Exploring Just Sustainability in a Canadian Context: An Investigation of Sustainability Organizations in the Canadian Maritimes

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By

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Abstract

Sustainability has been characterized and explored mostly from an environmental standpoint, with relatively less attention paid to social and economic dimensions. Because many sustainability organizations have grown out of the environmental movement, they tend to emphasize environmental priorities and retain many of the organizational strategies that were pioneered when the focus was on environmental conservation. However, to attain a more socially and economically informed environmental practice, broader procedural aspects, including recognition and participation, and substantive aspects, including issues of social need, distribution of wealth, and economic opportunity, need to be addressed as these matters are intimately linked to environmental concerns. In this thesis, I examined sustainability organizations against the concept of 'just sustainability', with specific consideration paid to uniting the substantive concerns of sustainability with the procedural concerns of environmental justice. I focused my examination on model forests and UNESCO biosphere reserves located in the Maritime Provinces of Canada, an area of high economic vulnerability and low political power. By looking to governance directives from environmental justice, entrepreneurship, and community development, I conducted a multi-case study analysis with organizations that have a mandate to address the environmental, social and economic imperatives of sustainability. Through engaging these organizations in a comparative learning situation, I was able to achieve the following objectives, to: i) assess the governance strategies used within these organizations against just sustainability theory; ii) understand the challenges faced by place-based organizations and examine strategies to better improve local understanding, community empowerment, as well as sustainability outcomes; and iii) assess the feasibility - conceptually and empirically – of incorporating social entrepreneurship into the governance practices of sustainability organizations to bring together the benefits of both approaches.

The findings of this thesis make valuable contributions to the empirical evidence needed to advance our understanding of just sustainability, both conceptually and in practice. Overall, my findings point to the importance of understanding and improving our practice of sustainability governance through identifying and offering examples of innovative governance arrangements that are better able to address procedural and substantive concerns. Findings show that the stakeholder model typically used by biosphere reserves and model forests contributes to

systemic challenges that limit procedural justice in these organizations. By looking to other literatures, including community development and social entrepreneurship, and to lessons learned from other place-based organizations, I propose ways to adapt governance strategies to improve community engagement and organizational outcomes, including a framework to inform place-based governance for just sustainability and a "hybrid model" that captures the benefits of stakeholder representation and social enterprise. This study speaks to the need for researchers and practitioners seeking to advance sustainability governance to extend their understanding beyond environmental sustainability to embrace more social dimensions. This thesis demonstrates the value of looking to broad literatures and new models to inform sustainability governance and encourage the adoption of new ways of thinking, new strategies, and new tools to help advance sustainability.

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Abbreviations

BLBRA = Bras D'Or Lakes Biosphere Reserve Association

BR = Biosphere Reserve

CBRA =Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association

CMFN =Canadian Model Forest Network

FBR = Fundy Biosphere Reserve

FMF = Fundy Model Forest

IACBR = International Advisory Committee on Biosphere Reserves (a committee of UNESCO)

MAB = Man and the Biosphere (a program of UNESCO under which biosphere reserves were created)

MAB ICC (UNESCO) = MAB Intergovernmental Coordinating Council (a council of UNESCO)

MF = Model Forest

MUBR = Manicouagan Uapishka Biosphere Reserve

NFA = Nova Forest Alliance

NGO = non-governmental organization

NRCan = Natural Resources Canada

SNBR = Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve

SNBRA = Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve Association

UNESCO = United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

VC = Vibrant Community

VC Saint John = Vibrant Community Saint John

WCED = World Commission on Environment and Development

CHAPTER 1: Introduction - Just sustainability in environmental governance in Canada

1.1 Background

The concept of sustainability unites concerns for the natural environment, economic development, and social well-being (Redclift, 1987; Robinson *et al.*, 1990). To date, the term sustainability has been characterized and explored mostly from an environmental standpoint, focusing on natural resource limits, environmental degradation, and the preservation and restoration of natural landscapes, with relatively less attention paid to the social and economic dimensions raised by the concept of sustainable development[1] (Agyeman *et al.*, 2002; Boström, 2012). Yet we know that environmental sustainability is inextricably connected to social justice and equality. Typically, those geographic areas with a wider distribution of wealth, greater social liberties and political freedoms, and a higher degree of education suffer less environmental degradation (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2003; Torras & Boyce, 1998). Furthermore, despite being primarily the result of overconsumption by the world's more affluent populations, environmental burdens weigh most heavily on the poor (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2003; World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED], 1987). In order to attain a more socially and economically informed environmental practice, broader procedural issues, including recognition, participation, and capabilities, need to be addressed, as these matters are intimately linked to environmental concerns (Sachs & Santarious, 2007; Scholsberg, 2007). Further, actions towards sustainability can be best operationalized at the local level through community-level initiatives that promote engagement and empowerment (Agyeman *et al.*, 2002; United Nations, 1992). This connection between social justice and environmental sustainability has been termed "just sustainability" (Agyeman *et al.*, 2003). Just sustainability was originally coined by Agyeman *et al.* (2003) in an effort to connect issues of social wellbeing and equity to economic development and environmental sustainability.

[1] I recognize the debates about sustainability and sustainable development, but I am using the terminology here to be consistent with the UNESCO program.

Many organizations working to address sustainability concerns, referred to here as sustainability organizations[2], have grown out of the environmental movement and tend to emphasize environmental priorities and retain many of the organizational strategies that were pioneered when the focus was on environmental conservation (Boström, 2012). Since the 1970s, environmental governance arrangements have shifted from a centralized, hierarchical governance structure to decentralized, collaborative, and nested forms of deliberative governance[3]. Multi-stakeholder and consensus-based approaches have been widely applied to place-based environmental organizations to address the complexity of environmental issues with the hope that meaningful involvement from diverse social groups will increase the legitimacy of environmental decisions. Theoretically, the stakeholder model brings different knowledge, expertise and perspectives together to build trusting relationships and develop better informed and robust decisions. Through time, the missions and mandates of these environmental organizations have broadened to incorporate broader sustainability objectives; however, the governance structures and strategies employed within these "sustainability organizations" have undergone little innovation to address broadening interests and imperatives. Further, the consensus-based stakeholder model has been widely interrogated, as it has been shown to support existing power structures, limit participation, promote consultation fatigue within specific interest groups, and, most significantly, stifle decisions and associated actions (Parkins & Davidson, 2008; Reed & Mcilveen, 2006; Reed, 2008). As scholars continue to advocate for the conceptualization of sustainability to broaden from environmental sustainability to a more holistic definition that explicitly addresses social concerns (Agyeman & Evans, 2004; Dillard *et al.*, 2009; Schlosberg, 2007), these organizations must continue to broaden their conceptual reach, and address associated procedural concerns. Therefore, to address the imperatives of just sustainability, scholars and practitioners must more effectively bridge environmental and social understandings. Drawing knowledge and lessons from scholars in a variety of disciplines, including political science, public health, social studies, geography, and business, I have explored literature on social and environmental justice, community development, and social enterprise to inform innovations in governance for sustainability.

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[2] Sustainability organizations work to address complex challenges that advance sustainability through an integrated understanding of the connections between social, economic, and environmental dimensions of human-environment relations.

[3]Deliberative governance utilizes forms of decision-making where authentic deliberation (i.e., dialogue, weighing options) is important.

The environmental justice literature provides procedural[4] insights that deserve consideration to advance governance for sustainability. While deliberative governance models have been developed to encourage access and inclusion in environmental decision-making, explicit connections between environmental justice theories and governance for sustainability have not been systematically explored. Developing these connections may help to improve procedural aspects of sustainability organizations. While most theorizing of environmental justice acknowledges equity issues and the distribution of environmental costs and benefits (Schlosberg, 2007), political theorists focusing on environmental justice have recently come to realize conceptual deficits in procedural understandings and directives. To address issues of distribution, activists, community groups and non-government organizations working on the ground to address issues of environmental justice require decision-making processes that take into account the opinions and perspectives of those affected. Drawing from those who inform justice theory (e.g., Fraser, 2000, 2001; Nussbaum, 2001, 2011; Sen, 1999; Young, 1990), Schlosberg (2007) describes three procedural imperatives that must be addressed to advance environmental justice: recognizing those typically disenfranchised, seeking participation from broad social groups, and building the capabilities of the community.

The conceptualization of place-based governance for sustainability further informs how these imperatives for just sustainability might be operationalized on the ground. Scholars have emphasized that place-based governance offers opportunities to advance sustainability (e.g., Edge & McAllister, 2009; Pollock, 2004). Place-based governance occurs in locally defined geographic areas that do not necessarily adhere to boundaries traditionally used to delineate a community (e.g., a county or municipality). Local cultural and regional identities and priorities are taken into account (Bradford, 2008; Slocombe, 1998). Place-based governance is better able to address complex problems through improved and contextualized policy processes, including broader and more inclusive participation and more effective use of community assets (Edge & McAllister, 2009; Pollock, 2004). By looking to community-based literature, including work on community development (e.g., Emery and Flora, 2006), collective learning (e.g., Brown, 2008; Brown & Lambert, 2013), and adaptive management (Armitage *et al.*, 2008), this thesis offers an opportunity to understand the importance of community understanding, empowerment, and

[4] I use the term procedural to refer to the processes involved in decision-making that affect outcomes.

community-based outcomes in determining the success of local-level sustainability organizations.

Finally, literature in social entrepreneurship offers strategies that may improve the effectiveness of governance for sustainability. Social entrepreneurship draws on entrepreneurial and business principles to address social challenges and promote social change (Nicholls, 2006). Social entrepreneurship offers a different governance strategy for place-based organizations addressing sustainability issues, as it changes the funding model and opens up other ways for the public to participate. Only recently have scholars started to think seriously about the role business strategies can play in addressing environmental and sustainability concerns (Dean & Mullen, 2007). Entrepreneurship is now being recognized as a useful approach to encourage social innovations and societal transformations (e.g., Olsson *et al*., 2006; Westley *et al.*, 2011). For example, Biggs *et al.* (2010) have shown that social entrepreneurship can inform governance strategies used in the management of social-ecological systems. They found that social entrepreneurship strategies encourage actors to rethink their opinions and perspectives, engage new actors, and mitigate conflict (Biggs *et al.*, 2010). Social entrepreneurship is a model used successfully in other social sectors; yet, it has rarely been explored by place-based organizations working towards sustainability. By looking to governance strategies employed by "social sector" organizations, lessons for operationalizing just sustainability can be identified.

1.2 Research Purpose

With this in mind, the purpose of this research is to advance theoretical understanding of just sustainability and improve opportunities for achieving it through place-based governance. This goal is achieved through assessing the governance structures and processes of biosphere reserves and model forests against principles and intended outcomes of just sustainability. Essential to this line of inquiry is grappling with the merger of environmental governance with the procedural justice and community-focused imperatives that inform just sustainability. By looking to governance directives from environmental justice, entrepreneurship, and community development, I assess these organizations through a multi-case study analysis and comparison. Through comparing these organizations, I addressed the following objectives:

i. assess the governance strategies used within biosphere reserves and model forests against just sustainability theory;

ii. understand the challenges faced by place-based organizations and identify strategies to improve local understanding, community empowerment, as well as sustainability outcomes; and

iii. assess the feasibility of incorporating social entrepreneurship into the governance practices of sustainability organizations to bring together the benefits of both stakeholder and social entrepreneurship approaches.

This work promotes innovation and improves the potential for these organizations to achieve their goals, learn from the experiences of others, and gain a broader theoretical and practical understanding of just sustainability.

1.3 Place

I focused my examination on biosphere reserves (BRs) and model forests (MFs). Both of these organizations are innovative models, working to advance the sustainability of a socio-ecological system, rather than addressing discrete aspects (i.e., conservation). Therefore, they work to incorporate diverse perspectives into their governance strategy. My study took place in the Maritime Provinces of Canada, an area of high economic and social vulnerability and low political power. Opportunities for economic development, such as mining, forestry, tourism, and offshore oil and gas development, offer the chance for economic renewal, but may have serious and uneven environmental and social effects, posing challenges to achieving just sustainability.

In this region, two model forests (Nova Forest Alliance - NS and Fundy Model Forest, NB) and three biosphere reserves (Bras D'Or Lakes Biosphere Reserve, NS, Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve, NS, and Fundy Biosphere Reserve, NB) exist in close proximity. These organizations were compared to Vibrant Communities Saint John, located in Saint John, NB, and Manicouagan-Uapishka Biosphere Reserve in northeastern Quebec (See Figure 1.1; Table 1.1). All of the organizations considered have varying degrees of participation from government, the private sector, civil sector organizations, and local and First Nation[5] communities.

[5] Because this work is focused in Maritime Provinces of Atlantic Canada, I use the terms First Nation and Aboriginal interchangeably, although they are distinct. Aboriginal is a government term that includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis people. Because there are no Inuit or Métis in the study region, I am able to use First Nations and Aboriginal interchangeably, but this is not the case in other areas of Canada.

1.3.1 Biosphere Reserves

World BRs are sites designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) that operate at the landscape level to i) conserve of biological and cultural diversity; ii) work towards sustainable development; and iii) support education and research (UNESCO, 1996). When the first BRs were established by UNESCO in 1976, BRs primarily served as sites for environmental protection and natural science research. However, since the mid-1990s BR mandates have broadened to place greater emphasis on social justice and community development (UNESCO, 2000, 2002). BR organizations encourage learning and action through deliberation, networking and experimentation (Edge & McAllister, 2009). They do not have regulatory authority, but aim to engage and empower communities by developing projects that involve citizens in skills training across a variety of conservation, research, and development initiatives. There are currently 16 BRs in Canada. Canadian BRs operate as small non-profit organizations. Some have a few staff members, others are run completely by volunteers. They are loosely guided by strategic planning from UNESCO, including the Seville Strategy (1996), the Statutory Framework (1995), and the Madrid Action Plan (2008).

1.3.2 Model Forests

MFs are sustainability organizations that operate at a landscape scale. When first initiated in 1992, MFs were established to test concepts and implement practices for sustainable forest management. At their inception, they aimed to formalize a connection between government and industry to share knowledge and mobilize research results to inform forest management practices (Sinclair & Smith, 1999). MFs brought a number of stakeholders together (e.g., private industry and operators, rural communities, interest groups and organizations, First Nations, researchers and experts and government agencies) to assess values and attitudes around forests, identify sustainability challenges and inform forestry policy and management practices (Pollett, 2012). In 2005, the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers issued a set of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management (including environmental, social, and economic criteria) that MFs were required to address (CCFM, 2006). In 2008, the International Model Forest Network identified a set of principles and attributes that served to guide activities of all members of its network (IMFN, 2008). In 2007, the program shifted focus from sustainable forest management to sustainable forest communities, demanding greater community participation, knowledge

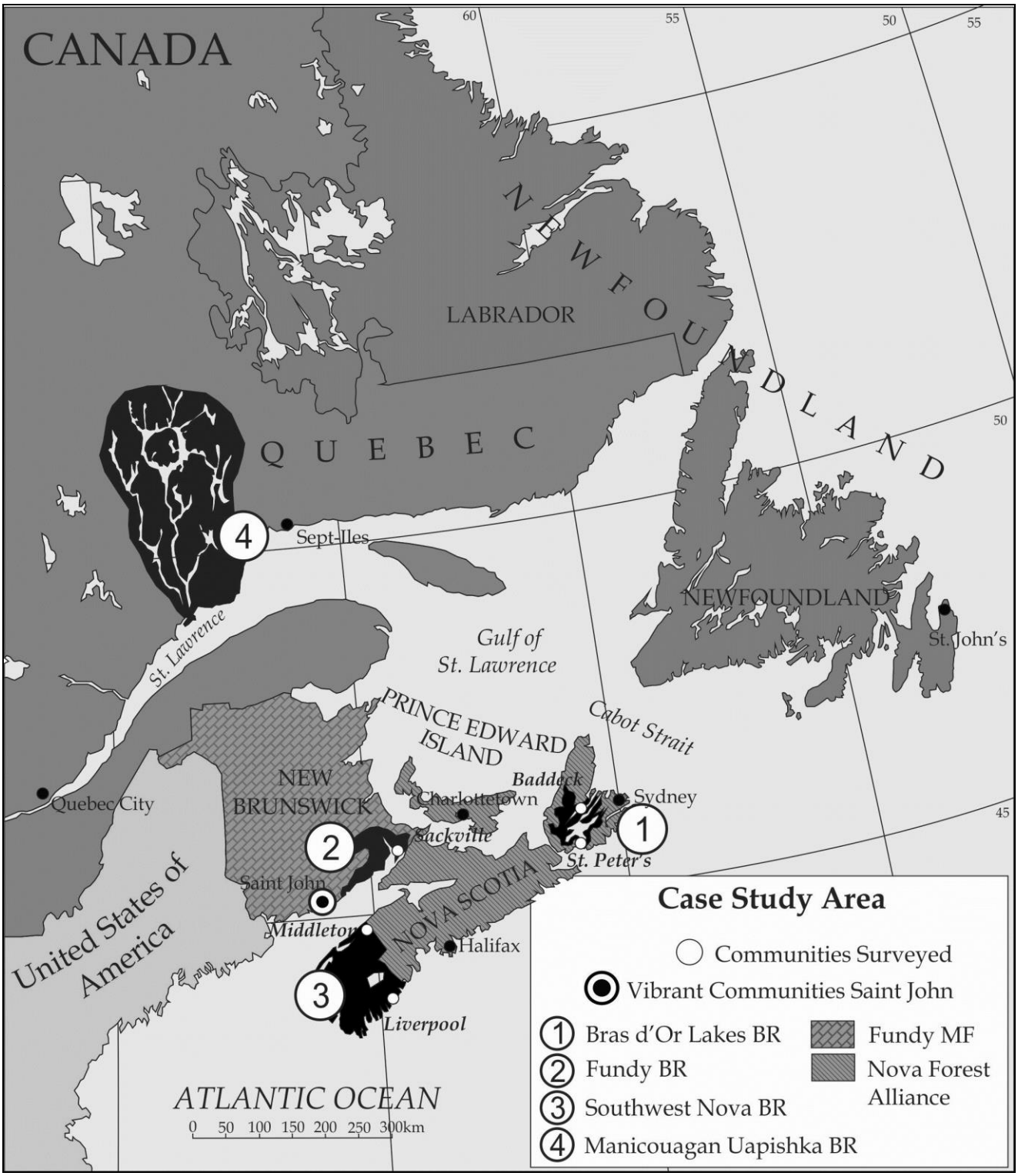


Figure 1.1: *Map of Study Area*

This map shows where data collection took place in Atlantic Canada. The small white circles represent the communities where the sidewalk interception surveys took place. The numbered circles (1-4) represent each of the biosphere reserves studied. Their geographic reach is represented in black. The model forests studied are represented by texture. Finally, Vibrant Communities Saint John is also noted.

Table 1.1: *Characteristics of each organization (as they describe themselves)*

Organization	Est.	Description
Bras D'Or Lakes Biosphere Reserve (BLBRA) blbra.ca	2011	Located in the centre of Cape Breton Island, NS, BLBRA is a 3566 km^2 region of forest, coastline, freshwater, and marine ecosystems. Because of the mix of both fresh and ocean water, species representative of over 30° latitude exist. Development in the area is based largely on resource extraction, including forestry, mining, agriculture, shellfish aquaculture and tourism. Many organizations in this region collaborate to promote environmental conservation and sustainability. The region is made up of Mi'kmaq, Scottish, Acadian, and other European populations.
Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve (SNBR) swnovabiosphere.ca	2000	Comprised of the 5 counties of Annapolis, Digby, Yarmouth, Shelburne and Queens on the southwestern tip of Nova Scotia, SNBR is a 15,464 km^2 region that encompasses many terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, including the Acadian Forest, rolling plains, and coastline. The core of the biosphere reserve is the largest protected wilderness area in the Maritimes - Kejimkujik National Park and Tobeatic Wilderness Area. The rich culture of the region includes Mi'kmaq, Acadian, English, and Scottish. The area includes the founding settlements French and British colonies, as well as the Black Loyalists along the southwest shore region in Shelburne county.
Fundy Biosphere Reserve (FBR) www.fundy-biosphere.ca	2007	FBR occupies 4423 km^2, extending from St. Martins to Sackville along the upper Bay of Fundy coast, and then inland to the city of Moncton. With Fundy National Park at its core, and the Bay of Fundy adjacent, it is one of the most ecologically unique landscapes in North America. The area's maritime climate, diverse topography (including cliffs and marches), and the tidal changes of Bay of Fundy characterize the region. The natural landscape has influenced the area's inhabitants, including the Mi'kmaq, and the Europeans settlers that began to arrive over 400 years ago.
Fundy Model Forest (FMF) www.fundymodelforest.net	1992	Based out of Sussex, the FMF primarily works in southeastern New Brunswick on a land base of approximately 4,200 km^2. The landscape is a mix of Acadian forests and farms, with a coastal area along the Bay of Fundy. They have worked with local stakeholders on outdoor education, habitat stewardship, and non-traditional forest products (including non-timber and value-added products).
Nova Forest Alliance (NFA) www.novaforestalliance.com	1998	Based in Stewiacke, the NFA began in 1998 and then officially became one of Canada's MFs in 2002. The Prince Edward Island Model Forest Network Partnership was launched as an adjunct to the Nova Forest Alliance, carrying the model further in the Acadian forest region. The Nova Forest Alliance strives to develop sustainable forest management through used a collaborative partnership model. They work to build partnerships, create new knowledge, implement practices for sustainable forest management, and communicate their successes. They work in various communities throughout Nova Scotia and PEI.
Vibrant Communities Saint John (VC Saint John) www.vibrantsj.ca	2004	VC Saint John began as a partnership between the Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative, the Human Development Council, the Urban Core Support Network and the City of Saint John to serve as a steward for the Greater Saint John Poverty Reduction Strategy. They focus on five priority neighbourhoods in Saint John with the highest rates of poverty through addressing four elements - neighbourhood revitalization, single parents, children and youth, and workforce participation. Their primary goals are reducing poverty in Saint John from 28% to the national average of 15% by 2015 and reducing the child poverty rate from 28% to below 10% by 2020.
Manicouagan Uapishka Biosphere Reserve (MUBR) rmbmu.com	2007	MUBR covers a total area of 54,800 km^2, from the regional county municipality of Manicouagan in the south, to the commercial forest lands to the north, and the boundaries of the Manicouagan and Outardes Rivers watersheds to the east and west. MUBR has a population of approximately 34,000 inhabitants, most of which live in the city of Baie Comeau or in one of the seven villages in the area. The economy of the area relies heavily on natural resources: the fishing industry, forestry, mining, hydroelectric power generation, and aluminum are the primary industries. The MUBR is marked by numerous geographical and ecological features such as the eye of Quebec - the fourth largest meteorite crater in the world, the Groulx-Uapishka Mountains, and the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Source: Descriptions are based on the information presented on each organizations' website.

sharing, skill-building and community-relevant outcomes. Every MF operates as a non-profit organization and, except for a small number of administrative staff, those who participate in the MF as board members donate their time and expertise. The Canadian Model Forest Network currently shows 15 MFs in Canada, although as of the submission date of this thesis, only about one-half of those are truly operational (M. Johnston, personal communication, 2015). Both BRs and MFs operate using a stakeholder model and a multi-level governance structure, with strategic directives set from above and local interpretation and implementation of those directives.

1.3.3 Vibrant Communities

Vibrant Communities (VCs) is a cross-Canada educational action initiative to develop local solutions to alleviate poverty in urban areas. The initiative was established through the partnership of three national level organizations: the Caledon Institute for Social Policy, the McConnell Foundation, and Tamarack: An Institute for Community Engagement, and originally involved 14 communities. VCs respond to the fundamental realization that complex social issues, including poverty, homelessness, and drug abuse, are inherently connected and can only be addressed through wide-ranging, multi-sectoral collaborative approaches. Officially launched in 2002, the mandate of VCs is to "create and grow a movement of diverse leaders and communities from across Canada who are committed to exploring, challenging and testing ways to unleash the potential of communities to substantially reduce poverty and ensure a good quality of life for all citizens" (Leviten-Reid, 2007, p. 3). VCs focus on building a sustainable social system. Therefore, they have drawn on concepts presented in sustainability and resilience literature, focusing on the well-being perspectives and social aspects of both (Gardner & Director, 2011; Torjman & Leviten-Reid, 2003). They employ place-based governance strategies that adaptively respond to the local contexts within which they operate.

In addition to the case study work conducted within these organizations, sidewalk interception surveys were conducted in communities to assess the public knowledge of the BRs and MFs, identify community values and priorities, and determine community assets that may complement the work of the BRs and MFs studied. These communities were selected because of their size (large enough to have an area with grocery stores and other amenities, offering foot traffic), location relative to one another (far enough apart to offer a sampling of communities of the region), and proximity to a BR and/or MF (within the area served by a BR and/or MF).

These communities show regional trends of out-migration, a high unemployment rates, and average incomes significantly lower than the national average (Table 1.2). The research approach that I used extends beyond case study analysis to examine how different governance models within a region, created at different times with different operational objectives, can co-exist, complement, and learn from one another and the community to build regional capacity for sustainability.

1.4 Rationale for Research

Research on just sustainability in Canada is only now emerging (Agyeman *et al.*, 2009; Draper & Mitchell, 2001; Haluza-DeLay, 2007). To date, Canadian research informing just sustainability has focused on case studies in specific geographic areas, including major urban centers and Aboriginal communities (see Haluza-DeLay, 2007). Through the multi-case design of this study, this research responds to the call for more comprehensive investigations into the connections between sustainability and social justice in Canada, both to advance theoretical understanding of just sustainability and to operationalize it on the ground (Haluza-DeLay, 2007). Further, the conceptual integration of imperatives for just sustainability with community development, social entrepreneurship and place-based governance for sustainability offers opportunities for this research to be shared with and employed by practitioners working to advance sustainability concepts.

This work responds to the identified need for interdisciplinary approaches to identify and integrate relevant knowledge and innovations across 'disciplinary frontiers' to resolve the practical challenges of sustainability governance (Meadowcroft *et al.*, 2005). This research examines how sustainability organizations operate internally and suggests how their governance strategies may be improved to better advance sustainability. This research also answers the call made by Francis (2004) to conduct interdisciplinary research in sustainability organizations, as the organizations offer opportunities for learning that can be more broadly applied. Although there is value in scholarly critiques, the larger opportunity for contributions lies in how sustainability organizations might learn, adapt and respond to innovations to better address their missions and advance governance for sustainability.

