

The Age of the Unenvironmental^{*1}

A Thoughtleader Perspective Commissioned by
the Canadian Environmental Grantmakers' Network

This is one in a series of Building Bridges papers that addresses the need to forge new and more powerful partnerships to arrive at comprehensive solutions. The purpose of this series is to inform and stimulate strategic thinking, discussion and debate among environmental grantmakers and to build linkages to the economic, health and social justice sectors that is essential to the resolution of many of the environmental concerns with which we are engaged.

Resilience will be the defining concept of twenty-first century security," writes Joshua Cooper Ramo in his provocative book, *The Age of the Unthinkable*. "We can think of resilience as a measure of how much disturbance a system can absorb before it breaks down so fundamentally that it can't easily return to the way it once was."

Well, by just about any measure, our system, our world, is breaking down so fundamentally as to be virtually unrecognizable, and it certainly won't return easily to the way it once was. This is not all bad – I'd rather cross the country in a hybrid than on a horse – but it's mostly not good, and it is especially not good for what we term "the environment."

Return to the opening sentence – note the use of the word *security*. Ramo can be forgiven for framing his thoughts in terms of global security, because he manages a geostrategic advisory firm, Kissinger Associates, which concerns itself with such things. But, as with earlier thinking (see Robert Kaplan in *The Coming Anarchy*, among many others), Ramo realizes that environmental issues are, in most cases, really *global security* issues. Water scarcity, forest depletion, pollution, eroding production returns from agriculture, sprawl, species loss, and the mother of them all, climate change – all these things portend security breakdowns, including out-and-out war in some cases, as populations explode and scarcity makes whole regions uninhabitable.

¹ With apologies to Joshua Cooper Ramo

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Ramo's book is subtitled: *Why the New World Disorder Constantly Surprises Us and What We Can Do About It*. A fundamental conclusion of his analysis is that, confronted as we are with "an avalanche of ceaseless change," many institutions that were built post-World War II to reorder the world and usher in an era of industrial and technological growth, are now outmoded. What's more, our leaders are confused (see Kyoto and Copenhagen), such that "some of the best minds of our era are still in thrall to an older way of seeing and thinking. They are making repeated misjudgments about the world..... Mostly they grew up at a time when the global order could be largely understood in simpler terms, when *only nations really mattered* (my emphasis) ... We've left our future, in other words, largely in the hands of people whose single greatest characteristic is that they are bewildered by the present." If you want a vivid picture of what that looks like in real life, just remember George W. Bush.

Ramo makes a powerful argument for fundamental overhaul of our institutions. In the US, he says, just as vital as the National Security Council could be a Deep Security Council; foreign aid could be organized through a Department of Global Decency; and "what if the Environmental Protection Agency was moved to Silicon Valley and staffed entirely by people under forty." In Canada, one might equally ask, what if the Department of Fisheries and Oceans were renamed the Department of Ocean Conservation, and was moved out of Ottawa to be, well, near an ocean and, if we are lucky, even some fish? What if the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs

... well, in all truth it should be abolished, but if we have to have one, why not one staffed entirely by Inuit, First Nations and Metis people?

My point in citing Ramo here is simply to jolt us out of any lingering assumption that the institutions that got us through the twentieth century are up to the task of getting us through the twenty-first. Nor is Ramo a lone voice. Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams write in *Macrowikinomics: Rebooting Business and the World* about "the stagnation and inertia that grips so many contemporary institutions." In the *Harvard Business Review*, Michael E. Porter and Mark R. Kramer call for nothing less than the reinvention of capitalism, which in their view requires the role of the corporation to be redefined away from one of mere profit-creation to that of creating "shared value." Everywhere you look, there is an explosion (sometimes literally) of dissatisfaction with the status quo. In that light, an effort by the Canadian Environmental Grantmakers' Network (CEGN) – a small alliance of themselves relatively small institutions in the global, even Canadian scheme of things – to look outwards to imagine how more integrative approaches to the issues that confront Canada might produce dramatically better outcomes than business as usual, is a timely move indeed. It also begs the question, does CEGN's collective capital (monetary and intellectual) even matter in the great scheme of things, and do members of CEGN have an appetite for *transformative change to their own approaches* to intractable issues? The former question is easier to answer than the latter.

