

## **Future Scenarios for Public Education in the Bow Valley**

CRPS Futures Planning is an information and idea gathering process to identify community values, education trends and forces of change affecting education. It will determine key directions for the future of public education in the Bow Valley. The outcome of the Futures Planning process is to inform future CRPS strategic planning and decision making; leading to actions that will support student learning over the short and long term.

In Phase 2 of the project, exploration took place of the contextual trends and driving forces of change in relation to public education program delivery, and the development of future scenarios for the Bow Valley.

The list of driving forces derived from the Phase 2 public input is in the table below. The two forces chosen as the axes for the creation of scenarios were:

- **Changing social fabric**
- **Information technology**

### **Creation of Scenario Worlds and a Scenario for each**

The next task was to tease out the kind of society (scenario world) that the Canadian Rockies Public School District (CRPS) would exist in, in 2030 for each of the four combinations of the two key drivers of change. The story-line (scenario) of how each of these worlds could credibly emerge from today's situation was then articulated for each scenario world. This experience reinforced the key point of the whole visioning project – we in the CRPS face a range of futures. We do not face just one future, especially not the one we tend, quite unconsciously, to take for granted.

## Forces shaping the future of public education in the Bow Valley

<b><i>Driving Forces</i></b>	<b><i>Description</i></b>
<b>Changes in the public education system</b>	Fragmentation – multiple local school boards. Will there even be any buildings necessary for school kids? How will education be delivered? Needs for different skills – critical thinking, language, integrated curriculum. Home schooling on the rise. Pressures for academic achievement.
<b>Social change and fabric</b>	Changes in the nature of the family and community. Social structures affecting the ability of CRPS to deliver education. Different relationships in our community because of cultural shifts and so forth. (fragmented versus connectedness). Missing role of the extended family – who has the voice of the child? How to identify with the globalized world?
<b>Economic structure</b>	Living in a globalized world with increased competition and opportunity with jobs shifting away from North America. The basis of the Bow Valley’s business economy will change. Different jobs in the future. Less reliance on carbon – implications for education.
<b>Demographic shifts</b>	Global population increase - population changes in cultural make up of local and regional population. Aging local population with effects on the numbers of school age children and availability of teachers. Immigration of different cultures to the Bow Valley. Ignorance of other cultures and languages. Part time residents increasing as percentage of the population.
<b>Natural environmental pressures</b>	Global environmental change (collapse or amazing adaptation) leading to competition for resources. The quality, quantity and diversity of the Bow Valley’s ecosystem(s) and the relations to our economy.
<b>Information technology</b>	Pace of change increasing, virtual connections, “plugged in”. Changing relationships between self and technology and the changing notions of reality. Changing social skills and vehicles for communication – lack of face to face contact.
<b>Knowledge base</b>	Volume of information – too large to memorize – how to discern? Quantity of information, how to teach it? What

