Integrating Culture in Sustainable Communities: Canadian Policy and Planning Approaches

M. Sharon Jeannotte and Caroline Andrew
Centre on Governance
University of Ottawa
Symposium on Placing Culture in Sustainable Development
Coimbra, Portugal
May 15, 2012
Overview of presentation

- Background on four-pillar model and Canadian Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs)
- Integrating the cultural pillar within the ICSPs
- Policy and implementation issues
- Concluding thoughts on current status and future of ICSPs
Four-pillar model of sustainability includes:
- Cultural vitality
- Environmental responsibility
- Economic health
- Social equity

Conceptually, the role of culture is still uncertain.

Operationally, integrated approach to implementing plans is still a challenge.
Background on governance in Canada

- Constitutional monarchy and a federal state with a democratic parliament
- Ten provinces and three territories
- Spans area of 9,970,610 square kilometres
- Municipalities not recognized under the Canadian Constitution and are considered “creatures of the provinces”
Background on ICSPs

2005 – Federal government introduced Gas Tax Agreements with the provinces to share a portion of gasoline revenues, which were to be transferred to municipalities using a per capita formula.

Transfers were conditional upon preparation of ICSPs – overarching documents to align municipal plans and policies under one integrated decision-making framework based on the four-pillar model.
What are ICSPs?

As defined in Gas Tax Agreements an ICSP is:

- “a long-term plan, developed in consultation with community members that provides direction for the community to realize sustainability objectives it has for the environmental, cultural, social and economic dimensions of its identity.”
Rationale for ICSP initiative

- To accelerate a shift in local planning and decision making to:
  - a more long-term, coherent and participatory approach to achieving sustainable communities
  - help communities plan and manage resources, achieve identifiable outcomes, deliver services and address priorities within an integrated four-pillar framework
Challenges in integrating cultural pillar

- Concepts of integrated planning and cultural pillar were new to both provinces and municipalities.
- Several provinces and organizations developed guides to help municipalities prepare ICSPs.
Overview of inclusion of culture in ICSP Guides (N=17)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitions of culture</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rationale for inclusion of culture</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key aspects/notable contexts of culture</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance on integration of culture</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key mechanisms for integrating culture</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overview of ICSPs

- Hundreds of ICSPs produced between 2006 and 2011
- Smaller communities most responsive
- Conceptually, culture most often linked to:
  - Community identity, distinctiveness, attractiveness and “sense of place”
  - Sociability, public participation, voluntarism and social networks
- Operationally, culture tended to be marginalized in sustainability action plans.
City of Kingston’s ICSP “Sustainable Kingston” (2010)

- Vision of Kingston - “Canada’s most sustainable city”
- ICSP included guiding principles, themes, indicators and goals to help achieve vision
- Organized under four separate pillars but recognized the need for integration
- Cultural pillar includes four themes:
  - arts, creativity and entertainment
  - history and heritage
  - active citizenship
  - Diversity
- Established community partnerships to help implement ICSP
City of Williams Lake ICSP
“Imagine Our Future” (2010)

- ICSP used as basis of Official Community Plan “Creating Our Future!” (2011)
- Identified 10 strategic priority areas including three relevant to cultural pillar:
  - Distinctive arts and culture
  - Partnering with First Nations
  - Lively downtown
- Identified 25-year objectives, key performance indicators, and five-year transition strategies for each priority area
- Official Community Plan translated ICSP into specific goals and objectives over five to ten years
Current status of ICSPs

- Gas Tax Transfers made permanent in 2008
- Change in government in 2006 and 2008 financial crisis resulted in federal withdrawal from active encouragement and funding of ICSPs
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) provided support for ICSP development under Green Municipal Fund until 2011
- FCM now only supports sustainable neighbourhood action plans, community brownfield action plans, and greenhouse gas reduction plans
In looking at overall literature the dominance of the plan is clear – and Sharon has covered this with the ICSP analysis – Local Agenda 21 plans were also mentioned.

But also three other processes that complement planning – that were seen as effective ways of integrating culture into broader planning processes.
Three other processes

- Developing a common vision and a common understanding – before the planning process
- Governance practices – to enhance the planning process
- Public participation – to drive acceptance and adoption of the plan
Common Vision

Need for a common community vision and a common understanding of culture and the way it would be integrated into the planning process before starting planning – setting the general directions for the integration of culture

Leadership and champions – who are the best champions? – elected officials, community leaders, cultural leaders?
Governance Practices

- Importance of Partnerships – to enhance planning process
- Horizontal and Vertical Partnerships
  - Horizontal – both within an individual government structure and between government and civil society
  - Vertical – intergovernmental – the national and the local
Public Participation

The Ideal – public participation as bottom-up citizen commitment to holistic vision of society and importance of culture drives public understanding and adoption of plan. But at the level of concrete examples of public participation many more top down planner driven examples of organizing and structuring public participation.
Observations on the impact of ICSPs

- Emphasis shifting to neighbourhoods
- Discourse shifting:
  - Organizational innovations
  - Planning innovations
  - New vocabulary of sustainability
  - Challenges to traditional notions of cultural development
  - Greater engagement by cultural stakeholders
  - Increasing use of citizen experts
Thank you!

M. Sharon Jeannotte, Centre on Governance, University of Ottawa
Sharon.Jeannotte@uottawa.ca

Caroline Andrew, Director, Centre on Governance
University of Ottawa
candrew@uottawa.ca