

How to Organize Training Sessions for Harbour Authorities and Other Community-Based Management Organizations

A Manual

Coastal Communities Network

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The logo for Canada, featuring the word "Canada" in a serif font with a small Canadian flag icon above the letter "a".

Table of Contents

Introduction \	1
Finding Your Audience \	2
Attendance \	3
Location \	4
Participation \	5
Promotion and Awareness \	6
Content \	6
Motivational Speaker \	7
Conflict Management \	8
Evaluation \	9
Reporting Back \	10
Following Up \	10
Appendix A: Sample Icebreaker – Radical Bingo \	11
Appendix B: Sample Press Release \	12
Appendix C: Sample Pre-Training Survey \	13
Appendix D: Sample Post-Training Survey \	14
Appendix E: Sample Report-Back Letter \	15
Appendix F: Sample Letter of Support \	16

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How to Organize Training Sessions for Harbour Authorities and Other Community-Based Management Organizations

Introduction

Volunteers in rural and coastal communities across Canada are relied on to manage a broad range of community resources. For example, harbour authorities and harbour management groups, run by volunteers, manage community wharves in hundreds of coastal communities. The volunteers who are responsible for these community resources often need some type of training to prepare them for their responsibilities and to teach them how to communicate effectively with each other and with their communities.

This manual addresses the challenges of teaching volunteers in rural and coastal communities how to network, communicate, find common ground, and encourage dialogue. It is based on the experience of the Coastal Communities Network (CCN), a province-wide nonprofit organization that has been working since 1992 to enhance the viability of rural and coastal communities in Nova Scotia through education, networking, acting as a conduit between communities and government, information sharing, and advocacy. CCN includes representatives from fishery organizations, churches, educational organizations, economic development agencies, environmental groups, and other community-based organizations.

CCN held training sessions for harbour management volunteers in King's County and Southwest Inverness, Nova Scotia. The harbour issues and activities were different in these two communities, as were attitudes toward collaborating and sharing with each other.

This manual draws on CCN's experience with volunteers in these two areas. It outlines the steps involved in planning and carrying out training for volunteers who are charged with managing community resources. It includes examples from our experience and sample resources that readers can adapt to their own situation. This manual will be useful to any organization that is carrying out training for the first time.

Finding your Audience

Before offering training workshops, it is often helpful to do preliminary visits to the community in which the training will be held to explain what you have to offer to the group or groups that you hope to attract. You should also explain what participants will learn. These groups can then decide who, if anyone, should attend.

Be aware not only of a group's need but also of its receptiveness. Although many community groups

need to learn new skills, develop networks, or build capacity, if the group is not ready to adopt new ideas or new ways of working, then the training may be put to better use elsewhere.

Use your local contacts to connect with people and groups in the community that could benefit from the training you have to offer.

Example

One group of harbour management organizations that CCN worked with had already decided to collaborate in an effort to make the harbours in their communities more sustainable for the future.

Through discussions with the members of this group, we agreed that CCN would provide training on how independent organizations could work together and still maintain their independence. We also agreed to help them identify their goals and set their priorities.

Example

Another group of harbour management organizations that CCN worked with had not been introduced to the idea of working together. However, after consulting with people who lived in the communities where these organizations were based and who had worked with these organizations, we felt that the organizations would be receptive to our session. Some of the criteria for our decision were the groups' current capacity for management and the likelihood of ongoing benefits from networking and learning from each other.

Attendance

If your preliminary visits go well, people will see the value of the training you have to offer. But there are additional challenges to working with volunteer groups. First, volunteers have a limited number of hours to dedicate to meetings, workshops, and training sessions. Getting the work done often takes priority over building capacity. Second, because

people tend to respond to a personal invitation more readily than to a general announcement, you may need to develop contacts in the community who can help you recruit participants for your training. Third, timing can be an issue. Training should be scheduled at a time of day or time of year that will allow the greatest number of volunteer to participate.