Ramo again. Political power is changing and spreading so fast, he writes, that, “More than 90 per cent of the nongovernmental organizations in the world were created in the past 10 years.” In *Blessed Unrest*, Paul Hawken estimates there are between one and two million organizations around the world working on some combination of social justice, poverty relief, environmental protection and community development issues, in large part because of the continuing failure of governments to deliver solutions to people where they live. So, as under-capitalized as Canadian grant-makers might sometimes feel, and as under-supported as many Canadian environmental non-government organizations (ENGOS) might be as a consequence, Ramo believes that the rapid-fire changes taking place around the world “will render institutions that look unshakeable weak and unstable; it will elevate movements that look weak into positions of great power.” If indeed “the environment” is even a “movement,” then it might just be that a perennially underpowered sector, certainly if measured in terms of raw political power, might yet find its footing as our world’s institutions fracture and stagnate, and lose theirs. Optimistically, then, the role of CEGN members and the people and organizations they support, *could* matter a great deal, but only if CEGN members develop an appetite for integrative approaches that will enable them to leverage their assets and their influence to the point that their grasp exceeds their reach. And only if they encourage their grant recipients to do the same.

About twenty years ago, an organization called Ecotrust took an uncommon approach to a common problem. British Columbia’s coastal rainforests were being logged at a wildly unsustainable rate, and the classic set-piece battle between loggers and environmentalists was on constant display for all to see. (As a reporter for CBC Television at the time, I made sure of that.) In a place called the Kitlope, Ecotrust supported the Haisla Nation in its efforts to protect the last vestige of its territory that hadn’t been ravaged by clearcut logging. Ecotrust’s fundamental idea was and remains to invest in people in place, to work with people who outwardly might be seen to have very little power, but whose connection to the land through their culture is a fundamental but typically overlooked asset – and a tremendous source of local power. Ecotrust went in search of opportunity at the nexus of the economy and the environment, rather than plumping for one at the expense of the other. In other words, its work was about reconciling opposites, and finding advantage in complexity. As someone whose job it was to observe the workings of governments, industry, environmentalists, First Nations and others who had an interest in defending or altering the status quo in BC at the time, I felt that Ecotrust was the only organization at the time that was taking an intentionally integrative approach to an issue that for decades had been dominated by siloed and segmented views and tactics. (So much so that in 1994, just as the BC government agreed to protect the Kitlope from logging, I joined Ecotrust; I’ve been working there ever since).

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What is telling about the Kitlope is that when it came time to legislate its protection, the Haisla said no to the idea of a park, which is what the government wanted to call it. The Haisla hated the idea of a park, a concept that often excludes Indigenous people from exerting their Aboriginal rights. In the end, after a lot of horse-trading, the government ended up changing the map of British Columbia to read: “Kitlope Heritage Conservancy Protected Area.” In other words, a word soup with everything the bureaucrats could come up with that didn’t say park, but meant park to them. But here’s the thing. To the Haisla, the Kitlope always was – is now, and always will be – *Huchsduwachsdu Nuyem Jees*, “the Land of Milky Blue Waters and the sacred stories it contains.” What we learned at Ecotrust was that, sure, we had helped the Haisla save almost a million acres of forest from being cut. But they didn’t see their territory in those terms, as trees being “saved.” They saw their country as a container for stories, for their culture. Or, as Toronto’s Eric Young has observed about the Haisla’s view of the Kitlope, “Think about how that echoes Jane Jacobs’ view of cities as containers of memory and storehouses of collective knowledge. Places are not just physical, they are relational. And the relationship between place and identity is profoundly important.” Young says, “Meaning-making and future-making go hand in hand.”

This is a point worth emphasizing as we think of integrative approaches to problem-solving. To stay with BC’s rainforests for a moment, it echoes in the comments of Ross McMillan, CEO of Tides Canada and a key figure in the

Great Bear Rainforest solution. “In order to achieve lasting conservation gains for the protection of biodiversity,” McMillan says, “you really have to address both social and economic outcomes at the same time.” To do this well, of course, is immensely challenging, as evidence the objections by some First Nations to the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement; the Great Bear deal also has its critics; and it’s fair to say that the Kitlope deal hasn’t yielded all the economic opportunities the Haisla might have wished for. But whatever their perceived successes or failings, each of these approaches embodies what Roger Martin, writing in the *Harvard Business Review*, defined as the basis of integrative thinking that he has observed in successful business leaders: “They have the predisposition and the capacity to hold in their heads two opposing ideas at once. And then, without panicking or simply settling for one alternative or the other, they’re able to creatively resolve the tension between those two ideas by generating a new one that contains elements of the others but is superior to both.”