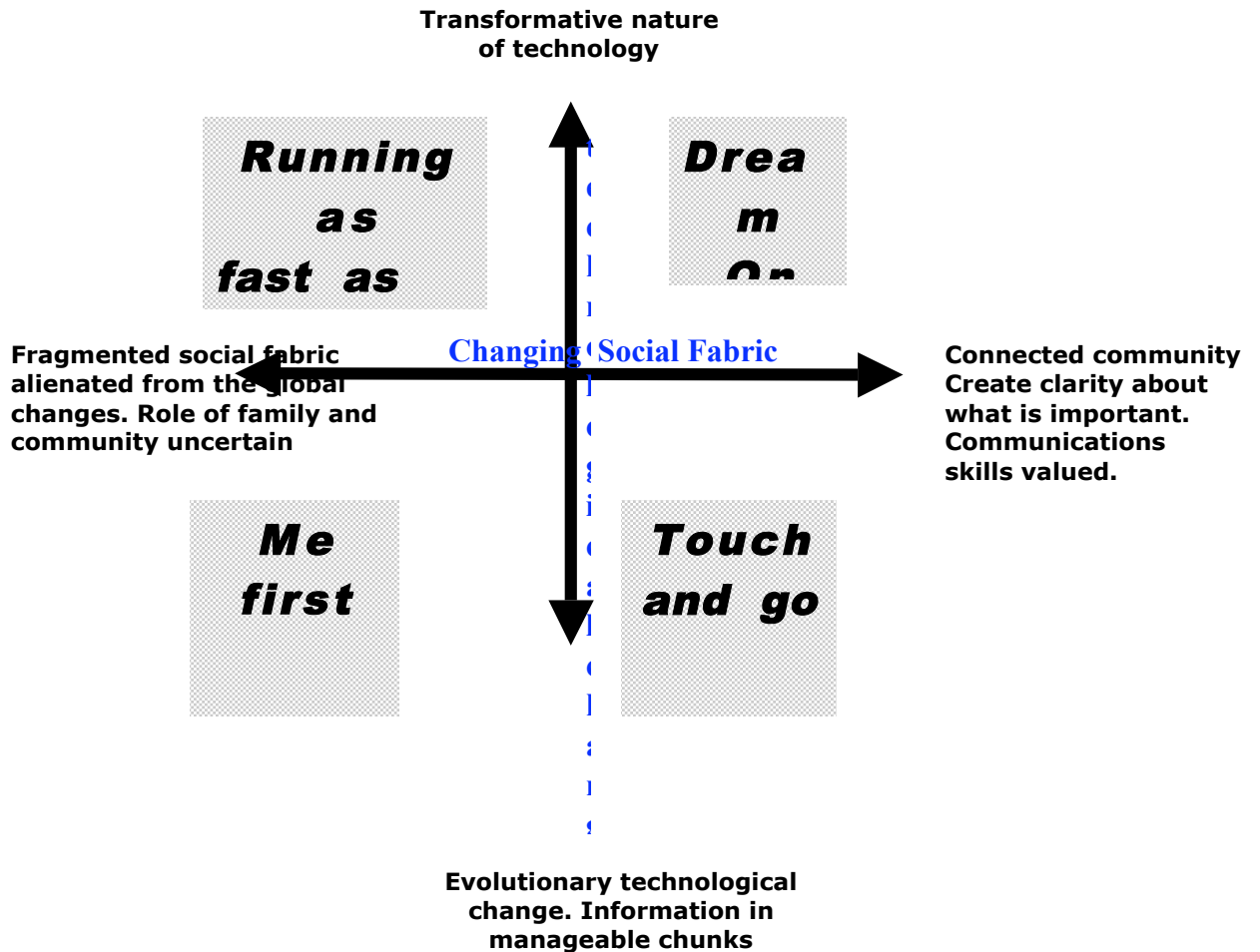
	technology to use to teach with? Changing role of the educator.
<b>Role of First Nations</b>	Role in the future – playing catch up now – how to get ahead of the curve? Role of family, elders, community in the future of the children and the development of their voice.

## The Scenarios

The four scenarios developed based on the Phase 2 public input are in the diagram below. The story behind them appears in the following pages.

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# Scenario Framework - CRPS



1.

# **1. Running as fast as we can (top left)**

## **1. Overview**

### **In this scenario the transformative nature of technology drives the changes.**

A strong global and Alberta economy drives towards a fast paced life with technology at the core. The oil economy has left us with enough in the heritage funds to be able to finally start on technology development of our own. We have put our funding into creating new technologies – particularly nano-technologies that are going to dramatically change how we do everything. Technological developments have spilled over to our kids and we have been able to create a new group of highly connected young people.

In the throes of a technological revolution more people can live in the beauty of the mountain valley and work from home. This technology has allowed wealth to be accumulated and has placed extraordinary pressures on the education system and parents expect their children to keep up with the constant changes.

A polarized social structure contrasts three groups: a large aging and wealthy population; a dynamic globe-trotting young professional set; and a poor, transient service-work population. Public community participation is minimal. Physical and social meeting places are sharply divided.

## **2. The Story – Looking Back from 2030**

We have become a Province connected to the rest of the world in ways we could never have imagined in 2008. Our technological innovations have begun to make as much impact in the world as our oil sands did at the beginning of the century. All of this is good for our students who are learning to be citizens of the world they are connected to. It does however mean that little attention is being paid to family and community life. Schools look very different than they used to and we are now competing for as much information as we can in order to be “up on” the world.