Table 1.2: *Statistics Canada (2011) Demographic Information for Communities Surveyed*

	Sackville	Baddeck (Victoria Subd. B)	St. Peter's (Richmond Subd. A) *	Middleton	Liverpool (Queens Regional Municipality)	Canada
Population	5558	769	3,953	1,749	2,653	33,476,688
Male	2,645	1965*	1845	755	5250*	16,163,115
Female	2,745	1815*	2015	915	5490*	16,689,210
Population Change (%)	2.7	-11.9	-2.9	-4.4	-3.8	5.9
Median Age	44.6	52	50.6	50.7	48.9	40.6
Unemployment Rate (%)	13.1	23.5*	12.0	10.1	11.1*	7.8
Average Individual Income ($)	34,985	31,233*	33,384	32,424	29,706*	40,650
Average Family Income ($)	66,058	72,746*	74,219	68,714	63,948*	94,125
Average Household Income ($)	65,885	60,411*	63,242	52,221	54,578*	79,102

The information offered above is found in the 2011 Census (National Household Survey). Because of the Census subdivisions, St. Peter's is represented by the Richmond Subdivision A, NS; Baddeck by the Victoria Subd. B Census division; and Liverpool by the Queens regional Municipality (each highlighted by an asterisk). Population change refers to the percentage change in population from the last Census (2006) to 2011 in each community. This table shows that there has been notable out-migration in these communities from 2006 to 2011, that the unemployment rate is much higher in the communities surveyed than the Canadian average, and that average incomes in these communities are significantly less than the Canadian average. The median age is also much higher in the communities surveyed than the Canadian average.

1.5 Research Methods Overview

Linking the fields of governance and just sustainability is most effectively supported by a grounded or critical perspective and approach to analysis. I used both for this study. The research conducted for this study was both multi-strategy and multi-case (Bryman & Teevan, 2005; Yin, 2014). Through using a multiple-case study, I compared different place-based organizations (each served as a case) by collecting the same information for each case (Yin, 2014). Most of the cases were located within a single broad region, allowing me to focus attention on shared attributes and challenges. Where variation in outcomes occurred with a different type of sustainability organization in that region, I was able to attribute that variation to the organizational culture and strategic approach rather than the contextual conditions of the region. One organization outside of the region was also studied. As a biosphere reserve in a rural and remote region, it faced similar challenges and was governed under the same international program as the other biosphere reserve organizations. Yet, it addressed its challenges in a novel

way. Hence, this variation allowed me to demonstrate that organizations sharing the same overall programmatic goals could achieve different results by making a deliberate change in their governance structure. Hence, the multi-site, multiple case study approach provided greater confidence in the results and offered more insights for innovation than a single case or a single site might accomplish. Data were collected using multiple methods in order to meet the objectives offered above, including three sets of interviews, document analysis, and sidewalk interception surveys.

Table 1.3: *Research methods used to address each research objective*

Research Objectives		
Examine governance strategies used against procedural justice	**Establish best practices for community understanding, empowerment and outcomes**	**Assess the feasibility of social entrepreneurship in sustainability organizations**
Interviews (Rounds 1, 2)	Interviews (Rounds 1, 2)	Interviews (Rounds 1, 2, 3)
Document Analysis	Document Analysis	Document Analysis
	Sidewalk Interception Surveys	

Interviews. Three rounds of in-person interviews were conducted with various individuals involved in the BRs, MFs, and the VC studied from 2011 to 2014 (Round 1 – 38 interviews, May-June 2011; Round 2 – 7 interviews, Sept.-Oct. 2012; Round 3 – 3 interviews, January 2014). Interview participants included the board members, staff and partners of these organizations. Interview protocols were approved by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board. In total, 48 interviews were completed. All interviews were semi-structured, and were, on average, about 90 minutes long. Potential interviewees were identified through their affiliation with each of the organizations, many of whom were solicited though snowball sampling. The data were transcribed and uploaded into *NVivo 10* analysis software and coded iteratively to inductively determine themes out of noticeable patterns, trends, agreements, et cetera. These themes, patterns and trends were then used to develop explanations and draw conclusions. See Appendix A for interview questions.

Document Analysis. Documents were collected about each of the organizations examined and uploaded into *NVivo 10* for qualitative analysis. These included annual reports, strategic

planning documents, newsletters, and public policy documents. These documents were collected and analyzed to further validate interview results and offer complementary information.

Sidewalk interception Surveys. Sidewalk interception surveys took place in five communities located within the regions designated as BRs and/or MFs in September, 2012. Sidewalk interception surveys were designed to validate community perceptions of sustainability challenges. The surveys were conducted in-person with the help of research assistants contracted from local universities (for a detailed description of the method, see Methods section in Chapter 3). The sidewalk interception survey protocol was approved by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board. The data were transcribed and analyzed using *NVivo10.* See Appendix B for the questionnaire.

1.6 Ensuring Quality and Validity of Research.

To ensure data quality, several measures were taken. I employed a mixed-method approach, which offered a considerable degree of reflective consideration. I employed this strategy to both enrich my data and improve confidence in my research findings. Steps were taken to build rapport and trust with by interview participants to help ensure authentic responses. The semi-structured interview questions were primarily drawn from the literature and were developed to obtain specific information from a specific group of people. I conducted the number of interviews necessary to reach saturation, as the data needed to conduct this research were from those with firsthand contextual knowledge about what was happening in specific organizations. Sidewalk interception surveys were conducted in-person, allowing interviewers to clarify questions, if required. The number of sidewalk interception surveys collected supports the reliability of the results.

The participation of human subjects was integral for the success of this research. Participants offered stakeholder views of the identified governance models and offered innovative ideas for advancing just sustainability in governance strategies. Without soliciting human participation for this research, achieving the desired results, as well as the desired social impacts, would not be possible. All research methods correspond with guidelines set by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. The information that I collected through the interviews and sidewalk interception surveys has remained confidential according to the University of Saskatchewan's ethics policy.

1.7 Thesis Organization

This thesis is presented as a 'dissertation by manuscript', following the parameters set by the College of Graduate Studies and Research. This thesis consists of five chapters, including a general introduction (Chapter 1) and a general conclusion (Chapter 5), which bookend three publishable manuscripts (Chapters 2, 3, and 4). As of the thesis acceptance date, each manuscript has been submitted for publication. The following are the proper citations for the manuscripts, including co-authorship with my supervisor, Dr. Maureen Reed. For each paper, I led the conceptualization, conducted data collection and analysis, and took the leadership role in writing.

George, C. and Reed, M.G. (submitted, 2015) *Revealing inadvertent elitism in stakeholder models of environmental governance: Assessing procedural justice in sustainability organizations.* Manuscript submitted for publication in Journal of Environmental Planning and Management.

George, C. and Reed, M.G. (submitted, 2015). *Operationalizing just sustainability: Towards a model for place-based governance.* Manuscript submitted for publication in Local Environment.

George, C. and Reed, M.G. (submitted, 2015). *Building institutional capacity for environmental governance through social entrepreneurship: Lessons from Canadian Biosphere Reserves.* Manuscript submitted for publication in Ecology and Society.

Chapter 2, entitled, "Revealing inadvertent elitism in stakeholder models of environmental governance: Assessing procedural justice in sustainability organizations" examines the procedural elements of the consensus-based stakeholder model in the BRs and MFs studied. Drawing on strategic documents and semi-structured interviews, the governance structures of processes are evaluated against a framework for procedural justice, identifying challenges and competencies associated with recognition, participation and building capabilities.

Chapter 3 is entitled "Operationalizing just sustainability: Towards a model for place-based governance". This chapter builds on the procedural elements discussed in the first manuscript. BRs and MFs are strong advocates for community engagement. In practice, however, these organizations have had variable success in effectively engaging community residents and addressing their needs and interests. In this chapter, a framework for place-based

governance for sustainability is used to compare strategies used in BRs and MFs with the operations of VCs, an anti-poverty organization that operates locally in Saint John, New Brunswick. This chapter draws attention to three imperatives: comprehensive understanding, community empowerment, and community-based outcomes, and five procedural drivers: local leadership, strong networks, diverse community engagement, learning together, and information sharing. Results are used to provide greater clarity on processes that address the imperatives and mobilize the drivers of effective place-based governance for sustainability.

The third manuscript, Chapter 4, called "Building institutional capacity for environmental governance through social entrepreneurship: Lessons from Canadian Biosphere Reserves" considers the value that social entrepreneurship could bring to BRs operating using a multi-stakeholder arrangement by examining whether it can help them address governance-related challenges of collaboration and institutional capacity. Analysis of organizational documents and participant interviews in three BRs in Atlantic Canada reveals that, over time, these organizations have struggled to maintain their mission objectives, retain productivity, and respond to economic stress. By examining social entrepreneurship theory and its practice in Manicouagan Uapishka Biosphere Reserve in northern Quebec, we determined lessons associated with the potential transfer of its application to other BRs and sustainability organizations more broadly. We then considered the conditions under which broader use of social entrepreneurship may assist sustainability organizations to become more effective. This chapter contributes to understanding and improving institutional capacity and collaboration through social entrepreneurship.

The concluding chapter revisits the central lessons learned through each manuscript and considers the broader meaning and application of the work. The thesis ends with a discussion of the broader use of and future directions for research.

GUIDEPOST

The next chapter explores the governance structures and procedures in the BRs and MFs that serve as the central cases for this study. Each of these organizations operate through the use of the consensus-based stakeholder model. This model is evaluated against a framework for procedural justice, both theoretically and in practice. A literature review reveals well-documented theoretical tensions between the stakeholder model and imperatives for procedural justice, identifying issues that may preclude appropriate levels of recognition, participation and capability. Analysis of BRs and MFs exposes that, despite organizational efforts to promote inclusion and participation, these organizations have fallen victim to traps laid by the stakeholder model, exhibiting elements of elitism and professionalism seen elsewhere in environmental governance and management.

CHAPTER 2: Revealing inadvertent elitism in stakeholder models of environmental governance: Assessing procedural justice in sustainability organizations

2.1 Abstract

Consensus-based multi-stakeholder forms of environmental governance involving government, private and civil society actors, have become popular for advancing sustainability, but have been criticized for failing to achieve procedural justice objectives including recognition, participation and strengthening capabilities. Yet, how such models have functioned *within* non-governmental organizations dedicated to advancing sustainability has been underexplored. This paper assesses the procedural elements of consensus-based multi-stakeholder models used within Canadian biosphere reserves and model forests, two organizations working to address environment and sustainability issues. We draw on strategic documents and semi-structured interviews in five organizations in Canada to analyze their governance structures and processes against a framework for procedural justice. We find the organizational structure reproduces elitism and professionalism associated with stakeholder models more generally and reproduces challenges associated with recognition, participation and building capabilities found in other stakeholder approaches. Meeting broader sustainability challenges requires organizations to address procedural justice issues in addition to their traditional environmental concerns.

2.2 Introduction

Since the 1970s, citizens in Western economies have become more directly involved in environmental governance through multi-stakeholder and consensus-based approaches to decision-making. Stakeholder models can be described as forums in which "decisions are reached through free and open deliberation of representative and equal stakeholders" (Wills-Toker, 2004, p. 176). Researchers have argued that such models help to address the complexity of environmental issues and promote fair and accountable decisions (e.g., Reed, 2008; Scholsberg, 2007). These concerns suggest sustainability is not just about balancing environmental and economic concerns; achieving procedural justice is an important element of achieving sustainability. Political ecologists, environmental justice scholars and sustainability scientists have argued that procedural justice might be achieved when processes offer recognition to multiple perspectives (e.g., Brunner *et al.*, 2005; Robbins, 2012; Schlosberg, 2007), allow

diverse actors to engage in meaningful participation (Reed, 2008; Schlosberg, 2007), and build or enhance capabilities of participating groups (Sen, 1999).

Despite such ideals, organizations face four key challenges that limit progress towards procedural justice. First is the trend toward greater cultural pluralism in many countries. In Canada, the increasing diversity of the population reveals differences in culture, beliefs, and values. As a result, organizations have moved to incorporate a diversity of public perspectives into decision-making. Yet how to best reach out to diverse publics remains a challenge and, consequently, many participatory models continue to recognize 'the usual suspects' (Parkins, 2006). Second are issues of asymmetries in social power and entrenched social inequalities that favour elite interests, also known as elite pluralism (Wrennel, 2013). Third, as a response to efforts to secure or maintain funds through government or philanthropic sources or to participate effectively in governance processes, many environmental and civil society groups have become increasingly professionalized (Parkins & Sinclair, 2014; Skocpol, 2004). This trend towards increasing professionalization has long been observed in environmental organizations (Seager, 1994), in community forestry organizations in Canada (Egunyu, 2015), and in civil sector groups more broadly (Kasperson, 2006; Skocpol, 2004). Forth, because many sustainability organizations have grown out of the environmental movement, they tend to emphasize environmental priorities and retain many of the organizational strategies that were pioneered when the focus was on environmental conservation (Boström, 2012). However, the move to sustainability requires a conceptual shift from the 'non-egalitarian conception' (Jacobs, 1999) of environmental protection that has been operationalized through environmental managerialism to a more holistic definition of sustainability that explicitly addresses social and environmental justice considerations within its governance strategy (Agyeman & Evans, 2004; Dillard *et al*., 2009; Schlosberg, 2007). A focus on environment and social justice demands that organizations pursuing sustainability must broaden their conceptual reach to be more inclusive of social and economic concerns, as well as how the public is engaged in their own efforts to advance social sustainability.

To date, research about multi-stakeholder models has focused on citizen boards or committees that participate with government and/or the private sector to address a specific sustainability or environmental concern. Such committees have been used to provide citizen input related to specific sectors such as forestry (Parkins, 2006), watershed management (Leach

et al., 2002), and management of protected areas (Tazim & Eyre, 2003). Assessments of these approaches have revealed that they, sometimes inadvertently, have supported traditional, narrow and elite power structures and interests, rather than new perspectives and a broad set of benefits (e.g., Klenk *et al.*, 2013; Parkins & Sinclair, 2014; Reed & Mcilveen, 2006). Despite these limitations, multi-stakeholder models of governance have also been adopted *within* environmental and sustainability organizations. In these cases, organizations with a mandate to advance sustainability through consensus-based decision-making seek stakeholders from a diversity of interests to help advance their mission. To date, research has focused on the effectiveness of sector-specific advisory committees; hence, we know little about how sustainability organizations operate internally and whether their internal governance structures replicate the limitations of the broader, government or industry-led advisory citizen boards and committees.

The purpose of this paper is to assess multi-stakeholder models of representation *within* organizations that have a mission to advance sustainability using a framework of procedural justice. BRs and MFs are two examples of such non-government organizations. A focus on these organizations will reveal the extent to which recognition, participation and capabilities are fostered within sustainability organizations. We provide a framework for assessing procedural justice, offering guidelines for interpreting recognition, participation and capability. We explore the use of the stakeholder model within five BRs and MFs in the Maritime Provinces of Canada. In our analysis, we pay attention to how the structure, history, and stakeholders of these organizations influenced their procedures, particularly how they have come to embody professional and elite structures and processes. We then consider the implications for embracing cultural pluralism, achieving organizational outcomes, and building community capabilities within such organizations more broadly.

2.3 A Framework for Assessing Procedural Justice

Those focused on procedural justice (e.g., Schlosberg, 2007) argue that three elements are required to provide an equitable distribution of social and economic benefits when seeking to promote sustainability or environmental justice: recognition of multiple perspectives, effective citizen participation, and building capacity. Each is addressed in turn (Table 2.1).

Recognition offers some individuals or social groups a formal acknowledgement of the right to participate in decision-making processes by offering them a seat at the decision-making table. Recognized stakeholders are typically selected based on their comparative power, influence, and legitimacy (Mitchell *et al.*, 1997). In environmental literature, stakeholders are identified as those who may be directly affected by a decision or can pose a credible threat (e.g., Mitchell, 2002). However, when examined through the lens of social justice, the process of being recognized can be conceived as an issue of social status (Fraser, 2001).

Fraser (2001) argues that through misrecognition, certain groups are not viewed as peers and hence, they are not invited. According to Fraser, to avoid such an outcome, groups can be recognized by exercising three strategies: First, decision-making forums must be accessible by ensuring there are ways for citizens, non-government organizations, many levels of government, the private sector and those with relevant knowledge to come to the decision-making table during different stages of the process. Second, special attention should be paid to those groups traditionally marginalized from decision-making to ensure that they have access. Broadening access may require that the formats, locations and procedures be reconsidered to better align with the needs and interests of those at the decision-making table (Walker *et al.* 2006). Third, representative stakeholder arrangements require that communication strategies be developed to ensure that information is being shared with the broader public. This helps to ensure organizational transparency and that the organization is accountable to the community that it intends to serve (Newsom & Chalk 2004). Targeting specific groups will help ensure that relevant information gets to them and that meetings and opportunities for input and feedback are well advertised and financially and logistically accessible.

Participation refers to opportunities to provide meaningful input towards decisions, meaning that the contributions are respected, valued, and considered as the group comes to decisions (Diduck *et al.* 2015; Walker *et al.* 2006). Young (1990) declares that democratic and participatory procedures are conditions for procedural justice. Meaningful participation requires information sharing through many multi-directional approaches that provide equitable knowledge sharing opportunities and well-structured dialogue among participants. Although recognized, some groups may choose to not participate because of conflicting agendas, pre-existing conflicts, distrust or lack of interest. Therefore, it is important that steps are taken to

Table 2.1: *Governance characteristics that promote procedural justice*

Elements of Procedural Justice	***Selected Research***
Recognition	
– Broadly accessible to a diversity of stakeholders and rights holders selected based on their knowledge, power, influence, and legitimacy.	Reed & Mcilveen, 2006
– Access is granted during different stages of the decision-making process.	Boström, 2012; Diduck *et al.*, 2015
– Special consideration and possibly accommodation made for affected groups, especially those marginalized in the past.	Fraser, 2001; Walker *et al.*, 2006
– Well-designed communication structures that promote information sharing among participants and the broader public to promote transparency and accountability.	Boström, 2012; Newsom & Chalk, 2004
Participation	
– Information sharing through multiple approaches to offer opportunities for all participants to listen and be heard	Diduck *et al.*, 2015
– Well-structured dialogue involving all participants. May be assisted through an outside facilitator.	McDougall *et al.*, 2013; Walker *et al.*, 2006
– Deliberative process that builds trust and respect. Each perspective should be heard, respected, and considered by all participants.	Walker *et al.*, 2006
– Participate in determining how the issues are framed.	Boström, 2012
Capabilities	
– Necessary knowledge, skills and abilities should be built to ensure that participants are able to meet current demands and address future challenges (empowerment).	Kasperson, 2006; McDougall *et al*., 2013
– Knowledge and awareness should be strengthened through relationship building and collaborative learning.	McDougall *et al.*, 2013
– Research and information development supported by the organization should be accessible and useful to the broader community.	Diduck *et al*., 2015; Newsom & Chalk, 2004; Olsson *et al*., 2004
– Policy, planning, and standard setting should be monitored to ensure desired results.	Olsson *et al*., 2004

Elements of procedural justice described in the research. Characteristics of each element are offered with citations from those describing these characteristics in the literature.

build trust and treat others' input with respect (McDougall *et al.*, 2013). Finally, it is important that participants play a role in scoping the issues addressed (Boström, 2012).

Capability refers to the individual or community assets that enable goals to be effectively realized and achieved (Sen, 1999). These assets are typically thought of as material resources; however, they also include knowledge systems, ability to strategize and plan, specific skillsets and experience, leadership and managerial expertise, and time. The capabilities function of procedural justice requires that convener organizations build the capabilities of those involved to ensure that they are capable of accomplishing what is required, so that they are better equipped to address future challenges (Kasperson, 2006; McDougall *et al.*, 2013). There is a responsibility

for governing organizations to build community and individual capacity by strengthening relationships among stakeholders and promoting collaborative learning (Diduck *et al.*, 2015; McDougall *et al.*, 2013). Research and information developed through the organization should be useful to, and shared with, the broader community. This requires that organizations are structured to ensure that they are "owned" by the community and other stakeholders (Diduck *et al*., 2015) and that the programs and policies that come out of the decision-making process provide the intended benefits (Olsson *et al*., 2004).

2.4 Study Area and Methods

Analysis of the stakeholder model is based on an examination of five BRs and MFs operating in the Maritimes of Canada. Both of these organizations are working to advance sustainability through more holistic understandings and interventions, rather than addressing discrete aspects (i.e., conservation). Because of this, they work to incorporate diverse perspectives into their governance strategy. These include Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve (NS), Bras D'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve (NS), Fundy Biosphere Reserve (NB), the Nova Forest Alliance (NS) and, through it, PEI Model Forest (PEI), and Fundy Model Forest (NB).

2.4.1 Biosphere Reserves

BRs are UNESCO-designated sites that operate at the landscape level to carry out three functions: conservation of biological and cultural diversity; sustainable development; and support for scientific research, learning, and public education (UNESCO, 1996). BR organizations encourage learning and action through deliberation, networking and experimentation (Edge & McAllister, 2009). They do not have regulatory authority, but aim to engage and empower communities by developing projects that involve citizens in a variety of conservation, research, development initiatives, and skills' training. BRs are loosely guided by strategic planning from UNESCO. In 2015, this included the Madrid Action Plan (2008).

Canadian BR organizations have been structured as multi-stakeholder forums designed to engage diverse perspectives such as municipal, provincial and federal governments; representatives of natural resource industries (forestry, fisheries, mining, agriculture, ecotourism) and environmental organizations; academic and/or government researchers and "members-at-large". Many BRs have seats available for First Nations representatives. Each BR has a different

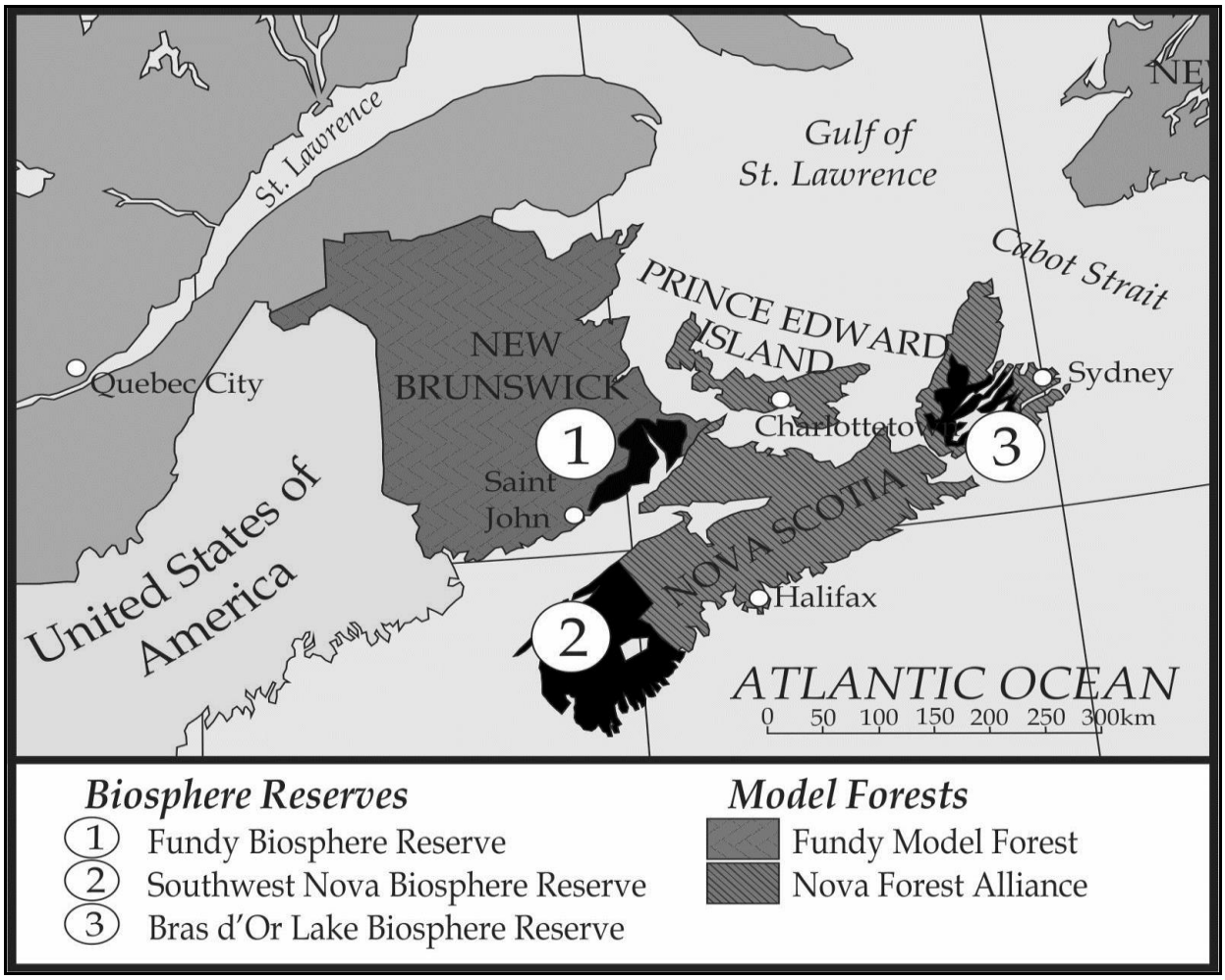


Figure 2.1: *Map of Biosphere Reserves and Model Forests in the Canadian Maritimes*
This map of Atlantic Canada shows the biosphere reserves and model forests in the Maritime Provinces. The biosphere reserves are numbered and their geographic areas are represented in black. The geographic area that each model forest spans is represented by texture.

