

NRE2 Interview – capacity for revitalization (at Tweed Conference)

Student: Katia Marzall

Site representative: Essie Green, Winterton, NF

Winterton challenges:

Encountering an alternative economic activity for the cod fishery, collapsed in 1992;

Involvement of a larger group of people in the decision-making regarding the future of the community;

1. The ongoing challenge of Winterton, NF, is to recover an economic stability after the Cod Industry collapsed in 1992. This industry was the major economic activity for the community, as it was for many other communities in NF, and its collapse implied the loss of job and economic support for the whole community.

After the collapse of the cod industry, there was initially a governmental financial support to the communities attained. According to the interviewee, most of the youth got comfortable with a governmental income, and are not interested enough to make changes happening. Further, The town became an interesting site for summer-house for retired people, mostly from the US. These two issues characterize a smaller group involved in looking for alternatives, since the both mentioned groups are living in the community, but do not feel committed with its economic future.

2. Alternatives for and economic activity where looked in two major directions: diversification of sea species to be explored and tourism.

The first was addressed by looking for the presence of other species available in the same area already explored: crab, mussels, sea ousin, shrimp and whelk where alternatives found. The challenge was then to adapt the physical structures to fish and to process the different species. With the whelk, for instance, some groups in the community where addressed with the question about what to do with its shell. Some artistic ideas came about, with not much emphasis yet.

The tourism industry has a great potential to flourish. The environment is attractive, with sea on the one side, where whale watching, fishing, sea caiaquing are possible; and on the other side there are trails through forests and mountains. The tranquillity of the region, particularly the absence of crime is also an attractive. Accommodations for tourists was one of the aims, but together, there was a creation of a museum, which major aim was as well to preserve some traditions and knowledge still existing in the community for the prosperity, aiming to develop this skills in the younger generations. To achieve that, a Heritage Society was created, with the major aim to bring back the ship building industry, that could be as well become a future economic activity. The museum encompasses a marina, that will be home for small crafts, harboring and a ship yard, where they will be built, possibly year around. Recently, the community found out that one of its churches has one of the eight remaining pipe organs in the world. The idea to make use of that, is to leave the church open more often, and not only for the services.

3. The initiative of the museum and heritage centre was of the Town council, with the ideas coming from a person (the interviewee, in her period as the town major)) that had had similar experiences in other sites. The heritage Society was created, and worked together to find what are the aspects of the town that could be interesting to promote. Since the boat building activity was an important activity in the past, and there was still someone that master the skills, they choose to strengthen their identity in this direction.

4. The most important resources to face the challenges the Town of Winterton is facing are human resources. According to the interviewee: “good positive thinking people. No need of money, only of people power”. However, they are financially covered by different grants, coming from diverse institutions, that support the construction of the needed structures.

The first boat built so far was finished in 2001. Since then, other four were built. The wood to build them is local, carved out by local people.

5/6. The major players in this process were the Town Council and the Heritage Society. Other committees came into being, such as the Futures Committee, where the artisans were involved.

7. “necessity is the mother of invents”, if you want to survive, it might not be as difficult. However, because of the current tendencies, the concern is with the social future of the town, that is becoming elderly. Interests and activities are shaped by this dominant part of the community, since youth is leaving. This is not seen by the interviewee necessarily as a problem, but as something that has to be taken into consideration when thinking about the kind of activities that should be emphasized on.