

Growing Environmental Philanthropy in Atlantic Canada

By Jamie Gamble

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Foreword

October 14, 2014

The Canadian Environmental Grantmakers' Network (CEGN) is a membership group of more than 60 funders from Canada and the United States. Our mission is to strengthen the impact of philanthropy in support of an environmentally sound and sustainable future for Canadians. We do this by facilitating collaboration and by generating and sharing knowledge. We also give public voice to the shared aspirations of our members and provide skill-building opportunities designed to help ensure that our members keep pace with a rapidly changing world. And we work with key partners and not-for-profit organizations that provide an essential function to Canadian communities through public engagement and policy development and implementation.

CEGN's Atlantic Initiative is rooted in a concern shared by a number of CEGN members over the low levels of environmental philanthropy in Atlantic Canada. This is of particular concern in light of both the need and opportunities for nurturing conservation and sustainability initiatives in the region. The last national overview of environmental grantmaking in Canada, conducted by CEGN and based on 2011 and 2012 grants data, showed the Atlantic region (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, PEI, Newfoundland and Labrador) receiving only 2.7% of the funding for environmental activities across the country. Research by Ajah, a Montreal-based software company that builds tools for the not-for-profit sector, shows that environmental philanthropy was just 2% of all philanthropy in the region in 2013. It is felt that the paucity of environmental philanthropy is hobbling progress on key environmental concerns in the region and that a relatively modest increase in funding could support significant conservation gains. In addition, more environmental philanthropy in Atlantic Canada will strengthen the capacity of environmental organizations in the region, leading to a stronger environmental contribution from Atlantic Canada on issues of national importance.

However, despite relatively low levels of environmental philanthropy in the region, there are wonderful examples of environmental initiatives being supported by CEGN members and other funders. There is much to celebrate; to learn from; and to build on. CEGN's online grants database highlights some of the environmental philanthropy currently being undertaken in the region (www.cegn.org). This work is being undertaken by environmental groups, community organizations, academics and others. Shining a light on existing work is one way to help funders see the opportunities for adding environmental philanthropy to their current funding portfolio. And given the essential link-

ages between a healthy environment and a healthy economy, there are many ways by which all funders can contribute to the broader goal of a sustainable future for Atlantic Canada.

CEGN's Atlantic Initiative is a modest one. The research undertaken by Jamie Gamble for this report is focused on only a portion of the funding community in Atlantic Canada. And the report was not designed to capture fully the perspectives of environmental organizations within the region. In addition to the Initiative's research component, a workshop is being held in October in Halifax at the time of the Philanthropic Foundations of Canada conference. This workshop will convene existing and prospective funders to explore the obstacles and opportunities for increased environmental philanthropy. The CEGN Board will review the recommendations in this report and the outcome of the Halifax discussion to determine what next steps can be taken to nurture increased environmental philanthropy in the region.

We are grateful to Jamie Gamble for his excellent work in the research and development of this report. His experience in the world of philanthropy and his roots in New Brunswick served the project very well. Anne Levesque conducted two funder interviews with francophone foundations and we thank her for her work in this regard. We also appreciate very much the time and insights of those individuals who agreed to be interviewed.



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Introduction

In Atlantic Canada, the natural world is at our doorstep. With a large rural landscape, cities that border on oceans and forests, and an economy closely tied to natural resources, we have a deep connection to our environment. Yet the many Atlantic Canada groups and organizations that champion conservation and sustainability efforts face significant challenges in securing the necessary resources to carry out their work.

The Atlantic region receives only 2.7% of all funding for environmental activities across the country.¹ Low levels of environmental philanthropy in Atlantic Canada are of particular concern in light of current environmental challenges. Shale gas, forestry, and water use issues have divided people. Atlantic Canadians also share a stake in critical global issues including climate change, declining fish stocks, and sustainable economic development.

While we can quickly point to some examples of success: large national funders who actively grant in the region, local funders with a strong environmental mandate, and organizations that have grown the scope and complexity of their individual giving – the pool of resources is insufficient to the scale of the environmental issues we face.

Could a modest increase in funding result in significant conservation gains? Are there local or national funders interested in doing more to advance environmental sustainability? What stands in the way of increased environmental philanthropy in Atlantic Canada?

These are questions that the Canadian Environmental Grantmakers' Network (CEGN) wants to answer. As Canada's national network of philanthropic foundations and other organizations that support efforts to transition toward a more sustainable world, CEGN seeks ways to stimulate and steward an increase in environmental philanthropy in Atlantic Canada. This report, commissioned by CEGN, is a first step in surveying the current funding landscape, and introducing options and ideas for addressing these central questions. These questions are part of the dialogue among funders convened by CEGN at the October 20th workshop, Building a Sustainable Future for Atlantic Canada: The Role For Philanthropy.

