

Aligning (Alberta) with the 21st Century

Ruben Nelson
Executive Director, Foresight Canada
29 des Arcs Road, Lac Des Arcs, AB, Canada, T1W 2W3
ruben@squareone.ca

Summary

Since 1997, in Alberta, Canada, we have been developing a multi-faceted, cross-sectoral community of interest committed to aligning Calgary, Alberta and ultimately Canada with the emerging character and requirements of the 21st Century. A major dimension of this work is a growing effort to nurture a society-wide commitment to the practice of strategic foresight – one that not only has immediate utility for existing organizations, but also includes the ability to notice, explore, understand and respond to long-term cultural-frame change. We acknowledge that ours is not the usual regional foresight ambition. Alberta is bracketed in the title to make the point that similar efforts could be undertaken in many places.

This paper begins with a brief exploration of ‘cultural-frame change.’ Then, in Section 2, we set out why we have made this commitment – it is the *sine qua non* of sustained success in the 21st Century. Section 3 covers how we have gone about this work and how our strategy has evolved – by engaging hundreds of sympathetic opinion leaders and citizens from the beginning and, lately, by dis-aggregating out efforts. Section 4 sketches where we are in the process and what we are striving to make happen now – we are about to expand the scope of the three institutions we have created in order to begin to make a significant difference to the future of Alberta... and maybe even the world.

1.0 What We Mean by ‘Cultural-Frame Change’

By ‘cultural-frame change’ we point to this fact: on rare occasions, over long periods of time, an existing culture, quite unconsciously, may evolve into a fundamentally new way of living and being in the world. In such cases, the manner in which a people see, think, aspire and do are all reframed. Of course, the change is not *total*. Change, even transformative change,

never is. But the degree and depth of change can be so significant that the emerging discontinuities outweigh and overwhelm the continuities. In such cases, it can be said that a change in the taken-for-granted and culturally embedded frame of reference of a whole people has taken place. We will return below to the significance of the fact that this type of transformative process, at least up to today, has been almost wholly unconscious.

As an example of such cultural-frame change, consider the differences between nomadic cultures and those that emerge when such cultures become settled, as began to happen about 10,000 years ago. We now know that the scale, social structure and essential strategies of the latter differ profoundly from the former. Whereas nomadic peoples typically number in the hundreds, settled peoples can accommodate thousands and even tens of thousands. Scale alone allows nomadic peoples to be dialogical – to govern themselves through human processes that include extended face-to-face conversations. For settled peoples, the same considerations of scale demand a more formal and, typically, hierarchical social structures. This sense of hierarchy is reinforced by the fact that, when attacked, settled peoples must stand and fight, whereas nomadic peoples can melt away into the landscape. It follows that when a settlement is at risk much of the time, being a warrior ceases to be an occasional role for young men. Rather, a permanent class of male citizens trained and ready to fight is required. Over time, this response to a new demand has also tended towards the view that women are not merely physically weaker and in need of protection, but subservient. Finally, at least for the purposes of this example, no tribal culture develops a written language as a way of extending memory, whereas, in time, virtually all settled cultures do.

Given the above, it is meaningful to talk of nomadic and settled cultures as fundamentally different ways of living; as exemplifying quite different cultural frames of reference. This is also true of pre-Industrial and Industrial cultures and of Industrial and truly post-Industrial cultures. We note, of course, that these distinctions are phenomenological, not evaluative. In abstract, no culture is inherently better than another. However, some cultures may be better suited to notice and cope with their time and place in history than others. As will become clear below, this capacity to cope with one's evolving environment is central to our interests.

2.0 Why Focus on Cultural-Frame Change?

The short answer is captured in five assertions that we in Foresight Canada have come to take as given. (1) Ours is a time of profound, world-wide cultural-frame change. (2) This fact – that we are living in a rare period of cultural transformation – has not yet registered on the radar screens of enough opinion leaders in the Western world to make practical differences.¹ (3) Therefore, the great danger we face is overshoot. (4) If the human adventure is to be sustained throughout the 21st Century with any reasonable degree of grace, prosperity and humanity, then a critical mass of citizens must awaken to the fact, content and importance of the first three propositions. Finally, (5) Alberta can serve the world and itself by becoming a living, learning laboratory for the work of awakening to the realities of societal transformation and intentionally co-creating a society and economy that is deeply and truly aligned with the emerging character and requirements of the 21st Century.

