in a participatory decision-making process is critical.

Local government needs to be more participatory. Switzerland is one of the best known models of a participatory nation state. Although it is small, it is divided into a collection of twenty-six cantons based on historic regions with distinct identities. The cantons are independently governed with their own parliaments and constitutions. Only affairs in common with all cantons are dealt with by the central government. Cantons are



further subdivided into communes that also have legislative powers. “Important decisions in small communes are commonly made by the citizens themselves at public meetings.” The right to initiate referenda and other direct democracy tools exists at all levels of government (Kendall, 2000, sec. A). Respecting historical traditions for local governments is important. Swiss decisions in such matters as the country’s defence happen at the national level, allowing most other decisions to be made at the very local level. Citizen initiatives can challenge legislation at any level.

The Swiss model could be useful for reinventing a truly democratic local government. Referenda, plebiscites, recalls and other forms of direct democracy can be valuable tools when utilized with informed decision-making. Active responsibility and participation is the key. If we want our political system to change, we will have to take a more active role in demanding an extensive overhaul which recognizes the value of local decision-making.

Existing municipal governments could become a louder community voice. Local councils can interpret their authority to speak out on a much broader range of issues concerning the well-being of the community. Strong backing by their constituents can give their words even more influence. For example, in rural farming communities in Pennsylvania, agribusiness corporations were allowed under state regulations to spread animal and human wastes on fields. The public outcry, stemming from the fear of community health problems, was not enough of a reason to stop the practice. In 2002-3, two of the county's townships “did something no American municipal government had ever dared: They decreed that a corporation's rights do not apply within their jurisdictions” (Kaplan, 2001, para. 8-9). With strong public backing, local government can begin to act beyond the limits of its jurisdiction.

Greater community political control of local resources is essential for community strength. In a very small way, a transformation along these lines is beginning to take place in parts of rural India where villagers have decided to create an alternative to globalization. Close to 1500 villages imposing self-rule have declared themselves village republics. They have taken control of their natural resources by creating local resource management institutions (Sharma, 2005, sec. Village Republics). From the desperation of poverty, these villages are challenging both corporate and central government ownership and management of community resources. Local resource use decision-making can give priority to community interests.

In Canada, municipal governments' actions beyond their legal powers could be legitimized with strong vocal public support encouraged by active participatory democracy. Devolution of political decision-making to the local level could allow communities to take even greater control of their futures. Greater public involvement in, and responsibility for, local government is perhaps the most powerful force to devolve decision-making to the local level.

The discussion now will turn to the Maritime region. Local government in the region has been greatly influenced by the highly centralized British colonial system. This has been perpetuated to the present times and perhaps contributes to low voter turnout rates. But alternatives for the region have been articulated by a number of writers. The primary focus of the following section will be historical influences, or their absence, and contemporary municipal government in the region.

#### **D. local governance in the Maritime Region**

One of the greatest deficits in governance for rural communities in the region has come from centralization. Moving decision-making away from the local level is adding to the disintegration of community. As Milsom points out, "things are not working in rural and small-town Nova Scotia ... Our small rural and coastal communities are on the critical list. It is far past the time that public policies began to be shaped to save the patient." Milsom believes public policy is forcing people to leave the region. Governments could begin to adopt policies which give communities a decisive say in the use of these resources, and ensure Nova Scotians are the primary beneficiaries (2003, pp.31-32).

Community based, bottom-up decision-making over local resource use was certainly a hallmark of an earlier culture in the region. The traditional Mi'kmaq had a system of governance reflective of their lifestyle and organized around extended family ties. Wicken has conducted one of the most comprehensive studies of Mi'kmaq culture. He found that a specific territory was managed by winter hunting groups made up of two or more households, usually related by marriage. Extended families enjoyed rights and obligations within their territorial boundaries, where customary laws governed the use of resources. During the summer months, the abundance of aquatic foods in the nearby tidal areas of the bays and rivers supported larger, more sedentary communities. Social and economic relationships were forged among the different winter hunting groups. The population of the summer villages could increase to between 100 and 300 people, providing, among other things, prospective marriage partners for the youth (2002, pp. 30, 34-35, 38).

Wicken found that the Mi'kmaq system of governance was more complex than many early non-Native writers had realized. Europeans were conditioned to look for one male with supreme power, resembling their own monarchy and family structures. However, among the Mi'kmaq all adult males, and most likely females, would have participated in decision-making and in delegating individuals to represent them in discussions with neighbouring Mi'kmaq bands. A clear understanding of the limits of territorial usufruct rights by all parties minimized conflict. For the protection of their land and resources, regional alliances were also made with the neighbouring Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, and Abenaki nations. During the late seventeenth century, New England expansion of the Atlantic fishery off Nova Scotia, and increasing non-Native settlements in Maine, prompted unified action among Native nations. "The aboriginal names affixed to the 1726 treaty express a political unity among villages who thought of themselves as Mi'kmaq, and between them and the Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, and Abenaki people living to the West" (2002, pp. 43-44, 56-57). Local participatory decision-making augmented by inter-dependent relationships between neighbours was central to their form of governance.

Wicken adds that oral tradition suggests Mi'kmaq communities often had three leaders who shared responsibilities for everyone's welfare. One would be renowned for his/her wisdom, a second would act as a spiritual leader, and the third was designated as a war chief (Wicken, 1995, p. 128). Positions were maintained by respect and duty, as opposed to the birthright for life customary of European leaders.

In contrast, early British governance in the Atlantic region was centralized in London, England. The British roots of the present local government in Nova Scotia came largely after 1713, when the British claimed sovereign authority over mainland Nova

Scotia. But for many decades after 1713 the Mi'kmaq continued to govern their traditional territories, which fell outside the small Acadian and British settlements. As Antoft points out it is unfortunate that, "the struggles for democracy in Canadian society have followed a path that did not benefit from lessons that we might have learned from the original inhabitants," the Mi'kmaq (1998, p. 1). Characteristics of Native governance were overlooked, or more likely rejected as too egalitarian. Instead, wealthy merchants, lawyers and friends of the Lieutenant-Governors of Nova Scotia became a local form of government which was referred to as the Quarter Sessions. This enabled the central government to extend its influence into local affairs (Fergusson, 1961, p. 5). Local representation was permitted only through the Grand Jury, which was comprised of selected local property owners acting as advisors to the Quarter Sessions, with no real decision-making power. Recognized Deputies in Acadian villages, prior to the 1755 Deportation, may have appeared like community representatives, but they were used primarily by the British as a vehicle to communicate orders to the local French, who lived at a distance from the seat of authority in Annapolis. In short, the British colonial government was extremely reluctant to allow anything but the necessary minimum of local governance, with most decision-making power remaining at the centre in London.

The political development of local government in Canada did not closely follow the earlier American model. The emergence of an eighteenth century expansionist, periphery-type of governance in what would become the United States was not part of the design for the highly centralized British Empire which started to develop after 1688 (Mancke, 1997, pp. 28-29). The roots of governance in the United States had been sown in the seventeenth century prior to 1688, and its expansionist ambitions could not easily

be curtailed. The British lost the thirteen colonies in the American Revolution, but centralized an empire which would survive for almost two more centuries.

The experience of early local government in Nova Scotia was very limited. Between 1758 and 1879, county and township local government consisted of “non-elective bodies known as the Commission of the Peace or the Court of Sessions which met only twice a year” (Ross, 1997, p. 60). If local governments were to be established, it would be a county system with royally appointed officials. “New England’s form of town government was not to be replicated in Nova Scotia or elsewhere” (Mancke, 1997, p. 19). The New Englanders migrating to Nova Scotia in the 1760s, accustomed to a form of direct-democracy township government, lobbied for a provincial statute with a measure of local autonomy. Their request was quickly disallowed by the Crown in 1761 (Fergusson, 1961, p. 7).

British colonial policy deliberately rejected the idea of local decision-making power. In its stead, the Quarter Sessions became the limited appointed form of local government in the region. This ensured London’s direct control of a weak Nova Scotia colonial government. Saint John, New Brunswick became a minor exception in the Maritimes in the eighteenth century when fourteen thousand Loyalists, migrating north after the American Revolution, demanded incorporation as a town and received their charter in 1785 to provide local services such as policing and fire protection. In comparison, Halifax’s experience was more the rule; incorporation came to the city over fifty years later in 1841. Legislation for local county government in the region came late as well, not arriving until 1879, after Canadian confederation. While all three Maritime provinces at first had been reluctant to promote county government, they imposed mandatory legislation once it was recognized as a way to download costs for such things

as roads and bridges (Antoft, 1998, pp. 2-3). Local government bearing fiscal responsibilities, but no real autonomous power then, as it still does today, little threat to centralized decision-making.

In 1867, all powers of municipal government were given to the provinces within the new confederation of British colonies called Canada. The 1867 disempowerment of local government was copied from a statute enacted in 1849 in Upper Canada. The Baldwin Act clearly stated that local powers would only be those conferred by the then British colonial legislature (Carrel, 2001, p. 28). It was not until 1982 that Canada gained the right to amend its own constitution without approval of the British Parliament. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) lobbied, unsuccessfully, to have the rights of municipal government enshrined in the 1982 constitution. (As mayor of Dartmouth and one-time head of the FCM in the 1980's, John Savage supported municipal constitutional powers. Later, as premier of Nova Scotia, Mr. Savage gave the matter little priority.)

The 1982 Constitution Act continued to centralize the division of powers outlined in the British North America Act of 1867, including the section specifying complete provincial jurisdiction over municipal government. In fact, it is erroneous to even consider the municipal government an equal partner with the federal and provincial governments. The legislation of 1867 made municipal government totally under the control of the provinces. In Nova Scotia, the scope of municipalities' administrative function is defined entirely by provincial legislation, the Municipal Government Act. Highly centralized decision-making at the local level remains.

The historical lack of empowerment for local government may reflect the present low public support for the institution. Voter turnout in municipal elections in Nova

Scotia has been consistently lower than in both federal and provincial elections.

Municipal is the closest level of government to the people, and for that reason has the greatest potential to become more broad based and participatory. But despite the participatory potential of municipal government, the public appears to have a greater level of interest in provincial and federal politics. Voter turnout in recent federal and provincial elections has set low records of about 60 percent. In comparison, the last province-wide statistics compiled by the N.S. Department of Municipal Affairs in 1997 show the average turnout for municipal elections considerably lower than that and declining:

Table 2. Voter Turnout in Municipal Elections, Nova Scotia

	1985	1988	1991	1994	1997
Cities	44 percent	44 percent	42 percent	36 percent	63 percent
Towns	56 percent	60 percent	64 percent	52 percent	46 percent
Rural	53 percent	51 percent	54 percent	51 percent	38 percent
Overall	52 percent	51 percent	52 percent	47 percent	46 percent

Adapted from: 1994 Municipal Council Elections and Municipal Elections Survey 1997 from Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Affairs, Policy Development and Research Division (now part of Service Nova Scotia)

The 63 percent increase for cities in 1997 is not truly reflective of trends due to the fact that there was no election in the largest urban centre of Halifax in that year.

Addressing the problem of low voter turnout in municipal elections has been, for the most



part, ignored by both municipal and provincial governments. Inactivity, or inattention, only allows the provincial governments to more closely control the actions of local government.

The Nova Scotia government's increased centralization of decision-making in recent years has reduced opportunities for local participation. Standardization and fragmentation of community services imposed by centralized provincial models greatly reduces their effectiveness. Provincial standards can be inappropriate from a local perspective, stifling local creative ingenuity in achieving the very objectives of the standards (Carrel, 2001, p. 84). Alternatively, local participatory decision-making can provide a venue for home-grown solutions, which may not meet provincially set standards, but which clearly reach local objectives.

Centralized provincial models tend to isolate community services, such as education, social assistance and justice, from each other, but through a participatory process, "citizens might decide to consolidate these services under a single community government, a single political body ... democratically and directly accountable to citizens and the community they serve" (2001, p. 93). For example, the growing number of high school students falling through the cracks in Nova Scotia's education system is one group suffering under a variety of social problems which could be more effectively dealt with by one local public service department. Students coming from lower economic households may not have the advantage of home learning tools such as computers or positive, knowledgeable parental models. Economic inequities may motivate them to risk unlawful behaviour. Not dealing with these students' socio-economic realities, which can contribute to criminal behaviour, leaves little hope for solutions to their educational

problems. The long-term societal costs of not using a more holistic local problem-solving approach, as opposed to the present fragmentation of services, are huge.

Small community school closures are another symptom of centralization.

Community schools continue to be threatened with closure in all corners of Nova Scotia. In conversation with Mike Foley, a school board supervisor, Milsom writes of the history and the loss, especially in regards to the one and two-room school-houses which closed down in the 1950s and 1960s. Foley speaks of a great sense of loss, particularly for those communities which did not convert the empty school-houses to useful community buildings. The most recent wave of rural school closures over the past decade “involves an incredible human cost,” says Foley. They are “the lifeblood of the community” which “sustains and nurtures community life,” providing a space for a wide range of local gatherings. Closing local schools not only puts a primary community meeting place in jeopardy, they can also be “used as training centers to give both kids and adults the skills needed to become productive in their own communities” (2003, p. 185).

School closures are determined by school boards, which have also been centralized into regional boards in recent times. However school board funding flows from the province, and ultimately it is provincial budgets which force decisions. Foley believes there is a “cost to providing quality education in rural communities, but if we only look at the bottom line we are doing something wrong” (2003, p. 185).

Centralization has also taken place through amalgamations of municipal units, despite widespread public opposition. Amalgamations have been fuelled largely by two false perceptions. The first is that fewer separate municipal governments will mean cost savings. This is often used by proponents as a selling feature, but the savings are always the promise of the future. Regardless of cost over-runs the amalgamations are pretty well

irreversible. The creation of the Halifax and Cape Breton regional municipalities did not save anywhere near the amounts anticipated. Amalgamation cost overruns in Halifax grew from the initial estimated \$10 million to about \$30 million (Berman, 2005).

The second fallacy is that the operation of local government will be more efficient. From a participatory perspective, there is typically a critical loss to the democratic process. The number of individuals represented by one politician increases many times. Pessimistic attitudes may be fuelling the desire for fewer politicians, but local government is where increased numbers of representatives could persuade a cynical electorate toward greater participation in the decision-making process. Creating a participatory model of local governance, which encourages decision-making from the ground up, could give us a truly democratic form of community government.

The problem is not one of too much local government, but that it is of the wrong kind. Maintaining local councils to deal with micro-level issues could be more efficient. On the other hand, critical regional issues could be determined by boards made up of representatives from each local council, without risking the loss of the benefits of local decision-making. Cities such as Halifax were governed under a ward system prior to amalgamation and the creation of the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). These electoral boundaries defined neighbourhoods of about 5,000 to 10,000 voters. Like any community the ward residents were certainly not a homogenous social group but they did share a geographical area on a scale in which community members could more easily connect with one another. The scale of local government is an important aspect of self-reliant, empowered communities.

Native communities present alternative models of local government structure. In outlining a proposed model of governance for Mi'kmaq self-government, Dorey

describes a “federation of self-governing, communal, collectivities voluntarily joined together for mutual benefit into ... a Commonwealth” (1994, pp. 17, 35). At the heart of Dorey’s model is economic self-sufficiency in order to be truly independent. For legislative decision-making, Dorey advocates the Mi’kmaq construct a distinctively different electoral model from the familiar Canadian government institutions. The Mi’kmaq model would have a legislative body with one delegate for every one thousand constituents. A directly elected President would have veto decision-making powers, but in turn vetoes could be overridden by two-thirds of the delegate body (1994 117, p. 38).

A discussion of Native American’s struggle for sovereignty, which necessarily includes control of both local resources and self-government, can be instructive for all communities seeking greater command over their futures. The Atlantic region’s place in Canada is another important consideration, given the federal political regionalization which has emerged over the past twelve years. Regional sovereignty within a newly structured Canadian confederation may be a choice made for, not by, Atlantic Canada. If Quebec continues on a path towards sovereignty association, “the Maritimes may well be the first place in the world to find itself independent without having asked for it.” One GPI Atlantic writer proposes a structure based on the European Union model where six sovereign regions of Canada act as “independent members of a cooperative economic and political union.” The example of “a decent human society in Atlantic Canada” could offer a model of hope “to a world failed by materialism, threatened by environmental collapse, and desperate for the alternative this region can demonstrate and offer” (GPI Atlantic, 2000).

Sovereignty association could also protect the Atlantic Canadian lifestyle, that is considered by some as one of a higher quality within the country. Despite being

portrayed as one of the poor cousins of Canada, Prince Edward Island (P.E.I.) has “tremendous wealth and good life and good sense of community and relative security and safety.” P.E.I represents an antithesis to national trends towards faster paced, higher stress, materialistic, mobile lifestyles with little connection to community. “So it's very good that Islanders have that pride in their lifestyle. They should never let anyone tell them that it's better somewhere else” (Day, 2001).

Protection of our way of life from the forces of globalization will ultimately involve difficult political decisions. A sovereignty association relationship with the other regions of Canada could leave the Maritimes free to design a model for local governance. McConkey's model for a municipal Confederation stretching across the country could be more easily applied to a Maritime region:

A new Confederation based on the autonomous municipality would provide the humanly scaled political community in which genuine democracy can be expressed and exercised. ... The political culture of democracy is cultivated by, as its exercise cultivates, a broadness of spirit and an ethical vigor that can only arise amid the ongoing face-to-face work of acting and discussing together, sorting through points of difference with others toward the resolution that allows further co-operative action and discussion. (1993, p. 173)

A Maritime political confederation of local communities would also better reflect our natural bioregions. Looking to nature as a guide, a Maritime regional entity would come closer than perhaps any part of Canada to conforming to a bioregional model. Although the political and economic implications of a change in the Maritimes' relationship with Canada would be huge, it could provide an opportunity to empower local government within a confederation of municipalities, with only one other regional level of government. Devolving greater decision-making power to the local level may be the only real alternative to a capitalist economy which serves the needs of national, continental and global corporations at the expense of communities.

Local governance in Lunenburg County largely falls within the realm of the institution of municipal government with a small measure of community activism. Council meetings in all municipalities in the County are covered in the local paper. Municipal elections are covered as well with profiles published of all the candidates. But voter turnout in municipal elections falls well below that of either provincial or federal elections. Even when frustration with local government arise they often take the form of quiet resignation. However, community activism by locals can be stimulated as a response to council decisions when local taxes, quality of life or organizations such as volunteer fire departments are threatened. This type of community organizing by locals can be contrasted with the actions of the come-from-aways who organize and speak out on national and international concerns. Café Canada has become a regular gathering to raise awareness of these issues. This is the topic of local governance which will be returned to in the empirical study of Lunenburg County in Chapter 4, Lunenburg local governance. The institution of municipal government will be examined in the county for possibilities of greater participatory democracy. But first the discussion will focus on the conceptual examination of what community is and what it might be in Chapter 3, Local Community followed by a look at local community in the Maritime region.