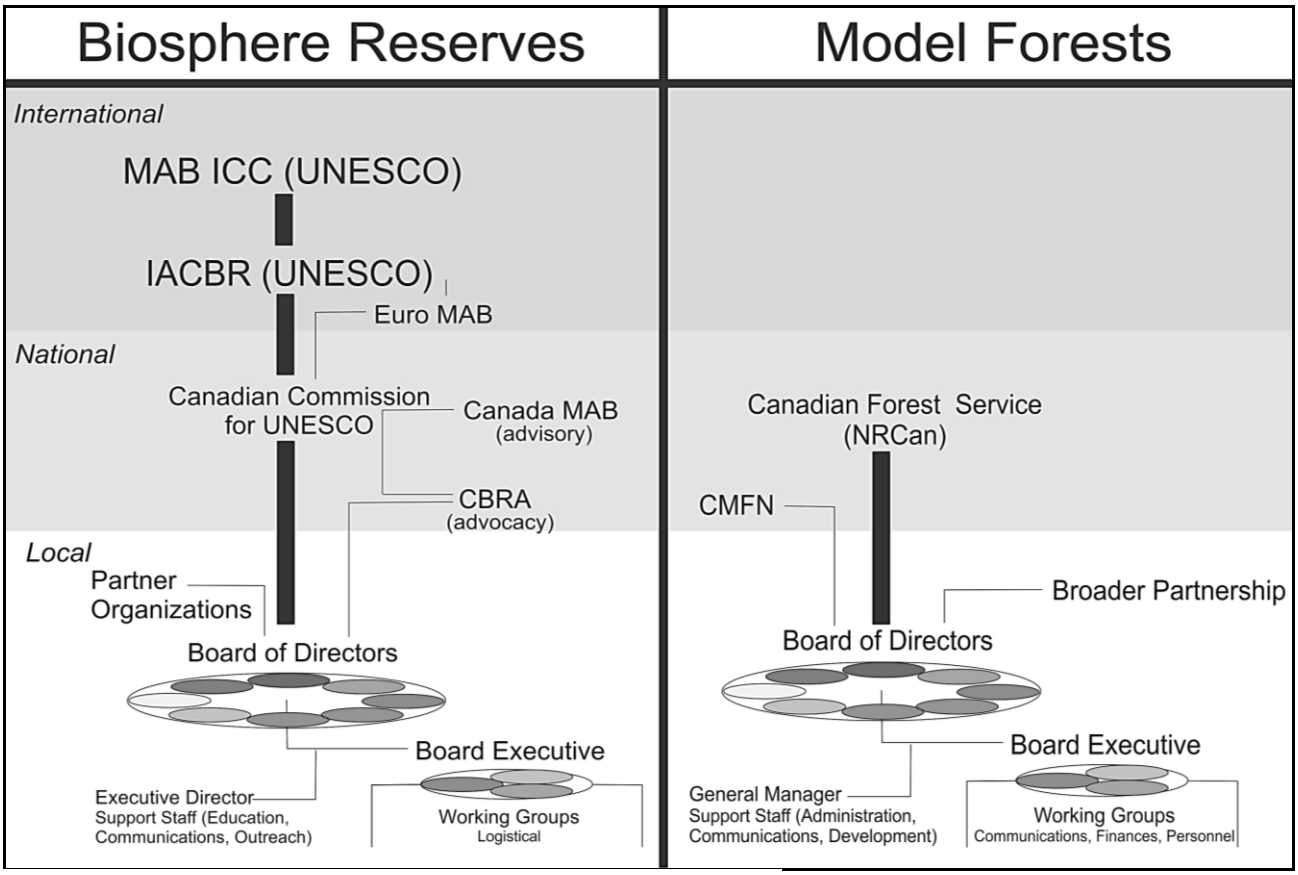
mechanism for identifying representatives. In many cases, board members are prescribed by the BR's terms of reference. Municipal and Aboriginal leaders from the region are examples. Some resource sector representatives may also be appointed because of the position they hold. In some cases, members are nominated from the general public. Typically, these people have been actively involved in establishing the BR. Academic or scientific members of the board (who have often conducted research in the region) have become involved in this way. Frequently, BR boards have a combination of appointed and elected members (Francis, 2004).

2.4.2 Model Forests

Like BRs, Canada's MFs operate at a landscape scale. When first initiated in 1992, MFs were designed to develop a deliberate connection between government and industry to share knowledge and mobilize research results to inform sustainable forest management practice. Over time, they also brought together 'unlikely' partners such as private industry and operators, rural communities, interest groups and organizations, First Nations, researchers, experts, and government agencies (Pollett, 2012; Sinclair & Smith, 1999). In 2007, the program funding MFs shifted focus from forest sustainability to community sustainability, demanding greater community participation, knowledge sharing, skill-building and partnerships. Every MF operates as a non-profit organization and, except for a small number of administrative staff, those who participate in the MF as board members donate their time and expertise.

2.4.3 Governance

Both BRs and MFs operate using a stakeholder model and a multi-level governance structure, with strategic directives set from above, and local interpretation and implementation of those directives. Figure 2.2 shows the multi-level structure of BRs and MFs. BRs are accountable to the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, as well as the International Advisory Committee on Biosphere Reserves through periodic reviews to ensure that each local organization is effectively meeting the objectives of the program. When funded by the Canadian Forest Service, MFs were limited by the funding requirements and mandates prescribed, as well as associated accountability. Both types of organizations have a national-level network that has a mandate to advocate for the organizations working at the local level. Because the conceptualization of BRs and MFs was developed international and national-level organizations, their governance structures at the local level account for higher-level requirements and, therefore, may be different than grassroots organizations. However, despite their apparent top-down governance structure, in practice, neither UNESCO nor the International Model Forest Network have "regulatory" powers with respect to the organizations. Hence, both BRs and MFs in this region were created from local initiative and opportunity and continue to be driven by local level actors. Additionally, their governance structure at the local level - a deliberative stakeholder model - is widely applied in grassroots organizations.



MAB ICC (UNESCO)= MAB Intergovernmental Coordinating Council
IACBR (UNESCO)= International Advisory Committee on Biosphere Reserves
CBRA=Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association
NRCan= Natural Resources Canada
CMFN=Canadian Model Forest Network

Figure 2.2: *Structure of Biosphere Reserves and Model Forests*
A representation of the multi-level governance structure of biosphere reserves and model forests in Canada, from the international to the local level (shown along the left side of the figure). These are generalized models showing a typical governance structure for each type of organization. Specific biosphere reserves and model forests may have modified this model slightly to meet their specific needs and operational goals.

2.4.4 Methods

We investigated similarities and differences among multiple cases, a strategy that offers opportunities for comparisons and knowledge sharing (Yin, 2014). Forty semi-structured key informant interviews were conducted from 2011 to 2012 with board members, staff and partners of the five organizations. Interview questions focused on the governance structure and procedure in each of the organizations, the benefits and challenges associated with each of the governance models, personal experiences, successes and challenges, and opportunities for improvement

within each organization. The interviews were transcribed and coded both inductively and deductively. Interview data were supported by content analysis of annual reports, strategic planning documents, newsletters, and other information made available by BR and MF practitioners. Content analysis of documents was performed using *NVivo 10* once the themes were better understood from the interviews. We used the documents to look for evidence to support themes identified through the interviews. Because of the small number of people involved in each organization, we opted to combine the cases when assessing the procedural justice concerns to protect the confidentiality and integrity of participants. Although the BRs and MFs demonstrated different levels of success, the challenges associated with the stakeholder model were verified by the interviewees of all organizations examined.

2.5 Assessing Procedural Justice in Sustainability Organizations[6]

2.5.1 Recognition

The multi-stakeholder structure of these organizations recognizes the diversity of interests based primarily on professional affiliation. This has meant that professionals have been targeted and many of the representatives are more senior members of their organizations. Generally, BRs and MFs identified stakeholders that roughly fall into one of six categories: managers (land owners, resource-based industry), decision-makers (governments), experts (academics and researchers), related organizations (other environmental non-government organizations), First Nations, and broader society (including non-affiliated community members). Similarly, MFs also justified stakeholder representation through affiliations with environmental aspects of sustainability. Despite the mandates of both organizations, stakeholder representation showed a continued bias towards environmental expertise, with limited participation from those involved in community and economic development. Information made available through the annual reports, websites and interviews revealed that proportional representation of stakeholder groups was biased towards government and academics. During interviews in 2011-2012, all of the organizations examined had an academic serving as chair of the organization.

[6] The people who volunteer their time and energy to be involved in these organizations should be commended and I am not attempting to underplay or discredit their efforts. Rather it is the stakeholder model and the structure of these organizations that I am challenging.

Government had the highest representation in Fundy Model Forest (FMF) and the Fundy Biosphere Reserve (FBR), whereas environment-focused non-government organizations had the highest representation in the Nova Forest Alliance (NFA) and Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve (SNBRA) (Table 2.2). In Bras d'Or Lakes Biosphere Reserve (BLBRA), the community composed the highest proportion because, as a new organization, they did not require members to list their formal affiliations. First Nations occupied one seat in each organization, except for FMF, where First Nation representatives occupied two seats. Academics held two seats in most organizations, except for FMF, where academics and researchers occupied six seats (see Table 2.2 for proportions). Well, we think it's not possible to say what a desirable distribution would be, we think it's notable that social service and economic development agencies are greatly underrepresented.

Table 2.2: *Proportional representation of stakeholder groups in BRs and MFs*

	SNBRA	FBR	BLBRA	NFA	FMF
Affiliation	%				
Government	18.5	31.2	17.6	15.7	33.3
Industry	18.5	12.5	5.9	10.5	11.1
Community	18.5	12.5	52.9	21.1	5.6
ENGOs	25.9	18.8	5.9	36.8	19.4
First Nations	7.4	6.2	5.9	5.2	5.6
Experts	11.1	12.5	11.8	10.5	25.0
Community Development Agencies	0.0	6.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total (numbers may not add to 100 due to rounding)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Annual reports, websites, and other supporting documents.

The percentage of board members representing each type of affiliation in each organization explored: Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve (SNBRA), Fundy Biosphere Reserve (FBR), Bras D'Or Lakes Biosphere Reserve (BLBRA), Nova Forest Alliance (NFA), and Fundy Model Forest (FMF).

Table 2.3: *Representation based on gender (averages from 2007-2012)*

	SNBRA	FBR	BLBRA	NFA	FMF
Gender	%				
Male	n.a.	71.5	64.7	93.8	71.9
Female	n.a.	28.5	35.3	6.2	28.1

Source: Annual reports, websites, and other supporting documents.

The percentage of board members who were male vs. female in each of the organizations explored from 2007-2012: Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve (SNBRA), Fundy Biosphere Reserve (FBR), Bras D'Or Lakes Biosphere Reserve (BLBRA), Nova Forest Alliance (NFA), and Fundy Model Forest (FMF). This information was not available for SNBRA.

Gender representation was also skewed (Table 2.3). For gender representation, although the ultimate goal is parity, in the absence of parity, critical mass is important. This is the point where behaviours tend to change when a group gains a certain level of representation. A critical mass of 30% appears to be accepted in the literature (Reed & Varghese, 2007). Annual reports, websites, and other supporting documents revealed that from 2007-2012, all organizations had higher male representation, the closest gender ratio being 35% female: 65% male (BLBRA). One organization had a ratio of 6% female: 94% male over those 5 years (NFA). Within the five organizations, only one had had a female chair over the past five years. In short, the organizations were dominated by seasoned, professional men. Although the number of women on the boards has increased from 2007 to present, the numbers remain low, especially in MFs.

Those who sit on the boards of BRs and MFs are not elected through democratic processes and, because these organizations do not possess formal authority over environmental management decisions, they are not required to be accountable to the broader public. However, these organizations are meant inform policies and management practices, as well as facilitate dialogue and work towards achieving sustainability (e.g., UNESCO, 2002; NRCAN, 2006). Interview respondents supported the multi-stakeholder structure of the board because of the diversity of values and perspectives brought to the table, though many participants felt that the size of some boards made it difficult to manage.

> *I think that the structure makes sense conceptually… I think the structure is one that allows for interesting conversations because you get a wider array of opinions because the design of the board.*

Those involved within the organizations expressed that, through the design of their stakeholder boards, they had effectively represented community members interested in participating in their initiatives.

> *We feel that our board is representative… in terms of gender, in terms of professional designations, territory, et cetera. I mean, there are all sorts of indicators and we feel that we have a good balance on that. That is an important aspect of a good functioning board. You don't only get your friends and you don't only get people who think the way that you think; you get the right people.*

The actions of some boards, however, belied this comment. Interviewees of some boards revealed that their boards were composed of many members who had been friends outside of the organization and new members were commonly solicited through the personal and professional networks of other board members.

One reoccurring theme was the overrepresentation of government. This is because, through the models, organizations were encouraged to include representatives from different areas, levels, and divisions of government.

> *Well if you look at the way that the Board is constructed… there are so many layers of bureaucracy, it's difficult to include certain expertise for the region… No, we're not really strategically reaching out to find good individuals with strong expertise who would add value to the board. Not at this point anyway. It's just too big of a challenge.*

Many also expressed that they would like to see a more diverse representation of culture and ethnicity.

> *We also have an Acadian presence in the region. But we have not identified any Acadian individuals who would be comfortable with coming and representing their culture. We also have many Black Nova Scotians who we have not been able to engage. There is also a large Francophone population in this part of the province, but we've never really found anyone who was interested in participating…*

The level of commitment of certain representatives was voiced as a challenge in every organization. Many of the organizations struggled to improve the attendance of government officials. This is likely because many government representatives are not there out of personal interest, but rather because they have been appointed to the board as part of their job. Although all organizations had a seat set aside on their board for First Nations, they were challenged to ensure consistent engagement from First Nation communities.

> *Although we've had some First Nation representation on our board, … [but] there is not a high level of predictability. But whether or not we have First Nation*

attendance at our meetings, we have a relationship with the First Nation community.

There were several reasons offered why this may be the case. As one interviewee explained:

> *First Nation communities are highly solicited… So they need to choose where they put their energy... This being said, we've never had any negative feedback from them… more and more, we are in a society where people are busy and we can't expect that everyone will be listening to our message and will be part of what we are. And that includes the First Nation community.*

A First Nations representative agreed, saying:

> *It's a commitment that we can't really keep up because it's a lot of time just to sit on the committees… We get a lot of requests from different places all the time for us to sit on different committees and give Mi'kmaq perspectives on forestry and just to have a Mi'kmaq participant on the committee. We really don't have the resources or the staff to do things like that.*

Interviewees expressed the importance of ensuring that organizations offered a significant benefit to recognized stakeholders; however, identifying benefits was considered a significant challenge. The organizations examined attempted to improve access by moving the location of each meeting to different areas of the BRs and MFs and changing the times of day that they met; however, no interviewees mentioned that by doing so they sought to address the needs of a specific interest or demographic group. Rather, they changed locations and times to provide greater fairness in access. None of the participants interviewed felt that, as representatives on a stakeholder board, they were responsible for communicating with the broader community. Although individuals were sought to represent recognized stakeholder groups, there was no associated responsibility for those representatives to communicate back to the group they supposedly represented.

2.5.2 Participation

Both BRs and MFs used a multi-stakeholder board to bring diverse actors together to have meaningful conversations about and take action on community issues related to environment and sustainability. Although all participants acknowledged that such discussions

had value, the governance structures of both organizations were seen as limiting the quality of participation within the organization. Interview responses produced five main challenges for participation: the time required to reach consensus and move things forward; the level of engagement required through the stakeholder model; the lack of idea generation and knowledge sharing occurring at the stakeholder board level; the quality of participation; and power imbalances among board members.

Because of the multi-stakeholder nature of the board, interviewees suggested that decisions took longer to make because of the number of people and diverse perspectives around the table. One participant said, "*If I send it to the board, it dies*," referring to the lack of ownership taken by the board to come to a consensus and move projects forward. Staff felt it challenging to ensure that board members remained active and engaged.

> *A lot of them [board members] just come to the meetings and that's it.*
>
> *Is everyone engaged? I would say no. Some are really willing to represent the organization, others will not.*

When meetings did occur, participation was described as very passive and not very meaningful. Much of what stakeholder boards were asked to participate in was routine maintenance. Some felt that their time and expertise was being wasted when attending meetings that did not call on their perspectives, or offer them new information.

> *There's a general tendency to nod and agree and go along with instead of to challenge or to participate and to be democratic or progressive about the comings and goings of the business of the organization.*

Some participants suggested that staff member(s) could facilitate greater engagement and/or reduce the commitment of stakeholder boards.

> *I always say that our best move and our worst move was to hire an executive director. Yes, we had someone to run the organization and do the day-to-day stuff, but we also lost this huge pool of volunteers. When the [organization] was born, we were this huge pool of volunteers... but now, because there is an executive director, they say "that is the executive director's responsibility."*

These organizations have been thinking about ways to promote engaged and active participation on their multi-stakeholder boards. Some were proposing more formalized commitments through annual membership dues.

> *We're proposing a membership structure… where they're actually having to pay membership dues on an annual basis. Nothing major, but to say it's a commitment, we're on board.*

Others were rethinking how they select board participants and how meetings are conducted with the goal of promoting active participation.

> *It's not just about filling seats: it's about filling seats with the right people, people who are willing to contribute and help and up to now we have been able to achieve that.*

Power dynamics playing out on the boards may have contributed to passivity among members. Although most interview participants did not voice concern with power imbalances, some issues were mentioned. Especially in organizations where the board meets infrequently, interviewees reported that the chair held the central position and board members followed along with the decisions made by the chair because board members had limited involvement. This situation was most prevalent where stakeholder meetings did not allow for the board members to participate in the discussions.

> *There is a bit of a dynamic that isn't always positive. … Our Chair is a worthy Chair. By worthy I mean that he is a very capable speaker, ambassador, and communicator. Having said that, he is also a [professional] and is quite used to being the only one in the room talking…. That's not meant to sound negative, except to say that it does create a dynamic where the Chair talks and the rest of the Board listens.*

During the interviews, academics and government officials were two types of stakeholders identified as holding considerable power. As the quote below suggests, academics in central positions were able to greatly influence the priorities of the organization because of the financial and other resources they had available and the potential capacity that they could bring to the organization.

> *There's a tendency, sometimes, if a university faculty holds a central position in an organization that somewhat relates to the agenda of their personal research that the person's research agenda starts to become a dominant agenda in the organization… And the academics do bring money to the table, but that money is pigeonholed…. you have to be careful that it doesn't start dominating the interests of the organization at the expense of other issues.*

Government officials were also identified as representatives holding considerable power. As one interview participant discussed, the presence of government officials contributed to a conflict of interest that worked against the ideals of the stakeholder model.

> *When there were some very large pieces of business to be conducted, the room was sometimes dead quiet… There was actually standing, stinking conflict of interest right there before us in many meetings. There were meetings and issues where it would never come up, but there is no question that it was there and it was imminent many times…For that reason, at times, no worthwhile debate occurred on things where worthwhile debate was needed.*

2.5.3 Capabilities

Interviewees revealed that the accountability structure of BRs and MFs focused on aligning local-level initiatives with national or international requirements, rather than local needs and capabilities. Additionally, the broad mandates and diverse perspectives present within these organizations further limited their ability to target and develop specific capabilities.

The overall vision and mission of both BRs and MFs were developed at higher levels. For MFs, the Canadian Forest Service laid out a new vision every five years that each model forest adopted in order to receive federal funding. Under the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere program, each BR was to meet same broad, high-level mandate. Although broad vision statements provided flexibility for local implementation, changing mandates affected capacity of the organizations (Bullock & Reed 2015). For example, federal funding of MFs meant that the organizations lost valuable relationships and capacity when they transitioned between each 5-year funding phase. This was most evident in 2007 when government sought to improve economic conditions for forest-based communities.

They [The federal government] basically said that they knew all they needed to know about sustainable forest management, and were moving on to something else. So the next phase was the forest communities program, which was focused on the rural resource-dependent communities….The partners that did forest based research, the ecologists, the people that worked on forest management strategy and developed tools for forestry, kind of stepped away, because our focus went completely towards rural resource dependent communities… the funding was structured in a way that we couldn't continue to do a lot of the things that we had done in the past.

After announcing the phase-out of federal funding in 2012, the FMF started to do some strategic planning.

What we found is that it's just sharpened our focus on the specific issues in New Brunswick. I think in a way it will make us more relevant to the province….So what we're more or less doing now is picking up the shards of things that were dropped in the past, and things that still need to be done… I think it's slowly increasing our relevance in a way.

We want to build the capacity and the expertise to actually do the projects, as opposed to just simply finding money.

UNESCO does not fund BRs, hence there was no direct accountability to UNESCO for capacity building. Interviewees from BRs, however, felt that the Canadian Biosphere Reserve Association (CBRA) should help build local capabilities. While CBRA has worked to build a national network of BRs, interviewees suggested that it could be doing more to support those working at the community level.

I think that CBRA should be responsible for information sharing and making sure that individual biosphere reserves are equipped with the general tools that they need for success. For example, we're doing our periodic review on Thursday. We were not sent any information about what was expected... We have no idea. We thought it was just a general meet and greet with a tour and discussions about what we have been doing this far…[But] this little chat that we were planning to have is actually pretty serious business.

Nonetheless, community-based initiatives have been carried out. All of the organizations had engaged communities. FBR, for example, established a Charter Membership Program that engages community businesses, organizations, and public institutions to improve their sustainability. Their Amazing Places program has served as a tool to educate and inspire the public about natural history. The Tree Guide produced by FMF was widely distributed to school children. Workshops and learning events have also been offered to community members to encourage them to learn about food security, forestry, and climate change. Despite these efforts, because the current governance structure requires them to be accountable to the higher levels of the organizations, rather than out to the communities, both BRs and MFs have rather limited ability to build capabilities locally.

The accountability structure of these organizations also limited the community 'ownership' of the organization, restricting public knowledge of the organization and discouraging community involvement and empowerment. Neither documents nor interviews provided any evidence that the organizations attempted to systematically evaluate community needs to see how their organization could serve the community more effectively. Nor had the organizations critically evaluated how their work served to the advantage or disadvantage to particular social groups, although some organizations have worked specially with First Nations to develop projects. A significant amount of the work by the organizations, however, had not been broadly disseminated so that public awareness remained low and relevance was not determined.

2.6 Discussion

The BRs and MFs involved in this study experienced several structural and procedural challenges associated with the stakeholder model that limited their ability to achieve procedural justice.

2.6.1 Determining who to include: embracing cultural pluralism

The BRs and MFs in this study had representation from a variety of sectors; yet, there are important gaps. Like other public interest organizations, BRs and MFs recruited participants who were professionals (members of government, academia, and industry) and usually part of the highly educated middle class (Skocpol, 2004). The position of Chair in these organizations, with

few exceptions, was held by an academic. Because of the low turnover in these organizations, only a few perspectives were recognized. First Nations consistently held one or, in the case of FMF, two seats. Other cultural groups, including Acadian populations, have yet to be formally recognized and given access to the stakeholder board. The gender disparity appeared on all boards, but especially on MF boards, replicating challenges in citizen advisory boards related to forestry (Reed & Varghese, 2007).

Researchers and practitioners working on environmental management have expressed the need for more direct public engagement, particularly from First Nation communities, to help legitimize processes of decision-making and improve the robustness of decision-making outcomes (Klenk *et al*., 2013; Reed & Mcilveen, 2006; Teitelbaum & Bullock, 2012). In the cases studied here, efforts were made to provide nominal participation by designating seats on the board. However, without specific efforts to understand and appreciate the challenges of participating and the knowledge that indigenous and other groups might bring, such arrangements may simply be token gestures (Klenk *et al*., 2013).

Across Canada, many BRs and MFs have made adjustments to the stakeholder model in order to ensure they are accessible to specific interest groups. In addition to the strategies described above, including hosting meetings at different sites and at different times of day, other Canadian BRs and MFs have modified their governance structure to establish co-chaired boards with First Nations (e.g., Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Reserve) and developed projects to address the needs of specific (marginalized) stakeholders (e.g., Prince Albert Model Forest). Developing governance models that are more inclusive and better address cultural pluralism does not necessarily mean continuing to add seats to multi-stakeholder arrangements; rather, they require finding ways to work together to broaden the public sphere through a range of strategies such as project partnerships and knowledge-sharing opportunities, among others. One of the risks of the stakeholder model is that organizations employ it as a rigid structure that cannot be adapted to suit local needs. The organizations examined in this study may be better served by adapting the model to fit the local context.

2.6.2 Negotiating levels of participation to achieve organizational outcomes

For the most part, participation in the BRs and MFs examined was limited to the staff, executive and board of directors. The staff were involved in the day-to-day operations and the

chair offered regular feedback. Board members typically met bi-monthly to quarterly and were not responsible for further participation between meetings unless they were involved in a specific project. Opportunities for broader community volunteerism in these organizations were limited to email notifications and facebook pages, with the exception of those who participated in workshops. These results confirm Skocpol's (2004) findings that many new public interest groups and organizations are run by a relatively small number of professional staff, leaving little opportunity for the broader public to participate.

Although many interviewees said that they felt comfortable voicing their perspectives, some participants felt that there were procedural power dynamics that got in the way of a deliberate and democratic process. Interviewees from both BRs and MFs voiced the issue of what Newman *et al.* (2004) refer to as the chairman's baby - the chairman's external interests are reflected in the happenings of the organization. As typical in many smaller non-government organizations, the chairman in these organizations played a pivotal role in the day-to-day operations of the organization, making 'everyday' decisions rather than going to the rest of the board. Sometimes this caused the chairman's other interests (e.g., research) to become a central focus, which generated a conflict of interest.

Because of the large time intervals and the lack of board member engagement between meetings, board meetings became forums for routine maintenance. Rather than utilizing the strengths of the multi-stakeholder board, board meetings became feedback mechanisms where the chair and staff talked and the others listened. Similarly, Newman *et al.* (2004) found that large time intervals, coupled with lack of board member engagement, are shown to promote board stagnation. To varying degrees, this was indeed the case in the BRs and MFs investigated here. Staff members suggested that when issues went to the board, it only slowed organizational outcomes because the need to reach agreement on initiatives meant more time spent on reflection and deliberation. If an issue was tabled because the board could not agree on a way forward, the length between board meetings meant that the issue would not be resolved for months.

