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## Acceptance of the Collective Impact Initiative Model in Rural Communities: Case Study Example—Gros Morne, NL

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# **Acceptance of the Collective Impact Initiative Model in Rural Communities: Case Study Example - Gros Morne, NL**

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## **Abstract**

The collective impact initiative (CII) model provides a novel framework to ensure cross-sector collaboration and effective public participation to support complex decision-making processes. The model encourages stakeholders to go through a process that ensures fair representation from diverse groups and sectors in the community to arrive at a mutual agreement. This article examines the model's merits based on feedback received from community stakeholders in the region of Gros Morne National Park, Newfoundland and Labrador, as they contemplated a hypothetical marine conservation effort. There is a lack of literature on applying the CII model in rural communities; hence, this paper examines the feasibility of the model in the Gros Morne Area while the future directive would be applying the model to understand its effectiveness. Focus group sessions were used to gather information from regional stakeholders. The participants were residents of the area and selected stakeholders. It was determined that the CII model holds great potential in addressing community engagement challenges in the region and providing a more effective structure for stakeholder collaboration in conservation planning. The findings show that the participants supported the establishment of the model in the area. Participants also highlighted the strengths and challenges of the model and agreed that it would be an effective framework for community engagement and ensure cross-sector collaboration in the region. This research provides future direction for community engagement and how the CII model could encourage more equitable stakeholder representation in rural communities.

**Keywords:** collective impact initiative, stakeholder collaboration, conservation planning, community engagement interest

# **Acceptation du modèle d'initiative d'impact collectif dans les communautés rurales : Exemple d'étude de cas - au Gros Morne, à T.-N.-L.**

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## **Résumé**

Le modèle d'initiative d'impact collectif (IIC) fournit un nouveau cadre pour assurer une collaboration intersectorielle et une participation publique efficace pour soutenir des processus décisionnels complexes. Le modèle encourage les parties prenantes à passer par un processus qui assure une représentation équitable des divers groupes et secteurs de la communauté pour parvenir à un accord mutuel. Cet article examine les mérites du modèle en fonction des commentaires reçus des intervenants communautaires de la région du parc national du Gros-Morne, à Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador, alors qu'ils envisageaient un effort hypothétique de conservation marine. Il y a un manque de littérature sur l'application du modèle IIC dans les communautés rurales; par conséquent, cet article examine la faisabilité du modèle dans la région du Gros-Morne alors que la future directive appliquerait le modèle pour comprendre son efficacité. Des séances de groupes de discussion ont été utilisées pour recueillir des informations auprès des intervenants régionaux. Les participants étaient des résidents de la région et des intervenants sélectionnés. Il a été déterminé que le modèle IIC a un grand potentiel pour relever les défis de l'engagement communautaire dans la région et fournir une structure plus efficace pour la collaboration des intervenants dans la planification de la conservation. Les résultats montrent que les participants ont soutenu l'établissement du modèle dans la région. Les participants ont également souligné les forces et les défis du modèle et ont convenu qu'il constituerait un cadre efficace pour l'engagement communautaire et assurerait une collaboration intersectorielle dans la région. Cette recherche fournit une orientation future pour l'engagement communautaire et la manière dont le modèle IIC pourrait encourager une représentation plus équitable des intervenants dans les communautés rurales.

**Mots-clés :** initiative d'impact collectif, collaboration des intervenants, planification de la conservation, intérêt pour l'engagement communautaire

## 1.0 Introduction

Established in 1973 (Parks Canada, 2009; Innes et al, 2012), the Gros Morne National Park (GMNP) is described as having outstanding universal value as it boasts some of the world's best examples of the process of plate tectonics (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], n.d.). Bonne Bay, a deep glacier-carved fjord, adds scenic value and beauty to GMNP and was undoubtedly one of the main reasons to declare GMNP as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987, 14 years after its establishment (Smith, 2015). Based on a 2012 Parks Canada report, Gros Morne attracts 200,000 visitors annually and continues to build a close relationship between Parks Canada and the communities, thus giving visitors a unique feeling of being welcomed home. With such an influx of visitors and its extraordinary natural assets, the desire among the community members to expand the Park's protection of its terrestrial ecosystems to marine ecosystems is not unexpected.

There are eight community enclaves in GMNP, as shown in Figure.1 and are a part of the study area. They include (a) Trout River, (b) Woody Point, (c) Glenburnie-Birchy Head-Shoal Brook, (d) Norris Point, (e) Rocky Harbour, (f) Sally's Cove, (g) St Paul's, and (h) Cow Head.

Figure 1. Study area: GMNP community enclaves.



Reprinted with approval from Brushett (2018), the coastal communities of Gros Morne.

The park designation process took place without proper consultation (Brookes, 1988; McCuaig, 2012) and ever since, enduring perceptions of a lack of engagement within the community have persisted (Kukac, 2009). An effective engagement framework can serve as a platform for earnest, responsive, and locally relevant consultations that ensure future decisions on natural resources are informed by the perspectives and levels of approval within a community. This article discusses the merits of the CII model, first introduced into the public engagement literature in 2011 by Kania and Kramer through their Stanford Innovation Social Review publication. The Stanford Review provides examples where the CII approach contributed to problem-solving and addressing public and social issues (Harwood, n.d.). However, this article will examine the merits of the CII model applied at the community level.

