NORTH COAST INNOVATION LAB

Interview Reflections and Program Design

April 2018
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Key Findings and Reflections

An initiative of Ecotrust Canada, the North Coast Innovation Lab (NCIL) is a place-based initiative for people who are invested in the future of Prince Rupert to work together on tangible projects and initiatives that build a resilient economy as a tool for community well-being. Phase I of the NCIL involved scoping and designing the program, including a period of intense community interviews.

This report goes into detail on what we heard and about the NCIL. We begin by offering ten key insights from the interview analysis and reflection:

1. Not only are social and professional connections being made and information shared from participant to the NCIL, but information, connections and ideas are also being dispersed between individuals through the interview process.
   • A network is quickly building through the interview process, and Ecotrust Canada staff have disseminated information and connected people while simultaneously receiving information, ideas and connections.

2. Demonstrable, tangible projects, or “quick wins”, may be necessary to build momentum and galvanize support for community initiatives. Past initiatives and consultations have struggled with collective “buy-in” and have led to community apathy/cynicism towards new projects.
   • Those who are aware of “reanimation” and “place-making” are highly supportive, and those less familiar are open to the idea. Some precedents (paint Prince Rupert, Civic Pride clean-up, etc.) have occurred and found success, but have yet to galvanize long-term energy or spillover impacts.

3. Communication gaps exist across organizations, sectors, domains, and the public at large; this impacts information exchange, news dissemination, community awareness, and more.
   • There are few ideas towards addressing this challenge – perhaps a physical space (as opposed to digital) for information gathering and sharing might garner universal access.

4. There is a near-universal respect for, and recognition of, the importance of celebrating local Indigenous cultures and sharing the history of Prince Rupert and surrounding communities.
   • Many have mentioned Tsimshian-related economic opportunities, such as cultural and eco-tourism, traditional foods, art and ceremonies. There are locally operating economic development arms of Lax Kw’alaams, Metlakatla, and Gitga’at Nations, as well as social enterprises and activities led by the Nisga’a.

5. Public waterfront access is desired by all – frequently mentioned as an ongoing challenge and opportunity to improve Prince Rupert.
   • The establishment of new means of access, and continued support for existing efforts (Redesign Rupert plans, Kaien Trails efforts, etc.) align with local desires and could improve the attraction and retention of tourists and workers coming here.

6. Mayor Lee Brain is a beacon of hope and inspiration for many community members, who see his leadership as welcome change to status-quo governance and share his “vision” for a strong, independent Prince Rupert.
7. Prince Rupert is human-capital depleted, leading to a struggling volunteer sector, a lack of buy-in and commitment to new initiatives, and a demand for professional labour that outpaces the community’s growth and efforts to train and recruit locally. The booming industry – the Port – inspires mixed feelings because it is reshaping and providing opportunities for Prince Rupert while attracting capacity away from local businesses.

- There is a regional planning project currently underway for marketing the region for working professionals; perhaps there is a way to complement these efforts on a local level, earning the support of the local economic development team while improving the “livability” of Prince Rupert.
- Volunteer coordination, attraction and retention is a major barrier to this sector’s survival – perhaps there is an opportunity here, particularly with youth.

8. Downtown revitalization would lift a massive social and economic cloud from Prince Rupert: its appearance discourages and depresses community members; many vacant properties are owned by people from outside Prince Rupert who have no incentive to improve their buildings; degradation makes it unappealing for businesses and residents to occupy; high property taxes discourage people from purchasing properties there despite reasonable prices, etc.

9. There is a large demand for better access to fresh seafood – something that could be alleviated through the establishment of a local fish market.

- Such an establishment would have wider benefits as well – social cohesion between groups, recognition and celebration of First Nations and fisherman culture, increased food security through affordable access to seafood, local economic activity, a tourist attraction for international and regional visitors, etc.

10. Residential housing and rental affordability has been steadily rising for some time, and is now well beyond the means of low-income, homeless, disabled, and other disadvantaged Rupertites, disproportionately of First Nations identity.

- This crisis manifested in the “tent city” protest of November 2017, resulting in a new emergency homeless shelter being established downtown.
- New modular homes are soon to be built to accommodate some of the need, as part of a provincial strategy to address the affordability crisis.
- A public discourse/consultation workshop took place in Prince Rupert January 11, 2018, where turnout of at least 150 people overwhelmed organizers (community members voluntarily facilitated). During this event, housing affordability was one of the most cited poverty-related challenges.

**Acknowledgements**

We thank everyone who contributed – information, past reports, insights, data, reflections, and suggestions. We are especially grateful to those who shared their time and agreed to be interviewed.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Vancouver Foundation in supporting this work. We are undertaking this work on the unceded territory of the Coastal Tsimshian.
Introduction

Ecotrust Canada is a registered charity with a mandate to: design economic solutions that benefit people in place; support economic initiatives that demonstrate triple-bottom-line outcomes; and advance policy and practice that ensure adjacent communities benefit directly from development. We bring deep experience and commitment to Prince Rupert, a local office serving the community, and experience with place-based social innovation lab processes and social enterprise development.

We began exploring the North Coast Innovation Lab (NCIL) in 2016, and spent a year figuring out if this would be a good fit for Prince Rupert; whether we were in a position to add value to the existing initiatives and organizations in the community; could we bring capacity and attract funding to this work; and whether the social innovation lab approach was the right one. Our work, soul searching, and partnership discussions led us to the same place – YES.

Once we knew we wanted to move forward, Phase I of the NCIL became clear: scoping and designing the NCIL to understand and respond to the needs in Prince Rupert, and articulating the objectives and activities of the NCIL. Nathan Randall was welcomed to the Ecotrust Canada team to carry out much of the scoping and design. Community interviews were a key part Phase I, and this report offers our reflections on the interviews as well as our design of the NCIL. We know that we weren’t able to talk to everyone, but we humbly offer our insights as they have shaped the design. We will continue to listen and learn as we take action on the focus areas that emerged. We are grateful for everyone who shared their time.

