Community thoughts on the UNESCO World Heritage Site, Gros Morne and Bonne Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador.

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Background

World Heritage sites are recognized by the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) as places of importance to humanity; 167 countries across the globe, including Canada, have pledged to protect them. Canada is blessed with 10 natural World Heritage sites and one mixed World Heritage site which is internationally renowned. Caring for world heritage sites is our responsibility to the world. Over $1.3 billion was allocated by the Canadian government to expand protected areas and to help protect endangered species. This move is a reflection on the pledge made to safeguard 17 percent of Canada’s landmass and inland waters by 2020. It is the responsibility of the federal, provincial and municipal and first nations’ governments to manage public land and water in Canada.

The recent increase in attention towards conservation and preservation of natural resources has led to discussions on the need for National Marine Conservation Areas (NMCA), Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and Buffer Zones. National Marine Conservation Areas are small zones that restrict public access. These are being implemented by Parks Canada. Marine Protected Areas are a broader version implemented by DFO or Environment Canada. However, the difference between NMCAs and MPAs are not well-known to the public. Understanding the level of knowledge of the public, along with their opinions about an MPA’s can also prove beneficial towards a successful implementation of conservation goals. A buffer zone is a protective layer of the core zone that’s been implemented to safeguard the area from external threats. Buffer zones are now a common practice implemented for all new world heritage sites.
Gros Morne National Park was established in 1973 with a circumference of 1805 square kilometers on Newfoundland’s west coast. The natural beauty and the unique geological showcase earned Gros Morne its UNESCO World Heritage status in 1987. The roadway passes through the park’s varied terrain and coastal villages. Gros Morne is the third-largest national park in eastern Canada, and people have lived in the Gros Morne area for more than five thousand years. Gros Morne is renowned for its wildlife, mountains, massive cliffs, deep fjords, alpine tundra, long sand beaches and the golden tableland plateau. There are approximately 3300 residents living in the communities in Gros Morne, and a minimum of 200,000 tourists visit during spring and summer. Within Gros Morne National Park (GMNP) there are eight community enclaves that influence the decision-making process through their respective municipal councils.
In 2012 Gros Morne received a wakeup call when Shoal Point Energy proposed to drill and “frack” for oil at Sally’s Cove and then at Trout River, Chimney Cove, St. Paul’s and many other sites along the coast. Following this proposal, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee expressed their concern and appointed a monitoring mission in 2013. In 2014, the committee suggested creating a buffer zone around Gros Morne National Park for better protection. The UNESCO defines a buffer Zone as “an area surrounding the property that has complementary legal and/or customary restrictions placed on its use and development to give an added layer of protection to the property” (Burzynski, Marceau, & Cusson, 2015, p 14). It also further states that the buffer zone should include the immediate setting of the nominated property, important views and other areas that are functionally important as a support to the property and its protection.

The main objective of a buffer zone is to prevent or slow external interference and influence with the main zone. A buffer zone could support the park; (1) in maintaining the parks reputation and enhancing the tourism industry (2) prevent industrial activities from damaging the park’s beauty, (3) protect watersheds, rivers and community water supplies (4) protect local fisheries which could be harmed by other industrial activities (5) secure the scenic view around the coastal communities (6) help protect wildlife migration routes (Burzynski, Marceau, & Cusson, 2015, p 31). Therefore, having a buffer zone for the Gros Morne national park could elevate its value and preserve the UNESCO status. Successful conservation relies on the support given by its communities and it involves extensive public engagement.
Bonne Bay is a fjord located on the west coast of Newfoundland at the base of the Great Northern Peninsula and it is surrounded by Gros Morne National Park. There are many communities that share a strong relationship with the Bonne Bay marine ecosystem, they are Norris Point, Rocky Harbour, Glenburnie-Birchy Head-Shoal Brook, Woody Point, Sally’s Cove, and, Trout River. There is a strong tradition of fishing within these communities, and hence the relationship between the communities and the marine ecosystem has been strengthened over the years. Coastal communities in Newfoundland were established in the 1800s primarily because of the abundant marine resources available. The terrestrial ecosystem of GMNP is protected by the federal legislation (Canada National Parks Act) designed for managing human activities in the park. This legislation mandate ends at the low tide mark, and therefore, the marine ecosystem of Bonne Bay has had no legal protection implemented.

