

Strategic Plan - Seeds for Eco Communities

2014 - 2024



December, 2019 Version

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this strategic plan is to bring forward a vision - to share information, tools and confidence with people around the world on how to develop low/zero impact eco communities, demonstrating a respectful relationship with their surrounding lands and waters.

Any resources that are brought together to support Seeds for Eco Communities will be used directly towards this initiative and related partnerships which support a similar mission, vision, values and/or goals as outlined in this plan. It is envisioned that Seeds for Eco Communities will be launched as a non-profit organization.

This plan explains its purposes through a mission statement, vision, values and goals. It includes a set of related actions and strategies with a proposed path forward for delivery of each goal. A consideration of risks and opportunities is also included.

Finally, there is an Appendix for further details on the proposed pilot community.

This plan is a living document and is proposed for discussion with team members and the Board of Directors and may require updating from time to time.

Purpose

Mission

To share information, tools and confidence with people around the world on how to start living healthy and sustainably through a respectful relationship with the surrounding lands and waters in low/zero impact eco communities.

Vision

A world where the water, animals, plants and people are living sustainably together, with an opportunity to embrace their life's journey and who carry this vision forward to future generations.

Values

The following 7 core values are set out to help guide efforts in recognition of the 7 grandfather teachings. The 7 grandfather teachings recognize the importance of knowledge, honour, bravery, honesty and truth along with other important lessons.

The 7 values of this organization include:

1. Holistic world view
2. Mutual respect for the land, water, plants, animals and people
3. Transparency and accountability
4. Value each of our roles and responsibilities
5. Inclusivity, including cooperation beyond borders
6. Recognition of existing and new knowledge, science and best practices
7. Service beyond self

Goals

Below are 5 key goals to guide efforts forward:

1. To provide practical tools, resources and education transferable locally, nationally and around the globe on Seeds for Eco Communities, in as many accessible methods and languages as possible.
2. To create leaders around the globe who share knowledge, information and tools on Seeds for Eco Communities and who support the establishment of new communities.

3. To re-connect through teachings on the relationship of land, water, plants, animals and people; empower others to take on their responsibility in caring for and actively protecting and restoring mother earth.
4. To support efforts to help minimize the ecological footprint at local, national and global scales by establishing communities locally and with time to make a difference at a global scale.
5. To monitor approaches, progress and environmental, social and economic health of each community and to share this information broadly.

Moving Forward

This document focuses on the first 10 years of efforts which started in the fall of 2014 with the initial development of this strategic plan and continues forward to 2024. Efforts beyond 2024 will be developed at a later date.

Activities and Strategies

#	Activities	Strategies / Deliverables	Timeline	Status
Goal 1: Share Tools, Resources & Information Locally, Nationally & Globally				
1	A: Establishing Organization	Draft strategic plan and begin to gather information and resources to support initiative	Fall 2014 - April 2016	Complete
		Host first meeting to discuss draft Strategic Plan; discussed at Annual General Meetings and as needed with team	Ongoing	Ongoing - 1 st Meeting January 2016 and ongoing meetings
		Register organization	April - May 2016	Complete
		Open bank account and obtain insurance	June 2016 and when needed	Complete - bank account open and insurance obtained
		Finalize strategic plan, update as required.	January 2016 and as required thereafter	Ongoing - last updated December 2019
B: Secure Resources	Confirm and secure key resources and expertise to launch organization & pilot community, including team training	Ongoing	Board of Directors, Advisory Committee and Volunteers established, supported by organizational policies, by-laws, etc. Pilot community land search summer 2016 and ongoing	
C: Conduct Research	Undertake jurisdictional research to gather existing knowledge, tools, resources and best practices	Ongoing	Complete - with ongoing learning	
D: Develop Tools, Guides & Information	Develop tools, guides, other resources and information for sharing	Ongoing	Underway and ongoing	