Example

Historically, fishermen did not work together as they each ran, and continue to run, their own independent businesses. However, with the introduction of harbour authorities and the divestiture of wharves to community groups, fishermen are now required to work with each other and often the wider community. It can be a challenge to get fishermen to sit together, and with others, to discuss common issues. Here are the steps we took:

1. *We made personal contact with potential participants.* We used e-mail and the telephone to tell people about our training. Whenever possible, we spoke to people in person.
2. *We enlisted the help of local partners.* In one location, we contacted the local Small Craft Harbour (SCH) business manager and the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (NSDAF) field representative, both of whom live in and work closely with the invited communities. They were able to speak with individuals to promote the training sessions. Because they were familiar with the harbour authorities that we had invited, they were able to explain how our training sessions would address each group's needs. We also sent a personalized letter to each member of the harbour authority executives.
3. *We timed sessions carefully.* We held our training sessions in February and March, which are a time of low activity for fishermen. Even then, we found that toward the end of March, people started to get busy preparing for the fishing season. In most regions of Canada, this time of year creates the additional challenge of winter weather; be sure to work out alternate dates for your training sessions.

Location

When deciding on the location of your training sessions, keep in mind the following:

1. Your participants can suggest where training could be held. Sometimes, when participants come from a number of different communities, a suggested location may cause a disagreement. If this happens, try for a neutral location that is acceptable to all and does not favour one area over another.
2. Try to get any meals or refreshments from local groups or businesses. This shows that you support the local community and economy.
3. Pay attention to the physical configuration of the meeting space and try to ensure that everyone can see each other.

Example

We held our first training session in a neutral location. At that session, participants agreed that rotating meetings from one harbour community to another would help them become more familiar with each other's community and increase the host community's interest in the project. The group also hoped that more people would attend meetings if they were held in their community. Rotating the location of meetings became a tool to generate wider community interest in the objectives of the group and in the wharves overall.

In one location we found that sitting around a long board-style table did not allow people at one end to interact with people at the other end. The group recommended that subsequent meetings be held around round or square tables so that all participants would be able to communicate and make eye contact with each other.

Participation

Getting people to attend is the first step. Getting them to participate can be an additional challenge. Some people are reluctant to participate or speak at meetings. People may hesitate to contribute ideas if there are others in the room who are not there for the good of the group but to further their own agenda. To encourage participation:

1. *Develop trust and ensure a safe environment for sharing.* One way to do this is to have the group establish ground rules for how they will interact with each other, present ideas, and record what happens in the session. Ground rules might include: only one person speaks at a time; listen to understand, then speak to be understood; respect diverse views; and talk about issues, not people.
2. *Vary the way in which information is presented and discussions take place.* Alternate between large group discussions and smaller breakout groups to ensure that everyone has a chance to contribute in whatever way they feel comfortable.
3. *Use an experienced facilitator.* Good facilitation is essential. An experienced facilitator can keep the meeting on track, encourage everyone to participate, summarize the discussion for review, and, if necessary, modify the agenda to deal with unexpected situations.

Example

In our training sessions, we:

1. Tried to learn as much as possible about the areas in which we were holding training, including the state of the fisheries and local government's interaction with the industry, before the workshops began.
2. Tried to create a safe and comfortable environment by being clear about the purpose of the session, asking about the expectations of the group, and providing an opportunity for participants from the different communities to tell each other about their wharf and what was and wasn't working.
3. Used Radical Bingo, (please see page 11), a fun icebreaker activity, to encourage people to move around, feel comfortable in the meeting space, and get to know each other.
4. Included both presentations and opportunities for people to share information with the whole group and to brainstorm in smaller groups.
5. Provided door prizes to show our appreciation for people's time and to lift the energy level in the room at low times, such as after lunch.

We also hired an experienced facilitator for our training sessions. Having a facilitator from outside of the communities that participants came from ensured that one community would not be favoured over another. If you cannot get a neutral, third party to facilitate the training session, consider having co-facilitators from different communities.

Promotion and Awareness

Even if you do not invite the community and the media to attend your training session, you may still want to inform the wider community about the role of the groups you are training and the objectives of the training session. Increasing awareness of the group (e.g., a harbour management group) and its importance to the community may encourage people who are not directly involved to volunteer their time.

Example

We issued press releases for each of our training sessions. Timing a press release can be as important as the information it contains. If possible, try to coordinate your release with issues in the news. (For a sample press release, please see page 12).

Content

Community-based organizations typically have a variety of training needs. Some of these will be beyond your expertise. Stick to what you know and bring in other experts when possible or necessary. During your preliminary visits and through your contacts in the community, you should be able to determine the needs of the group. Once participants are identified, they can help you decide on content.

