

NORTH COAST INNOVATION LAB

YEAR 1 DEVELOPMENTAL
EVALUATION REPORT





Figure 1: NCIL Team at Cow Bay Days

Table of Contents

03 Overview

Team **04**

05 Context

NCIL in Photos **06**

07 Timeline

Community Projects **09**

11 Impact

Metrics **13**

14 Reflection

Moving Forward **15**

Overview

This report captures the North Coast Innovation Lab's (NCIL) work in 2018 and reflects on its progress through a Developmental Evaluation lens. The NCIL is a place-based initiative supporting tangible projects and initiatives that will build a resilient economy in Prince Rupert. There has been incredible progress and evolution of the NCIL since its launch in 2017, and it has begun to have significant local impact. The NCIL's mission of bringing capacity, research, and energy to innovative projects is beginning to bear fruit in partnerships and projects of varying scope and scale. The NCIL is well positioned to enable positive impact locally into 2019 and beyond.

Substantial energy is building around the NCIL's approach to community building and local economic development in Prince Rupert.

The NCIL is a place-based initiative for people who are invested in the future of Prince Rupert to prioritize and work together on tangible projects and initiatives that build a resilient economy as a tool for community well-being.

WHAT?

The NCIL seeks to support ALL Prince Rupert residents and invest in community connections, collaborations, and partnerships.

WHO?

The NCIL works across cultures, sectors and organizations to spark innovative, collaborative local economic development initiatives designed to improve socio-economic resiliency for Prince Rupert.

HOW?

Developmental Evaluation Process

The NCIL is working to enable and support systems change in Prince Rupert and is using a developmental evaluation (DE) approach to inform strategic planning and evidence-based decision making. "Combining the rigour of evaluation with the flexibility and imagination required for development, this form of evaluation" supports the ongoing learning and evolution of this work.* The DE undertaken by the NCIL enables the team to explore how their work can enact change at multiple levels within Prince Rupert. The DE process (including monthly reflections, interviews, coaching sessions) documents shifts in perspectives and practices in Prince Rupert, and captures the evolution of community relationships and behaviours.

**A Developmental Evaluation Primer (Gamble, 2008)*

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The first year of the NCIL has been a time of exploration, innovation, and grounding. There has been great uptake and feedback from across the Prince Rupert community. The work of the NCIL has balanced a patient assessment of root cause barriers to economic vibrancy in Prince Rupert with a pragmatic effort to create tangible traction and action for the project. A culture of innovation is being nurtured in Prince Rupert and the NCIL is complementing efforts and projects initiated by local organizations while building networks of innovators and community-builders. The NCIL is in a very strong position to carry forward groundbreaking work into 2019 and beyond.

*Annelies Tjebbes,
Developmental Evaluation Coach, North Coast Innovation Lab*

Context

Prince Rupert is a community in a time of flux and reconciliation. Situated on the territory of the Coast Tsimshian, many First Nations including Metlakatla, Lax Kw'alaams, Gitga'at, Gitxaala, and Nisga'a Nations are investing in projects, businesses, real estate developments, and socio-economic opportunities within municipal boundaries. Local initiatives such as [Hays 2.0](#) and [Redesign Rupert](#) are creating substantial opportunities to inject energy in the economy and contribute to vibrancy in the community. The partnerships developed between local organizations and institutions and the NCIL have brought numerous opportunities for collaboration and project advancement. In addition, large investments in industry over the past year, including \$21.9M to the port from the federal government, and a positive final investment decision for a \$270M LPG export terminal by Pembina, have been contributing to new economic opportunity in Prince Rupert.

Other external shifts that are supporting the advancement of the NCIL's mandate include:

- Indigenous governments and organizations are growing their capacities, programs, and services in the form of social, economic and cultural initiatives and enterprises.
- New housing developments - including low income and seniors' housing models - are underway, which will provide an injection of support to the community, seeking to address issues of affordability and social housing scarcity.
- The local Coast Mountain College has a new focus on experiential, place-based learning and this could create opportunities for synergy with NCIL.
- The City of Prince Rupert released a 2030 Sustainable City Draft Policy Objective Document which will inform the NCIL's future initiatives.