Because of the need to reach consensus, participants were sometimes caught between their personal opinions on an issue and the pressure to agree with others to move toward organizational outcomes. Many of the organizations in this study achieved consensus largely because some board members played a more passive role, while the more central members of the

organization (chair and staff) informed the board of what the organization is doing. Challenges of the consensus model have been discussed by others (e.g., Parkins & Mitchell, 2005), who have suggested that if consensus is the primary goal, governance models should be designed to encourage discussion, debate, diversity and fairness. Such a design brings other challenges. Embracing cultural pluralism through diverse participation will likely only slow an organization's ability to achieve consensus. Sustainability organizations should consider how best to achieve consensus, as they should also strive to admit more diverse perspectives and public deliberation (even from the existing stakeholders around the table). Hence, governance strategies should be structured to optimize both processes and outcomes, rather than put them in direct competition with one another.

2.6.3 Navigating the balance between professionalization and building community capabilities

In BRs, each association is accountable to UNESCO through their periodic reviews and accountable to government and other actors through organizational and project funding. Until their core funding ended in 2013, MFs were accountable to the federal government. Upwards accountability to higher program levels and funders created significant administrative burdens in the BRs and MFs that operated with few or no staff. Their limited resources and capacity were spent responding to the demands and expectations directed from higher levels rather than reaching out to their local constituents. Other researchers have found that this burden reduces the capacity of organizations to deliver outcomes (e.g., Lockwood *et al.,* 2009) and limits accountability out to the broader community, thereby restricting local legitimacy (Lane, 2006).

This research also uncovered other undesirable effects. In order to meet the professional requirements of higher governing bodies, the organizations studied here structured themselves to achieve legitimacy to higher authorities, and thereby prioritized board members with professional knowledge, political power, and managerial authority. These findings support Skocpol's (2004) broader claims about the narrowing of public life and raise concerns about democratic legitimacy, especially considering the lack of formal mechanisms to ensure community accountability (Wallington *et al.,* 2008). Parkins and Sinclair (2014) emphasize the need to focus on the benefits of community engagement and how broader engagement can lead to positive outcomes. The accountability structure of these organizations limited the community

‘ownership’ of the organization by confining public knowledge of the organization and limiting community involvement and capacity building.

2.7 Conclusions

This paper examined the challenges of procedural justice embedded within multi-stakeholder models of governance within sustainability organizations. We found that, despite the intentions of participants in these organizations, elements of elitism were apparent in both the BRs and MFs studied. By examining these organizations through the lens of procedural justice, we discovered they exhibited challenges associated with recognition, participation and capabilities. These challenges can be tied to broader issues of professionalism and prevailing environmental discourses that promote elitism in sustainability organizations. The top-down guidance given to BRs and MFs influenced their stakeholder arrangement and contributed to the capacity gap at the local level. Representation continues to be dominated by professionals with a background in environment and resource management and fails to respond to arguments for cultural pluralism. Missing from these discussions were representatives that address social and economic sustainability issues, specific cultural groups, and the broader public. Some cultural groups gained no representation at all (e.g., African Canadians) while those cultural groups identified by interviewees (e.g., First Nations) continue to be token members of the organizations. Additionally, the gender ratio continues to favour men. Although BRs and MFs may exhibit more of a managerial tendency than other local-level organizations because of their multilevel structure, analysis of these organizations reveals procedural challenges that may be experienced in local-level organizations employing the multi-stakeholder model, which include deciding who to include, promoting active participation, and limiting conflict of interest among members.

Several scholars have made the connection between the substantive and procedural aspects of social sustainability (e.g., Agyeman & Evans 2004; Dillard *et al.* 2009). The framing of a sustainability issue, including its procedural aspects, affects substantive outcomes (Boström 2012). This research reveals systemic procedural challenges such as elitism arising from within sustainability organizations employing the stakeholder model. Its continued and uncritical adoption has unintentionally entrenched environmental managerialism in institutions and organizations working towards sustainability. Parkins and Sinclair (2014) suggest two ways to

address institutionalized elitism. The first option is to create tools that promote broader and more meaningful participation, including volunteer opportunities for specific projects and initiatives and targeted working groups and initiatives that work to empower specific groups. The second is to promote broader-based community-based decision-making and activism through formalized feedback mechanisms from the community. Beyond these strategies, our research suggests that scholars and practitioners must work towards a holistic definition of sustainability that meets procedural and environmental imperatives. This agenda demands that we actively address the 'historical dualism' (Boström 2012) that has resulted from years of conceptually disconnecting the environmental and social pillars of sustainability.

GUIDEPOST

In the previous chapter, the consensus-based stakeholder model used in BRs and MFs in the Maritime Provinces of Canada was evaluated against a framework for procedural justice. Results suggest that the consensus-based stakeholder model poses procedural challenges for sustainability organizations, limiting broader participation, community engagement, and organizational outcomes. In the next two chapters, innovations that may serve to improve procedural justice in sustainability organizations while improving community engagement, organizational capacity, and sustainability outcomes are identified. Chapter 3 offers a framework for place-based governance for sustainability informed by community-focused literature and a cross organizational comparison among the BRs, MFs and VC Saint John.

CHAPTER 3: Operationalizing just sustainability: Towards a model for place-based governance

3.1 Abstract

The concept of sustainability has been developed and explored mostly from an environmental standpoint, with less attention paid to social concerns. As the concept of sustainability broadens to include social aspects, sustainability organizations must embrace strategies that allow them to more effectively address community issues and procedural concerns. Biosphere reserves and model forests advocate strongly for community engagement in achieving place-based sustainability; in practice, however, these organizations have had variable success in effectively engaging community residents and addressing their needs and interests. In this paper, we offer a framework for place-based governance for sustainability to compare strategies used in biosphere reserves and model forests operating in the Maritime Provinces of Canada with the operations of Vibrant Communities, an anti-poverty organization that operates locally in Saint John, New Brunswick. We draw attention to three imperatives: comprehensive understanding, community empowerment, and community-based outcomes, and five procedural drivers: local leadership, strong networks, diverse community engagement, learning together, and information sharing. Based on our results, we provide greater clarity on processes that address the imperatives and mobilize the drivers of effective place-based governance for sustainability. We also draw specific attention to the need for organizations to build capabilities at the network level. Our results suggest that there is a need for theory and practice to advance beyond current understandings of sustainability governance to enhance the capacity of organizations seeking to implement community-based sustainability strategies.

3.2 Introduction

Since the 1980s, academics and practitioners have described how sustainability is not just about environmental protection, but requires attention to economic, social, and cultural concerns. Decades have passed since academics and practitioners began to think seriously about how to operationalize the concept for effective practice; however, innovations have been slower than anticipated (Sachs, 2005). Many sustainability organizations were founded as environmental organizations and, despite broadening their mandates, they have retained the organizational

strategies that were utilized when their focus was on environmental conservation (Boström, 2012). These organizations are increasingly challenged to advance a more 'just' sustainability (Agyeman, *et al.* 2003), which considers the inextricable interrelationship between social and ecological systems widely supported in complex systems theory (i.e., Folke et al., 2005). When applied to local communities, just sustainability requires attention to social considerations such as community development, human well-being, and procedural concerns, including recognizing diverse social actors (Agyeman, *et al.* 2003; Magis & Shinn, 2009).

We suggest that place-based governance offers a framework to help better understand how local organizations can operationalize strategies for sustainability. Place-based communities, with their own knowledge, ideas, capacities, and vitality, are now widely celebrated as legitimate and pivotal agents in addressing the complex economic and social challenges associated with sustainability (Eversole, 2011). Organizations working on 'social development' issues, such as poverty and public health, in post-industrial countries are not typically considered to be 'sustainability organizations'. However, such organizations can offer operational lessons and governance strategies at the community level designed to mobilize resources, solve problems, and create transformative change for sustainability.

Place-based organizations work in a specific geographic area or community to achieve their mandate. Looking to different place-based organizations, our research purpose is to learn more about how to successfully organize place-based community action. We develop our framework for place-based governance inductively. We introduce the preliminary framework in the next section. It emerged from careful reading of academic literature and review of preliminary results of empirical research in three types of place-based non-governmental organizations – biosphere reserves (BRs), model forests (MFs) and vibrant communities (VCs) - operating in Atlantic Canada. Using the framework, we explore how BRs and MFs work to address regionally-specific sustainability issues. We assess the extent to which the operations and priorities of these organizations echo the needs and identified interests of the local communities. Next, we turn to an organization doing anti-poverty work within local communities, examining how VCs work to understand, empower and achieve outcomes in the communities that they aim to serve. Using the results from our analysis, we revise our framework to emphasize how drivers can mobilize change more effectively. Our conclusion emphasizes the need to broaden thinking about sustainability beyond environmental concerns

and to strengthen bridges connecting environmental and social dimensions, both in theory and in practice.

3.3 A Preliminary Framework for Place-based Governance for Sustainability

Traditional institutions are poorly structured to address sustainability challenges (van Zeijl-Rozema *et al.*, 2008) and governance strategies based on the dominant stakeholder model have revealed several drawbacks, including reinforcing traditional power structures, restricting participation, producing consultation fatigue, and hindering timely decisions, definitive actions and influential outcomes (Parkins & Davidson, 2008; Reed, 2008). Place-based governance utilizes local identities to build strengths and capabilities to mobilize the public, private and civil sectors and address local-level challenges. Effective place-based governance can also be a catalyst for mobilization and collective impact, creating meaningful and locally-desired changes for the community (Bradford, 2005). This approach aims to attract local leaders, broadly engage community members in decision making and initiatives, nurture social capital, promote collaborative learning, and foster a sense of community belonging and pride (Edge & McAllister, 2009).

Place-based governance occurs in a locally defined geographic area that does not necessarily adhere to boundaries traditionally used to delineate a community (e.g., a county or municipality). The governance strategy extends beyond formal policy agreements to include local cultural and regional identities and priorities (Bradford, 2008; Slocombe, 1998). Place-based governance focuses on mobilizing change by empowering local communities (Dale, 2001).

We propose a framework for place-based governance that suggests organizations seeking to advance sustainability must meet three imperatives: *comprehensive understanding*, *community empowerment*, and *community-based outcomes* (Figure 3.1). To achieve a comprehensive understanding, sustainability organizations must understand the needs, issues, and interests of the communities they intend to serve. In organizations that have focused on the environmental aspects of sustainability, this may require expanding focus to embrace the social, economic and cultural values and interests of their communities. Organizations must serve as conveners and bring together broad community knowledge to construct a shared understanding of community issues. This requires situated understanding from community residents or their representatives, knowledge about communities including statistical data (e.g., demographic information) and city

trends (e.g., social services availability, labour market, etc.), and knowledge for achieving transformative change within communities (Bradford, 2005). This information must be synthesized and integrated into a comprehensive understanding of community challenges.

The second imperative is *community empowerment*, which is defined here as a shift towards greater equality in the social relations of power (Laverack & Labonte, 2000). Organizations must seek mechanisms to empower multiple groups within a community, improve participation, develop local leadership, and increase community control and ownership of initiatives. This may require re-envisioning who and how people participate in these organizations. The final imperative is that organizations develop *community-based outcomes* – focusing on the things community stakeholders consider important for its social, economic, and environmental wellbeing (Sharma & Kearins, 2011). Although other discussions of place-based governance have not emphasized the importance of achieving outcomes (Dale, 2001; Edge & McAllister, 2009), we identify it as integral for mobilizing community members and support.

Achieving understanding, empowerment, and community-based outcomes in place-based organizations requires five procedural drivers for successful implementation: Local leadership, strong networks, diverse community engagement, learning together, and information sharing. These themes emerged from a preliminary review of the data collected. They were then expanded/clarified through literature search and then revised in light of more in-depth analysis of our results. Research related to community development (e.g., Dale, 2001; Emery & Flora, 2006), collective learning (e.g., Brown, 2008; Brown & Lambert, 2013) and adaptive management (e.g., Armitage, 2008) provided insights about these procedural drivers.

3.3.1 Local Leadership

Leadership is widely recognized as crucial for successful collaboration, as leaders are able to bring parties together and coach them through difficult portions of the collaborative process (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Susskind and Cruikshank (1987) recognized that collaborative leadership techniques can range from relatively non-invasive (facilitation) to more directive interventions. Leadership is important; especially when there is little incentive to participate, power and resource asymmetries are apparent, and conflict is likely (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Sustainability scholars (e.g., Dale & Newman, 2005) stress the importance of local leadership for pooling resources and mobilizing the community. Emery and Flora (2006) found that when

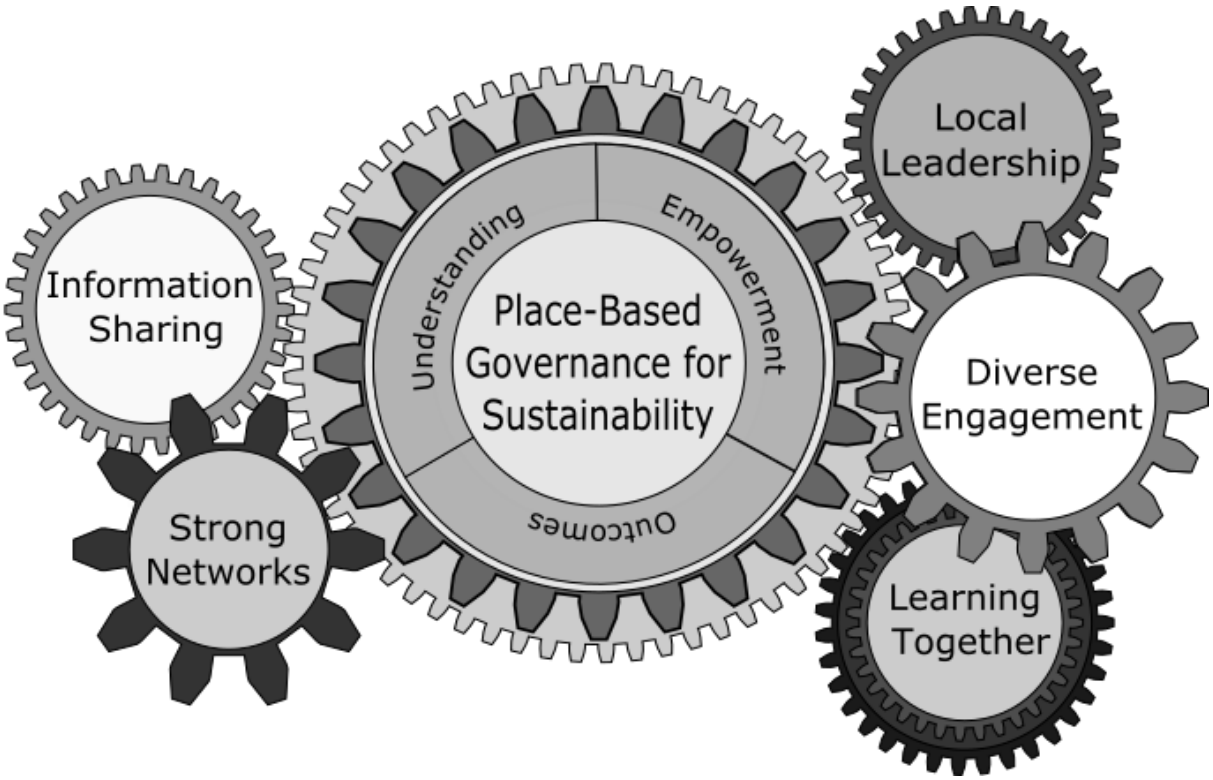


Figure 3.1: *A Proposed Framework for Place-based Governance for Sustainability*
Procedural drivers for place-based governance for sustainability identified in the literature: Information sharing, strong networks, local leadership, diverse engagement, and learning together.

community leaders invested social capital, these investments resulted in more capital investments, causing what they refer to as a "spiraling-up process." They found that active and engaged leaders can serve to change community norms and values and improve citizen interest in community affairs (Emery & Flora, 2006). Because of their broader connections, local leaders are also called upon to bridge and mobilize broader forms of capital.

3.3.2 Strong Networks

Although leadership by a few key individuals is essential to catalyze initiatives, strong networks are also important for making ties and bonding social capital (Bodin & Crona, 2009). Collaborative partnerships are better able to generate knowledge, leverage resources, build social capital, promote innovative strategies and solutions, and support implementation (Agranoff, 2006; Presas, 2001). Individual organizations rarely possess all of the requisite knowledge, skills, expertise, and resources that can be acquired through an effective network. Strong networks are able to attract internal and external support and resources, are recognized by insiders and outsiders, and are able to build trust among members to freely communicate (Human & Provan,

2000). Because collaborative practice is highly resource intensive, it is important that successful outcomes be achieved.

3.3.3 Effective Community Engagement

Ensuring the direct engagement from a diversity of community members is integral to increasing the effectiveness of place-based organizations (Tessler Lindau *et al.*, 2011). At the local level, place-based organizations typically solicit participation from a diversity of stakeholders from the community to serve as decision-makers and to generate ideas. It is important that processes are inclusive and fair – meaning that participants should reflect that affected population, not only in terms of demographics (age, gender, ethnicity), but also in terms of values and interests (Pollock, 2004). The diversity of actors participating at the community level may be as broad as the members in the community, including citizens, civic organizations, local businesses, unions, universities or colleges, and various levels of government. Broad engagement recruits and develops social capabilities within the community (Edge & McAllister, 2009). Processes for decision-making should be constructive and equally accessible to all. This may require recognizing specific needs of individual interest groups. Engagement is likely to decrease if the participants believe that they are not effectively influencing meaningful outcomes in their community. To maintain public engagement in place-based organizations, citizens must believe that their involvement is both useful and effective.

3.3.4 Learning Together

The potential for collective learning and working through conflicts is greatest at the community level (Bradford, 2005). Some literature on social learning argues that social units (including communities and organizations) may be able to learn together, as opposed to learning independently then sharing the information with others (Armitage *et al.*, 2008). Evidence from studies of organizational learning suggests that collective learning can be more effective than the sum of individual learning (Argyris & Schön, 1996). There is also an identified need to collectively connect information, reflection, and experimentation (Kolb, 1984). This adds credibility to the theory of collective impact (Kania & Kramer, 2011), where people collectively learn and reflect on relevant information before establishing mutually reinforcing activities to respond to their overall goals. Working collaboratively with diverse stakeholders requires organizations to develop a common goal that can be realized through community investment, and

operationalized through tangible community projects (Brown & Lambert, 2013; Kania & Kramer, 2011).

3.3.5 Information Sharing

Building organizational legitimacy and trust among partners and the community requires effective communication. Accountability and transparency are paramount in place-based organizations relying heavily on investment and support from community members. Well-designed communication systems offer opportunities for information sharing, deliberation, and feedback, which will raise levels of knowledge and awareness about initiatives, enable organizations to have a sense of community opinion, and allow organizations to extract ideas and innovations (Paquet, 2004). The close proximity and face-to-face interactions encourage greater information sharing and feedback (McDougall, 2013). The use of additional feedback systems, including social networks, allows for opportunities for the community to identify issues and can more quickly allow the organization to identify mistakes. Therefore, it is important that communication is a priority and takes place frequently through a range of face-to-face and virtual strategies (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

3.4 Methods and Study Area

This study adopted a multiple case design (Yin, 2014) to confirm our framework, looking horizontally across six place-based organizations to offer opportunities for structured comparisons. We used mixed methods, including a document review of reports, and newsletters, in-depth interviews conducted during 2011-2012 with board members, staff and partners of each of the organizations, and sidewalk interception surveys that took place in five communities located within the BR and MF regions. Sidewalk interception surveys are short surveys administered in-person by researchers in public places. Participants are solicited to participate while they are in a public place and, if they accept, immediately complete the survey. This type of survey approach was employed to gather local-level public opinion about community forestry (e.g., Ordonez, 2014) and water values (e.g., Castleden *et al.*, 2015). It is able to capture the participant's own words, and does not require much time or commitment from the participant. For this study, a sidewalk interception survey was designed to obtain residents' awareness of organizations perceptions of community values and sustainability challenges. Research assistants were situated at various locations around the community on weekends (grocery stores, malls,

restaurants, churches) and would ask passersby if they would mind taking 5 minutes to answer a structured set of questions. The 40 interviews and 452 sidewalk interception questionnaires were transcribed. Documents and interviews were coded both inductively and deductively using qualitative analysis software to determine organizational strategies for community engagement and their associated success. Sidewalk interception surveys were also coded using qualitative analysis software to explore community values and priorities with respect to geographic location and demographic information, taking into account the mandates of the BRs and MFs.

3.4.1 Organizations

BRs are areas that support sustainable development, environmental and cultural conservation, and capacity building through research, education and knowledge sharing (UNESCO, 2000). Beginning in the mid-1970s under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) program, BRs have progressed from being conservation sites for natural science research to models for community-based sustainable development (Pollock, 2009; Reed & Massie, 2013; Schultz & Lundholm, 2010). MFs were established by Natural Resources Canada in 1992 to advance forestry practices and develop policy directives for sustainable forest management (Sinclair & Smith, 1999). In 2007, the program was revised to Forest Communities Program to reflect a shift in emphasis from researching and modelling for sustainable forest management practices to promoting the development of "softer" skill sets required to support forest-dependent communities. The mandates of both BRs and MFs have changed to more effectively embrace the social aspects of sustainability (Bonnell, 2012; Reed & Massie, 2013). Finally, VCs is a cross-Canada educational action initiative to develop local solutions to poverty alleviation in urban areas. Officially launched in 2002, the purpose of VCs is to bring together diverse actors and mobilize communities to explore, experiment, and engage in new ways to reduce poverty and improve collective well-being in communities across Canada (Leviten-Reid, 2007). VCs were established as foundation-funded organizations with a paid staff and the ability to offer resources (money and coaching) to their communities. MFs also had substantial initial government funding; this was withdrawn in 2013. BRs have had very limited and intermittent funding and were self-organized by volunteers who had to create most of the resources they needed.

BRs and MFs are organizations that grew out of environmental conservation to embrace broader definitions of sustainability. VCs are explicitly at the other end of the sustainability

spectrum and focus on building a sustainable social system. Interestingly, they have all drawn on concepts presented in sustainability and resilience literature, focusing on the well-being perspectives and social aspects of both (Gardner, 2011; Torjman & Leviten-Reid, 2003). Although each of these organizations operationalizes their mandate at the local level, there is also national-level network for each model. All of these organizations are well established, offering opportunities to understand what they emphasize in their processes, projects and outcomes. All have relied on social networking and partnerships for funding and logistical support to develop their local organizations and national profile. Further, in 2010, VC Saint John had operating funding of approximately $600,000, which is comparable to funds leveraged by Fundy MF, and far more than what has been leveraged by BRs in the Maritimes to date.

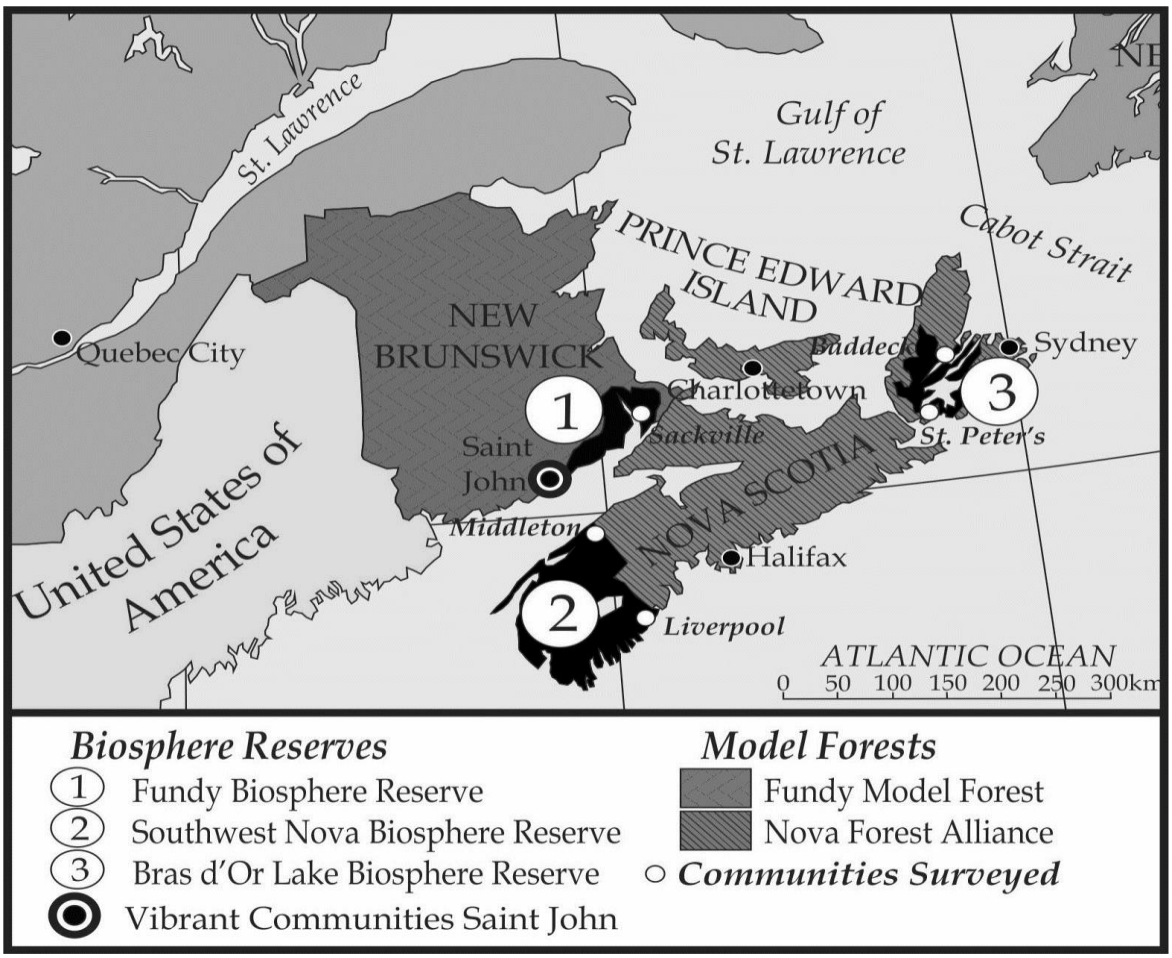


Figure 3.2: *Map of Study Area*
This map shows the study area in Atlantic Canada. The small white circles represent the communities where the sidewalk interception surveys took place. The numbered circles (1-3) represent each of the biosphere reserves examined. Their geographic reach is represented in black. The regions of the model forests explored are represented through texture. Vibrant Communities Saint John is also highlighted.