To prepare this report, interviews were conducted with 23 granting organizations and individual philanthropists from Atlantic Canada, of which the majority are not CEGN members or commonly identified as an environmental grantmaker. Granting organizations included private, corporate and commu-

¹ This information is drawn from CEGN's Environmental Grants database (available at <http://www.grants.cegn.org/>), which provides an overview of environmental grantmaking across Canada for 2011 and 2012. The database includes grants information from 87 environmental funders, but does not include the full spectrum of environmental grantmaking for the country.

nity foundations. In addition, three environmental sector leaders from the region were interviewed to get some additional context and perspective, and 14 CEGN members who are active or interested in the Atlantic region responded to a brief electronic survey.

What environmental work are Atlantic funders doing?

Atlantic Canadian Funders:

- Half of the private foundations interviewed have made significant grants to environmental projects, with land conservation and wildlife protection as the primary goals of these grants
- Half of the private foundations have made little to no environmental grants
- Some of the corporate foundations have ongoing environmental grants with specific organizations or initiatives, and this is largely driven by their corporate social responsibility mandate, existing relationships, or employee-driven interests
- Community foundations have all made small environmental grants from their undesignated funds, but these are generally ad-hoc, and represent a very small portion of their overall granting
- Community foundations have minimal (sometimes no) designated funds for environmental initiatives (the exceptions are the Fundy Community Foundation and the Fondation Communautaire de la Péninsule Acadienne Inc. that each have a modest endowment program)
- Several funders recognized that some of their granting did have an environmental component, but in many cases, other issues were the primary drivers for the grant (e.g. health, education, or social justice)

National Funders (CEGN members):

- There are 21 CEGN members that made grants in Atlantic Canada in 2011 and/or 2012. As CEGN currently has only one member in Atlantic Canada, all of these funders, with the exception of the Fundy Community Foundation, are from outside of the region.²
- Fourteen of the CEGN members that are funding or have funded in Atlantic Canada responded to the electronic survey. Of these funders, 20% are currently doing no environmental grantmaking in the region and 53% direct less than a quarter of their grantmaking dollars to the region.

² The CEGN environmental grants database.

- A diverse range of environmental issues receive support, with the highest concentration in terrestrial ecosystems and land use, coastal and marine ecosystems, and freshwater ecosystems. Other issue areas supported include climate and atmosphere, energy, biodiversity and species, and sustainable agriculture.
- Support for land stewardship was by far the most common focus of grantmaking among CEGN members active in Atlantic Canada. There is also activity in capacity building, public education and direct activity (i.e. shoreline rehabilitation). Support for movement building and public policy strategies is less common.

What interest is there in expanding environmental philanthropy in Atlantic Canada?

Modest opportunity with community foundations and designated funds:

Canada's largest community foundations on average commit 9% of their total granting towards the environment.³ In most cases, Atlantic Canadian community foundations are granting well below that. Several Atlantic community foundations have expressed an interest in growing their environmental granting, particularly through the establishment of designated environmental endowments.

“I'd like us to build capacity for environmental organizations, as well as their ability to collaborate and interact with the public and private sectors.” – CEGN Member

Firmly established funding patterns with the region's funders:

The granting patterns of private and corporate foundations are firmly established. While most would welcome more submissions from environmental organizations, the appetite for any substantial expansion of their environmental funding is currently limited.

National funders interested in capacity building and longer-term funding:

The granting of CEGN members covers a range of issues and strategies. Several CEGN members are interested in increased funding for capacity building of Atlantic Canadian environmental organizations, and more multi-year investments.

³ Assets & Giving Trends of Canada's Grantmaking Foundations. Philanthropic Foundations Canada and Imagine Canada, September 2014.

What are the underlying issues affecting environmental philanthropy in the region?

Poor Visibility: The environment, and in particular the work of environmental organizations, is invisible to many of the region’s funders. There are a few foundations or individuals who have a well-developed environmental granting stream, but these are the exception. Environmental organizations are ‘not on the radar’, and many foundations have minimal interaction with environmental organizations and champions. Where there is connection to environmental organizations, this is generally because of a long-standing relationship or particular local issue of interest.

Other Priorities: For several foundations, there is a hierarchy of issues and interests, and the environment is less of a priority relative to areas including health, poverty, social inclusion, youth, seniors, and economic development. The relative importance of these other issues is further heightened in a struggling economy where the prevailing view is that the environment and the economy are opposing choices. Several foundations noted an interest in supporting ideas and initiatives that cut across issues and sectors, and that they are not seeing many environmental organizations engaging in cross-sector work.

Limited Philanthropic Wealth: Only 1% of the assets held by the largest 150 Canadian Foundations are in Atlantic Canadian Foundations.⁴ Many corporate head offices are headquartered outside of the region, and, as a result, granting decisions and influence is often elsewhere.