Success stories of the CII model have grasped the attention from a wide range of organizations, groups, and communities. For example, the CII model was employed when the United States public education system needed a revamp due to the high secondary school dropout rates. With the involvement of a non-profit organization—Strive group—the project increased student success in 4 years. The participants included 300 leaders from local organizations, including (a) the city government officials, (b) private and corporate foundations, (c) school district representatives, (d) education-related non-profit groups, and (e) representatives from universities and colleges. The Stanford review introduced this effort as a ‘collective impact initiative’ as it involves (a) a centralized infrastructure, (b) a dedicated staff, (c) a structured process that leads to a common agenda, (d) a shared measurement system, (e) continuous communication, and (f) mutually reinforcing activities among participants (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Another example of the CII model application is the Elizabeth River Project (1993), when more than 100 stakeholders, including diverse groups and organizations, were brought together to clean up the Elizabeth River in southeastern Virginia. For decades, the Elizabeth River had been a dumping ground for industrial waste, but 15 years later, through the application of the CII model, more than 1000 acres of watershed land has been restored and conserved (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

The CII model was introduced to a group of various stakeholders in the region of GMNP to determine the model’s potential for tackling the need for effective community engagement and multi-stakeholder collaboration around the historically contentious topic of marine conservation in an Atlantic Canadian context. In this case study region, the stakeholders include representatives from (a) the town councils, (b) small business owners, (c) anglers, (d) representatives from the Grenfell Campus of Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador, (e) entrepreneurs, (f) representatives from Parks Canada, (g) The Cottage Hospital, (h) teachers, (i) artists, and (j) representatives from not-for-profit organizations. This multitude of stakeholders were invited to participate in the study in a focus group and an online survey was sent to the residents of the region. Participants were asked to reflect upon the merits of each of the model’s steps as they applied it to a hypothetical public consultation process for a proposed marine conservation area in Bonne Bay, one of the deep-water fjords in GMNP.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

The CII model was designed to guide community change and bring key multi-stakeholder groups together to make informed decisions (Sutton, 2016). Many collaborative efforts were introduced in the literature, including multi-stakeholder collaboratives, funders’ collaboratives, and social network collaborative methods (Kania & Kramer, 2011). However, compared to the other models, the CII model

has been endorsed as having the ability to help solve long-term complex social and community problems that are otherwise not easily addressed. Community groups have identified that real change does not happen through isolated interventions between organizations but from sectors working together (Milnar, 2014; Amed et al, 2015; Gemmel, 2014). Whether driven by the community's need to solve a problem, fix a crisis or create a better vision for the future, there comes a time when a strategy is needed (Holmgren, n.d.) and this is where the CII model has been used as a supportive framework. The CII model provides a framework to bring community groups together to achieve such change. The CII framework enhances traditional collaboration practices within communities while encouraging a culture of shared leadership, deeper community engagement, increased accountability, and a shared vision (Bradley et al., 2017).

### **2.1 The CII Framework**

The CII framework was introduced in the Stanford Social Review in 2011 (Figure 2). After its considerable success over the years, the model has been adopted to support social and community initiatives across the US and around the world (Kania & Kramer, 2013). The CII model provides a framework for effective multi-stakeholder engagement, which can better inform policymakers and key interest groups. The CII model has been vital in community change, and has been adopted by many businesses, organizations and public agencies in the US in a range of sectors, including health, education, justice, and natural resources (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016). Increasingly, the CII model is not just considered another tool for collaboration but represents a fundamentally different, more disciplined, and higher performing approach to achieving large-scale impact across multiple disciplines, including community change (Brown et al., 2012; Pole, 2017).

While the CII model is relatively new, we have seen a number of success stories in the United States (as discussed earlier) and across the world. The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) is one such organization that has used the CII framework to help reduce nutrition deficiencies among 530 million people across the globe, including countries such as China, Kenya, and South Africa (Brown et al., 2012). Since 2002 the Tamarack Institute Canada has taken the initiative to fight poverty in cities across Canada by using the CII model, which proved to be successful (Holmgren, n.d.). Due to its successes and potential to effectively guide multi-stakeholders through complex issues and contentious decision-making processes, exploring the merits of the CII model in a rural context is warranted. To that end, the current study evaluated the CII model with input from stakeholders in the Gros Morne National Park region of Newfoundland and Labrador as local interest group representatives contemplated a hypothetical marine conservation proposal.

Most traditional collaborative models focus on single non-profit organizations, government agencies, and businesses that operate in isolation and often compete over scarce resources and jurisdiction (DuBow et al., 2018). The traditional method of funding one organization to find a single solution to a complicated problem will not provide a reliable long-term solution (Kania & Kramer, 2011), hence the reason why the CII model was developed. The CII model recognizes the need for various services and interventions to solve a problem. The model can be applied against a wide range of issues at the local, national, and even global levels (Brown et al., 2012). The CII model is grounded in the belief that no single policy, government, organization, department, or program can tackle or solve the increasingly complex social problems that we face as a society. Still,

even the seemingly impossible is possible through cross-sector coordination (Julian et al., 2017).

However, it is important to recognize that the literature suggests the CII Model may not work in every situation. Brown et al. (2012) present three key preconditions that need to be met before implementing the CII model. The first precondition is an influential champion, a leader who commands the necessary respect and keeps the team together, creating an active environment. The second is adequate financial resources for 2 to 3 years, with one primary funder to support the project startup and organize the required resources. The third is typically linked to a crisis situation that urges organizations and community groups toward change and collaboration. Brown et al. (2012) further explain that the CII model offers an opportunity for organizations and community groups who have never worked together before to collaborate in a CII effort.