This report contains three parts:

- Part I provides an overview of the North Coast Innovation Lab – what it is, its principles and objectives, its activities and timeline, and initial areas of focus.
- Part II shares what we heard from community interviews, and offers reflections on those insights as well as how the responses aligned with the priorities coming out of the Redesign Rupert process.
- Part III presents the key areas of focus for the NCIL, based on learnings and listening to date, as well as more detail on the initial areas of focus.

Aligned with Ecotrust Canada’s mission of designing economic alternatives for people in the places they call home, we have created the NCIL to be a place-based approach to generating innovative and collaborative solutions to the complex socio-economic challenges facing Prince Rupert. We invite you to dive in, be a part of the change, and contribute where you are able.

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Part I:
the North Coast Innovation Lab

What is the North Coast Innovation Lab?

The North Coast Innovation Lab (NCIL) is a place-based initiative for people who are invested in the future of Prince Rupert to work together on tangible projects and initiatives that build a resilient economy as a tool for community well-being. Drawing on eight years of community-based work in Prince Rupert and our award winning three-year initiative in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, the Local Economic Development Lab (LEDlab), we believe that the time is right to explore this creative, proactive and collaborative approach to local economic development in Prince Rupert.

The NCIL is modeled on social change labs worldwide. This is a longitudinal ‘think and do’ initiative concentrated on understanding the conditions required for a vibrant, inclusive and sustainable Northern community, and building ground up solutions engaging stakeholders from across the system. The NCIL also builds on Ecotrust Canada’s competencies around the success of the LEDlab which has successfully incubated 11 social enterprises and initiatives, and offered nearly 200 hours of facilitation and hundreds of hours of entrepreneurial training. The NCIL brings together a diversity of community perspectives and professional capacities. It is experimental by nature and focused on affecting systemic change.

Starting a social innovation lab begins by developing a common understanding of the key problems or challenges facing an organization or community on a systemic level. Then, the relevant stakeholders and actors are gathered together to identify opportunities to ideate, test and experiment with tangible, collaborative solutions to the aforementioned challenges, influenced by design and systems thinking. The social innovation lab acts as a space, either literal or figurative, for rethinking complex problems, being open and honest, taking risks, and experimenting with new collaborative solutions.

Principles

The following five principles reflect the spirit of the North Coast Innovation Lab:

Tangibility

Our aim is to spark practical, demonstrable and community-led projects and initiatives for the purpose of fostering economic and social resiliency in Prince Rupert.

Recognition

We will acknowledge and respect the social, cultural and historical complexities of Prince Rupert and its surrounding communities, and complement the existing community initiatives aiming to foster a sustainable future.

Ambition

With a spirit of hope and optimism, we will work with local actors and organizations to address and ...

overcome the systemic barriers that hold Prince Rupert back from achieving its fullest potential.

**Inclusion**

Our work will be relevant to all cultures, classes and sectors in Prince Rupert, with particular respect to First Nations peoples who have occupied this region for millennia.

**Integrity**

We will remain true to Ecotrust Canada’s purpose and principles: to support the realization of an alternative economy through meaningful, respectful relationships and partnerships within Prince Rupert.

**Program Objectives**

Over three years, the NCIL aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Spark innovative, collaborative, community-led projects using Social Innovation Lab methodology to address complex systemic problems
2. Acknowledge, complement and activate existing community-wide development initiatives
3. Prototype and nurture small, rural and remote community partnerships with academic institutions
4. Develop student talent for social innovation in rural, northern and industry-dependent communities and economies
5. Enhance the capacity of new and existing businesses, community organizations, and local “champions” to realize their own potential
6. Build a culture of social innovation and collaborative community development within Prince Rupert

Our long term goal is to increase **social and economic resiliency for the community of Prince Rupert**.

**Activities**

Working towards our objectives, and to meaningfully contribute to the socio-economic resiliency of Prince Rupert, the NCIL will focus on the following activities:

- **Providing** research, facilitation, design, incubation and project coordination **capacity** to activate community-led projects
- Supporting Prince Rupert in **developing a shared understanding** of the persistent **problems and opportunities**
- Facilitating and strengthening **community networks**
- Collecting and sharing **ideas and knowledge** generated over time
- **Building community capacity for social innovation** through workshops, partnerships, events and other forms of interactive learning
Key Areas of Focus

In response to the challenges, opportunities, values and needs of Prince Rupert, as understood from a broad spectrum of community members interviewed in Phase 1; as well as the key findings from the public at large via the Redesign Rupert consultations; and through the results of participatory presentations and workshops with key stakeholders and the general public; we identified the following areas of focus for the NCIL:

- Growing the local economy for fish and marine products
- Co-working, information and resource-sharing
- Downtown revitalization, place-making and livability
- Economic diversification through entrepreneurship
- Creating low-barrier income opportunities through social enterprise
- Cultural economy-building (cultural and ecotourism, arts)
- Youth engagement and participation
- Bridging the socio-economic “divide”
- Enhancing and supporting volunteerism

Figure 1. A visualization of the NCIL activities within Prince Rupert
Initial Project Focus Areas

Out of the Key Areas, four questions emerged for early exploration by the North Coast Innovation Lab and will be targeted as directions for NCIL projects and partnerships within its first year (August 2017-August 2018). They are described in detail in Part III of the report, but summarized here:

1. How might we grow the local economy for fish and marine products in Prince Rupert?
2. How might we enhance co-working, information-sharing and resource-sharing?
3. How might we develop social enterprise and entrepreneurship in Prince Rupert?
4. How might we engage youth in downtown revitalization and place-making?

Timeline

Following the two initial quick-start projects (May-August 2018), additional projects, likely of longer duration, will take place in the fall of 2018. Scoping and partnerships around NCIL initiatives will be ongoing, as new project and research ideas emerge, and past projects evolve from scoping/feasibility studies to implementation and impact evaluation.

Figure 2. The timeline of the NCIL from December 2017 onwards
Part II: Community Interviews & Insights

While the NCIL is action-oriented, it was important to first listen and reflect on what has come before.

