



Communications Plan

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The Stewardship Centre for BC Communications Plan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document provides a plan for The Stewardship Centre for BC (SCBC) to guide its communications efforts over the next two years in support of the organization's Strategic Plan.

The Communications Plan provides an analysis of the public, stakeholder and media environment in which the SCBC will undertake its communications activities. The plan identifies the overriding goals, objectives and target audiences for communications. A strategy provides overall direction for the development of a wide range of communications products and implementation of communications tactics.

The concept of branding the SCBC is reviewed and recommendations are provided. The importance of story telling as a central feature of communications is outlined and key messages are provided for use in all communications products. Several principles are identified to guide communications activities.

A detailed work plan has been developed (Appendix A) and several techniques for evaluating communications have been identified.

The Communications Plan calls for:

1. Enhancing awareness and understanding of the SCBC within the stewardship community.
2. Communicating with local decision makers and professionals involved with land use planning.
3. Communicating with businesses and operators that have stewardship interests.
4. Informing the public about stewardship through targeted communications and outreach at the community level.

The Communications Plan proposes two main stages for implementation. Stage One will involve the development of various products and materials, and building a communications tool kit. Stage Two will focus on using the tool kit in a variety of communications and outreach activities.

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BACKGROUND

The SCBC was created in 2006, with its roots going back to 1992 when representatives from several federal and provincial agencies formed the Stewardship Technical Committee (STC) to develop best practice guidelines for stewardship activities and promote stewardship in British Columbia. Over time, members of the STC recognized that a broader membership would benefit stewardship interests and the efforts of several stakeholders led to the creation of the SCBC.

The SCBC is comprised of representatives from federal and provincial government agencies, local government, industry and a number of local stewardship, environmental and conservation organizations from different areas of British Columbia.

The SCBC believes that stewardship is based on a personal commitment to care for the land and considers the organization to be a leader in promoting the stewardship of natural values as the foundation for sustainability. The SCBC believes that shared responsibility across all sectors of society is essential to realize sustainable practices.

The SCBC **vision** is: “British Columbians understand, enjoy and sustain healthy ecosystems through stewardship.”

“The SCBC **mission** is to promote ecological stewardship by engaging British Columbians, increasing knowledge and understanding of healthy ecosystems, and building the capacity of stewardship organizations.”

The SCBC is a virtual organization with its most visible presence being through its website, which provides access to many stewardship resources and tools, i.e. case studies, project information and a wide range of publications. The signature product on the website is the *Stewardship Series* of publications. Through various resources, the SCBC aims to assist individuals and organizations conserve biodiversity, use natural resources wisely, and maintain or improve soil, water and air quality.

A three-year strategic plan was developed in April 2008 and this document is the organization’s first communications plan. In its strategic plan, the SCBC has four primary strategic goals:

1. Increase knowledge and understanding of healthy ecosystems.
2. Engage British Columbians
3. Build the capacity of stewardship organizations
4. Strengthen the Stewardship Centre for British Columbia

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SITUATION ANALYSIS

This section of the communications plan provides an overview of various stakeholder issues related to stewardship. The situation analysis provides context for undertaking SCBC communication activities.

Public Environment

Environmental and stewardship issues gained significant public profile in the late 1980s and through the 1990s, which was reflected by a growth in the number of community-based stewardship groups. This growth was due, in part, to the availability of funding from a number of federal and provincial government programs. In the past decade, the ability of local stewardship organizations to undertake some initiatives has been hampered by either the elimination of funding or a significant reduction in funding. Even with the recent funding challenges, however, about 800 community-based groups are active in British Columbia and are having a positive impact on stewardship.

The efforts of various stewardship and conservation groups and environmental non-government organizations (ENGOS) have raised the public and media profile of stewardship and environmental issues over the past couple of decades. Recently, climate change and global warming have been the highest profile environmental issues in most jurisdictions, including British Columbia.

While current survey data on public attitudes about stewardship and environmental matters are not available to the SCBC, 2005 data available to the communications consultant indicate that the top-of-mind environmental issues of greatest concern to Canadians are: air pollution/smog, drinking water quality, climate change, greenhouse gas, global warming and water pollution. If a public opinion survey was taken in Canada today, it is likely that these would be among the most important stewardship and sustainability issues.

The 2005 data indicate that citizens feel poor industry stewardship is a major cause for concern and that the public generally has lost confidence in our political leadership to deal effectively with the issues. Less than four years ago, a large majority (75 %) of Canadians rejected the notion that environmental protection would cost jobs. Industry scores very low when it comes to credibility on environmental issues. In sharp contrast, scientists/experts and NGOs score significantly higher when it comes to environmental credibility. In the current economic situation, it is more challenging to keep stewardship and sustainability issues on the radar of governments and most industries than it was just a few years ago.

While a public opinion survey today might reveal some different results, it is safe to say that the public continues to have serious concerns about environmental protection and expects high standards of stewardship from governments, businesses and industries.

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Stewardship could be called a “motherhood” issue; people instinctively want the natural environment (water, forests and soil) to be cared for in a way that it provides protection for today and for future generations. There is a reasonably strong emotional connection to stewardship for most people, but there is evidence that many people do not fully understand the meaning and scope of stewardship and the role they could play in protecting the natural environment.

When it comes to environmental stewardship, the majority of people want to do the right thing, so that the natural environment will be cared for and sustained. For many, however, climate change and the widespread loss of biodiversity seem of such a magnitude that they cannot see how an individual could take action or even influence actions that will benefit stewardship. On some issues, many people do not even have a clear or accurate understanding of what the terminology means let alone how they can have a positive impact. There often is a gap between what people say they value and how they act upon their values. Many favour actions by others and/or actions that do not cost them financially or cause them to change their lifestyle.