	E: Launch Organization & Pilot Community	Official launch of organization & pilot community	Summer 2016 and TBD	Organization registered and launched May 2016, website and social medial platforms launched in 2017, land search for pilot community is ongoing
Goal 2: Create Leaders to Share Knowledge, Information and Tools				
2	A: Establish Core Team and Policies	Develop Board of Directors, Terms of Reference, By-Laws, Financial Policies and team members roles and responsibilities	November 2015 - September 2016 and ongoing	Board of Directors, Terms of Reference, By-Laws and Financial Policy established and approved, additional policies (Volunteer, Social Media, Health and Safety, Workplace Harassment) established and approved, all documents as well as team members roles and responsibilities reviewed and updated annually, as needed
	B: Build Out Partnerships	Build partnerships, share information and resources including on-line, telephone and face to face communications	July 2015 and ongoing	Lamas, Wales and Findhorn, Scotland eco community visits July 2015; Manitoba and Saskatchewan eco community visits July 2018; website, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn launched 2017, Pinterest and information sharing booth at various events both launched summer 2019
	C: Develop and Deliver Engagement Plan	An engagement plan will be developed with a specific focus of how to expand networks and	2019-2020	Underway

		partnerships out beyond core team		
Goal 3: Re-connect Through Teachings on Land, Water & People Relationship				
3	A: Consider Key Teachings, Tools & Information	Develop teachings, tools, resources and information for sharing	Ongoing	Underway
	B: Deliver Key Teachings, Tools & Information	Deliver teachings, tools, resources and information	Ongoing	Information booth hands on learning and ongoing
Goal 4: Reduce Ecological Footprint at Local, National & Global Scales				
4	A: Develop Pilot Community	Seek and purchase land for pilot community	Summer 2016 and ongoing	Ongoing visits since 2016
		Obtain all necessary permits, and approvals for pilot community	Ongoing	To follow
		Build pilot community	Once land obtained	To follow
		Develop a financial strategy for pilot community and organization moving forward	Once land obtained and ongoing for organization	To follow
	B: Develop Other Communities in Ontario	Share information, tools and resources to support others to develop new communities in Ontario	Ongoing	To follow
	C: Develop Other Communities in Canada / World	Share information, tools and resources to support others to develop new communities in Canada / World	Ongoing	To follow
	D: Expand Networks	Seek partnerships and opportunities on how Seeds for Eco Communities could be used as a vehicle for other change to improve the overall health and well-being of the planet, its plants, animals and people	Ongoing	To follow
	Goal 5: Monitor and Evaluate Progress, Share Information Across the Globe			
5	A: Monitoring and Evaluation	Undertake jurisdictional research to gather existing knowledge, tools, resources and best practices	Summer 2018 and ongoing	Ongoing

		Develop partnership(s) with Universities to have masters / PhD student(s) conduct monitoring and evaluation of the pilot community	Once land obtained	To follow
	B: Sharing Information	Concurrent to the launch of the organization, share information through the new website and social media networks e.g., Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn	Summer 2017 and ongoing	Ongoing weekly posts to social media and monthly did you know information series
	C: Internal Communications	Regular communications with team members via calls and emails, face to face and teleconference meetings, as needed	Ongoing	Ongoing

Risks and Opportunities

The following table lays out key opportunities and related considerations to potentially be pursued under each goal.

Goals	Opportunities	Key Consideration
<p>Goal 1: Share Tools, Resources & Information Locally, Nationally & Globally</p>	<p>Presents an opportunity to broadly educate people about simple options on how to live more sustainably</p>	<p>Some of the tools, guides and resources developed could potentially be used to modify existing homes/businesses for improved sustainability</p>
	<p>Provides opportunities to get key resources translated into other languages</p>	<p>This could help to support the continuation of traditional languages</p>
	<p>Having the land for the pilot community purchased by the project lead reduces risks to success and provides flexibility to grow the community into the future</p>	<p>Avoids dependency on other funders and complications associated with land severances with separate ownership</p>
	<p>Training and education will be provided for team members, as required</p>	<p>Several training modules have been developed by Seeds for Eco Communities and are offered to all team members. This will help to build up personal skill sets and will support career goals that are aligned/related with the mission, vision and goals of the organization.</p>
<p>Goal 2: Create Leaders to Share Knowledge, Information and Tools</p>	<p>Development of external connections and networks will support partnerships with other organizations with a similar mission, vision and goals</p>	<p>Growing partnerships and working with other leaders in Ontario on green building, beginning to make connections around the globe via the development of the Global Eco Directory.</p>