### **3. Local Community**

#### **A. key issue**

The starting point in the discussion of community is trying to define it. Community is a very nebulous entity which largely defies description. The internet is now able to network people from around the world into a quasi-community. Urban neighbourhoods struggle to become communities within a largely human-made city environment. Spiritual, political and economic associations all create unique non-geographical communities of people. Despite the variety, the primary backdrop of human existence remains the creation of community. As Cobb expresses it, “Community, like everything worthwhile in history, is ambiguous. There have never been ideal communities and there never will be. But without communities, however imperfect, society can only decay” (1996, p. 194). Berry defines community as “a people locally placed and a people, moreover, not too numerous to have a common knowledge of themselves and of their place” (1992, p. 168).

Since common knowledge is gained through the practice of building relationships, on a practical level, community is about relationships. The traditional Native peoples’ practice of honouring “all my relations” encompasses all relationships, including one’s critical relationship with the natural world. Monture-Agnes affirms the strength of relationships:

The central object of social arrangements for my people is significantly about living in the way of peace. This peace is defined much more broadly than living without violence. Living with peace is about living a good life where respect for our relationships with people and all creation is primary. (Monture-Agnes, 2002, p. 41)

In contrast, the relationships industrial economies’ have with the natural world largely perceives nature as a resource to be managed for the production of commodities. The

scale of production and the pursuit of profit often become the priority over sustainable management practices. Small, traditional farming practices provide a good example of the importance of relationships, which in turn nurture healthy agrarian communities.

Farming by the measure of nature, which is to say the nature of the particular place, means that farmers must tend farms they know and love, farms small enough to know and love, using tools and methods they know and love, in the company of neighbors they know and love. (Berry, 1990c, p. 204)

This connection to people and place includes awareness of the necessary commitment and responsibility. Elaborate communication technology today may be able to connect networks of individuals who have common values or beliefs, but these networks may lack a broad, responsible commitment to each other or to the shared natural world.

Community is ultimately about the knowledge of people in their place, which cements humans together in relationships of trust.

[T]he health of a community depends absolutely on trust. ... It learns in the course of time and experience, what and who can be trusted. It knows that some of its members are untrustworthy, and it can be tolerant, because to know in this matter is to be safe. A community member can be trusted to be untrustworthy and so can be included. ... But if a community withholds trust, it withholds membership. If it cannot trust, it cannot exist. (Berry, 1992, pp. 161-162)

Trust is not a commodity that can be bought or sold. It can only be built through the practice of building human relationships within community. While as individuals we may belong to a wide variety of networks, our best hope for reviving an ecologically sustainable society in the western world, where local needs are the priority, lies in small, rural communities where an intimate relationship to place can be nurtured (Berry, Sale). Community, then is not a building block of the abstract notion of culture, but “a cultural initiative [which] can exist only by becoming personal” (Berry, 2005, para. 27).

The pursuit of individualism has diminished personal responsibility for community relationships. The present form of individualism that is prominent in Western



cultures was chosen as a release from traditional communities which often stifled the full development of the individual. “[T]here are limitations to a life lived in one place and in one community,” says Vitek. “Small communities can become provincial and stagnant, community structures can become oppressive, and life in one place can become boring.” Traditional rural communities offered many reasons for individuals to reject and escape from these limitations on one’s life. But, suggests Vitek, there were also many worthwhile and necessary aspects of traditional communities which have been overlooked through the transition to a perspective in which individualism dominates. He believes we now need “to measure what has been lost, and consider a life committed to a community and to a place, that preserves a central core of the freedoms and dignities we have come to expect in a democratic society dedicated to preserving and promoting individual self-interest” (1996, p. 5).

The personal freedom of individualism needs to be weighed against the loss of important community supports. We are our neighbour’s keeper, despite the illusion that our affluence provides enough security for each of us to act primarily as individuals. Community is like the model of family. Individualism can set us apart from the messiness, but we may also give up important mutual supports.

### **B. origins of problem**

The reasons for the decline of meaningful community relationships are varied.

Mass production, the mass consumer, the big city, big-brother state, the sprawling housing estate, and the nation-state are in decline: flexibility, diversity, differentiation, mobility, communication, decentralization and internationalization are in the ascendant. In the process our own identities, our sense of self, our own subjectivities are being transformed. (Callinicos, 1989, p. 4)

Social networks have been fragmented in communities around the world. Rural people have been leaving livelihoods on or close to the land for the promised economic benefits of urban centres. In Canada since World War II, and particularly in the United States, this urban migration has more recently shifted as urbanites fled inner city neighbourhoods for suburbia.

Lasch argues that close knit, interdependent urban neighbourhoods bore characteristics of traditional villages. The popularity of suburban living stemmed more from a need for isolation, a release from the obligations of urban communities. "It is often said that people went to the suburbs in search of community, as an alternative to urban anonymity. I think it was just the other way around," he says. He believes the lure of personal freedom, where individuals were accountable to no one, was the attraction of the suburbs. (Lasch, 1997, p. 104)

American affluent society is now challenged by rising suburban crime rates directly related to the inequitable distribution of wealth and the growing desperation of poverty. Suburbanites increasingly look for protection in purchased home security and gated communities. At the same time, Western affluence allows greater individual anonymity within communities. Individuals interact less with their neighbours. Nuclear family households, where both adults work, institutionalize care for both their young in daycares and the elderly in senior's homes. All of these factors have contributed to human relationships being in a severe state of disarray, more noticeably so in the affluent parts of the world. This lack of nurturing relationships translates into a pervasive spiritual isolation. While the building block of community is people, a common feeling for many since WWII is the loss of community. Pursuing "reciprocal relationships of trust and

interdependence” can rebuild social capital and strengthen communities (Flora, 1996, p. 219).

Weaker connections between individuals within communities have reduced trust. Our affluent society allows us, in many respects, that we rely on each other less because the need is not as great. With less opportunity to build trusting relationships, we have come to rely on other mechanisms in interactions with our neighbours. For example, professional lawyers and insurance claims adjusters now manage many sensitive matters between community members. Using third parties in this way may feel less messy due to the distance from other community members we can maintain. However, this jeopardizes opportunities to build trust. Berry points out that "we have changed from a society whose ideal of justice was trust and fairness among people who knew each other into a society whose ideal of justice is public litigation, breeding distrust even among people who know each other" (1992, pp.121-122).

Building community trust is done through the practice. Moderation and conciliation are more likely to happen without a third party if people can bring themselves face to face with those with whom they find disagreement. The increasing cost of liability insurance for small business and non-profit organizations is due in part to the increased risk that claims will be litigated to gain the most for an injured party. A measure of responsibility, which might rightfully fall on the injured party, is often lost in settlements bent on avoiding legal costs. Ultimately, the cost is borne by individuals through increased insurance premiums and, by extension, the community through weakened levels of trust.

Becoming responsible for one's own local place can be a starting point for building community. However, demanding freedoms without a full commitment to one's

responsibilities is a common enough human condition. Many adults model a very low level of responsibility for their communities, while expecting youth to act with a high level of responsibility. Our teenagers' demands for freedom of choice without accepting parallel responsibilities are reflective of a consumptive, individualist society which is destroying the very source of our own basic needs, the natural world. Based on her public school teaching experiences, Deborah Meier speaks to why so many of our teenagers today, who understand and demand their individual freedoms, have little or no understanding of their responsibilities:

A lot of our adolescent students assumed the first habit of mind was having the right to your own opinion or viewpoint. ... [But] [w]hat I'd like you to do is to take responsibility for your opinions, to look upon them not as just something you have a right to but as something you have some responsibility for. (1998, Question period, sec. 3)

Freedoms and responsibilities are often not in a healthy state of balance. Excessive demands for responsibility can be oppressive. On the other hand, too much freedom can lead to self-indulgence and decadence. This can translate into a lack of responsibility for one's community, the very source of many individual freedoms. But communities which limit freedoms to the acceptance of responsibilities are often criticized as traditional, backward or not with the times. Berry argues that such freedoms only suppose the promise of individual self-fulfillment:

Freedom defined strictly as individual freedom tends to see itself as an escape from the constraints of community life – constraints necessarily implied by consideration for the nature of place; by consideration for the needs and feelings of neighbors; by kindness to strangers; by respect for the privacy, dignity, and propriety of individual lives; by affection for a place, its people, and its nonhuman creatures; and by the duty to teach the young. ... People are instructed to free themselves of all restrictions, restraints, and scruples in order to fulfill themselves as individuals to the utmost extent that the law allows. ... But there is a paradox in all this ... as the emphasis on individual liberty has increased, the liberty and power of most individuals has declined. ... [W]e have become 'free' for not much self-fulfillment at all. (1992, pp. 150-152)

The broadly accepted assumption that self-fulfillment is best met through individualism, may not be entirely true. The alternative of commitment to, and responsibility for, a defined community may offer as many or more possibilities for self-fulfillment.

The capacity for individual human relationships are dependent on the physical size of a community. In order to maintain strong connections community members need “to have a common knowledge of themselves and of their place” (Berry, 1992, p. 168). Sale considers the optimum size for community, with local political and economic control, ideal “at the close-knit village scale of a 1000 people or so, or probably more often at the extended community scale of 5,000 to 10,000.” Human institutions for decision-making need to be of a size “where people know one another and the essentials of the environment they share, where at least the most basic information for problem-solving is known or readily available.” It is at this level decisions will most likely be right or more easily corrected, if misguided, with less long-term damage to society or the environment (1991, pp. 94-95). Both Sale and Berry feel small communities still provide the best opportunity for humans to live in closer harmony with the land, and in many ways functioning more like a natural biological unit, as one part of a healthy local ecosystem. They suggest connection to place be based on traditional community values, but not without tolerance and the vision of creating a truly equitable space for everyone.

One impediment to community comes when the prevalence of mobility in Western cultures places those with very different needs and wants in the same community. A common phenomenon in North America has urban dwellers relocating to rural communities for a quieter slower lifestyle. The strained challenges of human relationships which can build local social capital are often visible in rural communities

when newcomers and old-timers attempt to integrate. Economic inequities are a common irritant. More affluent newcomers often drive up property values with their purchase of desirable waterfront and choice lands. This can increase current property taxes for locals, while limiting everyone's traditional access to water front areas which may have been used as a common community resource for generations.

In addition, newcomer's initial attraction to a slower pace of life can be compromised by their demands for the urban-type services to which they are accustomed. Differing opinions of economic development, often defined by land use and zoning by-laws or the rejection of such by-laws altogether, is also typically a contentious issue between the two groups. Big box stores and fast food outlets may be seen as desirable conveniences by locals, while newcomers may see them as blights on the landscape. Flora summarizes the root cause of the tension between newcomers and locals as one based on mutual shortsightedness on the part of both parties:

In all these cases, the actions of newcomers increase conflict within the community by focusing on the environmental capital of locality and ignoring the importance of social capital. And old-timers, by not recognizing the importance of social capital, do not see the newcomers as an important resource for the community and fail to integrate them into it. (Flora et al., 1996, p.219)

Recognizing the value to community that both newcomers and old-timers have to offer is a measure of community tolerance. The strength of community often lies in the challenges of the most difficult human relationships. Barrett argues that the key is to keep community traditions which will reverse exclusionary practices, while avoiding introducing practices that are destructive of solidarity, and may hence worsen or create new exclusions (2005, p. 16).

Building strength and tolerance within communities can serve as a building block for supportive relationships *between* communities. The promotion of independent self-

reliant communities does not necessarily imply isolated, small, walled communities. The authors of *A Blueprint for Survival* speak to the need for connections between communities.

Although we believe that the small community should be the basic unit of society and that each community should be as self-sufficient and self-regarding as possible, we would like to stress that we are not proposing that they be inward-looking, self-obsessed or in any way closed to the rest of the world. ... [T]here must be an efficient and sensitive communications network between all communities. (in Sale, 1991, p. 66)

The challenges of differing perspectives between communities are often exasperated by the inequitable relationship between most rural and urban communities. Rural communities in Nova Scotia, like most of Canada, have largely become subordinate to urban centres. The economic theory that the periphery (rural) exists to serve the needs of the centre (urban) fundamentally describes a heavily biased relationship. Centralized decision-making allows urban centres to control the huge quantities of natural resources they consume. Rural communities, the source of most of these resources, are typically given little decision-making power over the use of their own resources. Sale pointedly states, “The contemporary high-rise city, in short, is an ecological parasite as it extracts its lifeblood from elsewhere and an ecological pathogen as it sends back its wastes.” A necessary goal for sustainable communities of the future is to therefore “establish parity in the relationships between a city and its hinterlands, a mutual flow that recognizes the dependence – a needful, mutually understood dependence – of one upon the other.” Cities will continue to offer cultural diversity, produce manufactured goods, be trading centres, and provide services such as hospitals, libraries and universities. But “the small community has historically been the most efficient at using energy, recycling its wastes, reducing drawdown, and adjusting to carrying capacity. ... A kind of unconscious

wisdom operates at that level ... [where] the decision-making mechanisms [are] most adaptive and competent.” Rural communities will continue being the primary provider of food, water and raw materials, offering urban communities good examples of sustainability in all respects. “Human life, to be fully human, needs the city; but it also needs food and other raw materials gained from the country. Everybody needs ready access to both countryside and city” (Sale, 1991, pp. 65, 114). One task in urban centres will be to construct healthy symbiotic relationships with neighbouring rural communities.

The existing size of many of our cities poses problems. The growth of urban centres around the globe continues. “In 1960, in the least developed nations of the world only 9 percent of the population lived in urban centers; now it's 26 percent. In industrial nations, like our own, 75 percent of our population [is] located in urban centers” (Zajonc, 1996, para. 5, 7). With about three quarters of our population living in urban areas, Zajonc is led to the conclusion that “only 5 or 10 percent of the urban population can move back onto the land before the impact starts to damage that environment significantly” (1996, para. 7). His implication is that, we have to find sustainable solutions for much of our population within urban spaces.

Urbanization has also been making small-scale local communities and neighbourhoods less identifiable. The meaning of the term ‘local’ is now typically defined in a wide variety of ways. The market place may take the liberty of defining local products, but local community is defined by its members. The collective will of the people defines the parameters of their own local community, commonly based on culture, tradition, population and natural landscape. City neighbourhoods are further challenged by the difficulty in maintaining or establishing a sense of community. Homogenized urban neighbourhoods may need to look to different defining parameters. But population



size is one critical determining factor for any community. Authors such as Sale (1991) and Morris (1991) both suggest an upper limit of about 10,000 people. They believe that the effectiveness of political and economic decision-making and social interaction diminishes when communities grow beyond this limit. Local is where we can best know and understand our impact on others or the natural world, and realize a sense of community identity.

Globalization continues to draw us away from local community. We are led by mainstream news media to believe that we have adequate information to make morally correct decisions on global matters. The misconception prevails that we are well informed, and even active, participants in international political, economic or charitable decision-making. For example, we form differing, largely uninformed, opinions on when and where military action should be taken in countries which most of us have only visited through television, while sharing an almost total disconnection from the daily joys and pains of millions in other parts of the world. Global corporate media engages us with selected images, disguising our disconnection while pretending active participation.

The most recent economic incarnation of capitalism has also made us global consumers. Consumption continues to be the primer for economic growth. But "[t]he global economy does not exist to help the communities and localities of the globe. It exists to siphon the wealth of those communities and places into a few bank accounts" (Berry, 1992, p. 129). Now we increasingly purchase imported disposable goods, produced on the other side of the world, exporting our wastes for so-called sustainable recycling. Expanding trade has been the hallmark of globalization proponents. Again, we are left with a misrepresentation. The poverty of the producers in third world countries is hidden from us by the large distances of globalized trade.

Even in our over consumption of products from distant places, we still long for a local connection to place. As Berry says, community is “a locally understood interdependence of local people, local culture, local economy, and local nature” which “lives and acts by the common virtues of trust, goodwill, forbearance, self-restraint, compassion, and forgiveness” (1992, p. 120). Committing to the responsibility of getting to know, and working with, those in our local communities in relationships of trust is much more readily achievable and valuable than the superficial, vague, global relationships offered by our mainstream media and corporate marketing.

The concept of social capital is vital to any discussion of local community. We have all grown up with some moral lessons as to the benefits of co-operation; early lessons in the schoolyard pointed to the necessity of sharing. We were taught there is a multiplier effect when people work together, which can outweigh the conflicts inherent in human interaction. In his book *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam (2000) defines physical capital as physical objects, human capital as the property of individuals, and social capital as the trust built through healthy human relationships. Social capital, he says, “is most powerful when embedded in a network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital” (2000, p. 19). A community can be rich in good, hardworking people with plenty of physical resources, but it can become much more so through human relationships which build trust. This is the multiplier.

Putnam raised alarms in many circles by suggesting there was a drastic decline in social capital in the U.S.A. in the latter part of the last century. He found political and civic engagement down. Informal social ties decreased and, although tolerance of others rose, Americans trusted one another less. The possible reasons he suggests are changes in

family structure, suburban sprawl and electronic entertainment (2000). In an earlier writing Putnam argues more emphatically that television is the real culprit in the loss of civic participation. Individual leisure pursuits such as TV are replacing other group activities like joining a bowling league (1996). Some of his critics suggest that the decline may actually be due more to the fact that established organizations are not evolving and taking up issues important to younger generations. Another possible reason suggested that the lack of volunteer time is due to economic demands that create the need for double income households (Shuman, 1998, p. 36). However, Putnam and his critics all seem to imply that there is a marked decline in the general health of communities. Playing together, working together or simply acting together for whatever reason does strengthen community

In contrast, the free market economy's principle of competition over co-operation weakens community. Businesses compete with one another in a marketplace, where demand for products and services is supposed to reward winners. In this competitive drive, the natural world is often an ancillary loser. Individuals compete with one another for jobs where the best skills and knowledge are supposed to determine winners. In this competition, families and communities can suffer. "The ideal of competition always implies, and in fact requires, that any community must be divided into a class of winners and a class of losers" (Berry, 1990a, p. 130). This is not to deny that a measure of competition in life is frequently modeled in the natural world, but "it is equally obvious that no individual can lead a good or a satisfying life under the rule of competition, and that no community can succeed except by limiting somehow the competitiveness of its members" (1990a, p. 134). The best human values cannot be reduced to an economic formula.

We live in an age where an economic system of free market capitalism permeates all aspects of our lives. It is attempting to reduce everything to a tradable commodity with a monetary worth. According to Norbert-Hodge, this is not natural in a healthy community:

In a healthy society you do not have the economy influencing identity, influencing values, influencing religion and spirituality; you do not have the economy making an impact on every aspect of life. In a healthy society the economy is subsumed under ethical and spiritual values. It is shaped by cultural identity and cultural values as well as by ecological imperatives. (Norberg-Hodge, 1996, para. 24)

The competitiveness of capitalism induces us to view the world in terms of supply and demand, producers and consumers. But the full development and benefits of human relations, the essence of community, is only limited by this narrow economic view of our existence.

