

Project Report

Transition Streets Pilot 2015

Transition Sunshine Coast CANADA

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Mission Statement

Transition Sunshine Coast CANADA is part of a global network that inspires us all to imagine and create a vibrant future that has alternatives to fossil fuels. We embrace building local resilience which is ecologically sustainable while nurturing and celebrating our community.

Collaborating with the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association's Earth Stewardship Pilot Project

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The Transition Street Project workbook and logo are adapted with permission from Transition Town Totnes, England and the workbook and evaluation forms with permission from Transition Victoria, BC Canada. References have also been made from Transition Initiatives in Nelson, BC and Guelph, Ontario

This document shares information about the Transition Streets Project on the Sunshine Coast, British Columbia, Canada, run by volunteers of Sunshine Coast in Transition Education Group: how it worked, what it achieved, what was learned and where we are headed next. The workbooks were funded with a portion of a \$250 grant from the Town of Gibsons.

1. SUMMARY

The first Sunshine Coast Transition Streets Pilot Project has run in two areas to date:

- Langdale Neighbourhood November 2014 – May 2015
- Town of Gibsons March 2014 – July 2015.

Twelve households took part in the Pilot Project (a group of seven neighbours from Langdale & a group of five from Gibsons). These small social groups used a workbook full of practical low-cost and no-cost actions to help them reduce their energy use and other household bills.

Our aim was to pilot 3-5 neighbourhoods from Langdale to Sechelt. Five neighbourhoods responded with interest: Langdale, Gibsons, Granthams Landing, Roberts Creek and Sechelt. All but Roberts Creek have attended a Transition Streets Information gathering. Granthams Landing and Roberts Creek neighbourhoods are planning to commence soon. Sechelt decided to opt out for now. We've learned that although a variety of methods were used to encourage initiators and participants, overall, word of mouth was the most successful.

An overwhelming majority of participants in the Pilot Project now feel more connected to and part of their local community. In addition, there were some significant pattern shifts in attitude noted at the end of the program:

- 80% now strongly agree with knowing what practical, effective actions they can take to reduce the potential impacts on them and others compared to 10% at the beginning.
- Reassuringly, 100% strongly agree that they are confident that they can and will make changes to their lifestyles that will last, compare to 50% at the beginning.
- It's worth noting that most of the people who participated in the pilot were already aware of, and in some ways committed to, living more sustainably.

The most popular actions from the five topics of energy, water, food, waste and transportation are recorded in the Results section on page 6. Although carbon and monetary savings have not been calculated for this project, it is worth noting that in the original Transition Streets Pilot Project in Totnes, United Kingdom, 500 households that took part saved over \$1,100 per year and 1.3 tons of CO₂ per year on average as a result of participating and doing actions from the workbook.

The Langdale neighbourhood group said they plan to keep meeting. They have already initiated a successful neighbourhood garage sale, inviting the entire neighbourhood to participate. The Gibsons group participants were not from the same street or neighbourhood, making it difficult to continue to meet regularly, but the majority said they intend to meet and touch base in the future about future projects.

The coordinators were very satisfied and encouraged with the results of the Pilot Project. Though each participant had an individual starting point in terms of knowledge of resources, level of commitment, and actions they had put in place already, everyone moved forward in very positive and significant ways. The feeling of camaraderie and group support was the thread that held each group together throughout the project and fueled a desire to continue after the completion of the seven sessions.

2. about the Project

The project aims to inspire and motivate people on the Sunshine Coast to work together and support each other in reducing their reliance on fossil fuels, building social cohesion and strengthening the community's resilience in the process.

It brings together small groups of neighbours and supports them in taking effective, practical, money-saving and carbon-reducing actions. A workbook helps each person to build their own action plan that improves energy efficiency, minimizes water use, reduces waste and consumption, explores local transport options and promotes local food.

It also helps everyone to understand what's behind rising energy and food prices, and climate change, and what this means for them, their family and their local community. Each group meets 7 times over a period of 3-7 months period. For more information about how the project works, please see the education page website at

www.sunshinecoastintransition.wordpress.com/education Behaviour change is the cornerstone of the project and is delivered through the meetings, the workbook and the peer support (and a bit of peer pressure!

3. What do the participants say?

Aspects of the project that *Langdale* participants liked the most:

- Meeting & spending time with neighbours.
- Getting to know new people
- Feeling energized by like-minded people
- The encouragement we give each other
- Getting together and sharing & eating delicious food.
- Meeting up at different streets in the neighbourhood in a synchronistic way and walking to our meeting place together carrying our workbooks and plates of food – it had an empowering feel to it.
- The easy format of the workbook and clear actions to do
- Group action e.g. garage sale, inviting other neighbours to join in.
- Having fun!

Aspects of the project that *Gibsons'* participants like the most:

- Always felt good at the end of a session/more hopeful
- Huge amount of information, adapted to local community. Excellent format ready to use. Sharing with lovely people who care/take responsibility.
- Meeting new people & talking with them below the "surface"
- Learning new ways/ideas for improving Transition
- Sharing ideas & big picture discussions about issues, hearing about different actions/organizations happening within the larger community of Gibsons & the Coast

4. Our project supporters

The Sunshine Coast Conservation Association (specifically Naomi Fleschhut) worked with us in the initial planning stages, assisted with funding applications and participated in the facilitation & launching of first orientation meeting with the Langdale neighbourhood.

