



SUMMARY REPORT

Exploits Thriving Regions Partnership Process:

Workshop #1

27 January 2023

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Introduction

As part of the Harris Centre's Thriving Regions Partnership Process, on January 18th, 2023 the Harris Centre hosted the first in a series of four workshops for the Exploits Region. Over 30 people from communities across the region (see Appendix A for a list of workshop attendees) met in Grand Falls-Windsor to:

- Share their vision for a thriving Exploits Region;
- Identify specific ideas and opportunities that could support community, economic and social development in the region;
- Cluster these ideas into "themes"; and
- Select three priority areas that can be used to solicit possible applied research by Memorial University researchers.

The Harris Centre is releasing a call for Expressions of Interest from Memorial University faculty, staff and students to complete research projects focusing on the priority themes that were identified. A fund evaluation committee comprised of local and academic members will choose which researchers will move forward in the process and attend a second workshop later in 2023. These researchers will then refine their research plans and incorporate input from the people in the region. Ultimately, this process will result in the Harris Centre funding up to three publicly engaged research projects in the Exploits Region for up to a combined total of \$45,000.

About the Thriving Regions Partnership Process

The Harris Centre's Thriving Regions Partnership Process (TRPP) is an opportunity for Memorial University to work with people and communities in the Exploits region to help promote a thriving social and economic region through the funding of publicly engaged research projects in the region. Over the course of 14-16 months, participants in the TRPP process will select, shape and learn from three community-engaged research projects (funded by the Harris Centre up to \$15,000 each) related to regionally-identified priorities.

The TRPP program builds upon and has taken the place of its Regional Workshop programming that was undertaken from 2005-2016. To date, the Harris Centre has engaged with six regions through the Thriving Regions Partnership Process, providing an opportunity for Memorial University to partner with people throughout the province in promoting and developing thriving regions through research, teaching and engagement.

A local leadership team is helping plan and promote this process in the Exploits Region; see Appendix B for the list of team members.

* For the purposes of this initiative, the regional leadership team has defined "the region" as the service area for Community Business Development Corporation – Central.

A. Creative & Multiple Solutions to Health Care Needs

14 Dots
7 Stars

- What health indicators look like in the region
- What don't we have access to in the region
- How create less barriers & more access to mental health care
- Dynamic health services – respond to changing needs, assets and contexts
- Creative healthcare solutions – leveraging and combining existing assets to address health care needs/problems, and not just “traditional healthcare”
- More accessibility for health services in each community
- Access to more services
- More accessibility to rural communities
- Focus on the training and retention of healthcare workers. Also, we need to look at the working conditions of the workers

B. Culture & Tourism

12 Dots
15 Stars

- Regional tourism
- What niches/gaps/opportunities exist in the market?
- Development of indigenous history
- Suspension bridge and trail development along the Exploits River
- ATV trail loops between communities – with the additions of some sections, these loops would be accessible.
- Different festivals
- Thriving indigenous tourism product – Beothuk – for Exploits Valley
- Exploits Valley Tourism Plan
- Regional development of rivershed; riverfront development
- Outdoor recreation (trails, ATV, adventure tourism)
- Celebration of the Exploits Valley – uniqueness; identifying assets
- Exploits River Trail development & events
- Cultural and social activities for all

- Tourism opportunities around the river
- Focus on ecotourism/sustainable tourism
- Supports for more accommodations
- Increase tourist “attractions” (natural and man-made)
- What other opportunities out there under adventure tourism?
- How can river front dev. help drive forward tourism?
- Tourism opportunities in remote areas
- Climate change adaptation for tourism operators in Exploits Valley
- Cultural preservation of NL Heritage
- Beothuk - Known areas not explored by P.A.O. on Beothuk Lake
- We need to highlight that the region has a world class theatre: The Gordon Pinsent Centre for the Arts
- Increase the eco/adventure tourism potential of the “Exploits Region” from Lloyd's Lake thru to the Bay of Exploits via Beothuk Lake and the Exploits River Valley.

Through a combination of individual reflection, group brainstorming, and smaller break-out group discussions, workshop participants identified a series of topics they felt are relevant to the region and could benefit from applied research. After workshop attendees generated and clustered their ideas, they were invited to vote in two different ways for regional priorities. Participants used 3 dots for what they viewed as “the most important” themes and 3 stars for those themes “they cared about the most” (i.e., most likely to dedicate their time and energy to supporting).

From this process and additional discussion among workshop participants, these four themes were selected by participants as being most important for the region and the best fit for potential applied research by Memorial University.