Admittedly, what’s good for business isn’t always good for the environment, but as today’s environmental issues tend to be less and less about saving a single species, or a valley, or battling a developer, or banning a pesticide – indeed as our environmental issues reveal themselves to be more and more complex and linked to many other intractable social, health and economic justice issues, then the era of integrative thinking, and action, would seem to be upon us. Complex problems require complex solutions. It is unimaginable

that any serious effort at transformative environmental change-making in the future can take place absent a strategy that emphasizes integrative thought and action, set within a dramatic reframing of our issues, encouraging and drawing upon collaborations among unusual bedfellows, embracing complexity, and, of course, involving a serious element of risk. That risk, I would argue, needs to be commensurate with the risk of sticking to what we already know *doesn't work*. For that, look no further than our responses to climate change.

Here are some words that might ring familiar to members of CEGN. “Climate change is clearly the most profound environmental issue of our time. Not only because of its potential to damage our ecosystems—and by extension our human economies—but also because it is a synthesis of all other environmental issues; energy (in)efficiency, deforestation, pollution, species extinction, water use and desertification, urban sprawl... many of the most pressing environmental issues are related intimately to the problem of climate change. Therefore climate change is a meta-environmental issue: if we solve this problem, we may solve many other environmental problems at the same time; if we don't, it may not matter what happens with the others. And let's face it: we're losing... badly. At a time when we need to dramatically reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, they are instead climbing rapidly. Governments are not taking action at nearly the rate required. The world's largest emitter, the US, is downright scornful of any meaningful action. Canada, whose performance up to now has been pathetic,

is running headlong in the wrong direction. And China and India seem ready to turn on the energy tap. So, for those who feel that climate change poses real risks, we must face the facts: the hour is late.”

That was four years ago, and the author was Andrew Heintzman, and the paper was the first in a Thoughtleader Series sponsored by CEGN. Heintzman's argument in many ways goes to the heart of what CEGN is demanding of itself in its strategic plan, which contemplates that “building linkages to the economic, health and social justice sectors will be essential to the resolution of many of the environmental concerns with which we are engaged. Making these linkages will be a first step in forging new and more powerful partnerships capable of arriving at comprehensive solutions.... With sixty grantmakers comprising our national network, CEGN is well positioned to play a role in catalyzing a more integrated approach to the resolution of challenging societal issues, of which environment is just one component. CEGN can serve as a hub for communicating the need for a more integrated approach to its members, and encouraging members to leverage their financial resources, intellectual capital, and influence to begin to approach their work in more integrative manner.” But if Heintzman is correct – and it is noted that his paper contained *his* views, not those of CEGN or its members – then why wouldn't CEGN position itself to work towards dramatic impacts on an issue that seems to integrate, or at least implicate, virtually every environmental issue known to woman? Heintzman is right to suggest that climate change is a synthesis of environmental issues, but it doesn't stop

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there. There are implications for human health, for our economic prosperity, for social justice and human rights, that suggest a perfect entrée for CEGN to reach beyond its traditional circles to network with funders and businesses who also see climate change as a pressing issue, but perhaps don't frame it as an environmental one.

Ann Dale, in the third Thoughtleader Series paper wrote: "Climate change affects everyone, and its impacts are synergistic, unpredictable, highly unstable and its threshold effects impossible to predict. Given the federal government is backing away from the Kyoto protocol, funding for a nation-wide climate change campaign designed to both inform and influence people's lifestyle choices, is essential for future human security. Such an initiative requires an unprecedented level of cooperation between environmental organizations, researchers and scientists as well as leadership and campaign coherence. Is such a campaign possible? If we look to the changes brought about in 20 years by the anti-smoking campaign, can we learn from this experience and implement a campaign to achieve similar results in a ten-year time frame, or even a five-year time frame? Such a campaign will require a large capital investment, possibly five to ten million dollars, which runs counter to current funding patterns ..."

If you missed the third paper in the series, perhaps you caught the fourth, by Frances Westley: "So how can environmental funders support ... new forms of knowledge production? A starting point would be to support projects that

are squarely focused on: a) complex and linked social-ecological systems; b) are concerned with restoring or maintaining resilience and sustainability in these linked systems; c) recognize cross-scale interactions and are concerned with finding eco-solutions. Such projects would be team based, including not only multiple disciplines from within the university, but also practitioners (managers, policy makers, business representatives, ENGOs and community groups) directly concerned with the outcome." Westley went on to say, in 2007, "time is short, the urgency is high."

