Planning in Indigenous Communities: Lessons Learned from the Comprehensive Community Planning Process

by

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Abstract

Planning in Indigenous communities is taking on greater importance as land claims are settled, legal victories force governments and industry to consult with and accommodate Indigenous peoples and interests, and development happens on Indigenous lands. Whereas planning was once the vehicle through which Indigenous peoples were oppressed, marginalized, and confined to reserves in the pursuit of colonial aspirations for land and territorial acquisition, today planning is increasingly becoming a method through which Indigenous peoples are achieving greater degrees of sovereignty and self-determination. Interestingly, the framework that many Canadian Indigenous communities use to engage in planning is a product of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). The INAC Comprehensive Community Planning (CCP) Framework was developed in 2006 and piloted with several First Nation communities in British Columbia. This research project sought to review the CCPs of First Nation communities that have engaged in planning using the INAC CCP Framework in order to identify lessons learned from their experiences. The lessons learned form the basis for my recommendations to support other Indigenous communities in their planning efforts.

Keywords: indigenous planning, first nations planning, aboriginal planning
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Introduction

Planning in Indigenous communities is taking on greater importance as land claims are settled, legal victories force governments and industry to consult with and accommodate Indigenous peoples and interests, and development happens on Indigenous lands. Whereas planning was once the vehicle through which Indigenous peoples were oppressed, marginalized, and confined to reserves in the pursuit of colonial aspirations for land and territorial acquisition, today planning is increasingly becoming a method through which Indigenous peoples are achieving greater degrees of sovereignty and self-determination. Indeed, planning has enabled Indigenous peoples and communities to come together to create a vision for the future that is happy, healthy and prosperous. This is in keeping with planning’s role in the “scientific, aesthetic, and orderly disposition of land, resources, facilities and services with a view to securing the physical, economic and social efficiency, health and well-being of urban and rural communities” (Canadian Institute of Planners, 2016).

Interestingly, the framework that many Canadian Indigenous communities use to engage in planning is a product of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), the federal government department charged with ensuring the Government of Canada’s obligations to Indigenous peoples as well as their constitutionally protected rights are met. The INAC Comprehensive Community Planning (CCP) Framework was developed in 2006 and piloted with several First Nation communities in British Columbia. It provides a basic understanding of and a guide for communities to engage in planning, focussing on governance, lands and resources health, infrastructure, culture, social, and the economy. While some critics claim it is nothing more than a Western planning framework imposed on Indigenous peoples (Booth and Muir, 2011; Prusk, Walker & Innes, 2015), evidence suggests that communities can achieve planning
success by adopting and adapting the Framework to include local culture, knowledge, practices and methodologies (Musqueam, 2011; Westbank, 2015; Wikwemikong, 2012; Akwesasne, 2016).

This research project sought to review the CCPs of First Nation communities that have engaged in planning using the INAC CCP Framework in order to identify lessons learned from their experiences. The lessons learned form the basis for my recommendations to the Saugeen First Nation, Ontario, Chief and Council, my community partners on this project, who themselves are planning on undertaking their own CCP initiative. The lessons learned and recommendations can also serve as a guide for other Indigenous communities looking to engage in planning. I begin with a review of the literature on planning in Indigenous communities, followed by my project methodology. I then provide a case study on Saugeen First Nation to situate their context in the broader planning discussion, followed by my analysis of the CCPs from four First Nation communities. I then propose a set of recommendations based on lessons learned, followed by some concluding remarks on the future of planning in Indigenous communities.
Section 1 – Literature Review

History of Exclusion

Planning is not a new concept for Indigenous peoples; rather, Indigenous peoples have engaged in forms of planning long before European “discovery” of the “New World”. As the oldest inhabitants of the Americas, Indigenous peoples have been altering the environment to suit their needs and to ensure their survival for millennia. Lewis (1995) referred to American Indians as “students of the environment … who practiced adaptive land management as environmental conditions changed over time” (as cited by Hibbard, Lane & Rasmussen, 2008, p. 141). It was only with the arrival of European settlers that Indigenous planning was all but eradicated. Indigenous peoples were pushed to the brink of extinction due to disease, war and famine, subjected to numerous atrocities, and confined to reserves whose lands were often barren, isolated and desolate, all in the pursuit of colonial aspirations for land and territorial acquisition.

As new territories and lands were settled European practices of surveying, creating boundaries and ascribing land and property rights were notions entirely foreign to Indigenous peoples and completely counter to their paradigm. Central to state creation and expansion was the need to establish order and government, create power structures, and subordinate the Indigenous populations so as to not pose a threat to the new colonial powers. Indeed, the process and outcomes of colonization had and continues to have devastating consequences for Indigenous peoples. As Howett, Connell & Hirsch (1996) describe:

[Indigenous] peoples’ assets, interests and property have been sold, leased, traded and despoiled; communities have been dispossessed, displaced and impoverished; lands have been submerged, cleared, fenced and degraded; seas rivers lakes have been polluted; sacred sites have been dynamited, excavated, desecrated and damaged in every possible
Colonization, as Ugarte (2014) argues, “has materialized imperial aspirations for territorial and cultural expansion, and what we currently term land use planning is the main mechanism by which Indigenous dispossession of lands and rights took—and in many cases still takes—place” (p. 405). Porter (2010) agrees, stating that planning has been not only “complicit in, but actively produces, social injustices for Indigenous peoples to this day” (p. 71). This marginalization and oppression vis-à-vis planning has adversely impacted on the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples in Canada and around the world. In Canada Indigenous peoples experience the poorest outcomes on almost every measure of health and wellbeing compared to the rest of Canadians. According to the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (2013), these health issues include:

- High infant and young child mortality; high maternal morbidity and mortality; heavy infectious disease burdens; malnutrition and stunted growth; shortened life expectancy; diseases and death associated with cigarette smoking; social problems, illnesses and deaths linked to misuse of alcohol and other drugs; accidents, poisonings, interpersonal violence, homicide and suicide; obesity, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular, and chronic renal disease; and diseases caused by environmental contamination. (p. 4)

In addition to the poorer health and social outcomes experienced by Indigenous peoples as a result of colonization, marginalization and having a lack of meaningful say on how their lands
and territories are to be used, Indigenous peoples also experience several other “invisible” losses. Booth and Muir (2011) argue that Indigenous peoples experience a decline in “resilience in individuals, communities and cultures” (p. 427), while Turner, Brookes, Failing & Satterfield (2008) identify eight additional losses, including cultural/lifestyle losses, loss of identity, health losses, loss of self-determination and influence, emotional and psychological losses, loss of order in the world, knowledge losses, and indirect economic losses and opportunities (as cited in Booth and Muir, 2011, p. 427). Indeed, planning’s impact on Indigenous peoples has been considerable.