Community-based stewardship organizations repeatedly demonstrate that local solutions are possible and that action can be taken to benefit citizens and the community as a whole. A central role of the SCBC is to provide information and tools that support these community-based organizations in advancing the stewardship agenda. This support extends to anyone involved with or interested in local land use decisions and planning. Numerous local initiatives provide opportunities for sharing and learning, which is central to the mandate of the SCBC.

Stakeholder Environment

Property and Real Estate

Stewardship is affected by many industries, and property and real estate development sectors (residential, commercial and industrial) are often where issues and concerns surface. In recent years, significant property/real estate development across much of the province has heightened concerns about the adverse stewardship impacts from much development. While environmental stewardship is valued by the public, not all developers and others involved with land use matters perform strongly on this front. Local stewardship organizations, including those represented in SCBC members and directors, confront development issues daily. Some of those involved with development (developers, planners, engineers, etc.) may show an awareness of public expectations for stewardship values, but this awareness does not always translate into stewardship-oriented planning and conservation friendly on-the-ground development.

BC Forest Industry

The B.C. forest industry is presently focused on its economic survival. While the industry struggles economically, there are serious concerns about the environmental impacts from the loss of about 80 % of the pine forests in huge areas of the province due to the mountain pine beetle infestation. In addition, there are other important stewardship and sustainability issues in coastal forests including biodiversity loss and threatened

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species. Despite these concerns, it must be acknowledged that some forest companies incorporate stewardship goals in their planning and on-the-ground activities, usually to fulfill a requirement associated with a forestry certification standard (i.e. CSA, SFI, ISO or FSC) or some legal obligation. In addition, domestic conservation, environmental and stewardship organizations are having a positive influence on the practices of the forest industry.

Mining/Oil and Gas

In the past few years, a great deal of exploration and development has occurred in the mining and oil and gas sectors. These activities put significant pressure on the natural environment through road building, water pollution and damage to biodiversity. Many of these impacts are not visible to the public and consequently do not garner the same level of public or media attention that can occur with development issues in urban areas. Furthermore, exploration and development activities can provide substantial economic benefits, and stewardship concerns are often given a lower priority with decision makers.

Fishing

Compared to most resource industries, the fishing sector (commercial and sport) has been more focused on stewardship and biodiversity in the past couple of decades, as a result of the steep decline in the fish stocks critical to the economy. While this industry has been active in supporting fish habitat restoration, there is still hesitancy to adopt conservation measures. Fish farming and other activities raise serious questions about the strength of the sector's stewardship commitment.

Agriculture

The agriculture sector has received a great deal of attention in recent years on matters related to stewardship and biodiversity from water diversion. Irrigation, pesticide pollution (herbicides and insecticides), predator control efforts to limit range animals, and the pollution of community water supplies continue in areas of heavy agriculture. Climate change projections of drier summers in many parts of the province could well lead to greater water diversion – a serious threat to stewardship. Expansion of vineyards, for example, increases water usage, leads to the loss of biodiversity and limits the natural range of wildlife. Amid the economic benefits of the wine sector, the call for better stewardship seems to go unheeded.

Tourism and Outdoor Recreation

Many in this sector support stewardship because the natural environment provides a direct economic benefit. Their clients generally place a high value on unspoiled outdoor, wilderness and back country experiences. For the most part, this sector generally supports stewardship initiatives, with some parts of the sector likely being more supportive than other parts. At the same time, however, tourist and recreational pursuits put pressure on the environment. Sport fishing lodges have a major impact on fish stocks and often are built in settings that are impacted by grey water pollution, oil and gas spills and disruption to feeding patterns for wildlife.

Federal Government

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For much of the period since the early 1990s, the federal government has demonstrated leadership on stewardship and conservation through initiatives such as the Species at Risk legislation in 2003 and the protection of habitat and pollution prevention through the environmental assessment process. The role of Parks Canada in the protection of large areas as parks and increasing public awareness and understanding of nature through various interpretative programs is also positive. The federal government is interested in the work of the SCBC and representatives from Environment Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans serve as members or directors.

Provincial Government

Provincial government interest in the SCBC comes through member/director representation by the Ministry of the Environment. Previously, a wide range of stewardship initiatives were supported by funding from provincial organizations such as Forest Renewal BC and Fisheries Renewal BC. While these two organizations no longer exist, the province has many initiatives with important stewardship linkages, including the Climate Action Plan, Conservation Framework, BC Air Action Plan, Living Water Smart, Green Building code, the Future Forest Ecosystem initiative, Forests for Tomorrow and the Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan. Given the importance of stewardship to the public, elected government officials want to be seen as supporting stewardship activities or events. In recent years, however, this interest has not translated into significant funding to support community-based stewardship organizations and initiatives.

Local Governments

Local governments play a key role in stewardship and environmental protection, especially when it comes to property and real estate development and land use decisions. Most development is attractive to local governments. Economic benefits during the construction phase and on an ongoing basis, including an increased tax base, are seen as good for the community. Municipal planners and engineers play an important role in the review, assessment and approval processes for local development. They work within the policy direction provided by elected officials, so the extent of their influence on stewardship values is directly related to the direction set by city hall. Some communities or municipalities are known for being development “friendly” while others are reputed to have a reputation for having a stronger stewardship and environmental protection orientation. There are numerous successes on the part of community-based stewardship organizations and many of these successes are the result of effectively influencing local government decisions.

First Nations

First Nations express a strong connection to land and resources, which includes an inherent responsibility to care for the natural environment. This responsibility is consistent with First Nations spirituality and values. Therefore, it seems logical that First Nations would support the work of the SCBC and, while some effort has been expended on building this connection, more needs to be done to build the relationship between the SCBC and First Nations. It is also recognized that much development in First Nations

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communities is funded by the federal government and usually has an environmental assessment associated with it.

