



RENEWAL NORTHWEST

Outcomes from the September 2009 Retreat

The competencies we have developed through past experience may not be effective in the face of changing social values and increasingly extreme business and environmental cycles. We need to recognize cross roads that are critical and be ready to step onto a different development path. We want to go past “what future is most probable” to more powerful questions like “what future do we want to create”? This retreat starts us down this path. We intend to attract the leaders, and develop a credible set of metrics about sustainability, that will shift development initiatives towards a more sustainable and prosperous future.





THE RETREAT TEAM

Convener: Nathan Cullen
MP Skeena-Bulkley Valley

Coordinator: Diane Suter

Facilitators: Larry McCulloch
Erika Rolston

Host: The Logpile Lodge

Delegates:

Mike Ambach
Gladys Atrill
Nicholas Azak
David Belford
Knut Bjorndal
Jim Bourquin
Greg Brown
Nathan Cullen

Dean Daly
Marylin Davies
Andrew Davis
David de Wit
Dorothy Giesbrecht
Jay Gilden
Sam Harling
Tara Marsden

Lianne Olson
Brad Pollard
Mike Simpson
Nikki Skuce
Cristina Soto
Tim Tchida

SUMMARY

A group of opinion leaders from North-Western BC were invited by the MP for the Skeena-Bulkley Valley riding, Nathan Cullen, to attend a weekend retreat in September, 2009 to flesh out viable alternatives to current economic development thinking. They were challenged to create a community-oriented vision for the future and to devise ways to evaluate whether future development activities would be consistent with this vision. Funding for the retreat was provided by the Driftwood Foundation.

Visioning exercises, case studies, story-telling, and appreciative inquiry were used to help build deeper understanding amongst participants and a common vision about the future. The status quo vision of the future included concerns about lack of local control of local resources, failure to recognize and capture the full potential of human and natural capital in the region, and worsening environmental conditions leading to longer and deeper economic downturns, environmental degradation, an exodus of human resources, and fewer cultural opportunities. The positive vision of the future was characterized by political and business leaders who had a well developed lens on sustainability, an influx of skilled workers and new perspectives, economic, ecological, and cultural diversity, innovative community leaders, a sense of pride and self-determination at the community level, abundant economic and social opportunities and services, and the use of a comprehensive array of indices to measure prosperity and well being.

It was suggested that an agency might need to be formed to help development proponents and other organizations determine whether proposed initiatives were likely to be sustainable and consistent with the broader vision for the region. There was considerable discourse about whether such an agency would act in an advisory capacity or as a certification body, what relationship it would have to existing agencies, appropriate governance structure, funding mechanisms, etc. There was a sense that the model was a good one and that there were enough skilled individuals in the region to offer credible and valuable service.

Looking forward, the group concluded that the work they began at the retreat needed to be continued. Some of the tasks they identified included:

- potentially expanding the group to obtain broader representation.
- developing a mission statement, governance structure, and roles for members.
- working with related initiatives to identify synergies.
- developing an initial evaluation protocol on sustainability.
- meeting with communities in the region to provide information about the initiative and to seek their input and support.
- evaluating a project proposal to test the evaluation protocol, find ways to add value to the process for development proponents and regulatory agencies, and to help focus the group's work.
- hosting a regional forum to launch the agency and engage a broader audience.

During closing comments, it was evident that there was a sense of optimism about the future of Northwest B.C. There was common understanding and intent, significant strides were made towards developing a credible set of metrics about sustainability, and substantial progress was made in answering the question "what future do we want to create".



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background	4
Outcomes	5
Introduction	5
The Visioning Exercise	5
The Case Studies	9
The Highway 37 Power Line Project	9
Case Study on Alternatives to Copper Smelting	10
Forces And Elements That Would Likely Affect The Sustainability of the Projects	10
Tasks Going Forward	15
Reasons for Optimism	16
Appendix I – Individuals Who Have Participated in RNW	17
Retreat Delegates:	17
Other Individuals:	17
Appendix II – Retreat Press Release	19
Appendix III - Post Retreat Survey Results	20
Appendix IV – Collation of Pre-retreat Interview Information	25
Appendix V - Research Information (under separate cover)	30

BACKGROUND

Renewal NW is a non-partisan group of individuals from various backgrounds who are concerned about current economic development patterns in North-Western BC. Nathan Cullen, the MP for the Skeena-Bulkley Valley riding, acted as the catalyst for the initiative by challenging a number of well respected opinion leaders in the Region to flesh out viable alternatives to current economic development thinking. He expected that the initiative would be driven by leaders from every sector including First Nations, business, government, non-profit and environmental organizations, and communities. It was not expected that these individuals would necessarily represent any constituency, but that they would each bring different experience and perspective.

