
SMOKY RIVER OPPORTUNITY SEMINAR REPORT

*"Growing Your Own..."
March 8, 2007
Girouxville Community Centre*



Smoky River Opportunity Seminar Report

Local Business Panel

Five local entrepreneurs with varying degrees of business experience were asked to discuss the ins and outs of “being your own boss” within a rural area. Each of the panel speakers is involved in a variety of different businesses and each was considered a suitable participant based on their business type, historical information, the business stage that they are at and their experiences. The panel was incorporated into the seminar to inform delegates/participants of their specific goals and intended to focus primarily on the genuine challenges each of them had to face when setting out on their own.

Panel Speakers:

- Lorraine Desaulniers - Bee Hive/
Bee Line Travel
- Diane Chiasson - Honey Capital
Realty
- Ellen Jacob - Bella Vita Aesthetics
- Marcia Ouellette - Hair For You
- Romeo and Annette Perra - PAR
Coffee

Panel Outcomes and lessons learned

All businesses begin with an idea but a business can only start by taking a leap of faith. A great deal is at stake but being well prepared, developing or finding the necessary management skills once you have started, finding the support personally and becoming part of the community is essential for success.

In a rural region, a community has to accept your business for it to become successful. To that end, marketing is an essential component to profitable small businesses. Respecting your clients, your employees and being professional

at all times will help everything else fall into place. Don't wait for opportunities to come to you, look for them and then act upon them. Community involvement is necessary as it helps to get you known and respected, not only as a business owner, but a community contributor as well.

You need to enjoy being in business to keep it successful. Be aware of where you can go to get financial support for your enterprise. If you are considering buying a business, buy a well-established business and know the history of the market. Be aware of obstacles when buying. For example, communication issues, as well as cultural and growth challenges that may be on the horizon.

Define your natural talents and how they can help you grow a successful enterprise. Encouragement from others, persistence, and faith in yourself is important. In partnerships you need to establish clear guidelines of “areas of expertise” to help avoid conflicts. Don't depend on yourself for all the answers as there are others who are willing and capable of helping you with challenges. Have clearly defined personal and business goals



Keynote Speaker: Eveline Charles, CEO, EvelineCharles Salons and Spas

Eveline Charles was born and raised in the small French community of Falher. Her strong work ethic and flare for fashion were apparent at an early age, which lead to her enrollment in the Marvel Beauty School immediately after high school. Eveline began cutting hair professionally in 1974 and ten years later, opened her first salon Bianco Nero in Edmonton.

After opening two salons in Edmonton, Eveline changed the name of her company from Bianco Nero to EvelineCharles Salons and Spas.



In 2001, two new locations opened in Calgary and Edmonton. In 2002, EvelineCharles expanded beyond Alberta to open a fifth location in Vancouver, British Columbia. In 2005, two more locations were opened in Calgary, as well as a 26,000 square foot Academy of Cosmetology and Esthetics in Edmonton. In 2006 the company expanded again, this time into Kelowna.

With eight current locations, Eveline is still eager to expand her brand into new cities and markets.

Presentation Summary

Be a winner with the mindset to accomplish your goals, was the message shared by Eveline Charles, a local resident who has made it big in the high end salon and spa industry. She shared her story of starting out with limited finances and her belongings in the back of a pick up truck and opening her first hair salon, a journey that has taken her to the top of her field as the CEO of a multi-million dollar cosmetology and aesthetics company. Ms. Charles highlighted the importance of managing your business from outside, not from the cutting room floor, using advertising venues to promote products and capitalizing on the markets and opportunities as they arise.

EvelineCharles now operates its own cosmetology and aesthetics academy based in Edmonton that offers young students the opportunity to expand their skills with cutting edge techniques and custom made product lines. Employees of the company are given career coaching and opportunities to move up the company's corporate ladder. They are encouraged to set goals and are given opportunities to enhance their personal and professional development.

EvelineCharles Salons and Spas have projected revenues around the \$19M mark for the 2008 fiscal year and has won the Global Salon Business Award in 2004 and 2006. In the future, EvelineCharles will be developing 17-20 new sites, will open three academies and will begin to implement succession planning.

**Bob Davis: Executive Director,
Rosebud Theatre**

Located in the Hamlet of Rosebud, one hour east of Calgary, Rosebud Theatre hosts over 35,000 patrons annually at various live theatre productions, maintains a post-secondary education program for 28 students, and a popular dining/catering facility.

Bob Davis shared the story of Rosebud, a booming community of three hundred in the 1950s that had dwindled to twelve residents by the 1970s. It wasn't until the mid-1980s when a surge of theatre camps and plays revitalized the Hamlet of Rosebud. With a population of one hundred and growing, the town now boasts three Bed and Breakfasts, a café, store, church and the lifeblood of the community and the town's primary employer – the theatre.