Environmental Non-Government Organizations (ENGOS)

ENGOS are highly involved with conservation and stewardship initiatives across the province. Many ENGOS have high profile strategies designed to draw public and media attention to environmental and conservation issues. While their efforts contrast sharply with the lower profile efforts of the SCBC and community stewardship organizations, the interests and desired outcomes are complementary. ENGOS also partner with local governments and organizations to improve land use planning and environmental protection. The information and tools available from the SCBC make an important contribution by increasing awareness and understanding of the issues raised by ENGOS.

Religious/Church Organizations

Many religious or church organizations show an interest in environmental issues, both locally and nationally. This interest can range from internal conservation efforts to an association with broader community efforts. Stewardship of the natural environment is an important spiritual value for many people involved with church and religious organizations. These organizations typically represent a cross-section of the community and there most likely are opportunities for the SCBC to collaborate in areas of shared stewardship interest.

Media Environment

Stewardship, conservation and environmental issues tend to attract substantial media interest in B.C., depending upon the scope of the issue. While climate change has received significant coverage in the past few years, other stewardship issues also receive attention at the provincial and local level. Much of the coverage has been reduced in recent months due to the attention given to the economy and financial matters. Nevertheless, stewardship or environment stories continue to receive notable public and media attention, especially when there is something dramatic or controversial to report. Stewardship and conservation groups often are successful in drawing media attention to a specific issue or situation, but the ability to influence decision makers most often comes from sustained media attention. When other issues arise, however, it is a significant challenge to sustain this attention, especially with the major media. At the community media level, there is a greater likelihood of sustained coverage of a local stewardship issue. Media outlets in smaller centres typically have limited resources (reporters and money), which means there are opportunities to submit stories and editorials that are most likely to be covered in their entirety.

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OVERRIDING GOALS

The overriding goals of the communications plan are:

- For the SCBC to be recognized as a source for information and tools about ecological stewardship.
- To increase the level of knowledge about ecological stewardship among primary target audiences.

COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

The SCBC Strategic Plan covers the three-year period from 2008 to 2011. The Strategic Plan is at the completion of its first year, so the communications objectives are focused on a two-year timeframe.

1. Enhance the effectiveness of the SCBC website.
2. Increase the use of the SCBC website by member and director organizations, municipal planners and engineers, property/real estate developers and other professionals involved with land use planning and development.
3. Increase awareness and understanding of the SCBC and its tools and products among member and director organizations.
4. Increase member and director participation in SCBC communication activities.
5. Increase understanding of ecological stewardship on the part of municipally elected officials, planners and engineers, property/real estate developers and consultants.
6. In communications products, demonstrate appropriate links between ecological stewardship and related topics, i.e. climate change and biodiversity, in order to increase understanding of stewardship.
7. Extend communication to the public and other stakeholders at the community level.
8. Increase public awareness and understanding of the value and benefits of ecological stewardship.

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TARGET AUDIENCES

Target audiences are divided into two broad categories to reflect the focus of communications over the next two years. Primary audiences are those that will be specifically targeted in the next two years. While the secondary audiences are not necessarily less important in the long term, the short-term communication effort will not focus directly on them. Nevertheless, it is important for the SCBC to take advantage of opportunities to profile stewardship and its work with any of the identified target audiences at any time.

Primary

- SCBC members and directors, and their representative organizations
- Community-based stewardship and conservation organizations across B.C.
- Municipal governments and regional districts
- Municipal decision makers – elected officials, planners and engineers
- Union of BC Municipalities, especially the Environment Committee
- Property and real estate developers
- Consultants participating in local development planning
- Associations/organizations representing planners, engineers, biologists, foresters, and others involved with land use decisions and planning
- Local community organizations such as Chambers of Commerce, service clubs, health, churches/religious organizations
- Tourism operators – ecotourism, guide outfitters, back country/wilderness operators, sport fishing lodges
- Outdoor recreation, angling, hunting and snowmobiling groups
- Local First Nations
- General public, especially in areas where SCBC member and director organizations have influence
- Students (grade school through high school)

Secondary

- Provincial government ministries
 - Agriculture and Lands
 - Integrated Land Management Bureau
 - Forests and Range
 - Environment
 - Tourism, Culture and the Arts
 - Transportation and Infrastructure
 - Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources
 - Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation
 - Community Development
 - Housing and Social Development
 - Small Business, Technology and Economic Development
- Provincial government agencies
 - BC Hydro
 - BC Transmission Corporation

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- Tourism British Columbia
- BC Housing
- BC Rail
- Oil and Gas Commission
- Environmental Assessment Office
- Islands Trust
- Forest Practices Board
- BC Treaty Commission
- Agricultural Land Commission
- BC Transit
- BC Ferries
- Columbia Basin Trust
- Pacific Carbon Trust
- Provincial Capital Commission
- Federal government departments
 - Natural Resources Canada
 - Environment Canada
 - Department of Fisheries and Oceans
 - Department of Indian and Northern Affairs
- Industrial sectors
 - Forestry
 - Mining
 - Oil/gas/energy
 - Agriculture, including ranching and vineyards
 - Fisheries
- First Nations organizations – First Nations Summit, Union of BC Indian Chiefs, First Nations Leadership Council
- ENGOs
 - Land trust organizations
 - Conservation groups
 - Naturalist organizations
 - Wildlife organizations
 - Streamkeepers
 - Policy and monitoring organizations

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STRATEGY FOR COMMUNICATING

The strategy for communicating flows from the SCBC Strategic Plan and its high-level goals. More specifically, effective communication is necessary to increase knowledge and understanding of healthy ecosystems and to strengthen the SCBC. With increased knowledge and understanding, the capacity of stewardship organizations will be enhanced and the foundation will be established for greater engagement in ecological stewardship by British Columbians. The communications strategy is based on the belief that knowledge and understanding are necessary precursors for action and engagement. People are more likely to be motivated to action when they have appropriate knowledge and understanding of an issue and know what they personally can do to make a positive difference.