Methodology

Nathan Randall joined Ecotrust Canada in November 2017 to lead the scoping and design work. From November 27, 2017 to January 26, 2018, the stakeholder mapping and interview processes were carried out to understand how a social innovation lab could contribute to socioeconomic resiliency in Prince Rupert, identify short and medium term project and partnership opportunities, and learn about the landscape and history of Prince Rupert. In total, 41 interviews with 45 different Rupertites were conducted, gaining a variety of contacts and perspectives from leaders and community builders in Prince Rupert. The interview responses have been organized and analyzed, and serve as the primary influence in the prioritization of NCIL project focus areas. We share reflections from the interviews in the Key Insights and Takeaways section of this report. A list of those interviewed is found in Appendix A.

Interview Questionnaire and data collection, organization, and analysis

Prior to commencing the interviews, a survey tool containing 11 questions (later reduced to 10) was developed as a semi-formal guide to the interview process. Interviews were designed to take approximately one hour and acquire a broad spectrum of responses from participants. They were asked to speak openly and to not feel limited by the scope of the survey tool questions (see Appendix B for the questionnaire tool). Interviews were audio-recorded if participants agreed to assist in post-interview transcription.

Another tool used during the interview process was a human-centric profile template, which was filled out during the interview. This tool (as seen in Appendix C) was completed to capture some of the interview responses in real time, while also granting some insight into the personal values and visions of the interviewee. These sheets are useful “at-a-glance” reference documents that summarize the priorities and ideas of interviewees.

The final interviews took place on January 26, 2018. The interview responses were transcribed and organized over the following two weeks. An analysis was done to tally how often sentiments or ideas were repeated, which highlighted the most frequent responses.

Redesign Rupert

It is worth noting that no project or initiative happens in isolation from those around it, or without impact from what has come before. The NCIL follows on the heels of Redesign Rupert, a civic engagement process in partnership between Community Development Institute, University of Northern British Columbia, the City of Prince Rupert and Community Futures. Its purpose is “to develop and implement strategies for economic diversification and community resilience in Prince Rupert”. At a time when liquefied natural gas (LNG) developments were an imminent possibility, Redesign Rupert worked to engage the community around their assets and desires, to provide a base of knowledge to launch community initiatives from. It continues to be a framework that we see the NCIL activities contributing to, and we have reviewed their

2 Redesign Rupert Final Report
data and reports.

Reflecting on both the Redesign Rupert process and the NCIL interviews reveals much about Prince Rupert at large, and covers a significant array of perspectives for a community of approximately 12,000 inhabitants. The final reports of Redesign Rupert have been analyzed and compared with the reflections from the NCIL interviews. These, and the ongoing initiatives from Redesign Rupert and their partners, will continue to influence the work of the NCIL as community building projects are realized.

An overview of the Redesign Rupert report findings, and comparison to those of the NCIL interviews, can be found in more detail in the Building on Redesign Rupert section within this report.

**Key Insights and Takeaways from Interviews**

The following insights represent the key findings from the NCIL interviews. These points provide an “at-a-glance” perspective on the most frequently cited and mentioned topics around Prince Rupert’s challenges, opportunities, strengths, and barriers.

**CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS**

**Human Capital**
- Struggling volunteer sector
- Trouble recruiting and retaining skilled labour
- Port industry jobs pulling talent away from small business and entrepreneurship opportunities
- Large proportion of low-education, limited experience people unable to find suitable work

**Poverty and Health**
- Multigenerational trauma and ongoing impacts of colonialism heavily contribute to social and health dysfunctionality
- Many cases of mental health, substance-related issues, homelessness and poverty, disproportionally First Nations
- Serious need for, and current lack of, treatment centres and rehabilitation services
- Additional resources and programs required to address aforementioned challenges

**Economy**
- Global trend of online retail reduces viability of brick-and-mortar businesses, resulting in closures of businesses
- Prince Rupert experiencing prolonged and continued decline of natural resource economies and jobs, such as the fishing and forestry industries
- Concern over the lack of long-term economic alternatives, vulnerabilities of globalized economic activities and inequitable gains of industry growth across classes and cultures
Community

- Rupertites and regional residents often prefer shopping in Terrace to Prince Rupert, reducing the economic viability of local retail businesses
- Community members believe that major industrial projects and developments are necessary to build up the community, as opposed to local entrepreneurship and economic leadership
- Socio-economic divide between “two cities” – the haves and have nots – who rarely integrate or communicate, leading to division and misunderstanding
- For low-income families, there are a lack of affordable recreational activities, and paperwork and registration processes often act as a barrier to accessing low-income programs

Housing and Infrastructure

- The steady inflation of housing, and consequently, rental costs in Prince Rupert, has caused a “crisis of affordability” for low-income residents
- Many buildings owned by absentee landlords who do not live in the community, have no vested interest in their properties beyond financial value, resulting in building vacancy and deterioration
- The City of Prince Rupert have huge debts and costs for aging municipal infrastructure which inhibit their ability to address other civil matters
- Construction and land development in Prince Rupert is challenging and expensive due to the muskeg and rock foundations

Cultural

- Tension and division exists between settlers and First Nations peoples here – socially, across industries, arts communities, and also between the various First Nations communities
- The LNG prospects, consultations and agreements created divisions within and between First Nations communities
- First Nations peoples in Prince Rupert and surrounding communities are disproportionately affected by social, health, infrastructure, employment and youth challenges
- Municipal and federal agencies don’t understand how organizational culture, and the colonial delivery of services, prevents information exchange, cooperation and comfort for First Nations people

Political

- A Port Industry regulatory tax cap limits the proportion of taxes owed to the municipality of Prince Rupert; as a result the tax burden falls disproportionately on homeowners and small businesses

Communication

- There are many different information channels and sources in Prince Rupert, but no universal or dominant source for community members
- Communication gaps exist within and across industries and sectors
STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Local Economic Development

- The tourism industry holds much potential as an economic driver in Prince Rupert
  - Cultural and ecotourism could be a great way to share the beauty and history of Prince Rupert, if led by a Tsimshian business or organization
- Additional support and encouragement to budding entrepreneurs is needed, as well as new forms of enterprise
- With improved scheduling and volume of cruise ships in the coming summer season, more opportunities exist for Prince Rupert to capture visitor wealth as they come and go
- There is a business opportunity in innovative seafood products, traditionally-processed goods for sale to visitors and locals, both here and for export