I will elaborate briefly on each of these foundational propositions.

2.1 Ours as a Time of Profound Cultural Transformation

There is not space in this paper to defend our observation that ours is one of the rare times in history in which a *global mind change*² is slowly taking place; that a truly post-Industrial culture is unconsciously emerging within and among us. For our purposes, it is enough to account for the fact that in Foresight Canada this is the way we frame this moment of history. To us, the view that acknowledges the evolution of Industrial cultures to a truly post-Industrial condition is the best hypothesis to account for what is now happening on the planet. As with any good hypothesis, it accounts for more data, more fully and fruitfully, and it generates more interesting questions to inquire into. Note that we use ‘post-Industrial’ as a place-holder – to denote that civilization that will come after Western Industrial culture.

¹ It can be argued, although we shall not do so here, that what drives what is now called “Islamic fundamentalism” is a largely intuitive sense by the leaders of these movements that the globalization of modernity requires a cultural-frame change that precludes the continuation of pre-Industrial frames of reference and the cultures that depend on them.

² The phrase is Willis Harman’s. See Harman, 1998.

While we accept such phrases as “knowledge economy” or “experience society” as interesting probes, none of the labels offered to date are insightful and powerful enough to grasp and name the new culture that is now emerging.

Two major factors have influenced our acceptance of the post-Industrial hypothesis. First, our work has been informed by my own life-long interest in the evolution of Western civilization. While, as a general interest, this orientation is fairly common, I am the only Canadian who has undertaken formal research into the long journey of Western Culture into and now out of its Industrial form. I have done so on three occasions – once in relationship to social policy³, once environmental policy⁴ and once as a general exploration of the Post-Industrial Futures Hypothesis⁵. The second factor is that quite by accident, in the 1990s, the centre of gravity of serious futures research in Canada shifted from Southern Ontario to Alberta, i.e. there are now more persons with established reputations as substantial futurists in Alberta than in any other Canadian province. Since 1990, there has existed in Alberta a group of professional futurists with a non-trivial interest in understanding long-term cultural change, evolution and transformation

2.2 Opinion Leaders are Overwhelmingly Unaware of the Transformation We are In

It is our experience that the Industrial view of the world has a firm grip on the imaginations and aspirations of virtually all opinion leaders in every sector of Canadian society.⁶

Everywhere, the dream is that economic growth is the font of virtually all value; that with growth all else that is desirable can be obtained; but without growth a high quality of life cannot be achieved. Behind these views lies the deep unspoken assumption that human life is best seen as a production-consumption function. It follows that it is right and just that one's

³ The Social Policy Project as undertaken for the 15th Prime Minister of Canada, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, from the spring of 1970 to the fall of 1971. For a brief discussion see Nelson 2006 B.

⁴ The Cultural Paradigms Project was undertaken for the Advanced Concepts Centre of Environment Canada from the spring of 1975 to the fall of 1976. It was the first time that the concept of *paradigm change* was applied to whole cultures.

⁵ The Post-Industrial Futures Hypothesis Project was undertaken from the fall of 1986 to the summer of 1989. Its ten papers are unpublished. Contact rubennelson@shaw.ca if you are interested in them.

⁶ Of course, the same can be said of virtually all leadership that now makes up the Western world. But our focus is on Canada and Alberta.

contribution to the production of goods and services is taken as an accurate measure of one's human worth and, therefore, determines the degree of one's access to the consumption of goods and services. It follows that environmental protection is justified if and only if a contribution to economic growth can be shown. Even education is valued primarily because it offers access to the marketplace. IBM's new slogan captures the committed-to-growth sensibility that now dominates our culture: "*Innovation for growth.*" Our point is made by the fact that every reader immediately grasps the appeal, power and density of IBM's new slogan.