Until recently, Indigenous peoples were systematically marginalized and excluded from the state apparatuses and decision-making tables that would allow them to have a voice on how their lands and resources were allocated, and have further been denied their right to self-determination. This history of exclusion and marginalization, ironically, flies in the face of long-held normative assumptions about planning’s role in the management of lands and resources, mediating between diverse actors, planning for the future, and generally making the world a better place. It should come as no surprise then that theorists, practitioners and Indigenous peoples alike have been calling for fundamental changes to planning theory and practice, so that planning might indeed become a vehicle to facilitate and enhance Indigenous prosperity.

Decolonizing Planning

In recent decades there has been a push for planning to be more inclusive of Indigenous peoples, knowledge, concepts and practices. Given planning’s history of exclusion, oppression and marginalization of Indigenous peoples, there have been increasing efforts to ‘decolonize’ planning—a call to action among those in the field to reexamine planning’s historical role and to chart a course wherein planning becomes a vehicle to bring about prosperity of a holistic nature to Indigenous communities.
According to Porter (2006, 2007, 2010, 2013) planning is a practice situated in colonial structures that cannot bring about change in the power dynamics between Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations until planners take a deconstructive, reflective and critical stance in their operations and underlying assumptions. As Porter states, “the decolonization of planning must proceed as a complex renegotiation of values, knowledge, meaning, agency and power between planning and Indigenous peoples, and within planning itself” (2010, p. 153 as cited in Ugurte 2014, p. 408). She proposes an approach that requires planners to reflect on their position within the power structures they operate and to approach their work with empathy and selflessness, and to adopt an attitude of service. Nichols (2009) calls for planners to be cognizant of the power imbalances that often exist between Indigenous/non-Indigenous peoples so as to avoid perpetuating them. Barry & Porter (2012) argue for a deconstruction of planning wherein “any theoretical and methodological frame must be analytically and politically sensitive to the historical and contemporary oppression that state-based planning often brings about for communities of difference” (p. 4). Beneria-Surkin (2004) calls for planning to be more inclusive of and equitable for Indigenous peoples, and “a real commitment to Indigenous participation in all aspects of development projects, democratic governance and knowledge production” (p. 116). And Fox et al. (2006) assert that for decolonization in planning to take place healing must start at the individual level and proceed outward from the individual(s) to include institutions and ultimately institutionalization for decolonized practices.

In her critical essay on the need for planning and planners alike to engage in a process of decolonization, Ugurte (2014) argues that it is necessary for both the actors and institutions to change if real change is to take hold:
While reflexivity and changes in personal attitudes, behaviors and values are essential, the institutional dimension plays a particularly critical role if decolonization planning theory, practice, research, and education are to transcend individual goodwill. Planning—or at least state-centered planning—is a highly institutionalized, textually, mediated, and procedural practice, which becomes embedded in legislations, and plans. Therefore, broader social decolonization processes in settler states must involve the shared establishment of rights and legal frameworks guiding Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations, the development of organizations and institutions, the re-writing of histories, formal education, and symbolic acts of public compensations and acknowledgement, among others. Unless all those layers are affected, it will be difficult to transcend colonial legacies in planning. (p. 411)

While it is positive to see an increasing number of academics and professionals calling for a paradigmatic shift in planning theory, education and practice, in reality, as with most transformational changes, the shift towards a new way of operating can be a slow and arduous undertaking, especially for a profession whose practices are so deeply rooted in excluding and marginalizing the “others.” This is not to discount the efforts of the non-Indigenous allies and well-meaning professionals, quite the contrary. In fact, in many instances it is primarily because of the non-Indigenous allies’ calls for change that such action begin to take foot. For instance, in 2003 the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) established the Indigenous Peoples’ Planning Subcommittee (IPPSC), a group whose mandate is to build local planning capacity and support Indigenous peoples and communities in the areas of development, governance, health, education and other areas (Canadian Institute of Planners, 2016).
However, as much needed as outside support and capacity building might be needed by Indigenous peoples, the challenge with allies leading the way rather than Indigenous peoples themselves, is that often these initiatives can loose momentum and/or be relegated to lower status initiatives when competing with the myriad other projects needing to be completed. As is the case with the CIP, the IPPSC is simply that—a subcommittee, whose membership is comprised solely of allies. Indeed, there is a certain irony in non-Indigenous peoples leading the call for planning to be more inclusive of Indigenous peoples only to have the entire committee comprised solely of allies. Furthermore, by non-Indigenous people leading the charge for planning transformation there is considerable risk in Western methods being imposed on Indigenous peoples and practices, thereby perpetuating the marginalization of Indigenous peoples and knowledge within the profession. Planning and advocacy for and on behalf of Indigenous people has largely been done by outside agencies and professionals, and the result is that plans end up having little relevance to the peoples and their communities, and mainly reflect the needs of government, funders and outside organizations (Mennell, Palermo & Smith, 2013). The real need then is not just for a decolonization of planning, but also for models to emerge that will encourage greater numbers of Indigenous peoples to take up planning themselves, thus leading to a resurgence in Indigenous planning.