Bob Davis holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Masters of Arts in Public Policy, Law, and Administration. Bob's career has included a variety of opportunities to work with volunteer organizations and community economic development initiatives including Alberta Forest Service, Hockey Canada, Hockey Alberta and the Highwood Business Development Corporation in High River, AB.

In 2000, Bob joined the Drumheller Regional Chamber of Development and Tourism as General Manager. In 2003, he took on the position of Executive Director at Rosebud School of the Arts and Rosebud Theatre.

Presentation Summary:

In his presentation "*Get Focused...Get Together*," Bob Davis shared how the Rosebud theatre grew from a high school play, into a major visitor attraction. The focus of the message was "keep it simple," know your strengths, work together and have a vision for where you want to go.

He stressed the importance of working together and having the support of your team. Getting connected with your team and keeping them involved will maximize your group's ability to perform at their best and create employee satisfaction.

The Canadian Badlands Passion Play, Chemainus Theatre (BC), the Budding Playwrights Festival, Christmas in Alberta, choir concerts, a recording studio, radio programs and the Rosebud Folk Club are all products of Rosebud ideas, energy, resources and talents.





Kelsay Reimer, Manager, Peace Country Development Corporation

Kelsay Reimer originates from southwest Saskatchewan and has strong ties to the rural way of life. Prior to assuming the General Manager position with Peace Country Development Corporation (PCDC) in November 2005, Kelsay had been employed as the Community Economic Development Officer with Southwest Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) and Southwest Regional Economic Development Association (REDA) in Swift Current, SK. This position allowed her the opportunity to work on a variety of community initiatives, promote regional partnerships, and be a catalyst for building community capacity at the local level.

Presentation Summary

Kelsay provided an overview of the Community Futures goals and objectives. This organization helps develop and implement community based economic development strategies. It is a user-friendly business development centre that controls and manages investment funds. Community members interested in starting or expanding their business can apply for loans from Community Futures (up to a maximum of \$150,000).

Community Futures is also an entrepreneurial development centre that provides one-on-one business training to help individuals interested in self-employment or those looking to expand their business. Community Futures is dedicated to strengthening both community entrepreneurs and the economies of the communities they serve.

Rachelle Bergeron

Rachelle Bergeron is from the Peace country and has lived in the region for most of her life. Rachelle is currently Agente de développement économique with le Conseil de développement économique, and has been with the organization since the fall of 2004. She has worked on various community economic and project development initiatives.

Presentation Summary

Rachelle shared the vision that the Conseil de développement économique de l'Alberta promotes and cultivates the advantages of the francophone community and its services. Business, the community and culture go hand in hand, and working together each contributes to a richer cultural fabric, develops community strength and diversity and multiplies the attraction and marketing capacity for all. Rachelle shared specifics of the St. Isidore marketing project, particularly the project deliverables which aim to identify markets and strategies, engage local stakeholders, create a welcome package and create a long term viability strategy for ongoing activities.



Community Engagement Toolkit

Facilitator – **Kelley Moore, MCIP,
Regional Intersectoral Committee
Coordinator, Saskatchewan Learning**

Kelley Moore has extensive training and experience in citizen engagement practices and has led the development of Citizen Engagement Plans in a variety of settings. Kelley facilitated a workshop that helped to provide communities and individuals with the necessary tools for successful community engagement and planning. Kelley's presentations lead participants to answer questions like:

- Why should citizens be engaged in decision-making?
- What degree of participation should citizens have?
- What are options for citizen participation?

“Look around in your region to see if a partnerships already exists and consider whether you should join with them or build something new.”

~Smoky River Opportunity Seminar 2007

No one entity can fully support the needs of a community or a region. It is essential that individuals, community, faith-based organizations, government agencies, businesses, and other community group's work together to help their community or region grow and thrive. Partnering presents valuable opportunities to share resources, develop joint goals and objectives, and learn from each other.



Ideally, a partnership will draw its members from many different backgrounds and sectors of the community. The aim of the seminar, through the advertising and marketing efforts, was to lay some groundwork for this to happen. The Smoky River Opportunity Seminar was part of an important piece of the puzzle to develop a comprehensive approach for helping the Smoky River region create a partnership for development.

With the help of Kelley Moore, together people from the Smoky River area were able to assess the needs of the region by focusing on some of the successes that have happened in the past and look forward to possible future initiatives and potential successes. This provided some clear focus to develop a coordinated response to these needs delivering a consistent message about the importance of regional engagement.