Big Industry

- Port industry businesses provide an important and growing economic foundation for Prince Rupert
- Opportunities exist for Port industry-related support businesses to be created
- A more equitable taxation of Port industries would greatly benefit the community
- Encouraging and supporting industrial development on Watson Island is an opportunity
- More direct investments of Port businesses in local organizations, businesses and/or entrepreneurs could directly support economic activity in Prince Rupert

Downtown Prince Rupert

- Widespread desire to revitalize and redesign downtown Prince Rupert, to have empty spaces occupied, debilitated buildings repaired, be more pedestrian-friendly, have more accommodations options
- Improving other aspects of “livability” of Prince Rupert, with things like improved access to waterfront, additional land developments in Seal Cove and other areas for tourism and real estate, and more affordable accommodations for all
- Having more apartments in the upper floors of downtown buildings, creating incentives for second-story businesses to occupy the ground floors, and providing grants or other financial incentives to revamp and fix deteriorated sites and buildings downtown

Civil Society

- Coordinating and incentivizing volunteerism – perhaps through a volunteer centre or a matching-system, or using existing information directories as channels through which volunteerism can be managed community-wide
- Involving youth more in projects and events in Prince Rupert – to foster accountability and ownership, connecting them more with their community, to encourage them to want to stay in Prince Rupert
- Need to unite the “haves and have nots” to build up the community, aligning their successes and supporting those in need for a more equitable, connected community
Indigenous and Cultural

- Cultural tourism – many see the opportunity for success, to bring more cultural recognition and celebration for Tsimshian, but recognize the need to be led by Tsimshian
- Other points varied, but revolve around strengthening business and economic opportunities between First Nations and non-First Nations, increased public recognition of Tsimshian territory through signage and naming, supporting aboriginal entrepreneurship, and generally encouraging community involvement of First Nations people and groups

Marine and Natural Resources

- Many want to bring back the seafood processing sector of cultural, historical and economic significance to Prince Rupert and the surrounding communities
  - Processing fish products prior to export would mean a huge boost to the local economy in capturing more value, low-skill employment, innovation opportunities for more specialized fish products, and more
- Many also want to revitalize the fishing industry, support local fisherman, create a more equitable fishing system, cultivate a demand for groundfish and shellfish, and generally grow the industry to once again be an economic staple of Prince Rupert

Political

- Mayor Brain's vision, leadership, and understanding of the community and its needs is inspiring and encouraging for the future of Prince Rupert

**THRIVING, VIBRANT, SUSTAINABLE PRINCE RUPERT**

Place-making and Livability

- Demand for nice public parks and spaces – both in creation of new spaces, but also in re-animating and redesigning existing spaces to be more accessible and enjoyable places to gather and spend time
- Expanded access to the waterfront
- Downtown revitalization: full of businesses and accommodations; with architecture that accommodates and allows for being outside while it rains; “walkability” in and around town; and suggestions of blocking off part of 3rd Avenue to be pedestrian-only, either temporarily or permanently
- Continued upkeep and running of social and recreational facilities and activities, accessible for people of all income levels, and include a vibrant arts community

Economic

- People gainfully employed, regardless of education or experience, supported by thriving small and medium-sized business community
- Prince Rupert takes advantage of the available resources here to support the local economy, including the accessing and processing of marine resources
Cultural
- Renewed spirit and increased participation in community volunteerism
- More recognition, representation and celebration of Tsimshian culture throughout Prince Rupert

**ROLES OF CULTURE IN COMMUNITY BUILDING**

First Nations Culture
- Cultural tourism as a means to celebrate and tell local history
  - Comparing what other communities and cultures have done, as in Haida Gwaii or Hawaii, could give ideas into how Tsimshian cultures can be respectfully celebrated by the community and visitors
  - Opportunities for authentic cultural and ecotourism, fishing and harvesting, and other traditional means of relating to the land, which could be led by Tsimshian people or organizations
  - The All-Native Basketball Tournament is a perfect example of Nations coming together in pride and celebration
    - Learning from this tradition and finding other ways to bring everyone together
  - Increased signage and recognition of Tsimshian heritage and identity
  - Learning respectful and meaningful ways to engage and partner with First Nations peoples, overcoming tensions and barriers to grow as a community

Multiculturalism
- Multiculturalism, as demonstrated through events, associations, and identities, are assets and important aspects of Prince Rupert that should be encouraged and celebrated

Ocean & Land Culture
- Fishing culture is essential to Prince Rupert, and should be embraced, so people can reconnect with this foundational characteristic of past and present-day Prince Rupert

Arts and Culture
- Artists, of First Nations and non-First Nations identity, should be promoted and nurtured as important members of this community

**VISIONS FOR NCIL IMPACT**

Capacity-building of existing organizations/projects
- Many well-intentioned organizations and community groups could broaden their reach and increase impact with additional capacity. This capacity could be:
  - Knowledge-building (navigating the proposal process, how to turn ideas into action, municipal bylaw details, social media literacy, grant sourcing and writing, etc.)
• Human (volunteerism, research, legwork to get projects off the ground)
• Management (organizing events, Board management, business planning, etc.)
• Many projects that are either being managed with limited capacity, are “off the sides of desks”, or have been planned but have yet to be launched or implemented.
• All have the potential to strengthen Prince Rupert in some way, but without additional capacity, will not reach their full potential

**Facilitation and resource-sharing**

• A physical space, such as a co-working space or resource-sharing centre, where community members can share information, work together and projects, discuss their collective future, and gain “on-the-ground” perspectives on a variety of Rupert-related affairs.
• Providing a work space for meetings, internet access, collaboration and project planning, with facilitation and consultation services possibly being provided by the NCIL, the City, or another group.
• Shared space also addresses some of the communication gaps addressed by community members, who could visit this physical space as a way to share and receive information with others, and have relevant info on display in the space.

**Entrepreneurial incubation and social enterprise**

• Harbour and encourage more entrepreneurial projects, both by launching new initiatives under the NCIL, as well as supporting or complementing existing entrepreneurship programs.
• There are many ideas for social enterprises in Prince Rupert.