In implementing the CII model, key intangibles or softer elements should be achieved for its success. These include trust among the diverse stakeholders, leadership identification–development, and establishing a learning culture across stakeholders (Brown et al., 2012). Innes and Booher (2004) argue that for better engagement in communities, a broader spectrum of the public should be approached. A low number of participants limits the information that government and public administrations can gather; therefore, a broader outreach increases the resulting decisions effectiveness (Koch, 2013). The CII model provides the required tools to bring together a broader spectrum of stakeholders to work on a common agenda.

The requirements of the CII model pose challenges as well, such as bringing people together who have never collaborated before and the necessity of engaging identified resources and innovations that already exist but have not been recognized (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Kania & Kramer (2013) reports that many collective impact initiative success stories acknowledge the problem is not a lack of resources but the inability to accurately access the resources and solutions that best fit the situation. Additionally, the CII model purports to solve social problems by changing systems, but systems themselves can be very complex, involving multiple players playing multiple roles that are critical for change (Sutton, 2016). However, a collaborative effort within the community can create the long-term vision to address complex problems from the diverse angles necessary (Bradley et al., 2017). The traditional modes of collaboration often produce isolated results due to stakeholder organizations working independently (Braun et al., 2016). These isolated approaches can overlap when different groups work on the same issue at different times without collaborating (Prange et al, 2016). However, the CII model advances the collaborative approach by providing a formal framework for organization and action.

Sometimes one of the biggest challenges in implementing the CII model is that initiatives rarely invest the necessary time and resources in teaching people how to engage the community effectively before implementing the model (Brown et al., 2012). The more stakeholders engage and take responsibility, the easier it is to determine alternative or better solutions, as ownership is key in adopting effective strategies. Additionally, Kania and Kramer (2011) list five essential steps to a CII model: (a) a common agenda, (b) a shared measurement system, (c) mutually re-enforcing activities, (d) continuous communication, and (e) a strong backbone organization. These criteria are presented in Figure 2 and discussed further below.

Figure 2. Five conditions of the CII framework

<b>The Five Conditions of Collective Impact</b>	
Common Agenda	All participants have a shared vision for change including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions
Shared Measurement	Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants ensuring efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable
Mutually Reinforcing Activities	Participant activities must be differentiated while still being coordinated through a mutually reinforcing plan of action
Continuous Communication	Consistent and open communication is needed across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives and create common motivation
Backbone Support	Creating and managing collective impact requires a separate organization(s) with staff and a specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative and coordinate participating organizations and agencies

Taken from Brown et al., 2012, p. 1.

The CII model requires all participants to have a *shared vision or common agenda* regarding the problem in question (Kania & Kramer, 2011). A mutually agreed-upon approach to addressing the issue at hand is an essential element of the CII model because it fosters open and effective information exchange between stakeholders (Holmgren, n.d.). The CII model assumes that resources and services to promote change already exist but have not yet been recognized, supported, or connected. Therefore, having a common agenda enables participants to focus on available resources and agree on how to best utilize these resources. A common agenda encourages stakeholders to focus on the goals at hand while encouraging interaction with each other (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

Mutual agreement on a *shared measurement* and having a common agenda goes hand in hand (Kania & Kramer, 2011). In a shared measurement system, there needs to be a list of key indicators agreed upon early in the process that will be used across all participants (Holmgren, n.d.), ensuring the consistency of the results and findings. Agreeing on common indicators can be difficult; however, it can be agreed upon through continuous communication and trust. It may seem difficult to have one shared measurement system or agree on mutual key indicators, but with the recent advances in the technology of reporting and the use of software, several feasible options are available to practitioners. The success of a model depends on how the results can be measured.

The model assigns each stakeholder responsibilities or a set of activities that mutually support other stakeholders (Kania & Kramer, 2011). While each stakeholder focuses on their activities, the technology platform manages the



shared measurement indicators to map and create findings coherently. These *mutually re-enforcing* activities ensure that individual stakeholder is aligned (Braun et al., 2016). In a CII model, stakeholders cannot work in isolation, as every step and action are communicated and shared among all stakeholder members (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Every stage of the CII model binds each activity together to ensure that the overall objective is met.

Through open and ongoing *communication*, trust among multi-stakeholders such as non-profits, government agencies, and corporations can be developed. The CII model is a long-term model and may take several years of regular engagement and collaboration to enable stakeholders to recognize common activities and appreciate each other's efforts (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Ongoing learning and adaptations are the outcomes of regular, effective meetings (Holmgren, n.d.), and these will also serve to keep the group of stakeholders committed. The CII model is not a predetermined formula; rather an emergent, evolving process (Sutton, 2016). It is dependent on constant communication between stakeholders to manage the change.

Successful CII models have shown that a strong guiding force is key in maintaining group cohesion and motivation to generate results (Kania & Kramer, 2011). The *backbone organization* of the CII model acts as the driving force and provides the team with the necessary resources. In most cases of CII model application, the backbone organization tends to fulfil six roles: (a) guide the development of a vision and strategy, (b) support aligned activities, (c) establish shared measurement practices, (d) build public will, (e) advance policy, and (f) mobilize funding (Holmgren, n.d.).