In summary we have discussed many of the barriers to strengthening community. There is the key issue of individualism versus community. The problems facing local communities today originates in a number of sources. Affluence and urban migration has created a disconnect from community. The rise of personal autonomy is diminishing trust stemming from interactive personal relationships. Communities cannot reach their full potential when many members expect and demand a great deal of personal freedom, yet are not aware these come with given responsibilities and commitments. Urban centers suffer from neighbourhoods that are too big for optimal self-government strategies (Sale), while rural communities are complicated by the conflicting expectations and values of newcomers and locals. The necessary interdependence between communities is further strained by inequitable urban/rural relationships. All communities' degree of self-reliance has been under pressure from globalization. These barriers are accentuated by a

decline in community social capital. In the next section we will examine some alternatives that point to ways of dealing with these problems.

### **C. alternatives**

Finding viable alternatives to the problem of a diminished sense of community is imperative. The decline of community in North America has been recognized by many writers. Wendell Berry is one of the most prolific writers on the demise of rural, farming based, communities in the United States. He believes the rejuvenation of healthy, sustainable, self-reliant communities will have to begin in small rural environments where people still retain the remnants of local memory and history. These are also the locales where residents regularly bear witness to the exploitation of natural resources through an economic model that is destructive towards rural communities. Cobb supports Berry's belief that small rural communities still hold the best prospect for individuals to participate in a defined community. "To be a member of a community is to participate in its life, and to some degree in its decisions" (1996, p. 188). Berry also feels it is critically important that all communities conduct their own renewal, one which "would have to be done not from the outside by the instruction of visiting experts, but from the inside by the ancient rules of neighborliness, by the love of precious things, and by the wish to be at home" (1992, pp. 168-169). He believes rural communities offer the best possibility for enhanced human relationships and much deeper relationships with the land.

Connection to place includes our relationships with the land. Urban environments, relative to natural rural environments, are not only largely human constructs but often create a state of sensory overload.

The urban environment's constant over-stimulation of the senses cannot help but cause us to limit the use of our senses, to intentionally shut ourselves down. In that sense, we adopt a guarded stance toward life rather than an open one, and we become less than we could be. (Ross, 1992, p. 94)

A natural human defense function is to put up filters in order to avoid sensory overload. On the other hand, more rural environments can offer sensory stimulation in a much more subtle way. Without the need for filters, a much greater sensory awareness can be maintained (1992, p. 93). This can nurture our relationship with the natural world and connection to place. In the introduction to his book, *Shadows in the Sun: Essays on the Spirit of Place*, Wade Davis turns to indigenous cultures and describes their “traditional mystique of the earth that is based not only on deep attachment to the land, but on far more subtle intuition – the idea that the land itself is breathed into being by consciousness.” Davis describes an indigenous perspective where the land is animated. “Mountains, rivers and forests are not perceived as inanimate, as mere props on a stage upon which the human drama unfolds (1992, p. 8). In the same chapter, American poet Gary Snyder offers a solution to the disconnect from the land we suffer under in our affluent mobile western societies: “Stay put.” For it is “only by discovering a sense of place ... a commitment to a particular piece of ground, will we [be] able to redefine our relationship to the planet” (1992, p. 7).

It is the interaction of humans together, within communities, which builds social capital. Social capital is generated from human relations. It is less tangible than the individual knowledge and skills of human capital, or the material form of physical capital, but just as “physical capital and human capital facilitate productive activity, social capital does as well” (Coleman, 1988, pp. S100-S101). Putnam (2000) believes social capital is important for three reasons: “First, social capital allows citizens to resolve collective

problems more easily.” Co-operation usually leads to everyone being better off.

“Second, social capital greases the wheels that allow communities to advance smoothly.”

Relationships built on trust facilitate interactions between individuals. Thirdly, it improves our lot “by widening our awareness of the many ways in which our fates are linked.” Individuals within a community “become more tolerant, less cynical, and more empathetic to the misfortunes of others,” he says. Belonging to a community of people can provide important networks for all aspects of life, including growing evidence of an increased ability to deal with traumas and illness more effectively. “Community connectedness is not just about warm fuzzy tales of civic triumph. In measurable and well-documented ways, social capital makes an enormous difference to our lives” (2000, pp. 288-290).

Building social capital is at the heart of strengthening communities. Returning to the common example of mixing newcomers and old-timers in a rural community, Flora’s work reveals ways to move people together not further apart. It is critically important for both groups to attempt to perceive community from the other’s perspective.

For newcomers, it is important to establish that they do not think that they are better than the old-timers because of higher levels of income or education or more urban experience. And for old-timers it is important to make newcomers native to place by forgiving them for not having a great grand-father born in the community and thereby acknowledging that one can be linked to place by more than kin ties. (1996, p. 219)

Nurturing relationships of mutual trust is the starting point for building social capital and community. This is the foundation for acceptance of diversity and differing opinions on local issues. Honouring and celebrating place, with all its present cultural diversity, encourages co-operation and collective action, the strength of community.

Putnam also points to the practical value of building community social capital. Mutual interdependence and co-operation between community members can have benefits for those seeking work. Most everyone relies somewhat on “the economic advantages of social ties. ... [U]nemployed people have found, for example, that they look first to friends and relatives for leads on job openings.” An individual may be seeking work in the competitive marketplace, but the strength of her or his human relationships is often the most important factor. “[A]t all levels in the social hierarchy and in all parts of the economy, social capital is a powerful resource for achieving occupational advancement, social status and economic rewards – perhaps even more important than human capital (education and experience)” (2000, pp. 320-321). These practical benefits of social capital can be both attractive and rewarding.

Although social capital can benefit all, women remain the social fabric that binds communities together. Women are the underlying strength that nurtures relationships and community. When communities, neighbourhoods or families are under stress, women are typically the primary force for recovery. The absolute necessity of the role of women in building community remains.

‘Women’s work’ has always been dismissed – the work of remembering the details, noticing the emotional nuances, keeping the peace, keeping food in the fridge and clothes laundered. Yet these seemingly mundane affairs form the basis of healthy community life. Women’s ways weave the substance of community ties. We need to value these sensibilities and move them into public life. (Adair, 1993, p. 93)

When men, or a type of masculine perspective, occupy most of the top political, economic and social decision-making positions around the world, we are not only missing the feminine perspective, but perhaps missing the best possibility for finding solutions to the many problems communities are facing everywhere. Capra (1992) wrote of the



convergence of three major changes in western culture, one of which was the end of patriarchy and the rise in influence of the women's movement.

Feminist writers such as Patricia Perkins and Marcia Nozick recognize the importance of a holistic approach to rebuilding community. They understand that true empowerment requires local strength in many different areas of daily life. In *No Place Like Home*, Nozick argues for a broad based, comprehensive transition that is needed in all aspects of our society:

Feminine principles are forming the foundation for an alternative vision of society which is influencing how we work, organize and make decisions – smaller, more personal structures and processes, co-operative work situations, consensus decision-making and reliance on community supports and the informal economy. They are values which support the building of sustainable communities. (in Perkins, 2003, Conclusion)

Women's ways of building community are not only an alternative, but are distinctively different and often separate from the activities of men. In a study of an Avalon Peninsula community in Newfoundland, Porter argues for "greater recognition of 'women's culture,' examining the ways in which women organize and do things together as a powerful alternative to 'men's politics'" (1985, p. 77). She looked at women's culture at work in a coastal strip about one hundred miles long. Telephones and mobility on year-round roads highly integrated the women of the region in a network of social/voluntary associations where women-only gatherings were the most popular. This is the relationship work of building community. On the other hand, the relatively exclusive domain of men's politics mostly barred women. Porter found it is "the men and male groups that dominate those public expressions of what we, conventionally, call politics." This may not have been seen by women as exclusionary but irrelevant to "the 'really' important matters of personal relationships, caring concerns and the family."

They organized around what they knew establishing “a kind of freedom, autonomy and material confidence” in which they could make their own politics. What they “have engineered is in effect a retreat from an apparently uncontrollable outside world to one which is more manageable.” The women have achieved “a piece of subversion that should not go uncelebrated, but the latent power of the organized rural women of Newfoundland is, as yet, unrealized” (1985, pp. 83, 88-89). It is notable that this is taking place in a rural area at the margins of mainstream Canadian society. The coastal area studied is within a short drive of the city of St. John’s, but Newfoundland as a whole remains very much peripheral to the centre of Canada. Perhaps this in itself is conducive to a greater sense of community, despite the distances between towns in the one hundred mile coastal strip. Although Porter doesn’t compare the degree of women’s organizing to the level in an urban community, her work does suggest that connection to place, inter-marriage, and common occupations such as fishing make the possibilities for organizing greater in a rural community.

Along with women’s voluntary work, family duties, and jobs outside the home, women’s contribution to the care of the needy in the community remains huge, although not fully recognized. Women’s role as the primary provider of unpaid work is a major force in sustaining healthy communities. “[W]hen community falls, so must fall all the things that only community life can engender and protect: the care of the old, the care and education of children, family life, neighborly work, the handing down of memory, the care of the earth, respect for nature and the lives of wild creatures” (Berry, 1992, p. 133). The care for the most vulnerable members of our society, the very young and the very old, is not only largely unpaid work but the majority of it is done by women. In Nova Scotia in 2001, 60 percent of women spent more than thirty hours per week providing

childcare, 54 percent do at least fifteen hours of unpaid housework and 21 percent provide more than ten hours per week for senior care. Many of these women would also be working at paid employment (McFadyen, 2004, pp. 43-46, 39). The value of these human relationships to the community is incalculable. Providing the daily needs for all through genuine compassion and duty, is the foundation of community and is still largely accomplished through women's initiatives.

This sense of responsibility for community relationships can begin to be instilled in children in the schools. Education for community teaches the value of healthy community relationships. One of the primary purposes of schools is to socialize students so they might become functioning members of society. Socialization for community priorities would emphasize "a special form of interrelationships among people, one based on mutual respect and trust, on a generosity toward our fellow citizens and understanding for their intentions." But the day-to-day practice of building relationships, particularly between different generations, is largely missing from both our schools and from our communities. Without more avenues for adults to model for youth relationships of responsibility and care for their community, education will continue to lack a soul. We are simply failing to convey a sense of community to our future members (Meier, 1998, sec. 1, para. 5, 6, 24). Education to nurture community is directly relevant and connected to the setting, our community's members. The specific education of one's community can take place within the communication between older and younger generations. While children find themselves in daycares then schools, seniors often spend the final years of their lives institutionalized in care facilities. Given the higher number of homes with only two generations, where both men and women work outside the home, there are often limited options to meet the needs of the young or the old. Situations will continue to

demand the need for care facilities, but creating more opportunities for our children to be in the company of our elders can preserve community history and knowledge, which is being lost to future generations by this disconnect. It is the practical local knowledge of the elders which may be critical to the future survival of our communities.

While it is easier to identify a sense of community in terms of a rural location, the majority of Canadians now live in urban areas. Cities are becoming larger with no easy way to divide them into manageable parts. But if a vision for sustainable communities is to be realistic, it must include the urban landscape. Dividing cities into interdependent neighbourhoods is a model which can be found in our own heritage. In medieval European cities, “households were united into small territorial unions. Neighborhoods of 10,000 or so were responsible for controlling crime and meting out punishment. They elected their judges and priests, and formed their own militia” (Morris, 1991, p. 134). Invention and enterprise flourished within a framework where economic matters were determined by, and in the best interests of, the whole community.

If we were able to reconstruct the conditions under which such cities flourished on, say, a neighborhood scale, we would be taking a giant step in revolutionizing not only the way we do business, but the way in which we conceive of the basics of economics: production, distribution, marketing and consumption. Furthermore, it would offer an opportunity to re-introduce the idea of a commonly defined and shared ethic into the marketplace. (1991, p. 133)

Solutions for cities could also benefit rural communities. Sale and other writers believe more self-reliant urban communities could pursue less exploitive relationships with rural communities. Increasing the production of food and energy within urban communities, reducing the export of wastes to neighbouring rural communities, and limiting the expansion of land development into surrounding rural communities could be positive initiatives.

If solutions are to be found for all communities, it will have to include a reduction in consumption levels. Living with less material needs opens up the possibilities for participating in activities which feed the soul. Collective community activities can provide these opportunities, but distinguishing needs from wants is important. “Wants may be ‘easily satisfied’ either by producing much or desiring little” (Sahlins, 2004, para. 2).

Capitalism encourages consumerism, teaching us from a young age that the market place can provide commodities to satisfy all our needs and wants. But the feelings of trust and the security of belonging to a tribe cannot be converted into commodities for sale in the marketplace. In fact, in “an increasingly environmentally, economically, and socially compromised future, it may be of more use to know how to maintain personal wellness, grow nutritious food, and repair basic household machines than to rely exclusively on a fat investment portfolio.” Burch believes that when wants in life are minimized, it allows much more time and energy to develop the practice of living in a way which responds to our inner spiritual calling, in its broadest sense (2000, p. 147). Our work, which consumes so much of our lives, can take on greater meaning, while still meeting our basic needs.

The perspective on life carried in the short word ‘vocation’ is one with room for the divine, the inner world of spiritual intimacy between every person and the supernatural source of all life. ... [A]t the same time the very idea of ‘vocation’ testifies to a mingling of practical and divine activities in all work, no matter how humble. (2000, p.143)

Providing the space for a fuller development of the individual allows for lives of more depth and quality. With greater time for, and awareness of, what is important, human relationships can be nurtured. The resulting social capital is to the benefit of the community and therefore the individual. However, many Maritimers are forced to choose

between living with less economically, without a guarantee of a higher quality of life or, on the other hand, relocating to where they may find work.

The above has looked at suggestions for alternatives which support local community in our fragmented Western civilization. The discussion looked at; the need to build social capital, consider education which brings our children together with the elders, create opportunities for the involvement of women with respect for their role as community builders, define neighbourhoods in cities to strengthen connection to place and reduce our consumption of material goods which can enrich our lives in other ways. Let's now look at aspects of community in the Maritime region.

#### **D. local community in the Maritime Region**

The widespread disintegration of community is taking place in many rural parts of the Maritimes as well. Talk of youth 'going down the road' to regional urban centres or to other parts of the country and the world is a common refrain in rural Nova Scotia (Milsom, 2003). While the population of Nova Scotia fell only slightly between 1996 and 2001, some rural areas, suffering under economic stagnation and government cutbacks and centralization, are said to offer young people little choice but to leave home. "[T]he population of Guysborough County has fallen by more than 10 percent." If the youth who are leaving were to stay, they "would raise families and join the volunteer fire departments and other local organizations that are the lifeblood of our small communities." Milsom suggests the declining populations in rural communities may also allow governments "to justify further reductions in, or centralization of, [local] health-care and education services," further escalating the disintegration (2003, pp. 31-32). A

closer look at the statistics (Table 3) on mobility in Nova Scotia of individuals above the age of five is revealing:

Table 3.

NOVA SCOTIA 5-YEAR MOBILITY STATUS, 2001							
	Total Pop	Migrants	Migrants % Total	External	Intra Provincial	Inter Provincial	Intra- Provincial as % Total Migrants
Cape Breton Urban	62,885	3,245	5%	160	1,395	1,660	43%
Coastal Rural	243,780	26,330	11%	1,665	16,330	8,035	62%
Hfx-Dart-Bed-Sack	296,990	58,460	20%	5,895	27,300	24,995	47%
Non-Coastal Rural	238,360	36,465	15%	1,570	22,550	12,150	62%
Province	841,985	124,470	15%	9,280	67,575	52,965	54%

Source: 2001 Census, Statistics Canada

in *Between the Land and the Sea* (2004),  
Coastal Communities Network, [www.coastalcommunities.ns.ca](http://www.coastalcommunities.ns.ca)

The urban area of Halifax attracted 64 percent of immigrants, 47 percent of those from other provinces and over 27,000 or 40 percent of Nova Scotians moving within the province. However, Table 3 indicates intraprovincial migrants relocating to both coastal and non-coastal rural communities even greater. “Some 39,000 Nova Scotians migrated to rural communities. . . . These trends must reflect to some extent an urban to rural shift that is running counter to the predominant urbanization tide” (Coastal Communities Network, 2005). The 39,000 migrants would also include rural Nova Scotians relocating to other rural parts of the province. Many Nova Scotians continue to prefer living outside urban centers.

In a study of twentieth century rural Prince Edward Island (P.E.I.), Sharpe “compared the conflict between rural society and urban-industrial society to a war.” He argued that the urban society became dominant in P.E.I. through a process of social change sweeping aside rural values and cultural norms, “that have universal value and can help provide a corrective and restorative direction for modern urban societies” (1991, pp. 100, 8). The rural values are described in the context of a supportive sharing community. He compares the rural individual’s rights and responsibilities, within the socially accepted norms and behaviour of the society, to the individualism of the urban-industrial society based on material wealth, competition and hierarchy. Rural society operates as an “integrated totality,” as opposed to modern urban life as a “series of rootless segmented parts” (1991, p. 104). Perhaps due in part to its rural character, Atlantic Canadian values of neighbourliness continue to stand out in comparison to other parts of Canada.

Relationships within the community are crucial. Newcomers, locally referred to as come-from-aways (CFA’s), and old-timers, referred to as locals, often struggle to find common ground. The possibilities in our society for mobility increase with affluence. Community make-up often becomes a mix of locals and more affluent CFA’s. These economic differences are often coupled with dissimilar attitudes toward local resource use. The rural perspective of locals often gives priority to economic benefits, while the more urban based perspective of CFA’s commonly places higher value on the aesthetics of landscape (Flora, 1996). Many CFA’s are drawn to rural living for quality of life reasons, wanting their new community to remain just as they found it. Ironically, the coming of more newcomers like themselves, changes part of the character of the community which drew them there initially. Antoft’s thesis speaks of parts of scenic Nova Scotia being eagerly bought up by buyers from outside the province. “[T]he old



homestead, unpainted, drafty and decaying, had become a nest-egg. A symbol of security and comfort in old age” (1977, p.1). In the early 1970s he actively participated in the Nova Scotia debate between those supporting the private property ethic and those who felt the alienation of land is a serious economic, social and emotional threat. National and provincial population and urbanization statistics were also studied. Between 1951 and 1971 the Nova Scotian population increased only 23 percent compared to the Canadian average of 53 percent. Across the country urban residents grew to 76.1 percent of the total population, while in Nova Scotia it was only 56.7 percent. More rural Nova Scotians chose to remain outside urban centers, “becoming a floating workforce for primary industries in lumbering and fishing, for seasonal food processing factories, tourist establishments, and construction” (1977). Local lifestyles and employment were, and are often, tied to resource use. Impacts of modern urban lifestyles were increasingly impacting rural communities.