**Downtown Prince Rupert**

• NCIL could be a vehicle for driving tangible downtown revitalization.
• Creating new place-making initiatives that align with existing civic movements (such as Transition Prince Rupert), or building on past projects (such as the 3rd Ave art project).
• Organizing downtown businesses and community members (ineffective in the past) to plan out tangible improvements to downtown.

**Youth & Students**

• Engaging and involving youth in the NCIL processes, including engagement, ideation and also projects that are co-created by the Lab.

**Volunteerism**

• Addressing the need for volunteerism to be made more efficient and accessible in this community, to improve the ability of events and organizations to succeed in their objectives, and as a means of community cohesion and civic duty.

**Access to Fish Products**

• Exploring ways to get fresh and affordable fish products into the hands and mouths of Rupertites is a common desire, and some propose the Lab focus on this.
Aligning with Larger Initiatives

• NCIL develop in tandem with outcomes of Redesign Rupert – the robust civic engagement process that concentrated the community’s needs and desires
  • Exploring those primary findings and aligning projects to them would ensure that NCIL projects are addressing the desires of the community at large

OTHER INNOVATIVE, COLLABORATIVE PROJECT IDEAS

Place-making

• Projects that improve the “livability” of Prince Rupert, through recreational development, improved waterfront access, taking action on revitalizing downtown, and other place-making initiatives

Small business and entrepreneurship

• Variety of entrepreneurial ideas and past business projects that participants identified as positive and innovative forces in the community
  • Should entrepreneurial development be a focus of the NCIL, there are many ideas and thought leaders to draw upon for inspiration and possibly partnership

Information and resource-sharing

• A physical space, for co-working, or as an information centre, to be a gathering point and location for information sharing, communication and collaboration

Youth

• Youth-centric community projects, in entrepreneurship, place-making, recreation, or otherwise

Building on Redesign Rupert

Context

Redesign Rupert is a civic engagement process in partnership between Community Development Institute, University of Northern British Columbia, the City of Prince Rupert and Community Futures. Its purpose is “to develop and implement strategies for economic diversification and community resilience in Prince Rupert.” At a time when LNG developments were an imminent possibility, Redesign Rupert worked to engage the community around their assets and desires, to provide a base of knowledge to launch community initiatives from.

Redesign Rupert took place from October 2015 to May 2017, with a total of 1300 participants, involving many different meetings, mapping events and workshops, including the “Redesign Rupert Recharge” community workshop attended by 150 people. From the project, three community action groups were established, from which six projects were initiated.4

The research and engagement processes differ between Redesign Rupert and the North Coast Innovation Lab; whereas the Redesign Rupert process engaged the public at large, the NCIL Interviews focused on

3 Redesign Rupert Final Report
4 Ibid.
community builders, those working in local institutions and organizations, and decision-makers. Studying the findings from both processes reveals much about Prince Rupert at large, and covers a significant array of perspectives for a community of roughly 12,000 inhabitants. It also allows us to build on the strengths and findings of Redesign Rupert.

**Civic Engagement Results**

Five major themes emerged through Redesign Rupert to reveal the priorities and values of Prince Rupert participants:

- Children, Youth and Families
- Community Culture and Heritage
- Economy and Livelihoods
- Housing
- Public Spaces

From the Redesign Rupert Recharge, a community facilitation exercise around those five major themes, some key needs were identified, several of which parallel the NCIL interview responses. These are identified below to highlight which values, ideas and observations are common to both Redesign Rupert and the North Coast Innovation Lab. We also list where there are activities underway within these themes.

**Children, Youth and Families**

- Eliminate barriers to participation in child and youth programs and activities
- Increase after-school programming options and hang out spaces for young teens (aged 11-15 years) and older youth (18-20 years) that focus on empowerment and skills development
- Build capacity within local service/volunteer organizations to provide and maintain child and youth programming
- Establish an outdoor public space (with some covered area) that is safe, easily accessible and suitable for child and youth-based structured and unstructured activities, i.e. community gardens, outdoor water park, or walking track

**Parallels**

NCIL interview findings also touched on barriers to recreational activities for children, namely affordability of recreation programs and paperwork/registration tasks.

Building capacity within local service and volunteer organizations was central to the NCIL findings both as a challenge to the community, as well as a possible focus area of the NCIL.

Improving public spaces and developing weather-appropriate outdoor places for public use was also a common finding; Transition Prince Rupert’s McKay Street Park project is being realized, in part, as a response to this desire.

**Community Culture & Heritage**

- Develop a greater awareness and appreciation within the local community about the diverse array of arts and cultural assets in Prince Rupert, for example, local carvers
- Strengthen efforts to promote and showcase local arts and culture to tourists and visitors
Expand the number of spaces available for arts and culture groups and activities
Extend efforts to publicize and coordinate local arts and cultural events/ opportunities

Parallels
Building up the cultural and artistic communities was also found to be of importance under the NCIL interviews, with an understanding that First Nations should lead any indigenous art and cultural initiatives. The 3rd Ave Art Project, which took place in July and August of 2017 under Redesign Rupert’s Community Culture and Heritage Action Group, was a direct response to these Redesign Rupert findings, as well as the need to revitalize downtown. It served as an important precedent for future art projects in Prince Rupert, especially in the downtown core. People spoke about the need to have tangible outcomes of the discussion – being able to see art in storefronts.

Some other parallels under this section include supporting multicultural and artistic festivals and events, recognizing cultural tourism as an experiential economic opportunity, creating a public market for art/culture/cuisine, and improving communication between people and community events.

Economy and Livelihoods
- Develop a local economic diversification strategy
- Strengthen efforts to attract, support and retain retail businesses in Prince Rupert
- Revitalization of 3rd Avenue and other key economic hub zones lead by community champions
- Improve transportation infrastructure and connections
- Expand training and apprenticeship opportunities in fields that are relevant to the local economy

Parallels
Strengthening the local economy through diversification and ground-level projects is one of the key objectives of the NCIL. These desires were echoed in the NCIL findings as key challenges, including attracting and recruiting labour, supporting small businesses and revitalizing 3rd Avenue.