As the CII framework has evolved, so too has the concept of the backbone organization (DuBow et al., 2018). For successful results, proper administration and strong management are required. Early descriptions of the CII model emphasized the importance of high-quality backbone leadership (DuBow et al., 2018). Initiating and managing CII efforts require a separate organization and staff with a distinct skill set to serve as a backbone organization (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Coordination takes considerable time, and as it is unlikely that participating stakeholders will have the time to carry out such tasks, a coordinating support infrastructure will significantly increase the chances of success. Cabaj & Weaver (2016) state that the backbone organization should act as a container for change while an intermediary or a coordinated body oversees the daily tasks and requirements. The backbone organization is required to guide the vision and strategy, mobilize funding, advance policies, and guide participants to constantly suggest new ideas in solving problems (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016).

## **2.2 Merits of the CII model**

While the success of the application of the CII model may seem likely given the success stories outlined above, there is a lack of literature regarding the merits of CII model application in rural contexts or in support of complex resource conservation issues. The application of the model in such contexts is yet to be explored. Furthermore, while our society often demands quick solutions and short-term relief methods, the CII model requires an extended period of time and dedication to achieve sustainable results (Weaver, 2014). The CII model generates long-term payoff with a system change that helps communities thrive (Weaver, 2014). Multi-stakeholder decision-making in a rural community can be a very daunting process, especially when applied to complex situations and accounting for different opinions (Brushett, 2018). Harwood (n.d.) believes that communities that embrace the CII model can solve such complex challenges.

The CII model has the potential to create community-based solutions based on stakeholder participation and commitment, a shared vision or common agenda, and mutually agreed-upon actions. Engaging stakeholders effectively may foster better-informed and more robust communication and engagement. A backbone organization is also critical for providing the model's management, organizational, resourcing, and policy advocacy requirements. Therefore, to increase the chances of the model being adopted by communities to tackle such complex problems, it is important to examine the perspectives of local stakeholders and engage them from the idea generation stage. Engaging the community at an early stage and documenting expert knowledge will benefit those involved in the CII process to ensure success.

### **3.0 Methodology**

Social problems are challenging to solve without a fundamental collaborative mechanism. Therefore, groups and organizations worldwide have begun using the CII model to work more effectively toward solutions for their social problems (Milnar, 2014). The data gathered through the study coincides with the five phases of the model and is composed of stakeholder input that was analyzed to determine the perceived relevancy of this model for the Gros Morne area. The research employed two methods: a focus group with regional stakeholders from eight enclave communities within GMNP and an online survey sent to the community groups and identified stakeholders. Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered in the focus group and online surveys. The primary purpose of qualitative research was to describe and understand rather than predict and control (MacDonald, 2012).

Similarly, Whyte-Jones (2016) suggests that qualitative methods assist in uncovering emerging themes and insights while helping with a broad understanding of issues. Therefore, data collected from the focus group were structured to allow in-depth discussions and interactive participation to gather rich qualitative data. The focus group data were analyzed using NVivo.x64 qualitative data analysis software. The online survey was circulated using Qualtrics and was analyzed using SPSS.27 software. The CII model was then analyzed to understand how it might be implemented in the GMNP region to foster more effective public engagement around safeguarding natural resources.

Participants for the focus group were recruited by email provided by local organizations and town councils. Thirty organizations and community groups were invited, 18 of which participated in the study. The 18 participants represented 13 stakeholder groups. Stakeholders included (a) local town council members, (b) representatives from Parks Canada, (c) Friends of Bonne Bay—a local voluntary group—, (d) community organizations, (e) small business entrepreneurs, (f) the Gros Morne Cooperating Association, (g) Grenfell Campus of Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador, and (h) the Old Cottage Hospital—a historic building that now functions as a hub for many local events and initiatives.

An online survey was circulated through email among 70 residents in the Gros Morne region, out of which 50 responded. Research questions included Likert scale, multiple choice and open-ended questions. The questions focused on understanding how residents perceived how a multi-stakeholder group could work together to address communication and engagement issues in the area. Participants included small business owners, writers, community groups, teachers, artists, retired public servants and anglers. The focus group research method was employed to gather information on past and current levels of public consultation and the possible future application of the CII model in the region.

Stakeholders examined whether the CII model provides a better planned and more effective engagement structure in natural resource management. Natural resource planning was taken as an example to guide the group through the steps of the CII model as the historical context of the area includes enduring perceptions of poor and inadequate consultation processes associated with the establishment of Gros Morne National Park (Brookes, 1988). The online survey was employed to provide respondents with a brief overview of the model and gather feedback regarding support or opposition levels if such model was implemented in the region.

### **3.1 Group Approach and Process**

The purpose of the focus group was to gather rich qualitative data on how the CII model could be applied to help make informed decisions in natural resource management. A hypothetical example of an ocean conservation initiative focused on Bonne Bay in Gros Morne National Park was used to conduct the study. The focus group was held on the 22nd of January, 2020 at the Old Cottage Hospital. The facilitator first presented a brief overview of the CII model, including international examples, and then a more detailed explanation. The session included a series of probing questions, an introduction of each individual and their respective stakeholder groups, and a discussion on what participants envisioned for their community. Through interactive discussions, participants were then asked to consider, debate, discuss, and provide feedback on the various components of the CII model. The main data collection methods included audio and tape recording, note-taking, and participant observation which are considered primary methods by Nyumba et al. (2018). In addition to primary data collection methods, interactive activities were employed to gather more information, and flip charts were used to aid in the compilation of feedback. As mentioned, the NVivo.x64 program was employed. Audio recordings of the workshop were entered into the program to code the data into groups as coding arranging ideas into nodes. The nodes were structured so that feedback provided an evaluation of the CII model.