The stated objectives at the outset of the retreat were to:

- develop a vision about how communities should look a generation from now and what kinds of development would be needed.
- develop ways to evaluate whether proposed activities would be consistent with this vision.

Before the retreat, an introductory conference call was held to explore the interest in such an event and to determine what ingredients might be needed for the group to be successful. There was a strong sense that the initiative was timely and that collaboration and effective communication was essential. A communication style that included story-telling and dialogue was identified as a way to build understanding and a common vision. Larry McCulloch, the chief facilitator for the initiative, also met with a number of individuals after the initial conference call, prior to the retreat, to further flesh out expectations and possible outcomes.

At the outset, it was recognized that, for the initiative to be successful, people with vision and a passion for BC's northwest region would need to be involved and that a comfortable setting that allowed for creativity would be required. This space was provided at the Logpile lodge in Smithers on a Friday evening and Saturday in late September, 2009.

OUTCOMES

Introduction

Retreat participants were involved in a number of activities during the Friday evening and Saturday sessions. The Friday session provided an opportunity for participants to learn more about each other and begin to develop a common vision about sustainability. A great deal of enthusiasm was brought to bear on a visioning exercise designed to identify current concerns about development in the northwest as well as what an ideal future might hold. Once the formal session ended, many of the participants gathered in the common room to informally debrief the exercise and to dialogue about northwest development issues.

On Saturday, the itinerary included:

- An icebreaker on the origin of people's names.
- A review of some of the research undertaken in support of the retreat.
- A debriefing exercise on the headlines from the Friday visioning session.
- Breakout group case studies: a) completion of the Highway 37 Power Line Project and b) alternatives to copper smelting in NW BC.
- A brainstorming exercise on the structure and function of a proposed RNW Agency.
- Development of a media communiqué
- Discussion about next steps
- Closing comments about signs of hope for a sustainable NW.

The Visioning Exercise

Scenario development and storytelling are often used by collaborative work groups engaged in community and business development to scope out new directions. This modern approach encourages creativity and helps participants identify options and the underlying forces that shape future outcomes. During the Friday evening session a visioning exercise was conducted with two break out groups. Each group was given 60 minutes to develop a story line about what the future would look like 30 years from now.

Group 1. The Status Quo Scenario

- Participants in this group were asked: what will communities and the regional economy look like 30 years from now if we continue on our current path?

Group 2. The Ideal Future Scenario

- Participants in this group were asked: what will development need to look like 30 years from now to create the kind of future we want in NW BC?

The exercise was conducted without participants having looked at data on existing conditions, defining what was meant by sustainable, and without a full appreciation

of individual perspectives and world views. The objective was to stimulate creative discussion, painting a rough picture of sustainability using broad strokes with a brush with soft edges. In the plenary session that followed, groups were encouraged to use as many people as possible to present the findings, telling the story in newscaster style.

The presentation by the status quo group, done as a TV newscast, with Dean Daly as anchor, was both hilarious and revealing. Headlines from their newscast included:

- “US army invades NW BC to control water resource”***
- “The industrial paradigm results in a boom and bust economy”***
- “Massive protest as DFO announces all fisheries are closed”***
- “5th mine closure in 5 years (congruent start up 25 years earlier blamed)”***
- “Youth – the lost segment of society”***
- “Real estate prices hit record highs”***
- “The last drop of oil passes through the pipeline (plans revealed to use the pipeline to export BC water to other areas)”***
- “Industry and First Nations exploit every economic opportunity”***
- “Kathlyn Glacier gives up the ghost”***
- “Water and climate migrants from the south invade the NW”***
- “Burns Lake becomes energy self sufficient”***

These headlines and the ensuing discussion underscored concerns about:

- lack of local control of local resources.
- export of valuable commodities without adding value and without considering future demand (short term thinking).
- lack of vision by political leaders.
- poor planning leading to boom and bust cycles and the convergence of poor economic conditions across sectors.
- failure to recognize all parts of society in terms of the strengths as well as needs.
- high cost of living leading to further marginalization and disparity amongst sectors of society.
- failure to act in a proactive way to changing environmental circumstances.
- environmental degradation.