Housing
- Expand the supply of quality, affordable rental housing
- Explore options to lower the costs of residential development
- Establish a community-based housing group to speak as a unified voice on housing issues and to explore solutions
- Expand housing options that are physically accessible for seniors to enable the growing elderly population to remain in Prince Rupert as they age
- Increase supply of supported housing
- Establish a standard of care for landlords to ensure that rental accommodations are safe and of acceptable quality

Parallels
The “crisis of affordability” around accommodations was a key challenge identified in the NCIL interviews.
Redeveloping and improving derelict buildings is another common finding, as many are owned by absentee landlords, or have been abandoned in years’ past with the decline of Prince Rupert’s population.

Public Spaces

- Foster community involvement in the use and maintenance of public spaces
- Revitalize, enhance and promote the use of existing public spaces
- Create new public spaces, including covered spaces

Parallels

One Redesign Rupert suggestion for increasing community involvement for public space improvements is through volunteer system coordination. Finding, effectively coordinating, and inspiring volunteers is a frequently-cited challenge and requested project idea for the NCIL.

Revitalizing public spaces and making them more walkable and enjoyable for the public is another cited finding under the NCIL.

Kaien Island Trail Enhancement and Recreation Society, the McKay Street Park, Civic Pride Prince Rupert, Rupert Rubbish Roundup, are a few notable groups and initiatives acting on these public demands for community-led public space improvement and access.

Projects from Redesign Rupert

Redesign Rupert birthed and focused many projects and project ideas, which were a result of the Action Groups established. Consisting of community leaders with personal and/or professional interests in their group area, three action groups were established, and subsequent projects were launched and planned through them:

- Children, Youth, and Families Action Group (status unknown)
  - Prince Rupert Community Resources Directory (active online)
  - Volunteer Prince Rupert (online, limited awareness/use/participation)
  - Expanding After School Programming (status unknown)
- Community Culture and Heritage Action Group
  - Action on Arts and Culture (Arts Sector promotion initiative, status unknown)
  - 3rd Avenue Art Project (realized, summer 2017)
- Economy and Livelihoods Action Group
  - Shoring Up the Shoulder Season (Promotional plan for Dine Out Prince Rupert – took place January 2017)

The status and follow-up for these projects needs to be determined going forward, so that the NCIL does not compete or replicate another identical project.

It should be noted that two of the above projects, Volunteer Prince Rupert and the 3rd Avenue Art Project, are aligned with key NCIL directions for supporting Prince Rupert – covering civil-sector capacity building, strengthening volunteerism, beautifying downtown, and supporting the arts and culture communities here.
Community Profile

Another aspect of Redesign Rupert was creating a detailed demographic profile of Prince Rupert. Age, education, employment, and housing details for the City were organized and presented, offering a useful snapshot of the demographic context in which community development initiatives will take place.

Some notable statistics from the community profile are:

Age
• Prince Rupert has an aging population, with significant increases in senior population proportions (65+) over the past thirty years (1981 – 2011)

Education
• According to Early Development Instrument, many young children are entering kindergarten in a vulnerable state (46% vulnerable on one or more scales as of 2013)

Employment
• There are five major industries employing the majority of workers: transportation and warehousing, retail trade, public administration, health care and social assistance, and education services (as of 2011)
• Unemployment steadily declined in Prince Rupert from 2001 to 2011 (15.4% to 10.1%)

Housing
• There is an extremely limited supply of safe, appropriate, and affordable homes available
• The existing housing stock is aging – as of 2011, more than 75% of houses were 35 years old or more, with minimal developments since then (fewer than 20 from 2011-2015)
• Between 2011 and 2016, the average selling price for a single-detached home increased 44.3% while the supply of homes for sale has been decreasing
• Prince Rupert has high proportion of households who rent, rather than own, their homes – with the average price of $730 per month for a private apartment (in spring 2015)

One key challenge to this data is its age – the most recent census dates for some of the above figures is 2011 – a 7-year gap between then and the present, during which developments in industry may have significantly altered the demographic totals and trends.

Since the Redesign Rupert profile was completed, Statistics Canada released their 2016 census data. The population was 11,733 residents in 2016, a 2.1% drop compared to 2011.
Part III: Areas of Focus

Ongoing Community Engagement and Education

With the findings from the community interviews compiled and organized, as well as compared with the public consultations of Redesign Rupert, the next step was to share these findings and test our approach with community partners, interviewees, and the larger community. This was done through two presentations, which also detailed the North Coast Innovation Lab’s design and purpose, raised awareness around social innovation, and shared the approach, resources and intentions the NCIL can bring to current and future community initiatives. One-on-one and small group meetings also took place with community partners, education institutions, civic leaders, and interested community members who wanted to learn more.
Presentations took place on the following dates and times:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Est. # of Attendees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, March 7</td>
<td>1 - 3 p.m.</td>
<td>Prince Rupert Public Library</td>
<td>Presentation and workshop with possible partner organizations</td>
<td>12 - 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, March 8</td>
<td>7 - 9 p.m.</td>
<td>Northwest Community College multipurpose room</td>
<td>Open presentation to community</td>
<td>25 - 30</td>
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</table>

Through facilitated activities and discussions, potential projects and areas of focus were adapted to reflect the realities of implementation in Prince Rupert and priorities of community members.
A core activity of the NCIL will be ongoing education and discourse for community organizations and the public around social innovation, the work of the NCIL, and the impacts and outcomes of the initiatives to come.
NCIL Key Areas of Focus

In response to the challenges, opportunities, values and needs of Prince Rupert identified in Phase I of the NCIL Interviews; the key findings from the public at large via the Redesign Rupert consultations; and participatory presentations, the following key areas of focus for the NCIL were identified. These reflect opportunities for a social innovation lab methodology to be tested in Prince Rupert.

**Key Area 1: Co-working, information and resource-sharing**
- Create a shared workspace for collaboration, office work, ideation/brainstorming, meetings, etc.
- Improve communication and collaboration across organizations and sectors that use the space
- Display relevant information for visitors/occupants, which could include community events, workshops, grant opportunities, city bylaws, etc.

