

CLARITY IN CHAOS Roundtable at First Canadian Place (Toronto, Canada), by *Scenario2 Corporation*

09 December 2013: 10:15-10:30am EST via Skype: Theme Workshop on Sustainability

Topic: *Sustainability -Intangible Currency.*

Guest Presenter: Thomas C. Esakin

Thank-you for inviting me to join you today from Villahermosa, Tabasco, México to share...

...a story.

As Nick of *Scenario2 Corporation* so wisely helps us realise.....

...All is a story.

Individual and collective people, a nation, a region, a city, a company, an NGO, a religion, a family unit...*sustainability.*

There is a story being told in and among all lives lived in activity.

Sustainability, with thanks to Thomas Berry, has come to be known by many as "Humanity's New Story": one in which we humans understand the importance of living-out our lives in the scientific awareness of "interconnectivity".

For physics, quantum physics, cosmology, biodiversity, the new field of "Systems Thinking" and more now know with high degrees of certainty that life is interconnected in usually unknown and mostly non-linear - that is, "intangible" - ways. We humans are early at understanding these interconnexions and earlier still in actively integrating this scientific knowledge in to our patterns of behaviour.

Thomas C. Esakin: *Sustainability - Intangible currency. (09/12/13)*

Our "Sustainability Story" today here at CLARITY IN CHAOS will help us better understand that often "intangible currency" also known as sustainable development. *To clarify our language, internationally the "sustainability / sustainable development" (two interchangeable terms) that we refer to today is understood to entail three mutually-reinforcing dimensions of the: social, economic, and environmental. This 3-part mix is also often referred to as the "Triple-Bottom-Line" (3BL) or increasingly in business as: ESG - Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance.* The dragon boat image Nick has shown you prior to our conversation of today helps us captures some of that "intangible value" which is sustainability and that forms the essence of my story.



Wikimedia - Wikipedia (2013). *Dragon Boat Racing in Hong Kong* [online]. Available from: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8d/Dragon_boat_racing_in_Hong_Kong.jpg [Accessed: 29 November 2013].

My story is one about how different sized entities entered into a common relationship based on: different outcome requirements, differing ways of measuring success, and very different ideas of opportunities and risks; and with their fully partnering in trust without holding any certainty that

the relationship would even work out and while also holding the understanding that all in the relationship must find a way to row in the same direction for success to be achieved by everyone.

This is a story that involved 12 layers of government: international (UN), federal (Canada), provincial (B.C.), regional (Alberni Regional District and the Central Region Board), two incorporated villages (Tofino and Ucluelet), and 5 separate incorporated First Nations Bands PLUS civil society at all levels in the area, local to international NGOs, and industry especially the forestry and aquaculture sectors (oyster and salmon farmers), the tourism sector, transportation sector, and more.

Our story takes place in Clayoquot Sound in the early 2000s, a place of 1,000 year old trees that can require over 12 humans with arms outstretched to surround one of these majestic ancient cedars.

It involves this region that had earlier gone through about 10 years of mass civil protests, experienced environmental terrorism (Canada's only related conviction came from the area), was literally then considered the most conflicted area in all of Canada and one of the most conflicted in the industrialised world, had the record of holding the largest number of mass-arrests in Canada until the recent G20 protests in Toronto, and caused international embarrassment for our country including through First Nation petitions to the UN, all related to industry attempts to literally clear-cut timber in the region (which, I will add, was a way of harvesting timber that did not mimic nature's ways in the region). ***Now referring to Nick's dragon boat image, the Clayoquot canoe was in chaos and so going no-where as all in the dug-out were trying to row in different directions.***

The major parties involved willingly - even desperately - came together to explore common solutions under the then very new solution-area of "sustainable development". ***Again referring to Nick's dragon boat image, the canoe came to be dead-still in the water as everyone in the boat had simply stopped rowing in their search of a more commonly-agreeable solution.***