3.4.2 Study Area

The two MFs - Fundy Model Forest (est. 1992) and Nova Forest Alliance (est. 1998), and three BRs - Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve (est. 2000), Fundy Biosphere Reserve (est. 2007), and Bras d'Or Lakes Biosphere Reserve (est. 2011), located in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick form the focus for this study, as well as the Vibrant Community of Saint John (Figure 3.2). We also surveyed five communities (Sackville, St. Peter's, Baddeck, Middleton, and Liverpool) located within the BR and MF regions to determine whether needs identified by communities were echoed within the BRs and MFs listed above.

3.5 Results

3.5.1 Community Understanding

Of the 452 people surveyed, 28.3% had heard of the BR and 15.7% had heard of the MF operating in their area. Liverpool had the highest percentage of participants aware of the BR. At the time of data collection, Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve had just put up a sign on the highway that advertised the BR and many respondents from Liverpool knew about the BR because of the sign on the highway. Also, some respondents had heard about the BR through articles in local newspapers. Another respondent said that the biosphere reserve was being advertised on Liverpool's town website and taught in the local schools. Of those who had heard of the BRs and MFs working in their areas, the majority were unsure of what they did. This was affirmed by those involved with the organizations. An interviewee from a BR said:

> *I think that within the community we are mostly unknown. I don't think the community thinks that we do anything.*

A MF representative suggested that the need to communicate with the broader community was greater for the BRs than for the MFs.

> *I think, the distinction between [BRs] and us is that they're trying at a much broader level to change the public's behaviour and perception, and so they need to have a much broader and probably comprehensive communication program than we do.*

However, the majority of participants from each of the BRs and MFs investigated voiced challenges associated with communication. One staff member said:

I'm stuck with this whole communications component, trying to do things that are meaningful, that help move the organization along… One of our big goals is knowledge mobilization, so making sure that whatever we work on gets to the people that should have it. That to me is important, and then the question becomes how do you do that? So you have to be a little bit known, so they come and they get what they need from you, or you have to be pushing it out so that it arrives when they need it. So it's, you know, that's the balance, and how do you build a communications program that's going to do that and not be overwhelming.

Table 3.1: *The number (and proportion) of participants who had knowledge of BRs and MFs in each of the 5 communities surveyed*

	Questionnaires Administered (N)	Knowledge of the BR (%)	Knowledge of the MF (%)
		Yes	Yes
Baddeck	61	29.5	18.0
Liverpool	98	42.9	24.5
Middleton	63	11.1	6.3
Sackville	123	33.3	22.0
St. Peter's	107	18.7	4.7
Total	**452**	**28.3**	**15.7**

The five communities surveyed (column one). The number of questionnaires administered in each community is shown in the second column. The third and fourth columns depict the percentages of survey respondents in each community who had knowledge of the biosphere reserve (BR) and model forest (MF) respectively.

VC Saint John emphasized the importance of learning from the community to establish initiatives. When they began, VC Saint John focused on bringing people together to collect data to develop a community understanding and determine future steps.

For the first couple, three years there was more focus on research: what does poverty look like here and what are the implications associated with that and then that was communicated quite effectively into communities and we focused on communication with the communities a lot and through that, the research got transformed into evaluation. We had a pretty good understanding of what the issues were and we needed that to find out what were the most effective interventions.

To some extent, the research conducted in earlier phases of the MFs was used to inform initiatives that they pursued later on (see Bonnell 2012); however, the data gathered during these phases was not gathered intentionally to inform collective initiatives. The BRs studied had done little research, either preliminary or secondary, that would offer insight into projects and initiatives that would be especially relevant to communities. In contrast, VC Saint John offered opportunities for community members to give feedback on organizational initiatives, as well as the overall strategy for VC Saint John.

> *We reviewed the strategy with the community. So we had an event last fall that had about 100 people and we reviewed each of the areas. We told the community what our priorities were and what we had done and asked if we had to change anything… Then our leadership roundtable reviewed what came out of that meeting and set specific targets… That really directs where we put our resources.*
>
> *The solution has to be drawn from the community. It's not our solution.*

As well as actively seeking community understanding through research and opportunities for community feedback, VC Saint John emphasized the importance of continued communication with the local community.

> *More recently, there has been a focus on communication. How do we deliberately connect this messaging with people who we aren't communicating with already? We communicate well with government and non-profit organizations. We've shifted our focus to target more deliberately the general public and the business community. I think that Saint John has engaged the business community better than anyone else on poverty issues.*

Typically, VC Saint John compiled and collated the information from those doing work and communicated outcomes broadly. As well as having a website, Facebook page, twitter account and an email list, all interviewees from VC Saint John emphasized the importance of a community newspaper developed by VC Saint John called *Around the Block* that keeps the community up-to-date on local events.

> *[We focus on] good news stories… We wanted this paper just to focus on positive things – how the communities are working together, how they are learning to work*

together more and more often and how important it is not to reinvent the wheel. – Knowledge sharing.

Many of the organizations working on social and economic development use the paper to advertise their events, but there are also opportunities for community members to write about what is happening in their community. It "*gives people their voice*" and serves as a way for VC Saint John to hear from the community. The paper is supported by the City of Saint John through a Neighbourhood Development Grant. A member of one of the priority neighbourhoods is the paid staff member and coordinates the paper. The funding for the paper comes from ads sold to local businesses, as well as grants. The paper relies heavily on volunteers. It is another way that VC Saint John engaged with the communities.

It started with 8 pages and 6000 copies and now we are at 9000 copies, and most issues are 16 pages.

In addition, the national network of VCs also has an E-Magazine that showcases the accomplishments of The VCs across Canada.

3.5.2 Community Empowerment

The Atlantic Provinces are known for their high rates of volunteerism. Of those surveyed, over 80% said that they had volunteered or given money to initiatives. Further, participants said that they would advocate for (23.7%), volunteer for (39.6%), donate money to (13.8%), and pay for a service (20.8%) associated with initiatives that addressed the community needs and interests.

Interview participants suggested that BRs and MFs use their multi-stakeholder boards as forums for community engagement; however, beyond this, there are few opportunities for the broader public to become involved. Interviewees revealed that having a multi-stakeholder board as the single opportunity for community engagement in these organizations created three challenges. First, the board was typically seen as being biased towards elite interests that do not necessarily represent the community.

I think that the board of directors is a bit too lopsided, towards government and research, and not a realistic representation of what the community is made up of.

Second, although board members may be present for meetings, participants in both BRs and MFs voiced their overall discontent with the level of engagement from board members.

> *On a lot of boards that I'm on, including the one that I work for, people tend to shut their brains off when they're not in a meeting, and so they're not actively using their connections and you know, their imaginations to help the organization along …what we don't have is those people actively out there beating the bushes and helping us develop ideas and projects.*

> *I feel that there should be more doers: those who are engaged and keen to do things. And part of it's the board structure. We have a lot of people on our current board and it has people there because of who they represent, as opposed to because they're keen on the [names organization].*

Third, many of the BRs and MFs reported having difficulty retaining community engagement and support, especially during periods of economic difficulty.

> *We've also found over the last couple of years that really our participation from the partnership committee has dwindled, dropped off. So we're saying that structure really doesn't meet our needs.*

> *Municipal units encompassed by the biosphere reserve traditionally give $300 annually in financial support. However, municipalities are now pulling their funding from the [names organization] because A) they are pushed to the wall and every penny has to be accounted for and B) we have not convinced them that the $300 that they're giving us is providing any type of value.*

VC Saint John reported having a high level of success with community engagement. They did this through facilitating multiple ways to get engaged and were very strategic in whom they selected to participate and how they engaged them.

> *The focus for these last couple years is to make it possible for anyone to engage in any way.*

> *There are different ways that we engage. We have a leadership roundtable and we have gone from being more strategic in that partnership to being more political. So in my mind, the people who reside on the roundtable are the ones*

that need to see each other caring about and listening to these issues… It's sort of the positive peer pressure group.

Participants revealed that VC Saint John seeks participation strategically, soliciting high-ranking individuals and then using them to influence one another. They focus on soliciting the participation of senior staff who have the power to influence change, including the General Manager of Public Health and the Superintendent of the school district.

It's the strategy of who can influence who. Who listens to who. Businesses influence other businesses.

VC Saint John has a small group of executive members that addresses the managerial aspects of the organization. The broader multi-stakeholder leadership table was developed to bring diverse interests together to work together to address poverty issues.

So we have the leadership team and they are not a board of directors. They don't review budgets or anything like that. They are strategic and part of it is to see each other sitting at that table.

Interview participants emphasized the importance of developing a community engagement strategy that empowers the community, especially those who live in poverty. Because of the diversity of the partners involved and the associated differences in social power, VC Saint John has taken specific steps to empower those who are more vulnerable. When talking about representation on the leadership team, one interviewee said this about people on the leadership team who represent those living in poverty:

We have about 6-7 that represent and have a voice and, again, making sure that they represent more than just themselves and that they come from a place of power - "I represent my neighbourhood and I have been asked to represent on their behalf." I think [that it] makes it way easier for someone to speak their mind and carry their weight at the table. They are not just them, they are representing their community. Just like the other representatives around the table.

It is important that someone who has lived in poverty and who has experienced it can go to the meetings and not be afraid to voice their opinions. Say "Oh no, excuse me – that doesn't work. We have to have it this way."

Projects are likely to be more successful if they allow for diverse and meaningful opportunities for engagement. When talking about the PALS program (a partnership between the business community and schools) one interviewee said,

> *Everyone is contributing in their own way. Some companies give money to the school for after school programs or whatever, and some companies give volunteer time, but what is really amazing is that the more that people are engaged and really doing something hands on, the more they get into it and the more proud they are of this movement and the more they pay attention to what's next and the progress being made. … It's about finding all of these different ways to involve people. That's probably the most important thing… This program has probably had the most far-reaching sustainable success and it's not about money. It's about people's commitment. … People want to be part of success.*

Fostering broad and flexible engagement was seen as a way to build capacity and momentum.

3.5.3 Community-Based Outcomes

Participants from BRs and MFs emphasized the value of having a broad network that includes a diversity of partners to facilitate community-based outcomes. BRs and MFs have representatives from their network sitting on their board. The multi-stakeholder composition of their boards is the most obvious way that each organization serves as a convener. Those involved with the MFs emphasized the importance of their networks for learning and achieving outcomes.

> *If we are developing a project or something needs to be done, we figure out who needs to be a part of it, and we either have the contacts, or we work on fostering those contacts, and grow them…. that's one of our major jobs, is connecting … and making sure that we are partnering at the right level.*

> *The expertise that we have? We're really kind of a coordinating staff, but we have … quite an extensive network of people that we can draw on…to work with us on specific initiatives. Because we've had a broad network of people … we can bring [them] into projects when we need them. That's kind of the way we're working.*

However, networking was not necessarily seen as the best way to get things accomplished in BRs with few financial resources and logistical capacity.

The whole concept of NGOs collaborating because they are in the same area is a nice idea, but it is not usually feasible. Many times it's just another thing to do. Especially in an organization that has very little capacity, it is not a high priority.

Although the benefit of strong networks are known to environmental NGOs, the culture around project grants continues to be competitive, rather than collaborative, even among organizations that are part of each other's network. A member of the FBR discussed this challenge:

We have these representatives from other organizations [on our resource development committee]… But … they run into a bit of a conflict of interest when they serve on a committee because if I go to them and say, "Listen, we'd really like to develop their projects on historical places …, who can I go to to get money from?" that sort of puts … [them] in a hard place… It makes it messy.

Interviewees voiced concerns about their organizational vulnerability, noting that other environmental NGOs in the area have disappeared because they could not find the funding or resources to continue. One interviewee noted that this organizational environment is "*not really going to get us where we want to go, and it doesn't build capacity in the people you want working in this sector."* Without being asked about this specifically during interviews, participants from three of the organizations identified the desperate competition for project grants among environmental NGOs in the area as a significant challenge.

By contrast, VC Saint John is part of a highly integrated network. Members of VC Saint John reported that this was the best way for them to build trust and empower their partners.

Build trust and the relationship… There are these different ways of building that credibility and trust that are multi-purpose. To build that trust with community non-profits and people who live in poverty, we had to be really quiet and not in the limelight and promote others.

As a network, when you do your job really well there is a price to pay, in terms of who gets the attribution and who gets the credit... What it did was shifted the way that we worked for a couple of years to deliberately being way in the background. So almost never saying our name. So our website is actually the Saint John Poverty Reduction Website. All of our promotion was promoting the people who

were doing the work on the ground. And that really drove a lot of our work. We are deliberately communicating for others.

Whereas the representatives from BRs and MFs interviewed felt that they were in competition with like-minded organizations for funding, VC Saint John showed evidence of collaborating with other organizations to pool the most resources for their combined cause. Interviewees confirmed that they are able to coordinate with other organizations well to maximize their capacity to produce community-based outcomes.

With the Learning Exchange, we actually use their admin support so we pay them a small amount and they do our bookkeeping for us… Our space is given to us by the Health Centre, so our health partner. All of the research is done by the Human Development Council, so we try to make sure that if we have funds coming in the door for a service that another agency can provide, especially another non-profit, that we pay them rather than doing it ourselves.

Some of the groups that we partner with most closely don't have a seat on the table. We partner so closely with them we can speak for them at the table. [For example,] Saint John Learning Exchange. We work quite closely with them helping them write grant proposals, reviewing work, doing some strategic thinking, making alliances, that kind of stuff.[Another example is] TRC Resource Centre for Youth. Our mandates are completely complementary, so within the last two months we have co-written 2 grant proposals just to get that professional capacity.

VC Saint John has assumed the role of convener and motivator. All interview participants reported examples that confirm they engage with their network in strategic ways to achieve the strongest outcomes.

If a goal is to reduce teen pregnancy, [we ask] "who is doing that? How do we move that forward?" So, there's a committee but they were rather stagnant, so we put some of our HR resources behind that to support the process of them identifying what are the priorities, what are the actions, and what needs to happen. We don't provide any service, but we provide the process support to get the pieces moving, to bring people together.

VC Saint John has been able to develop targeted initiatives that respond to community needs. Through their Learn and Go program, VC Saint John has worked on short-term projects including bus stops and playgrounds to ensure that residents can see that VC Saint John is a "*way to get things done*". Staff emphasized the importance of adapting and maintaining momentum, continuously working to improve their programming and their impact.

> *One thing that we have never done is rest on our laurels... How do we challenge ourselves next?*
>
> *Sometimes people are really afraid to take that next step because they don't have a lot of success to build on. Success builds success. It builds your confidence.*
>
> *You can change your role and build leadership elsewhere. That's a good goal to have. But we never step back.*

And they are recognized for their efforts in these areas by community members and partner organizations.

> *Vibrant is good at bringing people together… they have the knowledge to bring people together. Sometimes I feel that they do it a bit too quietly. That they don't get enough recognition.*
>
> *Vibrant communities has definitely had an impact for me and for others. Vibrant has been building and knows how to get things done. Without them, we'd be lost.*

3.6 Revising the Drivers for Successful Implementation of Place-Based Governance

Our assessment confirmed the importance of the five procedural drivers, but also suggested key revisions of the framework aimed at achieving more effective community understandings, broader empowerment, and sustainable community-based outcomes. Procedural drivers are more precisely described below (Figure 3.3).

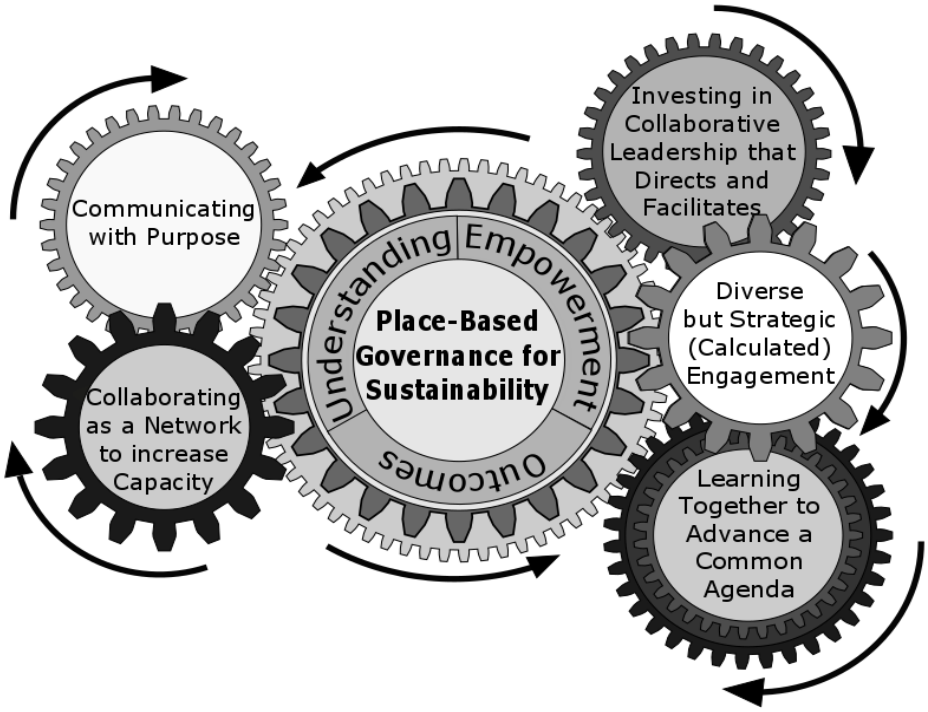


Figure 3.3: *Revised Framework for Place-based Governance for Sustainability*
Procedural drivers for place-based governance for sustainability. Based on our results, the levels of community understanding, empowerment and community-based outcomes needed to achieve place-based governance for sustainability can be effectively supported through five procedural drivers: Communicating with purpose, collaborating as a network to increase capacity, investing in collaborative leadership that directs and facilitates, diverse but strategic engagement, and learning together to advance a common agenda.

3.6.1 Investing in Collaborative Leadership with the Right Balance of Facilitation and Direction

All organizations practice a form of collective leadership. BRs and MFs have acted as collaborative leaders, facilitating and, at points, mediating discussions among diverse stakeholders. VC Saint John has also served as a collaborative leader through facilitating and mediating stakeholder discussions, but they have also served as a catalyst for community empowerment and transformation through *strategically engaging community leaders* and coaching those involved toward desirable outcomes. Part of their strategy is to empower other organizations and individuals to contribute to fulfilling VC Saint John's mandate. They effectively realized a spiraling-up process (Emery & Flora, 2006) through engaging and empowering other active community leaders - both organizations and individuals. They successfully guided participants towards a common vision for the initiative, built relationships among stakeholders, and served as a catalyst for new opportunities to create value in the

community. VC Saint John emphasized the importance of supporting the contributions of others in the collaborative process. They maintained a low profile in the beginning and supported other organizations to achieve success. They worked to empower people on the front-lines to be leaders in their own community. Ansell and Gash (2012) have emphasized the importance of such strategies, arguing that collaborative leaders must simultaneously play the roles of steward, mediator and catalyst. While evidence of all three roles were shown through the interviews with VC Saint John, the catalyst function was not supported in the less successful BRs and MFs analysed. Hence, leadership that catalyzes action through a balance of facilitation and direction is an important procedural driver for place-based governance.

3.6.2 From Building a Network to Collaborating as a Network

Our results support other findings that suggest stronger networks are better able to generate knowledge, leverage resources, build social capital, promote innovative strategies and solutions, and support implementation (e.g., Agranoff, 2006; Presas, 2001). Importantly, our research extends these insights by suggesting that collaborations must be strategically designed and operationalized to fit the context (see also Keast & Mandall, 2014). All of the organizations examined here spoke of themselves as facilitators, conveners, or bridging organizations; however, the practice varied greatly between BRs, MFs, and VC Saint John. BRs and MFs served as conveners largely through their governance model – the multi-stakeholder model that brings diverse interests together. However there was less evidence to suggest that these organizations have been engaged in the committed relationships required to support strong networks. On top of bringing organizations together, convener organizations must serve to pool resources, encourage mutual exploration, and develop new and relevant knowledge (Agranoff, 2006).

VC Saint John has worked to build a collaborative poverty reduction strategy through building a robust network, as well as mobilizing and sharing financial and logistical resources and expertise with other organizations. There was little evidence that BRs and MFs have served as bridging organizations at this level. Results suggest that the efforts of BRs and MFs organizations in the Canadian Maritimes remain disjointed. There was no central vision to advance sustainability and BRs and MFs compete with other organizations working in similar areas for the limited funds available. By contrast, VC Saint John works to efficiently pool their

resources and operate collaboratively rather than in competition with like-minded organizations. These findings speak to the potential to mobilize and capitalize on community resources more effectively through *collaborating as a network*.

3.6.3 From Diverse Engagement to Strategic (Calculated) Engagement

Direct engagement from a diversity of community members is viewed as necessary to effectively address sustainability challenges (Pollock, 2004; Tessler Lindau *et al.*, 2011). However, what is less widely asserted is the need to address normative aspects of governance that promote equity among those involved in community-directed decision-making. BRs and MFs practice community engagement through a multi-stakeholder board with diverse representation from interest groups, identified experts, and community members. Beyond this, some BRs and MFs also form strategic partnerships with community organizations. However, our results suggest that community engagement has remained low. Looking to VC Saint John, there are four mechanisms that they have used to improve community engagement. The first is active empowerment of specific stakeholders to ensure that they participate in decision-making processes. VC Saint John solicits participation from diverse community members through a round table comprised of 25% private companies (businesses), 25% public officials (government), 25% non-government organizations (community groups), and 25% those who live in poverty (residents). VC Saint John has actively worked to empower those who represent people living in poverty at the roundtable. For VC Saint John, it is important that people living in poverty not only have a seat at the decision-making table, but that they are comfortable voicing their opinion and perspectives. They have done this formally by having community members nominate their representatives from the five priority neighbourhoods. These representatives are empowered to speak on behalf of their community. Second, VC Saint John has offered a number of ways for the community to engage. Because of the diverse network of organizations and actors involved, there are many opportunities for citizens to take part through volunteering on initiatives, participating in events, donating money, et cetera. Through the stakeholder model, BRs and MFs have limited their possible engagement to participating on their boards. Third, VC Saint John has *engaged community actors strategically* in ways that they are most interested in participating and are best equipped to contribute to the overall capacity of the organization's mission. VC Saint John has been successful in making their initiatives high

community priorities through soliciting the participation of those who can most effectively advance their mission. Further, they have also been persuasive in their engagement, going to businesses for contributions and offering bragging rights. Finally, VC Saint John works with like-minded organizations and interest groups at the grassroots level to advance their mission and offers them autonomy and support at the front lines. This strategy encourages other organizations to partner because there are few trade-offs (e.g., loss of organizational identity, deviations from core mission). Therefore, discussions of engagement need to expand to consider both who and how organizations engage different actors. Beyond representing the community, organizations should address normative concerns and consider how best to engage community members to address the interests of both individual citizens and organizations.

3.6.4 From Social Learning to Learning Together to Advance a Common Agenda

Through the stakeholder model, BRs and MFs have continued to practice a form of social learning where diverse individuals are solicited to bring their knowledge and expertise to the table and then share that information with others. However, it has been suggested that allowing communities and organizations to learn collectively may be more effective, as it helps move towards shared norms and common interests (Argyris & Schön, 1996; Diduck *et al*., 2012). Developing a common agenda for addressing sustainability problems requires people to develop a shared sense of purpose through a cooperative fact-finding approach that helps to develop a shared understanding of community data (Pollock, 2004; Smedstad & Gosnell, 2013). BRs and MFs have relied heavily on higher-level mandates as directives for organizational initiatives. VCs, instead, apply directives from collective impact theory (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Collective impact theory suggests that diverse participants must come together to develop a broad, but common, vision for community change. This includes a shared understanding of the problems, and a collective approach that will address these problems through mutually reinforcing actions. Where the concept of co-learning emphasizes the importance of dialogue and information sharing among a diverse group of actors, collective impact theory emphasizes *learning together to advance a common agenda*. It suggests that diverse groups of stakeholders learn together about community issues through knowledge sharing and targeted research and data collection. Only then should they collectively decide how to address challenges. VC Saint John collected community stories and mapped community demographics and assets to effectively understand

the issues and the conditions before determining the potential ways forward. Beyond information sharing, place-based organizations need to learn about community issues together to come to a common understanding of community issues and to brainstorm ways forward.

3.6.5 From Information Sharing to Communicating with Purpose

Scholars of sustainability emphasize the importance of communication (e.g., Pollock, 2004). Most of the BRs and MFs communicate through email lists, websites, Facebook pages, and some have twitter accounts, newsletters or columns in local newspapers. However, VC Saint John also offers opportunities for community feedback and has given voice to community members through their initiatives. VC Saint John continues to organize smaller projects that specifically respond to community needs to demonstrate the value of community input. They communicate and receive feedback on "little wins" to ensure that the community perceives the organization as moving forward and getting things done. This strategy has helped VC Saint John leverage new resources and investments from within and outside the community. This strategy supports theories of adaptive management - that effective governance not only requires communication, but also needs feedback loops and experimentation. There is a need to try things out, receive feedback, and adjust (Armitage, 2008; Leviten-Reid, 2006; Paquet, 2004). 'Quick and dirty' projects have proven to be a good way to generate buzz about their initiatives and better serve the community. Hence, although communication is important to ensure organizational transparency, *communicating with a purpose* of community engagement, feedback, and to advertise community benefits pursued by the organization is also an important driver for place-based governance.

3.7 Conclusion

Through comparing three very different types of organizations, this paper has provided new insights into how sustainability organizations may improve their organizational capacity while increasing their connection to, and impact in, the community. BRs and MFs have seen their mandates, as well as the policy environment within which they operate, change markedly. Transitioning to address social aspects of sustainability requires that these organizations readdress how they engage with the communities they intend to serve. The stakeholder process, although helpful for broadening participation, offers few avenues for addressing three

imperatives for place-based governance: i) understanding of community issues and priorities, ii) achieving empowerment through authentic community engagement and ownership, and iii) tailored approaches that improve community capacities and achieve effective outcomes. Effective place-based governance, however, requires additional structures and procedures to encourage community engagement.