Our point is not to condemn, but to raise to our consciousness the depth of the largely unconscious commitment in the Western world to this view. *Homo sapiens* has become *homo economus*. To us, this is not an abstract point of trivial interest. In our experience, virtually all foresight work that is supported by either governments or corporations is cast in this frame. The unspoken, if not stated, assumption is that foresight is good as long as there is a clear link to increasing economic growth. One piece of evidence is found in this experience. In the summer of 2005, when we were undertaking a review of emerging strategic issues for The National Research Council of Canada, we could not find any example of serious and sustained foresight work that is devoted to exploring the cultural-framing issue and understanding the current evolution of the cultural context of our lives, economies and societies. We know of no instance in which changes to our own inherited cultural-frame of reference is even listed as a major strategic issue for the 21st Century; let alone *the* major and over-riding issue⁷. It appears to us that most foresight work and the opinion leaders who support it assume that whatever changes we face in the 21st Century will take place within the constant frame of Industrial culture; that the cultural frame itself will not change.

Given that the degree of sophistication required to become aware of one's own inherited cultural assumptions, and given the fact that the Industrial frame is the only perspective that

⁷ We acknowledge that our survey was less than complete. Therefore, if you can draw our attention to such work or such instances we shall be grateful.

Western national states have ever known⁸, this bias is wholly understandable. However, to the degree that ours *is* a time of profound cultural frame change, an unconscious and unthinking commitment to extending our past when that may not even be empirically possible, especially when this bias passes as a futures-orientation, is misleading, at best; dangerous, at worst.

Before turning to the dangers of ignoring cultural-frame change, allow me to reinforce the fact that in Alberta this issue is only raised in supportive and encouraging ways; never as attack. Given the Canadian experience, it is to us wholly understandable that challenging our inherited frames of reference is not yet a developed Canadian competence. Who among us would easily come to this view? Not Canadian Aboriginals – they have survived for 20,000 years by following their traditions. Not long-arrived Canadians of European stock – our experience in Canada is recent enough that the only dream we have ever known is of Canada as a better and more prosperous Industrial nation. Not more recent arrivals from every corner of the world – our multi-cultural policy says they can keep the culture they brought with them in this new land. In short, virtually all 31 million Canadians unconsciously assume that the essential ways they have been in the world up to now can and will be the ways that they will be in the world in the future. The recognition of the reality of a cultural-frame change is so faint and partial that for public purposes it matters not. It follows that if cultural-frame change is real, we will experience overshoot.

2.3 Overshoot – The Great Danger

To overshoot is to continue behaviours – seeing, thinking and acting – *that have been successful*, long after the conditions that made them successful have evolved into a fundamentally new state of affairs. The words in italics capture the fact that overshoot is not about good (new) VS bad (old) behaviour. Rather, our judgement is contextual – the core of overshoot is that behaviours that used to be appropriate are, given a new context, now inappropriate and even life-threatening

⁸ Nation states were invented and legitimized by the Treaty of Westphalia, 1648. They reflect and reinforce the then still-emerging Industrial ways of seeing, thinking and acting, because they are themselves a product of such ways of seeing, thinking and acting.

Overshoot is what Generals do when they prepare as if yesterday's war will be fought again tomorrow. It is what citizens do when they ask governments to create an essentially familiar future, but to air-brush out all the problems of the present. In fact, overshoot is the normal behaviour of culturally unconscious people, including politicians and opinion leaders. Such persons simply cannot bring themselves to believe that they face a future that will essentially be discontinuous from the only world they have known. Since this is the default view of every culture, overshoot is to be expected when cultures face profound change, whether in their environment or in themselves⁹. However, in a time of profound change, overshoot is also *the* greatest danger to every person, family, company or society. In extreme cases it can be fatal.¹⁰

In short, the central insight that animates our work in Alberta is that *we can no longer afford to continue to strive to create a better version of the late modern Industrial world we know and love. Rather, we must now learn to set our sights on a truly post-Industrial future that is deeply aligned with the emerging character and requirements of the 21st Century.* We say this, not because we agree with some of the women's movement or deep ecology – that Industrial cultures are inherently evil and a gross historical mistake. This is not our reading of the nature and role of Industrial culture. Nevertheless, it is time to move on.