## **3. Technology Conflicts**

The developments in technology brought forward an ongoing battle for resources and between community groups “for” and “against” this way of life. Some citizens embraced this new way of living and understood the advantages of being connected to the world, others worked hard to retain a sense of community and a reminder of the place they are fortunate to live in.

These conflicts spilled over into the schools. The School Administration felt a great strain on its already limited resources to be able to compete technologically. In 2012, the Alberta Government began to understand that the oil wealth was going to need to be diverted in different directions. Funds were released to develop a diversity of industry and some of the nano-technology that had been developed in the background at the universities came to the fore. There was increasing money available for those researchers who wanted to take advantage of the exploration of different technology – first in the medical arena (after all the Heritage Trust Medical Savings Fund had been a beneficiary of the oil revenues for many years) and then in the communications field. Combining these two technological imperatives began to mean that not every community needed specialist doctors. This allowed these

professional people to live in communities such as Banff and Canmore because they could work elsewhere without leaving the lifestyle they have come to appreciate.

#### **4. Social Divides**

There was little overlap or interaction amongst groups of people living in the Bow Valley. First Nations fell even further behind than in the early part of the century. The two groups of people (those who embraced the technology and those who did not) were divided while living in the same community. Their fundamental values were causing the divide. There was no social or spatial overlap as each group tended to use different places, from restaurants and pubs to stores, trails and means of transportation. No group was committed to the valley as a place. Some related to a neighbourhood, or a street or pub, but few related to the community or area as a whole.

One of the great challenges for the education system was how to provide education for a community divided? The tension between expectations of the curriculum and those parents who had embraced the new age, and those parents who were more concerned about the integration of school into their families and community caused additional burden on the teaching staff and Administration.

#### **5. Implications for public education**

In this scenario, innovation abounds as do painful transitions and inequalities.

In Alberta as a whole, substantial investments have been made, especially in disadvantaged communities, to develop flexible, state-of-the-art facilities. ICT was introduced and used extensively.

Now there are highly motivated teachers working in favourable working conditions with high levels of communications technology that allow for easy connection to students no matter where they are. In addition teachers are encouraged to spend time in research and development for better communication tools for education purposes as one of their forms of professional development. In addition there are group activities, networking, and mobility in and out of teaching for the teachers. In fact they might be in competition to teach the most connected child.

New learning institutions to serve the Bow Valley communities have emerged, and professionals (public, private; full-time, part-time) are created in what is now termed a "learning market". Choice plays a key role in the education of the child in this scenario. Choice is made by those buying educational services, and choice is exercised by employers who give market value to different learning routes.

Indicators and accreditation arrangements displace direct public monitoring and curriculum regulation.

## **2. Dream On (top right )**

### **1. Overview**

**This is a story of the development of a commitment to create** together a new future for public education in the whole Bow Valley. The main drivers are strong technological advances and an equally strong commitment to being a valley that is fit to live in, offering strong social connectivity and high quality of life.

Through *Inspiring Hearts and Minds* we have learned that drifting on the education tide would not lead us to a future that was satisfying for most of our children; that we have real choices about what we could become.

This is an institutional and governance challenge, as well as a call for personal responsibility. Early moves includes WIFI access to the internet to every inch of the valley; and the mandate to extend the School Board's planning capacity to include fore - sighting and to become a resource to the whole valley. These three actions will allow the inclusion of community members in a sustained way.

It will be a constant struggle, especially in the first decade, to hold and keep to the new attitude towards public school education. Newcomers arrive with their old assumptions. Further, it will take some time to get Alberta Education to treat us as a test bed for new ideas. First they ignore us; then they fight us. At last, they see us as an asset.

In time, however, the journey will become easier. More of us understand more deeply just what we are about and why. New technologies and organizational forms enabled more consistent participation. In addition, we are able to enhance both our sense of community and our physical environment. Of course, it does not hurt that we were able to attract funding as a significant social experiment and that we are held up in many circles as a positive example to be emulated. Our success becomes self-reinforcing, for example, both knowledge work and knowledge workers are created.