Local Issue Focus: Grassroots engagement in environmental issues is very high. Atlantic Canadians contribute a great portion of their volunteer time to the environmental movement. These efforts tend to be highly localized. As a result, environmental efforts are often independent and isolated. The connection between local issues and grassroots work with provincial or regional strategies is fragmented and under-developed. Some national grantors can feed into lots of small grassroots projects because of the nature of their granting, while others seek a stronger regional platform in order to advance broad based strategies. There is little inter-provincial work, largely because provincial boundaries define issues as legislators operate within a provincial

“I struggle to identify a specific organization. I’m not sure who is associated with the environment.” – Atlantic Based Funder

⁴ Assets & Giving Trends of Canada’s Grantmaking Foundations. Philanthropic Foundations Canada and Imagine Canada, September 2014.

“The entry of just a few new environmental funders would make such a difference in Atlantic Canada. Here in Nova Scotia, the Sage Environmental Program, while a relatively modest funder by national standards, has buoyed the whole sector and helped leverage additional funding for many great projects.” – Environmental Leader

scope. This is further reinforced by the tendency of Atlantic Canadian funders to have a funding mandate or focus that is primarily provincial, or locally within a province.

Place Focused Funding: Environmental grants from Atlantic funders emphasize place over people or policy. Their granting patterns favour land stewardship and conservation, with some smaller emphasis on people focused strategies, such as public education and engagement. Atlantic Canada funders are generally reluctant to engage in controversial issues involving public policy. CEGN members who fund in the region have a much more diversified range of granting strategies. They also favour land stewardship, but they support a much more diverse range of activities including public policy, campaigning, education, communications and capacity building.

Responsive Funding: The majority of foundations in the region grant in response to the applications they receive. They do not develop specific initiatives to direct resources towards a particular idea or strategy. There are some exceptions: RBC Foundation’s Blue Water Project and the Fondation de Gaspé Beaubien’s Aqua Hacking, for example. A majority of the foundations reported low numbers of proposals from environmental organizations, and that they would welcome more.

Fundraising Capacity: Few Atlantic environmental organizations have fully developed fundraising programs and resources. With a high number of local, grassroots organizations, there is limited human resource capacity to develop and implement sophisticated, long-term resource development initiatives. These organizations are unable to invest the time in donor cultivation and stewardship necessary for large fundraising campaigns or major gifts. Organizations with a strong national presence and some of the provincial environmental organizations are the exception.

“The people on the side of the angels are always saying ‘NO’.”
– Atlantic Canadian Funder

Messages Not Connecting: While Atlantic Canadians have a very high affinity with the natural world, the messages and discourse of environmental organizations does not connect well with the general public. Several funders suggest that organizations work to develop messages that can garner a broader base of support. Many Atlantic Canada funders are adverse to

controversy, and would be reluctant to wade into contentious issues. Funders would like to hear more about environmental successes, efforts that bridge multiple issue areas, and concrete activity that links economic and environmental sustainability.

What are strategic options to increase environmental philanthropy in Atlantic Canada?

Connect the dots: Atlantic Canada’s grassroots environmental action is vibrant. The region is desperate for some kind of platform that can transform this energy into something more cohesive and visible. This is not easy work. Strong skills in collaboration are in short supply (in all sectors) yet it is the essential skill for the 21st century. Collective efforts need to generate value for each community’s local interests and sufficient social cohesion within the network that it can manage the social friction that comes with increasing the diversity of stakeholders, setting priorities, and making choices in provincial and regional level strategies. Who has the resources and legitimacy to convene?

Actions: Begin to develop a stronger network of Atlantic Canadian environmental funders, and develop processes that can accommodate funders of different sizes with different capacities to engage. Find ways to support the convening and strategic networking of environmental organizations in the region.

Tell the story: Broader engagement and increased visibility results from compelling examples of where progress is being made, and a narrative about the diverse work undertaken by environmental organizations. There is a wide spectrum of opportunities for philanthropic support of environmental efforts. Stronger communications about environmental efforts can draw more supporters to the work. There is an opportunity to model the kinds of messages that many are calling for: constructive solutions, the link between a health economy and a healthy environment, and the interconnectedness of the environment with other important issues. How do we build a new narrative for the environmental movement in Atlantic Canada?

Actions: Develop a clear and concise communications resource, such as an annual report or newsletter, that outlines the issues, interests and progress of Atlantic Canadian environmental funders and organizations.

Seek new sources: The potential for expanding the funding from established Atlantic Canadian funders is limited. With stronger networks and increased

“Give more funding to grassroots organizations for environmental initiatives. There’s bang for the buck as they have volunteer participation and citizen involvement, they know their community, and they have great ideas to improve their community.” – CEGN Member

visibility, incremental gains are possible, even likely. Transformative changes in environmental funding demand new, and perhaps, unlikely sources. Who else might be engaged? Is it information-technology professionals with an interest in urban sustainability? Is it wealthy retirees who move to rural areas? Is it U.S. funders who share an interest in issues that have environmental implications for both sides of the border? How can we equip environmental organizations – small and large – to better identify and access new funding sources?