Building a community partnership can be challenging! Disagreements can arise in establishing project goals or strategies. Turf and boundary issues may exist between organizations, or groups may have competing demands for other worthy projects in the community. Different opinions and perspectives can sometimes bring things to a halt. The information presented at the Opportunity Seminar provided the right balance between broad representation and the necessary tools for working together and engaging the community.



Reflecting on your communities attributes

Delegates were asked to share information during the workshop part of the Opportunity Seminar. The following is a compilation of the information shared. Following these ideas, is a toolkit to assist communities in the Smoky River Region move ahead on any one of the projects suggested at the Opportunity Seminar on March 8, 2007.

Recent successes for the Smoky River region, High Prairie and Peace River.

- Waste/water commission
- Regional fire fighting, new truck
- Christmas hamper program
- Family night program
- Fundraising for community and religious organizations
- Ski-doo rally
- Book-keeping for new businesses
- Country Sunshine promenade
- St. Isidore winter Carnival and marketing strategy
- Fire Smart (safe communities)
- Peace Oilsands Synergy
- Hank Williams First Nation- Movie and TV show
- Regional Recycling Facility
- Northern Lakes College; University courses
- High Prairie swimming pool
- Ice arena (second service)
- Approval on new hospital
- Chamber of Commerce reinstated
- Elks pro rodeo
- Falher arena (hockeyville)
- Bella Vita
- Peace River Air show
- Peace Fest
- Peace River FCSS (Family and Community Supports)
- 4-H involvement

Community strengths contributing to successes in the Smoky River region:

- A need was identified
- People worked together
- Ideas spread through word-of-mouth
- Volunteers came forward
- Financial support from community political efforts
- Community involvement
- Thriving business community
- Ideas brought forward to community and accepted plans follow
- Cooperation
- Partnerships
- Common goals
- Quick response- good communication
- Strong organizational and facilitation skills
- Community ownership, involvement and buy in
- Leadership
- Cooperation
- Vision
- Action plans
- Geographic area (similarities/ four seasons/ boundaries)
- Planning commitment
- Human resources
- Small business donations
- Work ethic
- Encouragement and support
- Community champions
- Active promotion
- Push economic development opportunities
- Become a catalyst
- Provide facilities (housing, recreation, medical services)
- Prioritize
- Setting goals
- Letting go
- Have fun
- Delegate
- Work together
- Teaching/training



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- Involve dynamic groups
 - Influential people
 - Create our own reality

- Motivate people from within the community
- Education

What would future success in the Smoky River region look like?

- Attraction and retention of youth
- Likeminded committee's 'doing' as opposed to visualizing; take action
- Thinking outside the box; embrace fresh ideas; accepting change
- Increased community infrastructure (i.e. businesses)
- Cooperation/ planning /organization and teamwork
- Better quality and quantity of housing
- Rebuilding community spirit especially with newcomers
- Regional municipal council
- Wheelchair races in downtown
- Restoration and renovation of churches; including St. Paul
- One building for CRC/Parent Link/ FCSS
- Better communication within community
- Seminars

- Volunteers counselors
- Cultural entertainment programs
- Outreach connection
- Connect with other communities
- Opportunities for youth involvement in the region
- Stable health services
- More continuing care
- Sense of security for seniors
- Sell this area to the world
- New residents actively involved in the community
- One main regional website
- Cooperative municipal districts and governments
- Caring communities
- Innovation and action
- Affordable education
- Changing attitudes
- Good quality of life

TOOLKIT

Steps for Initiating a Community Project **Prepared for NADC by facilitator Kelley D. Moore, MCIP**

When a community joins together to work towards a common goal (e.g. attracting and retaining youth to a region or developing a regional services web site), there may be challenges to overcome. Successful outcomes for community initiatives often depend on how well stakeholders work together to overcome challenges. It is important that community members, municipal administrators, elected representatives, businesses and other stakeholders work together to achieve common goals. The good news is there are steps groups can take to help them work better together and achieve their goals!

At the Opportunity Seminar, several community-economic development initiatives were identified as desirable by seminar participants. The information below is intended to assist participants and other groups to work through the steps involved with leading a community-based initiative.

1. Understand your community and the issue or need

Step 1: Hold an initial exploratory meeting and gather information about the community and the issue at hand.

The first step in initiating a project is to identify potential stakeholders and their interest in the issue or need that has been identified. When stakeholders with diverse viewpoints in the community come together, it encourages discussions that can lead to new understanding, opportunity and solutions.

2. Define your purpose

Step 2: Develop an organizational base (e.g. a committee name) and build an identity within the community (e.g. start to promote the purpose of the committee).

Shared interests provide the basis for mutual learning and collaborative problem solving. It is important to educate one another about the diverse interests that exist. Through this learning process, it is possible to develop a common sense of purpose and a definition of the issue or preferred state.