SIGNIFICANT HIGHLIGHTS

In addition to the local context in Prince Rupert, the following significant highlights within Ecotrust Canada build out the story of the NCIL's launch and evolution:

1995	Ecotrust Canada Forms
2010	Ecotrust Canada opens first Prince Rupert office
2015	Partnership with Radius-SFU on Local Economic Development Lab (LEDlab) in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside

2016	Early Engagement of partners on concept of social innovation in Prince Rupert
2017	Initial funding to explore design and scope of Prince Rupert social innovation project
2017	Commitment to adapt LEDlab approach and framework to Prince Rupert



The NCIL is putting social innovation into action here in Prince Rupert. It is bringing us together to do bigger things than we could accomplish separately.... they are bringing talent, energy, resources, and innovation to life.

*Mayor Lee Brain,
 Mayor, Prince Rupert*



Timeline

11.17

- Project Manager hired to listen to community needs and design the NCIL.

01.18

- NCIL joined team of facilitators at BC Poverty Reduction Forum.

03.18

- NCIL presented community interviews.
- Participated in BC Rural Development Forum.
- City Council presentation.

04.18

- **Interview Reflections and Program Design Report** shared with community.

05.18

- Cohort 1 Project Coordinators and advisory committees begin community projects.
- NCIL joins the city's economic development Business Walks survey.



Did you know?

The North Coast Innovation Lab has been involved with many local events including Seafest, Cow Bay Days, Trading Coast Conference & Market, Seafood Literacy Workshops, and a Careers in Community Event in partnership with Redesign Rupert.

06.18

- NCIL participates in Northwest Community College permaculture design course.

08.18

- Co-organized and managed Pop Up Prince Rupert, a downtown street festival.

11.18

- Hosted SFU research team to inform the development of community-based research opportunities.

11.18

- Coast Mountain College Students presented marketing plans for their course projects developed in partnership with the NCIL.

12.18

- Participated in roundtable discussions informing the city's downtown redevelopment planning.

Did you know?

The NCIL attended and shared insights at industry gatherings across Canada in 2018 including the EconoUs Social Innovation Labs, Converge, and Art of Cities conferences.



Community Projects

Enhancing Coworking, Information Sharing, & Resource Sharing in Prince Rupert

prepared by Kara Herbert

Prince Rupert is home to a variety of small-business owners, but operates under financial and human capital constraints that limit the capacity and effectiveness of small-scale organizations and entrepreneurs. This project, informed by community interviews with entrepreneurs and program services providers, included an identification of needs, assessment of collaboration spaces, and the provision of accessible resources for entrepreneurs and small-business owners.

The research component of this project identified that increased support, collaboration, and communication between small businesses, entrepreneurs, and other supporting organizations could lead to an enhanced entrepreneurial culture in the community.



Tangible Actions

In the short term, a skill-building mini-conference, the Trading Coast Conference was hosted and facilitated in September 2018 in partnership with Hecate Strait Employment Development Society and Community Futures Pacific Northwest. It provided an opportunity to meet with entrepreneurs at all stages, share best practices, raise awareness of programs and services, and build solidarity for the entrepreneur community.

In addition, a pilot outdoor market surfaced as an opportunity to “test the appetite” of both locals and tourists for a larger-scale event of formal and informal vending. The Trading Coast Market, was held in partnership with Hecate Strait Employment Development Society, September 2018.

A longer-term objective of this project was to explore the creation of a shared workspace to bring together the broader entrepreneurial community and address overlapping needs. Various models of shared workspaces were compared and an assessment of Prince Rupert’s specific needs and existing amenities was undertaken. A *Coworking & Incubation Space* was recommended as the best shared space model to help address the social and professional needs of entrepreneurs and to support shared accessing of resources, group learning, collaboration, and enhanced social cohesion. Next steps for the creation of this space are mapped out in the report.

Growing the Local Economy for Fish and Marine Products in Prince Rupert

prepared by Rabia Ahmed

Prince Rupert has a long history as a fishing town but, despite the abundance of fish moving through the region, there is little access to locally caught seafood for residents. The aim of this research and feasibility project was to understand the demand for local seafood, scope out options for enabling seafood access, and develop preliminary concepts to match the local context.

From interviews and surveys with community members and active commercial fishers it is clear that Prince Rupert's residents have a deep desire for opportunities to access fresh, local seafood. Based on local fisher and processor visioning, and comparative community research, an outdoor fish market, a Community Supported Fishery (CSF), a fish hub and seafood literacy programming were selected for further feasibility analysis to support this demand.