It is impossible to know the awareness level of the SCBC among various target audiences, but it is safe to assume that awareness is limited and, in some cases, may be zero. This means that almost any systematic communications should help the SCBC to at least partially achieve its communications objectives. While organizational awareness is low, there is a reasonably high level of awareness of environmental issues among many audiences, which means there likely is interest in communication about stewardship.

SCBC communication can occur at any time, but it is worthwhile thinking about it in two major stages.

- **Stage One** will involve preparing to communicate in a planned and targeted manner by developing a communications tool kit, planning outreach and communications opportunities and ensuring SCBC members/directors are equipped to support communications implementation.
- **Stage Two** will focus on using the products developed in stage one and executing the identified communications and outreach tactics.

An important aspect of communications facing the SCBC is ensuring that the organization first has an appropriate profile with all its member and director organizations, community-based stewardship organizations and other stakeholders committed to ecological stewardship. While this plan does not call for a costly communications effort, there will be costs. It will also require a commitment on the part of members and directors to ensure that people in their own organizations are aware of the SCBC, what it does and how it can help.

Another aspect of the communications plan is to ensure that ecological stewardship is a top-of-mind consideration for municipal elected officials, planners, engineers, developers, consultants and others involved with land use planning and development. Through executing its plan, the SCBC will be able to increase stewardship awareness and understanding, and positively influence municipal officials and developers. Networking with Chambers of Commerce and other community organizations is another effective way of influencing decision makers.

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It is important for the SCBC to be seen as adding value and providing a service to municipal decision makers, developers, consultants, businesses and citizens interested in ecological stewardship or whose work affects stewardship. In terms of implementing communications and outreach tactics, it is likely best to look at this in a few major streams.

1. Enhancing awareness and understanding of the SCBC (what it is, what it does, etc.) among people and organizations within the stewardship community, including the organizations represented by SCBC members and directors.
2. Communicating with local decision makers and professionals involved with land use planning to ensure stewardship considerations are more extensively embedded in property and real estate development planning.
3. Communicating with businesses and operators that have stewardship interests in order to identify ways in which the SCBC information and tools can be of use to them.
4. Informing the public about stewardship through targeted communications and outreach at the community level by providing communications products, tools and other information to support local stewardship organizations.

A communications tool kit is required to fully achieve the communications objectives, but some outreach and communication certainly can occur before all the products and materials are developed during Stage One.

BRANDING OF THE SCBC

The subject of branding was raised by the SCBC prior to developing the communications plan and it warrants discussion. Branding is an exercise that imprints attributes of a product's or an organization's image on target audiences. For a retail product, branding may include elements such as a logo, a slogan, and celebrity endorsements as part of a campaign that includes high-profile advertising, point-of-purchase displays and public involvement campaigns (i.e., sponsored events) related to a product's use and benefits. Simplicity in each of these elements enhances the success of the branding effort. One of the most successful and high-profile branding exercises in the past decade or so has been the Nike shoe and sports wear campaigns featuring the ubiquitous swoosh, the slogan "Just Do It" and endorsement by several high-profile athletes.

An important feature of the highly successful Nike campaigns has been encouraging the public to make a purchase that has little, if anything, to do with the product itself. In effect, the campaign is designed to create a lifestyle identification to make people feel good about their product choice.

Corporate organizational branding can be a more complicated exercise, as it involves marketing the image or reputation of an organization as a whole. Most commercial organizations prefer to concentrate their efforts on marketing specific products and services, unless they offer a single product. In such situations, the organization and product are essentially synonymous. An example of this would be motorcycle maker

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Harley-Davidson's hugely successful brand marketing of a lifestyle that is strongly associated with its basic product.

The main objective of branding is to increase or retain sales, market share and/or public or consumer support. Even when an organization's products and services have no direct competition, branding campaigns may be used to encourage clients to feel good about using a product or service. For example, BC Ferries engages in some branding activities through its "Life on the Coast" campaign in an effort to build a positive perception and relationship with the public.

The examples above are mass marketing campaigns on a large scale, which means they are financially costly. At the local level, a quite different approach is often taken. A local restaurant may be known for superior food. By focusing on product quality, the restaurant achieves a successful brand for little or no incremental marketing cost. This is accomplished in part through earned media coverage, such as restaurant reviews, rather than paid advertising.

When imprinting a product or organizational image on the minds of target audiences, branding essentially occurs every time there is an association or connection with the audience. This is referred to as brand reinforcement and it can be positive or negative, depending upon an individual's experience with the organization and/or its products. For example, a negative experience in a retail store or with a company's website is part of the brand response. To be successful with such a branding exercise, an organization must ensure that all transactions with its target audiences are positive and consistent with the brand being marketed.

A logo on its own, however, often doesn't say a lot. In the Nike example, the success of the swoosh icon and "Just Do It" slogan has been dependent upon many things, including an emotional association with high profile athletes and a particular lifestyle.

For the SCBC to consider a concerted branding exercise, it is essential for the organization to be clear on what it hopes to accomplish. Another important consideration is that of the cost for a comprehensive branding effort. Even if the SCBC were not to use paid advertising and other high profile communications, costs could be a limiting factor. The possibility of branding for the SCBC may be limited to some form of visual identity.

The SCBC has an existing signature comprised of its name with a specific font treatment. This form of visual identity often is referred to as a wordmark and it has the benefit of explicitly identifying the organization with a custom font treatment without using an icon or symbol. All the provincial stewardship organizations under Stewardship Canada use the same approach for their website identification, with some variation in font style and size. The signature is accompanied by a relevant provincial or territorial flower on the respective website banners. The SCBC also uses the signature on a number of publications.

