



Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent

Connecting People to Sustain and Enhance Culture, Community and Conservation

Nałmuqzin / Xʷčxʷčut / Miistakistsi:
Kootenai (Giant) Salish (Rocky Mountain Range) Blackfoot (The Mountains)

2nd Annual Conference Summary Report

September 22 & 23, 2011
Polson, Montana



Preface

The 2nd Annual Conference, Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent, was designed and convened in partnership with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes' Tribal Council. The two-day event focused on the integration of culture, community and conservation in the Crown of the Continent. The gathering attracted approximately 200 people and KwaTaqNuk Resort along the southern edge of Flathead Lake served to connect people working in different places and sectors throughout the 18 million acre region and in some cases beyond.

The purpose of this summary report is to amplify key conference themes and ideas around the theme of integrating culture, community and conservation. Two complimentary documents serve to provide the underlying detail for this report, they are the *Did We Hear You?* Report prepared by Stephen Edwards (Sept. 2011) and the 2011 Conference Evaluation Report. These documents capture the depth of knowledge shared and generated during the plenary sessions, small group workshops, and may be reviewed on the Roundtable website. www.crownroundtable.org

This document was prepared with several audiences in mind – the diverse array of supporting co-sponsors who made this conference possible, the exceptional speakers and facilitators, the dedicated participants, those who did not attend but have the desire to know what happened.

A special thank you is extended to the individuals listed below. Individually and as a team they compiled and edited the conference notes which will serve as a documentary record of this significant event in perpetuity. Most of these individuals are students who are interested in learning more about the on-the-ground work and related natural resource issues in the Crown made the time to serve this effort in a volunteer capacity. The opportunity and their involvement reflect the Roundtable's commitment to train future leaders. Through authentic educational engagement and direct contact with today's leaders these students hopefully gain valuable exposure to the wide cross-section and diverse social, political, economic and ecological domains when working to integrate culture, community and conservation in the 21st century.

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This conference is fast becoming a signature event within the Crown of the Continent, and people consistently praise the staff of the Roundtable for its ability to create an inclusive, informed, and deliberative setting connecting people in a shared landscape.

Introduction

The Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent is an ongoing forum to bring together people who care about this special place. It is based on the observation that the future of the region is being shaped by over 100 government agencies, non-government organizations, and community-based partnerships. Through workshops, an annual conference, and collaborative projects, the Roundtable embraces the 18 million acre region; is open to all perspectives, interests, and communities; focuses on connecting people, facilitating communication, and catalyzing action; supplements other related activities and initiatives; and promotes sustainable communities and landscapes.

The Roundtable is not any particular group of people, a government commission, or a new organization. It is a network of existing networks, and is co-convened by the University of Montana's Center for Natural Resources & Environmental Policy and the Center for Large Landscape Conservation.

Indigenous cultures – Tribes, Bands and First Nations – have inhabited the vast landscape of the Crown for thousands of years. It is one of the last places in North America that still hosts all of its native large predators – a sign of a remarkable intact landscape. The 18 million acre ecosystem contains the headwaters of three major water systems; habitat for a diverse array and significant number of native flora and fauna; and a natural landscape of breathtaking vistas, wildness, solitude, and big broad skies that inspires a perpetual connection between people and nature.

The 2011 Conference

The 2nd Annual Conference explored the dynamics that help define the Crown of the Continent's communities and landscapes and was designed to provide specific information and to provoke dialogue and perhaps some answers to specific questions. Questions like, how are landowners working with one another and with new partners to sustain and improve working landscapes? How is a renewed focus on cultural heritage and native knowledge shaping local and regional decisions? How are local governments and civic organizations adapting to changing economic, environmental, and social conditions and helping foster discussions about the future?

Conference Theme – Integrating Culture, Community and Conservation

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Council hosted this conference. They provided a spectacular location on Flathead Lake that offered an extraordinary point in time to explore common interests and strategies for sustaining the cultural and natural landscapes of the Crown of the Continent among today's shareholders. The organizing theme of the conference focused on the importance of integrating culture, community (including local economies), and conservation to sustain and enhance the living system as a whole.

Conference Objectives and Expected Outcomes

1. Build relationships, exchange information, and foster a sense of regional identity;
2. Examine issues facing the Crown of the Continent from the perspective of culture, community, and conservation; and
3. Prepare a strategy to develop a portfolio of investments for adaptive management.

The conference format was designed to be as dynamic as its theme – integrating culture, community and conservation. There was an intentional combination of keynote speakers, plenary and small group workshops, and cultural activities highlighting the integration of Tribal and First Nation perspectives into

the conference. The cultural elements - songs, drums, storytelling - were exceptional; they struck human cords, connecting primeval with contemporary.