Re/emergence of Indigenous Planning

The re/emergence of Indigenous planning has been in direct response to the history of colonialism; the state’s marginalization of Indigenous peoples; Indigenous peoples’ rebuke of the state and their institutions; a desire among Indigenous peoples to reclaim sovereignty and assert jurisdiction and control over their territory and to benefit from their lands; to advance self-
determination; and to reclaim their culture and identity. Jojola (2008) describes the emergent
Indigenous planning paradigm as:

… an approach to community planning and an ideological movement. What distinguishes
Indigenous planning from mainstream practice is its reformulation of planning
approaches in a manner that incorporates “traditional” knowledge and cultural identity.
Key to the process is the acknowledgement of an Indigenous worldview, which not only
serves to unite it philosophically, but to also distinguish it from neighboring non land-
based communities. (as cited in Walker, Jojola, & Natcher, Eds., 2013, p. xviii)

Matunga (2013) characterizes the period from the early 1980s to the present date as a
period of resurgence in Indigenous planning, coinciding with Indigenous peoples’ protests and
legal victories locally, nationally and internationally. In Canada, particularly with the repatriation
of Canada’s Constitution that enshrined Indigenous peoples’ rights, countless legal victories by
Indigenous nations have defined and redefined Indigenous-state relations and charted a course
for a new era in Indigenous planning. Planning by and for indigenous peoples, as Walker, Jojola,
& Natcher (2013) suggest, is important in that it protects cultural, social, political and economic
rights and interest, secures self-determined goals, and supports relations with non-Indigenous
communities. Indeed, as Burke et al. argue, “Indigenous nations must develop their own plans
and regulations as a fundamental right of sovereignty and self-determination and as a means to
enforce treaty obligations of outside powers” (p. 120). If real change is to occur then it must be
Indigenous peoples themselves who drive such change, or a Lane and Hibbard (2005) state,
“Indigenous peoples must take hold of the planning role – building alliances, managing resources
and mediating decision” (p. 182). Matunga (2013), in his critical essay on Indigenous planning
argues that the following question have always been critical for Indigenous people in regards to planning:

Whose future? Who decides what this future should or could look like? Who is doing the analysis and making the decisions? Who has the authority, the control, the final decision-making power? Whose values, ethics, concepts, and knowledge? Whose methods and approaches? What frameworks, institutions, and organizations are being used to guide the planning processes that affect Indigenous peoples? Where are Indigenous people positioned in the construction of that future? (p. 4)

It is in answering such questions that Matunga suggests that Indigenous planning be positioned as a theory and practice on internalized self-definition and externalized advocacy, and that the entire process of Indigenous planning “connects people (tribes or clans) with place (land) through knowledge (traditional or contemporary) and values and/or worldviews (attitudes, beliefs) in order to make decisions (process, institutions) that can be put in to practice (application, action) to enhance the well-being of Indigenous community.” (2013, p. 15). Prusk, Walker & Innes (2015) in their evaluation of a CCP pilot project in 11 Saskatchewan First Nation communities identified the key characteristics of Indigenous planning as being “strong commitment to positive political, social, economic, environmental change, and the centrality of community, kinship, and place-based processes and institutional arrangements” (p. 4). Indeed, as Matunga (2013) concludes:

Indigenous planning is a form of planning whose roots and traditions are grounded in specific Indigenous peoples’ experiences linked to specific places, lands, and resources. In other words, planning within, for and by the particular Indigenous community for the place they call theirs. Importantly, it isn’t just spatial planning by Indigenous peoples, but
has a much broader scope, focusing on the lives and environments of Indigenous people (as cited in Prusk, Walker & Innes, 2015, p. 4).

Models of Indigenous Planning

In reviewing the literature on Indigenous planning there were no readily identifiable conceptual frameworks or practice methods that can be solely classified as uniquely ‘Indigenous.’ This should come as no surprise given the success that colonization and planning has had on marginalizing and oppressing Indigenous peoples, knowledge and traditions. What the literature does capture are a limited number of conceptual frameworks and recommendations for possible models of Indigenous planning, as well as a limited number of analyses on some of the more widely used Western methods that have achieved some successes when used with Indigenous peoples and in communities.

In recounting his work with several tribes in the United States, Hibbard (2016) suggests that planning in Indigenous communities takes place in a manner that ensures cultural integrity – what he refers to as Development Planning with Cultural Integrity (DPCI). He builds his thesis off of a case study analysis of work he has undertaken with two Indigenous communities – The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla in Oregon, and the Kake Tlingit in Alaska. Both communities had achieved success in utilizing traditional approaches to development, but by hybridizing their approaches to include more traditional values they were able to achieve a greater degree of sovereignty and self-determination.

Hibbard, Lane & Rasmussen (2008) argue that models of Indigenous community-based planning “emphasize control of planning activities as a means of ensuring that local goals and agendas are pursued,” and that “planning activity is instigated, controlled and conducted at the local community level” (p. 146). Because planning can be so politically charged, especially when
it comes to land and resource planning, its imperative for these authors that planning be done by local people to meet local needs and so that outside agendas do not end up usurping planning agendas and priorities.

Interestingly, the most widely referenced and criticized planning framework is the Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada’s (INAC) Comprehensive Community Planning Framework, the model for which this project seeks to learn from and build upon. The CCP Handbook (2013) provides a step-by-step approach to development planning in Indigenous communities and focuses on seven key sectors: governance, lands and resources, health, infrastructure development, culture, social, and economy. Some researchers have found that the CCP model has been used quite successfully in several First Nation communities (see AANDC, 2011, Mannell, Palermo & Smith, 2013). In fact, one community – Westbank First Nation – has reorganized their entire political and administrative structure to reflect the community’s vision for the community based on feedback from the CCP process. These authors argue that the CCP Handbook provides a good basis for most communities who want to engage in comprehensive planning. Others are more critical in their analysis of the CCP framework (Prusk, Walker & Innes, 2015; Booth & Muir, 2011), seeing it as a top-down, Western-based approach that seeks to impose processes rather than letting the community decide how best to approach planning. While both sides of the argument present compelling cases, it is Indigenous peoples that end up in the unfortunate position of having to choose between the lesser of two evils – choosing to not engage in planning at all, or using a framework that largely prescribes an approach and satisfies a settler government’s agenda. My own research below, however, suggest that planning need not be a zero-sum game for Indigenous peoples, and that Indigenous peoples can successfully adapt Western methods to best suit their community’s needs.
Section 2 – Project Methodology