We make the point with this litany:

- Alberta has a great 20th Century culture¹¹.
- Albertans still have a 20th Century dream.¹²
- The 21st Century will not be a replay of the 20th¹³

⁹ See Nelson 2006 A for an exploration of this view.

¹⁰ See Diamond 2005 for an exploration of this view.

¹¹ If a global consulting firm evaluated today's major jurisdictions against criteria that mark an exceptional modern Industrial society and economy as defined in the late 20th Century, Alberta would be in the top 5%; Canada, the top 10%.

¹² We suffer from overshoot. We and our politicians of every stripe act as if a better version of yesterday will still serve us well tomorrow. This orientation is the only orientation that is manifest in the current race to be leader of our governing party and Alberta's next Premier. When this is pointed out to Albertans, they recognize this reality.

¹³ It is clear to any reasonably careful observer that the 21st Century will be seen as a century of system-breaks. It is already taking us off our inherited mental maps and business models.

- Therefore, we need new mental maps for new times – fresh and powerful visions of where we are in history and what we can become in the 21st Century.

2.4 Conditions Required to Sustain the Human Adventure

We not only assume that ours is a time of profound societal change, we also assume that this fact must be faced, explored, understood and responded to consciously, openly and courageously by both persons and whole societies. Further, for the first time in history, we must acknowledge and embrace our role as co-creators of the cultures by which we live; of social and human realities. The future is in our own hearts, minds and hands, even though no culture on the planet raises its young and organizes its life as if this is so. Again, there is not space to argue the view here that social realities are socially constructed. It is enough for our purposes to acknowledge that the deep rationale for this judgement is that, as we read the evidence, this is and always has been the case with our species. That we are co-creators of our lives and the future is, to us, undeniable.

However, we are driven to action now by practical considerations.

The core insight that moves us is that *the conditions that have under-girded and enabled the dramatic success of our species, even in the face of our overwhelming unconsciousness, are now being eroded to the point we can no longer depend on them.* To us, the following conditions of humane life are yesterday's, but not necessarily tomorrow's, realities.

- The earth was so generous and robust that we could do her little serious harm. Her healing capacity far outran our capacity for harm.
- The pace of societal and environmental change was slower than the unconscious capacity of humans, as persons and cultures, to adapt to change.
- Living and dying were essentially local affairs. Even the death of a whole people mattered little in the overall scheme of things.
- Proximity created community, whether you liked it or not.

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- A culture's unconsciously inherited ontological and epistemological assumptions, and societal understandings, structures and patterns of living still revealed and reflected a functional sense of reality.

As we read the data, none of these conditions will continue to apply throughout the 21st Century. This implies that the dream of a truly sustainable society and economy lies beyond, not within, the Industrial dream. A new cultural-frame of reference is required. If this reasoning is at all close to the mark, then as a culture we are way beyond, "*Houston, we have a problem.*" Rather, we are truly *in over our heads*.¹⁴

This, in turn, implies an additional condition for sustained societal success in the 21st Century – one that is historically new:

- A critical mass of citizens must come to consciously explore and understand this moment of history, including the reality of cultural-frame change, and learn to respond to it with courage and creativity.

As we see it, then, the most profound strategic challenge facing us as humans is that now we must awaken to the reality, depth and nature of the transformation we are in. We have come to call this the Co-Creating Tomorrow Challenge. For the first time in history, we must become aware of and take responsibility even for the ways we frame and express our lives as a culture. As the slogan contributed by the youth delegation to the most recent conference of the World Futures Studies Federation put it: "*If you want your dreams to come true, do not stay asleep.*"¹⁵

To us, this assertion – that we must awaken to a new reading of our historically situation or likely die – is startling and even alarming, especially since it is so little understood. As noted, it is not the default view of any existing society. However, we are cheered by the fact that this way of experiencing our time is shared by a slowly-growing number of persons. This conversation is alive, if well below a critical mass, in virtually every country. The

¹⁴ This felicitous phrase is the title of Kegan 1994.