Can you see the coaches in Nick's dragon boat photo? The ones who sit at the front of each boat, pounding out a steady and common beat for all rowers to follow. The solution in the Clayoquot - sustainable development - ***became the encouraging and constant sound the coach intoned through the drum, rhythmically imparting this solution to the rowers (i.e. players in the Clayoquot region) as a way to help them pull together and move in one common direction.***

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With an internationally-required support of key governmental, industrial, and civil society levels of the region, it became declared a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve. ***Think of this status as being akin to the body of the canoe itself, which may exist in form but can only act in a consonance with others.***

The Clayoquot Biosphere Trust (CBT) was the then new administrative arm of the Clayoquot Biosphere Reserve. We at the CBT walked the region, its peoples and diverse levels of government through a comprehensive, 1.5 year, *SDS - Sustainable Development Strategy* -like process. ***Think of an SDS as the oars held by the rowers, which are an appropriate tool for them to use to cause movement of the canoe. SDS's are a tool used to create movement or action in sustainability.***

Our SDS process for the region designed niche marketing & public engagement activities for:

- political leaders (all levels of government including First Nations);
- each of the 5 First Nation communities, including first-ever radio ads produced in the Nuu-chah-nulth language and using the voices of prominent elders;
- elementary, primary and secondary school children (developed a curriculum for teaching);
- all 3 non-indigenous communities (questionnaires developed & mailed to each home mailbox, plus public meetings and report-back meetings);
- One-on-one meetings with industry, First Nations, political, NGO, and moral leaders; and
- more

Success for the CBT out of this process was placed at the truly highest-level, (100%) participation by: representatives of political and First Nations leaders, of all identified major industry associations in the area, and of each of the 5 First Nations communities (it took us almost 1.3 years to secure the formal involvement of the final First Nation community). Plus 30-50%+ involvement of non-First Nations residents participating in some manner in one of the SDS activities.

We at the CBT fully understood the clear "intangible value" of this new thing called sustainability - that it could indeed create CLARITY IN CHAOS - when the recognised leader of the most important (& also the most position-oriented) environmental NGO in the region & her aquaculture nemesis (himself as gentle as a butterfly) willingly sat down together in a professionally facilitated session to role play each other's perspectives on the question of how to share use of land and resources in the Clayoquot.

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The primary outcome of the process was development of a 3BL sustainability vision, mission, strategic goals & objectives for the operations of the CBT and to serve as an early blue-print for a shared future of the Biosphere Region and its resources, and all of which needed to be transparently verified, quantified and proven out of process documentation. ***As a direct result of sustainability and this SDS process, the canoe rowers were now willing to row the boat in an agreed common direction.***

That Biosphere Region vision included sustainable tourism, affordable housing, selective logging practices, continued aquaculture: simply, a call for balance that reflected a respect for the diversity of validly competing interests in the region.

At the end of the SDS process, that most important (& most position-oriented) environmental NGO in the region decided that they still wanted their all-or-nothing solution (i.e. save all trees) and so they left the boat, but this time did so respectfully and simply pushed the canoe away to allow all others in it to continue their rowing in their now more unified direction.

Our experience in the Clayoquot demonstrated how sustainability, at its core, is a risk-mitigation tool that helps reduce or eliminate conflict by creating a legitimised and respected process to balance competing interests. This is not rocket science, simply known psychology: when people are given real opportunities to share their views and then see that their views are being acted on, they often and even eagerly assist in the implementation of the agreed outcomes as they know that the ideas being acted on are both legitimate and include their own.

Out of that Clayoquot SDS process, I became a literal convert to sustainability and it is what brings me to Tabasco, a petroleum-producing region with high-levels of conflict that can be more easily mitigated through sustainable development approaches including an SDS.

Balancing competing interests to help the boat of activity move in an agreed common direction, thereby reducing conflict and mitigating risk, is one of the many "intangible currencies" inherent within sustainability. Sustainable development, indeed, helps provide: CLARITY IN CHAOS.