"It is urgent that grantmakers take a fresh and hard look at where and how they are deploying money," declaimed Mark Sarner in the fifth and last paper in the series. "There is no time to waste. If, as is widely recognized, government and corporate policy change are the critical factors in moving towards the world we want and need, then exponentially more focus, priority and resources need to go into championing just such change." Sarner made a spirited pitch for grantmakers to dramatically increase the amount of funding they spend to support advocacy and public policy inputs. He reported that only six per cent of funding by environmental grantmakers went to advocacy and policy, while a majority of money went to protection of large landscapes. Sarner thought spending a quarter of all environmental grants on advocacy and policy would make a difference: \$33 million, compared with about \$7 million (in 2002). "Rest assured that \$33 million per year over the next three years, strategically deployed, could

make a huge impact on policy change and resource allocation. It is hard to see what the rationale would be for grantmakers to maintain the status quo. As I think all would agree, it isn't working, at least not fast enough to make the necessary difference...There's no downside to making a bold move. There's plenty of upside."

CEGN's 2010 report, *A Profile of Environmental Grantmaking in Canada*, revealed that funding for advocacy stood at 5.2 per cent of all grants, and exactly the same amount was spent on policy analysis (the data reported were for 2007, and do not include all environmental grantmakers). At a combined 10.4 per cent, that's a marked improvement over 2002. But funding by *issue* shows that funding of climate and atmosphere work in Canada in 2007 accounted for just 3.5 per cent of all grant dollars, which was itself a *decrease* of 11 per cent over 2002. Admittedly, these data are not comprehensive and do not capture changes in grantmaking since the Thoughtleader Series was published, but there doesn't appear to be much evidence that the clarion call of the CEGN's thoughtleaders has translated into action. Time is short, we are told, the urgency is high. Well, maybe not *that* high. For what scientists and thoughtleaders agree is the biggest issue of our time, Canadian environmental grant-makers devote almost the least amount of their focus and resources.

I would contend that the best issue around which CEGN might act as "a hub for communicating the need for a more integrated approach to its members, and

encouraging members to leverage their financial resources, intellectual capital, and influence to begin to approach their work in a more integrative manner" is staring it in the face. It is called climate change. This is not to suggest that every donor must either become a climate change donor or be kicked out of CEGN; nor that every NGO become a climate change NGO. But if CEGN is serious about playing a leadership role, it and its members could consider radical investments in a reframing of how we talk about climate change at the very least. And better still, invest in integrated and leveraged funding, thought leadership and *action* once the reframing has been done. Such a reframing might also address the idea, heretical as it might seem, of dropping the word *environment* - "the environment," "environmentalism," "an environmentalist," "environmental grantmaking" - from the grantmakers' lexicon altogether. What was it Joshua Cooper Ramo said about the need for institutional change?

It has been more than 50 years now since Lester B. Pearson won the Nobel Peace Prize. Pearson's radical idea in a world traumatized by World War II, the Korean War and in 1956, the Suez Crisis, was to propose that a multinational United Nations peacekeeping force be sent to the Suez to separate the warring parties. For that idea, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1957. The Suez was a crisis that threatened the security of the world. Lester Pearson proposed not more aggression, but more peace. He invented peacekeeping, one of the singular achievements of Canadian geopolitics in the 20th Century.

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We are now confronted with another crisis that threatens the security of the world. It is called climate change, and Canada – not the government of Canada in this instance, but leadership organizations like CEGN – is uniquely poised to enable a breakthrough in this century every bit as radical and influential as peacekeeping was in the last. We can't call it climate-keeping, because we are not going to "keep" the climate that we've had for the past century or two: the author and activist Bill McKibben, among many others, points out that we are already past the point of no return, pegged at 350 parts per million of CO₂ in the atmosphere by significant consensus. For that matter, Lester Pearson didn't manage to "keep" the peace, either. But Pearson's notion, Canada's notion of peacekeeping was always an antidote, an alternative, a moral counter-balance, to war. We equally need, we urgently need, a counter-balance to a rampant acceleration of climate change and its predictable effects, and the chronic inability of our existing institutions to take the problem seriously. In pursuing and articulating climate change-related innovations and alternatives in a way that *has global resonance and authority*, Canada can regain an international stature that we have squandered by being climate change deniers and treaty busters. This is not to suggest that the goal here is to pursue a Nobel Prize – Al Gore and Co already got one of those for their work in climate change awareness-raising. What we now need is to go beyond awareness into sustained, coherent, global action. Canada could and should lead the way.