The research I undertook for this project was done in partnership with the Saugeen First Nation Chief and Council. Saugeen was approached as a partner on this project because I am a member of the community and serve as an elected Band Councillor. The original research question posed by the Chief and Council was “How can the Saugeen First Nation Chief and Council build on the Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada’s Comprehensive Community Plan Framework to facilitate sustained engagement of their membership throughout the planning and implementation phases?” This question was originally settled upon because of past challenges experienced by Chief and Council in sustaining a high degree of engagement and participation by membership on past community initiatives. Quite often, as one Council member remarked, “it is the vocal minority of the community who attend these sessions and end up making decisions on behalf of the entire membership.” However, over the course of several discussions with the Chief, a more broader research question emerged that seemed to not only capture the original research question, but also capture best practices and lessons learned from other First Nations who have completed their own CCPs. After discussion with and approval by my research supervisor, the original research question was changed to the following: What lessons might the Saugeen First Nation Chief and Council learn from other First Nation communities that have completed their own comprehensive community plans?

To address this research question I undertook four activities. First, I reviewed the academic and grey literature on planning in First Nation communities, focussing on peer reviewed journal articles, books, professional and policy papers, and government statistical data. Second, I conducted a document review—a qualitative research method for reviewing the data contained in natural documents—of the 20-year Strategic Plan for Saugeen First Nation. As Scott
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(1990) argues, document review is a useful qualitative method when reviewing documents because it allows the researcher to analyze a document’s authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning. Third, I conducted an Internet search for CCPs that had been completed by First Nation communities in Canada. Finally, once I had selected the CCPs based on a non-probability sampling method, I reviewed the documents using content analysis, a method to “find patterns and relationships among the variables (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2002, p. 293 as cited in Booth & Muir, 2011, p.430).

In conducting my Internet search for First Nations CCPs a variety of search terms were used, including: comprehensive community planning, Indigenous planning, First Nations, planning, Aboriginal planning, and community strategic planning. My criterion for including a CCP in this research was a) the plan must be from a First Nation community in Canada, b) the plan must be a final version and approved by the First Nation’s Chief and Council, and c) the plan must have been made publically available on the Internet. My Google keyword search returned 6,370,000 results, of which the top 200 were reviewed against the selection criteria. Of the 200 search results I identified four CCPs from Canadian First Nation communities that had been approved by their respective Chiefs and Councils and made publicly available on the Internet. The four plans that were selected offer a detailed look at the CCP process undertaken by each community and allow for some general conclusions and recommendations to be made on planning in First Nations communities.
Section 3 – Saugeen First Nation Case Study

Saugeen First Nation (Saugeen) is an Anishinabek (Ojibway) community located in the Northwestern portion of Southwestern Ontario, situated on the Southern shores of Lake Huron. It is an approximately two-and-a-half hours drive from major urban centres such as Toronto, Barrie, Kitchener-Waterloo, and London. Saugeen’s Traditional Territory spans two million acres, including the entirety of the Bruce Peninsula, South to Goderich, and East to Wasaga Beach. The Traditional Territory is jointly shared with the Chippewa’s of Nawash, a sister community located approximately 70 kilometers North-East of Saugeen. The political confederacy of the two communities is referred to as the Saugeen Ojibway Nation (SON).

Figure 1. Saugeen’s Traditional Territory


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Saugeen’s membership is approximately 1,854 individuals, with an on-reserve population of 801, or 43.2 percent. According to Statistics Canada (2011) the median age for Saugeen is 32.7 years compared to 40.0 years for Ontario. While Saugeen’s population is younger than Ontario’s it is a relatively older population when compare to the First Nation population as a whole, at 22 years. Saugeen’s members over the age of 15 having earned at least a high school diploma is 56.3 percent, compared to 80.8 percent for Ontario. The average total income for all persons on Saugeen is approximately 55 percent less than the rest of Ontario, at $23,366.00 compared to $42,264.00. Unemployment rates are also double that of Ontario’s, with 17.2 percent of Saugeen members being unemployed compared to 8.3 percent for Ontario. What these numbers show is that a majority of Saugeen’s membership reside off-reserve, they are relatively young, have lower levels of education and income, and experience higher rates of unemployment compared to the rest of Ontarians.

**Treaties 45½ and 72**

As European settlers pushed further in to the SON Territory the British sought to sign treaties with the SON leadership. In 1836 SON and the British signed Treaty 45½ which stated that in exchange for the SON agreeing to open up a portion of their lands for settlement, the British would ensure the entirety of the Saugeen Peninsula (now known as the Bruce Peninsula) be forever protected and for use exclusively by members of the SON. As Treaty 45½ notes:

… I now propose to you that you should surrender to your Great Father the Sauking Territory you at present occupy, and that you should repair either to this island or to that part of your territory which lies on the north of Owen Sound, upon which proper houses shall be built for you, and proper assistance given to enable you to become civilized and
to cultivate land, which your Great Father engages for ever to protect for you from the encroachments of the whites. (INAC, 2016)

Fully 18 years later, however, the British stated that they were no longer able to protect the Territory from settler encroachment unless the land was protected by way of another treaty. This treaty, Treaty 72, saw the SON Territory fully opened up to European settlers, save for Saugeen’s current land holdings. Today, Saugeen’s Territory is a fraction of what it once was at 5,069 hectares. Their land holdings includes four reserves: Saugeen Reserve, Saugeen Hunting Grounds, Saugeen Fishing Islands, and Chief’s Point—a small tract of land occupied by leasehold cottage owners, and is also used for hunting, fishing and ceremonial purposes.