The child learns the twin values of being connected to the world and to his or her own community. The communities in the Bow Valley have made a concerted effort to remain connected both within themselves and between them. Part of the rationale for this is focussed on the children growing up here. A deliberate effort has been made to create a family, community and educational setting in which this twin philosophy is espoused valley wide so as to create a young person fit for the world of 2030.

### **2. The Story – Looking Back from 2030**

Why did we worry about resources for the kids in school and how we were going to help to develop global citizens though our education system? We can see now that, in 2008, we had only a dim sense of the work that lay before us. In 2008, by the standards of the day, much was working for us. Our economic growth was strong. Alberta was prosperous. We were learning to cooperate within the Valley. Education, changing global climate conditions and the community were securely on

our radar, along with wealth creation. In short, the pressures for overt change were not huge.

In hindsight, *Inspiring Hearts and Minds* was a critical step in the right direction. One of the surprises was that the vision was not the blueprint that so many of us had anticipated. Rather, it expressed a new aspiration – a new sense of what we could do and become together over time, if we had the wit and courage to commit to finding and marking a new path for public education.

### **3. What a Lot of Effort it took!**

Conflicts between the push from the world “out there” and the goals and aspiration of the people of the Bow Valley have taken a lot of work to sort out. We had an intent in mind in 2008 and we had to keep renewing our commitment to it as new ideas about technology, the role of education, the requirements for funding and where the jobs are – kept imposing themselves on our valley.

The work was not about not paying attention – after all along with the rest of Alberta we were hooked up to the rest of the world in ways we couldn’t have imagined in 2008. The work was about understanding how the rest of the world was functioning while remaining true to our collective commitment to maintain a well functioning family, community and educational system that held high the idea of being connected.

### **4. Remembering Where we live and Who we are**

We knew we were fortunate to be living in Alberta. The re-elected Liberal government finally weaned the province off its focus on carbon, by taking advantage of the taxes from oil sands, coal-bed methane and natural gas (whose prices finally soared). The focus became the diversification of the economy and particularly the development of a technological Research and Development corridor focused on technology development for mid 21<sup>st</sup> century needs.

The Bow Valley was able to take advantage of this – students could learn at an early age about the technological advances. Because of its commitment to the valley, the School Administration ensured that any new learning of this nature was brought back and used for the benefit of the communities here.

At every level up and down the valley – family, school and community, this became a driving force – a truly integrated learning community if you will. It has meant the retention of the schools bricks and mortar as a learning place for all.

### **5. Community Development**

This sense of connectedness did not come about overnight. There had for many years been natural divisions between the communities in the Bow Valley, which had to be bridged. After all we have a natural environment we all love dearly and the increasing visitor numbers had brought us together before – so why not become united around something so important as the impacts of the burgeoning technology industry on the education of our children.

Many valley wide meetings were held. These were not just in big forums as in *Inspiring Hearts and Minds*. The meetings took place at the kitchen table, around the campfire, in meeting rooms and school classrooms.

Sustained dialogue became a way of life – if we had a community problem to deal with, an environmental issue to discuss, a decision by Parks Canada that would ultimately affect all of us - we considered our joint voice to be of prime importance in determining how to deal with all of these issues.

## **6. Implications for Public Education**

The large majority of schools in the Bow Valley have earned the label "learning organisations" with strong knowledge management and extensive links to the families and communities of the Bow Valley. There are extensive shared responsibilities between schools and other community bodies as sources of expertise, and tertiary education. Professional teachers are not the only sources for information and learning. Involvement in the learning organization by other community members is encouraged. The learning organization environment of the public schools has spawned a wide range of organisational forms and settings, with strong emphasis on non-formal learning. Transformative technology – ICT used extensively, especially for communication and networking - has helped this to happen.

Schools enjoy widespread recognition as the most effective bulwark against fragmentation in society and the family. They are defined by collective and community initiatives addressing education and other issues facing the Bow valley. Because the family and community connections are so strong, schools act in a supportive role that allows schools to mitigate fragmentation.

In the learning organization, old assessment tools make little sense. There are flourishing new forms of evaluation and competence assessment.

Because the Bow valley has taken this stand on connecting the student, family, community and education, there are stronger links between K-12, post-secondary, continuing and adult education. The University of the Bow Valley received its charter in 2026 and the first class graduates in 2030.