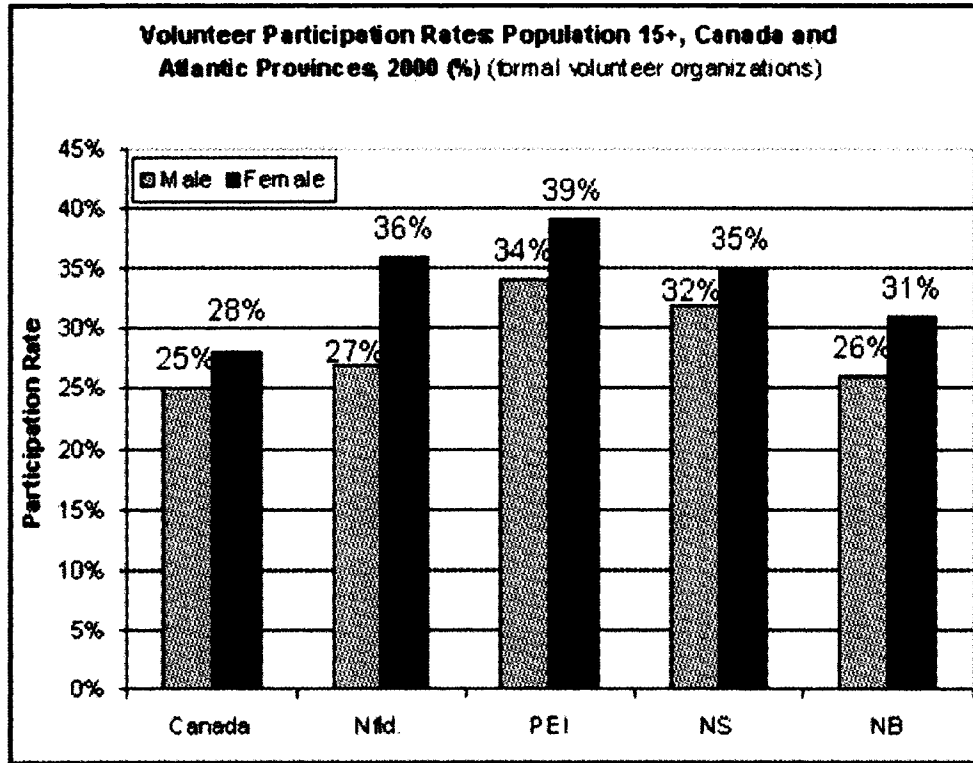
It has been a long-held belief by many Nova Scotians that the most attractive waterfront lands are increasingly being purchased by individuals residing outside the province. This is one community resource to which people retain an emotional attachment. “In the late 1960s non-resident land ownership of Nova Scotia shore land and farm properties arose as the subject of earnest and often heated debate” (1977, p. 1) Lunenburg County’s landscape, its beautiful Atlantic coastline and many sandy beaches continue to attract people from away whether they be Europeans, Americans, central Canadians, Haligonians or those from anywhere outside the community. Nova Scotia land has become a globally traded commodity. The increase in non-resident land ownership impacts local community. Breeze’s 1998 thesis outlines some of these

problems. Rapidly rising property values increase land speculation, creating further pressure to cash in and sell land which may have been in the family for generations.

The management of resources, such as forestry and agricultural land, has shifted elsewhere instead of being community based. These management decisions made elsewhere, are often not in the best interests of the local community. This has been particularly acute with the large corporate land holdings in the forestry industry. The pace of resource extraction, along with the rate of residential land development, can also have negative impacts on the local environment. Many communities have also experienced reduced access to natural resource activities such as hunting and berry-picking, along with the freedom to walk along some of the most scenic shorelines in the province (1998, p. 12)

Increasing non-resident land ownership in rural Nova Scotia could also impact community volunteerism. Statistics Canada released a report on Canadian volunteerism trends between 1997-2000. “The results show a continuing sharp decline in formal voluntary work throughout Canada ... dropping from 31 percent to 27 percent. ... [T]he total number of hours ... declined by 5 percent in just three years” (GPI Atlantic, 2003).

Table 4. Volunteer Participation Rates ( percent): Population 15+,  
Canada and Atlantic Provinces 2000

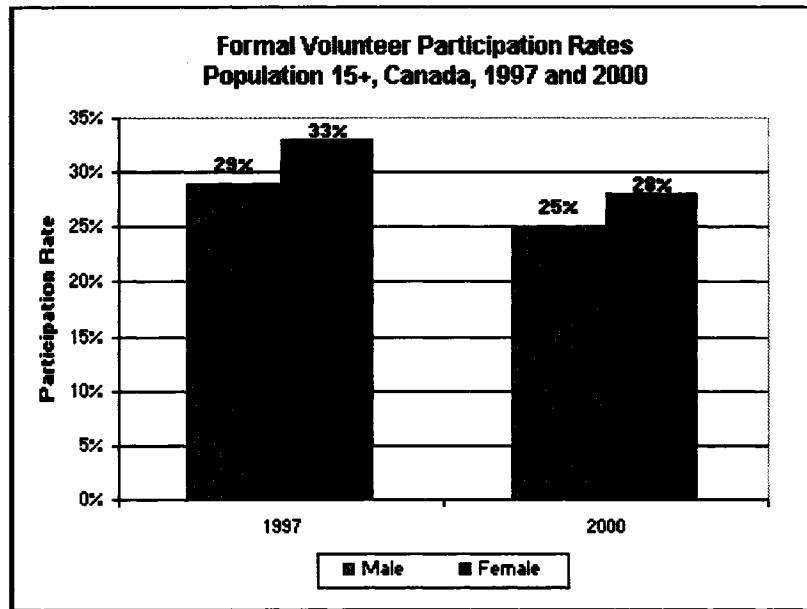


Source: Statistics Canada, Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians 2001

in GPI Atlantic, [www.gpiatlantic.org](http://www.gpiatlantic.org) :

The Economic Value of Civic & Voluntary Work in Atlantic Canada,  
2003 Update

Table 5. Formal Volunteer Participation Rates: Population 15+, Canada, 1997 & 2000



Source: Statistics Canada, *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians 2001*  
 in GPI Atlantic, [www.gpiatlantic.org](http://www.gpiatlantic.org) :  
 The Economic Value of Civic & Voluntary Work in Atlantic Canada,  
 2003 Update

Tables 4 and 5 show that women are consistently higher than men in the formal volunteer hours they contribute. Table 5 shows a continuing decline in volunteerism across the country in the three years surveyed, although the Atlantic provinces all remain above the Canadian average, as indicated in Table 4. However, GPI Atlantic believes the trend toward declining volunteer hours can have a dramatic impact on recipients such as the elderly, disabled, sick, homeless, youth in need, abused women and children, and other vulnerable groups.

While Atlantic Canadians can be justly proud of the remarkable strength of the voluntary sector in this region, and the tremendous contribution that volunteers make to our wellbeing, standard of living, and quality of life, we must recognize that a growing responsibility and burden rests on ever fewer shoulders (GPI Atlantic, 2003)

GPI recognizes the benefits of the voluntary sector, “both in human and economic terms,” which makes “such a vital contribution to community and population health” (2003).

In addition to these volunteer efforts by community members local schools are an important community resource. Local schools are part of the fabric which holds communities together. Sharpe believes the traditional rural P.E.I. school was the most important social institution, providing cohesion in the community. Schools were “seen as not separate from but an extension of the home.” Socializing through schools established the school district boundaries as the local community (1991, pp. 72-74).

Many smaller rural schools continue to face the prospect of closure. Residents of Middle River, Cape Breton “see this as a fight to preserve a way of life that's disappearing all over Nova Scotia as the rural population bleeds away to Halifax and other urban centres.” Pate reports that the fight is really for their community because “young people just aren't going to stay her,” she says. “If we lose our school, we're going to lose our community” (2005).

In the Queen's County community of Mill Village, local residents see their schools as important to a sense of knowing community. “Through the school, my daughter knows she is part of a community. ... Even seniors who have no school-aged kids are worried,” one mother revealed. They feel if young families locate elsewhere, many of the services provided by active community groups may disappear. At another local Queens County school in Milton, Milsom spoke with a teacher who felt schools are where “kids learn the value of community” otherwise “they lose that sense of the value of who they are and where they are from.” In yet another Queen's County school closure, the community of Greenfield was advancing its plans to operate its own school when the school board finally backed down. Residents fought to keep their old two-room

schoolhouse because they felt, “Greenfield is a community of people that works entirely together. In the end it’s the people” (Milsom, 2003, pp. 184-185).

The integral part a local school can play in a community is supported by a personal experience I have had as a school bus driver, providing transportation for the 2002 safe-grad party of North Queens High in Caledonia, Nova Scotia. After ceremonies finished up at the school around 10 p.m., the high school graduates all boarded a bus headed to Halifax for a variety of activities, which would not wind up until after breakfast the next morning. Leaving the school, the procession through the community was led, and escorted, by the police and fire departments with their vehicle lights flashing, while family members and friends lined the streets waving and sending them off with their best wishes. It was akin to a community rite of passage for the grade twelve graduates. Adult chaperones accompanied the students, giving them just enough freedom to match their ability for responsibility. The welfare of the students, and by extension the community’s welfare, was the underlying consideration. But this was not a gift handed to the students. Parents, friends, teachers and students alike worked hard to raise the necessary funds for the night, which included go-carts with pizza and pop, disco bowling, alcohol-free karaoke at a downtown bar, breakfast at a popular location and treats at a fast food outlet before arriving very tired back at the school around 10 a.m. the following morning. The value to the community of the social capital built through this annual event is immeasurable, and an indication of the community cohesion existing in this particular small rural Nova Scotia town, using their school as the catalyst. Community co-operation and support for others is alive and well in Caledonia (Milsom, 2003, pp. 63-67).

Completion of high school is a standard measure of success for youth across Atlantic Canada, and high school is seen as an important stepping stone towards meeting

personal economic needs. Stay-in-school programs are heralded almost everywhere, but do they actually strengthen connection to place? Corbett suggests schools in rural Nova Scotia may be encouraging out-migration through what he calls ‘learning-to-leave’ education curriculum. He points to an alternative view of what a drop-out may mean. The so-called smart rural youth who stays in school, may be considered, by some, as not particularly gifted by community standards to deal with the difficulties of entrepreneurial risk-taking, physical toil, accessing community social capital, or whatever it may take to meet one’s financial needs in a limited local economy. To resist schooling is, therefore, to resist mobility and to some degree resist the rural migration forces of modernity (2001).

Attachment to place can manifest itself in ways which may appear to be negative behavior. After a study in the early 1990s revealed the community of Digby Neck had a 28 percent high-school dropout rate, a different approach was taken. The *Community into Curriculum* learning project proposed to make the curriculum more relevant to the local community where the students lived. Students began to explore ways to practise sustainable fishery and forestry harvesting. This led to a local Community Development Association promoting adult literacy, eco-tourism and activities which enrich the community. Acting together, the people of the community and the school can be a huge resource. The school has become the centre for activities in the community (Milsom, 2003, pp. 24-27). Sharpe argues that, in a traditional rural school the community supported and joined the success of an individual student in contrast to the urban-industrial school model. He describes the, “individual contribution to and participation in society” of traditional rural schooling. This is contrasted with the urban-industrial model characterized by “a person’s ability to out compete others” for material wealth (1991, p.

91). Rural institutions such as schools and churches remain important to community cohesion. They may now play a diminished role, but women remain the underlying cohesive strength in community throughout the region.

Women's Institutes have been promoting the well-being of rural communities in Nova Scotia for about one hundred years. In the rural community, the work of women was respected and considered to be important and necessary. In the urban-industrial model, it is considered to have little importance and be largely invisible (Sharpe, 1991, pp. 75-79). The visibility of the Women's Institutes is certainly less today as modernity reaches into most rural communities. In 2002, the Women's Institute of Nova Scotia (WINS) held a series of workshops around the province promoted as the *Rural Water Quality Project*. WINS tends to have higher visibility in rural farming communities, but when the water quality workshop came to the Bridgewater area it drew a surprisingly large crowd. Everyone was given information on private drinking water systems and the inherent risks of each. The importance of testing for characteristically local problems found in drinking water was stressed. Door prizes for comprehensive free water tests were handed out. Everyone left with sterilized containers for basic coliform testing. Names and contact numbers were requested for follow ups, to insure as many of the participants as possible tested their home water systems. However, local chapters of the Women's Institute are not prominent in most of Lunenburg County. Their presence largely in farming communities means they are now mostly found in the inland parts of Lunenburg County.

This concludes the Literature Review of this discussion. In Chapter 1 we looked at the benefits of local economies as compared to disembedded corporate globalized economies. This section concluded with a look at local economies in Atlantic Canada.



Local governance was discussed in Chapter 2. The possibilities for participatory democracy at the local level, as a vehicle to empower communities, was the primary focus. Models of participatory democracy in traditional Native communities, activism outside present institutions and opportunities within the structure of municipal government in the Atlantic Canada region were explored. Finally, Chapter 3 reviewed material on local community. Individualism versus community commitment, connection to place, volunteerism and building social capital and the pivotal role of women are all forces at play on both rural and urban communities struggling to maintain a sense of identity. Each chapter in the Literature Review concluded with a sub-section which looked at aspects of community in the Maritime region such as 'going down the road', land ownership and the increase in non-residents and the important role of local schools. This then frames the discussion which follows in Chapter 4, Case Study: Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia. Following on the organizational structure in the Literature Review, Chapters 1-3, Chapter 4 is sub-divided into: a. Lunenburg local economies, b. Lunenburg local governance, and c. Lunenburg local community.

Lunenburg County is similar to other parts of rural Nova Scotia but unique in some ways. It is a mixture of long-time locals and newcomers who largely can afford to semi-retire in an area where land values have steadily increased over the last decade. The traditional local Lunenburg character creates a hard working community of individuals, with conservative rural values which acknowledge the positive nature of slow change. Newcomers often bring a perspective shaped by experiences in urban settings. This creates challenges to full integration. Locals build community social capital very close to home through organizations such as volunteer fire departments. Newcomers network across the broader defined community, organizing support for such things as community

arts and larger political issues. The following chapter relies on the empirical work in a portion of Lunenburg County with a focus on local economy, governance and community so we might see how these bigger concepts explored in the Literature Review play out at a local level.

#### **4. Case Study: Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia**

Chapter 4 is the empirical research work of this study, which attempts to focus the discussion locally. The community studied is where I have made my home for the past ten years. This chapter includes background information, followed by discussion of the three topic areas; local economies, local governance and local community in Lunenburg County. Where possible the village of Dayspring, my home, is utilized for a micro-level discussion. The research is based on available material which is complemented by local newspaper articles and participant observations of mine over the past ten years. In my opinion, these observations have been enhanced by a high degree of involvement in local community organizations and other activities, as outlined in the Methodology. Before turning to the discussion of local economies, local governance and local community in Lunenburg County it would be useful to review relevant statistics as background material for the defined community. Much of the background material is only available for the whole county although this study will only look closely at a portion of the county.

- **Background Information**

Lunenburg County is part of a unique region of Nova Scotia. It is situated on what is known as the South Shore of the province. By the compass, it lies southwest of Halifax, which is the provincial capital and the largest urban centre in Atlantic Canada. Most of Lunenburg County is within a one and a half hour drive of Halifax. The county is still flavoured by the hardworking, earnest, steadfast qualities of its eighteenth century German Protestant founders (Bell, 1961). They are described in DesBrisay's nineteenth century classic as "simple, earnest, homely, genuine people," many of whom "had a superstitious belief in omens, charms and witchcraft." "They were poor, honest, true-

hearted, God-fearing, self-reliant, industrious people” (1972, pp. 26, 40, 41). Their sense of order and simple clarity survive today through the place names surrounding the town of Lunenburg. Peninsula roads north of town are called First and Second Pen. West of town one finds Front Centre, Centre and Back Centre. South of town is First South, Upper South Cove and Lower South Cove.

Map 1. Lunenburg County



Source: Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations  
 Municipal Facts, Figures, and History - Counties of Nova Scotia  
<http://www.gov.ns.ca/snsmr/muns/info/mapping/LUNEJ.asp>

The population changes, in recent years in Lunenburg County, are consistent with the average trends in the province.

Table 6. Lunenburg County, Population, 2001

	<u>Lunenburg Co.</u>	<u>Nova Scotia</u>
Population in 2001	47,591	908,007
Population in 1996	47,561	909,282
1996 to 2001 population change ( percent)	0.1	-0.1

Source: Statistics Canada

[http://www12.statcan.ca/english/Profil01/CP01/Details/Page\\_Custom.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=1206&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=Lunenburg percent20County&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=12&B1=Custom](http://www12.statcan.ca/english/Profil01/CP01/Details/Page_Custom.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=1206&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=Lunenburg%20County&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=12&B1=Custom)

Statistics show Lunenburg County has a population older than provincial averages, but perhaps more stable, with over 71 percent remaining at the same address of five years earlier, compared to only about 64 percent for the provincial average (Statistics Canada, 2005). Missing from statistics is the increasing number of non-residents.

Table 7. Lunenburg County, Age Characteristics, 2001

Age Characteristics	Lunenburg County			Nova Scotia		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total - All persons	47,595	23,420	24,170	908,005	439,085	468,920
Age 0-4	2,035	1,055	975	47,455	24,325	23,135
Age 5-14	5,530	2,925	2,605	117,570	59,840	57,730
Age 15-19	3,105	1,660	1,445	61,750	31,560	30,190
Age 20-24	2,180	1,100	1,080	56,180	27,370	28,815
Age 25-44	12,980	6,340	6,635	267,640	129,380	138,255
Age 45-54	7,735	3,845	3,885	138,280	67,835	70,440
Age 55-64	5,695	2,815	2,880	92,565	45,545	47,020
Age 65-74	4,335	2,095	2,235	66,650	31,165	35,485
Age 75-84	2,945	1,245	1,695	44,410	17,495	26,915
Age 85 and over	1,060	340	720	15,505	4,575	10,930
Median age	42.6	41.6	43.4	38.8	38.0	39.5
% over 15 years	84.1	83.0	85.2	81.8	80.8	82.8

Source: Statistics Canada

[http://www12.statcan.ca/english/Profil01/CP01/Details/Page\\_Custom.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=1206&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=Lunenburg percent20County&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=12&B1=Custom](http://www12.statcan.ca/english/Profil01/CP01/Details/Page_Custom.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=1206&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=Lunenburg%20County&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=12&B1=Custom)

Educational levels of county residents, outlined in Table 8, are slightly lower than provincial averages, with the notable exception of trades and college certificates or diplomas. The location of Nova Scotia Community College campuses in both Lunenburg and Shelburne counties, while there is no university on the South Shore, may be one underlying determining factor for these post-secondary education statistics. Comparing the two age groups 20-34 and 35-44 shows an 8.7 percent increase in postsecondary education. But trades graduates only increased .3 percent, college graduates 1.5 percent, while university graduates actually decreased 2.3 percent. Many newcomers to Lunenburg County would come with university educations, but other choices by younger members of the local population could be reducing this percentage.