### **3.2 Online Survey Approach**

The online survey was employed to gather data on the region's current public consultation and engagement process and participants' vision for the community. The online survey was sent to contacts established by the researcher and was circulated among 70 residents, out of which 50 responded. The survey link was circulated through email and was drafted in Qualtrics. The consent form for the survey was included at the beginning of the survey. The survey also carried questions regarding the CII model and if the residents feel it would be effective to have a multi-stakeholder group from the community work together to conduct public consultations and solve natural resource planning and conservation issues. The survey results were tabulated in SPSS 27, and results were generated.

## **4.0 Analysis**

Public engagement and consultation have been a frequent topic in the region, and various models have been explored since Parks Canada established GMNP in 1973. Through a series of probing questions and activities, both focus group participants and online questionnaire respondents were asked to share their perspectives on whether the CII model would help the communities in Gros Morne solve complex public engagement problems. The study produced both qualitative and quantitative data. The focus group outcomes are based on qualitative data, while the survey outcomes combined qualitative and quantitative data.

#### ***4.1 Participants' Evaluation of the CII Model***

Participants emphasized the importance of effective consultation during all stages of the study, such as stakeholder identification, and the central role of backbone organizations in the data collection phase. Participants believed that the CII model does indeed have the potential to contribute to informed decision-making on nature conservation issues. Focus group discussions also revealed the extent to which enclave communities would be willing to engage in and embrace the various components of the CII model. As Cabaj & Weaver (2016) state, it is vital to make a realistic assessment of where local actors have the knowledge, networks, and resources to make a difference within a community. The CII attempt can be successful only if the stakeholder readiness, capacity, and willingness are assessed (Demant & Lawrence, 2018) prior to project implementation. Therefore, participant feedback provided information on stakeholder identification, views on the role of a backbone organization, identifying existing collaboration resources, the strengths and challenges of the CII model, and the overall acceptability of the model for resource conservation efforts.

#### ***4.2 Stakeholder Identification for the CII model***

Many complex social problems seek collaborative efforts to address prevailing issues (Lasker & Weiss, 2003), and for real change to happen, sectors and groups should work together to make a change rather than driving towards isolated intervention (Milnar, 2014). During the focus group discussions for the current study, many stakeholders from communities in the GMNP region participated, shared ideas, and worked together to understand if the CII model would succeed in their communities.

Implementing a CII initiative requires considerable time and resources to map out the stakeholders and invite them to the discussions. Mapping out the skills needed to create good opportunities, engaging people at each stage of the change process and establishing the rapport and confidence to navigate between conflicts of interests and values (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016) also takes a considerable amount of time and resources.

Focus group participants engaged in a stakeholder mapping and identification exercise (Table 1). Participants listed those stakeholders they felt should be a part of the CII model process. Online survey participants were also asked to consider stakeholders that should be included in a CII process. Table 1 provides stakeholder suggestions from both groups of participants.

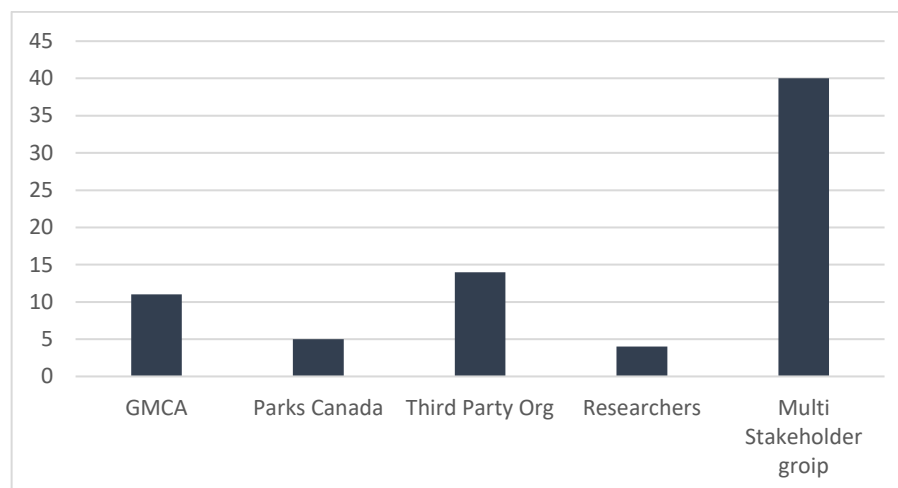
When participants were asked in the online survey which organization should be involved in conservation planning, (Figure 2) they indicated that a multi-stakeholder group approach would result in fair representation, leading to better decisions and solutions.

Table 1. *Stakeholder Mapping and Identification*

<b>Business Sector</b>	<b>Government–Public</b>
Fishing Plants	Municipalities
Tourism	Teachers
Store owners (Local Businessmen)	Parks Canada
Fishermen	Marine station, MUN, Grenfell
FFAW (Worker Unions)	Provincial Government
	Western Health
	DFO (Fisheries and Oceans)
<b>Community–Citizens</b>	<b>Voluntary–Non-profits</b>
Youth	Gros Morne Co-operating Association (GMCA)
Elders (Representation from the residents)	Lions Club
Recreational users	Voice of Bonne Bay
	UNESCO
	Friends of Bonne Bay
	Atlantic Healthy Oceans Initiative (AHOI)
	Ecology Action Center
	Oceans North
	Canada Parks and Wilderness (CPAWS)
	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)
	Kinsmen
	Gros Morne Summer Music Festival (GMSM)

Note: Focus Group, January 22, 2020—list of stakeholders for natural resource planning in Bonne Bay

Figure 2. Which organization should be involved in conservation planning?