The varied arrangements and conditions for learning have resulted in high paying teaching jobs and flexibility. The addition of a continuing education facility has helped to ensure that a core of high-status teaching professionals has been retained.

### **3. Me first (bottom left)**

#### **1. Overview**

**This scenario is driven by our inability to recognize our descent into impoverishment** and has resulted in a slow disintegration of the communities in the valley (even Banff). We face tough choices. There is an increased spread between the haves and have-nots, and increased local conflicts as each seeks his/her own way/interest – witness as an example - the separation of the expensive homes of the part time residents in Canmore. Fragmentation has led to the need for high security for the rich and high crime for the poor; and to high distrust for all. The provincial economy is deeply struggling as Alberta has not had enough foresight to put in place economic drivers to replace the oil.

The primary cause for the slow decline might have been economic but we did not collectively see the weak signals. Because we were relatively fragmented in the Bow Valley, there were no common meeting places or processes to discuss these issues.

The environment and the community are cannibalized in the name of necessity and a short, narrow view of life prevails. There are declines in everything – especially schools unless you can pay for them, and who wants to be schooled here anyway: the rich send their kids to private schools on Vancouver Island. Social services and community facilities slowly degrade, the population declines as those who can, seek a better life elsewhere, and the local economy slowly falls apart.

#### **2. The Story – Looking Back from 2030**

How did we let it slip away? – our sense of community, our respect for the environment, our desirability as a cohesive community welcoming to all. That question plagued us in the early 2020s, and by 2030, it has become clear.

It turns out that we were not any worse than other communities around the world. But we did suffer from a widespread human affliction - that of continuing to behave in ways that once worked for us long after the conditions that made them successful had changed into a fundamentally new set of conditions. There is even a name for it – *overshoot*. Just like a frog that is slowly being heated in a pot until it dies, we did not notice the weak signals that our situation was changing enough to warrant new responses. We just tried harder to make the things we already knew how to do, work for us. We know now that we should have been putting our energy into adaptation strategies, rather than assuming continuity.

It is hard to blame ourselves. After all, in 2008 when we started to think about education for our children in the next 15 years or so, none of us was equipped to notice, let alone respond to the slow but profound changes that would in time challenge our ways of living. We simply missed the fact that a new set of conditions which required new ways of living, were sneaking up on us.

By the time enough of us came to realize what was happening to us, it was far too late to avoid the place in which we now find ourselves.

### **3. Leadership and Governance**

We wanted to believe the promises of an easy future made by our leaders. The trouble was that we did not want to hear hard news, anymore than our leaders were willing to speak it. While we told ourselves we were doing heroic work, we conspired together to make sure the truth was not told, and if told, seen as not credible.

In the Bow Valley, *Inspiring Hearts and Minds* failed as a futures planning project for public education. We did not take the opportunity to engage our minds or our imaginations about what we could become. We wanted comfort now and elected those who promised it to us. We were among the vast majority of North Americans who simply could not bring ourselves to believe that there were good reasons to fundamentally alter our view of education and educational delivery as we had always known it.

And, to be brutally honest, we were not willing to do the hard, frustrating work that we sensed it would take to make significant change happen.

### **4. The Disintegration of the Social Fabric**

The story of the disintegration of the social fabric was slow, not well-recognized or understood, and ultimately fatal to life in the Bow Valley as we had known it. At first, the increasing prosperity was welcomed. Rising house prices drove up the value of our investments. But it also meant that our response in almost all areas was small and slow. We made meagre attempts to sustain our social infrastructures and to re-knit the social fabric in the Bow Valley. In hindsight, all of these efforts were too little, too late.

In our defence, there were some spirited efforts in 2008 - 2009 to get the province to let us be a site for some pilot initiatives in educational governance to test new directions for the future. But these were futile. Neither social nor educational innovation was truly on our radar.

Erosion of our social fabric through the steady increase in the price of housing meant that most of the children who were born here could no longer live here. In one blow, local knowledge was lost and the average age of the population was increased. Many of those who came here were older and mostly interested in a tranquil place in which they could enjoy their own lives. Having neighbours who were real neighbours did not interest them; all that they asked was they were not disturbed. A sense of community was not cherished. School age children and young families were not seen as worth supporting.