Attendees expressed the benefits from the mix of conference participants, the chance to see old friends, make acquaintances, and build new connections. The university student involvement, both as participants and session record keepers, was a terrific addition and should be expanded next year. It was suggested that specific program elements geared toward student interests should be added to future conferences. The desire to get outdoors as part of conference to explore and learn more about the lay of the land – the culture, community and conservation – was strongly suggested.

The Value of Place: Perspectives of First People



Representatives of four different tribes, representing the four quadrants or subregions of the Crown of the Continent, addressed the following topics: (1) traditional uses and value of particular places in the Crown of the Continent; (2) significance of native “place names”; and (3) identify specific places where might work together to preserve and protect such places by integrating culture, communities, and conservation. The outcomes of the presentations fell into two different categories.

The first was the *value and importance of place names* because they describe a sense of self, belonging and purpose. Place names reveal values and why places are important for historical, cultural, spiritual reasons and how they relate to native/tribal understanding of the landscape. Places evoke a sense of social responsibility, convey a “sacred kinship with life”, and cannot be precisely categorized because of multiple meanings and sometimes multiple names for the same place. Place names in native languages – which in some cases may communicate ideas that cannot be readily conveyed in English – shape an understanding of the place itself “Our language holds the secrets of our heritage” Represent a “cultural

path” that is connected to history, as well as to the present and the future. Changing place names is a way of asserting a claim to the place and creating boundaries.

The second outcome delineated important elements to bear in mind and strongly respect when *approaching Tribes and working with Native People*. The advice specified was to communicate what you want and when you want it, and listen, listen, listen! Face-to-face communication is critical, “fill up your gas tank and hit the road”. Allow ample time for discussion, be yourself, be personal, and be aware of tribal governmental structure and process. Build relationships by acknowledging cultural differences, identify common ground and build “community” – a combination of “common” and “unity” – based on shared humanity. Modify existing practices (such as “adaptive management”) to more closely align with and reflect tribal values. Be aware of shared interest of larger territory, that there are multiple layers of interest, and that all connected areas not necessarily included within boundaries “drawn” on a map. When sharing knowledge respect intellectual property (e.g., stories told, plants for food/medicine), and acknowledge sacred kinship, role of prayer, and the relationship to nature and role of humans in this place.



Resilience, Restoration and Resolve: Advancing Adaptive Management in the Crown

The third plenary session explored the challenges and opportunities to design and implement adaptive management strategies throughout the Crown region. The moderator asked questions to the five panel members and engaged them in a discussion about 1) emerging risks; 2) future scenarios; and 3) promising solutions on their local landscapes.

Several common themes emerged when panel members individually described what “adaptive management” is.

- “Tribal nations have been doing this for thousands of years”
- Try something new – e.g. shifting fragmented weed controlled projects on public land to integrated project planning and support with private and public management
- Adaptive management is inclusive by nature, move beyond silos and foster iterative decision-making. Reflection is an important process in adaptive management.
- “Seems like common sense”, not as simple as it sounds – takes time and other factors make issues complex (e.g. restoring bull trout in Flathead Lake – plus drought, climate change, wildfires etc., and impacts to the Lake system)
- Three types of knowledge should be included in the conversation:

- expert/scientific (physical and social sciences)
- community-based (values and experience)
- decision-makers (responsibility)

Challenges to designing and implementing adaptive management are multiple, often complex, and often people have to act without knowing what the effect or cumulative effects will be. Trust is a big one, and one that not everyone can get past. Implementation and restoration management decisions often have to be made without taking the time to gain more knowledge; must act knowing what is known at the given point in time.

Capacity building opportunities for adaptive management needs to be supported by local knowledge through bottom-up processes that encourage a proactive process. Monitoring is an essential component and needs to be integrated into the process before implementation for the purpose of accountability. Time scales or lag time between implementation and understanding the consequences of actions is a constraint; need to consider how lessons learned can be brought back into the management cycle? People have an appetite for adaptive management but need leadership to provide the framework and opportunity for capacity to carry it out.

Linking National and Regional Policy Initiatives to the Crown of the Continent

This third plenary session opened a window to the various governmental initiative and programs that address issues focused on large landscape conservation. It was an opportunity for conference participants to self-select a workshop of interest, learn some specifics about the initiative or program, and ask thoughtful questions of program managers, leaders, and politicians about opportunities for collaboration and for building on-going working groups to implement strategic plans. The four workshops and associated key outcomes to inform and invigorate Crown-wide work were:

1. Government to government relations:

- County Government Initiatives & Challenges
 - Community councils and/or advisory boards help direct rural projects and may serve as liaison to county governments;
 - Overlap with rural initiatives from other governments and agencies to create more opportunities for communication;
 - Establish consistent meeting schedules will enhance communication and avoid misunderstandings;
 - Identify key players and know which roles to maintain;
 - Don't come to the Tribes with a decision already made, be inclusive "as soon as you think of it";
 - Montana is at the forefront of collaborative problem-solving in conservation issues; how do we export the Montana model?
 - Collaborative efforts can address a wide range of community issues, not always about conservation;
 - Need to have relevant stakeholders at the table, they need to be engaged to maintain worthy relationships;

- Is the field too crowded? How much collaboration can government programs support, or have the resources for? Do we lose focus?