The report from Le Bris & Wroblewski (2018), provides information on the variety of species in Bonne Bay and highlights its uniqueness. The information from the report is summarized below:
There are 29 fish species from 17 families in Bonne Bay. Fish assemblages comprise of anadromous, estuarine, and marine fish species, including a late-maturing type of winter skate that is rarely found in the adjacent waters of the northern Gulf of St. Lawrence. The similarity in species composition across sites reflected salinity, substrate composition, and presence of eelgrass. Bonne Bay fjord supports small boat fisheries for American lobster and snow crab. It also supports recreational fishing for Atlantic cod and sea-run brook trout, pleasure boating, sailing, SCUBA diving, kayaking and, birdwatching. Several species of marine mammals, reptiles and fish listed under the Species at Risk Act (SARA) have been observed in Bonne Bay. Fish assemblages reflected the diversity of habitat available in the Bay and included four species of conservation concern.

The above significant features of Bonne Bay meets the fundamental criteria of an NMCA and should be declared an NMCA in the near future. Sustainable fisheries had been the conversation within communities in Bonne Bay for many years, and both the tourism and fishing industries have understood their co-dependency.
Marine Protected Areas or National Marine Conservation Areas play a vital role in sustainable fisheries. As defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), an MPA is “any area of intertidal or subtidal terrain, together with its’ overlying and associated flora, fauna, historical and cultural features, which has been reserved by law or other effective means to protect part, or all, of the enclosed environment” (IUCN, 2019).

Enclave communities of Gros Morne

Eight communities lie within the boundaries of the park: Trout River, Woody Point, Glenburnie-Birchy Head-Shoal Brook, Norris Point, Rocky Harbour, Sally’s Cove, St Paul’s and Cow Head. They are home to approximately 3300 people. All these communities are rich in natural resources and significant sites of value. Over the past 10-15 years, cultural activity in the park region was built on a base of long-standing local traditions which has constantly undergone a noticeable surge in growth. Gros Morne National Park is also recognized as a national center for culture and creativity, inspired by and reflecting the natural environment, to attract international attention.

Gros Morne South - The tableland plateau which is one of the few places where the earth’s mantle is exposed, is definitely a unique feature of the park. The communities that belong to the south side are; Woody Point, Glenburnie-Birchy Head-Shoal Brook and, Trout
River. There are other unique places such as; Lomond, Green Gardens, Killdevil that add value to the park. Visitors also have the opportunity to camp, hike and swim.

Gros Morne Central – The communities that belong to the Central part of Gros Morne is Norris Point and Rocky Harbour. This side of the park is blessed with many breathtaking sights, hiking trails, campsites, brooks and geological sites. The Gros Morne mountain trail is a unique picturesque hike. The Bonne Bay Marine Station is also located in Norris Point which has an aquarium that attracts tourists.
Gros Morne North – Sally’s Cove, St Paul’s and Cow Head communities represent the North of Gros Morne. St Paul’s and Cow Head have abundant natural resources and sites to visit. St Paul’s inlet contains a large unique salt marsh which is considered a bird resting area during migratory periods. Eelgrass, which is an important nursery habitat for fish and shellfish species grows at the bottom of this inlet. Shallow Bay in Cow Head is a sandy beach which is an attraction site for hundreds of migratory birds during the fall and is backed by high dunes. The Cow Head lighthouse trail, theater festivals are some of the hikes and events which add value to the place and provides an opportunity for the community to engage.

GMNP is the only park that has community enclaves within the park boundaries. This uniqueness compliments the value and thus, highlights the importance of having proper community engagement across all communities. The success of consultation depends on how well the community interests and conservation goals are combined, and how they work together. The concept of consultation and collaboration is essential in the development and management of protected areas. It is evident that community support enhances the likelihood
of a country meeting its conservation objectives by reducing political resistance. Any project development that may affect a community’s way of life should engage in the process of public consultation earlier, more often, meaningfully and through an open and transparent approach.

Recognizing the importance of community engagement, this project focuses on the perception of the community enclaves in Gros Morne National Park and on understanding how well their needs could be incorporated into future action plans.