One Straw Society Food Action coordinator Kym Chi helped us with funding applications.

The Town of Gibsons awarded a \$250 grant to Sunshine Coast in Transition in 2014 for two projects: Transition Streets and Transition Café (speakers) – the Transition Streets Project funds were used to issue workbooks (hard copies and digital sticks).

5. What do we know about participants and their homes?

Twelve households from 2 neighbourhoods participated, with a total of 34 people (22 adults and 12 children) involved. There was a wide range of family sizes, ages and composition. Langdale residents lived within comfortable walking distance of each other, but didn't live on the same street. Gibsons' district residents were more scattered geographically.

In relation to tenure, the majority of residences are privately owned detached houses. 33% of participants are renters – 50% of those live in suites (70% of the renters live in Langdale).

The following information is based on households prior to the pilot starting. Nine out of twelve evaluation forms are returned to date. Eleven out of 12 households completed the program (one opt-out later in the pilot was unavoidable).

- Regarding property ages, slightly more homes in Langdale were built between the years of 1970-1980 and the rest built between the years 1990-2000. Gibsons' homes were built from pre-1970's years up to 2000-2006.
- Home size range is between 800 sq ft – 2500 sq ft. All home fuel & heating systems are on BC Hydroelectricity, 33% also use gas and 25% also use biomass.
- Four households have Energy Star qualified appliances. Five households in Langdale and 1 in Gibsons have low flush toilets, low-flow shower heads, bathroom faucet aerators & kitchen faucets.
- One home had an EnerGuide Label from a recent home assessment prior to the start of the project and 4 households have Energy Star appliances.

6. Results

Participants complete an evaluation form at the first session and then again at the final session. This records the actions they take, and any changes in attitudes. This is then returned to the volunteer coordinators who track the results.

A. Numbers and Types of Actions

On average, each household:

- does 6 new actions from the workbook
- does 17 actions ‘more often than they did before’ as a result of the project.
- plans to do 4 more actions later and
- had already done 7 of the workbook actions before the project.

Priorities were quite varied between the two groups; however there are certain patterns that have emerged.

The top 4 most popular ‘new’ actions or actions that are being done ‘more than before’ are:

- Minimize food waste
- Make your own compost at home (or give food waste to others in the group or Gibsons Recycling Depot to compost).
- Reduce food packaging
- Dry laundry on a clothes line or dry rack whenever possible.

Other actions that rate close in popularity:

- Use power bars to stop phantom loads from appearing on your energy bills, wash laundry in cold water and unplug chargers for cell phones, cameras, tools and other equipment when not charging.
- Outdoors, purchase a rain barrel to collect rain water for irrigation. Water using a hose instead of a sprinkler. Plant native and drought tolerant plants.
- Buy local & seasonal foods
- Avoid – don’t buy items that are not essential.
- Fuel efficient driving
- Walk this way (walk don’t drive)

Top 5 “I plan to do this in the next few months” actions:

- Draft-proof your house
- Monitor water use (see page 9)
- Grow your own food
- Join Coast Car Co-op
- Try lift-sharing

Top 3 “already done” actions:

- Maximize indoor daylight by rearranging furniture, painting the walls a lighter colour, or installing skylights or light shelves (e.g. solar tubes)
- When replacing old appliances and devices, choose Energy Star qualified products
- Don’t leave taps running, fix drips & leaks, install faucet aerators and low flow showerheads.

B. Social impacts

In the evaluation forms we asked participants what they hoped to gain from being part of the Transition Streets Pilot Project.

The most common expectations were:

- To be closer and more connected with people in my neighbourhood and/or community.
- Gain more knowledge and ideas about reducing my carbon footprint.

Others wanted to be more motivated to make positive changes, or share the ideas and resources that were working for them and others. Interestingly, only about 20% of participants mentioned that saving money was an objective.

The vast majority in both neighbourhoods said all or most of their objectives were met. Based on the comments in the feedback section (see #3 “What do participants say”) participants feel closer and more connected with others in their neighbourhood and community.

There were some significant pattern shifts in attitude noted at the end of the program.

- Approximately 70% said they strongly agree that “I understand how peak oil and climate change affect me, my family, my local community and the planet” compared to about 30% at the first session.
- 80% now strongly agree with knowing what practical, effective actions they can take to reduce the potential impacts on them and others compared to 10% at the beginning.
- 80% now strongly agree that they are aware of “simple, easy things I can do to reduce household costs – and I know how to do them”, compared to 20% at the start of the program.
- Reassuringly, 100% strongly agree that they are confident that they can and will make changes to their lifestyles that will last, compared to 50% at the beginning.

C. Money and carbon saved

Although carbon and monetary savings have not been calculated in detail for this Sunshine Coast Pilot project, it is worth noting that in the original Transition Streets Pilot Project in Totnes, England, 500 households that took part saved over \$1,100 per year and 1.3 tons of CO₂ per year on average as a result of participating and doing actions from the workbook.