Why Canada? Why not? First, think about the drivers of climate change (and indeed

most of our "environmental" problems). They are essentially financial. Casino capitalism, or what Naomi Klein chooses to call "disaster capitalism," has driven the global economy to extremes (think tar sands, Gulf of Mexico, Nigeria) in search of oil, among many other things. Our economies, in the words of noted ecologist and systems thinker Buzz Holling, have become "embedded in oil." While capitalism looked for a while like it was going to come crashing down during the global financial crisis, Canada stood tall among modern democracies as having a financial system that did not collapse as pillars of bad debt subsided at every turn in other countries (most notably the United States). So Canada has street cred, financially. It has zero street cred on the environment, but it is a source of sober first thought in economics, and in finance. Why not harness that as a force for good in respect to climate change?

Michael Renner, blogging for the Worldwatch Institute, asked in August 2010, "What does it take to confront climate change and put the economy on a more sustainable footing? Topping the list are measures like promoting renewable energy, boosting the efficiency with which we use all sources of energy, making our communities denser to allow for greater public transit, putting a price on carbon—all no-brainers." Really? To whom? If it is so hard to get just one of those "no-brainers" done, like putting a price on carbon, why is that? One could argue it is because the bankers haven't yet concluded it is a good idea. So why would Canadian grantmakers of all stripes not pursue a collaboration with banks and insurance companies to begin to frame

climate change not from the outposts of what some see as the radical fringe of environmental groups, but from within the carpeted, sky-scraping hallways of Bay Street? Who better to promote changes to the way the world thinks about risk and return? No appetite for collaborating with the big five banks? What about with credit unions and financial cooperatives? The mission of Vancity Credit Union (already a member of CEGN) is Redefining Wealth, and Vancity has an associated community foundation that co-invests with the credit union in exactly that. (Conflict alert: I was until recently a director of Vancity and was closely involved in the development of its mission.) Why isn't every environmental grantmaker partnered with a financial institution to help redefine wealth away from gluttony to what Jane Jacobs described in *The Nature of Economies* as "reliable prosperity."

Note that in the above paragraph I suggest that Canadian grantmakers *of all stripes* - not just environmental grantmakers - could be collaborating with banks and insurance companies. As a first step, they could even be collaborating with each other. Remember, climate change is not really an environmental issue at all. Yes, there are climate-induced changes to our environment, but the downstream consequences of this touch every aspect of our lives, including effects that require the generous response of many funders who don't think of themselves as environmental funders. Climate change is as much within the purview of emergency services, hospitals, epidemiologists, scientists, businessmen, municipalities, sportswomen, youth groups, farmers, tourism operators, artists, engineers,

union members, gardeners, writers, inventors - you name it. There are dozens if not hundreds of categories of funding agencies that don't see themselves as environmental grantmakers at all, and yet their collective assets and interests could be powerfully aligned within a new framing around climate change that bills it *not* as an environmental issue, but as a series of interlocked and interrelated global security, health, welfare, economic and social justice issues. In many instances, there will be markedly oppositional forces at play - just the space that Roger Martin thinks is ripe for integrative thinking.

Along with banks, why not deep collaborations with Indigenous people? According to Dennis Martinez, "Indigenous peoples presently occupy 22 percent of the Earth's land surface, are stewards of 80 percent of remaining biodiversity and comprise 90 percent of cultural diversity." The experience of Indigenous communities around the world in a sense embodies the notion of resilience, and with the world's commodity lust now centering on what can be extracted from the last remaining lands occupied by Indigenous peoples, who better to learn from - and support - in their quest to resist the effects of climate change. If, as Sheila Watt-Cloutier asserts, the Inuit have "a right to be cold" - in other words, to hang onto some semblance of their climate - then to what extent are we prepared to support them in their efforts to battle climate change? To what extent are we prepared not just to fund them, but to integrate their thinking into our strategies going forward. A lot of effort is expended in trying to improve "governance" in Indigenous communities, and in many cases it is true

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that the corrosive effects of colonization have ruined ancient governance norms among native people. But surely it is a high conceit to try to get Indigenous people to adopt Western governance models when it is precisely those models that have created, and perpetuate, the illnesses of industrial society. Can we not instead invest in understanding governance models that served to ensure the resilience of Indigenous peoples for thousands of years, and rather than insist that Aboriginal people think more like us, learn to think and act and govern ourselves more like them?

Why not a partnership with youth?

Too often, programs aimed at youth are designed by people who don't really know what motivates youth at all (i.e. foundation or NGO executives). Young people are worried about climate change, and some of them even have ideas about how to mobilize around such a grievous threat to their future. Consider Jessie Housty, a young Indigenous woman from the central coast of British Columbia, who is advocating for the creation of a First Nations Youth Corps. On the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Peace Corps in the US, why not a Canadian-inspired global Indigenous youth corps, where kids who have been shackled with the post-traumatic stress disorder of colonization and marginalization are given the space to create a cooperative network of volunteerism and inspired problem-solving?