	Developing common partnerships outside of the organization will provide opportunities for team members to travel	Allocations for team travel will be added to the financial plan, will vary as opportunities arise
Goal 3: Re-connect Through Teachings on Land, Water & People Relationship	Provides opportunities to support/build capacity for Indigenous teachings and cultural awareness	This can be achieved in a variety of ways through the pilot community and in the materials and programs developed by the organization
	Provides an opportunity for traditional knowledge transfer from elders to youth	The concept of including all 3 generations in pilot community and other communities is recommended, continue to seek ways to support traditional knowledge transfer, as appropriate
	Building teachings on the land, water and people relationship and balance will empower others to take action to protect the planet	Teachings may be required to be delivered orally, accommodations will be arranged to make this possible
Goal 4: Reduce Ecological Footprint at Local, National & Global Scales	Pilot community will provide a demonstration of how ecological communities can operate in Ontario and in winter climates	There are many existing communities from around the globe and several designs of tiny homes in extremely cold climates to learn from, there is currently no known eco community in Ontario as proposed
	Success of Seeds for Eco Communities provides a vehicle to drive other common goals in organizations with similar interests	Expanding networks beyond Seeds for Eco Communities will have benefits aligned with organizational goals and will require careful consideration and discussions with the Board of Directors
Goal 5: Monitor and Evaluate Progress, Share	Ensuring intensive monitoring of environmental, social and	Support through PhD / Masters and/or university or college students will

Information Across the Globe	economic elements of communities will provide data to demonstrate success and lessons learned in a variety of different ways	provide credible third party results. Where possible, continue to pursue partnerships with credible Universities and educational institutes.
	Sharing information freely and broadly will remove traditional barriers and red tape associated with government and organizational knowledge transfer	Careful consideration will have to be taken to ensure information shared is accurate, easy to understand, respectful of confidentiality and appropriately communicated

The following table lays out key challenges anticipated with each goal. Included are key strategies to mitigate each of these potential challenges.

Goals	Key Challenges	Management Strategies
Goal 1: Share Tools, Resources & Information Locally, Nationally & Globally	Jurisdictional research and development of materials will take a significant amount of time investment	Build out network of volunteers and seek grants / funding to deliver research and products
	Securing resources required for each step of the journey	Timing and certainty of funding is unknown, significant amount of effort from team is required and ongoing, this includes securing necessary funds and expertise to deliver on key tasks
	Training might be hard to find, costly and there may not be existing training that covers off all needs	Some of the training will have to be established in house. Key training modules have been developed e.g., green building, social media SketchUp. Certain certifications or key courses will require resources to send team to, this will be included in the proposed financial plan.

	Copy write and sharing of information needs to be carefully undertaken to avoid any legal issues	Throughout information gathering and partnership building this will be carefully considered and appropriate approvals will be identified and obtained from the onset. This will be part of the 101 team training and will be built into organizational policies. All materials shared will have logo and copyright added.
	Respectful consideration and protection of traditional ecological knowledge	Work with community members from the onset on how information, knowledge and teachings would be shared in a respectful way
Goal 2: Create Leaders to Share Knowledge, Information and Tools	Establishing a team is dependent on a number of peoples time commitments	Provide flexibility on hours contributed to suite everyone's schedules, develop volunteer forms to clearly lay out expectations on who is doing which tasks, discuss resourcing and opportunities at team meetings, active recruitment of volunteer support
	Site visits to eco communities may be costly	Personal funds to be put aside to visit these communities as a priority, several visits have already taken place
	Other experts and partners beyond core team are needed to deliver an initiative of this scale	An engagement plan to reach out to various networks and partners will be developed. Team prioritization will take place on building out social media networks.
Goal 3: Re-connect Through Teachings on Land, Water & People Relationship	Some teachings are oral in nature and cannot be easily shared via the website and social media	Seek advice from community members regarding the best way to

		share these teachings and tools.
	There may be significant costs associated with the development and delivery of this information	Costs associated with this goal will be initially built into the financial plan, supporting grants can be applied for - to help offset costs.
Goal 4: Reduce Ecological Footprint at Local, National & Global Scales	Significant coordination required for launch of first pilot community to ensure success	Team members will have time allocated for this task and some flexibility with resources in the financing plan will be provided to ensure success.
	Time required for permits	Early research on general laws in Ontario is underway, to take place before purchase. As soon as a site is selected, intensive research into applicable local, provincial and federal laws and permit requirements will take place, time required for permits and approvals will be over-estimated in case there are delays.
	Some existing municipalities, industries and builders may oppose Seeds for Eco Communities as it could detract from their profits	Seeds for Eco Communities wants to work in harmony with all people including neighbouring communities. Early engagement of the community will be a priority. If challenges arise, proactive partnerships and information sharing will be utilized to mitigate.
	Community involvement in the plans for their community is essential	Significant effort will be made to engage members of the eco community and the surrounding community at the onset. Eco community members will be involved in the design,