Tangible Actions

The project report explores the top viable solutions for Prince Rupert, offers recommendations for implementation, and captures lessons from 3 demonstration projects:

- Pop up Fish Market with Dolly's Fish Market, July 2018
- Seafood Literacy workshop with Dolly's Fish Market and North Coast Transition Society, August 2018
- An attempted fish hub trial

Based on supply and demand limitations, the report recommends starting with initiatives (such as a Fish Hub or CSF) that will be successful with a small number of early adopters while still fostering a connection between seafood harvesters and consumers. In addition, seafood literacy programming is recommended as a complement to new economic initiatives to increase education, demand, and awareness of the value of locally and sustainably caught seafood. The next step to build on this project is to nurture partnerships with individuals and organizations who could carry some of these initiatives forward, to take on small-scale demonstration projects and encourage rapid learning and refinement of initiatives, and to include the community in building a model that will be sustainable over the long-term.

Impact

A body of evidence around the impact of the NCIL is currently in development. To date, there has been substantial uptake of the work in Prince Rupert, and while long-term impact cannot be identified at this early stage, leading indicators of impact include:

- Openness by local organizations to meet with and work with the NCIL - indicating openness to the culture of social innovation and collaborative community development
- Collaborations on projects including educational support to students and training programs for individuals
- Inclusion of Nathan Randall (Project Manager) on the Board of the Chamber of Commerce to provide strategic input on Prince Rupert's development
- Inclusion of the NCIL and summer interns in the local market and other community events and activities
- Buy-in and support for the NCIL from formal and informal Prince Rupert leaders

In addition, progress on Strengthening Community Networks and Capacity Building are highlighted below:

Strengthening Community Networks

A key activity of the NCIL is catalyzing systems change in Prince Rupert. To support this work, the NCIL is embedding learning and action into the community, establishing partnerships, providing support to existing organizations, and developing an understanding of problems and opportunities. There have been strong foundations laid around relationship building and collaboration in the Rupert community to date, and efforts to collaborate between organizations has also been growing through this work. The following depiction of the three levels of systems change highlights examples of impact the NCIL is working towards. These examples, in addition to other metrics, act as guideposts to mark progress on the NCIL's objectives.



Individual Level Systems Change

- Increased pride in Prince Rupert
- Increased ability to stay in Prince Rupert

Organizational Level Systems Change

- Increased organizational collaboration
- Increased capacity in partner organizations
- Increased outputs by NCIL