### **5. Technology**

New innovations in technology were slow to take hold in the Bow Valley. Developments in new ways of communicating may have been happening elsewhere but we were slow to take advantage of these as well. This was partly due to the restriction of resources caused by the downturn in the economy; and partly due to the lack of a cohesive local plan for the integration and use of new ways of communicating.

As long as those who could afford the vacation homes or the vacations in the Bow Valley had connections, that was enough. Indeed some visitors came to view it as a blessing that technology had not advanced as far in the valley – it made it a more quaint and relaxing place to come to visit.

In the earlier part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the School Administration for the Valley had felt a strain on its already limited resources due to the demands to compete technologically. Now it did not seem to matter so much any more. The administrative challenge was to have enough children to keep the schools open – no matter what the state of the technology. There wasn't enough flexibility to face and manage these challenges anyway.

## **6. Transformation**

This state of affairs could not last – the new Chair of the Public School Board (CRPS) took a stand and decided that the “Me First” mantra was not good enough. There had to be a way to unite the communities to create a collective vision for education in the Bow Valley.

She was booed out of the first Town Hall meeting she arranged, but was not deterred. She found a few people of like mind, although it was difficult to knock at the doors of the “dark windows” in Canmore particularly. Slowly this small group from the MD of Bighorn, Banff, Canmore and the Stoney First Nations gathered force and began to create a larger group which began to discuss the future of their valley and the education of their children. The Bow Valley-ists emerged.

## **7. Implications for public education**

There are powerful, bureaucratic educational systems in place, unable to see the weak signals. Because they are resistant to change, they move only in an evolutionary way. Schools are knitted together into national systems within complex administrative arrangements. This causes a uniform approach to education – which in a slow technological world could work.

Because of the entrenched response of the bureaucracy, the market has significantly extended into education as governments encourage diversification along the lines of “haves and have-nots”. People feel disenfranchised – the teachers, the students, their parents and the School Boards and Administration.

Governments withdraw from much of their direct involvement in schooling. Even though the Bow Valley-ists had made representations to the provincial government, there is no provincial support for innovative community-driven leadership initiatives as there are no major increases in overall funding.

The “Me First” generation is asking for a diversity of education mechanisms but traditional schools survive. The public has high expectations of schools, and there is a continued drift toward the extension of schools' duties that further stretches resources. This works towards embedding a distinct teacher mind set. The teachers have had to protect themselves from this “creep” and some have civil service status and strong unions. With fewer revenues there is a problem with professional status and rewards.

A major crisis of teacher shortages is triggered by a rapidly ageing profession, exacerbated by low teacher morale, buoyant opportunities in more attractive graduate jobs and a resistance to change rapidly.

This circle of retrenchment and conflict or emergency strategies spurs innovation and change - perhaps a revisiting of the work done in 2008 in *Inspiring Hearts and Minds* is called for?

## **4. Touch and go (bottom right )**

### **1. Overview**

**This scenario focuses on the power of community in the face of radical economic change.** The economic collapse causes shifts in the development of technology and creates challenges for the community and for education. Oil demand softens and prices fall. Alberta's rampant growth collapses in a state of shock. Demand for second homes in Canmore plunges. At the same time slow growth affects tourism across the valley. Residential and commercial real estate prices plateau then fall. Development grinds to a halt.

Initially, reduced development pressure eases the demand on municipal resources. But eventually falling market prices puts pressure on tax revenues. Municipalities take leadership in cutting costs but this impacts both social services and maintenance investments in major facilities. The same applies to the School Board which is also affected by the shift in the economy. Lack of resources, however, has a toll and school facilities deteriorate.

Many residents are initially relieved at the slow down in growth. But as the impacts, particularly the social impacts, become more obvious, a groundswell of concern arises demanding change. Neighbourhoods, community groups, churches, schools and other groups and institutions undertake projects from food donations to park clean-ups to trail maintenance to elderly support. The business community also responds.