¹⁵ WFSF conference held in Budapest, Hungary, August, 2005.

psychological impact of this way of experiencing the present is deepened for us by the realization that the planet cares not which path we take. It will carry on, with or without us, for another 4 billion years – until the sun explodes as it runs out of fuel.

2.5 The Idea of Alberta as a Living, Learning Laboratory

Achieving these insights is both exhilarating and a downer. Exciting because of the novelty, scope and drama of the challenge; depressing when we realize that the core work to be done is not yet publicly acknowledged by our or any other culture as work to be undertaken. In Canada, until we create The Alliance for Capitalizing on Change, no existing organization owned this work – not our universities, think tanks, government policy shops, corporations, labour unions, churches, foundations or social service agencies. It is still not on their agendas. From this perspective, a lightly-clothed child appears to have a better chance for survival in a prairie blizzard than does the human species in the emerging conditions of the 21st Century.

However, as prairie people, Albertans are resilient and self-authoring – when something needs to be done, those who see the need for the work just organize and tackle it. It does not occur to us to ask permission or to seek the blessing of those in authority. So it was with us in 1997.

Then, the thought emerged among us that if our judgement is at all on track, best we get at the work of exploring and understanding our historical situation afresh and of developing a community of interest that is the beginning of the required critical mass of citizens. We must work to change the odds until the future of humanity is favoured, if not assured.

The thought also occurred to us that sometime in the 21st Century, as this orientation grows in numbers and consistency – as others catch on to the depth of the changes now required of us - - the world will need a role model – a place to which to point and say, “*Well, they are doing it, so it must be possible. Let’s talk with them and learn from and with them.*” In short, the idea of Alberta as a living, learning laboratory, both for our own sakes and that of the world, began to emerge.

3.0 What We have Done and Why

We have been working over the last seven years to respond to these insights with some degree of adequacy. It is not only a work in progress; we have been making it up as we move along. This was required, given that we knew of no others who shared our deepest aspiration: *making a difference to humanity by developing the world's first jurisdiction with a critical mass of citizens who are comfortable with the view that ours is a time of profound cultural-frame change and must be responded to as such in every dimension of our lives.*

We started with a two-stage model. First we would test and refine our sense that Albertans are more ready than they know to face, explore and respond to profound societal and personal change. Second, we would use what we had learned to get on with the work. But, as you will see, life has its own rhythms and lessons.

3.1 The Capitalizing on Change Project

In the spring of 1997, I discussed these ideas with several colleagues. The essential question we wanted to answer was this: *“Is our sense – that ours is a time of unprecedented peril, possibility and societal change – grounded and shared by others, or is it mostly a projection onto reality by a small group of professional futurists?”* We understood that to test this question, we needed a cross-section of citizens, drawn from several places, sectors and backgrounds. Because we also understood that at root the journey must be one that offers hope, we choose the phrase “capitalizing on change” as the title of the project.

The model we choose to work with was that of local Table Groups and province-wide Plenary Gatherings. By drawing on previously-established friendships and connections we identified sixteen persons in four locations – Calgary, Canmore, Edmonton and Fort McMurray – who were willing to act as Chair and facilitator of a local Table Group. Each Chair was asked to pull together six to ten persons who were willing to meet on several occasions as a self-organizing Capitalizing on Change (CoC) Project Table Group. We also invited the eighteen organizations that sponsored the project to name suitable persons to a Table Group. The

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result was sixteen Table Groups made up of six to fifteen persons. Most met a dozen times over the two years of the project. The weakest group met twice; the strongest thirty-one times. Almost two hundred persons were involved in the Table Group process.

Over the course of two years of meetings, we asked each Table Group to work through three questions:

1. Do you experience ours as a time of profound societal change? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. If the answer to Question 1 is “yes”, is the change more like gravity or friendship? Is it just something we have to face and get used to or do the very ways we face and understand it and present ourselves to it affect the outcomes?
3. If the change is at all personal, what kind of organizational infrastructure do we in Alberta need in order to help us explore, understand and capitalize on the profound changes occurring within and among us?