**Land Claim and Eastern Boundary Litigation**

As a result of the Crown’s failure to honour its treaty and fiduciary obligations, the SON leadership commenced litigation against the Crown in 1994 seeking $90 billion in compensation from the proceeds of the sale of the lands that were never remitted to SON as agreed to under the terms of Treaty 72. The claim also seeks the return of Crown lands on the Bruce Peninsula and within the Territory that has not been sold. This claim, one of the largest in Canada, has the potential to reshape the social, political and economic landscape of the area, as the Territory has some of the most sought after water and lands for agriculture, recreation, energy generation and resource and mineral extraction.

Saugeen also has another matter separate from SON before the courts resulting from Treaty 72 regarding the northern boundary of the Saugeen Reserve. In 1990 Saugeen commenced the Sauble Beach Litigation claiming that its actual reserve extends an additional 1.5 miles north of its current boundary, and should include the tract of land from Main Street to 6th Street of Sauble Beach. The four main parties to the litigation are Saugeen First Nation, the
Town of South Bruce Peninsula (SBP), the Government of Canada, and the Province of Ontario. The parties have been in mediated negotiations for several years, but in a surprise move the Government of Canada accepted Saugeen’s evidence and supported its claims that their boundary does in fact extend to 6th Street.

In 2014 an Agreement in Principle was negotiated that would have seen formal title of the disputed land handed back Saugeen, with a joint management board established with three representatives each from Saugeen and SBP who would be charged with overseeing the beach and approving any changes. SBP would have also received a cash settlement of $5-million, with an undisclosed sum being awarded to Saugeen (Globe and Mail, 2015). Unfortunately, due to the divisive nature of the agreement and a desire among residents of SBP to not surrender any land, the agreement became an election issue and, as a result, the formed Mayor was voted out of office in favour of a candidate who ran on a platform of opposition and continued litigation. The matter is now before the courts.

**Past Community Planning Initiatives**

The Saugeen membership elected a new Chief and Council to a two-year term on June 24, 2016, and one of the first orders of business of the newly elected Council was to pass the Saugeen First Nation Governance Law as policy as an interim measure. This policy/law defines the operational procedures to promote and ensure good governance, and commits the Chief and Council to setting the strategic direction for the community by way of developing, implementing, and evaluating a Comprehensive Community Plan (CCP). The last time the Saugeen Chief and Council undertook a community planning initiative was in 2004, resulting in the 20-year Strategic Plan for Saugeen First Nation. The plan’s priorities centered on development in four sectors: social development, lands and housing, governance, and economic development. This
plan, however, was never fully actioned upon by way of the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of operational plans, thus previous and current Chiefs and Councils have had no clear or formalized evaluation method for determining the plan’s successes and failures, nor its effectiveness. No other community planning initiatives or documentation were identified under this project suggesting that formalized planning is an ad hoc undertaking advanced by various departments focusing on specific sectors of the community, and thus there is no strategic alignment nor comprehensive plan that identifies and plans for the current and future needs of the community.

My analysis of the 20-year Strategic Plan shows that of the 68 action items proposed across all sectors fully 70 percent (48) focus on developing the lands and housing and social development sectors, with governance and economic development representing 21 percent (14) and 9 percent (6), respectively. These figures suggest that within Saugeen there is a greater need to increase the availability of housing among residents in order to reduce overcrowding, to develop the lands in order to increase economic prosperity, and to improve the health and social wellbeing of the community. While no specific data exists on rates of overcrowding and health and social wellbeing among residents of Saugeen, numerous other studies (AFN, 2013; RHS, 2008; Statistics Canada, 2011) find that Indigenous peoples in general are 27 percent more likely to live in crowded conditions and have poorer outcomes on every measure of health and social wellbeing compared to the rest of Canadians (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2013).
In reviewing the action items currently in progress, not yet started, or complete, my analysis found that a majority of actions items had not yet been started in the 12-year period since the plan was developed. Fully 53 percent (36) of action items have not yet been started, with 25 percent (17) currently in progress, and 22 percent (15) completed. While nothing in the data explains why such a disproportionate number of items have not yet been started, a few assumptions can be made. First, as previously stated, no operational plans were ever developed. As such, there would have been no assigning of responsibility or delegation of authority to various departments and management staff to follow through on the action items. Second, the plan was developed in isolation by the previous Chief and Council who did not seek to engage input from management nor the Saugeen membership. By taking a top down approach to planning it is conceivable that there would have been minimal buy-in from staff and community alike, thus hindering successful implementation of the plan. Furthermore, with no formal reporting mechanisms in place it would be difficult to track follow through on the plan and hold individuals accountable. Finally, the two-year election cycle for Chief and Council makes it difficult to advance long-term, resource heavy initiatives. As one Council member stated, “it takes you six months to get up to speed, leaving you with one year for actual work, followed six months focused on getting re-elected.” Moreover, with the frequent election cycles comes a high
degree of turnover in the elected leadership, and nothing compels new leadership to follow through on previous leaderships’ plans.

![Saugeen’s 20-year Strategic Plan Progress Chart](image)

**Development within the Territory**

Development within the SON Traditional Territory has been taking place since European settlement, largely at the exclusion of the Saugeen membership and to their detriment. Indeed, as Treaties 45 ½ and 72 notes the Territory and the Peninsula were opened up to accommodate the settler nations, and within the Territory are highly desirable lands, aggregates, waters and natural resources that have been exploited. Over the decades that have followed large-scale industrial development and resource extractive activities have taken place that have primarily benefited the non-Indigenous towns in the area. For instance, the average income for all people residing on Saugeen is $23,366.00 compared to $52,785.00 for residents of Saugeen Shores, the municipality adjacent to Saugeen, fully 44 percent less (Statistics Canada, 2011).

One of the drivers behind this considerable wage disparity has to do with the low number of people from Saugeen employed at Bruce Power, the world’s largest nuclear generating station and one of the primary economic drivers in the area. Bruce Power (formerly Douglas Point Nuclear Generating Station) has been operating in the SON Territory since 1967, and today produces roughly 30 percent of Ontario’s electricity and directly employs over 4000 people in
highly skilled and technical positions (Bruce Power, 2015). In December 2015, Bruce Power and the Province of Ontario announced a massive 15-year $15-billion refurbishment plan for the plant beginning in 2020 that will see the life of the reactors extended to 2065.