Selected Regional Priorities

C. Labour Force Development

17 Dots
15 Stars

- Immigration
- Sustainable labour market --what does it look like? How do we get there?
- Aging population, demographic challenges, labour force – interrelated; need to be considered together
- IT employment opportunities, workers and training
- Software development training (CNA, Keyin) and related remote work opportunities for all communities across the Exploits Region
- More education opportunities (tech, health)
- What is the current state of the labour market?
- How to decrease gap between employer expectations and up and coming labour force
- What are the employment numbers by occupation and sector within the Exploits Region
- What is the demand for software developers and other remote work occupations across Canada, etc.
- Training, gaps in labour force
- Offering more programs
- Development of an IT strategy for CNA GF-W campus – Is it a real opportunity? What aspects of IT?
- What skills are short in region?
- Fill employment gaps existing for local employers
- Strategic Immigration Planning
- Highlight the role that the College of the North Atlantic can play in labour force development
- Focus on the training and retention of healthcare workers. Also, we need to look at the working conditions of the workers

D. Regional Cooperation

7 Dots
13 Stars

- What does "regionalization" look like?
- What is the impact of regionalization or centralization on communities?
- Asset mapping
- Increased outreach – social supports for remote communities
- Economic development strategy for Exploits Valley region – more partnerships (education, training, labour)
- Central community complex – information and resource hub
- Support for different groups working together – "community coalition"
- Collaboration – working together for the Exploits Valley
- Help to define the assets in the region that we can use to pool resources
- How can we use regional collaboration to move tourist through region?
- Ensure research project chosen identify any potential change in status quo (i.e., in Regional Cooperation, a community might lose a service or component) How can that change be properly managed.
- Don't focus on what smaller communities can lose with amalgamation, but focus on positives, what they can gain and its benefit.

See Appendix C for a list of all of the identified themes and topics.

Next Steps

With the completion and release of this report, the Harris Centre is opening the Exploits Thriving Regions Applied Research Fund. This is beginning with a call for Expressions of Interest from Memorial faculty, staff or students looking to develop projects to address one or more of the top three regional priorities identified in the previous section of this report. A Fund Evaluation Committee, comprised of local members from the Exploits region as well as academic members from Memorial University, will review the Expressions of Interest and decide on three projects to move forward in the region.

A second workshop will be held later in 2023, during which the three chosen researchers will travel to the region to meet with community members, local partners and stakeholders from the region. The researchers will present their planned research, gather feedback, and develop partnerships to further refine their research. Following the second workshop, the selected researchers will submit expanded research plans which will then be reviewed by the Fund Evaluation Committee to ensure that the projects still reflect what was originally proposed, while also incorporating local input and the development of community partnerships.

Once the projects are approved, the researchers will receive their funding and move forward with their projects. The researchers will continue to engage with people in the region throughout their projects, and an additional session will be planned when their projects are at or near completion to share results and discuss next steps.



About the Harris Centre

Named in honour of the late scholar and former Memorial University President Dr. Leslie Harris, the Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development was established on October 1, 2004. Dr. Harris was known for his integrity and independence, while making a practical contribution to Newfoundland and Labrador. The Harris Centre continues this commitment as Memorial University's hub for public policy and regional development. It links Memorial faculty, staff, and students with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and supports research, public engagement, and teaching in areas of regional policy and development. Working with all units at Memorial, the Harris Centre builds connections, encourages informed debate and supports collaboration, enhancing the University and the province through mutually beneficial partnerships. Since its inception, the Harris Centre has developed a suite of knowledge mobilization and public policy tools and has increased the university's presence in communities and region across the province.



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Website

Appendix A:

List of Attendees

Community Members

- Glenda Applin
- Joanne Butt
- Scott Dawe
- Judy Dobson
- Lawrence Ducey
- Gale Eastman
- Randy Edison
- Dexter Fewer
- Randy Gillespie
- Geoff Goodyear
- Lisa Hemeon
- Darryl King
- Jillian Maloney
- Lindsay Mercer
- Judy Mitchell
- Abby Moss
- Leona Newman
- Todd Parsons
- Kim Penney
- Susan Power
- Wendy Power
- Tracey Rheault
- Dave Rheault
- James Samson
- Mike Shainline
- Stanley Singh
- Jackie Thompson
- Kimberley Thompson
- Anne Marie Waterman
- John L. Whelan
- Mark Whiffen

Memorial University and Grenfell

Staff/Facilitation Team:

- Bojan Fürst
- Chris Paterson
- Joanne Rowe
- Jennifer Buxton

Appendix B:

Exploits Thriving Regions Core Planning Team

- Charlene Combdon, Exploits Chamber of Commerce and Qalipu First Nation
- Judy Dobson, College of the North Atlantic
- Brian Fowlow, Town of Buchans and Navigate Concepts
- Betsy Saunders, NLOWE
- Scott Sceviour, Botwood Port Authority
- Stan Singh, Town of Grand Falls-Windsor
- Mark Whiffen, CBDC Central

Appendix C:

List of All Identified Themes and Associated Topics

The following are listed in alphabetical order by theme name along with the results of the voting process engaged in by participants at the workshop. Participants used dots for what they viewed as “the most important” themes and stars for those themes “they cared about the most” (i.e., most likely to dedicate their time and energy to supporting). Underneath each theme are the ideas and topics generated by workshop participants. Priority themes are in bold.