During the debriefing exercise the next day, the group identified some of the thinking driving their vision of status quo development:

- That there is a scarcity of natural resources and an unknown tipping point for ecological collapse.
- That longer and deeper economic downturns, and shorter and lower boom periods will occur, and that they will:

- result from short term, reactive thinking.
- have both cultural and economic implications.
- lead to migration of capital and human resources and threaten regional stability.
- negatively influence community and political psyche.
- There is a lack of energy self-sufficiency at the local level and lack of local control of resources.
- Regional cross-communication and understanding is poor.
- Opportunities for youth will be insufficient and there will be a capacity exodus.
- Government is reactive and lacking leadership and this creates a vacuum.
- The level of collaboration between First Nations and industry is increasing but this may be at the expense of sustainability.
- The psyche of leadership influences economic potential.
- That regional identity will become threatened.

There was some recognition on the part of the status quo group that some advances in sustainability would be made (e.g. energy self sufficiency in Burns Lake), however, there was concern that it would be divisive, creating a sense of competition for scarce resources rather than being something that all communities could leverage.

The Ideal Future group, on the other hand, forecast a future in which communities pooled their resources in a way that was synergistic. Headlines from this group revealed an optimism about future development and that prosperity would be measured in more ways than conventional metrics such as GDP and jobs:

“NW BC models sustainable development for the world”

“Record high salmon returns”

“NW voted #1 in sustainable regions of the world”

“20th anniversary of the community accord on understanding and communication”

“Summer art schools established”

“NW communities serve as role models for other communities”

“Triple bottom line thinking evident in development initiatives”

“Ecosystem services valued by local land use planners”

“NW communities lead in social enterprise”

“NW BC attains sustainable green copper production and zero net emissions in resource development”

“Reforestation initiatives improve NW water quality”

“Cultural and ecological tourism reinvigorates entrepreneurs”

“NW BC - the physician that healed itself”

“NW BC - independent and self-sustaining”

During the debriefing exercise the next day, this group discussed some of the thinking driving their vision of the ideal future including that:

- isolation of interests and competition between communities and development sectors for scarce resources would not occur.
- climate change and amenity migrants (provincial and even global) would move into the area and this would bring new perspectives and skills.
- the area could be oriented to a resource-based economy but that there would be good economic justification for conservation and cooperation amongst interest groups.
- strong leadership for the NW would emerge.
- regional understanding would grow concurrent with improved self-reliance and sharing of success.
- the region would enjoy economic, ecological, and cultural diversity.
- community leaders would have a well developed lens on sustainability.
- community leaders would be creative and innovative.
- communities will feel pride rather than fear about their situation and celebrate having a range of choices.
- there will be a sense of winning and of self-determination.

Examples of Ways to Measure Sustainability

- Population trends
- Employment rate
- Disposable income
- Tax revenue
- Energy use
- Availability of environmental services
- Protected areas
- Water and air quality
- Community security
- Community services
- Cultural literacy
- Cultural security
- Social and political participation

Research on Sustainable Development

On Saturday morning, after the debriefing exercise, a few minutes were spent reviewing information that Diane Suter and Erika Rolston acquired during a cursory scan of the community development literature on sustainability. This information was provided to participants in advance of the retreat but was reviewed at this time to ensure that all participants knew what was contained in the reference package.

The information provided could be categorized as:

- complete documents that might serve as reference material during the meeting
- short summaries of some directly relevant documents or web sites that participants could refer to after the retreat.
- links or references to documents, topic, institutions, or people, that might provide information of use to the group in the future

Topics covered in the information package included:

- regional statistics and trends.
- local examples of potentially sustainable projects.
- research initiatives and potential partners
- sustainability planning
- examples of sustainable development in other regions.

The Case Studies

On Saturday morning, after debriefing the visioning exercise and reviewing the information package provided before the retreat, the group went on to evaluate two case studies. The purpose of the case study exercise was to test preliminary ideas about sustainability against projects that have been proposed in the northwest and to identify the driving forces that affect future development outcomes. Using projects from the region helps narrow the list, making it more geographically specific and pertinent. Identifying forces that might support or thwart sustainability initiatives is a necessary step in designing integrated solutions that are robust at multiple scales.