Note: Multi stakeholder group (n=40), Third party Org (n=14), GMCA (n=11), Parks Canada (n=5) and Researchers (n=3)

With the majority (n=40) of participants selecting a multi-stakeholder approach to conservation planning in the Gros Morne region (Figure 2), the notion that the impact of collective action is greater than what can be achieved individually, as put forth by Braun, Kowalki, and Hollins (2016). Therefore, a multi-stakeholder group that includes a cross-sector of individuals and organizations is preferable to one organization trying to tackle community problems and conflicts. Similarly, participants stated that such multi-stakeholder engagement facilitates a bottom-up approach that would enable a transparent process.

### 4.3 Existing Collaboration Efforts in Gros Morne

A collaborative effort within a community can achieve a long-term vision as it includes the diversity of perspectives necessary to address complex problems effectively. Collective impact efforts are effective when they honour and build upon what already exists (Bradley et al., 2017). However, it is not without its challenges, and a number of models have been considered to address such challenges that share similarities with the CII model (Braun et al., 2016). However, in Gros Morne, residents and stakeholders are eager to collaborate (Crantson et al., 2009). For example, a focus group participant shared,

There are initiatives that is[sic] similar to the CII in the area, which is kind of a stakeholder engagement that we do. But this [the CII model] is a broader version of that, and we feel it would be nice to have such a model.

The above indicates instances of community-led discussions and collaboration within the community. Another example is a series of public meetings, school events, and workshops organized in 2009 to educate the public on marine research and available resources in Bonne Bay (Crantson et al., 2009). The statements also convey Bonne Bay residents' willingness to collaborate and make informed decisions that positively influence the community.

Another example is establishing a lobster conservation area in Trout River Bay on the southwestern boundary of Gros Morne National Park (Le Bris & Wroblewski, 2018). It was initiated by local harvesters and highlighted the stewardship attempt and collaboration of the sustainable use of marine resources.

Trout River has separated [sic] an area for lobster fishing, and that attempt was successful 10 years down the line and it was an investment they made, and a collective initiative done in collaboration with the councils and the residents

Participants conveyed strong opinions that the residents in Gros Morne are already engaged in collaboration, therefore, having the mindset required for the CII model.

#### **4.4 Requirement for a Backbone Organization**

Most collaboration happens without a backbone organization, yet this is an essential criterion for success (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016). The backbone organization is responsible for coordination, providing administrative support, conducting periodic evaluations, and facilitating continuous communication. The backbone organization also ensures that each element of the CII is advancing appropriately (Braun et al., 2016). Identifying such organization in the Gros Morne region was a very important step to understanding who should take on this role. During the focus group, participants stated that the backbone organization should be unbiased and not emotionally attached to the region. Therefore, participants believed a third-party organization with no conflicts of interest should be considered. The backbone organization requires a dedicated staff separate from the participating organizations who can plan, manage, and support the initiative through ongoing facilitation, technology, and communications support, data collection and reporting, and handling the various logistical and administrative details (Kania & Kramer, 2013). One focus group participant mentioned:

The Backbone Organization...[sic] the way I see it could be a collaboration of a few. I see it as CPAWS, World Wildlife Federations (WWF), Ecology Action Centre, and Oceans North. They are NGOs that would be the best fit as they would not be biased. And these organizations can shape the policy, which is what we need

From the literature on CII model application in other contexts, a backbone organization must play specific roles, such as creating a locally relevant vision strategy, mobilizing funding, providing resources, making advances to policy changes, and providing the required leadership (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016). Participants acknowledged the importance of a backbone organization in guiding collaborative efforts and in supporting other CII models aspects. For instance, one focus group participant stated, “I think that backbone org [sic] is great because they can ensure that fair representation happens within communities.”

In many cases, there is a challenge where stakeholders cannot contribute the time necessary to guide the process (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016) hence the need for a backbone organization to arrange the required resources and skills. Those striving towards the adoption of a CII model should also encourage policymakers to support the CII process

#### **4.5 Strengths and Challenges of the CII model**

The CII framework has breathed a new life into the weary efforts of many long-standing community change initiatives (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016). The CII model has succeeded in making commitments and being accountable for supporting

larger shared goals for all community levels, from large public institutions and multinational corporations to individual donors and community-based NGOs (Gallagher, 2014). During the focus group, participants were asked to identify the strengths and challenges that might emerge when applying the CII model to public engagement efforts in the Gros Morne region (Table 2).

Table 2. *Strengths and Challenges of the CII Model in Gros Morne*

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
Working towards a unified goal	Burnout of community champions
Long-term vision	Need a good strategy to resolve conflicts
Funneling resources to where its needed	having different mediums of communication channels can be effort and time consuming
Brings together diverse group of people	communicating the importance of a backbone organization to the residents
Having a strong backbone organization	Finding the required funding
Having sub activities that will affect the success of the common goal	Younger generation moving out (issues of continuation of the model)
Continuous communication	
Project success	
Involve a larger portion of the population	

Table 2 indicates the strengths and challenges of the CII model. However, there is potential for success using the CII model if the challenges can be addressed effectively and collectively, and the strengths leveraged.