Table 8. Lunenburg County, Education Levels, 2001 (Source: Statistics Canada)

Highest Level of Schooling	Lunenburg County			Nova Scotia		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total aged 20-34	7,210	3,570	3,640	170,615	82,220	88,395
- percent of the age 20-34 with less than a high school graduation certificate	20.5	23.7	17.3	16.1	19.1	13.4
- percent of the age 20-34 with a high school graduation certificate and/or some postsecondary	27.7	27.9	27.6	28.3	28.9	27.7
- percent of the aged 20-34 with a trades certificate or diploma	16.6	20.6	12.8	13.9	17.1	11.0
- percent of the age 20-34 with a college certificate or diploma	22.7	18.3	26.8	18.9	16.0	21.6
- percent of the age 20-34 with a university certificate, diploma or degree	12.6	9.5	15.5	22.8	18.9	26.3
Total population aged 35-44	7,935	3,910	4,030	151,650	73,475	78,175
- percent of the age 35-44 with less than a high school graduation certificate	28.1	29.2	26.9	23.0	24.8	21.3
- percent of the age 35-44 with a high school graduation certificate and/or some postsecondary	19.0	19.3	18.6	19.1	18.1	20.0
- percent of the age 35-44 with a trades certificate or diploma	16.9	22.1	11.8	18.9	24.2	14.0
- percent of the age 35-44 with a college certificate or diploma	21.2	17.5	24.8	19.4	15.1	23.5
- percent of the age 35-44 with a university certificate, diploma or degree	14.9	11.9	17.7	19.6	17.8	21.2
Total population aged 45-64	13,305	6,630	6,675	229,300	112,390	116,905
- percent of the age 45-64 with less than a high school graduation certificate	36.6	37.7	35.5	33.7	33.6	33.8
- percent of the age 45-64 with a high school graduation certificate and/or some postsecondary	14.2	12.4	16.0	16.0	14.8	17.1
- percent of the age 45-64 with a trades certificate or diploma	18.2	20.9	15.4	17.0	21.9	12.2
- percent of the age 45-64 with a college certificate or diploma	14.8	13.0	16.5	15.2	11.2	19.1
- percent of the age 45-64 with a university certificate, diploma or degree	16.3	16.0	16.6	18.1	18.5	17.7

[http://www12.statcan.ca/english/Profil01/CP01/Details/Page\\_Custom.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=1206&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=Lunenburgpercent20County&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=12&B1=Custom](http://www12.statcan.ca/english/Profil01/CP01/Details/Page_Custom.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=1206&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=Lunenburgpercent20County&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=12&B1=Custom)

Incomes in the year 2000, detailed in Table 9, were about 10 percent below the provincial average.

Table 9. Lunenburg County, Income in 2000

Income in 2000	Lunenburg County Total	Nova Scotia Total
Persons 15 years of age and over with income	37,210	691,585
Median total income of persons over 15 years old	\$17,019	\$18,735
Composition of total income (100 percent)	100.0	100.0
Earnings - percent of income	67.4	71.4
Government transfers - percent of income	18.1	16.1
Other money - percent of income	14.5	12.5

Source: Statistics Canada

[http://www12.statcan.ca/english/Profil01/CP01/Details/Page\\_Custom.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=1206&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=Lunenburgpercent20County&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=12&B1=Custom](http://www12.statcan.ca/english/Profil01/CP01/Details/Page_Custom.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=1206&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=Lunenburgpercent20County&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=12&B1=Custom)

In the year 2001, the percentage of households considered low income was 13.5 percent in Lunenburg County, compared to Nova Scotia at 16.6 percent and Canada at 16.2 percent (Nova Scotia Finance, Community Counts, 2006). The statistics for unattached individuals over 15 years in Lunenburg County may reflect a growing number of single parents. In the ten year period outlined in Table 10 the actual number of low income individuals in this group increased 17.5%.



Table 10: Lunenburg County, Incidence of Low Income

	1991 - #	1991 %	1996 - #	1996 %	2001 - #	2001 %	1991 - 2001 %
Total - Economic families	13,990	100	14,255	100	14,675	100	4.9
Low income	1,590	11.4	1,945	13.6	1,590	10.8	0
Not low income	12,400	88.6	12,310	86.4	13,080	89.1	5.5
Incidence of low income in %	n/a	11.4	n/a	13.6	n/a	10.8	-5.3
Total - Unattached individuals 15 years and over	4,605	100	5,050	100	5,295	100	15
Low income	1,515	32.9	1,900	37.6	1,780	33.6	17.5
Not low income	3,090	67.1	3,150	62.4	3,520	66.5	13.9
Incidence of low income in %	n/a	32.9	n/a	37.6	n/a	33.6	2.1

Source: Nova Scotia Department of Finance, Community Counts web page

[http://www.gov.ns.ca/finance/communitycounts/table\\_ic6.asp?gnum=cnt1206&gname=Lunenburg percent20County&gview=&gtype=County&ptype=geo&acctype=income](http://www.gov.ns.ca/finance/communitycounts/table_ic6.asp?gnum=cnt1206&gname=Lunenburg%20percent20County&gview=&gtype=County&ptype=geo&acctype=income)

Table 11 indicates both participation rates and unemployment rates are slightly lower than the provincial average, which may indicate a larger number of individuals participating in the labour market, but outside formal sources of income and the scope of these statistics.

Table 11. Lunenburg County, Labour Force Indicators, 2001

	Lunenburg County			Nova Scotia		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Participation rate	58.7	66.6	51.3	61.6	68.0	55.8
Employment rate	53.1	60.3	46.3	54.9	60.3	50.0
Unemployment rate	9.5	9.4	9.6	10.9	11.3	10.4

Source: Statistics Canada

[http://www12.statcan.ca/english/Profil01/CP01/Details/Page\\_Custom.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=1206&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=Lunenburg percent20County&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=12&B1=Custom](http://www12.statcan.ca/english/Profil01/CP01/Details/Page_Custom.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=1206&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=Lunenburg%20percent20County&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=12&B1=Custom)

Table 12. Lunenburg County, Occupation, 2001

Occupation	Lunenburg County			Nova Scotia		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total Experienced						
labour force	22,760	12,595	10,165	442,420	234,440	207,980
Management occupations	1,975	1,260	720	42,305	27,020	15,290
Business, finance and						
administration occupations	2,935	620	2,315	70,735	18,210	52,525
Natural and applied sciences						
and related occupations	915	760	155	22,580	18,505	4,080
Health occupations	1,135	240	900	26,850	5,090	21,760
Social science, education, government						
service and religion	1,340	475	865	33,375	12,175	21,205
Art, culture, recreation and sport	550	180	370	11,125	4,650	6,475
Sales and service occupations	5,500	1,715	3,785	120,290	48,785	71,505
Trades, transport and equipment operators						
and related occupations	4,105	3,905	200	66,100	63,090	3,010
Occupations unique to						
primary industry	2,015	1,745	270	24,825	20,970	3,855
Occupations unique to processing,						
manufacturing and utilities	2,290	1,690	595	24,240	15,960	8,290

(Source: adapted from Statistics Canada)

[http://www12.statcan.ca/english/Profil01/CP01/Details/Page\\_Custom.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=1206&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=Lunenburg percent20County&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=12&B1=Custom](http://www12.statcan.ca/english/Profil01/CP01/Details/Page_Custom.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=1206&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=Lunenburg%20percent20County&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=12&B1=Custom)

Table 12 indicates some occupations, as would be expected, are above the provincial averages. Trades and related fields and primary work are both about 3 percent higher while manufacturing and processing are 4.5 percent higher.

Lunenburg County forms only part of the South Shore region. Queens County lies southwest of Lunenburg and is one amalgamated separate municipal jurisdiction. The District of Chester, which is part of Lunenburg County, lies northwest adjacent to Halifax

County and is a separately governed municipality as well. Lunenburg County contains the following municipalities with 2001 populations:

Municipality of Chester (eastern section of county) – 10,781

Municipality of Lunenburg – 25,570

(western section of county excluding the three towns listed below)

Town of Bridgewater – 7,621

Town of Lunenburg – 2,568

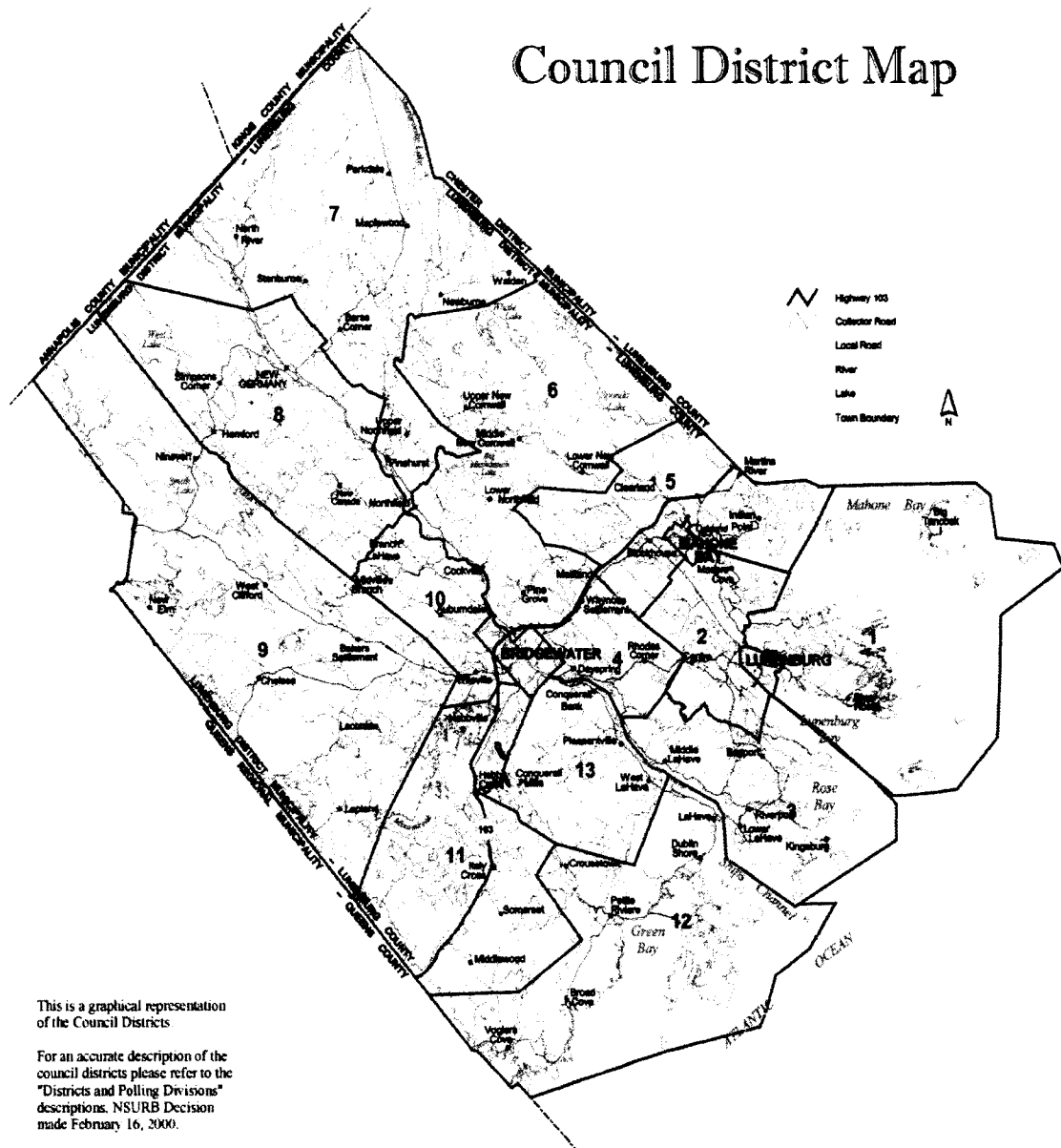
Town of Mahone Bay – 991

Municipal [county] 2001 total population – 47,591

(Source: Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, 2006)

The largely rural Municipality of Lunenburg, commonly referred to as the Municipality, excludes the three towns of Mahone Bay, Lunenburg and Bridgewater. The primary historical rivalry has been between the towns of Lunenburg, the historical centre, and Bridgewater, which claims to be the business centre of the South Shore. But more recently there is increasing economic rivalry between Bridgewater and the rural Municipality. Map 2 indicates the thirteen municipal polling districts divisions in the Municipality. The community of Dayspring lies within District 4 in the Municipality, on the LaHave River, west of and bordering Bridgewater along Route #3 to Lunenburg.

Map 2. Municipality of the District of Lunenburg



Source: Municipality of the District of Lunenburg, <http://www.modl.ca/DistrictMap.html>  
 Image includes map data derived from the Nova Scotia Topographic Database (NSTDB) and is Crown copyright © 2006, Province of Nova Scotia. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Lunenburg county remains one of the more populated counties outside the urban areas and the past wealth from the fishing industry helps maintain it as one of the more affluent rural parts of the province. Lunenburg local economies will begin the discussion.

### **a. Lunenburg local economies**

The Lunenburg economy has advantages over other counties in the province, but shares many aspects of rural Nova Scotia living. Although Table 9 indicates income levels are about 90 percent of the provincial average, many rural residents may adapt their lifestyles to compensate for the difference. Services often paid for in an urban setting are provided in rural areas through a higher degree of self-reliance. Home and auto repairs are carried out by oneself or by local individuals providing basic services with low overhead. Cash payments which avoid taxes are common transactions with these service providers. Home heating costs are reduced through burning locally purchased firewood. Privately owned woodlots are common. Many homeowners cut up, split, stack and carry their wood, in effect exchanging their time and labour in order to reduce their heating costs. Labour force participation rates in Table 11 indicate percentages slightly lower than the provincial average of 61.6 percent. Speculation, based on the premise individuals may have greater opportunities in a rural areas to participate in the labour force outside the scope of data collection, could make the Lunenburg County percentage lower.

The impacts of corporate business closely integrated into globalized trade are prominent in Lunenburg County. Supporters of corporate enterprise believe this provides the local economy with a measure of stability. The Lunenburg Queens Regional Development Agency (RDA) considers the stability partly due to the effect of the three major employers in the counties. High Liner Foods, Bowater and Michelin all provide a large number of jobs which has “also led to the development of a significant secondary sector.” The RDA feels Lunenburg benefits in less out-migration from its close proximity to Halifax, but suffers from county residents traveling to the city to shop,

hurting local retailers (The Canadian Institute for Research on Regional Development, 2000). With the recent opening of a big box store outside Bridgewater, local money does not have to be transported to Halifax before finding its way into corporate profits. Local money flows out of communities in many different ways.

The Michelin tire plant in Bridgewater is a prominent local employer with over twelve hundred employees (The Canadian Institute for Research on Regional Development, 2000). The overly inflated Michelin man may be their trademark, but they are also well known for their anti-union sentiments. Many years ago, the provincial government passed legislation which came to be known as the Michelin Bill requiring majority union support at all three Nova Scotia plants before unionization could take place at any one plant (Cunningham, 2002b). The commonly held belief in Lunenburg County, which also acts as an unofficial implied threat, is that Michelin will relocate to another country if a union vote is supported. On the other hand, unionization may not benefit the local economy to any greater degree than non-unionization. Michelin provides attractive wages compared to other employment opportunities, creating an economically stratified local working class. They also enhance their public image, in a similar fashion to the large corporate banks, by contributing to local fundraising projects such as the new YMCA building. However, unionization could help individual workers suffering from health and sickness from job-related activities. The plight of these workers may be just the tip of the iceberg with regard to the long-term costs of Michelin to the community.

Government supported economic development predominantly assists the corporate sector and global trade. During the provincial election in July 1999, candidates discussed the value of forgiving loans to Michelin in the amount of \$48 million

(Cunningham, 2002b). Michelin is a prime example of government economic development primarily designed to promote the corporate sector, and not local small business – this despite common knowledge that most job creation today stems from small business. Government appears not to have the administrative capacity to deal with small business. Michelin's plants produce tires for a global market. Raw materials are largely imported from outside the community and the end product, tires, are largely exported. The agreement governments have made, acting on behalf of the public interest, is to support Michelin in maintaining a plant work force in exchange for providing local employment. But the uncalculated costs to the community could include long-term health and sickness if Michelin fails to take full responsibility for worker health. Production waste and the related environmental costs could be even more difficult to predict. The long term impacts of ground, water and air pollution may not be fully realized until Michelin is long gone. At that point, Michelin may not have any pressing need to stay on good terms with provincial governments or the local community. And the present environmental impact of production wastes may be ignored for fear of jeopardizing plant jobs. The relationship between Michelin and the community can appear, on the surface, mutually beneficial at present, but the situation is fundamentally unbalanced in that most of the potential long-term negative impacts could become the responsibility of the local community.

The large, corporate, multi-national Bowater operates a sawmill at Oakhill in District 4. In 1999-2000, the mill upgraded the plant to a twenty-four hour operation. Bowater made these changes because there was and is no municipal land use strategy in place for the area, so development permits were not required. Nearby neighbours, including a seasonal campground, complained of noise (Cunningham, 2002a). To some

extent, Bowater took measures to reduce the noise levels, but even some residents directly impacted expressed the opinion that it was Bowater's right because the mill had been there for a long time. In an unrelated event, a plebiscite was held in 2002 to determine whether District 4, which includes the Bowater facility, wished to adopt a land-use strategy. Municipality staff held a meeting in the local fire hall informing residents the plan would be formulated by and for the community. The well attended meeting drew a sizeable vocal opposition. In a vote months later, the proposal to put a land use plan in place was defeated with only 132 voters casting a ballot (Corcoran, 2002c). Notably, the number voting was far less than the turnout at the earlier information session. Although there is a general mistrust of politicians and government, the underlying resistance to adopting land-use bylaws appeared to stem from a perspective that individual property rights are sacred, and decisions should only be made by the owner. The concept of a common interest through the use of municipal by-laws, in regards to shaping community, is secondary. The quiet enjoyment of one's home, if it is located close to the mill, has been compromised as have the aesthetics of the villages of Dayspring and Oakhill. In a small way, the richness of the community is diminished by how corporate private property rights and the pursuit of profits were exercised in this instance.

The corporate retail giant Walmart opened operations in Lunenburg County in early 2005. The Municipality became closely involved in the purchase of an operating farm for development of a retail shopping area where Walmart would be the anchor. The development was located near, but outside, the town of Bridgewater. The Municipality invested \$3.3 million in sewer services (Levy, 2006), \$.9 million toward water services, unknown expenses for service roads and another \$1.5 million investment in the purchase of adjacent lands for future development (Corcoran, 2004b). The speculative nature of



this type of investment is made possible, in part, by the rapidly overall rising assessments and property taxes in the Municipality. Municipal councilors argue the Exit 12 economic development will bring new job opportunities and increased tax revenues from the businesses locating in the new retail complex. However, a study by David Neumark of the Public Policy Institute of California contends that “Wal-Mart stores reduce employment by anywhere from 2 to 4 percent and depress local wages by as much as 5 percent” (Coleman, 2005). To control lower employment and wages, “Wal-Mart is in fact rabidly anti-union, deploying teams of union-busters from Bentonville to any spot where there is a whisper of organizing activity” (Hightower, 2005). In the film *Walmart, The High Cost of Low Price* Walmart is shown to have a pattern in North America of extracting huge subsidies from local and provincial/state levels of government and damaging the downtown core of small towns (2005). The millions of tax dollars invested in services for the retail development could in the future come to be seen as the *high cost* of Walmart’s *low price*. Subsidies and handouts to disembedded corporate economies, as discussed earlier, are a contradiction to true competition (Norberg-Hodge, 2002, pp. 73-77). The Lunenburg opening of Walmart and the accompanying chain stores has also strained relationships between the town of Bridgewater and the Municipality. At issue are commercial tax revenues as businesses leave the town for the new retail development area adjacent highway 103 at Exit 12. An alternative approach to the inevitable coming of Walmart could have been co-operation between the two municipalities for the benefit of the whole region. Instead, competition between the municipalities prevailed like true free market principles. Negotiating with both municipalities, utilizing divide and conquer tactics, allowed Walmart to negotiate terms to primarily serve their own interests. The loss of a farm resource is one obvious loss to the community. In the long run, there could

well be the loss of locally owned embedded businesses that have a greater commitment to the health and well being of the community.