Lifestyles become more "basic". Some adapt to reduced opportunities by seeking or creating multiple jobs. Some commute to Calgary. Others reduce costs and simplify lifestyles. Biking and walking increase. New entrepreneurs from knowledge-based to craft and art emerge – all attracted by the lifestyle of health, recreation and simplicity.

### **2. The Story – Looking Back from 2030**

We thought we were living in lotus land. The valley had reaped the benefits of all the people who wanted to come to the Bow Valley either permanently or temporarily. And the crunch came relatively quickly – so it stretched our communities to work together on all matters of importance.

By 2030 the Valley has experienced and survived another boom-bust cycle. New, more stable communities exist with a strong sense of place and self-reliance, and local control has emerged. Challenges remain. Although pressure on the environment has fallen from the days of rapid development, new challenges from the lack of resources have emerged.

We have been able to sustain our sense of connection across the Bow Valley. We have worked hard to do this with sporadic successes. Part of the sporadic nature of success has been due to the need for family members to work at several jobs to earn a living. We have realized the importance of a Bow Valley-based regional approach to sustaining ourselves, our families and our communities. For example, the 100

hundred mile diet has taken hold in the valley – it has become the 55 km diet. Through sharing resources, collaborating on services and initiatives like the creation of collective hydro-ponic gardens, the people in the valley have been able to have some sense of self-sufficiency. This has freed up enough time to jointly work on issues of real importance – the creation of a truly sustainable valley and valley wide innovations in networked education.

### **3. We are all part of Mother Earth**

So what if we don't have the extra money in our pocket for our retirement we thought we would because we had relied on the increasing value of our properties to fund that part of our lives – we have each other. Corny as this sounds we are able to use our ability to think and work together to recreate communities in the valley that are more in tune with ourselves and our environment.

Others have done it before us – perhaps not on such a wide geographic scale. But we have had practice – just look at how we developed a common understanding in 2008 of how we want our kids to be educated.

Other joint ventures followed – the creation of a sustainability charter for the Bow Valley, the development of an economic strategy for the area and so forth. These projects came about after we discovered we could work together even if we have different views. Our skill level in this area is unsurpassed in communities in Alberta. Indeed we are looked on as something of a triumph.

### **4. Technology as servant**

Technology has served us well. We are using technology to support us, but it does not drive us as frantically as it used to. We have been able to make use of our connections to the web to learn from elsewhere in the world. Communities in other cold places such as Sweden and Norway have taken on the task to create success out of what seems like failure. They have created a variety of different types of communities to meet the challenges and in doing so have become the architects of their own lives.

Technology still plays a role in the communities of the Bow Valley – indeed it is a useful means to remain connected. It also helps to establish and sustain some of the new education webs and networks that are formed around community activities. For example, students working in the hydro-ponic “gardens” get to display their knowledge of genetics and botany.

### **5. Conflicts**

Conflicts occur any time but can be particularly problematic in the time of diminishing resources. No matter how well connected you are, in time of crisis it can turn to be “all about me” quite quickly.

How to sustain the economy, social fabric and education of our children under circumstances that are as constrained as these seem to be requires a lot of fortitude and constant feedback as to the value of working together.

The leadership needed to help bring this about can come from different sources. With

the focus on the Bow Valley as a whole, we learn from each other in ways we haven't before. But we are not used to this and sometimes it is a little difficult to accept the wisdom of a child or a First Nation.

## **6. Implications for public education**

Valley-wide dissatisfaction with schools and new possibilities for learning leads to some of the schools being abandoned or turned into community gathering places. In fact the gym at the high school makes a terrific greenhouse!!

Learner networks have been established, hence the reason for the disappearance of some schools. These learner networks are now simply part of the broader "networked society". These networks are based on diverse parental, cultural, religious and community interests - some very local in character, others using distance and cross-global networking.

Small group, home schooling and individualised arrangements have become widespread. Because we now know the needs of our children in terms of educational requirements, we are able to set up joint home schooling sessions where the areas of interest overlap. This has been possible because we have exploited powerful and inexpensive ICT.

All of this "do it ourselves" has caused a substantial reduction of existing patterns of governance and accountability.

Specific professionals called "teachers" disappear. Demarcations - between teacher and student, parent and teacher, school and family, education and community - blur and break down as new learning professionals and support systems emerge.