

Meeting of “Town Hall” Committee Feb 23, 2019

1. Need for a SG Structure and Decision-making process Explainer

Realizing part of our challenging process in the “Town Hall” Committee was due (at least in part) to the fact the newer participants don’t have full understanding of Sustainable Gabriola’s culture and decision-making process, Dyan undertook to explain some of the history to those present (Ewout, Katharine, Tobi)

- role of Island Futures
- SG’s culture has evolved along with the group of people who started SG, and perhaps the “way we do things” now needs to be explained so new people have an easier time engaging
 - ie. organic and fluid, consensus-driven, co-creating strategies that evolve out of people's ideas, the network of ideas – nodes and connections - that flow through relationship instead of through an organized system
- seemed important to define what this group is NOT: not hierarchical, not leader-driven, not a membership or society, does not have a Board with defined responsibilities for members
- primary goals: 1. open up a space for dialogue, 2. not about money 3. co-create solutions
- Ewout suggested the wording to the website is not consistent with how Dyan explained it, nor with the strategic plan documents. termed it “confusing”

Suggested Ideas for consideration:

- o An article in the paper about SG's goals and projects to better explain to those who wonder/don’t know about Sustainable Gabriola?
- o Revisit the wording on website. Is there sufficient explanation of what SG “is”?
- o Could it be useful to write a simple: “what to expect at an SG meeting” for newbies? Or perhaps have one of the mature members take newcomers out for coffee and go through the history so they understand how to engage?

2. Town Hall Discussion

- still not certain we should call it a “town hall” because the term is loaded with implications, maybe unpack the term? is that part of the process of the 1st workshop?
- initial meeting must specify these are to be *Gabriola-style* discussions or dialogues
- not everyone needs to show up, it’s like the right to vote. We will make it as open as possible but ultimately people will self-select if they are interested in engaging with this process
- Tobi: suggest the objective of this dialogue series is “relationship-building” not product-creation. Each discussion can be seen as deepening waves of relationship. We aren’t here to solve problems as much as to listen and learn from one another. Fill in the gaps of information for the 95% of the population, and build stronger links in the networks of those who are “in the know”
- Dyan: creating processes for respectful and mindful dialogue is going to be increasingly important as we work on reconciliation and Indigenous relationships – we need to develop the capacity to have conversations with Snuneumuxw and with this community

- agreed that Dyan's framework is a good content map to navigate the first workshop
- Tobi suggested adding ground rules for engagement. Not a place for debate or polarizing ideas.

Katharine asked us to imagine what activities would take place and the following was suggested:

- **Introduction** – storytelling icebreaker of some kind - why are we here? possibly get individuals to share their personal interest in community dialogue.
 - Idea: video of a “town hall” that does NOT work - use comedy to break the ice and get us discussing ground rules
- **Break out** into groups at tables to determine guiding principles/values
 - bring back to main group and share
- **Break into new** (different) groups to brainstorm format or model ideas - different strong elements will emerge from each group
- Use the best ideas to come up with a **Gabriola-Style Town Hall model**
- Together, using dot-ocracy or some other creative way, brainstorm the **list of topics** that could be addressed in future dialogues.
 - Ask: are there organizations critically involved with this work we need to check in with? Dyan made the point that SG never steps on the work of other organizations or do the work for them
 - If YES, we go to those groups and ask if this process would be helpful to them.
 - if NO, we make a short list and decide on the topic and venue and format for the 1st community dialogue

Tobi wrote up a short invitation that could be used as a newspaper/poster/social media ad, or the basis for a press release to advertise the workshop:

TITLE: Design a Gabriola-Style Town Hall OR Discussion Series

Sustainable Gabriola is looking to engage the broader community in a series of stimulating, lively discussions around challenging subjects relevant to residents of Mudge, Decourcy, Gabriola, and the Snuneymuxw community. While town-hall style discussions can be a helpful way to become more familiar with pressing issues, only a limited number of participants can engage in the discussion. At their worst, town halls can also foreground division and contribute to the polarization of viewpoints. What could a made-on-Gabriola discussion forum be like? With the aim of creating a space for informed, respectful dialogue that engages the broadest spectrum of islanders possible, we invite you to a facilitated workshop in which we will – together – create a dialogue model and guiding principles for the discussion series, and identify topics for future discussions.

Sustainable Gabriola commits to making this process open, accessible, respectful and fun, engaging people from the whole community. We will have refreshments and childcare, and the workshop will be under 2 hours.