#### **4.6 CII Model Acceptability**

The online survey results provided perspectives on acceptance levels of the CII model if adopted in the Gros Morne region. Participants indicated that the CII model would be acceptable as it could bring together stakeholders from multiple disciplines and encourage working towards a unified goal. Respondents noted that this, in turn, facilitates regular communication and ensures a broad representation of the communities. An online survey participant mentioned:

Involve 'key connectors' from the start, preferably one or two key connectors from each of the eight communities identified above and engage long term stakeholders and councils.

Through the online survey data, it was evident that there is a need for effective public consultation and fair engagement, which could be achieved through a planned CII effort. Table 3 provides a summary to highlight the insights and ideas of participants.



Table 3. *Online Survey Questions Regarding the Consultation Process*

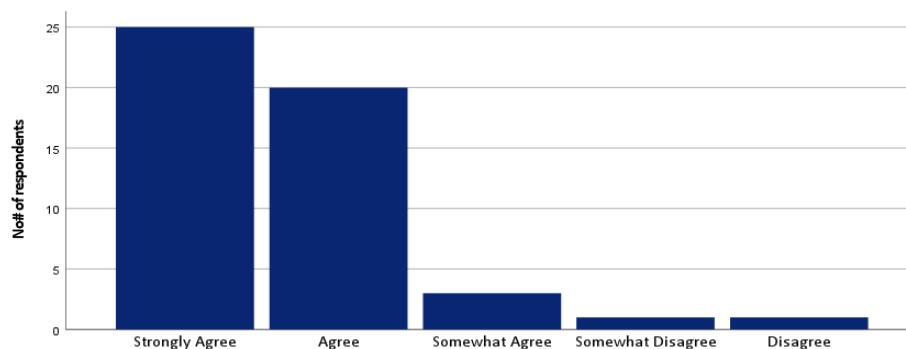
Question	Answers	Observation
Do you think there is enough public consultation happening in the communities of Gros Morne with regard to marine and terrestrial conservation planning?	n=42 respondents stated "No", n=6 rated may be while n=2 said yes	There is insufficient public consultation in the region
How would you rate the current level of public consultation in your community?	n=24 mentioned average, n=20 rated poor or terrible while n=6 rated good or excellent	The level of public consultation in the region is average or poor
Would you like to have the opportunity to participate in decision making regarding conservation efforts in the region of Gros Morne?	n=45 said yes while n=5 mentioned 'maybe'	People in the region likes to be engaged and be part of the decision making process
During which phase of a project is public consultation important? (before, during, after or all of the above?)	n=44 stated all of the above phases	Majority of the respondents believe that they should be involved in any project during all three phases of the projects (before, during the project and after the project)
What are your thoughts on how can we improve the level of consultation regarding conservation planning in the region?	Having open, accessible and inclusive consultation  More public events  Frequent multi-stakeholder review meetings  Engage long term stakeholders and citizens (have an inside out approach)  Combination of methods to inform the residents of public events and prior notice  Continuous communication and awareness	Ensuring that the vast population in this region is informed of the events and make the effort to engage them in the public consultation sessions

The data indicates an openness to the consultation process and a number of suggestions for how best to structure an effective public consultation process in the region, many of which coincide with the CII model process. Additionally, two questions regarding multi-stakeholder representation and the long-term commitment were asked to help better understand the effectiveness of the CII model.

As Weaver (2014) suggests, the CII model has a long-term payoff period and can motivate participants to stay focused on finding a solution (Kania & Kramer, 2013). Focus group participants indicated the CII model could funnel the available resources in the right direction, and because a backbone organization exists in the model, the outcomes would be robust, and better decisions would be made. The literature highlights the responsibilities of a backbone organization to drive the group towards a common goal, strengthen group dynamics, and help stakeholders resolve conflicts (DuBow et al., 2018). The focus group brought forward some challenges in applying the CII model in a local context, as decision-making in a community can sometimes be a daunting process. Some of these challenges include attracting the younger generation, collecting funding, and agreeing to a common goal among all participants.

Online survey participants were asked if they would support a team of stakeholder representatives from the eight communities alongside other stakeholders such as (a) Parks Canada, (b) town councils, (c) residents, (d) Indigenous groups, (e) anglers, (f) GMCA, (g) Grenfell Campus, and so forth, to gather in a CII in natural resource planning. As seen in Figure 3, most participants strongly agreed with this idea. According to Cabaj & Weaver (2016), those who are most affected by the issue should participate fully in attempts to address it and note that “nothing about us, without us” (p. 5) is a fundamental democratic moral principle and therefore, collecting feedback from a wide array of audience matters. The importance of including a wide array of participants in decision-making is reflected in the results.