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While the SCBC would not likely benefit significantly from a major branding exercise, attention should be paid to its visual identity or signature. While there is nothing problematic per se with the existing website banner, there is no information available on how it is perceived by audiences. The website banner does not work well in black and white print applications.

Slogans can be another aspect of branding, but it often is extremely difficult to create a meaningful, positive and memorable slogan to represent an organization. Slogans are susceptible to negative counter slogans that seriously damage efforts to brand an organization.

Recommendations

- That the SCBC develop a signature that will work effectively on the website banner and with print applications. This may simply involve having a graphic designer develop a variety of options based on different font types, sizes and colours. The consistent and widespread use such a signature will be essential for building the SCBC brand and identity.
- That a graphic designer be engaged to undertake this work.
- That the SCBC not develop a slogan at this time.

STORY TELLING

Story telling is the most effective form of communication with most audiences. In the case of the SCBC and stewardship, there are many interesting and informative stories to tell. In developing many of the communications products noted below, it will be useful to look for examples that tell stories about stewardship and/or the SCBC.

Story telling can take different forms, with examples being embedded in speeches, pictures, videos and case study summaries. In most cases, feature stories are positively received by local media, especially community newspapers. Feature stories and editorials submitted to these outlets tend to be run in their entirety, which means the key messages are retained. There may even be opportunities for the SCBC to support community-based stewardship organizations attract local cable stations to cover stewardship stories. These situations tend to provide high quality visuals as well as interesting stories, both of which are attractive to cable operators.

The SCBC should identify and develop a series of stories that could be used by members and directors for submission to community newspapers in their area. These stories would have messaging from the SCBC and obviously provide opportunities for pieces to be customized locally. This approach would take away the burden of individual SCBC members/directors having to write several pieces on their own.

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INITIAL COMMUNICATIONS FOCUS

Re-organize the SCBC Website

Through its website and other communications activities, the SCBC can have a positive influence at any time. Even though the SCBC website needs to be re-organized, there is a great deal of useful information available on the website and it can serve as a valuable resource for interested parties. An enhanced website will provide a more positive user experience and make the site a more useful tool in the communications effort. Members and directors could also inform their circle of contacts about the improved SCBC website, when it is ready.

Communications Products/Materials

A range of materials will be required for implementation of the communications plan and to support various tactics. The materials include backgrounders, fact sheet, case study summaries, stewardship series summaries, frequently asked questions (FAQs), PowerPoint presentation, speech module, feature stories, editorials and a newsletter. Development of these and other products will occur over the next two years. More detail on individual communications products is provided below.

Sector Outreach Plan

The SCBC does not have a physical presence through an office or offices, but its members and directors can play a role to help increase the profile of the organization through participation in selected outreach and/or communications activities. An important requirement will be developing a list of conferences, conventions or similar events that could be targeted for participation by the SCBC. To maximize this outreach, it will be important to develop an annual plan that identifies specific events, the type of participation (i.e. information display, speaker, panel, etc.), required support materials and who will represent the SCBC. The SCBC has already identified many relevant events and, while the event/outreach plan should be flexible, a planned approach will help achieve communications objectives and ensure that the effort and resources are directed to things that will most benefit the organization. A planned approach will allow members and directors to more effectively share the workload of representing the SCBC.

Practitioner Tip Sheets and Checklists

The impact of communication with primary target audiences, especially those involved with land use planning and decision making, will be significantly increased by demonstrating tangible ways in which the SCBC can support these audiences by providing them with information and tools to support their stewardship efforts. As such, it will be important to ensure appropriate materials, such as tip sheets or checklists, are available before launching this type of communication.

Community Outreach

It would take a huge effort and substantial resources to communicate effectively with the general public of B.C. and all the secondary audiences. While the capacity to undertake such communications is limited, the SCBC can draw attention to stewardship issues and opportunities through equipping community-based organizations with information that

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supports their outreach. Rather than creating stand-alone programs or initiatives, the SCBC should look for opportunities to partner or build upon existing programs, i.e. Wild BC and the environmental education program of the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation. Working in partnership, community outreach could be targeted at established events such as Rivers Day, Earth Day, National Forest Week and Environment Week. While this type of communication or outreach may be beyond the scope or capacity of the SCBC at this point, these do provide good opportunities to reach young people who will influence ecological stewardship decisions in the future. These events typically result in positive local media exposure.

Community Outreach Materials

The success of SCBC involvement with the above noted community outreach will be greatly enhanced by having accessible and easy-to-understand materials. In situations where the outreach is targeted at school aged children, it would be useful to have some basic fun and educational materials available. Activities should aim for field trips in the natural environment with hands-on experiences.

Photo Library

Stewardship and conservation projects usually have strong photogenic opportunities. Photos could be used effectively in presentations, to support feature stories and with a newsletter, on a corporate display and as a way of profiling projects on the website. SCBC member and director organizations would be a good source for images that the organization could use to build a library for a variety of communications applications.

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PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNICATING

The following principles should be followed in the development of communications products:

- The SCBC will tell interesting stories about stewardship successes. The stories will be personal by showing the individuals and local organizations involved.
- When telling stories, the emphasis will be on the positive benefits of stewardship, not the costs or sacrifices of stewardship.
- The focus will be on those things highly valued and supported by the public.
- In all communications products, plain and easy-to-understand language will be used – as though written for young audiences.
- A template will be used for all written communications products (backgrounders, fact sheet, etc.), so these can be identified as being from the SCBC.
- Avoid jargon in written materials.
- Where possible, images will be used to support stories or editorials; possible ideas include close-up images of living things.
- Communications will celebrate ecological diversity at the local level as well as across B.C.
- The language and messages will be specific – talking about clean water, land and air.
- Stories can go beyond the usual things (bears, deer, etc.) when talking about the natural environment – the focus will be on plants and critters that are not likely to come to mind for the average person, but that have an interesting or unique place/role in the natural environment.
- The partnership represented by the SCBC will be promoted, with emphasis on co-operation and collaboration.
- Emphasis will be placed on stewardship as a shared responsibility that provides shared benefits.
- Facts will be used carefully.