In regions around the world," writes Tad Homer-Dixon, "indications abound that the earth's climate is quickly changing

... But in the world's capitals, movement on climate policy has nearly stopped... we'll almost certainly need some kind of devastating climate shock to get effective climate policy." Homer-Dixon filed these observations to *The New York Times* from the deck of the Louis S. St-Laurent, one of Canada's powerful icebreakers that is confronting dramatically less Arctic ice every year. In his op-ed, titled "Disaster at the Top of the World," Homer-Dixon writes, "Policy makers need to accept that societies won't make drastic changes to address climate change until such a crisis hits. But that doesn't mean there is nothing for them to do in the meantime. When a crisis does occur, the societies with response plans on the shelf will be far better off than those that are blindsided. The task for national and regional leaders, then, is to develop a set of contingency plans for possible climate shocks – what we might call, collectively, Plan Z... We need to be ready."

So how do we get ready? Well, clearly the notion of climate change needs to be reframed as something much bigger than an environmental issue. Clearly, we need to find ways to collaborate with communities of interest who we might in the past have seen as oppositional, or at least not motivated by the same issues or the same sense of urgency that get environmentalists out of bed every day. But how does this play out in practice? How do we create action that supports the transformation we seek? The route, in a self-satisfied country like Canada, is not political – or not federal/political anyway. Despite many entreaties that climate change is the defining issue of our time,

it is reasonable to assume, sadly, that it might not be what galvanizes a revolution in Canadian thought and action. Despite all the aforementioned thought leadership, Canadian environmental grantmakers did not rally to fund a multi-million-dollar campaign on the issue. And possibly that was money well not-spent, because it's not at all clear that nation-states are capable of doing anything profoundly helpful any more even if they listened to their citizens, which increasingly they don't. In the build-up to the 2011 federal election, University of Waterloo political science professor Ramesh Thakur observed in *The Australian* newspaper that good governance in Canada has been "worn away ... Canadians are certainly good and worthy folks, but they suffer an excess of civil obedience, politeness and lack of civic rage that could be harnessed to combat political atrophy. At a time when Arabs risk life and limb for political freedoms, Canadians seem largely apathetic about the erosion of their democracy."

So, if a national revolution is outside the collective emotional range of Canadians, perhaps more *evolution* is what is needed – and perhaps CEGN members can harness their resources to others' to purposefully bring such evolution about. If people cannot be stirred to action at a national level – either through their own complacency, a lack of bold leadership, out of an abundance of realism, or simple exhaustion with national politics – then perhaps a movement for integrative thought and action needs to be fanned closer to home - at the regional or bioregional level, rather than at the national level. Perhaps it is here that the

"contingency plans for climate shocks" that Homer-Dixon calls for get hammered out en route to Plan Z.

There are no plug-and-play models for this, although there are *approaches* that have a lot of promise. I would say Ecotrust's is one, although that's my job. I would say the Great Bear qualifies as well. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has done an admirable job in adopting an unusually integrative approach to research for its Climate Justice Project. At the McConnell Foundation, incoming President and CEO Stephen Huddart justifiably points to CANOPY's "success in transforming the publishing industry (through) integration of environment and ecology," to which I would add, as CANOPY did, "economy." Sandy Houston at the Metcalf Foundation found that while their work on *Metcalf Food Solutions* was initially approached through an environmental context, "we realized there was a bigger community that should be engaged in that conversation... Instead of just environmentalists and farmers, there were people interested in transportation, health, ecology, climate. It became a richer community.... Food is a fundamental human concern central to our health, economy and environment and yet the system we have built around it is complex, rigid and opaque." Just the kind of system that demands to be *disintegrated* via the integrated thought, funding and action that Metcalf encouraged in its food solutions program.

The fact that there aren't myriad examples of such integrated approaches to environmental issues and to funding them isn't hard to fathom. Everyone in

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the NGO sector is asked to demonstrate what makes their program or their approach “distinct” from everyone else’s. Very seldom are they asked to articulate how their approach integrates across disciplines or scales. Nor do funders demand that of themselves. The reason, at least in part, is probably because it’s really hard. Ontario Trillium Foundation’s Future Fund promotes collaborations among grantees, which is hard enough. “Co-funding impactful initiatives is very difficult,” says Maja Saletto Jankovic, Acting Area Manager, Province-Wide and Future Fund. An approach that “moves the locus of control out from your own organization into a shared space requires relationship building and trust that takes time,” says McConnell’s Stephen Huddart. Ross McMillan at Tides Canada says taking a systems approach to funding “requires that you have staff and advisors who are comfortable adopting a systems approach rather than a narrow, linear, environmental approach.” Not surprisingly, the consensus is that an integrative approach to funding complex issues takes more time and money, not less.