Actions: Grant in a manner to help develop the core capacity of environmental organizations of all sizes to increase the sophistication and scale of their resource development efforts. Provide incentives, such as a matching grants program, to attract new supporters.

Find new champions in the middle: Diversity drives innovation and change. Trying to move environmental funders and organizations towards new levels of support will require new thinking and different ways of working. Individuals working across sectors can bring disparate people together, and help them to find a common agenda for mutual benefit. These champions are comfortable reaching across boundaries to bring people together, have the ability to convince people to do things that they otherwise would never do, and can make things happen, not just create a lot of heat and noise. These champions can be allies in helping to break the environment out of its silo and build connections with other sectors and concerns that may be common across civil society. How do we enlist those who can help link uncommon partners to forge a common cause?

Actions: Identify and enlist these champions, and stick with it even when it gets tough.

Explore the opportunities for impact investing: Several CEGN members are directing at least part of their endowments to investments that have both an environmental and financial return. Other members are supporting innovative financial mechanisms to help restore the health of local fisheries in Atlantic Canada. The region is also witnessing the emergence of programs that support social entrepreneurship, and some of these emerging entrepreneurs have ideas that include environmental benefits. In a region with a strong history of community development and community investment, developing local social venture investments and social entrepreneurship may be another pathway for expanding the resources available to environment initiatives in Atlantic Canada. How do we realize the potential of this idea?

Actions: Commit to further research and exploration of the possibility of impact investing in Atlantic Canada.

Lasting change for sustainability

It's one thing to get a bunch of people excited about something for a short period of time. A transformation in the funding ecosystem for the environment in Atlantic Canada requires long-term strategies and sustained effort. Expanding relationships, challenging the status quo, and finding effective ways to communicate and integrate the work underway in the region are the ingredients for a new platform for expanding the resources available. These are not simple tasks, and in doing these things, 'how matters.' The resilience of the effort is a starting point, not something to switch to down the road.

The attention and interest of CEGN members to grow the resources available to environmental efforts in Atlantic Canada is exciting and motivating. There is much work to be done, and the ideas and observations from the funders are a valuable contribution to building this necessary momentum.

Appendix A

List of CEGN members which funded initiatives in Atlantic Canada in 2011 and/or 2012

Organization Name	Organization Website
Carthy Foundation	http://www.carthyfoundation.org
Donner Canadian Foundation	http://www.donnerfoundation.org
The Echo Foundation	http://www.fondationecho.ca
Environment Canada, EcoAction Community Funding Program	http://www.ec.gc.ca/ecoaction
Fundy Community Foundation	http://www.fcf.nb.ca
Federation of Canadian Municipalities	http://www.fcm.ca
Ivey Foundation	http://www.ivey.org
Mountain Equipment Co-op	http://www.mec.ca
Patagonia	http://www.patagonia.com
RBC Foundation	http://www.rbc.com/community-sustainability/community/index.html
Small Change Fund	http://smallchange.org
TD Friends of the Environment Foundation	https://fef.td.com
The Gosling Foundation	http://goslingfoundation.org
The John and Pat McCutcheon Charitable Foundation	http://www.jpvcf.org
The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation	http://www.mcconnellfoundation.ca/en
The McLean Foundation	http://www.mcleanfoundation.ca
The Salamander Foundation	http://www.salamanderfoundation.org
The Schad Foundation	
Tides Canada Foundation	http://tidescanada.org
Toronto Community Foundation	https://torontofoundation.ca
Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation	http://www.gordonfoundation.ca

Appendix B

Interviews for the report were conducted with the following organizations and individuals:

Foundations:

Campbell Webster Foundation
CBCL
Community Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador
Fondation Communautaire de la Péninsule Acadienne
Fondation de Gaspé Beaubien
Fredericton Community Foundation
PEI Community Foundation
RBC Foundation
Rural Communities Foundation of Nova Scotia
The Community Foundation of Nova Scotia
The Greater Saint John Community Foundation
The Lockhart Foundation
The McCain Foundation
The Sage Environmental Program
The Sir James Dunn Foundation
The T. R. Meighen Family Foundation
The Windsor Foundation

Individuals:

Chuck Cartmill
Dale Godsoe
Danny Graham
Henry Hicks
Gerry Pond

Environmental Leaders:

Mark Butler and Maggy Burns, Ecology Action Centre
Lois Corbett, Conservation Council of New Brunswick
Chris Ortenburger, Citizen's Alliance PEI

Corporations

Michelin Canada



CEGN works to strengthen the impact of philanthropic support for an environmentally sound and sustainable future for Canadians

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