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KEY MESSAGES

The following key messages can be used with all communications applications. The messages should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis, as required. For specific situations and issues, it may be necessary to develop additional messages.

- A healthy environment and sustainable ecosystems are central to the quality of life desired by British Columbians.
- Stewardship is a responsibility shared by all British Columbian that is founded on a personal commitment to care for the natural environment.
- All of us can make a contribution to ensuring the province has clean land, water and air for the enjoyment of British Columbians today and in the future.
- Stewardship of the natural environment is essential for the social and economic well-being of British Columbia.
- The Stewardship Centre of BC is comprised of people from governments, the private sector and stewardship organizations that work together to create resources to support stewardship activities across the province.
- Our vision is that British Columbians understand, enjoy and promote sustainable ecosystems.
- We support individuals, community organizations and governments in their efforts to protect the natural environment.
- We provide information and tools designed to support stewardship activities across the province.

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STAGE ONE: DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIONS PRODUCTS

There are many products the SCBC can use to achieve its communications objectives and support the organization's Strategic Plan. While the products will not require a significant budget, there will be costs for a number of items. A work plan for the communications products is provided in Appendix A.

SCBC Visual Signature: As noted above in the branding section, a new visual signature should be developed for the SCBC. This signature will be used on the website and in all communications products to build awareness of the SCBC and its signature.

Website Enhancement: While the existing website has a great deal of useful information for target audiences, data are not available on how the site is used (number of visitors, pages visited, etc.). Even without data on usage patterns, the content needs to be re-organized to ensure it is more accessible. The following changes are recommended:

- Develop a short introduction to welcome people to the site and tell them how the site is organized. The existing “About Us” section of the website provides some information about the SCBC, but this should be reviewed to ensure it meets the needs of the organization.
- Material on the site should be organized according to relevant stewardship themes, i.e. forests and woodlands, land, marine/aquatic life, water, air, fish, wildlife, grasslands and greenways. For each theme, an appropriate icon could be used for linking purposes. Each theme would have its own section on the site, with documents and materials being organized so that it is logical and intuitive for users.
- The site should have links of use to different types of audiences. For example, there could be links for municipal planners and engineers, developers, teachers and students, community organizations, etc. This type of site structure would direct audiences to specific content known to be of interest to them.
- In reorganizing the website, a section should be added: “About the Stewardship Centre for BC”. This is where backgrounders, fact sheets, FAQs and similar materials would be posted.
- A photo display incorporated into the home page would be a useful feature for the website. Images from various stewardship projects could be displayed as a means of visually showing stewardship themes, values and projects. (See below)
- A short video piece or pieces (about two minutes in length) featuring stewardship themes, values and projects could be created. (See below)
- The SCBC provides free web hosting for a number of stewardship organizations, which extends its profile. As part of extending outreach to community-based stewardship groups, the SCBC should likely review the list of organizations that could have links on its website and then try to establish reciprocal links. While the impact from such an undertaking is not expected to be significant, it does provide another way for the SCBC to be seen as part of a larger stewardship community. One of the challenges is remembering to periodically check the links to ensure they are not broken.

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- The SCBC website has a “contact us” feature, but it could be more prominently displayed and website users could be more strongly encouraged to provide feedback.
- On an ongoing basis, an assessment should be made of need and feasibility of new reports/documents to enhance website content.

Backgrounders: It would be useful to have at least two basic backgrounders for posting on the website and in a print version. Print versions can be used as a handout and available in a PDF format for printing from the website.

- 1) A backgrounder on the SCBC would outline what the organization is, what it does, how it can help specific groups/organizations and how to contact it. Some of the content for a backgrounder on the SCBC is available in the “About Us” section of the website, but the backgrounder could be longer.
- 2) A backgrounder on stewardship would include a definition of stewardship and a short overview on key aspects of stewardship. Both backgrounders should be written for general audiences and be limited to one or two pages. The backgrounders should be formatted with the same banner as on the website to help extend the visual branding of the organization.

Fact Sheet: While it is important to not overwhelm people with a lot of facts about stewardship, it would be useful to have a sheet available on relevant facts that help put stewardship in context. Images and icons would most likely be useful enhancements to providing the facts. The fact sheet would be available on the website for reading online and in PDF for download and printing. The fact sheet would also be used as a handout.

Stewardship Series:

This series of publications is the main feature of the SCBC website content. The respective documents should be reviewed and updated, as appropriate.

The stewardship series documents are of varying lengths with a great deal of useful information and could be made more accessible in two ways:

- 1) Through having these organized under the appropriate website themes; and
- 2) By having short (one to two pages) **summaries** of each document in the series. Each summary would be posted on the website with a link to the full report.

Case Study Summaries: There is much useful information for community-based stewardship organizations, municipal decision makers, developers and others is available through case studies on the website. Summaries for many case studies are also available on the website, but access would be enhanced by having the case studies posted under key themes.

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Feature Stories: There are many stories about stewardship successes across B.C., some of which are contained in the case studies and reports on the SCBC website.

Recommendations

- That a list of potential feature stories be identified and then developed as an inventory. Stories of no more than 750 words would focus on stewardship successes and be supported by a few good quality images. These features would form the basic tool for targeted outreach to community newspapers and possibly other local media.
- Organize the stories according to key stewardship themes.
- Target stories for distribution in the period leading up to events such as Environment Week, Earth Day, National Forest Week, etc. or as a part of local campaign. Many local newspapers print special supplements for such events, which would provide an ideal opportunity for feature stories.
- Make the inventory of stories be available to all SCBC members and directors to use in their outreach efforts with local media.
- Coordinate distribution of the stories to maximize the communications payoff.
- Maintain an inventory of stories with new material being added on an ongoing basis.
- Post the stories on the website.
- Create a template featuring the SCBC banner as a means of extending the visual brand.
- Have the feature stories available for reading online and in PDF format for download and printing.