The households will likely take on more of the carbon saving actions in the workbook once the “official” project participation has ended, e.g. in the Totnes pilot, some of the groups went through the workbook a second time and the additional savings were not tracked. Additional savings and actions also happened after the Transition Victoria, BC pilot project finished.

7. What else have we learned?

- Most of the people who participated in the pilot were already aware of, and in some ways committed to living in a more sustainable way. Some had been to Transition awareness raising films and events. In the Langdale group, even those who knew about Transition requested more knowledge about peak oil and climate change (there was no information in the workbook we received from Transition Victoria “More on Peak Oil” so we didn’t have this for the last segment.)
- Some participants mentioned they would like more or bigger action ideas.
- There was quite a bit of discussion around replacing or not replacing inefficient incandescent lights with compact fluorescent bulbs (due to the mercury content) or even L.E.D lights.
- Some participants feel apprehensive about getting on a bicycle because they don’t feel the roads are safe. Although the range of bike routes are being expanded on the Coast, many paths end abruptly and parked vehicles often block bike paths. Steep hills are also an issue.
- Re Water Meters: Sunshine Coast Regional District water meters will be installed in Langdale in 2016 making monitoring an easier task (and residents are encouraged to monitor use). Gibsons’ residents are already on water meters, but the Town of Gibsons has requested that the meters are left undisturbed. So, participants are presently auditing their water use in other ways.
- Despite introducing group agreements on respectful communication in the first session, we feel it would help tame passionate discussions and maintain the focus on the topic if the agreements were re-introduced at the beginning of each meeting.

- A number of methods were used to promote the pilot and encourage neighbourhood initiators. The last one on the list “word of mouth” was the most successful.

The methods included:

- Press releases in local newspapers, ongoing promotion in our Transition newsletter and an article and updates in the sustainable Coasts online magazine editorial and Transition column.
- Setting up an educational page on our website with information, helpful resources, videos etc
- Awareness raising at our booth during community events
- Putting up posters in the neighbourhoods
- Going door to door (with host in Langdale neighbourhood)
- Holding several information afternoon teas at the local bakery and informal dessert evenings for those interested. Following up.
- Word of mouth – people who were interested, talked to other people they knew and encouraged them to participate.

8. What next for the project?

- Confirm our participation in SC Conservation’s Earth Stewardship Pilot program for phase 2 (workshop participation) and phase 3 (envisioning and implementing a neighbourhood project akin to Mark Lakeman’s “Place Making” Projects).
- Use this report and a written article about the pilot to do more awareness-raising to promote Transition Streets in neighbourhoods on the Coast (including a request for the local newspapers to write an article).

This year, in the face of an unprecedented dry summer, the local government introduced a total ban on all outdoor watering, resulting in an outcry from small farms and backyard food growers scrambling to save their crops. We feel there is a pressing need to educate residents to conserve and re-use drinking water and harvest rainwater - preferably as an ingrained habit and especially at the earliest stages of water restrictions. The Transition Streets project can fill that niche and strengthen neighbourhood co-operation in the process.

- Welcome local governments and other organizations to support and help us promote the Transition Streets project.
- Share our findings of the pilot with all interested parties on the Coast and with Transition Initiatives regionally, nationally and world-wide
- Secure funding for a part-time project co-ordinator to broaden the project on the Sunshine Coast. To date, all work is unpaid volunteer work.

9. Starting up Transition Streets in your neighbourhood

If you are wanting to start up a Transition Streets project in your neighbourhood, or are thinking about it and want to know more, please:

- check out the Education page on our website for information and resources:
www.sunshinecoastintransition.wordpress.com/education
- contact Katherine or Leonie of the Transition Education group at
ttsunshinecoast@gmail.com
- or phone 604 886 8769 voice mail

10. Appreciation

Sincere appreciation is extended to all the participants of the pilot project.

Funding was secured by some of the members of the Sunshine Coast in Transition Initiating team. Huge thanks go to Carol Shoji and Cathy Hannick, Matt Rockall and Dana Wilson as well as our project supporters: Naomi Fleschhut, Kym Chi and the Town of Gibsons.

Gratitude goes to Katherine Scott who volunteered to come on as coordinator part way through the Langdale project and co-facilitated the orientation of Gibsons. Appreciation to Elisabeth Gratz for setting up an online toolkit so participants could communicate with each other and hosts Jennifer & Craig Buchanan and Alex Laidlaw & Janine Young - the brave souls who came forward to kick their neighbourhoods off! Thank you to Gillian Brady for reviewing “Caring Carnivores”.

Thank you to Johan Stroman of Coast Car Co-op for writing up the brilliant Car Co-op page and to Jon Hird of the Transportation Advisory Committee for reviewing part of the Transportation segment. We extend our gratitude to Alun Woolliams and the Transportation Choices (TraC) group for reviewing the “Get on Your Bike” segment.

Thank you Gibsons Recycling founders Barb Hetherington (for accepting the Waste segment for review) and Buddy Boyd (for your tour of the compost facility).