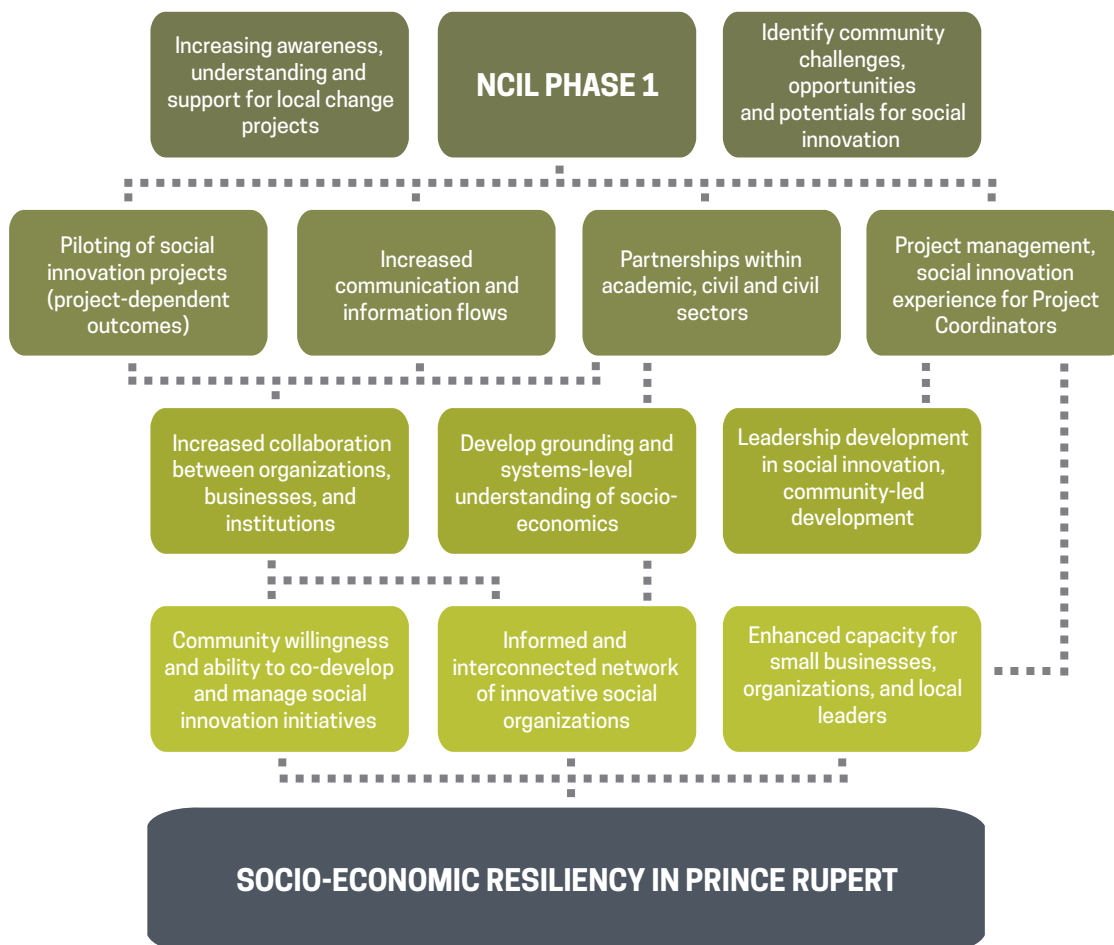
Community Level Systems Change

- Increased participation in community events
- Increased civic engagement
- Increased economic opportunities for local residents