Editorials: While it is impossible to predict when an editorial opportunity may arise, there are stewardship issues that arise from time-to-time in communities across the province. Even though these issues have local angles and relevance, there most likely are common themes.

- Create a series of themed editorials that would serve as a useful resource for SCBC members and directors to draw upon to use with local media in their area. The concept is to provide core content, with the ability to customize editorials for specific local circumstances.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- Create a set of questions and answers about the SCBC and stewardship for the website. The questions and answers would be available for reading online or in PDF format for download and printing, as many people prefer to access their information in a FAQ format.

Tip Sheets:

- Develop appropriate tip sheets or checklists for selected target audiences, which would help people such as municipal planners and engineers, developers, community organizations, tourism and other recreational/outdoor operators.
- Draw on good practices and case studies.

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- This is an area where the SCBC would add value and over time be a source of information for businesses and individuals wanting to improve stewardship.
- Make the tip sheets or checklists available for reading online or in PDF format for download and printing.

PowerPoint Presentation:

- Create a PowerPoint presentation for members and directors who will undertake outreach on behalf of the SCBC.
- Have a core presentation that could be customized by individual members or directors for specific audiences, as required. The presentation would contain information about the SCBC, its work, stewardship, etc. It could be used in presentations to municipal councils, developers, Chambers of Commerce, other community organizations, conferences, and with other interested parties. The value of such a presentation is that it ensures consistency of messaging and the user doesn't have to start from scratch.

Speech Module:

- Develop a speech module to support members and directors in speaking engagements on behalf of the SCBC. The module would contain key messages and information that the organization wants to communicate.
- Have components of the module targeted at specific audiences and be sufficiently flexible to insert locally relevant material or content targeted at specific audiences. The speech module would complement the PowerPoint presentation.

Newsletter:

- Determine the feasibility of creating an ongoing newsletter (published quarterly or at a suitable frequency), if new content and the capacity to sustain it are available. Such a newsletter would not have to be long and by having it available as an online or email version, it would not face the challenges associated with a print version. It would be another vehicle for profiling case studies, stewardship heroes and feature stories.

Stewardship Heroes:

- Profile people of B.C. who have made or are making a significant positive impact on stewardship in the province. While the concept needs to be further developed, the basic idea would be to identify individuals who are making a positive difference and profile them on the SCBC website, in the newsletter and possibly in feature stories. A page on the website could be set aside to profile the heroes. Profiles would be developed for each hero and the story would be accompanied by a photo of the person and the specific project. One option would be to profile a stewardship hero in each edition of the newsletter; another option would be to hold an annual awards event.

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Display:

- Determine the most suitable display style required for outreach activities by the SCBC. One relatively inexpensive and lightweight option would be a single panel display about three feet wide x seven feet in height with a retractable base for storing the panel. Such a display is lightweight and easy to carry and set up. Strong visuals would attract people to the display. The display would carry the signature developed for the website and written communications materials and publications. The website address would be featured on the panel. Cost for such a unit would be about \$750. Other display options are available.

Photo Library:

- Develop a photo library that would serve as an important resource to tell stories about stewardship and the SCBC. The SCBC should be able to secure a collection of good quality images from its members and directors to establish a photo library that could be drawn upon to add a photo feature to the website, support release of feature stories to the media and use with promotional materials.

Video:

- Develop a video of 8 to 12 minutes to profile the SCBC and important stewardship themes. The video could be broken into shorter pieces for posting on the website. The full length piece could be used in presentations, at events and as a handout DVD. A concept for such an initiative will have to be developed.

Materials for Children/Younger Students:

- Develop colouring and activity sheets for use with fun and educational activities. These would be especially useful for SCBC outreach efforts with younger students (grade school). These materials do not have to be sophisticated or costly. (Examples can be provided.)

Business Cards:

- Produce SCBC business cards with contact information and the website address for handout at various outreach activities.

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STAGE TWO: COMMUNICATIONS TACTICS

Development of the communications products noted above will provide the foundation for effectively undertaking the tactics listed below. It is important to note, however, that it is not necessary to develop all communications products prior to moving forward with at least some of the tactics. The major benefit from having most of the materials developed is that the tactics can be undertaken with the optimal communications tool kit in place. A number of the tactics listed below need to be more fully developed before implementation.

Inventory of Events/Conferences:

- Develop a complete inventory of outreach events with input from members and directors; build on opportunities already identified by the organization.
- Determine the events in which the SCBC plans to participate, identify the type of involvement, identify the individuals who would represent the SCBC and the support materials required. Obviously, there would have to be flexibility with the inventory of events, with some potentially being dropped and new opportunities being added.

Community Outreach:

- Identify opportunities for outreach with community organizations. As with the events and conferences, it would be important to identify how the outreach should be supported and who would represent the SCBC. This outreach should be initiated by members and directors.

Media Outreach:

- Identify all the themed weeks/days in which the SCBC has an interest and for which feature stories could be used. There are opportunities to target local media with feature stories in periods leading up to things such as Environment Week, National Forest Week, Earth Day, etc. The inventory of stories noted above would be drawn upon to support this outreach.

Editorial Strategy:

- Support the requirements and opportunities of members and directors in addressing local situations and issues using the editorials noted above.

Outreach to Municipal Decision Makers:

- Inform local planners and engineers about the materials and tools available on the SCBC website. Tip sheets and checklists would provide opportunities to demonstrate to those involved with local development that the SCBC has tools that can assist them in planning and development processes. This tactic is about relationship building and keeping the SCBC on the radar of these important local contacts. As such, there members and directors should be encouraged to share their experiences in working with local decision makers.