During the training session, take detailed notes on brainstorming, discussions, and possible actions. If

possible, give copies of these notes to participants when the session is over. This can generate enthusiasm and provides participants with a summary of debates and discussions that they can reflect on after they have gone home.

Provide your participants with materials to make their own notes during the session.

Example

We found that the harbour management groups that we worked with were interested in topics such as board governance, communications, conflict resolution, fundraising, and proposal writing. We provided a number of handouts on these issues that they could use after the session.

Although we shared what we could, we were limited in our ability to comment on some participants' requests, for example, issues regarding Small Craft Harbour (SCH) policies on collaboration and decision making. We invited SCH representatives to the session to answer questions and respond to concerns.

Although this was positive, the presence of SCH representatives may have affected how comfortable participants were in speaking about their experiences with SCH.

Motivational Speaker

A presentation by someone who can speak from his or her experience about issues that are similar to those that your participants face can help create a positive and inspirational atmosphere. It can be motivating to hear about the success of others, about the importance of volunteers' time and commitment, and about what can be accomplished through voluntary effort. However, be sure that the presentation is given in its proper context. For example, participants do not want to be told that they should do things in the same way that someone else has done them. The presentation should focus on the elements of success and how they are applicable to each unique situation. Community volunteers know that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the problems they face; they are also capable of applying someone else's experience to their own situation.

Example

We invited a harbour manager from a different region to speak at the beginning of our training sessions. Having someone speak about harbour management and cooperation was inspiring for most of our participants. The presentation generated a lot of discussion and provided some new ideas and approaches. However, it also had some negative repercussions. For example, the speaker worked in a very different situation than most of the participants and some people felt that the harbour manager's success was in part due to his access to resources (through a larger facility) that would never be available to smaller wharves. This difference, coupled with the message that 'it can be done if you work hard enough' detracted from the content that was relevant and helpful for the group. Providing a clear explanation of the purpose of the presentation and reiterating how it could be applicable may have avoided negative feelings and made the presentation more helpful to the group.

Conflict Management

Discussing issues that people feel strongly about can lead to disagreements and even conflict. The facilitator should be aware of how people are responding to each other and of their tone of voice and body language. If the facilitator pays close attention, major conflict can be avoided.

Although conflict can be hard to deal with, it is important that it is addressed and dealt with so the group can continue with the task at hand.

There are a number of ways to manage conflict. It is often helpful to speak one-on-one with participants to diffuse the conflict and get back to the task at hand. Conflict can also be avoided by allowing participants to set ground rules at the beginning of the session.

If the conflict cannot be resolved, it should at least be acknowledged.

Example

When conflict arose at our training sessions, we created an opportunity for one-on-one discussion with the person who initiated the conflict. This is sometimes referred to as a shuttle or caucus meeting. This served two purposes. First, it allowed the participant to express his concerns and to know that they were understood and acknowledged. Second, it allowed the participant to agree to the purpose of the training session and the goals we were seeking to reach. We outlined the short-term advantages of the session, as well as how his needs and concerns could be addressed in the long term. We pointed out that before this could happen, a strong foundation had to be built. We also succeeded in showing him that the controversial issues that he was raising would crack the foundation of the group before it had time to set. The participant ultimately saw the logic in this and took an active role in moving the process forward.

Evaluation

Evaluation helps everyone – workshop organizers, participants, and facilitators – understand what worked and why, what was accomplished, what still needs attention, and what could be done better in future sessions.

Evaluation can happen in a number of ways. You can ask your participants to list their expectations at the beginning of the workshop and discuss which ones will or will not be met. This can help remove any misconceptions about the workshop at the outset. At the end of the session, the group can evaluate whether expectations were met. Or you can use a simple form at the end of the session to gather people's thoughts on the topics, process, and facilitation. Alternatively, you could ask the group itself to decide how it would like to evaluate the session.

Example

Because we were trying to monitor the effects of our training sessions, we asked people to fill in a brief, anonymous questionnaire about their situation and experiences before we started (please see page 13 for a sample pre-training survey). At the end of the session, we used another questionnaire to gauge the change in people's attitudes, willingness to work together, and outlook on the future (please see page 14 for a sample post-training survey). This gave us valuable insight into participants' skills, willingness to work with others, and feelings about the sustainability of their groups.