2. Canadian Initiatives:

- What can be done on the Eastern side of the Crown that can coordinate with other areas? Are there initiatives outside the region that can be considered and adopted?
- Landowner concerns must be considered and addressed -
 - Weeds, recreational ATV use, stream degradation, hunter access, First Nations hunting rights.
- There are regulation differences between oil and gas drilling, coal mining, and logging on Crown lands in the Crown of the Continent; there needs to be a balance in the standards used to balance environmental protection and socio-economic values.

3. Americas Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative, Farm Bill, and State/Private Programs:

- AGO
 - 5 key landscapes – Crown of the Continent is one; the USFS is the lead agency;
 - Investing in place-based organizational collaboratives to further capacity to collaboration with other groups;
 - 12 of the 27 AGO action items have a strong fit within the Crown of the Continent landscape.
- Farm Bill
 - Wide array of field-based programs; uncertainty for the next bill passing especially in terms of budgeting;
 - Programs in the Blackfoot River Valley – Blackfoot Challenge – had a plan without boundaries, conservation was inclusive, and not just one acre at a time.
- State/Private Programs
 - Farm bill established most of the programs, and established that the state forestry program is the partner. This does not mean they cannot build partnerships outside of the US Forest Service.
 - Programs: Forest Legacy, Watershed Cooperative, Invasive Species Cooperative, Urban and Community Forestry;
 - 50% of all program budgets are taken off the top; the states then compete for the funding through a competitive grant process.

4. Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative (GNLCC):

- The Strength of the GNLCC is the advisory team because it represents many different interests;
 - Climate issues drove the original project, and consideration for how you talk about climate change;
 - Conservation delivery can't be done without buy-in with community-based groups; considered how can we emulate the Blackfoot Challenge all over the Great Northern landscape.

- How should the Great Northern engage in the grassroots?
- Education is important; engage college students to share their conservation experiences with peers; immerse youth in cultural experiences on Tribal lands; reach out to those leaders in communities who represent community-based groups.

Moving Forward

Significant accomplishments have been made by the Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent Leadership Team since the 2nd annual conference. These accomplishments are representative of the meaningful knowledge generated by conference participants from the quadrants in the final break-out sessions. (See pgs 20-25 from *Did We Hear You?* Report for detailed notes www.crownroundtable.org.)

◆ Select Leadership Team Co-Chairs - The Leadership Team of the Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent, a diverse group of 15 community, conservation, and tribal leaders from throughout the region selected three co-chairs to represent the three domains connecting people in the Crown. A cultural co-chair, Clayton Matt, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes; a community co-chair, Mary Sexton, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation; a conservation co-chair, Stephan Legault, Crown of the Continent Conservation Initiative.

◆ Develop and Adopt Terms of Reference - The Leadership Team developed and adopted the Terms of Reference to guide the Roundtable. See www.crownroundtable.org for copy of Terms of Reference.

◆ Create Adaptive Management Fund – Thanks to the catalytic work with the Kresge Foundation, the Leadership Team has started designing the architecture for this Fund to promote and support adaptive management throughout the Crown. The team’s vision is that the Fund will invest in projects that are consistent with the values and principles in the Friends of the Crown (FOTC) statement, and seek to advance and secure those values and principles. Specifically, the Fund portfolios will focus on the principles articulated in the statement – ecological integrity, sustainable communities, institutional relations, and public information, education and participation. The team hopes to leverage the investment by the Kresge Foundation to raise additional funds from public and private sources for the Fund.

◆ Prepare Implementation Plan for 2012 – Building on the initial work to design the Adaptive Management Fund the Leadership Team developed an Implementation Plan for 2012 through an inclusive, transparent, and deliberative process. The team began by negotiating and agreed to a set of criteria to evaluate and select Crown-wide collaborative projects. Proposals were solicited, and twenty-two were received, ranked and those best suited to FOTC principles focused on integrating proposals, seeking true partnerships, and connecting individual efforts to broader regional goals. A suite of seven collaborative projects were finally selected after multiple rounds of negotiation and will begin to be implemented in 2012. The projected work focuses largely on ecological integrity and sustainable communities. The second suite of projects will be selected by July 1, 2012 and focus on building leadership and facilitating communication and education. The Team fully anticipates and expects their collective abilities to connect and integrate work at multiple spatial scales and across the 18 million acre landscape will continue to improve in 2012.

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Center for Large Landscape Conservation
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The Conference Co-Sponsors were:

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Alberta Ministry of Tourism, Parks and Recreation
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Crown of the Continent Ecosystem Education Consortium
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