Community Cable:

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- Contact local cable TV stations in selected communities and invite them to tag along in situations where the SCBC is involved with community outreach that includes field trips. While not necessarily a high profile activity, it could result in coverage that would be seen by many local residents.

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EVALUATION

It is important to evaluate the effectiveness of the SCBC communications efforts.

- Undertake a short survey of members and directors to solicit their ideas on how to improve the website. This input would be considered along with what is suggested herein for re-designing the site.
- Undertake a short survey with members and directors after the re-designed site is in operation for at least six months to assess their experience with the site.
- Have the re-designed website evaluated by a small sample of audiences before launching the site. A small group could be asked periodically for feedback on the site after it goes into production. This would not be an onerous undertaking and all feedback should be considered for improving the site.
- Track website usage in terms of overall hits, pages viewed, repeat visitors, etc., and identify statistics on current usage as a baseline against which to track.
- Monitor email inquiries to the SCBC website contact link in terms of number of inquiries and type of inquiry.
- Measure the number of events and outreach activities in support of communications implementation.
- Assess the effectiveness of the SCBC website and communications materials through feedback from community stewardship organizations.
- Track media coverage of feature stories and editorials in terms of coverage volume and for the key messages appearing in the coverage.
- Have brief check-ins with members and directors after an event to receive their feedback. Incorporate this information into planning for the next year.

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APPENDIX A: COMMUNICATIONS WORK PLAN

The matrix below identifies target dates for completion of various communications products and tactical plans. Many activities can be undertaken at the same time and it should be possible to complete most items by October 31, 2009. While some communication activities obviously may occur during this period, much of the product development work is intended to provide the foundation for implementation of the communications strategy. In particular, some products enable certain tactics to be implemented.

Product	Completion Target Date	Application/Uses	Comments
SCBC Visual Signature	October 31, 2009	Website, communications products	Must be completed before reorganized website is launched and various communications products are posted on website and/or used with target audiences.
Website Enhancement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review current site and map out reorganization 	February 28, 2010		The site should be set up in test for review by a sample of audience. The reorganized site should not be launched until many of the new products are completed and ready for posting.
Backgrounders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SCBC ▪ Stewardship ▪ Others TBD 	September 30, 2009 September 30, 2009 TBD	Website, handout	
Fact Sheet	October 31, 2009	Website, handout	
Frequently Asked Questions	November 30, 2009	Website	
Feature Stories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify initial stories for inventory ▪ Develop up to 12 initial stories 	October 31, 2009 April 30, 2010	Website, media distribution, handout, newsletter	The first step is to identify stories to create an inventory. Several stories from the inventory should be written before launching a media campaign or other applications are implemented. It will be

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			important to ensure the inventory is regularly updated and new stories are written.
Editorials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify important editorial themes ▪ Develop editorials 	September 30, 2009 March 31, 2010	For use with local media, both planned and reactive	
Media Outreach Plan	March 31, 2010		On the basis of the inventory of stories, editorials and themed events (National Forest Week, Environment Week, etc.), develop a plan for outreach to local media using feature stories and, as appropriate, other communications materials.
Stewardship Series	January 31, 2010	Website	Review and update documents as appropriate
Stewardship Series Summaries	March 31, 2010	Website, handout	The scope of this work needs to be determined.
Case Study Summaries	April 30, 2010	Website, handout	The scope of this work needs to be determined.
Tip Sheets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify the types of tip sheets that would be especially useful for selected target audiences such as municipal planners and engineers, developers, consultants, etc. ▪ Develop tip sheets 	December 31, 2009	Website, handout	Tip sheets could be a useful tool for the organization to provide to selected target audiences. Once developed, use of these would be maximized by having them available in the appropriate sections of the reorganized website.

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PowerPoint Presentation	December 31, 2009	Outreach to community organizations, local government, conferences, speaking engagements	Use in conjunction with speech module
Speech Module	March 31, 2010	Outreach to community organizations, local government, conferences, speaking engagements	Use in conjunction with presentation
Event/Conference Plan	December 31, 2010		Using the existing list of events and canvassing members/directors for ideas on additional opportunities, develop the first annual plan. Plan will have to be updated annually.
Community Outreach Plan	January 31, 2009		Develop a plan for outreach to community organizations, local government, decision makers, developers and other audiences.
Newsletter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop concept and plan for first year ▪ Launch 	November 30, 2009 May 31, 2010	Website, PDF version	Story inventory, photo library and other communications products will be essential to support a newsletter. To be successful, at least two editions should be well planned at all times.
Stewardship Heroes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concept needs to be developed ▪ Launch 	April 30, 2010 August 31, 2010	Website	This initiative should be launched when the reorganized website is activated. Need to support with pictures.
Photo Library <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Determine themes as part of website reorganization ▪ Identify case studies, projects 	October 31, 2009 November 30, 2009	Website, in support of feature stories, presentation, display unit, newsletter	Setting up the photo library will require a fair amount of organization and effort. To ensure the library is maintained as a good resource to support communications, it will

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<p>that may have images available</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Canvass members and directors for access to images ▪ Create digital photo library 	<p>December 31, 2009</p> <p>May 31, 2010</p>		<p>be important for usage guidelines to be developed and for new images to be added over time.</p>
Display	March 31, 2010	Various forms of outreach, events	
Material for Children/Younger Students	March 31, 2010	Outreach in schools and with younger children	It will be important first to determine how much outreach the SCBC wants to undertake with this audience before expending effort to develop suitable materials.
Video	December 31, 2010	Outreach, website, presentations	
Community Cable	October 31, 2010		Depending upon the experience of developing the various communications products and various plans for outreach, approach local cable operators to explore the concept of having community cable produce and air stewardship pieces. The concept will require development.