Gow's Home Hardware (Gow's), although a corporate franchise, epitomizes this type of community-minded local business. The large Bridgewater store carries a wide range of products with plenty of highly trained, knowledgeable staff. People from away are delighted by store policies which invite customers to bring their dogs shopping, if kept on leash, and Gow's even provide dog treats for them at the door. Customer service in all respects is top-notch. Letters to the editor of the local paper from time to time sing the praises of store management and their commitment to helping individuals and community. When there is a local emergency, the store responds. Gow's employees who belong to the volunteer fire departments are free to answer fire calls without loss of pay (Turner, 2002). During these times, Gow's is abuzz with talk of the events unfolding in the community while staff cover for those off serving the community's needs. It is highly unlikely Walmart, Gow's new area competition, would offer staff and the community such benefits. In my conversation with owner Peter Gow shortly after the January 2005 opening of Walmart, he expressed support for the principles of free market competition. He felt maintaining Gow's high level of customer service and satisfaction was the key to success. Gow's also took a strong stand against Sunday shopping in the provincial plebiscite held in conjunction with the 2004 municipal election. The owner simply felt employees deserved one day per week reserved to spend with their families. Gow's commitment to staff and community is highly respected and valued locally. In light of so many small-town businesses across North America closing after Walmart openings, it will be interesting to see if customers continue to support a proven community-minded business such as Gow's.

The retail food industry in the area has also become highly competitive over the past decade. Superstore and Sobeys are the two corporate entities which hold the largest share of the local market. Both have constructed bigger new stores in the last decade where they now sell a broader range of non-grocery type items. Corporate marketing at one pretends to promote community. Portraying itself as the local *village market*, with local street names throughout the store, disguises the reality that you can go to the same aisle in the chain's other stores in different towns and find the same groceries, clothing, furniture, drugs or banking services. As well, you can join an activity in the chain store's community room which is provided for local volunteer groups who are encouraged to sell or consume the store's products. Holding a much smaller market share was the community-owned Town and Country Co-op. Its Co-op Basics marketing provided the more popular and necessary grocery items at relatively stable prices those on fixed incomes could rely on. But it did not and could not offer the same variety or convenience as the competition. Although it was an expansive store with an accompanying gas bar, it could not gain enough of the local market to fund expansion to compete with the one-stop shopping approach of the corporate grocery stores. Co-op members were notified the store would be closing on January 28, 2006 (Consumer Community Co-Operative, 2006). One local food retail worker believes corporate shelf prices are already on the rise since the Co-op's closing. Perhaps the Co-op closure is also seen as an opportunity for the large corporate retailer Walmart to enter the local grocery market. While Walmart does not have a full range of grocery items, they are now taking out full-page grocery ads in the local paper (Lighthouse Publishing, 2006). The only remaining locally owned grocery outlet, the Mainline Market, is small despite construction of a new building in late 2005. Their place in the local retail market is largely through the sale of meats, but in

their bigger new building they stock a wider variety of grocery items. However, on close inspection, many of Mainline's grocery items are supplied by the wholesale arm of Sobeys, the corporate retail grocery chain. While the Co-op closure could be seen as a variation of "a monopolistic corporate takeover that destroys smaller businesses" (Norberg-Hodge, 1996, para. 8), Mainline Market's share of local sales can easily be controlled by a corporation that serves as both supplier and competitor.

Food producers in Lunenburg County are, for the most part, small family operations. The Indian Garden Farms Market and U-Pick known as Hebb's in Hebbville outside Bridgewater is operated by the Hebb family, and is not to be confused with Stewart Hebb's Greenhouse and U-Pick on the Fancy Lake Road in Hebbville. The Hebbs take up a sizeable space in the Bridgewater telephone directory. The Indian Garden Farms Market (Hebb's) produces a wide range of fruits and vegetables. They could be a local example of a small farm which would be "anywhere from 200 to 1,000 percent more productive per acre than larger farms" (Norberg-Hodge, 2002, pp. 73-77). Part of their sales are direct to consumers through their own retail farm market. The annual opening of Hebb's strawberry U-Pick in June draws customers who wait in a line-up of cars extending beyond sight down the highway. But this follows earlier harvesting by a variety of local non-profit organizations that hold fund raising suppers and lunches. Hebb's also supports the community by allowing the food bank to glean their fields and by providing signage for community events at the local fire hall. Throughout the summer and fall seasons, Hebb's provides employment in their fields and through their farm market. While Hebb's benefits from direct farm market sales, consumers benefit from farm fresh produce without the added transportation and related environmental costs of

corporate agribusiness (Fawson, 2005; Norberg-Hodge, 1996, para. 37). Embedded businesses such as Hebb's provide many benefits to the local community.

Co-operatives are not prominent in Lunenburg County. The history of the Lunenburg 64 in the first half of the twentieth century could indicate the roots of the lack of support for co-operative philosophy. The plan suggested worker independence through profit-sharing where fishermen could own shares in the same offshore fishing vessels they worked on. The Lunenburg 64 was more a tool of private enterprise than of co-operatism. It may have been sound theoretically, but in practice few fishermen owned shares in these vessels. Notable also was the primary role the fishermen's union leadership took as facilitator of goodwill among owners, dealers, crew and speculators. Union militancy or genuine co-operative enterprise were not a large part of the dialogue in Lunenburg's history. (Barrett, 1979) Likewise today, Lunenburg fits the conditions outlined by Barrett for flexible specialization success based on private enterprise. Success is likely to be found in areas in proximity to urban centers and markets such as Halifax, and in areas "with pre-existing social and economic traditions rooted in individual enterprise." In contrast, co-operative strategies "seemed to be most successful in marginal communities with substantial degrees of ethnic cohesion" (1993). However, despite these factors, there are some notable co-op businesses in Lunenburg County today. There was a member-owned grocery retail outlet until January 2006 and there is the long-standing Farmer's Co-operative, but perhaps one of the more visibly successful co-op businesses in Bridgewater is LaHave River Credit Union.

In 2004, the LaHave River Credit Union celebrated its fiftieth year in operation. It employs approximately ten people and is guided by a Board of nine elected from the general membership. Each member holds one vote, regardless of the size of their deposits

or loans. During the last decade, LaHave River membership has continued to grow and its loans reached assets over \$20 million. In the three-year-period from 2003-2005, it returned to members rebates of just under \$370,000 (Lighthouse Publishing, 2006). Its success is evident to the community by the striking newer brick building built and quickly paid for in a characteristically German fashion of efficiency. It has remained an independent, locally-owned and directed entity through a period of amalgamations throughout the banking industry, including the credit union movement. Strong objections to amalgamation and support for small credit unions that chose to maintain their independence was voiced at provincial meetings by LaHave River delegates. Maintaining local control dovetails with the well established principle that the community benefits from keeping capital circulating within it as long as possible. However, despite the strong sense of local independence, many of the members do not support the credit union through a strong-minded co-operative philosophy. Support is primarily based on the principle of collective action offering a better service for the same or less cost to the members. There is also little evidence of motivation to extend the collective philosophy of co-operatives to other aspects of the community. In fact, even full member support of LaHave River Credit Union is at times contradictory.

Pure individual self-interest often can be very short-sighted. *In Your Interest*, the LaHave River newsletter, Fall 2005, draws attention to members who “cherry pick” services. Some members may express their love of the personalized service offered at the credit union while only maintaining an active chequing account and doing the bulk of their profitable banking elsewhere. The article is attempting to point out that if members support other banks, which profit from offering limited personalized service, eventually the credit union will be forced to do the same or go out of business. Members’ present

choices will largely determine what services the credit union will offer in the future. Full consideration of the long-term implications need to be well thought-out by members. In spite of the need for greater member support, LaHave River Credit Union remains one of the most successful co-ops in Lunenburg County.

Lahave River Credit Union continues to attract local small business as member/customers. The reasons are largely twofold. Small businesses are drawn to the generally lower banking costs relative to other financial institutions in the area. Other small, self-employed business people are drawn to the credit union as a way to finance their business enterprises. The home-grown manager of LaHave River came from work experience with one of the large chartered banks. Over the past decade he has been personally responsible for promoting an increase in small commercial loans. This, despite credit union government regulations restricting commercial loans to twenty-five percent of the total loan portfolio. These small local entrepreneurs, who may also employ a few employees, do contribute to a healthier local economy. For example, individuals harvesting a fixed amount of forest resources can generate greater employment for themselves and others than a highly mechanized operation could. Corporate forestry multi-nationals rely on mechanized harvesting to provide large volumes of raw materials. Mechanized forest clear-cut harvesting practices can also cause greater damage to the local ecology in comparison to individuals who may employ more sustainable harvesting practices. These small local entrepreneurs may not come to the credit union for strong co-operative philosophical reasons or perhaps only because they cannot borrow elsewhere, but together with LaHave River, they do manage to keep more capital in the local community longer through the local employment they generate. There is also greater potential to protect local resources. Just as local economies, including co-ops, can

better serve the interests of the community, locally-minded community government is essential as well.

The foregoing section on Lunenburg local economies has reviewed some of the relevant economic aspects of the county. Corporate entities operating under so-called free market principles control a major portion of the local economy. But there are some alternatives if community members choose to support them. We will now turn to look at Lunenburg local governance.



## **b. Lunenburg local governance**

The Municipality of the District of Lunenburg (Municipality) is a large, mostly rural municipal unit officially established in 1879. It includes a great deal of waterfront area but also extends inland to the interior of the province. Municipalities in Nova Scotia are all governed by provincial legislation called the Municipal Government Act. Their primary source of revenue is property tax determined by a combination of the tax rates they set and property assessments set by the province. Municipalities provide services such as waste collection, recreation, planning and land-use, building permits, inspections and some local economic development. In towns, services may also include fire, police, roads and water and sewer. Rural municipalities such as the Municipality may also take some measure of responsibility for these typical town-type services in areas where it is required, but usually not throughout their jurisdiction. Overseeing the provision of all these services fits well with what is known as local government.

Municipal government is considered community government. Elections are held across the province every four years. The Municipality presently has thirteen District divisions. Municipal government in Nova Scotia is distinctively different from both the provincial and federal levels by the absence of political parties. Individuals interested in taking greater responsibility for the needs of their community can offer for election without belonging to a political party. Despite the limitations of powers by the provincial government under the Municipal Government Act, municipal government has potential for a greater measure of local control. In fact, with strong backing of the community, municipal governments could extend the parameters of the limited powers afforded them by the province. One example, which only reached discussion in the Municipality years ago, was whether a by-law should be adopted banning forest clear-cut

harvesting in Lunenburg County. Under existing provincial legislation municipalities would have no authority to enact such a by-law. Regardless of authority or the ability to enforce such a by-law, it could have sent a strong message to the provincial government and the public. These types of by-laws, which fall outside their formal jurisdiction, could carry more weight if backed by a vocal community prompting municipal councillors to speak up in the community's best interests. Unfortunately, voter turnout in the Municipality of Lunenburg elections is on the low end of the provincial average.

Comparing Municipality voter turnout to other rural communities can be useful. In 1994 the average across the province was 51 percent while the Municipality was only 36 percent. Three years later in 1997 the provincial average dropped to 37 percent while the Municipality turnout fell to 32 percent (N.S. Department of Municipal Affairs, 1994; N.S. Department of Municipal Affairs, 1997). One reason for lower voter participation in the Municipality is the consistently high number of acclamations. In the 2000 election, seven of thirteen districts seats were contested with a voter turnout rate of about 45 percent. While six seats in the Municipality were uncontested in the 2000 election, the number increased to seven of thirteen in 2004. District 4 in the Municipality has consistently had contested elections for councilor in at least the last four municipal elections. In 1997, voter turnout was less than one third at 32 percent, well below the Municipality average of 37 percent. An active local campaign in 2000 increased voter turnout in District 4 to 46 percent. In 2000, with the same two candidates as in the previous two elections, over 55 percent of eligible voters turned out (Municipality of the District of Lunenburg, 2004). It appears that in District 4, consistent, actively-contested elections for council can increase interest and participation in local government.

Plebiscites are common tools of participatory democracy which can increase interest in local government. But the Municipality also provides examples of how even modest participatory democracy tools such as plebiscites can fail. In the previous section, Lunenburg Local Economies, the example of a District 4 plebiscite in 2002 for adopting a land-use strategy was discussed. Less than 10 percent of voters chose to cast a ballot despite strong opposition by many during an earlier information session at the community fire hall. Campaigns which raise the level of community discussion of a particular issue are an important part of plebiscites. In another plebiscite conducted with the 2004 municipal election, 60 percent of Municipality voters who chose to cast a ballot indicated they were in favour of electing a mayor at large in future elections, as opposed to remaining with a warden selected from within the group of elected councillors. In response to the results of the vote, the Municipality warden “conceded that many in the municipality probably didn't have an understanding of the differences between the two systems of government” (Corcoran, 2004c). At an earlier public consultation meeting in 2003, a majority of contributors also spoke against the change. Despite only being a small sampling of Municipality voters, an overwhelming majority of District 4 residents did not understand the plebiscite question and with greater understanding would likely have voted against the change. It is highly likely this was the case throughout the Municipality. Plebiscites can only be useful participatory democracy tools if an adequate level of awareness and education is achieved prior to the vote. The Municipality council is now faced with the dilemma of whether to implement the change while questioning if it is the true will of the people. The conflicting interests of councillors who might want to be mayor may prompt some to argue for acceptance of the questionable plebiscite results

arguing the people have spoken. Municipal politicians do not always put the community's interests ahead of their own.

Councillors are elected to speak and act for those they represent. In theory, there are no political parties in municipal government. In practice, most councillors belong to parties and are supported by party members. In 2001 Brian McIntosh, a Municipality councilor was appointed to the Police Review Board by provincial Lunenburg MLA and Justice Minister, Michael Baker. McIntosh was Baker's official agent in the 1999 provincial election and a financial contributor to the Progressive Conservative party. (Corcoran, 2002b) These connections can lead to conflicts for councillors between acting in the best interests of the community they represent or to the party to which they belong. To a large extent, provincial government downloading to municipalities has gone unchallenged due to these conflicting relationships where most councillors belong to either the Conservative or Liberal party. The Nova Scotia provincial government has always been one or the other party. The problem of inflating property assessments and taxes for those on fixed incomes in the Municipality could be another example of councillors' party allegiances muting their defiance of the provincial government that sets property assessments based strictly on market value. On the other hand, in this case, their voices may also be muted by the additional revenues in their own coffers which have allowed the Municipality to finance large questionable local economic development schemes.

Community activism is often a response to municipal decision-making. Over the last decade the Municipality has directly financed two multi-million dollar development projects. Neither was presented for public discussion prior to an election. In 1998, an eighteen hole golf course opened with a \$1 million dollar grant incentive and a mortgage

from the Municipality for \$3.2 million. The golf course's ongoing financial problems have required refinancing over a forty year term, sale of parts of their land and a two year deferral of principle payments to name a few economic supports necessary to keep the operation afloat. (Corcoran, 2002a) The Municipality refuses to make public the golf course's financial information, although as a non-profit organization, they are required to file annual statements for public viewing at the Registry of Joint Stocks. More recently, the Municipality has invested millions in water and sewage services for a development anchored by the Walmart retail giant on the outskirts of the town of Bridgewater, outlined earlier in Lunenburg Local Economies. Walmart type developments follow a familiar pattern across North America. They drain the retail economic base of adjacent small towns, in this case, Bridgewater. At the same time, the Municipality and Bridgewater had entered into an agreement to jointly fund a regional multi-purpose facility, the need of which has been acknowledged in the area for decades. The location for this facility has become the stumbling block. With Bridgewater now losing its commercial tax base to the Municipality's new retail development, it cannot afford to accept a location for the multi-purpose facility outside the town in the new development area. A war of words ensued with the Municipality taking out a \$1,000 dollar full page add justifying their position to the public (Corcoran, 2005b). Co-operation on a joint regional multi-purpose facility is at risk of failing. This example points to the critical need for healthy linkages between smaller municipal units. A co-operative regional economic development plan could have dealt with the inevitable coming of Walmart in a fashion which better met the needs of both Bridgewater and the Municipality. In contrast to this failing joint effort on the multi-purpose centre, the municipal waste/recycling facility is a positive example of regional co-operation working well in Lunenburg County. Each individual municipality contracts

for its own collection of waste resources. But all four municipalities jointly fund and direct a landfill, recycling and composting facility which has been an international leader in the field for over ten years. The success of the facility comes largely from the support and participation of area residents. Greater public participation in decision-making could provide more positive political and economic outcomes for the local community.

The potential for active participatory decision-making is present in a few obscure forums. The use of municipal zoning and land use planning are widely used in cities and towns for general protection of the public interest but appear less popular in rural areas. Some Municipality councillors have publicly acknowledged their disapproval of zoning and land use bylaws although elected councillors are responsible for protecting the general public interest. Land use planning is a municipal tool which could be used to alleviate such things as the growing loss of public access to traditional footpaths. But public awareness of the benefits of planning is critical for popular support. Many Municipality residents appear to fear that zoning and land use planning will only place more regulations in the hands of government, encroaching on their private property rights. These sentiments are understandable given the low public regard for politicians today, but in areas where land development is increasing, the need for guidelines becomes more important in order to protect enjoyment of the land as a common community resource. In practice, the model for zoning and land use planning provides community decision-making through community planning advisory groups. These local advisory committee meetings have the potential to offer greater community participatory decision-making. Another rather modest model for participatory democracy can be found in the provincial credit union organization. Delegates from all credit unions in the province have the opportunity to gather at least twice a year to make decisions and give direction to the

Credit Union Central Board which is comprised of elected representatives from all the districts. With usually a few hundred delegates in attendance, the potential for discussion of important credit union and community issues is huge. However, many delegates make little effort to prepare for discussions with too much focus on the social aspect of provincial meetings. The realized potential is often much less than it could be otherwise. Community activism also takes place within organized groups largely divided along the lines of locals and come from aways (CFA's).