Based on the feedback received respondents also mentioned, the protection of the park has played a vital role in preserving its natural beauty and they believe it would be safeguarded for many more years to come, for generations to enjoy.

**Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study was to understand the general thoughts of the communities and how people felt about living in a World Heritage Site. Information was also gathered on community thoughts on the necessity of a buffer zone for GMNP and a marine conservation area for Bonne Bay. Capturing what community had to say about the park was considered an important element of the study which helped to identify the relationship between conservation and community enhancement.

Consultation and collaboration are essential in the development and management of marine protected areas and its success depends on how well the interests are combined and how they work together. Mechanisms for gathering information, increasing awareness, conducting research and ensuring the participation must be established to improve collaboration and cooperation amongst stakeholders.

Successful establishment and management of conservation regimes often rely on public consultation and participation. Educating the public on the benefits generated from MPAs is regarded as a necessary condition for success. At the time Parks Canada took over Gros Morne,
there was no consultation done among the local communities, and this led to negative perceptions within those communities, which resulted in a lack of community support (Brookes, 1988). Environmental and social policymakers should focus more on achieving collaborative efforts in solving social problems within communities when initiating policies and conditions. Every community should own its issue and not the organization or authority.

Therefore, consulting the public and understanding their perceptions should be made the top priority when implementing conservation projects. The first step is to have a presence in the community and gather information about the thoughts of the residents. This was, in fact, the primary focus of the internship.

**How we collected information?**

The total population within the communities of Gros Morne – including Norris Point, Rocky Harbour, Cow Head, Sally’s Cove, St. Paul’s, Woody Point, Glenburnie- Birchy Head-Shoal Brook, Trout River -- is 3361; the population of the area is on the decline (Stat Canada, 2016). The project area is represented on the map.
A total of 100 residents and visitors were approached to collect information. The information was collected through a series of face to face interviews, online questionnaires, casual discussions and, random surveys. Information was gathered through a period of three months starting from 1st June 2019 to 31st Aug 2019. The summary pie chart below will give further details on how the information was collected.

**Data Collection Mode**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Mode</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casual Chats</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random Surveys</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Questionnaire</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face to Face interviews</td>
<td>32</td>
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</tbody>
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**Who we heard from?**

The respondents for the surveys and interviews were a composition of full-time residents, seasonal residents, and visitors. Having information from a diverse group of respondents was helpful to understand the different perceptions of how they felt living in and visiting Gros Morne. The majority of the respondents were full-time residents. All feedback received through this information collection process was carefully documented, reviewed and considered. Some key critical points that were observed during the three-month period would be discussed separately as observations in Appendix 01.
What we heard?

The majority of the residents love being in Gros Morne and enjoys its scenic beauty. The below graph would summarize the reasons why Gros Morne is so unique to its communities.

Communities around Gros Morne are open to discussion and are interested to preserve its natural value. Almost all respondents were aware and proud of the UNESCO World Heritage Status that Gros Morne has claimed and were in agreement to support conservation goals to increase its value further. Participants indicated that there should be more
involvement and engagement happening in the North (Sally’s Cove, St Paul’s and Cow Head) and Southside (Glenburnie-Birchy Head-Shoal Brook, Woody Point and, Trout River) of the park. The respondents opposed major developments happening in the park and suggested to have only sustainable development occurring. During the information gathering, it was also highlighted that residents should be educated on conservation goals and more awareness should take place within the community enclaves. Respondents agreed the key to successful conservation and enhanced community wellbeing is “More Engagement”. The responses received are categorized into key priority areas, which are; buffer zone, marine conservation and, engagement.

**Key Priorities**

*Buffer Zone*

Feedback indicated that the park should organize more educational and awareness campaigns in public forums for conservation goals to be successful. A few respondents commented that many would view a buffer zone as an extension of the park boundaries. Therefore, through awareness campaigns, it should be communicated that the purpose of a buffer zone is to safeguard the core zone of the park and not an extension. Some respondents agreed that a buffer zone could be implemented as a UNESCO biosphere reserve. The below chart would provide a summary of the percentage of respondents who were in favor of a buffer zone.
Based on the above figures 89% of the respondents were in favor of a buffer zone. Feedback from the respondents indicated that they are in favor of a buffer zone as long as it does not hinder any of the community's rights or way of life. They agreed that a buffer zone should stop any unsustainable activities from happening and would act as a safety ground for the park.