By that measure, then, it is possible that “environmental grantmaking” may become an increasingly marginal, diluted and potentially ineffective pursuit, not a more concentrated, deliberate and integrative one. Consider statistics recently compiled by Changing Our World, Inc., an international consulting firm that examines fundraising and philanthropy. In the US, reports the firm’s executive vice-president Susan Raymond, an average of 1200 environmental NGOs have been created every year since 1991. That’s

not a misprint. And what that means is that more than three new ENGOs have been founded every day, every year for the past ten years, all of them searching for funds, which most decidedly have not grown in proportion to the self-defined and supposedly distinctive “needs” of all these groups. In percentage terms, contributions to ENGOs have grown at less than half the rate that the number of organizations has. This explosion in ENGO “capacity” might be considered to be an indication that environmental awareness and action is on the rise, but it might equally prove to be profoundly counter-productive. It is also an indication that the notion of what even constitutes an environmental organization, and perhaps an environmental grantmaker, is shifting fast. We are confronted, in Raymond’s opinion, with an “endlessly additive” proliferation of organizations, with “duplication, replication, competition,” almost no “deal-making” that would create efficiencies or leverage, and all of this in the face of a new generation of philanthropists who “want to fix problems at scale. Yet non-profits continue to look at problems and their supporters through their own individual straws. There is little of scale to be found at the end of the straw.”

In a recent keynote speech to Philanthropy Australia, Raymond despaired not just about the proliferation of non-profits, but about the fact that while donors “have every right to pick and choose the problems or opportunities they address ... there are thousands of cars on this road, moving at different speeds in different directions with different purposes and goals. Pluralism is wonderful, but the

traffic on this road is a nightmare... I, for one, would love to see a 'high-occupancy' vehicle lane on this road." Raymond believes philanthropy needs to be more disciplined in problem-solving, but she also laments that "we are in danger of making philanthropy risk averse." If you agree that the business of philanthropy is, or should be, investing in change, then you simply must be prepared to tolerate risk. Raymond recommends that in an effort to be more "futures oriented," every donor should adjust their portfolio to devote ten per cent of their resources to funding risk and new ideas. "Look for the best, most interesting questions being asked about the future. Encourage and support those who are probing the edges of knowledge and understanding. Allocate ten per cent of your portfolio to intellectual risk, to questions for which we can now only vaguely discern answers, to projecting implications of change before society is overwhelmed by it. Come back to the world of ideas, even though there will be no immediate proof of impact." And how to operationalize more effective philanthropy? "Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate."

Lucy Bernholz, Stephanie Linden Seale and Tony Wang argue that "...moving an issue requires the involvement of many different kinds of actors; these new networks encompass foundations, nonprofits, social enterprises, innovators, writers and academics. Such a diversity of players – each of them integral to the issue – begs the question: if foundations have traditionally focused on only one part of this network of change agents, what are they missing?" "No single organization is responsible for any major social problem,"

John Kania and Mark Kramer write in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, "nor can any single organization cure it... Large-scale social change comes from better cross-sector coordination rather than from the isolated intervention of individual organizations... Substantially greater progress could be made in alleviating many of our most serious and complex social problems if non-profits, governments, businesses, and the public were brought together around a common agenda to create a collective impact. It doesn't happen often, not because it is impossible, but because it is so rarely attempted."

And there's the rub.

So what is Canada's project for the 21st century? Perhaps it is to become a global leader in what, after all, comes more naturally to Canadians than to a lot of other people in the world – fostering cooperation, integration and collaboration. The role of funders, it seems to me, is to help us discover new ways of living in the world, not to reinforce old ones. And if not to bankroll a national climate change campaign, then to help create "a self-organizing critical mass of people and organizations working to initiate small experiments and social innovations that can mushroom into pervasive changes in social behavior," as Don Tapscott and Anthony Williams have said. We need to rediscover what unites us, not what separates us. As Bill McKibben writes in his recent book, *Eaarth*, "The project we're now undertaking – maintenance, graceful decline, hunkering down, holding on against the storm – requires a different

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scale. Instead of continents and vast nations, we need to think about states, about towns, about neighborhoods, about blocks.... It's not just people in poor nations who are exposed to the elements now, but all of us. We've got to make our societies safer ...” There it is again, the idea that we started with, the idea of 21st Century security. We will achieve it not by relying on global institutions or even national ones, nor by being complacent and complicit, but by collaborating in brave experiments and investments in regional and local action, in integrative action in as many forms as we can invent, without complete confidence in what we might get back, but with utter confidence that to continue as we are condemns us to an even riskier future. Buzz Holling thinks that the world is “reaching a stage of vulnerability that could trigger a rare and major ‘pulse’ of social transformation,” one that is both “frightening and creative. The only way to approach such a period, in which uncertainty is very large and one cannot predict what the future holds, is not to predict, but to experiment and act inventively and exuberantly via diverse adventures in living.”