**Key Area 2: Growing the local economy for fish and marine products**
- Frequently mentioned as an opportunity and need for improving and rejuvenating Prince Rupert’s local economy
- Culturally and historically relevant industry that has experienced significant decline due to regulatory and economic shifts around fishing and processing
- Opportunities for having a “fish market”, or having fisherman sell fish off their boats on the pier, with benefits of food security, access to marine resources, local economic development, and community cultural activity
- Creating/selling innovative fish products, such as traditionally processed salmon, to add value to fish products and sell them locally, regionally, or internationally

**Key Area 3: Downtown revitalization, place-making and livability**
- Visible, tangible projects for place-making, infrastructure improvement, and pedestrian friendly spaces
- Improve the appearance and tenancy of downtown buildings and spaces, which are increasingly abandoned or vacated
- Activate existing initiatives and build on past precedents that address the downtown problem (such as the 3rd Avenue Art Project, and Paint Prince Rupert)

**Key Area 4: Economic diversification through entrepreneurship**
- Increasing alternative employment opportunities for Rupertites
- Support innovative approaches to economic development
- Can capitalize on secondary and support service for growing logistics economy
- Supporting or complementing existing entrepreneurship programs

**Key Area 5: Creating low-barrier income opportunities through social enterprise**
- Employ large segment of low-education, low-experience residents
- Raise income of those who struggle to afford housing
• Employment diversification from industry and administrative positions

**Key Area 6: Cultural economy-building**
• Building up the economy for cultural activities, ecotourism, and authentic “experiential” products and services for residents and visitors
• Highly suggested response for strengthening local economy
• Opportunity to celebrate local history, First Nations cultures, and natural environment
• Wide desire and acknowledgment of needing First Nations leadership in this area, as primary occupants and knowledge-keepers of the region
• Supporting indigenous and non-indigenous art communities and economies

**Key Area 7: Youth engagement and participation**
• Having students, from secondary and post-secondary schools, involved in community-building activities to improve sense of civic pride, ownership and responsibility for Prince Rupert’s well-being
• Encouraging activities for young people so that they will want to stay in Prince Rupert as they get older

**Key Area 8: Bridging the socio-economic “divide”**
• Addressing what is widely regarded as increasing gap between socio-economic classes within Prince Rupert, through community events and initiatives that overlap between the “haves and have-nots”
• Volunteerism and community-centric low-cost or free events as means to build community cohesion

**Key Area 9: Enhancing and supporting volunteerism**
• Volunteerism is struggling
• Volunteerism is essential to Prince Rupert community
• Build human and organizational capacity in volunteer sector
• A means to connect division between socio-economic strata and cultures
• Support important community-led programs that depend on volunteers
• Engage youth for connecting with older people, gain sense of community and volunteerism
First Year Project Areas of Focus

Out of the Key Areas, four questions emerged for early exploration by the North Coast Innovation Lab and will be targeted as directions for NCIL projects and partnerships in 2018. They are:

1. **How might we grow the local economy for fish and marine products in Prince Rupert?**

   There are limited ways of accessing ocean food products, and multiple organizations and individuals are keen to establish new pathways for accessing and enjoying this historically, culturally and economically significant food source.

   There is widespread demand for improving local access to fish and marine products, celebrating and reconnecting with ocean culture and fishermen, and growing the economy for locally-harvested marine products.

   Specifically establishing a fish market has been raised by the City of Prince Rupert’s Economic Development department and others, and would increase usage of newly developed waterfront infrastructure and the marina. This will be a part of the NCIL exploration, though we do not know yet whether this is the sole – or best – way to grow the local fisheries economy.

2. **How might we enhance co-working, information-sharing and resource-sharing?**

   Despite having a multitude of social service organizations and non-profits, the community still struggles to address issues around mental health, substance abuse, homelessness and poverty. For small organizations, there is a severe shortage of resources, both human and financial, necessary to increase their impact and address the persistent social challenges. The same challenges are facing small businesses and entrepreneurs, who struggle to compete and succeed. With a declining retail sector and a competitive funding environment for non-profit organizations, many are open to a new approach to working on projects and business ideas; one that can reduce costs, break down communication silos, and provide the essential resources for successful operations.

   How might we establish a co-working and resource centre that could serve as an accessible resource and gathering point for businesses, organizations and individuals who are working on building a resilient community and economy in Prince Rupert?

3. **How might we develop social enterprise and entrepreneurship in Prince Rupert?**

   Can the NCIL incubate and co-launch innovative enterprises with social and/or environmental aims, especially low-income or low-barrier opportunities for un- or under-employed people in Prince Rupert?

   How might we encourage the growth and success of existing entrepreneurship programs in Prince Rupert, especially those that serve First Nations and are tied to social service organizations and/or Northwest Community College programs?

4. **How might we engage youth in downtown revitalization and place-making?**

   The importance of involving youth in building the future for Prince Rupert was repeated in interviews, workshops, and past reports. How can the NCIL complement and assist in the activation of larger existing initiatives in improving the appearance, utility and occupancy of downtown Prince Rupert? How might we engage young adults and youth, through Northwest Community College and School District 52, in events and initiatives around place-making and revitalization?
Sharing the workshop results and next steps with Mayor Brain, March 9, 2018
Conclusion and Next Steps

The interviews captured a wealth of information about Prince Rupert, its residents, and the landscape we are operating in. They serve as a grounding and jumping off point as we determine how the North Coast Innovation Lab can add value in the community. They contributed to the design of the NCIL and initial focus areas.

Potential partners for the initial NCIL projects have been identified, based on the interviews, expressed interest, capacity, and feedback from presentations and meetings. We are engaged in ongoing discussions with partners, others in the community, and education institutions to activate ideas, capacity, and partnerships around initial and longer term projects.

Two graduate students will begin in May 2018 to focus on the first two pilot projects:

1. Grow the local economy for fish and marine products in Prince Rupert
2. Enhance co-working, information sharing, and resource sharing

These pilot projects will run from May to August 2018 as other projects are developed, incubated, and explored for the next phase of testing. There will be ongoing capacity building and the gathering and sharing of project ideas and innovation. The second cohort of students and projects will benefit from learnings during the first cohort.