**Marine Conservation**

Fisheries have been the way of life in Gros Morne coastal regions. For many years people have been fishing in Bonne Bay for cod, crab, squid, lobster, herring, halibut, mackerel and, capelin. There is a visible decrease in the number of fishermen in these communities. Trout River has the most number of fishermen from the communities here in Gros Morne. Recreational fishing is a special feature for the residents in Gros Morne and it is an activity they often enjoy with families. Local fishermen and residents had diverse opinions on Bonne Bay and also made suggestions on ways to conserve the bay for future generations. Coastal communities enjoy the sight of whales, dolphins in the bay and would like to see Bonne Bay rich in fish habitat. The majority of the participants were in favor of having protection in the bay. The summary of the responses is given in the below chart.
Respondents mentioned that protection should be limited because it should not hinder the rights of the local fishermen. It was suggested to give priority to the needs of the local fishermen and to involve them in conservation goals since they have a vast knowledge of the bay. Fishermen in Bonne Bay has demonstrated stewardship in fish harvesting during many instances in the past and one such instance is lobster harvesting. Feedback included suggestions that restrictions to the number of trawlers and seiners entering Bonne Bay would be the first step towards the goal of marine conservation. Participants feared that trawlers and seiners would scoop all the fish out from the bay and would affect the natural balance in the marine ecosystem. The suggestions given by the respondents are summarized below.
Feedback indicated that extensive public engagement on such conservation could support the residents to understand the terminologies and help make correct decisions. Respondents further mentioned the word “protection” merely, could steer negative outreach and better awareness campaigns should be hosted. As further stated, a community plays a vital role in conservation decisions and the local knowledge is an asset that should be used to make better decisions. Based on the above chart the majority of the respondents wanted protection for the bay.

**Engagement**

Most of the respondents were willing to have more engagement with GMNP. Gros Morne south respondents mentioned that there has been a significant improvement in the level of engagement currently, compared to previous years. However, it was also stated that there is more room for improvement. The importance of collaborating with stakeholders, various levels of government, industry and, the community were highlighted. The local residents expressed desire to feel more involved with the GMNP and to be more aware of the park priorities. In addition, the residents would like to see them be more visible and their voices more strongly reflected in the taglines of the GMNP. The below chart is a summary of what residents would like to see happening within communities.
During the interviews, it was mentioned that small businesses in the area should have a forum where all details are compiled for tourists to review. It was suggested that, having a map of each community on places to visit, to be included in the annual visitor guidebook. The restrictions on lumber cutting and access to snowmobiling were brought up during the discussion. The main concern of the respondents was that their children will not have access to lumber in the near future due to tight restriction and that was disturbing them. The respondents inquired on possible solutions on harvesting and then cutting for personal use. Access to snowmobiling in particular areas was also a concern where the respondents highlighted that the areas zoned were not practical enough. The respondents requested GMNP to review the snowmobiling access areas because transporting snowmobiles time and again were a hassle for those who enjoyed snowmobiling. This request was also referenced as a potential opportunity to increase visitation during winter seasons.

The most common response from the residents of the Southside and North were to have more involvement and presence in their communities. Especially the respondents from St Paul’s and Cow Head commented that “we are the forgotten community” which meant that these communities are being neglected from parks management plans and developments. A reasonable dispersion of benefits among all communities were requested. The below graph shows the preferred methods of public consultation within communities.
Considering the above results, respondents were in favor of using as many media as possible to engage with the community since it will help in better participation and reach. Many participants shared their appreciation for the opportunity to provide feedback and concluded that public engagement and effective communication would help both the park and the communities to meet its goals collectively.

Limitations

Conducting a door to door survey would be more supportive to gather a larger number of surveys. However, with the limited resources available this option was not considered to be practical. Community engagement should be spread in all communities evenly, but the majority of the respondents were from the South and Central of Gros Morne. More focus on public engagement should be given to the communities in the north side of Gros Morne in the next phase in order to have an even representation.