Participants were asked to consider two sustainability proposals that were received as a result of a “request for proposal” process. Specifically, they were asked to identify key elements and underlying forces that would affect the sustainability of each project. Each group did this independently and then presented their findings in a plenary session. To simplify this relatively complex process, a visual map of key elements and forces was created using hexagons. As participants identified the elements and forces, they were captured as a summary headline which was then placed initially at random on a large whiteboard. The hexagons were then reorganized into related themes. This approach often reveals ideas and relationships that are not always evident in normal conversation.

- ### Examples of Driving Forces
- Technological changes
 - Social dynamics/relationships
 - Regional/global economic forces
 - Gov’t/institutional policy and regulation
 - Environmental realities
 - Physical needs of humans
 - Communication/information systems
 - Demographics
 - Transportation systems
 - Gov’t and institutional leaders
 - Cultural values
 - Levels of personal development



The Highway 37 Power Line Project

A 335 km Transmission Line, running along Highway 37 from Terrace to Dease Lake, has been proposed as a way to deliver hydroelectric power to areas in Northwest BC that are currently using diesel-generated electricity (see www.highway37.com). Proponents envision that the line would attract power generation in excess of 2,000 megawatts per year from hydro, wind, geothermal, and biomass projects. They also believe that connecting to the Hydro grid would reduce the cost of electricity consumed by local communities and would reduce greenhouse gas emissions as communities transition away from diesel generators. Funding for the project is expected to come from the Federal and BC governments

and from private investors. Detractors suggest that the cumulative impacts resulting from open pit mining and other industrial activities stimulated by the transmission line may exceed environmental carrying capacity and that other areas of the province would be better served by this scale of investment. There is also some question about whether power costs in communities would be cheaper with the transmission line and concern that future extension of the line into Alaska could result in a loss of economic prosperity for northern communities.

Case Study on Sustainable Copper Production

Jim Bourquin outlined a sustainable development case to fully refine copper in NWBC. The proposal included a low emission copper smelter fed with copper concentrate from slurry pipelines connected to Western Canadian copper mines. He noted that the slurry pipelines could follow utility corridors, such as the proposed Northern Transmission Line corridor. An era of NWBC copper production would be powered by renewable rather than non-renewable energy. Bourquin indicated that this approach could eliminate a huge downstream carbon footprint. Under current regulation, proposed Northern BC open pit copper mines are able to use low grade non-renewable energy resources along the production chain to transport copper concentrate all the way to China, for example, where it is processed in coal powered smelters. He reported that cost effective current technologies already exist to transport and produce copper using clean renewable energy resources. He also spoke of keeping copper production jobs in NWBC and of Highway 37 public safety issues that could be avoided, if a North-South industrial utility corridor for proposed Northern mines could be planned and implemented with the support of traditional territory interests. Higher production costs, fears of air and water pollution, unresolved issues with First Nations land and title, and a lack of strategic planning on the part of governments for such things as carbon tariffs, funding support from carbon taxes, and royalty distribution were cited as potential barriers to this initiative.

Forces And Elements That Would Likely Affect The Sustainability of the Projects

After considerable discussion in the break out groups, representatives from each provided a summary of the forces and elements that must be considered in determining whether these projects would be sustainable. Hexagons from both groups were amalgamated in a plenary session (summarized below - bullets with the same colour and symbol indicate a link between categories).

Level of Local Benefit

- Percent value of a project that benefits the region
- Community benefits
- ◆ Level of local ownership (of a slurry pipeline or smelter)
- First Nations ownership
- Whether targeted funding gets reinvested in the region
- Quality of life
- ❖ Where economic benefits reside

Environmental Impacts

- Cumulative impacts
 - Ecosystem resilience
 - Carbon footprint
 - Water quality and quantity
 - Water recovery (pipeline)
- Level of natural capital
- Availability of ecosystem services
 - Tailings impacts
 - Track record on best practices

Level of Planning

- How development unfolds over time
- Whether the planned project aligns with other initiatives
 - Degree of inclusivity of the planning process
 - Historical context and past practices
 - Opportunities for adaptive management (looking at alternatives)

Employment

- ❖ Level of regional employment created
 - Long term jobs
 - Annual incomes

Governance

- Tenure considerations and opportunities for tenure reform
- Influence of local government
- ◆ Who holds the power to design process and approve projects
- ◆ Degree to which local stakeholders influence planning and operations (local stuff)