The Council of Canadians organizes public meetings called Café Canada at the Mahone Bay Centre. A local chapter of the Council of Canadians provides the volunteers for organizing, set up and facilitation of the events. Topics include political forums for candidates during elections, most notably federal but not municipal elections. National issues around the implications of Canada's economic relationship with the U.S.A., international issues regarding global warming and the prospect of diminished supplies of fossil fuels or the present state of our food supply are a few topics taken up. The meetings may attract on average between twenty-five to fifty people. It would be safe to guess that only a minority would be considered locals or born in Lunenburg County. If we consider two parts of the slogan think globally, act locally, Café Canada would favour the former in its focus. Given the nature of the Council of Canadians with a strong Canadian nationalist perspective it could be expected issues of a national and international nature would be prominent. On the other hand, many locals are motivated to community activism to meet local needs. When the Blockhouse Volunteer Fire Department proceeded with construction of an addition to their building to house a new fire truck they violated municipal bylaws by not securing a development permit first. Municipal council took an uncompromising position and ordered the addition torn down.

The local councilor for the area threatened to resign. Lawyers were employed on both sides. A security guard was unnecessarily employed at a council session. (Corcoran, 2003) Many residents of the Blockhouse area in particular and residents of the Municipality generally were upset by council's actions. They felt volunteer organizations like fire departments should be supported by local government. About three hundred supporters, including eleven other fire departments rallied, at a meeting in support of the Blockhouse Fire Department (Farrow, 2003). After weeks of wrangling, the Municipality spent approximately \$22,000 on legal fees and Blockhouse another \$7,600 before the municipality found a compromising way to allow the addition to stand (Corcoran, 2004d). Fire departments have grown out of community need and action remaining fiercely independent. The potential for a measure of very local community decision-making lies within the many rural fire districts.

Responsibility for providing fire protection and related services is a typical municipal government role. The Municipality collects and distributes the Fire Tax for rural fire departments but local departments set their own rates of taxation. If a particular department failed to meet a minimum level of protection for their community, the Municipality may at some point have to take action. However, for well functioning Departments such as Dayspring, the Municipality takes a very clear hands off approach. Otherwise they run the risk of losing the support of high-quality, trained community volunteers. The Dayspring Fire Department values and protects its independence and co-operation with other departments in the county is an expression of this independence. Mutual aid provides back-up assistance for other fire departments in times of emergency; umbrella organizations dealing with common needs connect departments across the region. Collective action within communities and between communities through strong



independent departments is a home-grown community model for bringing responsibility and action to the very local level.

This section has reviewed relevant aspects of Lunenburg local governance. The institution of municipal government holds potential to increase the level of local participatory democracy but is presently handicapped by low public interest. However, interest to the point of community activism can manifest in response to local government decisions. This has been particularly evident when volunteer fire departments are threatened. One barrier to cohesive community activism is the division between locals and newcomers. This and other aspects of Lunenburg will be discussed in the following section c, Lunenburg local community.

### **c. Lunenburg local community**

A sense of community needs to be defined, in part, geographically. Political boundaries figure prominently. The federal riding which extends from St. Margaret's Bay to Shelburne County is referred to as the South Shore but is far too large to define a manageable sense of community. Provincially, the same area makes up about six or seven ridings. But it is the combination of municipal jurisdictions which perhaps best meets the sense of community in the area. The geographic area of Lunenburg County, excluding the District of Chester, is the primary focus of this study. This defined community includes the towns of Lunenburg, Bridgewater and Mahone Bay surrounded by the rural municipal unit known as the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg (Municipality). "Community of place refers to the geographical setting within which interaction takes place over time. For interaction to take place, people have to be able to communicate" (Barrett, 2005, p.4). The distribution areas of local newspapers are instructive. Queens County including Liverpool has the Advance while the Chester area has the Clipper but Lighthouse Publishing produces the Bulletin and the Progress Enterprise in the defined community as well as some distribution in Queens and Chester. The locally-owned paper includes reports from long-standing community groups, advertisements for local fundraising suppers, the popular letters to the editor pages, an extensive local crime report and most economic or political events impacting the defined community. Later in this study it will be useful to discuss even more micro-level observations made within the Dayspring Fire District, an area which would include no more than one thousand people and form only part of District 4, as shown on Map 2 But community is not only defined geographically.

The local newspaper in many ways reflects the character of the community. One very prominent section of the paper is the crime report. Drunken driving, assaults, burglary and most minor offences are publicly posted. The popularity of the crime reports suggests public curiosity about the activities of one's neighbours, but perhaps more importantly it acts as a social control mechanism. The size of the local community increases the possibility that readers will know who it is and where they live. Youth are not allowed to be publicly named under the Young Offenders Act but most learn a firm hand is the locally accepted method of encouraging social conformity. The sense of order in Lunenburg County remains strong; deviance from the locally-established norms is discouraged. When teaching five week carpentry apprenticeship programs in Halifax in the early 1990s, to students from many counties of the province, it was noted by myself and other instructors that Lunenburg apprentices were distinctive. At the end of the day, Lunenburg apprentices would typically be checking in to see if work was completed while most students from other areas were already in their cars heading home. A disciplined work ethic, albeit stern and authoritarian at times, can be advantageous in accomplishing goals and promoting individual self-reliance. On the other hand, there is no visible indication of diminished consumerism from greater self-reliance in the area. The newspaper also plays a central role in maintaining connection to place. Advertised events outline one's social calendar in both the larger community and at the very local level, often defined by the Fire Districts, churches and school fundraising gatherings. These events are where networks of relationships are regularly nurtured; preserving fertile ground for building social capital.

Relocating to Lunenburg County, newcomers are faced with questions important to the local population. Locals understand their connection to place most importantly

through relationships with family and friends. Common questions posed by locals to newcomers are, where are you from? and more indirectly why are you here? Shortly after relocating from Halifax to Lunenburg County in 1996 my common dialogue with locals was based on their need to place me. After hearing my surname, the response would often be, “Now that’s not a South Shore name.” This would be followed by an attempt to be placed in/from Halifax which often elicited the response, “I could never live in Halifax”. It took many years for me to fully understand what this meant. Part of the understanding comes from feelings of sensory overload when visiting urban centers, as Ross described earlier in this study. However, the strength of relationships and connection to place are primary. The multi-faceted issue of non-resident land ownership limits connection to place for some and reduces the potential for building social capital at the very local level.

Many Nova Scotians have perceived a problem of non-resident land ownership for decades. The 1969 Landholders Disclosure Act was in part a response to that public perception, but governments have repeatedly failed to enforce the legislation. Accurate statistics on land ownership do not exist (Breeze, 1998; Voluntary Planning Task Force, 2001; Wilson, 2006). However, individuals who have looked closely at residency have indicated non-residents could own much more than the statistics reveal. Gillis, who sat as a member of Voluntary Planning’s 2001 Task Force on Non-Resident Land Ownership in Nova Scotia, felt obliged to self-publish his own *Alternative Report*. He indicates as much as ninety-five percent of our coastline is privately owned with much of the prime recreational coast owned by non-residents (Gillis, 2001). In conversation with the Municipality of Lunenburg Planning Department, without accurate statistics, indications are that building permits for most higher priced housing are for non-residents in coastal

areas (Wilson, 2006). Statistics Canada has also been lacking in accurate information on the number of non-residents. A comparison of population changes, property assessments and municipal taxes, as shown in Table 13, indicates local changes in Lunenburg County.

Table 13.

	<u>1992-1993</u>	<u>1996-1997</u>	<u>2001-2002</u>	<u>1992-2001</u>
Residential				
Taxes	\$5,325,500	\$6,390,400	\$8,137,500	+52.8 %
Assessments	\$641,626,500	\$710,044,440	\$957,351,600	+49.0 %
Tax Rate				
Per \$100	.83	.90	.85	average .86
Population	25,720	25,949	25,570	Drop of 150
Consumer Price				
<b>Index – Canada</b>	98.5	105.9	116.4	+17.5 %

(adapted from Municipality of the District of Lunenburg and Statistics Canada)

Municipality of the District of Lunenburg.

Operating Fund, Approved Calculation of Tax Rates for the Year Ending March 31, 1993, and March 31, 1997, 2001/2002 Budget Presentation, Preliminary Budget.

Statistics Canada. Community Profile; Lunenburg (Municipal District), 2001. Accessed: 3 February 2004

Statistics Canada. Canadian Statistics  
Consumer Price Index, historical summary.  
(CPI base year 1992 =100). CANSIM II, table 326-0002.  
Accessed: 19 February 2004  
<http://www.statcan.ca/english>

Statistics Canada's population figures do not include persons who do not make the Municipality of Lunenburg their normal place of residence. In theory this would mean all non-residents from within Canada and outside would not be included in population figures. Over the ten-year period, population has fallen slightly with property tax

revenues and assessments increasing 52.8 percent and 49 percent, respectively, while the Canadian Consumer Price Index rose only 17.5 percent in the same period. With the tax rate relatively constant, it appears sharply rising market based property assessments are being driven up by an influx of new money into the community from many individuals not included in population numbers. Statistics tracking population between 1996-2004 indicate an even higher decline of 2.3 percent in the Municipality. Also for the year 2003 there were 484 deaths compared to only 336 births (Nova Scotia Finance, 2006). Immigration to the Municipality is likely making up for a birth rate that is only about 70 percent of the death rate. Lunenburg County seems to be an example of an area going through changes to a “largely homogeneous class structure ... creating a new ‘expatriate’ group and a ‘local’ working class” (Barrett, 1993, p. 54). But increasingly along the LaHave, the traditional fine-crafted old homes, a visible statement of local culture and craftsmanship, lie vacant during the winter months. These are the choice waterfront properties too expensive, too large or need too many repairs for many of the full time residents. “Property tax is going way up because of foreign land ownership along the South Shore making it difficult for young people to buy a home” (Whynacht, 2002). Like the seasonal return of the geese, the old homes along the LaHave, tight for the winter, are opened up, aired and swept out in the spring for another summer season.

The Kingsburg, Lunenburg County peninsula and area have experienced a high level of non-resident housing development over the past few decades. The peninsula can be viewed as a microcosm of the problems of increasing water-front development throughout Nova Scotia. Three loosely defined groups emerged after community conflict over the development on the dunes adjacent to Kingsburg Beach in 1995 (Cameron, 2002). In addition to the locals and come-from-aways (CFA’s) another group of not so

new community members took the position of protecting the fragile dune areas as part of a community common resource. New CFA property owners and developers argued for their private property rights as a priority. Although written legislation outlines private property rights, rural residents in all corners of the province including Lunenburg County feel a loss of access to the shoreline as one symptom of increased non-resident land ownership (Voluntary Planning Task Force, 2001). The Kingsburg Coastal Conservancy (KCC) grew out of the local struggle for protection of Kingsburg Beach. In 1997 KCC received valuable recognition being “granted status by Environment Canada and the Province of Nova Scotia as one of the few organizations in Nova Scotia eligible to accept ecological gifts and issue receipts that bring tax benefits to those who donate ecologically-sensitive land” (Channels, 2005). Working to preserve land and protect coastal access KCC, in partnership with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, would later protect a unique headland known as Gaff Point. The hike to Gaff Point includes a walk along Hirtle’s Beach which can be blocked by water at high tide. An alternate route over the bluff, locally known as Admiral’s Hill, was used for years until the property was sold and new owners erected fences which were torn down and rebuilt a number of times. Letters to the editor in the local paper aired the issue. The community’s right to access the shoreline was countered with the owner’s liability concerns. The fences eventually were taken down but common property rights based on traditional practices remain undefined. (Corkum-Greek, 2002; Fawson, 2005)

The increasing number of non-residents in Lunenburg County can encourage individualism over responsibility for one’s community. Globalization’s free market principles have turned attractive waterfront land into a commodity. Ease of travel and the mobility of wealth gives buyers access over a provincial road system greatly improved

since WWII, allowing non-residents to own land throughout the province. In the early 1990s it was reported that more of Nova Scotia land is in the hands of non-residents “whose interest in the survival of local communities is, at best, marginal” (Land Research Group, 1990, p.16). A common perspective non-residents bring is a form of urban-type individualism often at odds with the aspirations of many in rural communities. Non-residents largely come for peace and quiet, not community interaction. For locals, the strong sense of community ownership and perhaps, a defense mechanism, demands knowing the intent of anyone who resides here, even if for only part of the year. At a local fund raising supper a volunteer was questioned on her feelings about the large foreign-owned homes now dotting the shoreline. With a pause and slow response she replied, “Well now, you know, they don’t mingle”. Individualism with little responsibility for the community and no desire to nurture relationships leaves the potential for building social capital very much diminished. Alternately, groups of residents, who may be mostly permanent residents but not longtime locals, do organize for the benefit of the community.

The Mahone Bay Centre is a recycled old town school which now provides a venue for additional social and recreational activities. “Town Council demonstrated its faith in this community by turning over the key to the old school to a group of volunteers with a big dream.” The Centre provides space for youth, artists, meeting rooms for community groups and a variety of tenants. “[I]ts vision remains constant: to support and enhance the quality of life, and contribute to the economic and social well-being of Mahone Bay and neighbouring communities” (Risser, 2005). The Centre has become a resource to a relatively large geographic community. It is the foremost facility in the area promoting a broad range of the arts. The makeup of the Centre’s volunteers is more likely to have not



grown up in the county and been born middle class with perhaps higher educational backgrounds. They form part of the rural-resident middle class with varying degrees of urban roots. This in-migration contributes to increasing property values and has widespread effects on schools, churches, voluntary organizations, leisure activities and most services (Barrett, 1993). It is perhaps not surprising that volunteerism draws segments of the population to certain types of organizations and not to others.

Volunteer efforts of a largely local working class segment of the community meet different and very local needs. In many rural Nova Scotia communities, fire departments have become the primary organizations for the contribution of volunteer hours. The Dayspring and District Fire Department (DDFD) is a totally volunteer organization established forty years ago in 1966. The Department's primary purpose is the protection of life and property in an area which includes Dayspring and a number of neighbouring communities. Their work may have initially been conceived as firefighting, but now the greatest number of calls are medical emergencies, while motor vehicle accidents are common as well. The Fire Tax collected by the Municipality on behalf of DDFD, amounts to about 75 percent of their annual budget of approximately \$80,000. The remaining 25 percent is largely from fund raising activities in the community. A DDFD Board of Commission oversees the Department's assets. An executive insures meetings and committee work proceeds, while the chief and officers are responsible for all operations concerning protection of the community. The Ladies Auxiliary provides food and drink when needed in emergency situations. They also do extensive fundraising largely centred around serving food in the Department hall. Increasing activities, responsibilities and demands over the years have required the development of better group organizational skills for all Department members.

DDFD is not just a training ground for community protection. When the Department was established forty years ago, all their revenues were generated from community fund raising. As the protection needs of the community increased, a Fire Tax was put in place. Today Department members are responsible for managing, on behalf of the community, an \$80,000 annual operating budget plus the ongoing maintenance of building and equipment capital assets worth in excess of \$500,000. In recent years, two new emergency vehicles were purchased, the first at more than \$200,000 and the second at over \$150,000 (Brown, 2002; Corcoran, 2005). These purchases in particular demanded new organizational skills for DDFD. A purchasing committee outlined the Department's need and negotiated with manufacturers. A budgeting committee determined what total costs and monthly payments were affordable. The general membership of approximately thirty-five discussed and approved the purchases. Finally, the Board of Commissioners decided to relocate the Department's banking to the local credit union where the new vehicle loans were arranged. The process of organizing and purchasing these vehicles forced the Department to put in place bookkeeping and decision-making processes adequate for their expanding needs. There is a silent understanding that these matters need to be conducted professionally because community scrutiny of finances could become an issue at a later point in time. Members closely involved in improving the organizational aspects of the Department are in themselves contributing to enhancing their own skills, but DDFD's contribution to the community's social capital is perhaps even more valuable.

The most widely supported community events are at the fire hall. For members of the Department, all gatherings are social regardless whether it is training, meetings or fundraising. At first glance it may appear the primary motivator for DDFD interaction

with the community is fundraising. This may even be true, but the end result is these events generate the highest level of social interaction in the community calendar. Smaller fund raising events largely bring together volunteers from within the Department. Larger events draw on a broader cross-section of community volunteers working together for a common cause. The general response from the community at large is typically overwhelming support. They are collectively supporting a community volunteer organization of one's neighbours which provides insurance for anyone in the community in times of emergency. But more importantly, it is very much about building social capital. It is a community working together cutting across most ideological, economic and religious lines. The fire departments have become the heart of many rural communities, more prominent than the churches, or schools now closed, which perhaps filled that role in the past. However, as in the past, women remain the underlying force.

Volunteer fire departments remain largely structured along traditional gender roles. The mostly male firefighters train and practise for emergencies with a wide array of specialized equipment. The hierarchical, militaristic male-type organizing is perhaps necessary for quick emergency response times. This is the frontline, the face of DDFD as the volunteer service and protection provider for the community. Hidden behind the traditional image of the male firefighter are the women. The DDFD Ladies Auxiliary represents women's role in providing food and drink to firefighters in times of emergency. But their contributions to Department fundraising throughout the year would be far greater than that of the mostly male firefighters. The largest fund raiser of the year is the annual summer Garden Party. Many fire departments in the county have similar events and the name is widely recognized as a time for outdoor food, games of chance and social interaction at the very local level. It is these activities, where individual

community members interact, which strengthen, human relationships and build important community social capital. The human resources and effort required to organize the event alone draws the community together in a collective effort. However, some elements of exclusion remain, meaning the Garden Party functions with limited “avenues for redress of grievances for subordinate groups” and therefore, in a small way, providing a limited “communicative space with transformative potential” (Barrett, 2005, p. 16). The volunteer activities of women today continue to provide the underpinnings of community of what might appear, at first glance, as a male-dominated local organization.

This section discussed community in Lunenburg County. Defining the parameters of any community is important. The municipal boundaries and the distribution of the local newspaper are primary indicators of the limits of this community. Newcomers to Lunenburg County often stand at a distance from locals. Volunteerism is largely divided along these lines. Newcomers are more vocal on national and international issues while local working class individuals are drawn to volunteer fire departments. These departments are a prime example of the active role of women in building community social capital. This concludes Chapter 4, Case Study: Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. The following Conclusion includes a review of the paper with some concluding remarks.

## 5. Conclusion

This research work has been organized to review three primary aspects of community. This work argues it is necessary to integrate economy, governance and community in one discussion, due to how closely they are interconnected. It began with the presumption that communities are in crisis. Furthermore, the current dominant economic, political and community institutions are seemingly incapable of dealing with this problem. Local economies are largely built on the community's resource base. Capitalist economic systems and free market principles support private ownership of resources. Native American land claims stand as a model of greater communal ownership of local resources and point to the need to rework the economic relationship between urban centres and rural communities. But the dominance of private ownership has led to greater centralized corporate ownership and control of community resources. In many instances, elected representatives pursuing local economic development, for the benefit of community jobs, agree to corporate control of local resources. However, the studies of Norberg-Hodge (1996, 2002) suggest global corporate economies are far less efficient than local economies when all the government subsidies and related ecological and community costs are considered. In addition, both Perkins (2003) and Sale (1991) argue that local economies can insulate communities from the destructive boom and bust cycles of global corporate economies. The debate is often framed by the choice between the pursuit of profit within strict private property rights or the priority of meeting the needs of community members in both the short and long term. Arguments made for alternative embedded local economies (Norberg-Hodge et al., 2002) include; greater balance between small and large economies (Schumacher, 1978), local self-reliance (Schuman, 1998 and Kloppenburg, Jr. et al., 1996), small scale technology (McRobie, 1982) and

locally owned co-operatives (Ransom, 2004). It is suggested by the writers that these alternatives can assist communities in making decisions which give priority to local needs over the pursuit of profits.