In order to allow Table Group participants to meet and share with each other, we also organized five province-wide Plenary Gatherings. Each was held on a weekend – Friday evening to Sunday lunch. They rotated between our two biggest cities – Calgary and Edmonton. To provide added stimulation, we invited one or two exceptional persons to be with us and speak to each Plenary Gathering. Gwynne Dyer demonstrated what an observant and inquiring mind can see about our evolving world that is beyond the obvious. Maureen O’Hara and Walter Anderson led us into and through the labyrinth of *knowing reliably* within a constructivist epistemology. Donald Michael helped us understand the critical role of community if we are to *know reliably*. Robert Horn introduced us to new ways of presenting information. The last two Plenary Gatherings were devoted to hearing and discussing the reports from each of the Table Groups.

Sixty to one hundred persons participated in each Plenary Gathering. Of these, about 75% were from Table Groups. As a way of developing our support community, we also invited key executives from our sponsoring organizations to these Gatherings. In all, almost 500

persons, drawn from every sector of our province, were involved in at least one meeting of the CoC Project.

The CoC Project was given credibility by one of Alberta's most respected business leaders, Marshall Williams. He was our first Chairperson. His support allowed us to raise \$250,000 each year. These funds allowed us to hire a full-time administrator and a part-time manager. A more complete report on the project can be found at www.capitalizingonchange.org

3.2 The Alliance for Capitalizing on Change

The organization that emerged from the work of the CoC Project was born in 2000: The Alliance for Capitalizing on Change (ACoC). When launched, it was hoped that like St. Paul, it could be a multi-faceted organization that was "*all things to all men (and women).*" It would be a rich mix of a not-for-profit research centre, community of interest, playground for the mind and heart, event organizer and consulting firm.

This dream has not materialized. We now know that it was too complex, ambitious and ambiguous. Over the first two years, we were constantly asked, "*What are you really?*" "*Which of the many facets are most central to you?*" Albertans were so used to unambiguous single-purpose Industrial organizations that our multiple foci, post-modern aspirations were seen to be strange and incredible. Besides, we did not then have a viable business model.

However, our organizational model did get two things right. First, we broke with the normal Industrial model of voluntary organizations by focussing on and valuing participants, not formal members. This shift reflects the change in attitude and circumstance regarding voluntary action that is sweeping through North America – folks want to participate on their own terms. Besides, we came to realize that the investment of time and energy is what matters, not formal membership. This model is working for us. Today, we have several thousand participants and fewer than two hundred members. Second, in order to hold the interest of serious professionals as volunteers over many years, we sought ways to undertake

some paid work together. This has mostly been through one and two day workshops, but it has been enough. Today, Foresight Canada is the vehicle for this work.

Given our struggles, in 2002 we went back to the drawing board and re-focussed ACoC as a loosely-knit support community for individuals who wish to develop their own capacities to explore and understand profound societal change. This clearer mandate replaced the many roles we had originally envisioned. If research was to be undertaken and public support gathered, someone else would have to do it. ACoC's mission now is, *“to nurture wise, strategic and courageous leaders of transforming societal change.”*

Today, ACoC has a viable business model. We are best known as a group that:

- Is committed to enabling interested persons to explore the nature and implications of the long-term cultural transformation in which we now find ourselves.
- Is skilled in designing and organizing events that are intellectually reliable and emotionally safe; cross-sectoral settings in which all persons are made to feel at home.
- Makes high-quality information available to its members and participants.
- Brings exceptional transformation-minded researchers and practitioners from every sector to Alberta to engage us through a public luncheon series in both Calgary and Edmonton. This series is now in its sixth year.
- Co-Sponsors high-quality, personal capacity-building workshops with Foresight Canada.
- Presents its work in cooperation with almost fifty Partner organizations in Alberta.
- Is led, managed and administered entirely by volunteers.