Social/Cultural Impacts

- Social costs
 - Degree to which costs are transported or off loaded to other areas or future generations
- Benefits and impacts timelines (avoiding boom and bust scenarios)
 - Impacts on human health
 - Human safety concerns
 - Social and cultural legacy of the project

Corporate Responsibility

- Accountability
- ◆ Commitment to communities
- Disclosure

Development of Individuals

- Opportunities for personal growth
 - Social conscience

Other Factors/Elements

- ❖ Economic Feasibility
- Resource availability
- Power needs and availability
- Degree of fit with existing and planned projects
- Existing infrastructure

A Renewal NW Agency

Much of the focus of the retreat to this point was on developing a vision about sustainable communities and economies and the driving forces that affect change. Participants began to develop shared enthusiasm, a common understanding of sustainability, and the ability to work together towards a common goal. This shared insight was a necessary stepping stone to the next task – developing ways to evaluate whether proposed development activities in NW BC would be consistent with the vision of an ideal future.

On Saturday afternoon, retreat participants were divided into two break out groups and asked the following questions:

*If there were a **Renewal Northwest Agency**, mandated by members to develop a set of guidelines that could be used to evaluate whether economic development proposals are a) sustainable and b) aligned with local values, including FN values:*

- *where would it reside?*
- *what would governance structure would it adopt?*
- *how would it be funded?*
- *how would authority and credibility be established?*

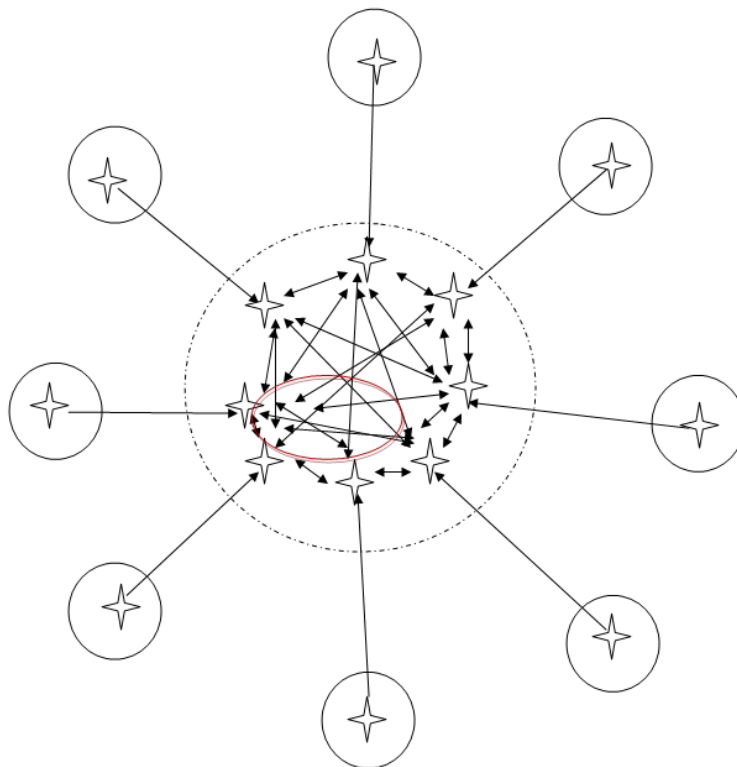
One group addressed the issues of establishing credibility and authority as well as funding and the second group looked at governance structure as well as issues of power and authority. The dialogue that took place was valuable in that it revealed many uncertainties.

Some key concepts that emerged during the discussions included that:

- it will be important to clarify whether such an agency would fill an advisory role or act as a certification body or both.
- credibility will naturally be established if an agency operates transparently, has community buy-in, has an effective relationship with related regulatory agencies, and has the technical ability to deliver value.
- authority is not something that is taken but rather it is given, possibly in the case of Renewal Northwest, by virtue of providing a service that is seen to be valuable by a broad range of interests.

- with regard to governance structure, the centre of focus appeared to be for a coalition arrangement in which members would not be representing constituents, but would be involved based on their experience and skill set as it pertained to the type of project or issue being addressed. As new projects or issues emerge, the coalition would change focus and the member list might change accordingly.
- this process cannot be rushed - the initiative will evolve by deliberate intention rather than deliberate design and momentum will build.
- with respect to funding, there was a sense that, if credible and valuable service was provided, funding sources would emerge, possibly including a fee for service arrangement.