Eric Young, in his foreword to the book *Getting to Maybe*, maintains that the complex forces of interconnection that make systems so resistant to change are the very same forces that can be harnessed to achieve change. “We need to be change-makers, and very capable

ones at that. Over the past 200 years, human society has developed exceptional ingenuities, proficiencies, organizations for the task of making *things* – from steam engines to microchips. Going forward we must learn to be equally adept at the task of making *change*. It's an essential modern competency.” Becoming not just good, but *great* at making change is something that should seize everyone who is serious about wanting to make a safer, more secure, more socially just and environmentally sane world. We cannot rely on existing, vested interests to deliver change for the better when they consistently give us change for the worse. “A system erected around the primacy of national and corporate self-interests just isn't going to cut it for this century,” write Tapscott and Williams. “We need individuals, companies and organizations that are forging new models of problem solving in their sectors and industries – models that rely less on central control and more on getting a self-organizing critical mass of people and organizations working to initiate small experiments and social innovations that can mushroom into pervasive changes in societal behavior.” Integrative approaches to grantmaking can help initiate and animate these experiments, and may indeed be the essential modern competency that philanthropists need to master in an age when we need to change how we do pretty much everything.

Integrative Funders

Four leaders in Canadian grantmaking were asked to share thoughts and strategies about integrative approaches to philanthropy.

The **Ontario Trillium Foundation's** Future Fund supports a number of initiatives that bring together ecological and environmental health issues, and through its Green Priorities Collaborative, two dozen environmental organizations strategize at an annual retreat that focuses on environment, but also tries to consider Ontario's economic prosperity.

At the **George Cedric Metcalf Foundation**, a specific focus on food systems has caused the foundation to look beyond the ecological base for food, and to address other factors such as social justice, social cohesion, equity and accessibility.

Tides Canada cites its interest in energy solutions as an attempt to step outside the environmental frame in order to ground opportunities in an approach that includes public education, community development and economic transformation nation-wide.

The **J. W. McConnell Family Foundation**, meanwhile, has a number of initiatives that it believes cut across sectors: supporting environmental groups to work together on policy and strategy; a sustainability education initiative; working on the boreal forest protection agreement; and its support for Sustainable Prosperity.

Maja Saletto Jankovic (Trillium) suggests that transformational change is most achievable, and visible, at the regional level. Larger, longer-term investments are required to create impact. "Creating collaboration is one thing, supporting it is another.... It takes time, skill and goodwill for organizations to come together on complex issues." Trillium grants provide 5-8 per cent for networking and knowledge

sharing. Jankovic cautions that long-term funding commitments (3-5 years) are required.

Sandy Houston (Metcalf) says that another example of a promising area for a more integrative approach is thinking about how to include low-income communities into the emerging green economy and the green jobs that will accompany it. "This approach means thinking about scale, ensuring a broader range of participants, creating platforms for new ideas and approaches, and deliberately building the conditions for them to come together." The challenge of trying to work in this way is not confined to funders. The NGO, public and private sectors are often not structured to address a set of linked outcomes. Building the foundations for this kind of work takes time and there is a need to be able to show the extent of benefits that can flow for a range of stakeholders from engagement in the process. This likely means investing more in communications, process skills and critical thinking.

Ross McMillan (Tides Canada) recommends that funders interested in taking a more integrative approach should talk to foundations in Canada or the US that have been involved in multi-sectoral initiatives involving funder or civic society collaborations. They should, he believes, "think critically of the scale at which they want to operate ... (and) think critically of trade-offs." Integrative approaches require more front-end analysis and scenario planning, and are more time-consuming and more arduous."

Stephen Huddart (McConnell) says complex issues require patience and results aren't always immediately visible. It is partly for that reason that McConnell produced a development evaluation methodology that "is designed for situations where there is strategic

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intent, but you don't know exactly what it is that you are going to create, or what results you'll get or what success will like." Huddart also said CEGN is itself

"an expression of grantmakers who realize that together there can be greater impact, faster learning and more adaptive capacity."

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