One of the by-products of generating nuclear power is nuclear waste, and on the Bruce Power site, which is leased from Ontario Power Generation (OPG), a provincial crown corporation, sits the Western Waste Management Facility (WWMF). WWMF stores all low and intermediate-level (LIL) nuclear waste on-site in above-ground warehouses, while all high-level waste is stored in below-ground steel-lined concrete bunkers. These facilities and bunkers are only temporary measures to house the increasing amounts of nuclear waste, and as the life of the reactors are extended by an additional 45 years there is increasing pressure on the provincial and federal governments to find a permanent solution to housing the waste. One of the frontrunner options is the Deep Geological Repository (DGR), a proposed site approximately 680 meters below Bruce Power, and within Saugeen’s Traditional Territory. This site is being proposed as a permanent location for the LIL waste because, as OPG (2016) states, “[t]he stability and predictability of the rock formations, along with their isolating capabilities, make an ideal setting where the waste can be safely stored while the radioactivity decays.” The SON leadership have been in negotiations with Bruce Power and OPG for several years regarding the proposed DGR and to settle past grievances for the decades of operating in the Territory without proposer consultation and their impact on the environment and Saugeen’s traditional way of life.

**Challenges and Opportunities**

The ongoing pressures from industrial development, resource extraction and exploitation in the SON Territory poses a considerable threat to the people of Saugeen and harms the cultural, environmental and territorial integrity for current and future generations. For instance, because
the Territory is situated on the Southern shores of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay and experiences considerable wind gusts, and because of the proximity to the large swaths of hydro transmission lines, the SON Territory is considered fertile ground for wind turbine farms. In fact, there are approximately 540 wind turbines spread across the four counties within the SON Territory. (Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, 2016). The area also has a high concentration of pit and quarry operators all of whom extract several million tons of aggregates from the rock and lands in and around the Bruce Peninsula and throughout the Territory.

Figure 1.3  Pits and Quarries in Saugeen’s Territory

*Note:* From “Pits and Quarries,” by Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. Copyright 2012 by Queen’s Printer for Ontario. Reprinted with permission.

In spite of these pressures and challenges the Chief and Council have several political, legal and administrative levers at their disposal to improve the current and future outlook of the community and to ensure that development within their Territory benefits the community. The
first, and quite possibly most important lever is the community’s ability to have wrested from OPG and the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) regarding the DGR and the burying of nuclear waste in the Territory (Bayshore Broadcasting, 2016). The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that Indigenous people should be provided every opportunity to provide consent in a free and informed manner on matters relating to development projects, resource extraction or other investments in their Territory (Ward, 2011). Indigenous peoples nationally and internationally are increasingly seeing FPIC as the standard through which consent is sought, and to this point very few communities have secured FPIC on projects in their territories.

Recent legal victories dealing with Aboriginal rights and title also provides Chief and Council with opportunity and leverage to advance current and future planning initiatives, both within the community in throughout the Territory. In Haída Nation v. British Columbia (2004) the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed that asserted (and not just proven) Aboriginal rights and title will trigger a duty on the part of the Crown to consult with those Indigenous groups affected by a proposed development project. The case also found that it is the responsibility of the Crown and not industry to ensure proper consultation has occurred with Indigenous groups, and while the Crown may delegate such duty to industry it is up to the Crown to ensure that full and proper consultation, and where appropriate, accommodation has taken place. In Tsilhqot’in v. British Columbia (2014) the Supreme Court of Canada found that the Tsilhqot’in retain Aboriginal title to its lands, which means that they have the right to manage, benefit from, and decide how the lands are to be used. The court also found that the governments must obtain consent before interfering with Aboriginal title lands, and if they cannot obtain consent then they must justify an infringement (Tsilhqot’in, 2014).
At the community-level, with Chief and Council approving the Saugeen First Nation Governance Policy the leadership is compelled to engage in comprehensive community planning. Such an undertaking must look at the strengths and limitations within the community, and explore the current and future opportunities and threats throughout the Territory to ensure that planning and development activities meet the needs of current and future generations in a manner that is consistent with Saugeen values and traditions. While such a comprehensive scan is outside the scope of this project, the lessons learned from other First Nations and documented herein will serve as a point of reference for Chief and Council and provide a framework for engaging in their own planning activities.
Section 4 – Analysis of Comprehensive Community Plans and Discussion

The four CCPs that were selected for analysis include two First Nation communities in British Columbia (Musqueam and Westbank), one in Ontario (Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve (WUIR)), and one that is multi-jurisdictional (Akwesasne, which straddles Ontario, Quebec and New York State, though their plan only focuses on Ontario). Each community used the INAC CCP Framework as the model on which their plans were developed, but each plan varied in terms of breadth, depth and level of detail. Of the four plans reviewed three were first-phase plans (Musqueam (2011), WUIR (2012) and Akwesasne (2016)), while Westbank’s (2015) was a second-phase plan, the first having been completed in 2010. Two of the four communities (Musqueam and Westbank) utilized “in-house” expertise to lead the development of their CCPs, while WUIR and Akwesasne hired external consulting firms. All communities utilized a mix of Band revenue and government project funding, while Musqueam also received private sector and grant dollars. What follows is my analysis of the plans categorized by theme.

Methods of Community Engagement and Communication

My first level of analysis was to look at how each community engaged and communicated with their members, who they engaged and communicated with, and through what media and/or communication vehicle(s) they used. I found that all of the communities had robust methods for engaging and communicating with their members as a whole and with sub-populations, such as children and youth, and Elders. To help increase the level of community engagement and participation Musqueam, Westbank and Akwesasne hired ‘Plan Champions’, people who helped keep momentum going throughout the process and acted at liaisons between the CCP facilitator and the community. WUIR opted instead to establish a CCP working group comprised of program managers who were tasked with driving the CCP process, though nothing
speaks to their role or mandate in regards to engaging the community. In terms of number of engagement sessions, Musqueam held over 100, Westbank held 35, WUIR held three, and Akwesasne held an undisclosed number, though based on the final report the number can be assumed to be high.