Next Steps

The feedback received during this phase would be monitored and used for the next steps of parks' future plans. The information provided was important details in preserving the UNESCO World Heritage status of Gros Morne and in elevating its community enclaves. We thank all of you who took the time to share your valuable thoughts, ideas and, suggestions.

Reference


Kukac, J. (2009). *Capturing the importance of natural resources and future activities in St. Paul’s, Newfoundland.* Thesis fulfillment for the Masters of Arts (Geography), Memorial University of Newfoundland.


Appendix 01

Observations

During my three months stay here in Gros Morne there were certain observations found important to note. The critical observations are given below:

(1) The community members here are very welcoming, however, it is also important to note that the majority of the respondents are afraid to open up, considering the negative rumors it might create. There needs to be a constant individual or a team engaging with the community.

(2) Face-to-face interviews were more successful than surveys and online questionnaires. The community members in Gros Morne respond well to friendly conversation. A survey has direct questions and sometimes can be misinterpreted. It is always recommended to have face-to-face conversations with community members, providing opportunities for learning and building relationships.

(3) Community members in GBS, Woody Point, Trout River, Cow Head and, St Paul’s had one comment in common. Members of these communities requested more engagement and consultation to be done by the park officials with the residents. They are eager to see more improvement happening and would like to see them being included in future plans for development. They would like to see their communities promoted more widely in order to draw more tourists to the area.
Appendix 02 – Questionnaire

Community Perceptions on Gros Morne National Park

Introduction: I am Roshayne, a master’s student at Grenfell Campus at the Masters in Environmental Policy Institute. I am doing my 3 months summer internship with CPAWS (Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society) as a community engagement staff associate. We would like to better understand the needs of the communities and their values in relation to Gros Morne National Park and I appreciate it if you could take a few minutes and help to fill up the questionnaire for me.

Primary Questions

1. How long have you lived in the area?
   - Less than a year □ 1-5 Years □ 6-10 years □ More than 10 years □

2. Are you a full-time, a part-time resident or a visitor?
   - Full time □ Seasonal / Part-time □ Visitor □
   a. Why do you live, visit here? …………………………………………
   b. What do you enjoy most about this area? What does it mean to you?
      …………………………………………………………………………………

3. What are the benefits and drawbacks of living in a park? ……………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………

4. Do you think the park and the area around need more or less protection than it does?
   - More Protection □ Less Protection □ Fine as is □

5. Are you aware that Gros Morne is a UNESCO World Heritage site?
   - Yes □ No □

6. Do you think the park would need a buffer zone to keep away major developments like fracking from happening?
   - Yes □ No □ Don’t Know □
   Other comments ……………………………………………………………

7. Would you like to see Bonne Bay and the waters surrounding Gros Morne National Park better protected?
   - Yes □ No □ Don’t Know □
   Other Comments ……………………………………………………………

8. If yes, what kind of protection will it help?
- Keep away the trawlers and seiners coming into the bay and give priority to the local fishermen and community ☐
- Protect particular zones of the bay to protect the habitat of special species
- Total protection ☐
- No protection ☐
- Don’t know ☐

Other Comments .................................................................

9. What would you like to see happening in the area?

- More engagement ☐
- Promotion of small business ☐
- Extended tourism window ☐
- Less pollution ☐

Other, Specify ……………………………………………………….

10. What are the best tactics to have open communication with residents?

- Town hall meetings ☐
- Social Media ☐
- Mails ☐
- Posters ☐
- Others, Specify ………………………………………

11. Are you aware of whom to contact in different situations? (you see someone polluting, you see an unidentified boat, you see someone excavating, you see someone harming the environment, etc.)

- Yes ☐
- No ☐

12. What can we do to increase the level of awareness among people on “who is responsible? for what?”

- A focal point of contact ☐
- Have a poster which gives direction for an e.g “report a polluter (contact no)” ☐
- Distribute a leaflet among the community on whom to contact ☐

Other comments to improve ………………………………………………….

Thank you for your valuable time!!! You are entitled to the DRAW!! We are giving away a $100 Gift card to a lucky winner!! 😊 (If you want to be included write your name and contact number)