3.3 Creating Tomorrow Foundation

In 2002, when ACoC was re-inventing itself with a sharper focus, a new exploratory conversation was also started by some members of the ACoC Board with a dozen influential Calgarians. The proposition on our plate was that *Canada needed at least one foundation wholly dedicated to the work of building public support for the view that ours is a time of profound societal change and that citizens must be encouraged and enabled to co-create an*

economy and society truly aligned with the 21st Century, and that we should create it in Calgary. The eighteen month exploration was chaired by a civic leader of great credibility – John R. Perraton, known to all as Jack. Jack, a local lawyer, had chaired Calgary's bid as the Canadian Bid City for the 2005 World's Fair. He was just finishing his term as Chancellor of the University of Calgary.

After eighteen months, in 2004, the Creating Tomorrow Foundation (CTF) was created. Its mission is to enhance the credibility of the idea that ours is a time of profound societal change, and to encourage citizens – Calgarians, Albertans and ultimately all Canadians – to explore, understand and respond to this novel condition. CTF's appeal is to sympathetic civic leaders from every sector – persons who value the fact that such an organization even exists.

To date, CTF has done two things. First, it has used the ACoC luncheon speakers to organize a series of small dinners with a cross-sectoral group of sympathetic civic leaders. These events are experienced as mind-stretching and stimulating by the civic leaders. We now have over 100 such persons who are glad to be invited. From CTF's point of view the dinners are laying the foundation for a supportive community of interest.

CTF's second undertaking is rather more ambitious. We are committed to providing the leadership for a big, hairy and truly audacious project – one that, working cooperatively with others, increases the likelihood of a reasonably prosperous and humane future by putting the cultural-framing issue squarely on the public agenda in Calgary, Alberta, Canada and the world. Our chosen vehicle is now called the Co-Creating Tomorrow Challenge – a local to global project that will extend throughout the 21st Century and nurture into being a vibrant and long-lasting global community of interest dedicated to exploring, understanding and responding creatively to the reality of long-term societal change, evolution and transformation. A Planning Group for this project is now at work. By the end of June 2007, it intends to turn over a project that is planned, staffed and funded to 2010 and sketched to 2020.

3.4 Foresight Canada

One of the adjustments made by ACoC in 2002 was to create Foresight Canada (FC) as the vehicle for research, consulting and delivering its workshops. As CTF grew as a related organization, it also became the sponsor for Foresight Canada's research and consulting. Foresight Canada's mission is *to nurture the practice of strategic foresight by Canadian organizations in all sectors at a high professional level*. FC will also offer the services of the best Canadian foresight researchers and practitioners to interested organizations. Foresight Canada appeals to executives in every sector who are sufficiently open to the uncertainty and ambiguity of our world today to be willing to undertake strategic foresight as a way to reduce their risk.

Today, Foresight Canada is incorporated as a not-for-profit entity under Part II of the Canada Business Act. Both ACoC and CTF are among its members (shareholders). The not-for-profit model was chosen because it makes clear that our commitment as a group of foresight professionals is to nurturing the work in Canada, not to lining our own pockets. All work we undertake through Foresight Canada is billed at *pro bono* rates – roughly one third of normal.

Over the last two years, Foresight Canada has:

- Served as the vehicle that has allowed us as a group of professional futurists to deepen our bonds by being able to undertake paid work together. All are also deeply involved in the life of ACoC and CTF.
- Won an open competition with The National Research Council of Canada to identify the major strategic issues Canada and the world will face over the next generation and to identify the characteristics of the science and technologies that will be required to cope with such issues.
- Offered a dozen training workshops, both publicly and in-house, in cooperation with ACoC, in such topics as Creating Strategic Scenarios, Complexity and Systems Thinking, Strategic Foresight.
- Designed and facilitated several day-long workshops that allowed our clients to explore major uncertainties regarding their future.

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- Contributed to the design and facilitation of a ten month process in the Town of Canmore (pop. 15,000) that engaged a critical mass of citizens in creating a long-term vision to guide the development of the Town's future.
- Coached the Futures Committee of a major Canadian cooperative and their consultants on foresight processes and practice.
- Sought funding to enable us to hire an office administrator to serve as the communications hub of a new Canadian network for strategic foresight.