Updates will be shared via the Ecotrust Canada website and newsletters. Please contact us with questions, for more information, or to sign up for our NCIL newsletter.
Appendices

Appendix A: NCIL Interviews

Total persons interviewed: 45
Total interviews: 41

List of those interviewed


People are listed in the order in which they were interviewed.
Appendix B: NCIL Interview Questionnaire

NCIL Community Member Interview Guide

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Conversation Type</th>
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<tr>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Last Name</th>
<th>Self-identify with First Nation?</th>
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<tr>
<th>Role</th>
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<th>Affiliated Org/Group/Club/etc.</th>
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Preliminary Questions and Info

Following this interview, may I quote you? Yes No

May I use your name in the quote? Anonymous? Name Anonymous Neither

May I record this interview, for review purposes only? Yes No

Overview of Interview, North Coast Innovation Lab Phase 1

- Aim of this project is to create a space for new and innovative thinking in the community; to foster an environment of collaboration, innovation, creativity and unity amongst governments, businesses and organizations of Prince Rupert
- First phase requires listening to people in the community; specifically, those who are already working to build a stronger Prince Rupert and a more robust local economy
- From this, we can learn where opportunities exist, which direction leaders want to take the local economy, the role and motivations of the leaders themselves, and to better understand the social dynamics and economic realities of Prince Rupert
- This information will influence the formation and refinement of the Lab; in particular, how to best address the existing gaps or shortcomings within existing networks; which social/ economic avenues offer the possibility of sparking systematic change; where gaps in capacity, communication or information might be filled; and how the NCIL could otherwise assist in the creation of a sustainable community and economy
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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Context</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Contextual Info</strong></td>
<td>A self-described explanation of your, and your organization's place in the community. What has your PR experience here been like? What different “hats” do you wear in the community, and why do you support these causes/organizations/clubs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tell me a bit about yourself! Describe how you relate to Prince Rupert, personally and professionally.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Response</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Prince Rupert’s Economic Landscape</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>What are some of the persistent social and/or economic challenges facing Prince Rupert? Who are being impacted and what are the ramifications here in PR?</td>
<td>Prince Rupert faces many different challenges on social and economic fronts – which are the most relevant to you, and how do you feel they impact/reflect on this community?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Response</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>What social/economic opportunities do you see here in Prince Rupert which are currently untapped, undervalued or currently ignored?</td>
<td>Are there any situations where the potential for income generation and community building are being missed? Is there more value in certain goods or services than is being recognized?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Response</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Can you identify and share your perspective on some organizations, movements or projects related to local economic development, community building, etc.? Have they found success, and what should we bear in mind while developing the NCIL?</td>
<td>Who are some of the key players trying to make a positive difference for people and/or businesses here in PR? What impressions have past projects made on the public, the non-profit, and/or the business communities? What has worked and what hasn't? How can we ensure not to repeat past mistakes, while building on past successes?</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Response</strong></td>
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### Challenges for a Resilient Prince Rupert

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<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you see as the barriers and challenges to sustainable economic growth and building a stronger community here in Prince Rupert? What changes (political, individual, economic) could occur to overcome these barriers?</td>
<td>Are there policies that are holding people/organizations from building up this community? Are there personal, communication, infrastructure, or financial limits on progress? Can the community overcome these barriers somehow? How about from your organization’s field and perspective?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Aspirations for a Better Prince Rupert

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What does a thriving, vibrant and sustainable Prince Rupert look like to you?</td>
<td>Can you paint me a picture of your ideal Prince Rupert? What differences are most appealing and important to you? Is it possible to achieve some of these ideals?</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prince Rupert and surrounding communities have rich histories and cultures that permeate throughout the community. How do you see culture best fitting in the economic growth of Prince Rupert? Into our approach?</td>
<td>This is an open question that can be approached in many ways. Examples might include: reconciliation and respect of First Nations culture in community development projects and collaborations; infusing local art and traditions into solutions; focusing on fishing-related solutions as they resonate with PR’s most symbolic industry; etc.</td>
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### The Role of North Coast Innovation Lab

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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How familiar are you with Innovation Labs, or other social innovation-related activities?</td>
<td>This process is sometimes used in community planning processes; popular examples of organizations using this method include CityStudio in Vancouver, MaRS in Toronto, United Way in Calgary, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In what ways do you envision the NCIL supporting your organization’s mission, the local economy, or the community at large?</td>
<td>Beyond the possible internships, or even direct capacity support, how might our efforts to build understanding and unlock new economic possibilities benefit your org? ie. Knowledge sharing, meeting facilitation with similar orgs, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Response

10 What community projects would be the most impactful and/or successful in Prince Rupert? Would you and/or your organization officially support? What ideas do you have for economic projects that could succeed within this community? Do these fit within your personal and/or professional mandate? Would you invest time/capacity into making these ideas a reality? Some examples I’ve heard before include - a public fish market for residents to buy fresh fish, a co-working space for small businesses, downtown revitalization, etc.

Response

Wrap-up and Follow-up

If I have any other questions, may I contact you in the future? Yes No
Would you like to stay informed on the NCIL as it develops? Yes No
Is there anyone else within your organization or network that should be informed or involved with this in some way? Yes No
If Yes, whom, and how should they be reached?

Is there anything else I should note, know, or otherwise be aware of?

Closing Remarks

• Following the Scoping & Design phase of the NCIL, we will be sharing our findings with community leaders, members, and associated organizations in February/March 2018
• This process will inform the next Phase, which involves the formation of collaborative partnerships and innovative project(s) designed to address some of the challenges and potentials we have discovered
• First projects will be piloted in the spring/early summer of 2018

Expect to hear back from me in Feb/March with updates and outcomes from this process

Thank you for your time and wisdom; I look forward to getting back to you and working together to build a stronger Prince Rupert!
Appendix C: Human-centric profile template
Ecotrust Canada is an enterprising non-profit powered by the vision of people and nature thriving together. We develop innovative economic solutions that enable rural and remote communities to share in the management and benefit of local resources – from forestry to fisheries to housing and energy. Our on-the-ground work and systems approach is entrepreneurial, partnership-based and relentlessly practical. Learn more at ecotrust.ca