		development, implementation and monitoring and assessment as well as the visions for the future of the community.
	Establishing communities in other jurisdictions will require more resources to visit, build partnerships and to develop tailored tools and resources	Local communities and champions will be approached from the onset. Ideally the local participants would lead development and implementation of the new community with support from Seeds for Eco Communities and existing established communities. Eco community directory will be a key resource to help connect new/established communities around the globe.
	Ongoing funds will be required to maintain the organization and to continue to monitor and build	A financial strategy will be developed to plan forward and where possible secure dollars several years out.
Goal 5: Monitor and Evaluate Progress, Share Information Across the Globe	Monitoring to be a reliable and trusted source or it will be questioned	Research and advice will be obtained from a reliable, certified and trusted monitoring source, to be sought through a reputable University at the beginning and reputable organizations or Universities moving forward.
	Monitoring and reporting out could be problematic if results are not communicated properly	A review process will be established for everything to be posted online, including monitoring results. This is not intended to change the facts but to ensure communications are

		accurate, simple, clear, concise and not offensive to anyone.
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Appendices

Appendix A - Pilot Community

It is envisioned that every community established is designed, built and maintained by the people of the community, including guidance and membership from both youth and elders.

For the pilot community, access to internet will be required as it is anticipated that the main office of Seeds for Eco Communities will reside in the pilot community.

Property Preferences

Location: Anywhere in Ontario, approximately 1 to 4 hours driving distance from Toronto

Lot Size: 5 to 100+ acres

Potential Land Use Categories: Agricultural/Residential/Recreational/Other

Water Source: Natural spring and/or well groundwater

Energy Source: Renewable low impact sources e.g., solar, small scale wind

The Land

Ideally, a minimum of 10 acres of land for the pilot community will be purchased and would include one or several springs and/or wells (preferably springs or both), water source will need to be confirmed prior to purchase. A location close to surface water would also be optimal and clean soil and a high elevation are essential. Site visits to potential properties commenced the summer of 2016 and will continue until a property is found. The selected location will be pursued with careful assessment of the land including flow tests for wells and/or spring, water and soil quality assessments and home inspections if structures already exist on the land. Land use requirements will also be examined before purchase through research and discussions with local boards. Road access will be required for safety reasons, however it is anticipated that the community will be self-sufficient on energy and water needs. Ideally the property would be purchased on a road that is cleared of snow in the winter time.

Research on past activities on the land and surrounding area will also take place once a property is found. Surrounding land uses within approximately a 100-150 mile radius will be examined to assess potential contamination. It is anticipated that permits and approvals will be sought as soon as the land is purchased.

It is envisioned that the first building in the community will be the shared building, in the future this could be home to learning, recreation, juice bar, tool shed, shared eating area and kitchen, laundry facilities, etc. for the whole community - there is so much to be shared.

The shared building can also be a temporary home for those initially residing on the community - as they build their personal eco homes.

Community Membership

Potential members of the pilot community will be assessed by the Board of Directors for suitability through an application process, first written and then followed by an interview. Interested community members will need to document their intentions on the community and provide details on the type of eco home they plan to build. Once members are selected they will be requested to sign a letter of agreement which outlines the roles and responsibilities of community members. The land for the pilot community will be purchased from personal funds by the project leader, in this pilot's case this will be Laura Blease, Founder of Seeds for Eco Communities. Each member of the community will be responsible for paying an annual/monthly fee to offset costs associated with property taxes, shared insurance, water and energy needs and basic maintenance of the community. It is anticipated that these fees will be minimal (approximately \$300-\$400/month).

Costs to construct and maintain each home will be the responsibility of each community member, help will be provided by other community members and partners wherever possible.

Potential Elements of Pilot Community

Basic initial structures include 3-4 initial first homes, multi season greenhouse with tool shed, shared building for healing/recreation/teaching/etc. and a visitor's opportunity home. The visitor's opportunity home provides an option for others to visit the community for a few days or a week + to gain hands on experience of the pilot community. This will educate others on Seeds for Eco Communities, while generating revenue for the community, including help with community building and efforts. Cultural teachings and awareness will be integral to the planning, development and day to day operation of the community.

Space for approximately 5-10+ additional homes is anticipated. A juice bar will be established in the shared building, and a path surrounding the community is envisioned for those who would like to stay active. Educational plaques will be established throughout the community in English and traditional languages as a means of education. Depending on the interests of community members, part of the land could be reserved for environmental initiatives such as planting trees and supporting innovative projects.