It was challenging to choose the proper wording for our survey; not every participant used the same words or phrases to describe how they felt about their work. Before you use the survey, you may want to test it once or twice on people who are familiar with the subject, but who will not be participating in the training session.

Reporting Back

It is important to report back to workshop participants so that they have a record of what was discussed and of any action items they agreed to. If you are not able to provide participants with notes at the end of the session, send them out by e-mail or regular mail as soon as possible. Ask for corrections and additions from the group (see page 15 for a sample report-back letter). Communicating with participants after the session also shows that you are interested in how they will use the information they learned and is an opportunity to let them know that you are available to them as a resource.

Example

We found that minutes from the session were extremely important to the group as a record of what decisions had been made and what actions were to be taken and by whom. We also hoped that the notes would be a resource for future initiatives.

Following Up

You may suggest to the group that, as part of the evaluation process, participants could complete a follow-up survey a few months down the road. This will let you know if the training remained useful and relevant. You may want to see if there have been any major changes in the groups that attended or the environment in which they work. You could suggest a mail-out survey or you could call people directly if time allows. This could be particularly useful if you will be designing another session.

Example

Knowing that fishing season was about to start, we decided that a mail-out survey was not the best idea because people would not have the time to respond to it. Instead, we made a few telephone calls to get a sense of how people felt after the sessions. Ideally, we would like to keep in touch, either regularly or periodically, with some of the people we worked with. Maintaining contact will not only provide support for the work that the community groups are doing but will also give us the opportunity to learn more about the kind of training and resources that volunteers need.

Appendix A: Sample Icebreaker – Radical Bingo

Match the statements in the boxes to people in the room. Have each person sign the box that describes him or her. Fill in any two lines (vertical, horizontal, or diagonal) for BINGO. A person can sign your card only once. You can sign your own card once. Have fun!

B	I	N	G	O
I am a member of CCN.	I hold a lobster license.	I play a musical instrument.	I plan to always live in a rural area.	I traveled over 30 km to get here.
I have a child who plays hockey.	I went whale watching last year.	I own a boat.	I read my local paper from cover to cover.	I have visited all four Maritime provinces.
I am a gardener.	I had my hair cut this week.	FREE	I'm going south this winter.	I can recite a quotation from Shakespeare.
I have more than 3 children.	I am under the age of 30.	I ride a bike.	I can see water from my property	I am wearing odd socks.
I am retired.	I regularly use the library.	I am a first-generation Canadian.	I quit smoking in the last year.	I have blue eyes.

Appendix B: Sample Press Release

For immediate release – February 1, 2005

Working Together to Make It Work! A New Approach to Managing Wharves

Maintaining and managing a wharf is no easy task. Volunteers provide an incredible amount of time, energy, and resources to ensure safe and sustainable harbours for fishing and pleasure boats alike. Their work is critical to our economy. In 2002, Nova Scotia exported \$1.2 billion worth of fish!

In an effort to support volunteers and innovative approaches to harbour management, the Coastal Communities Network (CCN) is offering a training workshop to Harbour Authorities and other community groups that manage wharves in Cape Breton, south of Inverness. The training session, being held in Mabou on February 7th and 8th 2005, will promote networking, learning from each other's experiences, and exploring the possibility of working together.

Ishbel Munro, the Executive Director of CCN explains, "Wharves are crucial to our coastal communities; they are often the only piece of infrastructure remaining now that the post office, general store and gas pump are gone. Community volunteers are thinking up new and innovative ways to keep their wharves and sustain their communities. The Coastal Communities Network is here to support that effort."

The training will include a presentation by Geri Nickerson, the Harbour Manager in Wood's Harbour, Shelburne County. Geri will discuss the opportunities and challenges of sharing management responsibilities among three separate wharves.

The training will also cover topics such as board governance, fundraising, and proposal writing.

Bruce Smith, an experienced facilitator, and Ishbel Munro, CCN's Executive Director, will be leading the session.

For more information, call CCN at (902) 485-4754

Appendix C: Sample Pre-Training Survey

Inverness South

Pre-Training Survey

February 7, 2005

Please circle the number you feel best represents your group. 1 is low; 5 is high. Please add comments whenever possible.