Through examining how an organization that explicitly addresses social dimensions of sustainability –poverty alleviation – is organized and connected within its region, we have been able to identify new opportunities for improving governance among other kinds of sustainability organizations. Insights include specifying procedural drivers for achieving effective community engagement while improving organizational capacity. The categories identified for the drivers have been expressed before in literature on environmental governance and management; however, the level of success shown in VC Saint John in comparison to the BRs and MFs investigated suggests that more theoretical development and organizational innovation is needed for these sustainability organizations to meet their full potential. One example highlighted through the results of this paper is how these organizations have understood and operationalized their function as conveners. VC Saint John has operationalized themselves as a network rather than an individual organization, suggesting that operationalizing place-based governance involves building corridors between organizations, rather than capabilities within organizational islands. Further theoretical directives in the areas of leadership, networking, engagement, learning and communication, taking into account the place-based imperatives of community understanding, empowerment, and outcomes will help to improve the procedural aspects of sustainability organizations.

Issues surrounding procedural justice and community involvement are becoming more difficult to ignore as scholars confirm that issues falling under the social aspects of sustainability, including social needs, equity and public health must be addressed in order to successfully attend to environmental challenges (Agyeman *et al.*, 2003; Sachs, 2005). However, sustainability theory and practice has grown from an environmental focus. Our research demonstrates that governance for sustainability requires researchers and practitioners broaden their thinking beyond environmental sustainability and strengthen bridges connecting environmental and social dimensions. Such bridges require innovations in existing theories for sustainability governance to guide action and enhance the capacity of organizations seeking to implement sustainability

strategies on the ground. They also require that organizations continuously seek innovations in how they conceptualize their mission and engage their communities. This research offers a modest contribution in that direction.

GUIDEPOST

The previous chapter looked across three very different organizations – BRs, MFs, and VCs - to offer new insights into how sustainability organizations can increase their organizational capacity through improving their connection to local communities. A framework for place-based governance for sustainability was proposed, informed by a broad literature review and findings from the organizations examined. Results suggest that there is value in looking to other literatures and organizational models to inform sustainability governance. The next chapter continues this trend, assessing the feasibility of utilizing social entrepreneurship to advance governance for sustainability. The next chapter looks at the conceptual feasibility of integrating social entrepreneurship and the consensus-base stakeholder model. Chapter 4 focuses on BRs, comparing those in the Canadian Maritimes to Manicouagan Uapishka Biosphere Reserve (MUBR) in Quebec. These organizations have adopted entrepreneurial strategies to varying degrees, with MUBR identifying itself as a social enterprise. Chapter 4 looks at how adopting characteristics of social entrepreneurship may help increase institutional capacity in BRs in the Canadian Maritimes and sustainability organizations more broadly.

CHAPTER 4: Building institutional capacity for environmental governance through social entrepreneurship: lessons from Canadian biosphere reserves

4.1 Abstract

Sustainability-oriented organizations have typically adopted governance approaches that undertake community participation and collaboration through multi-stakeholder arrangements. Documented challenges of this model are associated with collaboration and institutional capacity, and include reactive accountability structures, inability to reach consensus, funding limitations, and lack of innovation. Social entrepreneurship is a model used successfully in other social sectors; yet, it has rarely been explored by sustainability-oriented organizations. Nevertheless, research in other sectors has found that social entrepreneurship models of governance can encourage diverse participation from a wide range of social groups. This paper considers the value of social entrepreneurship for sustainability-oriented organizations by examining whether it can help them address governance-related challenges of collaboration and institutional capacity. Analysis of organizational documents and participant interviews in three biosphere reserves in Atlantic Canada revealed that, over time, these organizations have struggled to maintain their mission objectives, retain productivity, and respond to economic stress. By examining social entrepreneurship theory and its practice in a biosphere reserve in northern Quebec, we learned that social entrepreneurship more effectively targets values and expertise, encourages meaningful engagement, fosters strategic direction, and promotes a diversified and stable funding model than the stakeholder model. We determined there are opportunities to develop hybrid governance models that offer the benefits of social entrepreneurship, while addressing the procedural concerns outlined by the stakeholder model.

4.2 Introduction

The multi-stakeholder model of environmental governance has become the most common strategy in North America for engaging citizens. In this model, “stakeholders” and “rights holders” are meant to work together to inform management decisions (Parkins *et al.*, 2006). Stakeholders are described as those affected by or who can affect a decision (Freeman, 1984). In Canada, Aboriginal people are considered “rights holders” because they have legal and constitutional rights that are distinct from those of other Canadian citizens. Governments are also rights holders in this sense. The multi-stakeholder model has been widely adopted in the belief

that it offers improved transparency, democracy, equity and active citizenship and has the potential to reach those who have been marginalized or excluded from top-down decision-making (Reed 2008). Yet, in practice, multi-stakeholder models have been questioned for reinforcing traditional power structures, restricting opportunities for participation, engendering consultation fatigue, and/or avoiding timely decisions and decisive actions (Parkins & Davidson, 2008; Reed & Mcilveen, 2006; Singleton, 2002). Nevertheless, the intention to include multiple stakeholders and points of view is laudable and practical. Hence, many sustainability organizations replicate the basic model of including multiple stakeholders in their organizational structure in order to draw on a broad set of knowledge, expertise and perspectives from within their "communities". Yet, in the wake of funding cut-backs and reduced volunteerism, non-profit organizations today face a dual challenge to their internal structures and procedures. They are required to build a governance and organizational culture that can (a) create arenas for broad based participation by stakeholders and rights holders to link ideas, resources and influence decisions about sustainability, and (b) demonstrate innovation and flexibility in the face of dwindling financial resources. These requirements suggest a need for institutional capacity to harness and mobilize resources to promote organizational change and desired outcomes.

Social enterprise is an alternative model that is increasingly being used by the non-profit sector (Nicholls, 2006). It is based on employing business strategies and innovative approaches to achieve social goals (Granados *et al*., 2011). Like private entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs seek innovative opportunities to raise funds; they have aptitudes for innovation and appropriate risk taking. Unlike private enterprise, funds received through non-profit social enterprise are reinvested in growing the social benefits for stakeholders rather than in securing dividends for shareholders (Kerlin, 2013). Two Canadian examples of social enterprises include Evergreen Brick Works in Toronto, Ontario (www.evergreen.ca) and Harvest Moon Learning Centre in Clearwater Manitoba (www.harvestmoonsociety.org). Until recently, environmental scholars have been either cautious or unaware of social enterprise. This could be due to the longstanding distrust between private enterprise and environmental practitioners, as well as the belief that meaningful public participation within such enterprises is narrowly conceived (Cropper & Oates, 1992; Tietenberg, 2000). However, the concept has been advocated for in literature on social innovation and socio-ecological systems (SES) as it has the ability to reframe perspectives, identify and engage key stakeholders, and address disagreement (e.g., Biggs *et al.*, 2010). Given

a commonality in goals of sustainability organizations and social enterprise, it is appropriate to consider the relative merits of integrating the two models, in order to achieve sustainability objectives.

The purpose of this paper is to assess the feasibility - conceptually and empirically – of incorporating key tenets of social entrepreneurship into the governance practices of stakeholder-based sustainability organizations to develop a "hybrid model" that brings together the benefits of both approaches and helps them become more effective players in environmental governance more broadly. The paper begins by discussing the conceptual foundations of stakeholder and social entrepreneurship models including defining features, history of use, strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for application. Each is analyzed conceptually through the lens of institutional capacity, defined as the combination of intellectual capital (knowledge resources), social capital (relational resources), and political capital (mobilization potential) (after Healey, 1998). This analysis is followed by the documentation of case studies of four UNESCO BRs located in eastern Quebec and Atlantic Canada: Manucouagan Uapishka in Quebec; Fundy in New Brunswick; Bras d'Or Lakes in Nova Scotia; and Southwest Nova in Nova Scotia. BRs are geographic regions and civil society organizations working at the landscape level to address sustainability challenges by encouraging broad participation of local people in local decisions and actions. The BRs studied have adopted, to various extents, stakeholder and entrepreneurship models of governance. Activities in each BR are evaluated against a framework for institutional capacity to determine the potential for complementary capacity to pursue a holistic agenda for sustainability that might be built by integrating the stakeholder and social entrepreneurship models.

4.3 Model Foundations and Contributions to Institutional Capacity

In organizations employing a stakeholder model, the stakeholders typically make up the board of directors. Each board member is responsible for reflecting and voicing issues of the group s/he represents. In theory, therefore, board members act as "representative" members and should employ strategies to ensure they remain connected to, and informed of, the interests of the groups they serve outside the board. However, in practice, board members may act as "responsible" members, providing a particular point of view based on the perceived best interests of that stakeholder group. Typically, such organizations have staff members who report to the

board of directors with their initiatives. Some types of organizations governed through a stakeholder model are frequently also accountable to government authorities (or sometimes foundations) that provide funding and programmatic direction.

Social enterprises exist to address social or environmental problems by employing business strategies and innovative approaches (Granados *et al.*, 2011). Organizations operating under a social entrepreneurship model are mission-driven, and, instead of distributing profits and surpluses among shareholders like traditional entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs working under a not-for-profit model reinvest revenue into their mission with aims of reducing the dependence on external sources of funding (Kerlin, 2013). Social enterprises usually have a large number and variety of stakeholders because they need to account for a variety of interests, and ensure that they have the expertise and contacts necessary to operate successfully. The board of directors is typically structured to have a variety of perspectives and expertise, although there are typically more people with business backgrounds involved as employees and board members (Papadimos *et al.*, 2013). Community members participate in social enterprises as consumers of the products and services offered by the organization (Jackson & Harrison, 2011). Therefore, social entrepreneurs must work to fill the gaps that are important to community members.

Regardless of the model, success relies on an organization's ability to take effective action and meet desired goals (Hawe *et al.*, 2000). Healey suggests that such success can be secured with social infrastructure that is rich in "institutional capacity". Healey (1998, p. 1541) defines institutional capacity as "encompassing intellectual capital (knowledge resources), social capital (relational resources), and political capital (mobilization potential)". Capacity requires more than simple know-how. It also requires the inclusion of diverse participants who can bring diverse perspectives to bear, effective organizational and leadership skills to encourage people to work together, the ability for participants to deliver on their commitments, and the foresight to take advantage of emerging opportunities. According to Healey (1998, p. 1541), rich institutional capacity "allows rapid mobilization to new circumstances and enables flexible responses to be designed and developed". Her framework provides a mean to analyze both potential and practice of sustainability-oriented organizations. We suggest that organizations with high institutional capacity are typically better able to adapt to changes in external conditions (e.g., funding or policy fluctuations) without significant declines in the functional output of the organization. Both models potentially contribute to that capacity.

The stakeholder model is, in theory, effective at bringing different knowledge, expertise, and perspectives together to build trusting relationships and develop better-informed and robust decisions. A commonly cited drawback, in relation to institutional capacity, is the mobilization potential of the stakeholder model (Reed, 2008). In the social entrepreneurship model, the knowledge and expertise focus less on diversity and integration, and more on relevance, applicability, and the ability of participants to mobilize action related to the organization's mission and goals. Organizations using a social entrepreneurship model are mission-driven and measure their success on their ability to realize their organizational goals; however, the relationship between the public and the organization must be robust, or else the organization will be unsuccessful.

4.4 Context and Research Methods

BRs are UNESCO-designated regions and organizations that operate at the landscape level to carry out three functions: conserve biological and cultural diversity; advance sustainability; and support scientific research, learning, and public education (UNESCO, 1996). Aiming to engage and empower communities, BRs emphasize citizen participation in conservation, research, development initiatives, and skills' training. Canadian BRs have historically been structured as multi-stakeholder forums designed to involve diverse participants such as municipal, provincial and federal governments; representatives of natural resource industries (forestry, fisheries, mining, agriculture, ecotourism) and environmental organizations; academic and/or government researchers and "members-at-large". Many BRs have seats available for First Nations representatives, although as of 2014, active participation of First Nation groups was minimal across the BRs studied. Each BR has a different mechanism for identifying representatives. In some cases, board members may be prescribed by the BR's terms of reference. Municipal and Aboriginal leaders from the region are examples. Some resource sector representatives may also be appointed. In some cases, members are elected from the general public. Typically, these people have been actively involved in establishing the BR. Academic or scientific members of the board (who have often conducted research in the region) have become involved in this way. Frequently, BR boards have a combination of appointed and elected members (Francis, 2004).

The Canadian federal government provided core funding from 2009-2012 through Environment Canada, which was used to support a local staff member (approx. $50,000/yr). In 2012, the federal government abruptly terminated its funding and the BR organizations once more had to rely on specific project grants and donations to fund their core operations. Today, Canadian BRs are seeking to diversify their funding sources to include earned revenue to adapt to increasing competition among non-profits for a shrinking pool of available funding. In some cases, BR organizations are embracing the idea of social entrepreneurship as a mechanism to generate their own revenue in response to the changing landscape of public funding and private philanthropy. Through using a multiple-case study, we compared different BRs (Yin, 2014). Most of the cases were located within a single broad region - the Canadian Maritimes - allowing us to focus attention on shared attributes and challenges. Manicouagan-Uapishka BR is outside of the region studied, but as a BR in a rural and remote region, it faces similar challenges and is governed under the same international program as the other BRs. The four cases presented here exemplify a continuum of practice, with the first having wholly adopted the stakeholder model and the last having adopted a social entrepreneurship model (Fig. 4.1). Classifications have been decided based on the governance and funding structure of the organization, the use of commercial activities, and the innovation shown in their ability to offer social or environmental value. We consider the first case (Southwest Nova) as a stakeholder model because its governance structure is comprised of a stakeholder board, it has relied solely on grant funding, has not explored commercial activities, and has, comparatively, few innovative outcomes. The last (Manicouagan-Uapishka) is considered a model of social entrepreneurship because it has diversified its governance structure and revenue generating strategies to include innovative business operations that have offered broad social and environmental benefit. Cases two and three have adopted attributes of each to varying degrees.

The four organizations differ from one another in a number of ways. First, the age of the organizations varies from 14 to 4 years. Indeed the age of the organization affects its life-cycle stage, which may impact how the organization is governed, as well as its productivity (McClusky 2002). The BRs identified are located in three different Canadian provinces. All of these provinces have average incomes lower than the national average, as well as an average age higher than the national average. Each of the areas occupied by the BRs rely heavily on tourism

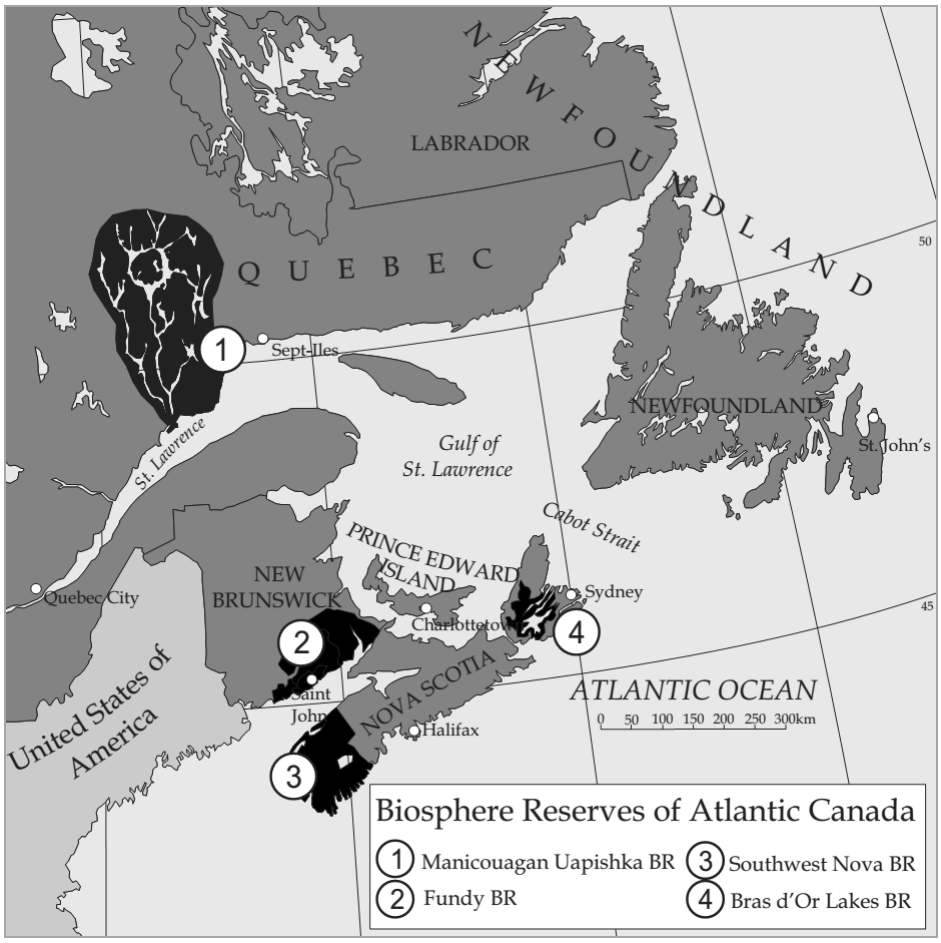


Figure 4.1: *Biosphere Reserves located in Atlantic Canada*
This map shows Atlantic Canada. The numbered circles (1-4) represent each of the biosphere reserves studied. Their geographic reach is represented in black.

and resource extraction. We should note that in Baie Comeau (the largest town in MUBR), the average household income is high in comparison to the other areas (StatsCan 2006).

Using a document review of strategic planning documents, annual reports, newsletters, and information made available by the BRs operating in Atlantic Canada and Quebec, and 23 in-depth interviews conducted from 2011-2014 with members central to each of the organizations, we examined how the governance of these organizations has impacted their ability to achieve their mission and goals, as well as successfully adapt during periods of internal and external change. Interviews were transcribed verbatim. Relevant documents and interviews were coded using qualitative analysis software, *NVivo 10*, to determine current governance priorities and organizational strategies, as well as the success of the organization to fill its mandate.

4.5 Application of the Models in Canadian Biosphere Reserves

In this section, some of the history and challenges faced by the BRs are presented individually. However, because of the small number of people involved who are likely to know one another, we opted to combine the cases when assessing institutional capacity in order to protect the confidentiality and integrity of the research participants and their organizations. A summary of the information provided is available in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: *Summary table of BR information*

	SNBRA	**BLBRA**	**FBR**	**MUBR**
Year Established	2001	2011	2007	2007
Board Structure	Representative stakeholder model	Representative stakeholder model	Representative stakeholder model	Board appointed based on values and expertise
Board Size	21 members	20 members	16 members	9 members
Staff 2011	1 Manager	No paid staff*	1 Executive Director 1 Conservation Program Manager (PT)	1 General Director 1 Project Manager and Communications Coordinator
Staff 2015	No paid staff	No paid staff	1 Executive Director 1 Conservation Program Manager (PT) 1 Communications Director (PT)	1 General Director 1 Project Manager and Communications Coordinator 1 Senior Advisor, Sustainable Development 1 Accounting Manager (PT) 1 Secretary (PT)
Decision-Making Strategy	Decisions go to the board and are debated.	Chair and individuals working on specific projects make relevant decisions. The Board is informed of progress and can offer feedback.	Executive Director takes advantage of opportunities. The Chair is in contact and the Board is informed and can offer feedback.	Board is responsible for the direction of the BR. Decisions are brought to the board. A multi-stakeholder Orientation Table offers advice and guidance to the BR biannually.
Characteristics	• Passive board • Diverse expertise • Difficulty finding new volunteers • Desire to increase output and communications	• Difficulty mobilizing volunteers • Need financial support • Strong network • Desire to increase output • Diverse expertise	• Flexibility to take on projects • Working with many partners (strong network) • Diverse expertise • Raising profile through projects • Challenged to maintain mandate	• Developed community vision for sustainability • Maintaining a strong network • Raising profile through initiatives

*BLBRA was established after the Environment Canada money was allocated given to the Canadian BRs. BRs also receive funding for summer students and short project contracts not included.

4.5.1 Southwest Nova BR

Southwest Nova BR was formally designated in 2001. Their BR association, SNBRA, functions using a policy governance stakeholder model, meaning that the board sets the strategic direction for the BR and makes the final decisions regarding operations and management, including projects, funding, and other governance activities. The board has a maximum of 21 members including representation from what they call three sectors: industry/development, government/First Nations, and non-government. The BR has a core group of committed members who have participated since the beginning.

> *I guess the original board members that have stayed with the biosphere reserve since it began stick with it because they have an intrinsic interest in the biosphere reserve concept and want it to succeed in Southwest Nova. These are the members who speak publicly about the biosphere reserve and champion the concept.*

Despite the benefits of stakeholder model and the commitment of those who champion the concept, SNBRA has been challenged in several ways. The large geographic size of the BR (covering an area of 1,546,374 hectares), as well as the depressed economy in southern Nova Scotia has made it difficult for the Association to muster the capacity and resources to move forward with its mandate.

> *I mean, we looked at the area of the biosphere reserve and said, "Woah, this is a big piece of geography." We are going to be overwhelmed if we have to deal with what is going on in all of the five counties (that are part of the area of the biosphere reserve).*

Because of the size of the area, and the limited capacity within the organization, interviewees expressed that it has been difficult for SNBRA to achieve a presence in the communities that are part of the BR. Internally, there are challenges as well. Along with the other BRs, in 2009, SNBRA received funds from the federal government department, Environment Canada, which paid for a staff member. Interviewees reported that this funding changed the dynamic of the organization.

> *In general, the funding for staff has been a detriment to the board. Because the permanent staff are charged with doing the work of the biosphere reserve, the*

board has become more passive. Because board members think that there is someone hired to do the job, they don't participate actively in the biosphere reserve.

Staff changes followed by funding cuts in 2012 further limited the capacity of the organization to build relationships and to be productive. All interview participants from SNBRA expressed their desire to increase project output, encourage community participation, and improve the profile of the BR. Despite this desire, most board members interviewed were uneasy about moving away from their current governance model to embrace more entrepreneurial attitudes, echoing fears described in the BR's strategic planning documents (i.e., SNBRA 2010).

4.5.2 Bras d'Or Lake BR

Bras d'Or Lake BR, founded in 2011, never received federal funding. The Bras d'Or Lake BR Association (BLBRA) operates through a 20-member voluntary board of directors with representation from the various geographic locations around the Lake, the municipal and First Nations governments, and other volunteer organizations involved in Lake-related projects. BLBRA has worked successfully with existing organizations to determine their role on Cape Breton Island and have successfully partnered with other organizations and expertise in the region to move projects forward. The group worked tirelessly for years to achieve designation, but once the BR was formally designated, the group had difficulty maintaining momentum.

The biggest challenge is there aren't enough people doing enough of the work that could be done for the biosphere reserve. It could be that I'm just frustrated and expecting that more would have happened by now than is happening, but I always, I mean, I feel as though more could be being done.

Despite challenges, the BR has advanced a few projects including an inventory of all of the organizations within the watershed to determine complementary capacity, signage to increase public awareness of the BR, curriculum development for Grade Four science students, and online resources to educate the public about the BR. Although BLBRA has support from diverse expertise, cultural backgrounds, demographics, and organizations, including all levels of government and First Nations communities, interviewees expressed concern about their ability to

move forward because of the lack of financial capital, reliance on volunteers, and the lack of broader knowledge of and support for the BR.

The BLBRA has volunteers and a strong network of organizations willing to participate with the BR; however, interviewees disclosed that, without a central person managing the projects and the associated human capital, the Association has not identified a suitable way to mobilize action with these groups.

4.5.3 Fundy BR

Established in 2007, Fundy BR (FBR) had government funding for most of its existence. FBR's board includes 16 representatives from academic institutions, conservation and heritage organizations, government and municipalities, First Nations, community development agencies, and resource and tourism sectors. The board allows the staff the flexibility to take advantage of opportunities that the staff feels fit within their broad mandate.

> *You mentioned something about innovation in our projects…. we're pretty good at jumping on opportunities when we see them. My board doesn't micromanage me so I don't ask many questions if an initiative fits generally within our mandate and or strategic plan then I go.*

FBR has been successful in receiving grants from various government initiatives, as well as private granting opportunities for a variety of projects; however, the BR has not yet used commercial activities for revenue generation. One interviewee stated that staff and board members continue to be mobilized because of their proactive and enthusiastic attitudes.

> *We take a very proactive approach and the staff that we have on board are also like that and we work well together to get the message out and lead by example.*

This claim is founded, in part, by advertising on its website that articulates a desire to "create a cooperative network of partners who will work to assist communities to achieve greater sustainable development" (http://fundy-biosphere.ca/en/about-us). To this end, it has partnered with educational institutions, the private sector, Parks Canada, cities and municipalities to complete all of its major projects and build a stronger network.

> *The trail project…is a great example of how partnerships work: You find an organization that is like-minded and you take a risk and you think outside the box,*

which the Trans Canada Trail was. Essentially, in order to get this project built we had to map the assets. I got [financial support]… from MEC[7], … from Loblaw Corporation and Trans Canada Trail, … from a local community development agency,… from health, wellness and sport, and the sky is the limit with this project. With all of this support, it expanded from a trail project to an environmental education and stewardship project.

Until 2012, the Executive Director was paid from funds provided by Environment Canada. Additionally, a few part-time and seasonal staff members were funded through grants awarded by the provincial and federal governments. When federal funds were cut, FBR was able to maintain its staff because of its continued success finding project funding. However, a financial plan that relied primarily on project funding made it challenging to address the broader mission and strategic plan of the BR. As one respondent said, *"since the funding cuts, we can't be too picky. We can't afford to be picky."*

Relying only on project funding meant that engaging with new partners was difficult; project grants did not pay for the time needed to foster new and existing relationships. For example, FBR started a Charter Membership Program to raise awareness of, and help engage the local community in, sustainability initiatives. However, without core funding, staff members could not allocate time to making the program more meaningful for those involved. Financial pressure caused the organization to deviate from their strategic goals. Previous to the funding cuts, public education, outreach, and communication were identified as key priorities for the organization; however, as FBR found very few project grants available in these areas, interviewees were not optimistic about the organization's ability to meet these priorities.