Priority Themes

A. Creative and Multiple Solutions to Health Care Needs (14 dots; 7 stars)

- What health indicators look like in the region
- What don't we have access to in the region
- How create less barriers & more access to mental health care
- Dynamic health services – respond to changing needs, assets and contexts
- Creative healthcare solutions – leveraging and combining existing assets to address health care needs/problems, and not just “traditional healthcare”
- More accessibility for health services in each community
- Access to more services
- More accessibility to rural communities
- Focus on the training and retention of healthcare workers. Also, we need to look at the working conditions of the workers

B. Culture & Tourism (12 dots; 15 stars)

- Regional tourism
- What niches/gaps/opportunities exist in the market?
- Development of indigenous history
- Suspension bridge and trail development along the Exploits River
- ATV trail loops between communities – with the additions of some sections, these loops would be accessible.
- Different festivals
- Thriving indigenous tourism product – Beothuk – for Exploits Valley
- Exploits Valley Tourism Plan
- Regional development of rivershed; riverfront development
- Outdoor recreation (trails, ATV, adventure tourism)
- Celebration of the Exploits Valley – uniqueness; identifying assets
- Exploits River Trail development & events
- Cultural and social activities for all
- Tourism opportunities around the river

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- Focus on ecotourism/sustainable tourism
- Supports for more accommodations
- Increase tourist “attractions” (natural and man-made)
- What other opportunities out there under adventure tourism?
- How can river front dev. help drive forward tourism?
- Tourism opportunities in remote areas
- Climate change adaptation for tourism operators in Exploits Valley
- Cultural preservation of NL Heritage
- Beothuk - Known areas not explored by P.A.O. on Red Indian Lake
- We need to highlight that the region has a world class theatre: The Gordon Pinsent Centre for the Arts

C. Labour Force Development (17 dots; 15 stars)

- Immigration
- Sustainable labour market --what does it look like? How do we get there?
- Aging population, demographic challenges, labour force – interrelated; need to be considered together IT employment opportunities, workers and training
- Software development training (CNA, Keyin) and related remote work opportunities for all communities across the Exploits Region
- More education opportunities (tech, health)
- What is the current state of the labour market?
- How to decrease gap between employer expectations and up and coming labour force
- What are the employment numbers by occupation and sector within the Exploits Region
- What is the demand for software developers and other remote work occupations across Canada, etc.
- Training, gaps in labour force
- Offering more programs
- Development of an IT strategy for CNA GF-W campus – Is it a real opportunity? What aspects of IT?
- What skills are short in region?
- Fill employment gaps existing for local employers
- Strategic Immigration Planning
- Highlight the role that the College of the North Atlantic can play in labour force development
- Focus on the training and retention of healthcare workers. Also, we need to look at the working conditions of the workers

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List of All Identified Themes and Associated Topics

D. Regional Cooperation (7 dots; 13 stars) What does "regionalization" look like?

- What is the impact of regionalization or centralization on communities?
- Asset mapping
- Increased outreach – social supports for remote communities
- Economic development strategy for Exploits Valley region – more partnership (education, training, labour)
- Central community complex – information and resource hub
- Support for different groups working together – "community coalition"
- Collaboration – working together for the Exploits Valley
- Help to define the assets in the region that we can use to pool resources
- How can we use regional collaboration to move tourist through region?
- Ensure research project chosen identify any potential change in status quo (i.e., in Regional Cooperation, a community might lose a service or component) How can that change be properly managed.
- Don't focus on what smaller communities can lose with amalgamation, but focus on positives, what they can gain and its benefit.
- General comments related to all of the above priority themes:
- PR and Communication
- Indigenous acknowledgement throughout any projects
- What is something that "Exploits" region has or can promote to differentiate itself from other regions within our province that would attract people to our region (whether to live, work or visit)?

Additional Themes

E. Affordable, Accessible Housing (6 dots; 2 stars)

- Housing development (for new residents, students, seniors)
- Affordable and accessible housing
- Connect Grand Falls-Windsor and Bishop's Falls via a housing development

F. Energy & Climate Change (4 dots; 3 stars)

- Green energy and hydrogen options/infrastructure
- Energy (hydro, hydrogen, wind, solar)
- Climate change adaptation strategy for the Exploits Valley; maximize new opportunities, technologies, environmental assets

Appendix C:

List of All Identified Themes and Associated Topics

G. Entrepreneur Development (4 dots; 11 stars)

- What do you need to support start-ups & entrepreneurship development
- Market research
- Capital access for business development
- Microbrewery w/ boutique motel or inn
- More local small business
- Microbrewery development

H. Food Security (5 dots; 7 stars)

- Biggest challenge for local producers – access to market
- Hydroponics business development
- Expansion of agriculture in the region
- Sustainable food supply

I. Natural Resource Development (5 dots; stars 4)

- Precision forestry
- Sustainable development of natural resources in the Exploits Valley
- Services – both gov and retail – more needed
- Aquaculture
- Development of fibre (biomass) resources
- Capital for mining and critical minerals
- Mining Sector What supplier opportunities are out there?

J. Social & Physical Infrastructure (9 dots; 6 stars)

- Family resource centre – engage new & young families; help with integration
- Childcare
- More daycare spaces
- Broadband
- Regional recreational complex
- Public transportation
- Infrastructure
- What are the usage numbers for recreational facilities across the Exploits Region
- Consideration of numerous Central Hubs to reduce travel time
- Survey of missing services and survey of actual needs
- Younger workforce will have different rec. needs