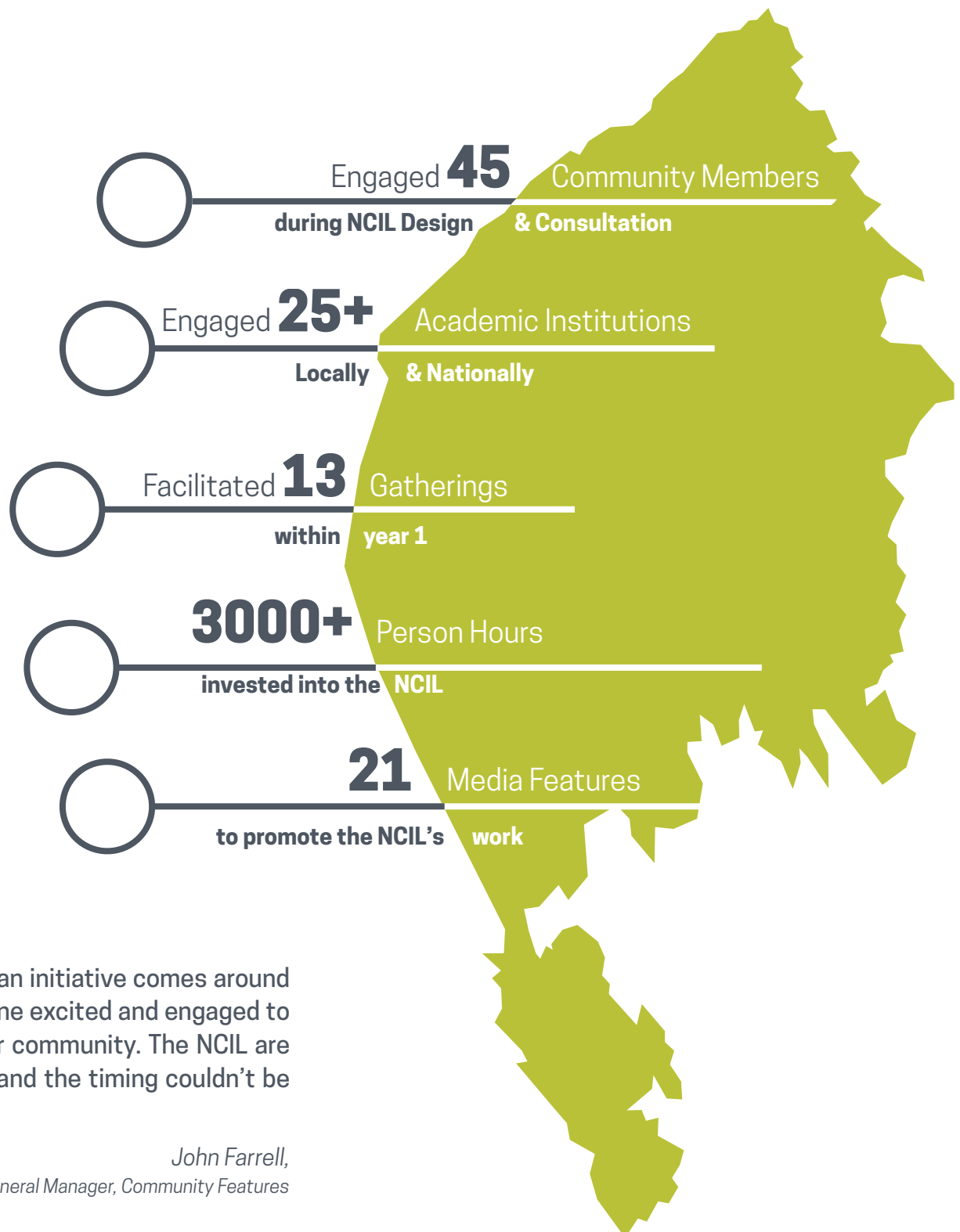
Capacity Building

Providing capacity and coordination for community-led projects is one of the NCIL's key activities. Two masters students (Cohort 1) spent 4 months each on NCIL projects, including pilot demonstrations, presentations and engagement sessions to share knowledge and approaches. Their collaboration with Advisory Committees supported an even deeper dive into social innovation approaches and their application in Prince Rupert. The community's capacity for social innovation and impact has been boosted through learning opportunities and collaboration with the local college and schools. Individual partnerships in this domain will continue to advance the local academic potential in Rupert and the overall capacity of local residents. Overall, these efforts have been contributing towards advancing the NCIL's Theory of Change displayed below.

THEORY OF CHANGE DIAGRAM



Metrics



Reflection

The NCIL is continually learning, adapting, and sharing insights with the Prince Rupert community and local partners. The NCIL's approach has been incredibly responsive to opportunities and this has allowed its work to take off in new and exciting directions based on partnerships and local community developments.



Throughout the NCIL's work, the team continually reflects on and considers the following Developmental Evaluation questions to help inform strategic decision making:

- How can the NCIL be a platform for collective leadership, supporting community and economic development?
- How might established practices and modern innovations cross-pollinate and reinforce each other?
- What types of economic activity, existing organizations, and cultural assets can be supported, and leveraged?
- What products could be commercialized locally so that the benefits are recirculated back to the community?
- How can inclusivity and diversity be supported through local and regional economic development strategies?
- What initiatives will attract and retain capacity (especially youth capacity) in the region?
- How might educational institutions and other stakeholders nurture a culture of civic participation?
- What can the NCIL teach us about building resilience in other rural and/or coastal communities?

Moving Forward

There are many priority areas in 2019 including a ramp up of student capacity, a focus on tangible results, and continued strategic collaboration. Building on the momentum of Cohort 1 and ongoing network building, four Project Coordinators (Cohort 2) were hired to lead eight-month initiatives:

Restorative Ocean Farming, in partnership with Coastal Shellfish Corporation

Social Enterprise Development, in partnership with Hecate Strait Employment Development Society

Food Production & Distribution, in partnership with Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Society

Downtown Revitalization, in partnership with Redesign Rupert and Community Futures Pacific Northwest

In addition, an emphasis on metrics and capturing evidence of impact will be vital for the Developmental Evaluation of the project. Overarching metrics on economic opportunity, resilience, civic participation, innovation and social cohesion will be explored to track key progress of the NCIL. Lastly the following key questions will be explored to help make informed decisions for the NCIL's work in 2019 and beyond:

- How is the NCIL affecting broader cultural, organizational, and policy changes?
- How can the impact the NCIL is having be quantified? Which local shifts can be attributed to the NCIL?
- How will the NCIL capture knowledge, embed it locally, and share it more broadly?

Given the adaptive nature of the project, it is tangible actions, key testimonials, and relationship developments that are indicative of progress and impact on the local community. The NCIL's work in amplifying existing initiatives, building partnerships, and leveraging local expertise has been paramount to its success to date. The NCIL's efforts are well underway, but the opportunities and impact from this work are only continuing to grow. With new student placements and projects emerging, a whole new series of innovations are set to emerge from the NCIL over the coming year.



We acknowledge the financial support of the Vancouver Foundation, the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation's Innoweave Program, Mitacs Canada, and the Rural Dividend Program in supporting this work. We are undertaking this work on the unceded territory of the Coastal Tsimshian.



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