Following the federal funding cuts, the FBR started looking into revenue-generating options to support the economic sustainability of their organization. In keeping with social enterprise, they looked into individual donations through PayPal, as well as selling their services through a for-profit arm that marketed the expertise found within their organization to fund their

[7] Mountain Equipment Co-op is a Canadian member-owned cooperative specializing in outdoor and recreational sports equipment and ethical business practices.

non-profit work. The FBR found there were challenges to making the transition to social enterprise:

> *I know one or two other organizations that do it and it works pretty well. It takes an investment of capital. This would probably be the problem. For example for GIS services, if we were going to go that route, we would have to purchase a license and that's expensive. We would also have to consider what our expertise is.*

This observation suggests that a shift towards social enterprise is not seamless, requiring strategic planning and a keen sense of what the broader community requires.

4.5.4 Manicouagan-Uapishka BR

Manicouagan-Uapishka BR (MUBR) was also designated in 2007. At that time, the MUBR adopted the traditional stakeholder model and sought funding by competing for grants. Four specific issues prompted managers of the BR to adopt a social entrepreneurship model in 2009. First, as the organization grew and began to partner with more organizations; those partner organizations wanted to hold a position on the board. However, increasing the number of seats on the board was not realistic.

> *When we were operating under the stakeholder model we had 15 board members. It is difficult to operate with 15 board members… but the thing was that they were all representing a partner and because we were partnering with more and more organizations there were more and more organizations wanting to be a part of the board. This was because the board was the only place that you could be a part of the biosphere reserve. So we had a problem there. And everyone thought that we would increase the number of board members when in fact, we did the opposite - we reduced it to 9.*

The governance structure of MUBR is different than other BRs in Canada. Rather than having seats dedicated to specific categories of stakeholders, new board members are selected for their personal knowledge and expertise, their availability and willingness to be involved, and their motivation to contribute. The BR seeks board members with a combination of entrepreneurial skills and experience, influence and connections in the region, as well as social

and environmental values that complement the BR's vision and mission. Under this new vision, interviewees reported that the board is more comfortable with a certain amount of financial risk.

> *And we decided to have 9 people who are actually there for who they are, not the organization that they are representing… because of their own skills and interests. When we reduced the size of the board we wanted to get people who were more in line with the outcomes of the strategic planning exercise and the organizational objectives.*

In addition to the Board, there is also an Orientation Table, which serves as a multi-stakeholder advisory committee.

> *We created the orientation table where everyone who wanted to deal with strategic planning and project orientation could go there. And everyone who wanted to deal with the administration of the organization (salaries, the day-to-day) would come to the board. It wasn't tough at all. Many of our partners were much more interested in the orientation table than doing the more administrative work. The orientation table has no quorum. The division happened very naturally.*

Interviewees indicated that the Orientation Table offers an opportunity for partners to participate in the BR. It also serves as an accountability structure to community partners and helps to address the possibility of mission drift. The second issue that prompted the adoption of a social entrepreneurship model was that members of the BR sensed that the political climate was very volatile and members did not want to rely on government funding for their organizational sustainability.

> *We had to adapt to the context. Politically, we had a conservative government in at the federal level and a liberal government in place at the provincial level and, together those two governments killed the grant programs. So the size of the cake that we as an NGO could share was getting smaller and smaller and it was getting tougher and tougher to receive grants. And we could see it was only going to get worse.*
>
> *We said if we do not create something that we would be able to sell, if we do not create an expertise that we will be able to sell, we will just sink. And this is*

exactly what would have happened in 2012… We would have crashed like a few other biosphere reserves crashed across the country.

The third issue was the challenge of meeting their organizational mission through the financial constraints of project funding.

Grants decide the objectives. I think lots of NGOs twist their projects to fit the criteria of the grant and you have to do your project in a way that the grant provider will be happy with. [Also,] grants will never pay salaries… You can buy a shovel, you can rent a pickup, but you can't pay anybody. So you're screwed.

The fourth motivation was the need to refine their mission and mandate to better fit the needs of the communities they work with and find a mechanism to connect more effectively with their community to promote sustainability. They identified social entrepreneurship model as a strategy for improving their financial viability while offering products and services that more effectively engage the community to work towards sustainability.

Following a strategic planning session in 2010, MUBR began to offer sustainability services to surrounding communities. They began working towards developing recognized expertise in this area and started to consult with the private sector, helping private companies (e.g., Alcoa) and municipalities (e.g., Baie Comeau) design sustainability plans.

We started this process to put in place a sustainability vision. And the only way we can do that is to help the partners themselves with their sustainability plan. The broader vision of sustainability will need to come from them. And what we're doing is walking with them towards this objective.

We did not start to provide sustainability services because it was a gap in the market. It's because it's our mission. We found a very original and economical way to fulfill our mission. …. The money that we generate through this is used to fund the other parts of our organization, including our work on education and First Nations projects.

MUBR recognized the limitations of this funding structure, identifying that the BR must work for people who can pay. They prioritized working with the municipality because the rural areas do not have the capacity to pay their consultation fees. MUBR has continued to apply for

funding and grants, but this money becomes an addition to the overall organizational budget, rather than the main source of funding.

4.6 Assessing Institutional Capacity in the Biosphere Reserves

The capacity of the BRs to access the three primary resources of institutional capacity is described below. Results are presented so as to ensure the confidentiality of interviewees and specific biosphere reserves.

4.6.1 Knowledge resources and expertise

Support for multi-stakeholder participation in the BRs was affirmed by every interviewee; however, representatives from the three Atlantic BRs identified a need for knowledge and expertise to extend beyond the stakeholder model in four ways. First, they stated that the knowledge and expertise represented on the board of directors for BRs overemphasizes certain knowledge, perspectives and expertise, making other opinions and perspectives underrepresented.

> *I think that the board of directors is a bit too lopsided, towards government and research, and not a realistic representation of what the community is made up of.*

Second, participants identified a need for expertise in areas including: marketing, finance, fundraising, public relations and economic development.

> *I think that we need to get more private sector people on the board – just their way of thinking and their experience doing business.*

> *I'm not a marketing person per se, and I would love to have help from somebody who actually knows how to create that stuff.*

Third, although seats may be filled on the board, interviewees suggested that the knowledge and expertise that is brought to the table is not employed to advance the mission of the BR.

> *I think there are a lot of knowledgeable people in the group that bring expertise to the table, but they need to be tapped - whether it's a municipal counsellor who could talk about how he works with his constituency, or a scientist, or a forest management person … There is tonnes of expertise there [on the board] and I don't think that they're [the board members] being tapped to their potential.*

And, finally, participants identified a need to find people with a passion for the organization's mission and values and who will help move things forward, rather than those who are seen as holding an identified stake.

> *I feel that there should be more doers: those who are engaged and keen to do things. And part of it's the board structure. We have a lot of people on our current board and it has people there because of who they represent, as opposed to because they're keen on the biosphere reserve.*

Interviewees at MUBR recognized the importance of having diverse perspectives, but they indicated the need to have specific knowledge and skills within the organization to fulfill mission objectives and to obtain those skills, where necessary.

> *We needed to go get the skills. We attended training sessions. We got together with people who had the skills.*

> *I would say that the other skill is to be using tools. When we were looking at other organizations that were doing this type of work we were looking at them and they were using mind maps, graphing software and prioritization models. It is important to have these tools. When you arrive in front of business people and say we're going to do it on the screen and actually show them they say, "Oh, this actually works." So we've been developing tools to have preformatted action plans and were always seeking new ways to achieve good results.*

The knowledge and expertise on MUBR's board, therefore, is focused on contributing to the organization's outputs, as opposed to solely having diverse knowledge and expertise. This diversity is reflected at their Orientation Table.

4.6.2 Relational resources

Representatives interviewed from all BRs emphasized the importance of building strong social networks and connections with their partners, the communities, as well as those with broader power and decision-making abilities. While participants from each BR expressed this desire, the Maritime BRs reported that local communities are relatively unaware of BRs. As one participant explained:

I think that within the community we are mostly unknown. I don't think the community thinks that we do anything. They don't know what we do and they don't think we do anything.

And, without significant financial or human capital, BRs are unable to establish and maintain networks and build relationships with identified stakeholders or potential partners. Even in FBR, an organization that has been comparatively successful at building partnerships and fostering active engagement, relational resources are challenged by funding directives.

It's harder because we're very project oriented. [Outreach is] harder to get money for.

As mentioned above, FBR has had to deprioritize their Charter Membership Program, an initiative that promotes community participation in sustainability, in favour of initiatives that are more financially viable.

Although FBR's board participation has remained strong, SNBRA and BLBRA have experienced a drop in board participation.

[Board] attendance has dropped off in many cases. For the AGM this week, … seven have responded saying that they are attending… I think people are stretched thin and they cannot commit the time to come explore an abstract concept like the biosphere reserve.

We couldn't get quorum, official quorum, which is 50% of our board members… all of last year, for any meeting last year.

Another issue reported by all organizations was the challenge between collaborating with other organizations and competing with them for grants.

There are a lot of NGOs… that have a conservation orientation and there's a lot of competition for money… We haven't really staked out what we should be doing and therefore someone else is stepping in and saying, "We'll take the money, we will do that."

MUBR reported using social entrepreneurship to help mitigate these challenges. By employing a social entrepreneurship model, MUBR found that initiatives have become more community focused and, consequently, community participation has increased.

So we aren't only thinking of applying our UNESCO mission, we are trying to apply it in a way that will be useful to our partners… Before we mostly said to partners, "We are a UNESCO biosphere reserve. We have this mandate and you should support us to do it." You can support us with a letter of support or provide us with a grant. But we were never useful to that grant provider. Now it is completely different.

When you apply for a grant you try to fill out the application criteria as best you can - so you receive the grant. But you're never trying to be useful to the grant provider. Now we are. It's a big shift in the mindset. It's completely different.

When asked whether public participation has decreased at MUBR as a result of shifting to a more entrepreneurial model, one interviewee responded:

I say not at all. In fact, it has increased. Much of our work is with municipalities and our bigger mandate working on the Ma Ville, Ma Voix[8] project and we're organizing three forums every year. … I would say that since doing this we have more capacity, a greater ability to leverage [funding, resources] because we are dealing directly with the partners.

When MUBR shifted from the stakeholder model to a more entrepreneurial approach, relationships strengthened and public participation increased.

4.6.3 Mobilization potential

Of the three elements of institutional capacity, mobilization potential poses the greatest challenge for BRs using the stakeholder model. BRs operating under the stakeholder model identified four key constraints to mobilization. First, they reported that, while the breadth of the UNESCO-mandated biosphere functions of conservation, capacity building and sustainable development allowed for flexibility for local implementation, it sometimes became overwhelming and stagnating because they offer no operational or strategic direction. This was particularly true for SNBRA, with several interview respondents identifying this challenge. Consequently, board members tended to adopt a "wait and see" approach rather than make

[8] Ma Ville, Ma Voix (My City, My Voice) is a municipal initiative in the City of Baie Comeau to create citizen dialogue and develop a plan for sustainable development in the region.

implementation decisions. Second, BRs with lower organizational capacity reported becoming increasingly disconnected from the geographic and social communities where they operate. They attributed this disconnection to their lack of community profile and limited community engagement. All BRs emphasized the need to improve their communication and outreach capabilities; however, this goal had proved difficult under the stakeholder model because there was no funding available that focused strictly on these outcomes. MUBR has been able to hire a communications coordinator. FBR has also had paid staff to serve in this capacity. Third, the large number of board members had generated, over time, people with entrenched positions. Because of the difficulty engaging new membership, it was difficult for some organizations to maintain momentum as some partners had left, and those who remained stagnated. These three factors contributed to a fourth challenge – mission drift and stagnation. Where initiatives were taken, they often involved pursuing project funding that lay outside of the original strategic agenda of the BR. The result was that human capacity within these organizations waned and what remained was not used effectively to pursue the organizations' goals.

> *Volunteers can do a lot and will do it well, as long as they know that what they do is going to be used and useful. I do think that there are directors who have sat on the board for years and because they're just not getting anything out of it and they're not contributing anything, they decide to leave. There needs to be a push towards a more active board.*

This finding was interesting as mission drift has been a more common concern raised in relation to social entrepreneurship. Indeed, the BR that had adopted social enterprise was also challenged by a similar pressure.

> *I would say that we're investing far more energy in the lucrative [activity], which is very important. We are still doing stuff with the others [applying for project grants], we have the annual reports to prove it. But of course, first because it's more lucrative, and second because when you enter into a business relationship you start to work and you need to provide results so you take care of it and it becomes a priority. When you deal with trying to put together pride in the region, a feeling of belonging, these are long terms of objectives that daily you won't get a phone call from anyone reminding you that you need to increase the feeling of*

pride in the region, but you will get a call from a client. So it does create a little bit of an imbalance in the priorities.

Hence, it appears that mission drift is a significant factor regardless of the model adopted by the sustainability organization.

4.7 Discussion: Introducing Entrepreneurship to Sustainability Organizations

The BRs involved in this study identified several challenges associated with operating under a stakeholder model. Yet, transitioning completely from the multi-stakeholder model to embrace a social entrepreneurship model may also be undesirable, as certain characteristics emphasized by the stakeholder model including broad participation, diverse perspectives, knowledge sharing, deliberative practice, and collaboration may become undervalued in a model that focuses strictly on social entrepreneurship. Our analysis shows that MUBR has actually adopted a social entrepreneurship model that offers characteristics of both the social entrepreneurship and the multi-stakeholder model: a targeted, small, and active board, and a larger, advisory multi-stakeholder Orientation Table. This Orientation Table allows the organization to take advantage of the benefits of a multi-stakeholder arrangement. Although this model fits within the understanding of social entrepreneurship, we draw attention to the complementary capacity built into MUBR's governance model by relabeling it as the social entrepreneurship/multi-stakeholder hybrid model (referred to as the hybrid model) (Fig 4.2). To date, no Canadian BR has adopted a model that does not incorporate a multi-stakeholder component. Ensuring a multi-stakeholder accountability mechanism may help ensure the organization operating as a social enterprise does not experience mission drift, a common concern discussed in the social entrepreneurship literature. Our results suggest that to avoid stagnation, BRs operating under a stakeholder model can achieve complementary capacity by incorporating elements of social entrepreneurship into their institutional structure. From our analysis, there are four key ways that incorporating a more entrepreneurial approach will enhance institutional capacity.

4.7.1 Targeting expertise and values

As Healey (1998) indicated, the success of an organization or initiative requires more than diverse knowledge and expertise and relational resources; successful mobilization requires

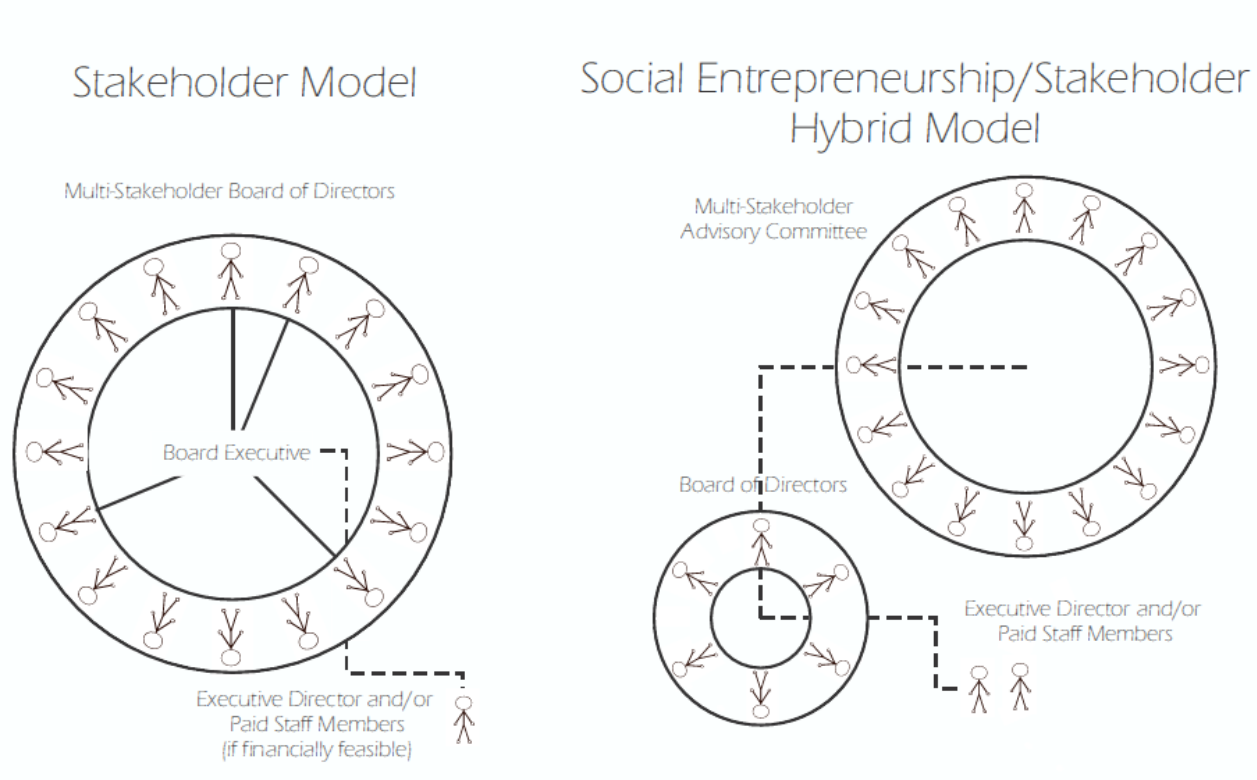


Figure 4.2: *Stakeholder Model vs. Hybrid Model in Biosphere Reserves*
Diagrams representing the governance models used in the biosphere reserves explored. While most biosphere reserves operate using a version of the stakeholder model (a multi-stakeholder board with selected representatives serving as the board executive and, if financially feasible, one or two staff members), Manicouagan Uapishka Biosphere Reserve uses a hybrid model that incorporates characteristics of both the stakeholder model and the social entrepreneurship model. This allows the organization to have diverse representation through their advisory committee, while having an engaged and active board with the knowledge and skills necessary to work with staff members to move the organization forward.

engaging those capable of moving things forward. Healey (1998) emphasized the importance of political capabilities in maximizing mobilization potential, while Lockwood *et al*. (2009) suggested that the efficacy of managers, boards, and organizations is imperative to achieve institutional success. Adopting a social entrepreneurship model requires that mobilization potential be more broadly understood than political capabilities. It also includes recruiting those with diverse perspectives on an issue, targeting knowledge and expertise to fill the logistical functions of the organization, and the drive to take strategic action. Our findings suggest that targeting the right people (who are not necessarily "representative stakeholders") who have appropriate interests, expertise and drive will help the organization operate successfully. Such was the experience in MUBR. While not following that model, the other BR interviewees confirmed this requirement when they expressed a need for board members with expertise in

marketing, fundraising, communications, and economic development to help them with day-to-day operations.

4.7.2 Promoting diverse opportunities for stakeholder and community engagement

The strategies used to encourage participation greatly shape who participates, as well as how individuals and groups participate in the decisions and initiatives that grow out of the process (Reed & Davidson, 2011). The stakeholder model supports the inclusion of a diversity of actors in order to receive input from multiple sources; however, it is important that participatory structures are effectively designed to promote *active* contributions and *meaningful* engagement. There is a tendency for stakeholder boards to become idle because the model emphasizes the importance of dialogue, discussion, and consensus, as opposed to productivity and outcomes (Singleton, 2002). This type of governance strategy does not encourage board members to be active. In our cases, it resulted in near stagnation – characterized by frustration among board members about the lack of productivity and the role they played at the meetings, dropping numbers, lack of commitment, and a general public knowledge of the organization. While some researchers have argued that broad knowledge, expertise and perspectives results in more legitimate and robust environmental decisions (e.g., Reed *et al.*, 2006; Reed, 2008), others criticize this model for inhibiting timely decisions and decisive actions (e.g., Parkins & Davidson, 2008). Our research suggests that both may be true. In the absence of a clear guiding strategic vision, consensus may simply mask indecision and inaction. By contrast, the model of MUBR involving a small action-oriented board and a multi-stakeholder advisory committee (their Orientation Table) offered two different ways to participate. By offering a hybrid model, MUBR encouraged meaningful and purposeful engagement of stakeholder groups and set clear objectives for the participatory process, thus encouraging these members to show up ready to actively participate in either higher-order strategic discussions or more immediate operational decisions.

4.7.3 Encouraging strategic direction and associated outcomes

Collaborative and participatory models of environmental governance move to advance a shared understanding of complex societal challenges (Healey 1998). Researchers and practitioners have suggested that governance principles must ensure that high level policy

directives (such as the UNESCO mandate for BRs) are combined with the ideas and values of local stakeholders, appropriately synthesized, and expressed as a shared vision (Dale and Newman, 2007; Lockwood *et al*., 2009). The shared vision must be comprehensive enough to account for diverse stakeholder perspectives, but directive enough to promote the development of strategic goals and attainable objectives (Healey, 1998; Mitchell, 2002). As part of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere program, each BR is offered the same broad, high-level mandate to tailor to their specific context. Yet, we found that those operating within a stakeholder model have had difficulty translating this mandate into a strategic direction and actions that suit their context. Adopting an outcome-oriented approach through social entrepreneurship became a way for at least one Canadian BR to ensure that the organization continued to move forward effectively and had a set of targets against which to evaluate their outcomes. In doing so, adopting a social entrepreneurship model strengthened the mobilization potential of the organization and, thus, its institutional capacity. Other cases verify our findings, showing that implementing a social entrepreneurship model prompts participants to reframe their perspectives and adopt a vision for the organization that promotes more strategic action (e.g., Biggs *et al.*, 2010).

4.7.4 Offering opportunities for more diversified and stable funding models

Stakeholder-based organizations operating though project grants are challenged in several ways. First, project money is typically not well tailored to an organization's mission; hence, the mission may shift according to the funding source. Second, grants and other forms of funding opportunities typically do not compensate for administrative time, so in organizations where there is no core or foundational funding source, it is extremely difficult to run an organization strictly from project grants. Third, grant funding raises the collaboration/competition conundrum as like-minded organizations typically compete for the same project funding. Civil society organizations have the opportunity to cooperate, pool resources, and share information, but because of the competition for funds, many non-government organizations are placed in a difficult position; organizations may undermine competitors, conceal information, and choose to act alone. For example, a national partnership for BRs suggested that, at the outset, some participants were reluctant to share their 'best practices' with others, with concerns that this may give other practitioners a competitive advantage for funding (Reed *et al.*, 2014). This competitiveness weakens many organizations, and also creates duplication, waste and

incompatible goals, and collective inefficiencies. It also weakens the unity and impact of collective outcomes. Finally, relying on project money is inherently unsustainable. An organization is unable to plan for the long term or build on their organization when they are operating through project grants. Adopting a strategy of diversified funding that includes social enterprise, as done in MUBR, promotes financial sustainability and allows the organization to build towards longer-term goals.

4.8 Conclusion

This paper assessed the conceptual and operational feasibility of integrating social entrepreneurship into governance models emphasizing the importance of participation and collaboration. Review of the literature revealed that conceptually, integration of the stakeholder and the social entrepreneurship models is indeed possible and could result in greater institutional capacity through drawing on the knowledge and expertise brought by the stakeholder model and the stronger mobilization potential of the social entrepreneurship model. Analysis of four BRs in Atlantic Canada and Quebec revealed that organizations operating under the traditional multi-stakeholder model were less productive, less likely to meet their mission objectives, and more likely to experience crippling economic stress than those that incorporated entrepreneurial strategies. Interestingly, there were no significant trade-offs to date associated with this transition at MUBR. Adopting key elements of a social entrepreneurship model at MUBR enhanced broad participation and collaboration and improved the organization's institutional capacity.

Whether this model can be maintained and readily transferred to other BRs and sustainability organizations more broadly, remains to be seen as local contexts differ. MUBR is a new BR and its restructuring did not threaten entrenched interests. Additionally, while MUBR shares common features of Canadian rural life, such as depopulation of the youth, there are also significant local players willing to pay for services they provide (e.g., Municipality of Baie Comeau, Alcoa). In the more depressed economy of Atlantic Canada, such willingness may not be as forthcoming. Hence, we suggest turning to a hybrid that draws on the strengths of both. A hybrid that incorporates targeted participation, diverse opportunities for community engagement, strategic outcomes, and a varied funding model could help sustainability organizations shift from an inherently reactive situation to one that is more anticipatory and innovative. A hybrid will also help these organizations build effective partnerships with others to better address regional

governance for sustainability. In this way, sustainability organizations may simultaneously build their institutional capacity while directly responding to community needs, thereby enhancing their sustainability mission.

Our focus on understanding and improving institutional capacity and collaboration through social entrepreneurship remains under-explored by environmental scholars. To date, such scholarship has focused more on critiquing existing arrangements than on offering alternatives. Our alternative combines the best features of two models. Since there is no BR organization that has fully adopted social entrepreneurship, it is not presently possible to determine whether becoming a social enterprise is a desirable option for BRs. Future research might more fully explore the spectrum of possible governance options by comparing a hybrid option against a strict social enterprise, should one emerge within the spectrum of organizations studied. Our research has revealed, however, that if sustainability organizations truly seek to make transformational change, they will need to sharpen new tools and ways of thinking. Research that thinks "outside the box" by targeting new kinds of strategies and identifying the means to make transitions will offer new options for sustainability organizations and will improve our understanding of the contribution of social innovation to advancing sustainability.

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion – Integrating just sustainability into place-based sustainability organizations

5.1 Synopsis

This research contributes to the theory and operationalization of the concept of just sustainability in place-based organizations. I applied this concept to the operations of BRs and MFs working to promote sustainability at the local level. I assessed their governance structures and processes against just sustainability outcomes. I utilized an interdisciplinary approach, looking to literature from geography, political science, business, public health, and social studies to address deficiencies identified through my multi-case analysis. Through comparing these organizations I was able to i) assess the governance strategies used within these organizations against just sustainability theory; ii) understand the challenges faced by place-based organizations and identify strategies to improve local understanding, community empowerment, as well as sustainability outcomes; and iii) assess the feasibility - conceptually and empirically – of incorporating social entrepreneurship into the governance practices of sustainability organizations to bring together the benefits of both stakeholder and social entrepreneurship approaches to addressing sustainability challenges.