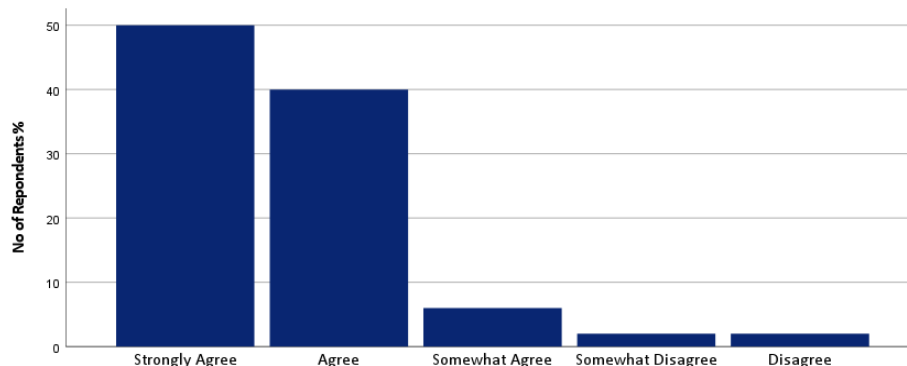
*Figure 3.* Will a multi-stakeholder group representing all eight communities be an acceptable initiative to steer effective community engagement in natural resource planning and management?



Note: This question is a 5-point Likert scale where 5= Strongly Agree and 1= Disagree.

Figure 4 also indicates the majority (n=45) of online survey participants agree (strongly agree or agree) that a multi-stakeholder initiative could better address natural resource problems in Gros Morne.

Figure 4. Would a multi-stakeholder group support in initiative effective engagement?



Note: This question is a 5-point Likert scale where 5= Strongly Agree and 1= Disagree.

With such positive responses to a multi-stakeholder approach, and should the challenges in Table 2 be addressed, the CII model could be applied to Gros Morne. An online survey participant shared that its success is dependent on,

Multi-stakeholder advisory group meetings on a regular basis. Members would need to represent a broad base of stakeholders and be highly respected individuals within their communities (i.e., employment sectors, community members, their peers). There would be a need for administrative support for the advisory group, the facilitator would need to be very well respected by all stakeholder group representatives.

The above suggests that stakeholders should represent all eight communities in the region. They should be able to meet regularly and take responsibility for their decisions. The facilitator, the backbone organization, should also be an entity accepted among the communities. As Kania & Kramer (2013) states, the CII model poses many challenges, especially the difficulty in bringing people together who have never collaborated before and the necessity of engaging resources and innovations that often already exist but have not been recognized. However, addressing such challenges and working together as a group to face them could generate greater results. As a focus group participant shared,

This process [The CII model] is great, and I am optimistic about this. People are more willing to cooperate more now. People now need an explanation, and they are more vigilant, people respond to the money part of it, you need to give them the facts.

Additionally, creating a successful CII model requires a significant financial investment, especially with the backbone organization's need for dedicated staff and resources (Kania & Kramer, 2013). Apart from facilitating collaboration and providing required resources, the backbone organization can also be viewed as an entity that can educate, build trust, provide a forum for difficult conversations,

support members' efforts, and, ultimately, empower members to become change agents (DuBow et al., 2018).

The above analysis shows that local stakeholders in a rural context appreciate the merits of the CII model and support its adoption to help navigate complex consultation and decision-making processes. This analysis and the literature reviewed above show that the CII model can be used in many diverse areas as a management tool to create a more credible information base by collaborating stakeholders (Kukac, 2009). Applying the CII model to the Gros Morne region could facilitate the formulation of more locally relevant and effective decisions in natural resource planning. Communities in the Gros Morne region are searching for better ways to engage, and they are eager to protect their natural assets, particularly the marine resources of Bonne Bay. This study has shown the CII model could be employed to engage diverse stakeholders to make decisions surrounding natural resource planning. The CII model can lead to better decision-making as it is a long-term approach, which facilitates effective community involvement. As one participant observed, "we do have a region that works and [is] changing. We need to start here and then go North."

Participants favoured accepting the model as the first step in changing the current engagement process in the region. Participants also believed that the CII model would be useful in natural resource planning efforts.

#### ***4.7 CII Model can Help Guiding Rural Resource Conservation Efforts***

The research findings revealed that most participants favour the CII model and expressed opinions that the CII model would be helpful in effectively engaging stakeholders and communities. It was also evident that most community residents are willing to cooperate and to take on the various roles necessary for model implementation. Study participants also indicated a preference for a multi-stakeholder group, made up of residents of the communities to steer the process. Finally, participants identified local organizations that would be most suitable to take on the role of the backbone organization.

Participants in the Gros Morne region are willing to actively engage and fulfill the various roles outlined in the CII model to help safeguard the area's natural resources. Therefore, there is a willingness to adopt a collaborative model that engages all eight enclave communities and that facilitates regular and earnest communication, produces decisions rooted in community needs and stakeholder assets as well as informs the decision-making process.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

This study analyzed the CII model and explored its merits with information from local stakeholders using the case example of a hypothetical marine conservation effort in Bonne Bay, GMNP. Participants indicated their strong support for the CII model. They perceived it as a means of supporting the communities in making accurate decisions and enabling a fair representation of the community assets and needs. Participants favoured a multi-stakeholder group initiative to strengthen the engagement process within the region and to engage a broad cross-section of representatives. Participants believed the CII model could encourage public consultation, leading to successful decision-making in natural resource planning. Participants felt the CII model builds long-term relationships, ensures continuous communication, and needs to be supported by a strong backbone organization to ensure project milestones are met and resulting strategies are successfully implemented. Participants in this study felt that the CII model would be the best solution for such projects and saw value in its

application to the hypothetical case example of MPA establishment. This paper shows that communities in the Gros Morne region support a resource planning framework that enables strong communication and engagement; hence, the CII model would be a good initiative to put into practice for future projects on the region.

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