A model suggested by one of the groups as a basis for a governance structure was the adaptive coalition or team net approach depicted in the diagram below.



In this model, individuals (star shapes), from various organizations or agencies step out of their group to engage around a specific issue, exploring it from many angles, each bringing different perspective, wisdom, and skills. The group identifies concerns, questions, ways and sources to answer them, examines impacts, and provides feedback. Normally a centre of focus (red ellipsoid) will emerge. As new issues or projects materialize, the table changes, potentially with different members and a different centre of focus. A well thought out mission statement and effective evaluation protocol ensure that there is consistency and quality in the service provided.

The concept of an agency that would serve to provide feedback on issues of sustainability and ways to meet local values was broadly accepted by both groups. It was evident, however, that considerable effort would be required and that such an agency would need to be carefully designed.

TASKS GOING FORWARD

The litmus test for the existence of any agency, is whether there is broadly based participation and measurable outcomes. To get a sense of the level of interest in continuing the work that was started at the retreat, participants were asked what the next steps should be and whether they would be involved. It was hoped by many that a lead organization or individual would emerge, at least on a temporary basis, to work collaboratively with the group and sub-committees during initial stages to get the agency started. Time was limited so the discussion on this topic was abbreviated. A post-retreat follow-up questionnaire was also circulated to participants to augment results of the discussion at the retreat. Five questions were asked (see appendix IV for a complete list of responses):

1. What was the most successful/valuable part of the gathering?
2. What would you want to see done differently next time?
3. Do you have any suggestions about the leadership/guidance of Renewal Northwest as it evolves?
4. What is the most important next step?
5. How could RNW serve for your organization/interests?

This process led to the identification of a number of tasks which would help solidify the existence and mandate of the agency. These included:

- preparing a press release about the retreat (see appendix II).
- exploring the idea of expanding the group to obtain broader representation.
- reconvening sometime before Christmas to flesh out a mission statement and governance structure, and to identify roles and responsibilities.
- working with related initiatives to identify synergies.
- crafting an initial evaluation protocol to expose uncertainties and the need for further work.
- identifying funding mechanisms.
- meeting with communities in the region to provide information about the initiative and to seek their input and support.
- evaluating a business or social project or proposal to test the evaluation protocol, find ways to add value to the process for development proponents and regulatory agencies, and to refine the scope of the agencies work.
- networking with colleagues to promote the concept and elicit new thinking.
- hosting a regional forum to launch the agency and engage a broader audience.

These tasks might be thought of as a menu of opportunities for involvement. Some could be tackled by the group as a whole and others might be better accomplished by individuals or sub-committees. It is often most productive to start from a draft or outline prepared by a smaller focus group. It is anticipated that the next session of

Renewal Northwest will be again convened and organized by Nathan Cullen but that there will be a strong need for the group to firmly grasp this role in the future.

REASONS FOR OPTIMISM

During the design phase for the retreat a number of outcomes for Renewal Northwest were identified including:

- the development of a cohesive working group with shared enthusiasm and a common vision about sustainability.
- a deeper understanding amongst participants about the kind of future each would like to see.
- identification of principles and elements that could be used in a set of guidelines to evaluate whether economic development proposals are likely to be sustainable.
- compilation of information on sustainable development that is pertinent to northwest BC and that can be used as a model for future development.

Substantial progress was made in achieving all these goals. An answer to the question of "what future do we want to create" did begin to emerge. It was also apparent that there was common intent and significant strides were made towards developing a credible set of metrics about sustainability. During the closing session, many participants had their own ways of expressing a sense of optimism about Renewal Northwest and the things that had been accomplished at the retreat. Here are some examples:

- *This retreat enabled us to express our views without reservation*
- *The retreat was characterized by intelligent dialog*
- *The conversation, and investment in it, is a sign of hope*
- *There was a willingness to share*
- *The retreat was not without healthy scepticism*
- *There was strength in the broad diversity of people*
- *It was a safe environment to risk crazy ideas*
- *Every person was engaged*
- *Having met together will affect us personally more than we realize*
- *There was no real tension around the vision*
- *There is opportunity for ramping it up*
- *It was an honour to be involved*
- *Thanks to Nathan and great political representation around the northwest.*

For more information about the retreat or next steps, please contact:

Larry McCulloch, 250-847-3267, larry.mcculloch@lmfms.ca or

Erika Rolston, (250) 622-2413, erika@nathancullen.ca