



how we **THRIVE**

June 17–20, 2018

howwethrive.org

Mount Saint Vincent University
Halifax, Nova Scotia



Photos by Dana Perry

THE INTENTION

- ▶ to catch glimpses of a “future that works” for all
- ▶ to learn from examples we can build on
- ▶ to build and deepen relationships across difference
- ▶ to pick up ideas, skills & tools we need
- ▶ to be challenged, inspired, renewed

THE DESIGN

- ▶ 4 days: enough time to learn, practice, connect
- ▶ big-picture, future oriented
- ▶ hands-on capacity-building for working in complexity
- ▶ integration of First Nations, African Nova Scotian, Gaelic and newcomer perspectives and leadership
- ▶ integration of the arts, reflection and multiple ways of knowing

THE INCUBATION (ORGANIZING) TEAM



PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS



WHO WAS THERE

- ▶ 135 change-makers
- ▶ 95% from Nova Scotia
- ▶ 45% from outside HRM



ARRIVING



Honouring the land and
its ancestral stewards

REFLECTING



What are our roots? Our aspirations?





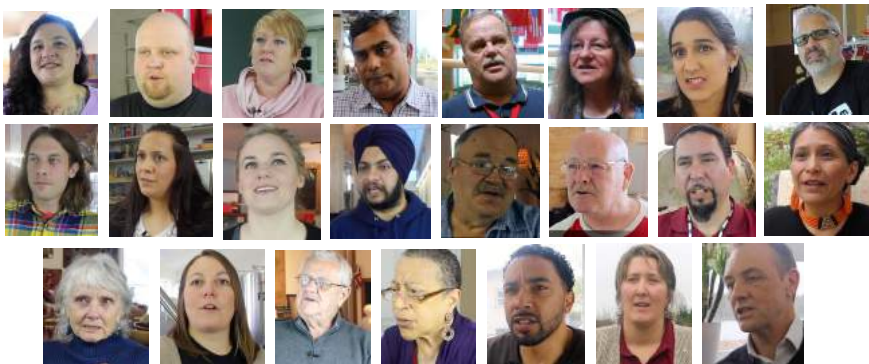
What does it mean to “thrive”?



“Nature has rights. We have responsibilities.”

–Elder Albert Marshall

VOICES FROM AROUND THE PROVINCE



What are signs of a thriving community?

Video produced in collaboration with Community Sector Council of Nova Scotia. Thanks to support from the Nova Scotia Department of Community, Culture and Heritage, Support4Culture Program. Video capture and editing by Dana Perry.

“Thriving is working together, helping one another.”

–Rev. Mother Phyllis Marsh





"A thriving community is not afraid, not caught up in scarcity economics."

—Jessika Hepburn



"Thriving is when people say, I actually love this place and want to invest my passion and time in it."

—David Sawler

GLIMPSES OF A FUTURE THAT WORKS



What histories successes & experiments are we building on?



GLIMPSES, ROUND ONE (@ 1 HOUR)

- ▶ Apoqnm'tulti'k: How We Help Each Other, Moving Forward
- ▶ Future food stories
- ▶ Mi'kmaq survival, conservation, disruption and resilience
- ▶ Recipe for resilience from the Gaelic community: song, story, beauty, culture
- ▶ Social enterprise: a global immune response to the business status quo
- ▶ Strong local economies
- ▶ What do our kids need to thrive?

GLIMPSES, ROUND TWO (@ 1 HOUR)

- ▶ The art of creating change
- ▶ Circular economies
- ▶ Redefining success
- ▶ Teachings through the Sweetgrass Braid
- ▶ Post-colonial spirituality and social justice
- ▶ Universities & colleges serving communities

ORIENTATION



“We can’t rely on what we already know or what we’ve always done.”

–Susan Szpakowski

REALITY CHECK

Hard truths, emerging opportunities.
A Father’s Day Panel.

- ▶ June Webber, Moderator
- ▶ Robert Cervelli
- ▶ Chris Googoo
- ▶ Tom Urbaniak
- ▶ Robert Wright



“We no longer have the luxury of just being with the people we feel comfortable with.”