3. Create a shared vision

Step 3: Develop a clear and concise vision. Test the vision in the community.

Provide time for broad representation in shaping your vision. The focus needs to remain on the common vision and goals people are working toward (the outcome), not on personalities or individual differences.



4. Clearly identify the issue or need

Step 4: Collect information to gain a broad understanding of the factors influencing the issue or community need (e.g. population change or increased crime).

Information can be gathered through a variety of ways including research, data analysis, surveys and guest speakers. Based on information gathered, stakeholders gain a clear understanding of the issue and the importance of the issue in the community.

5. Brainstorm potential solutions

Step 5: Draft options for addressing the community need or issue.

Try to gather as much information as possible about existing initiatives that are already underway to help address the issue or need. Look for opportunities to acknowledge and build on existing initiatives. Brainstorm as many alternative solutions as possible. Include those involved in implementing potential solutions in your brainstorming activities. Remember that people tend to gain understanding through sharing information. An open mind should be continually encouraged.

6. Develop a plan

Step 6: Develop an action plan and identify which community leaders are required to implement the various stages of the plan.

There are tasks required in the development of a plan including writing, budgeting, technical skills (e.g. mapping), promotion (such as media), and communication between stakeholders. In drafting the plan (including timeline), identify leadership opportunities for a broad range of stakeholders. A community-led initiative requires a team approach. Ensure that the skills of your team members are equally valued and shared.

7. Implement the plan

Step 7: Host a meeting(s) to promote the plan and provide opportunities for community, business and/or government participation in implementing the plan.

When those involved in addressing an issue or need agree on a solution, implementing and sustaining the solution occurs more easily. Consensus is not unanimity (everyone's first choice) or compromise (everyone gives in). Consensus means that everyone's views have been heard and understood and are reflected in the plan. Maintaining broad participation in the implementation of the plan (no matter how big or small) can improve timelines, increase synergies with other initiatives and reduce resistances to change. As implementation of the plan proceeds, maintain awareness of changing community dynamics and their potential impact on the plan.



8. Celebrate Success

Step 8: Celebrate achievements and positive changes occurring in the community.

It can take several years from when a community need is identified to when a desired change is implemented. Persistence and renewed energy are vital to sustaining community momentum. To keep attitudes positive and volunteers engaged, take time to regularly acknowledge contributions, successes and milestones. Even small events can bring renewed interest and new volunteers.

9. Reflect on lessons learned

Step 9: Document and share the best practices and lessons learned through the initiative.

The experience, knowledge and skills gained by working with the community to initiate a project should be documented. Reflecting on best practices will help future initiatives go more smoothly as participants will have a clearer understanding of the types of activities that work well (and those that do not). It should also be anticipated that new initiatives will emerge in the community over time. Documenting lessons and best practices that have taken place in the region can reduce frustration, save time and increase learning for new groups with new initiatives.

RESOURCE LIST

Prepared for NADC by facilitator Kelley D. Moore, MCIP

Internet Resources

City of Calgary, Handbook for Conducting a Community Assessment – www.calgary.ca (search “Community Assessment Handbook”)

City of Edmonton, Public Involvement Initiative - <http://www.edmonton.ca>

Coastal Zone Australia Ltd , URP Toolbox (formerly Citizen Science Toolbox) - <https://www3.secure.griffith.edu.au/03/toolbox/index.php>

City of Saskatoon, Community Association Volunteer Handbook - http://www.saskatoon.ca/org/leisure/community_associations/volunteer_handbook.pdf

City of Saskatoon, Planning Education Program - http://www.saskatoon.ca/org/city_planning/planning_education_program/index.asp

City of Vancouver, Citizen Handbook - <http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/>

Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Local Government Participatory Practices Manual – www.fcm.ca

Province of Saskatchewan, Working with Communities - <http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/hsif/pdfs/workingwithcommunities.pdf>

Community Development Resources

Wates, Nick. Community Planning Handbook: How people can shape their cities, towns and villages in any part of the world. 2000.

Sirolli, Ernest. Ripples from the Zambezi: Passion, entrepreneurship and the rebirth of local economies, 1999.

Cities and Environment Unit and Wagmatcook First Nation. First Nations Community Planning Model, 2nd Edition. Dalhousie University, 2003.

Facilitation Resources

Hunter, Dale, Anne Bailey and Bill Taylor. The Art of Facilitation. Tucson, AZ: Fisher Books, 1992.

Hunter, Dale, Anne Bailey and Bill Taylor. The Zen of Groups. Tucson, AZ Fisher Books, 1995.

Kaner, Sam Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making. Gabriola Island, B.C.: New Society Publishers. 1996.