The most common methods for engaging and communicating with community members included community meetings, online and paper surveys, newsletters, social media, open houses, workshops, and family group meetings. Musqueam, Westbank and Akwesasne also did a great deal of community outreach, including school visits, Elders visits, holding information sessions at community events, and attending National Aboriginal Day celebrations. Only two communities (Musqueam and Westbank), however, made specific reference to actively engaging their off-reserve membership. This appears to have been a missed opportunity for WUIR and Akwesasne to make their off-reserve members feel engaged in the process.

**Operationalizing the Plans**

My second level of analysis was to look at how each community intended to operationalize their plans. The WUIR plan detailed broad strategic sector/departmental goals with specific action items that would be lead by the respective department(s). It also identified timeframes for completing the items, such as short (1-3 years), medium (4-5 years) and long-term (6-10 years). The Akwesasne plan also included broad strategic sector/departmental goals with specific action items, though they also included estimates for financial and human resources required to complete each action item. While Westbank did not include an operational plan within their CCP (though one was developed but not made publically available on the Internet), it did list several specific action items broken down by sector.
The Musqueam plan on the other hand was quite comprehensive and detailed in how they intended to operationalize their CCP. They included a sample work plan that linked new strategic actions to operational objectives, with each strategic action colour coded according to priority level and classified as either a ‘current action’ or a ‘proposed action’. Budgets were also developed for each action item so that the Musqueam Chief and Council would be “equipped to make objective, financially-based cost/benefit and trade-off decisions” (Musqueam, 2015, p. 100). Their sample work plan also included more detailed information like whether or not a Band Council Resolution is required from Chief and Council before an action can be started, which committee or working group is assigned to specific action item, which department is responsible for seeing the action item through to completion, what phase (1, 2 or 3) the action item is in, if new staff are required to complete the item, and how close (percentage) the project is to being complete.

**Evaluating the Plans**

My final level of analysis included reviewing the plans to see how the communities intended to measure and evaluate success. Of the four plans only two (Musqueam and Akwesasne) included key performance indicators (KPIs) and performance measurement and evaluation tools to measure progress and success. Akwesasne included between one and three KPIs for each strategic action item, with their KPIs monitoring tools included reviewing annual progress reports, employee and community satisfaction surveys, and program manager briefing notes. Although their KPIs and monitoring tools can provide Akwesasne leadership with some insights in to how action items are progressing, there does not appear to be a central reporting mechanism where progress on a specific action item can be viewed against the collective set of action items to measure community impact. Moreover, Akwesasne’s monitoring tools tends to
measure things over which they have no control and have little impact on determining the plan’s successes or failures i.e. employee and community satisfaction surveys. This is common issue among public service organizations to include performance measures on things over which they have no control, “such as client characteristics and the environment in which they operate” (Rubenstein, Schwartz & Stiefel, 2003, p. 607).

The Musqueam plan identified three monitoring and evaluation tools to measure progress and success. In identifying which tools they wanted to used they asked themselves three questions: Are we doing what we said we would do? Are we having the impact we want on what we care about? And what can we do better? Having identified what questions they wanted answered they were able to identify the most appropriate monitoring and evaluation tools. To answer the first question they selected Compliance Monitoring to ensure that actions are getting done. Compliance Monitoring was built in to departmental planning and budgeting vis-à-vis work plans. To measure what impact the plan was having an Impact Monitoring tool was selected that would allow progress to be monitored year over year, for progress to compared against previous years, and to evaluate impact on community objectives. To measure overall effectiveness and identify where improvement can be made the Musqueam selected an Evaluation tool to monitor where the largest gains are being made and where efforts need to be adjusted to maximize outputs. By utilizing a rage of monitoring and evaluation tools and taking a triangulation (Morse, 1991) approach to data collection, the Musqueam should be able to ensure that the outputs of their plan are having the desired impact on their community, or be able to take corrective measures. Moreover, the Musqueam’s monitoring and evaluation tools support the principles of good governance in that they will be used to “communicate with the community, to
provide updates on [their] progress, and will help to maintain support and momentum for ongoing implementation of [the plan]” (Musqueam, 2011, p. 115).

**Lessons Learned**

In reviewing the four community plans against the INAC CCP Framework it is evident that while the Framework provided a basis from which the plans were developed, the communities did not limit their processes or creativity to those items or sectors prescribed. Indeed, each of the communities’ processes and plans reflect to varying degrees their local customs, culture, vision, priorities and hopes for the future. Moreover, each of the communities used the drafting of the plan as an opportunity to embed their histories, languages and cultures within their plans to ensure that the current and future leadership and those who will be operationalizing the plans know that culture and tradition are the roots from which all actions will take hold. The CCP process that each community undertook was an important opportunity for leadership, management, staff and membership to come together and vision a future for their communities—one in which their communities are healthy, successful and self-sufficient. Musqueam even used the planning process as an opportunity to acknowledge the root causes of community dysfunction in order to plan for foundational change, those causes being oppression of the *Indian Act*, an imposed system of governance, loss of lands, culture and identity, and impacts of Residential School. In this regard community planning was as much about healing as it was about planning for a brighter future.

It appears that whomever providing funding for the project impacted on the length of time it took the communities to complete their plans. For instance, Musqueam held over 100 community meetings, had a mix of public and private funding and took three-years to complete their plan. Westbank also took three-years to complete their plan which was largely self-funded.
Akwesasne and WUIR on the other hand received government funding to support the development of their plans and completed them over fiscal years 2015/16 and 2011/12, respectively. It seems that those communities that received government funding had time constraints put on them to complete their plans, and while nothing in the documents suggest that this impeded their ability to complete their projects, it would certainly limit the amount of time that could be devoted to community engagement activities. This, of course, poses a challenge when trying to engage with as broad a cross-sector of community members as possible and to ensure that consultation is meaningful, elicits deep insights and rich content, and empowers the community.