The Maritime region primarily functions economically as a part of national, continental or international capitalism. The primary resource sectors of the Maritimes have come to be dominated by global corporate economies (Burrill, 1987b). The economies of most rural communities in the region have been built upon one or more of the primary resource sectors and most continue to rely on the benefits. In the past, before corporate dominance, individuals and families were able to rely on drawing annual income from a combination of these resources (McMahon, 1987). Today small embedded businesses continue to offer a local alternative to disembedded corporate economies. Co-operatives (MacLean, 2005) and Nova Scotia's Community Economic Development Investment Funds (Milsom, 2003) are two models being used in the region to strengthen embedded local economies. Ultimately, it is the people who live in a community who have the wisdom to best decide on local resource use (Milsom, 2005).

In Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia private ownership of local resources tends to dominate. The large corporate businesses of Michelin, Highliner, Bowater and Walmart overshadow enterprises such as co-operatives. These disembedded corporate economies can be compared to the small embedded independent businesses which enrich the community in the county. Michelin and Walmart may be less obvious in their use of local resources but, like other large corporations, they take their profits from the local community and often are supported or subsidized by governments (Cunningham, 2002, Levy, 2006, Corcoran, 2004). On the other hand, small local businesses, like Gow's Hardware, give back to the local community through policies such as allowing employees

who are members of volunteer fire departments to respond to calls with no loss of pay (Turner, 2002).

Competition in the local retail grocery industry has been high over the last decade. The two major corporate chains in Atlantic Canada both built large new stores in Bridgewater and a third corporation, Walmart, is also slowly entering the food market in the area. This competition contributed to the recent closure of a long-time full-service grocery Co-op which supplied the basics at stable pricing often below pricing in the corporate chains. The only remaining sizable locally owned grocery outlet in Bridgewater stocks much of its shelves from the wholesale arm of one of the large corporate chains which is also a competitor. In contrast, a local farm, with a retail market outlet, provides the community with locally grown seasonal fruits and vegetables. The community benefits from fresh local produce, with lower environmental transportation costs and lower retail costs. The farm business also gives back to the community by supporting local non-profit organizations.

Lunenburg County does not have a strong history of co-operative business, but rather one of small entrepreneurs. LaHave River Credit Union, celebrating its fiftieth anniversary in 2004 with a striking new building built in 1997, is one of the most prominent co-ops. However, the membership does not exhibit strong co-operative principles that could extend to other aspects of the community. Commitment to the credit union appears to primarily revolve around collectively organizing to provide a better and cheaper service than the corporate banks. But in ways, LaHave River Credit Union does support a strong local economy. Many small private enterprises rely on financing and lower service charges at the credit union. Most of these operations provide local employment which keeps financial resources circulating in the local economy as opposed

to corporate profits which are directed outside the community to head office or to shareholders. As important to communities as embedded local economies is a greater degree of local governance.

Participatory democracy will likely be the next evolutionary stage in some Western democracy. Increasing political cynicism and declining voter turnouts in countries like Canada are creating demands for alternatives to existing government institutions. Despite having little or no formal powers, municipal government retains the best possibility, within a centralized state apparatus, for participatory democracy. The public expectation of this may force the state to recognize that the locality can be a political community just as the nation (Magnusson, 1985). Presently, models for participatory decision-making are more common outside the institutions of governance within active social movements. These groups are organizing at the local level but are often global in scope. They are well positioned to place pressure on local government which is close at hand while at the same time building bridges to other communities facing similar impacts from globalization. Raising participant's awareness of issues can also serve to personally empower them. Native American nations such as the Iroquois practised forms of participatory democracy centuries ago. Participatory elements remain today within Native Americans' struggle for decentralized governance in which they demand include a local economic resource base.

Democracy or political decision-making cannot be separated from economic decision-making. While democracy espouses the equality of all, capitalism gives rights to property holders which invariably means they may come to hold greater power over others. The actual democratic right to vote may come to be meaningless without a voice in economic decision-making (Swift, 2002). Native American demands for self government (political) and land claims (economic) are an indication of their awareness of



the necessary connection between political and economic decision-making. No doubt this is a primary reason for their outright rejection of the suggestion self-government be modeled on existing municipal government. In fact, Carrel feels Natives have made far more progress than municipalities within Canadian confederation (2001, p. 53). Non-Natives advocating ecological sustainability have also been drawn to decentralized Native models of governance which include collective community based political and economic decision-making (M'Gonigle, 1989).

Greater local decision-making can be realized through an active and involved citizenry. Switzerland is one of the best examples of a western political model which promotes decentralized participatory decision-making based on the premise of an informed public. In Pennsylvania, municipalities symbolically revoked the rights of corporations with the backing and support of residents suffering under the health effects of corporate activities (Kaplan, 2001, para. 8-9). In India, villages mired in poverty have imposed self-rule in order to protect and manage their community resources from the other levels of government (Sharma, 2005, sec. Village Republics). These actions may lie outside the existing laws of the state but with widespread support of the local population they have potential to bring about change in political decision-making and management of local resources.

Municipal governments are the most prominent part of formal local governance in Lunenburg County. The Municipality, which excludes the towns and the District of Chester in the county, is subdivided into thirteen districts. Each district has a locally elected councilor. The primary source of revenue for the Municipality is property tax through which they provide local services such as waste collection and land use planning. As is the case with all municipal governments in Nova Scotia, the Municipality is

governed by provincial legislation under the Municipal Government Act (MGA). Interest and voter participation in Municipality elections is low, even below provincial averages. Half of council seats are often uncontested. But District 4 could be an example of higher voter turnout when elections are actively contested. Plebiscites have also been used as a form of participatory democracy in the Municipality but with some unexpected results. As well, there are ongoing issues of conflict of interest when councilors give priority to the political parties they belong to over community needs. Council decisions are to a large degree ignored, tolerated or treated with quiet resignation but public displeasure can bring forth criticism.

How tax dollars are spent can be controversial. The Municipality has entered into two multi-million dollar economic development schemes during the last decade. The first, an eighteen hole golf course, has experienced continued financial problems (Corcoran, 2002a). The second more recent development, involves providing water, sewer and road services for a retail shopping development anchored by Walmart. The public purchase and development of adjacent lands is also part of what some consider, speculative investments. (Corcoran, 2004b) Co-operation with the other local town municipalities can be both good and bad. The Municipality and the town of Bridgewater are now struggling to fulfill their stated goal of jointly funding an area multi-purpose facility. Competition involving the Municipality's, Walmart-anchored, retail shopping development is creating problems. In contrast to this problem is the highly successful joint operation of the waste, recycling and composting facility by all four local municipalities.

Participatory democracy is very limited in Lunenburg County. Interest in elections and plebiscites, which can be highly questionable, contribute little as a stimulus for

greater participatory democracy. Land use planning is an existing municipal tool for communities to set down the parameters of land use in their area. However, entrenched public feelings of the priority of private property rights over community interests are often a barrier. Outside the institution of municipal government is provincial credit union organizing which provides a forum and a voice for community representatives from across the province. Although discussions are particular to credit unions, they are often general to common community issues. Other local community organizing in Lunenburg County is generally divided between two groups, the come-from-aways and the locals. Café Canada organizing information and discussion around national and international issues attracts newcomers. However, decisions adversely effecting volunteer fire departments can be hot-buttons for locals. In fact the twenty-eight community fire departments in Lunenburg County all act independently as well as collectively to further their goals. They are perhaps one of the best examples of civil society at the very local level.

Defining community is important. While modern technology can connect peoples around the world, community demands a geographically-defined place. Community is built on relationships with people and place which nurtures commitment and responsibility for people and place. Traditional communities need not be in opposition to individualism. It is time to assess and regain what traditional communities offered while valuing the worth of the individual (Vitek, 1996). Ironically, the postwar American movement to suburbia may also have been an escape from commitment to community (Lasch, 1997). Rebuilding reciprocal relationships of trust and interdependence can help rebuild social capital and strengthen communities (Flora & Flora, 1996). The assumption that self-fulfillment is best met through individualism can be weighed against the

alternative of commitment to a defined community for perhaps even greater self-fulfillment. Commitment and connection to place have both been strained by the mobility of affluent cultures like ours. Diverse communities of locals and newcomers create further challenges to community strength. But working to build independent, self-reliant communities does not deny the need for interdependent relationships with other communities (Sale, 1991). In fact one of the greatest challenges will be redressing the existing issues between urban and rural communities. Finding ways to better define community in urban spaces will be to the benefit of both urban and rural communities. Urbanization is a vehicle for global economies which threatens all community (Berry, 1992). Choosing co-operation over the free market principles of competition is essential for rebuilding community (Berry, 1990a).

Alternatives for rebuilding community will have to be sought out. The rejuvenation of healthy, sustainable, self-reliant communities can most readily begin in small rural environments. Solutions will not come from the outside experts but from the inside, built on community relationships of trust (Berry, 1992), with a strong connection to place, in what we know and feel as home. Through trusting relationships valuable community social capital can be built which can also bring economic rewards to individuals (Putnam, 2000). Women's ways offer some of the best hope for rebuilding community (Nozick in Perkins, 2003), where their personal, practical relationship work is creating truly sustainable communities. Women continue the vital work of providing for the necessities of the young, the old and the needy in our communities. From a more long term perspective we will also have to develop education for our youth and model value and respect for community (Meier, 1998), divide urban spaces into human scale communities (Morris, 1991) and find ways to live with less material consumption (Burch, 2000).

The community of this study is a large portion of Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia. The importance of placing geographic parameters on community is important. The area studied is the largely rural municipal unit, known as the Municipality, in the western part of the county. To a lesser degree, the three towns of Lunenburg, Bridgewater and Mahone Bay, which are surrounded by the Municipality, form part of this study. At a more micro level, the fire district of Dayspring, comprising of about one thousand people, is discussed as well. The distribution of the local newspaper, as perhaps the foremost local communication tool, indicates the parameters of the community. The local paper also reflects aspects of the character of the community as a continuum of its past. Lunenburgers have been known for their sense of order and steadfast work ethic. The extent and popularity of the crime report in the local paper may act as a social control mechanism reflecting that sense of order.

The community today is changing. The location, proximity to Halifax and beautiful landscape have attracted many newcomers to the county. While the mix of come-from-aways and locals challenges the community, the increasing numbers of non-residents is more controversial. Escalating property assessments for all stem from the inflated real estate prices being paid by non-residents (Whynacht, 2002). Access to shorelines is perceived by permanent residents to be diminishing (Corkum-Greek, 2002). Perhaps more critical is non-residents' marginal interest in the local community (Land Research Group, 1990), thereby limiting the possibilities for building local social capital. Community organizing continues often divided along the lines of come-from-aways and locals. The Mahone Bay Centre typically attracts volunteers from middle class backgrounds with higher education. Their goal is to enhance the well being of the broader community through the arts, youth activities and providing space for local groups

(Risser, 2005). Contrasting this organizing, are the activities carried on by a largely local working class segment of the population. Local volunteer fire departments have become the primary institution for participation in many rural communities. They are widely supported by community members through fund raising activities which can become the central social interaction in a community's annual calendar. Although their stated purpose is protection of community life and property, the extensive role of women building social capital through fund raising activities is an important part of the social fabric holding many communities together.

Promoting a space for all is critical to building community. Social capital is built through community relationships based on tolerance and inclusiveness. One struggle within communities will be to find balance between the we, as in group responsibilities, and the I, as in developing the full potential of the individual. "It is not the case that true individuality and true community are mutually exclusive. ... On the contrary, they constitute a polarity in which neither attains its fulfillment apart from the other" (Cobb, 1996, p. 186). Healthy nurturing communities can provide the space for individual development while demanding a sense of responsibility for one's community. Individual talents and gifts can then be used to enhance the community. The collective community responsibility for one another benefits all its members individually while at the same time enriching the community as a whole. Just as healthy families give attention to the general well-being of each member, communities need to be supportive spaces for individuals. In turn, individuals have reciprocal responsibilities for their community. This is the work of building community relationships. The resulting social capital becomes a common resource of the community. "While [social capital] cannot be appropriated by an individual, it can contribute to everyone's quality of life" (Flora et al., 1996, p. 220).

Community also needs to be defined broadly to include everyone. Recognizing existing community social networks can foster interaction for a broad cross section of community members. Individuals may disagree, but it is imperative to maintain respect for each other. In the end success can perhaps best be measured by the extent of positive community interaction and participation. This same spirit of tolerance and inclusiveness needs to be extended to other communities. (1996, pp. 220-223)

Developing healthy interdependence within and between communities can provide benefits. Working productively with neighbouring communities is important.

We should learn to identify ourselves at many geographical levels, each of which involves some participation and mutual responsibility and gives us some portion of our identity, but none of which dominates the others.

This direction reduces the risk of fanatical conflict between communities, and it can restrict the ability of any level to deny the basic rights of its citizens. (1996, p. 190)

Checks and balances between interdependent communities could insure a high level of tolerance for individuals and communities at large. Active participation and responsible decision-making by community members would be the best way to neutralize the inevitable attempts at abuse of power in and among communities. Co-operation can make the best aspects of many communities available to all. Strengthening relationships between communities can build social capital as well. Recognizing and utilizing our existing local resources is necessary.

Local knowledge needs to be validated as equally important as institutional knowledge. The vast majority of local knowledge lies in communities with individuals who have the unique accumulated knowledge of layers upon layers of local experiences. These experiences are highly specific to place compared to the much broader type of institutional knowledge. So much of this very valuable local knowledge has already been

lost. It is one more casualty of globalization's attempts to create a form of world-wide monoculture. But, if we are to find solutions to restoring rural communities and the land, retaining as much of the local knowledge that is still available is crucial. If we use the natural world as our teacher we find life forms adapt to very specific conditions in a particular location. Supporting the importance of local knowledge should be a primary goal of educational institutions everywhere. But more importantly, community members need to validate their neighbour's knowledge of place. Recognition and validation of what is common is often the most challenging. In all respects looking first to the local helps build community social capital.

The process of creating community self-reliance can build social capital. Many of our needs are presently met by slick packaged commodities in the market place. Often this is a prime vehicle for resources to flow outside the community. Much of what we freely did in the past for ourselves and one another we now pay for in our purchases. "One of the functions of intermediate technology will be to try to bring back into the household, into the community, and into the locality as many technologies as can be performed at those levels" (McRobie, 1982). Individual and community needs are often one in the same. Making a commitment to one place, a neighbourhood, a community defines a relationship which includes the responsibility to give priority to the common good. "[N]eighbors ask themselves what they can do to provide for one another, and they find answers that they and their place can afford" (Berry, 2001, para. 39, 38). Giving priority to having our needs met through exchanges with community members builds social capital. Keeping money and resources local as long as possible not only strengthens local economies but also nurtures community relationships.



The article, *The commons of small geographic places*, describes the rights of local people to their local place called home:

In this and other respects, the concept of the commons flies in the face of the modern wisdom that each spot on the globe consists merely of coordinates on a global grid laid out by state and market: a uniform field which determines everyone's and everything's rights and roles. Commons implies the right of local people to define their own grid, their own forms of community respect for watercourses, meadows or paths; to resolve conflicts their own way; to translate what enters their ken into the personal terms of their own dialect; to be biased against the rights of outsiders to local resources in ways usually unrecognized in modern laws; to treat their home not simply as a location housing transferable goods and chunks of population but as irreplaceable and even to be defended at all costs. (Ecologist staff, 1998)

Defining new directions for our communities will need to be home grown. Individuals will require a measure of autonomy within the framework of commitment and responsibility to their place. The best solutions will be found at the smallest possible grouping with these decisions guiding the other levels. Respecting cultural traditions will be critical. Human generosity and tolerance can rise to the surface when individuals feel in control of their lives and their destiny. Co-operation can replace competition. "When you co-operate and relate to people you become more individual, and more yourself. If you submerge some of your identity, you find it" (Ransom, 2004, p. 12). The goal of building community is an inclusive process which can support and maintain members defining for themselves how to best meet their community's needs.

There is much reason for optimism. We live in a part of the world which is incredibly rich in resources. The lack of community control of its resource base allows far too much of this wealth to leave communities. One way we can begin to stop the outflow is by collectively taking greater responsibility for supporting local economies and local government. Governments are largely reactive to the demands of the electorate. A committed responsibility toward making local government more participatory could

democratize municipal government and empower the local citizenry. But the essential collective community nature of this work from the bottom up needs to be initiated and built on relationships of trust with one's neighbours. This is where the work of nurturing community begins.

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March 29, 2006

Frank Fawson  
MA Candidate, Atlantic Canada Studies  
Saint Mary's University

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Re: Lunenburg County Map

>Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations

>Municipal Facts, Figures, and History - Counties of Nova Scotia

><http://www.gov.ns.ca/snsmr/muns/info/mapping/LUNEJ.asp>

**Date:** Thu Apr 13 07:31:21 2006

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Coordinator of Data Distribution

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From: Kevin Legere ]  
To: Frank Fawson a  
  
Re: Municipality of the District of Lunenburg  
Council District Map  
<http://www.modl.ca/DistrictMap.html>

March 30, 2006

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Kevin

Kevin Legere  
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Copyright Letter of Permission: Map 2

**Date:** Wed Apr 26 08:44:41 2006

**From:**

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**Subject:**

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Good luck with your thesis,

**Jeff A. Merrill**

Planner

**Municipality of the District of Lunenburg**



# Saint Mary's University

## Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Human Subjects

This is to certify that the Research Ethics Board has examined the research proposal or other type of study submitted by:

**Principal Investigator:** Frank Fawson

**Name of Research Project:** The Propensity to Communal Enterprise with Acadian and Mi'kmaq Communities of Nova Scotia: Cultural or Necessity?

**REB File Number:** 04-164

and concludes that in all respects the proposed project meets appropriate standards of ethical acceptability and is in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on the Conduct of Research Involving Humans.

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**Date:**

23 February 2005

**Signature of REB Chair:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. John Young

# Saint Mary's University

## Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Human Subjects

This is to certify that the Research Ethics Board has examined the research proposal or other type of study submitted by:

**Principal Investigator:** FAWSON, Frank

**Name of Research Project:** Community, local economies and local governance in Atlantic Canada: A Response to Globalization

**REB File Number:** 06-025

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**Date:**

1 March 2006

**Signature of REB Chair:**

Dr. John Young