4.0 Where We are Now

As of today, we have disaggregated the original work of ACoC into three legally separate but closely related not-for-profit organizations. Each has its own unique role and appeals to a distinct set of interests:

- The Creating Tomorrow Foundation is focussed on increasing public legitimacy of the core ideas and finding resources for them. It appeals primarily to sympathetic civic leaders.
- The Alliance for Capitalizing on Change is focussed on individual capacity development. It appeals to persons who wish to learn to become more effective agents of transforming change.
- Foresight Canada is the network research and consulting arm of the first two. It is focussed on nurturing the practice of strategic foresight in Canada.

There is some overlap in the Boards of these three organizations. The staff – professional and administrative, paid and volunteer – is common to all. This way the synergies among them are enhanced and the individual capacity to act undiminished.

We are increasingly confident that this model will work for us. As of today, each organization is solvent, over 5,000 persons are on our email lists, we have cooperative relationships with 50 Partner organizations, eighteen organizations contribute funds as sponsors or clients, and the joint income for our last fiscal year was in the order of \$350,000.

4.1 What Happens Next?

The honest answer is that even professional futurists do not know for sure. This fact does not disturb us. We are learning to be patient. The last seven years has taught us that if we are to succeed in this work we must be in it for the long haul. Both a clear long-term vision and adaptive tactics are required. And, of course, we have plans afoot to take each of these organizations to a new level of development and performance:

- CTF has group of more than 20 volunteers planning the Co-Creating Tomorrow Challenge. The intent is to launch it in the fall of 2007.
- Foresight Canada is about to begin to work with professionals across Canada to develop the Canadian network for strategic foresight.
- The Alliance for Capitalizing on Change has committed itself to working with interested Partner organizations to gather into a yearly event those Albertans who are between dreams – those who know that our future cannot be a bigger and better Industrial future and want to be with others from across the whole society who are open to the idea of working together to pioneer a new civilization.

4.2 Summary

Over the last seven years, the suspicion with which we began has grown into a conviction:

The most fundamental work of the 21st Century – for all persons, families, organizations and whole societies – is to become conscious architects and intentional co-creators of new ways of living; ways that truly fit the unique conditions that are emerging in the 21st Century; ways that help lay the foundation for the world's first global civilization – one that is wise, secure, prosperous, inclusive, integrated, sustainable and deeply humane. Citizen participation will no longer do. Conscious co-creation is our new game.

From some perspectives, the results of seven years work are somewhat meagre – we have only got ourselves to the point where we are getting ready to seriously enter the game of long-term societal change. However, *we in Calgary and Alberta have got ourselves to the point*

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that we are ready to become players in the cultural-frame change game. We have a clear rationale for the work and three well-formed organizations, each of which is making a unique contribution. This is no small feat. We know of no other place that has done as much. Needless to say, we would be delighted to learn of other initiatives that broadly map onto ours.

We hasten to add that we know of, value and have been fed by many initiatives around the world that map onto our own. It is inconceivable that we would have been able to even think of, let alone undertake, the work we have been about over the last seven years without such a supportive community of saints.¹⁶ Nevertheless, as far we know, the particular focus of our work – *developing a critical mass of citizens who accept cultural-frame change as their frame of reference* – is unique. This, to us, is the way foresight must come to be framed.

To the extent that there is a race to be the first jurisdiction to embed this work in its life, it is a race we would happily lose. It is in the interests of all of us that these ideas take root in many places. If there is anything we can do to help you understand and undertake this work, do not hesitate to contact us.

Finally, we take comfort in the words of the first Chairman of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the company that made present-day Canada possible. William Van Horn said, “*The biggest things are always the easiest to do because there is no competition.*” Nevertheless, we look forward to the day when the field of the cultural-frame change game is thick with players.

¹⁶ At the risk of offending some of our friends who are not listed here, allow us to acknowledge the work of the following institutions: The Club of Budapest, The Evolutionary Salon, The Institute for Conscious Evolution, The Institute for Noetic Sciences, The Meridian Institute and The World Business Academy.

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