Finally, the degree to which communities used internal versus external facilitators and project leads was discernable. Musqueam and Westbank used people from the community to lead and drive their CCP processes, and while their documents do not speak to the capacity or expertise of these individuals both plans were highly technical and professional, suggesting that these individuals were well-trained planners and facilitators. It can also be assumed that by using local expertise there was a greater degree of trust by the community with the project leads and in the process, thereby increasing community participation, level of engagement, and in the detail and richness of the information and ideas put forth by the community. Not surprisingly then, whereas WUIR and Akwesasne used external consulting companies there appears to be a degree of unfamiliarity with the communities’ histories, cultures, visions and hopes for the future. While both reports are quite technical and capture well the data and information gathered, they appear to lack the traditional knowledge and richness of the community input that Musqueam’s and Westbank’s plans detail.
Section 5 – Recommendations

Having reviewed the literature on planning in First Nation communities, assessed the 20-year Strategic Plan for Saugeen First Nation, and analyzed the CCPs from Musqueam, Westbank, WUIR and Akwesasne, I was able to identify themes and best/promising practices which form the basis for my recommendations that follow. The Saugeen First Nation Chief and Council, as well as other communities, can use these recommendations to support their future planning activities.

1. *Speak with and learn from other communities that have gone through the CCP process*

   Given the amount of time and resources it will take for a community to undertake a CCP initiative, it would be of considerable value to connect with communities that have gone through the process in order to learn from their experiences. The plans that were reviewed detailed an explicit willingness and a desire on the part of these communities to support capacity building and knowledge exchange with other First Nation communities.

2. *Chief and Council should endorse, support and fund the planning initiative but let the community drive the process*

   Communities have a lot of passionate people whose strengths and abilities will be necessary to drive the process, and the greater degree the community drives the process the greater stake they have in realizing the outcomes of the plan and their vision for the future. Research suggests that when the community drives the process it leads to a vision and “mandate from the people”, and results in greater community cohesion (Prusk, Walker & Innes, 2015, p. 5).
3. **Build the capacity of those individuals who will be leading the process**

Planning for a community’s future is a significant undertaking that requires multiple people with specific skillsets. By investing in the capacity of those individuals who will be leading the process through workshops, knowledge exchange activities, and formal and informal learning, communities will have a more knowledgeable and skilled team leading the process, thereby increasing the chances for a successful planning initiative.

4. **Hire a Plan Champion to keep momentum going**

Plan champions are critical to the success of CCP initiatives (Musqueam, 2011; Akwesasne, 2016; Westbank, 2015; Prusk, Walker & Innes, 2015; AANDC, 2011). Plan Champions act as liaisons between the facilitator and the community, follow through on action items between meetings, provide updates and reports to Chief and Council, and help to keep the momentum going throughout the process. Hiring a Plan Champion also builds the skills of a community member who can be a useful resource once the plan is complete.

5. **If necessary hire external planning expertise, but be prepared to build their cultural knowledge and capacity so community needs are met in a culturally appropriate manner**

If the community does not possess the required expertise internally to lead the planning process it will be necessary to hire external expertise. External experts are highly trained planning professionals and their expertise can be extremely beneficial to the process. However, externals facilitators may not have the cultural knowledge or expertise to lead the process in a manner that meets the needs of the community. Therefore, the community should be prepared to build the consultant’s level of cultural knowledge and capacity so community needs are met in a culturally appropriate manner necessary.
6. *Seek to engage members that reside both on and off-reserve*

Community members who reside off-reserve should be encouraged to provide input in to the planning process as much as on-reserve members. Off-reserve members can bring a unique and different perspective to what the community’s strengths, challenges and needs might be, as well as be able to identify opportunities and resources that otherwise might not be considered. Moreover, the CCP process could also be used as an opportunity to connect with and recruit skilled and trained members living off-reserve who can help drive implementation or fill employment gaps.

7. *Seek funding from a diversity of partners and funders*

Developing a CCP is a resource-heavy endeavour, and while INAC does provide communities with funding to undertake planning activities it is often less than what is required. As such, funding should be sought from a variety of public and private sources to ensure there are enough resources to complete the CCP while paying particular attention to minimizing the number of external influences, timeframes and reporting requirements.

8. *Develop operational plans, KPIs, and monitoring and evaluation tools to ensure follow through and to track performance*

A plan is only as good as the degree to which it is implemented, monitored and continuously refined and improved upon. Developing operational plans, KPIs, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks to ensure follow through and to track performance can increase successful outcomes and lead to greater accountability, transparency, and community trust in leadership.
9. *Use the CCP as a vehicle for continuity and measured change*

The frequent election cycle in First Nation communities and high degree of turnover among elected leadership poses considerable challenges for communities to engage in long-term planning. The CCP process, however, is an opportunity for the community to come together to plan five, 10, 20 or more years into the future. Regardless of the leadership of the day the CCP can act as a predictable vehicle for continuity and measured change that enables leadership to govern with a mandate from the people.
Conclusion

Planning in Indigenous communities is re-emerging as an important means towards building a future that is happy, healthy and prosperous for Indigenous peoples. Whereas once planning was the apparatus through which Indigenous peoples were marginalized and oppressed, today it is a vehicle through which Indigenous peoples are reclaiming their culture and identity, benefitting from their lands, and making their communities better and safer places to live. Indeed, there is much work still to be done, but Indigenous peoples are achieving greater degrees of sovereignty and self-determination than ever before. This change has been supported by allies who have a desire to see planning live up to its emancipatory nature in Indigenous communities, as well as numerous legal victories around Aboriginal lands, rights and title. However, it has been through Indigenous peoples themselves taking up planning that we have seen some of the greatest successes, successes that have been driven by the community, for the community.

Musqueam and Westbank are two such communities that have embraced planning’s role in visioning and planning for a future where all members have the opportunity to achieve their potential. They have shown that planning not only provides communities with an opportunity to come together to plan for a brighter future, but that it can also heal some of the historical traumas associated with colonization. It is in this essence—it’s capacity to support healing—that planning might finally live up to its emancipatory nature and help make the world a better place where all people can truly benefit.
References


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