1. How effective do you think your harbour authority or community group is at:					
<i>Making decisions</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Planning</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Communications</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Fundraising</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Writing proposals</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Writing business plans</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Management / Daily operations</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					
2. Does your board work well together as a team?					
	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					
3. Does your board experience burnout?					
	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					
4. How confident are you that your wharf is sustainable for the future?					
	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					
5. Do you think that working with other groups could help decrease burnout?					
	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					
6. Would you like to work collaboratively with other groups on:					
<i>Management</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Fundraising</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Planning</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Proposals</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Lobbying for policy change</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Communicating with your community about the role of your wharf in sustaining the community</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					
7. Is there anything else you would like to add?					

Appendix D: Sample Post-Training Survey

Inverness South

Post-Training Survey

February 8, 2005

Please consider the following in the context of what you have learned during the training workshop. Please circle the most appropriate number, 1 is low; five is high, and add your comments whenever possible.

1. How successful was the training at addressing your board's needs regarding:					
<i>Making decisions</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Planning</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Communications</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Fundraising</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Writing proposals</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Writing business plans</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Management / Daily operations</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					
2. Did the training provide ideas about how your board could work more effectively as a team?					
	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					
3. If your group is experiencing volunteer burnout, did the training offer any ideas about alleviating burnout through:					
<i>The material covered</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Networking with other harbours</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					
4. How confident are you that your wharf will be sustainable in the future?					
	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					
5. Now would you like to work with other Harbour Authorities on:					
<i>Management</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Fundraising</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Planning</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Proposals</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Lobbying for policy change</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Communicating with your community about the role of your wharf in sustaining the community</i>	1	2	3	4	5
6. What would you like to see at another training session?					
7. Is there anything else you would like to add?					

Appendix E: Sample Report-Back Letter

Coastal Communities Network
P.O. Box 402
New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, B2H 5E5

March 17, 2005

Hello,

Thank you for attending the Coastal Communities Network's training session held in early February. I hope that it provided some useful information and an opportunity to talk to other Harbour Authorities about common issues.

I have included notes from that session for your records and review. If there is anything that has been left out or needs correcting, please let me know. If you have any questions about the material we covered, please don't hesitate to contact CCN.

I have also enclosed a sample letter of support that may come in useful if you are applying for funding from someone other than Small Craft Harbour. As you may recall from the session, it is helpful to show funders that your project has the support of your RDA, local community groups, councilors or other neighbouring Harbour Authorities.

I hope that things are going well in your harbours and look forward to working with you again in the future.

Sincerely,

Ishbel Munro
Executive Director
Coastal Communities Network

Appendix F: Sample Letter of Support

[Name]

[Organization]

[Address]

[Town], [Province]

[Postal Code]

[Date]

[To Whom It May Concern or person's name if known]

The Harbour Authority of Porcupine Cove would like to take this opportunity to express our full support for the Baxter's Cove Wharf Restoration Project. The Baxter's Cove wharf needs immediate repairs in order to be fully functioning for the upcoming lobster season. This wharf is the first harbour up the coast from Port Hasting and therefore plays a key role in ensuring the safety of the fishing fleet. Fishermen from _____ to _____ fish off the coastline adjacent to Baxter's Cove. If you run into engine trouble or a storm, it is crucial that we are able to pull into Baxter's Cove wharf.

The Harbour Authority of Porcupine Cove is a volunteer organization that manages the wharf and harbour at Porcupine Cove. We were formed in 19__ and are located approximately ____ kms from Baxter's Cove. Our wharf was upgraded (or repaired/expanded etc) in 20__. While our fishermen are extremely pleased with the repairs, we recognize that all of the remaining harbours along our coast are crucial to the health of our fishing industry. The fishing industry plays a significant role in the Nova Scotia economy. In 2002, Nova Scotia exported over \$1.2 billion worth of fish.

Once again, we offer our full support for the much-needed repairs at Baxter's Cove. The harbour is strategically important to the fishing industry and we sincerely hope that you will be able to provide the needed assistance.

Thank you for your time and concern.

Sincerely,

Notes

Notes

Notes

This and other Knowledge Development
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at www.kdc-cdc.ca, or as a special collection
of the Imagine Canada — John Hodgson
Library at www.nonprofitscan.ca.



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