–Robert S. Wright

LEARNING STREAMS (@ 9 HOURS)

- ▶ Building an economy for all
- ▶ Design thinking
- ▶ Let's do this!
- ▶ Possible futures
- ▶ Revitalizing communities
- ▶ Shaping our future through stories
- ▶ Teams and partnerships that work
- ▶ Women leading as agents of change





FISHBOWL



Perspectives from the African Nova Scotian community

COMMUNITY SITE VISITS

- ▶ Afishinado Fishmongers
- ▶ African Community Investment Cooperative
- ▶ Al Rasoul Mosque/Bedford United Church
- ▶ Alderney Landing Community Cultural Centre
- ▶ Atlantic Contemplative Centre
- ▶ Between the Bridges
- ▶ Common Roots Urban Farm
- ▶ IWK Foundation/Women in Leadership
- ▶ Mocean Dance Company
- ▶ ONE North End
- ▶ Very Local Greens
- ▶ Wonder'neath Studios

RE-AUTHORING OUR FUTURE



MAKING OUR MARK



DANCE LAUGH PLAY CRY CELEBRATE!



CLOSING FRIENDSHIP DANCE



LEAVING OUR MARK...UNTIL NEXT TIME





THEMES

What does it mean to “thrive”? Who is asking the question and who is meant to answer? What is already assumed about the “how”?



by Susan Szpakowski

This past spring I was sitting at a kitchen table in We’koqma’q First Nation in Unama’ki (Cape Breton) with three women who challenged me with questions like these.

Andrea Currie and Rosie Sylliboy pointed out that I was late coming to their table. The planning cycle, which already held many embedded assumptions, was well underway. From past experience, they had learned not to respond to invitations that didn’t include them from the beginning. Also, they didn’t connect with the word *thrive*. It didn’t hold meaning for them. After an hour or so of these kinds of observations, there was a long pause. Andrea turned to the elder, who had been quiet so far, and asked, “Elder Ma’git, what do you think?” Ma’git Poulette looked at me for a penetrating moment and then said quietly, “Well, it could be a start.” This turned out to be a pivotal moment for THRIVE.

The women agreed to come to THRIVE and Andrea suggested we invite another Mi’kmaq elder, Albert Marshall, to help open the event by introducing the term *Netukulimk*. She said this would establish a ground we could all build on. As we later learned,

Netukulimk is about restoring our relationship with the land and each other. It is about tuning in to our interdependence with all living things. When these relationships are harmonious, Albert said, healthy, vibrant communities and economies will naturally grow from this ground.

The original intention behind THRIVE was to bring a “future that works for all” into focus by learning from positive trends and examples (“glimpses of the future”) already in our midst. Capacity-building streams would then equip us with the skills and tools we needed to move towards such a future. Together we would begin to surface a “new story” about what we value and where we are going. Part of the intention was also to invite as much diversity as possible into this exploration, especially from communities that have traditionally been at the margins. This was the reason I came to be sitting at Elder Ma’git’s kitchen table last spring.

But what I took away from that table, and from the experience of THRIVE, was much richer than an experience of “diversity.” It became clear that Albert was right, that the hidden opportunity right under our noses is to reset our way of being with each other and the land. And the people who are Indigenous to this place can help lead the way, even just by their presence.

Theme #2

Trust, solutions, action. Maybe it isn't as complicated or distant as we thought.

Many people were surprised at how quickly trust could form, and how far they could travel together in just four days.

The learning streams, which met for 9 hours, produced new insights, relationships, tools, and in some cases, new projects. Here are a few sample comments from the survey focused particularly on the streams.



“I learned it is possible to connect with great depth and meaning in a short span of time with someone I have never met before.”

“I saw how you really can tackle huge issues in a short period of time and, though you won't necessarily walk away with the answer, you will walk away knowing whether you are on the right path.”

“I saw how strategic business modeling and iteration will create a better product for everyone.”