Chapter 2 evaluated the consensus-based stakeholder model used in BRs and MFs against a framework for procedural justice. The organizational structure used within these organizations resulted in challenges associated with recognition, participation and building capabilities found in other participatory approaches and reproduced elitism and professionalism associated with stakeholder models more generally. This chapter highlighted the importance of addressing procedural justice issues in order to meet broader sustainability challenges, providing evidence to further validate the need for a concept of just sustainability.

Chapter 3 offered new perspectives about how place-based sustainability organizations can improve their operational procedures to increase their ability to meet their organizational mission while improving their connection to, and impact in, the communities they serve. Through comparing the BRs and MFs studied to VC Saint John, opportunities for sustainability organizations were identified. A framework emphasizing procedural drivers for place-based governance for sustainability was developed and then revisited, drawing insights from the

lessons learned from VC Saint John. Results showed that looking to organizations like VC Saint John may offer opportunities for innovations for place-based governance for sustainability, including methods for promoting community connection, empowerment and outcomes through collaborative leadership, strategic engagement and networking, learning for collective action, and well-communicated experimentation and little wins.

Chapter 4 considered how social entrepreneurship could be integrated into governance models that have been designed to foster stakeholder participation and collaboration. Results suggest that there are opportunities for both conceptual and practical integration. Conceptually, integrating social entrepreneurship with the stakeholder model offers the potential for greater institutional capacity. Analysis of four BRs revealed the same results. Based on the results, we suggested the development of a hybrid model that builds the institutional capacity gained by social enterprise into sustainability organizations.

Overall, findings suggest designing a governance strategy for sustainability that is adaptive, addresses procedural concerns, engages the community, and successfully produces outcomes requires that sustainability scholars and practitioners look beyond their environmental roots to embrace ideas and innovations from other disciplines and sectors. This research focused on seeking alternative governance arrangements, rather than continuing to critique existing strategies. Results showed opportunities for innovations for place-based governance for sustainability informed by environmental and social justice literature, community development perspectives, and the theory and practice of social entrepreneurship. This research focused on developing areas that, to date, are underdeveloped by environment and sustainability scholars.

5.2 Contributions and Significance

Together, these manuscripts contribute to sustainability governance, both in theory and in practice. As issues including social well-being, equity, and procedural justice become more apparent, scholars and practitioners of sustainability are challenged to broaden their conceptualization to incorporate social aspects (Agyeman *et al.*, 2003; Sachs, 2005). This is where this research offers its key contribution. Theoretically, this research shows that broadening sustainability understandings beyond environmental considerations offers the opportunity for theoretical innovations. These innovations not only address procedural concerns put forward by just sustainability, but also enhance the mobilization potential and outcomes

associated sustainability governance. This research also offers operational insights for practitioners working towards sustainability objectives in place-based organizations.

To date, strategies employed to address sustainability challenges are highly reflective of environmental discourses and scholars have been hesitant to encourage the integration of certain knowledge and practice into governance for sustainability. This research identified opportunities for innovation arising from interdisciplinary exploration and integration. Chapter 2 provided a framework to characterize and analyze procedural concerns in sustainability organizations. Chapter 3 offered a framework for understanding procedural drivers for place-based governance for sustainability, derived from and interdisciplinary literature review and lessons learned from cross-organizational comparisons. Chapter 4 offered the conceptual integration of social entrepreneurship and multi-stakeholder forms of governance to more effectively achieve the procedural and substantive outcomes associated with sustainability. My efforts to integrate insights from multiple sources demonstrate the value of interdisciplinary understandings in addressing challenges associated with advancing sustainability outcomes.

This research also offers the potential for practical application. I focused my research on the internal operations of non-government organizations and the resulting strategies that these organizations employ to address sustainability issues. To date, there has been little attention paid to the structures, procedures and strategies that occur *within* sustainability organizations. The BRs and MFs studied employ a consensus-based stakeholder model as their primary governance strategy. This dissertation offers lessons that can inform the governance strategies of these organizations. This research also produced information about community needs and values that can be used to inform future initiatives in these organizations (Appendix C). Key lessons from this dissertation have been distilled into a handbook for the organizations involved in this study.

5.3 Challenges and Limitations

As a student of the School of Environment and Sustainability, I was challenged to conduct research that was truly interdisciplinary. This research challenged me to draw novel connections between disciplinary concepts from business, public health, social studies, geography, and political science to appropriately synthesize and integrate interdisciplinary information. As my project developed, the interdisciplinary nature of the project posed several challenges, many of which have been identified in the literature (e.g., Golde & Gallagher, 1999).

The first challenge – which can also be viewed as a benefit – was the opportunity to drift across disciplines looking for applicable information. For me, this was a particularly important feature my research. I continue to be more concerned about offering meaningful contributions to theory and practice than adhering to disciplinary bounds. However, this opportunity offered a truly intimidating number of options for me as I shaped my study. Methodologically, I was challenged by 'epistemological pluralism'. Because I was drawing from so many literatures, I found that during my data collection I wanted to ask about everything to make sure that I had all of the information I needed to form my later arguments. I did several rounds of interviewing to address new questions that kept arising. I wanted more answers - a more complete picture. Then, finding a way to weave these results together in one body of work posed a personal challenge. However, through this experience I learned new ways to integrate information. Another related challenge was the ambiguity associated with the acceptable level of knowledge (disciplinary depth) that I needed to achieve in areas I was writing on, but did not have a formal background in. My most certain example is social entrepreneurship. I explored this topic because of my desire to make my thesis applicable and useful to the organizations that were part of my study, as well as make meaningful contributions to theory in this area. I did not have a background in business and, at the time of my comprehensive exams, could not have foreseen the need to address it. Because of this, I consulted those who were more experienced in the topic for guidance.

As in any graduate program, my study limitations included academic timeframes, financial resources, and human capacity for fieldwork and data analysis. Studies conducted over a longer timeframe offer opportunities to develop meaningful partnerships that benefit both the researcher and the community partner. Longer studies also have the potential to offer greater insight into organizational transitions, adaptations, and innovations. Because of the distance between the University of Saskatchewan and my study sites, going back and forth multiple times was not an option. This limited my direct experience in the case study areas. Further, the snowball sampling technique used to solicit interview participation meant that some perspectives were underrepresented (because they are underrepresented in the organizations). In a study with more human capacity, I would have liked to actively seek additional participation, specifically from those groups identified in Chapter 2 as having limited participation in the BRs and MFs, including First Nations, Acadians, and new immigrants. In a way, my identity as a relatively

young female student meant that members of the organizations were more willing to speak openly with me because they were educating me about their organization and helping me with my studies. A couple of my interview participants openly admitted that they were more willing to participate in the interviews because I was a student and that they would have likely refused if I had been a professional researcher. I must acknowledge that my identity could have affected the research results. Who I am and the rapport I developed with participants likely shaped their responses.

5.4 Future Work

The research presented in this thesis offers a modest contribution to research exploring how the concept of just sustainability can inform place-based organizations working towards sustainability objectives. Through conducting this work, I have identified a number of areas where more research would be welcome.

Uniting the concepts of just sustainability and place-based governance for sustainability has identified the need to enhance the social and economic data available to and used by organizations working towards sustainability. These organizations would benefit from greater understanding of their local context, including income levels, equity, well-being, as well as community needs, concerns and priorities. Through the process of gathering this information, organizations will likely improve their internal organizational capacity, as well as the capacity of the communities that they intend to serve. Research into making this connection is necessary.

The results of this thesis speak to the opportunities for cross-organizational comparisons to share innovations and lessons learned. Among BRs and MFs, these comparisons are already being made (e.g., Bullock & Reed, 2015; Reed *et al.*, 2014); however, the importance of procedural aspects is often difficult to articulate and requires more in-depth case analysis to offer useful advice. Therefore, there are opportunities to apply the conceptual frameworks offered in Chapters 2-4 to other BRs and MFs in Canada to encourage these organizations to learn from each other and adapt their procedural practice to become more effective in advancing sustainability outcomes. Additionally, there are opportunities to apply these frameworks to other civil society organizations working at the local level to help them examine the procedural aspects of their governance strategies.

There continues to be a need for long-term studies that follow these organizations through the development and adoption of new strategies to explore innovations and set-backs. Such long-term studies will offer the best information to establish directives for governance for sustainability. This thesis followed these organizations through federal funding cuts that resulted in the loss of the core funding to the BRs and MFs in 2012 and 2013. How each organization responded offers insight into their respective governance practices. Long-term studies will also help to assess factors that enhance and constrain place-based organizations working to advance sustainability.

Interdisciplinary perspectives offer opportunities for social innovation for governance for sustainability. Chapter 3 offered lessons from an anti-poverty organization that can be applied to organizations wanting to improve their community connection and applicability. Chapter 4 recognized social entrepreneurship as a possible strategy for governance for sustainability. These suggestions identify the potential for more research that grapples with the conceptual feasibility of integrating various strategies into place-based governance for sustainability. As well, more empirical data to support or reject the practical integration of social entrepreneurship for governance for sustainability is needed.

To conclude, it is important to acknowledge that sustainability theory and practice has been largely informed by those with an environmental focus. Governance for sustainability requires researchers and practitioners broaden their thinking beyond environmental aspects and better integrate environmental and social dimensions of sustainability. It may also require more bridges to be built across disciplinary and organizational boundaries. For academics, this may mean conducting collaborative research across fields of study; for practitioners, this may mean seeking new kinds of organizations to form partnerships. It may mean conducting transdisciplinary research where practitioners and researchers work more closely together. Ultimately, such efforts require that scholars and practitioners continue to innovate theories for sustainability governance to inform practice and improve the capacity of organizations advancing sustainability on the ground. This research offers a modest step in that direction.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (ROUND 1)

Question 1
About personal involvement in the BR/MF/VC.

a) What is your role in the BR/MFVC?
b) How long have you been involved in the BR/MF/VC?

Question 2
About the mission/goals, objectives and strategies of the organization.

a) How do you understand how the [mission statement/goals] "play out" in practice in the MF/BR/VC?
b) Who are the key actors within the region aside from the MF/BR/VC that you work with to meet your goals/mission?
c) Are there other groups who should be involved in the BR/MF/VC that currently are not? [If so, why not?]

Question 3
About setting priorities

a) The documents that I have reviewed suggest that the major issues in this region that could affect or be affected by the BR /MF/VC's mission are:
    i. Have I characterized the regional issues appropriately? Have I missed any big ones?
    ii. Which of these issues, if any, has the BR/MF/VC tried to address?
b) How do you determine program/project priorities for your organization?
    i. To what extent does your involvement in the national network shape your priorities locally?
c) What groups (or individuals) typically get involved in deciding priorities of the BR/MF/VC? What groups (or individuals) typically do not?

Question 4
About specific initiatives

*a) If you were to select 1-3 key initiatives undertaken by the BR/MF/VC in the last 10 years, what would those initiatives be? (These can be "**success stories**" or "**not so successful stories**.")*
b) Take each initiative separately. Can you describe it and reflect on what you learned from it? [View the questions below as probes, to be asked only if the interviewee does not answer them]
    a. What was the purpose of [initiative 1]? (e.g. to resolve or reduce a conflict? to build cooperative relations and action? to find and evaluative possible solutions to a recognized problem? to experiment with an innovative approach? ...)

b. *Why was it significant?*
c. *How did the BR/MF/VC decide whether or not to get involved? (e.g. it arose out of a defined strategic plan, or appeared unexpectedly as an attractive opportunity, or the BR./MF/VC was invited by other participants to play an important role? or ...)*
d. *What strategies and/or tools were used? (e.g. facilitating discussions among relevant stakeholders? pilot/demonstration project, efforts to find agreement on the characteristics of a desirable future?...)*
e. *What role(s) did the BR/MF/VC play? (e.g. securing funding from other sources, providing funding, brokering between two or more groups, providing labour, providing specific expertise, providing infrastructure)*
f. *What were you able to accomplish? What things had you hoped to do that you were not able to?*
g. *Can you describe the factors that facilitated this initiative?*
h. *What factors acted as barriers?*
i. *What are the key lessons you take away from this initiative?*

Question 5
About the activities of the organization
The following table provides a tentative list of activities that might involve your organization.

The table asks you to:
a) *Identify how important each management activity has been/is to your BR/MF/VC*
b) *How often your organization engages in these activities.*
c) *For activities you engage in sometimes or never, what activity would you make a much higher priority of you had more time and other resources? Why?*

Please fill out your answers below

Management activity Does your organization:	How important is this management activity?				How often do you engage in this management activity?			
	Extremely	**Very**	**Somewhat**	**Not at all**	**Daily**	**Often**	**Sometimes**	**Never**
engage stakeholders (ie. interest groups) and rightsholders (ie. landowners) in long term planning?								
allow for/promote the development of new initiatives and programs?								
scope out and/or conduct needs assessments that identify regional issues?								
support environmental management through initiatives/programs?								
inform community members of programs or decisions?								
monitor/evaluate the program effectiveness and outcomes?								
conduct performance evaluations and reviews?								
foster communication and knowledge exchange through appropriate forums within and outside the organization								
seek opportunities for outreach and spread initiative/programs?								
provide support to research programs or activities?								
establish partnerships with other regional organizations?								
encourage partnerships with research organizations?								
partner with other Biosphere Reserves and Model Forests?								
get involved in activities of the national network?								
get involved with an international partner?								
Other (specify)								

Question 6
Governance arrangements

a) *Have I explained the governance structure of the organization accurately?*
b) *What arrangements (such as subcommittees, working groups, caucus) have worked well or not so well in the governance of the BR/MF/VC organization?*
c) *What factors facilitate or hinder your abilities to*
    i. *work effectively internally?*
    ii. *work effectively with other groups?*

Interplay, Partnerships, and Networking Multi-scale Governance

d) *Do you work with other organizations? What do you feel could be gained by working with other organizations with similar objectives? Can you foresee any challenges?*
e) *How does your organization establish or join partnerships with other groups in the region? Explain*
f) *Are there key actors you think the BR/MF/VC is not connecting with beyond the organization but within the broader region? Why have you not connected with them?*

Connecting Institutional Objectives to Community Vision

g) *How does the vision and goals of this organization differ from those of the partner groups and the community? Do you feel that any objectives outlined by this organization complement community needs and priorities?*
h) *How would you describe the history of collaboration or cooperation between this organization and the local community?*

Building Local and Regional Capabilities

i) *Do you feel that this organization utilizes the talents and resources of a variety of community members? If yes, how is this done?*

Question 7
About Justice

Recognition/Participation

a) *Do you feel the current membership of your organization is representative of all those who may be affected by this organization's activities? If not, why not?*
b) *Do you feel that a particular interest group holds more power? What is this power associated with (knowledge, money)?*
c) *Do you feel that any contrasting/divergent views represented in the community are adequately represented within your organization? Can you suggest points of view that may be over/under represented?*
d) *Can you identify any groups that might be important in this way to the region?*

e) *What have been the factors that have facilitated or constrained effective participation of this/these group(s) in the BR/MF/VC?*

f) Has your BR/MF/VC linked with other Aboriginal organizations or initiatives in the region? What was your experience? What lessons do you take away from this experience?

Decision-Making

g) Who decides what initiatives this organization will become involved in? Do certain individuals or interests have more influence than others?

h) Are members encouraged to identify or draw attention to new ideas, issues, problems, or opportunities as they arise? How often? How is this done?

i) Are any topics not able to be discussed at your decision-making table because of potential conflicts?

j) Do you feel your organization has the knowledge, skills and resources to effectively address the issues that affect it?

k) How effective is information sharing in your organization? How well do individuals/organizations update one another? Is this information relayed to the community?

Final Questions

a) Do you have other observations or comments to make?

b) Do you have any questions for me?

c) Would you like a copy of the transcript?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (ROUND 2)

Section 1 - Personal Involvement (For those who I have not interviewed before)

1) *How long have you been involved in the BR/MF/VC?*
2) *What is your role in the BR/MF/VC? Has it changed over time?*
3) *Do you represent a particular organization or stakeholder group?*

Section 2 – Organizational Strength, Innovation, Adaptive Capacity in the face of Transitions

1) *Please identify any challenges that your organization has come up against in the past. I know that a big challenge has been the federal funding cuts. What was your initial reaction? How did the organization react? Are there any other examples?*
2) *Do you feel that your governance structure helped or hindered your preventative and reactive actions? Please explain.*

Organizational Sustainability

3) *How does your organization take steps to ensure that it will survive into the future?*
    a. *Does your organization do reviews and evaluations of past performance to determine lessons learned? If so, how do you go about doing it? Who is involved? How is it reported? How are the lessons learned from evaluations adopted into your organization?*
    b. *Does your organization engage in idea generation/brainstorming/community envisioning? If so, how is this done? Who is involved? How frequently does this occur? How are the results from these exercises adopted into the organization?*

Organizational Strength (Resilience)

4) *What aspects of your governance structure contribute to organizational strength?*
    a. *What type of expertise do you feel is well represented within your organization?*
    b. *What characteristics of your organization give it the strength to overcome challenges such as the ones just identified?*
    c. *Given the recent changes to your funding, are there any areas that you see a need for improvement in your organization to improve its strength? If so, what are they? Is there expertise that you feel is lacking? How do you envision the first steps towards improving organizational strength?*

Adaptive Capacity

5) *Do you feel that you have the right membership within your organization to adapt to these changes?*
    a. *Do you have the 'right people'? How do you describe the 'right people'?*
    b. *Do these people have the right expertise? Is there additional expertise needed*
    c. *Do you feel that there are other groups that should be included in your organization?*

Social Innovation

6) *How does your organization maintain a forward momentum (the ability to innovate)?*
   a. *Can you describe an example of social innovation within your organization? What was the process? What were the outcomes?*

Section 3 – Social Networking

Community Connection

1) *Do you feel that the community is aware of this organization? How does the local community perceive this organization? Has community perception, positive or negative, had an impact on this organization?*
2) *How would you describe the history of collaboration or cooperation between this organization and the local community? Could you give an example of an experience?*
3) *Do you feel that any objectives outlined by this organization complement community needs and priorities?*

Connection to Other Organizations

4) *Do you work with other organizations? What do you feel could be gained by working with other organizations with similar objectives? Can you foresee any challenges?*
5) *How does your organization establish or join partnerships with other groups in the region? Explain*
6) *What factors facilitate or hinder your abilities to work effectively with other groups?*

Connections with Higher-Level Organizations

7) *What is your relationship with the national network for your organization and other biosphere reserves or model forests? Do you think that they could help? In what ways would you look to them for support?*
8) *Your organization has representation from provincial and federal government. What do you look to them to do?*
9) *What about industry partners? Is there anything that they will do to help?*
10) *Of each of the partners described, as well as others, how would you look to them to support your organization?*

Section 4 - Things to add

1) *Do you have anything you would like to add? Do you feel that I missed something?*
2) *Do you feel that there is anything that you or your organization would like to learn through this research?*

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (ROUND 3)

Questions for M-U

1. *What is your personal involvement with the biosphere reserve? How long have you been involved in the biosphere reserve? In what capacity?*
2. *What enticed you to become a part of the biosphere reserve? How did you hear about it? Why did you become involved?*

Transition/Innovation

3. *Shortly after obtaining formal status of a biosphere reserve, you undertook a wide strategic planning exercise. Your organization chose to develop an entrepreneurial culture.*
    a. *Why did you choose to do this?*
    b. *Was it well received by everyone involved? Were there any specific groups who were particularly concerned about the biosphere reserve moving toward this model?*

Adaptation

4. *Did the shift to the social entrepreneurship model require any additional expertise or capacity?*
5. *Has the membership of your organization changed in response to adopting a social entrepreneurship model? Are you seeking membership from different expertise, funders, etc.?*

    "For the RMBMU, the selection of the board members shifted from having seats dedicated to categories of stakeholders (first nations, environment, education, etc), to a board organisation based on the individuals rather than on the seats. These individuals are now elected for their personal knowledge, availability and motivation to contribute. Globally, the board is seeking individuals to get a good balance of entrepreneurial skills and experience, influential leaders in the region and guardians of social values."
6. *Has your management structure (board, staff) changed since implementing the social entrepreneurship model?*
7. *How have your initiatives been refocused? Has there been a shift in priorities?*

How does you social entrepreneurship model work?

Looking through the document, "Manicouagan-Uapishka Biosphere Reserve and Social Entrepreneurship", I had a couple of questions.

8. *In the document you refer to entrepreneurial culture. What does entrepreneurial culture mean to you?*
9. *You talk about credible/competitive expertise. What does that mean to you? How is that built in a biosphere reserve?*

    To succeed along this path, the RMBMU now needs to generate a competitive expertise, efficient working tools, distinctive partnerships, in order to offer services that would stay attractive on the market.

10. *You talk about the importance of diversifying funding sources and being less dependent on grants. Where does your funding come from?*

    To diversify funding sources and being less dependent of grants, puts therefore the organization in a healthy state and allows it to move forward, to think outside of the box, to increase its tolerance to risk taking and to take decisions on a longer term basis.

11. *What is your 'auto-generated income'?*

    That, does not mean that contributions from economic development organizations, grants from foundations and subsidies from government, are not welcome anymore – they are just no longer critical for the organisation, because the dependency model has been replaced by a combination of grants and auto-generated income.

12. *Do you have any paid products and services?*

13. *Please describe your successes to date.*

Broader Application – Connections to Other Biosphere Reserves

14. *Based on your experiences and your knowledge of the other biosphere reserves operating in Canada, do you foresee any challenges?*
15. *What do you see as the three key pieces of advice that you would give to biosphere reserves attempting to advance the biosphere reserve concept in Canada?*

APPENDIX B

RAPID SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographic Questions

Are you from this community? ☐ Yes ☐ No, from _____ (must be relatively local)

Gender

☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Other

Age

☐ 15-19
☐ 20-24
☐ 25-29
☐ 30-34
☐ 35-39
☐ 40-44
☐ 45-49
☐ 50-54
☐ 55-59
☐ 60-64
☐ 65-69
☐ 70-74
☐ 75-79
☐ 80-84
☐ 85-89
☐ 90-94
☐ 95-99
☐ 100+

Household Income

☐ $0 - $19,999
☐ $20,000 - $39,999
☐ $40,000 - $59,999
☐ $60,000 - $79,999
☐ $80,000 - $99,999
☐ $100,000+

Education

☐ Some Grade School
☐ Completed Grade School
☐ Some High School
☐ Completed High School
☐ Some Technical and Vocational
☐ Some Community College
☐ Completed Community College
☐ Some University
☐ Received Undergraduate
☐ Received Graduate Degree

Labour Force Activity

☐ Unpaid work/unpaid care
☐ Management occupations
☐ Business, finance, administration occupations
☐ Natural and applied sciences and related occupations
☐ Health occupations
☐ Occupations in social science, education, government service
☐ Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport
☐ Sales and service occupations
☐ Trades, transport and equipment operators
☐ Occupations unique to primary industry
☐ Occupations unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities

Questions

1. *What do you value within your community?*
2. *Are there any aspects of your community that you would like to see improved? These can be specific actions or general themes for change.*
3. *For each of the aspects that you just identified, who to do you think is responsible to making the appropriate changes? (provincial/municipal governments, private donors, community groups, community members)*
4. *How would you support the changes that you would like to see in your community?*
5. *Do you currently support, or have you supported, any initiatives through volunteering, charitable donations and other actions?*
6. *Are you familiar with any non-government organizations or community groups that are working to address the issues you have previously raised?*
7. *Are you familiar with the biosphere reserves and model forests working in your region? (When asking the question, we will refer to the biosphere reserves and model forests by name). (If yes), what do you think these organizations do?*

APPENDIX C

Table C.1: *Community Values, Needs and Improvements Identified through Community Surveys*

	Aspect Identified (Number of respondents)	**Top examples identified for each aspect**
Community Values	Size of Community (209)	Small size
		Peaceful and quiet
		Laidback
	Natural Environment Surrounding Community (185)	Nautral beauty of the area
		Outdoor recreation value
		Environmental health of the area
	Sense of Community (176)	Everyone knows everyone
		Everyone is friendly
	Services Available (134)	Services that help ensure public safety - Fire department, police
		Access to healthcare institutions
		Access to education
	Sense of Place (83)	Grown up there
		Connected to the environment
	Family (71)	Have family in the area
Needs and Improvements Identified	Employment Opportunities and Business Development (160)	Need for economic opportunity
		Need for employment and careers
		Need for business development
	More Community Programming (121)	More programs for youth, children, and families, as well as seniors
	More Services (104)	More opportunities and resources for job training
		More services for low income families and individuals
		Better healthcare and services for seniors
	More Community Activities (93)	More recreational activities
		More cultural activities
		A place for the community to gather
	More Amenities (80)	More shopping opportunities
		More restaurants
	More Events and Entertainment (46)	More music, movies, etc.

Survey participants were asked what they really valued about living in their community and what their community assets were. Participants were also asked to identify their greatest community needs and how they would like to see their community improved. Participants were allowed to offer as many responses as they wanted. Responses were coded into themes. The top responses are offered in the Table A.1.

Survey participants said that they valued the size of the communities and the associated laidback lifestyle. Survey participants also said that they value the natural environment, but perceived their environment as relatively pristine (and therefore there was no pressing need to protect it). Other values included their sense of place and family in the area. The need for identified improvements mostly concerned social and economic issues. The primary concern for survey participants was economic development and employment opportunity. The second most common issue was the need for more community programming. Those survey participants who were more highly educated and wealthier (with the exception of students) identified that improvements need to be made with relation to the environment and sustainability within their communities. Of those surveyed, 12.8% said that they couldn't identify any community needs, 5.3% advocated for greater environmental protection, 4.6% wanted better public transportation systems, and 7.1% identified a need to improve community relationships and involvement.

When asked "Are any organizations working to address the needs and improvements?", 60.4% said that, to their knowledge, there were no organizations working on the issues that they listed. Of those who responded yes, organizations that were addressing the issues addressed included the municipalities, tourism advisory committees, and church groups. Respondents also noted that there is a lot of good planning, but not a lot of action is taken. They observed that there are lots of good ideas, but they have not seen organizations doing much and what organizations have been doing is not well advertised.