“What a joy it is when the gifts of strangers in the room start to come together, as we dare to see one another beyond the stories we were told.”

“The speed in which we had to operate in order to “complete” the process was energizing rather than frustrating. My stream was INCREDIBLE.”

“I saw new potential for networking and partnerships.”

“It became clear that we need a new narrative in NS to help build communities' confidence that they can—and should be— powerful and ambitious in working on local change they want to see.”

Theme #3

If we're going to create a future that works, we've got to get... creative.

Music, movement, paint, colour, masks, ritual...these engage parts of ourselves that don't always show up in our work. The arts invite us to step beyond our usual filters and beliefs. The act of creating with others, so central to the performing arts, is also core to the skills and capacities we need to co-create new solutions in our communities and systems. And... we can have fun and feel nourished in the process.

The event design was also creative, weaving together classroom, off-site, plenary, small-group, practical, reflective and artistic elements.

Everyone liked some elements better than others, but overall all parts of the program were ranked as "engaging and impactful" (averaging 4.5/5).



Theme #4

We can grow our leadership capacity on many levels at once.

We asked...“Thinking about THRIVE overall, what did you gain?”

People could choose multiple answers. More than 70% of respondents checked connections that will likely continue, new lenses for understanding complex issues, a sense of being part of something bigger, and greater awareness of people and perspectives they wouldn't usually meet.



Theme #5

Together we can do this!

This Wordle is a composite of all the responses to this survey question: “Thank you for being part of this event, even without knowing fully what it was or could be. Now that we’ve created it together, what was it about for you?”

Once again, connections and relationships were seen as a primary take-away and condition for moving towards a “future that works.”

“I left with a profound happiness that the future of Nova Scotia, in all aspects, is a point of focus for so many talented and passionate people.”

“This was an eye-opening experience of what we can accomplish when working from different areas, but for a common goal.”

“United, we thrive!”



Theme #6

We are ready to take our next step, with courage and conviction.

In the “Re-authoring our Future” session, groups of three distilled their learning and breakthroughs into nuggets that would serve as reminders to themselves and the community. Here are some of those nuggets.



“Thriving is messy. I commit my courage to take responsibility and show up to the awkwardness and love. I can’t do this alone. Please be with me.”

“To honour the struggle, loss, shame and guilt, and embrace our tenacity, courage and compassion. We are all we need.”

“Do what’s doable. Take YOUR step.”

“We are ancestors in training. Grow wise, stand tall, take your place.”

“Don’t leave anyone behind.”

“Messy, disruptive conversations create transformation. No more bullshit.”

“Connection – Disruption – Reconciliation – GRACE.”

“Accept being uncomfortable and use this as a means to start thriving.”

“Rooted in *Wantoqati*, peace, we walk together on this path as we nurture our commitment to people and place.”

“The Power + Leadership of courageous women.”

“A sense of adventure and joy will help us overcome challenges.”

“Unity through diversity. Empower the children.”

“We all have to respect and honour each other’s spaces, history and cultures.”

“Fierce patience and love.”



WHAT'S NEXT?

We asked... “Looking ahead, what could THRIVE be?”

100% of survey respondents said they were glad they came to THRIVE, that it was worthwhile. 100% said they wanted to stay connected to THRIVE, and of those almost half said they'd like to “help create what comes next.” They also had some specific thoughts about what THRIVE could be.



“Annual.” “National.” “Bi-annual?” “Annual with monthly events that keep the community connected.”

“I think it would be incredible if something like this could be made accessible to more folks who do front-line work.”

“I would love to see the openness, creativity, respect and engagement that were so powerful here spread to all areas of society.”

“An action-learning community.”

“A place of renewal and re-energizing, and to work on specific challenges together and connect various issues in creative ways.”

“An incubator for think tanks that work on specific challenges.”

“A place for experiencing and practicing inclusion in planning, problem-solving and visioning.”

“A launchpad for more localized gatherings.”

“A growing network of support, capacity-building and creative imagining.”



THANK YOU!

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