

# COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS ON NATURAL RESOURCES:

*Using open dialogue to find common ground*

December 2014



**Resource Works**

JOBS FOR BC. INNOVATION FOR THE WORLD.





# Resource Works

JOBS FOR BC. INNOVATION FOR THE WORLD.

## About the Resource Works Society

Resource Works is an independent Society open to participation by British Columbians from all walks of life who are concerned about their future economic opportunities. It is a response to the widespread observation that low economic literacy is a barrier to meaningful public discourse on matters central to the quality of life of British Columbians.

Resource Works communicates with British Columbians about the importance of the province's resource sectors for their personal well-being. It demonstrates how responsible development of British Columbia's resources creates jobs and innovation throughout the province, both directly and indirectly, while maintaining a clean and healthy environment. And Resource Works shows how the long-term economic future of British Columbia, including the Lower Mainland depends on the responsible development and extraction of the province's resources.

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# Resource Works Governance

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*A voluntary body that provides leadership and strategic advice to the Resource Works Society.*

**Lori Ackerman** is the Mayor of Fort St. John, BC and a director of the Peace River Regional District.

**James Brander, PhD**, is the Asia-Pacific professor of international business at UBC's Sauder School of Business.

**Ken Brown** is a First Nations development leader and former elected chief of Klahoose First Nation.

**Tai Cheng, LLB**, is Counsel for Fulida Group, a China-based company with pulp mill operations in Port Alice.

**David Emerson, PhD**, is an economist, civil servant, business leader, former Canadian foreign affairs minister.

**Mark Gordienko** is the President of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, Canada, and has more than 40 years of experience in the labour movement.

**Steve Hunt** is the Director of United Steel Workers District 3. He led the USW merger with the Industrial, Wood and Allied Workers of Canada, making USW the largest forest workers' union in Canada.

**Kathy Kinloch** is the president of British Columbia Institute of Technology.

**Yong-Jae Kim** is a partner in Gowlings' Vancouver office. His practice focuses on corporate finance, mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, share and asset acquisitions, and takeover bids in the mining and energy industry.

**Gerry Martin** is a Terrace resident and a member of the BC Jobs and Investment Board and the BC Agenda for Shared Prosperity advisory council. He is the former chair of the BC Progress Board, and served on the Premier's Technology Council.

**Dan Miller** is a former Premier of British Columbia. He also served as the minister for municipalities, for energy, mines and petroleum resources, for skills training and labour, and for forests.

**Angus Reid** is a former professional football player, small businessperson and motivational speaker.

**Brian Riddell, PhD**, is the President and CEO of the Pacific Salmon Foundation and member of the Royal Society of Canada's expert

panel on ocean climate change and marine biodiversity.

**Puneet Sandhar, LLB**, is a lawyer with Sanghera Sandhar Law Group based in Surrey, BC. In 2012, she received the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in recognition of her dedication to the community.

**Bud Smith** has served as an MLA representing Kamloops, as a cabinet minister, and as the Attorney General of BC. He is currently the chair of BC Lottery Corp.

**Kathryn Teneese** is the chair of the Ktunaxa Nation Council. She is a member of the Akisqnuq (formerly Columbia Lake Band) of the Ktunaxa Nation and served as the Chief Negotiator for the Ktunaxa Nation in their ongoing negotiations with Canada and British Columbia since 1996.

**Sandra Wear** is a successful technology entrepreneur and CEO of Canadian Women in Technology (CanWIT).

## SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOWS

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# About this report

*Community Conversations* is part of an effort by Resource Works to help engage British Columbians at the community level in discussions about resource issues. In recent years, communities across BC have been front and centre in debates around resource development. These debates have frequently been far from ideal. Discourse is too often dominated by polarized debate, heated rhetoric and disagreement on basic facts. It is our hope that this report helps to encourage a more productive conversation on resource development at the local level.

The first step of this process was to promote a better understanding of how local communities are affected economically by resource development. *Community Impacts*, published by Resource Works in October 2014, illustrates the economic activity flowing from BC's resource sector to the community level in BC, with a focus on eight communities in BC's Lower Mainland.

This report captures the results of our next effort, which was to visit the communities that were studied in *Community Impacts*, share our findings, and – most importantly – listen to residents in those communities. Our primary goal was to identify areas of common ground: key themes that describe broadly shared values relating to resource development. Our hope is that this common ground can be used to support healthy public discourse on resource issues in the future.

## The people behind the process

Resource Works owes a special thanks to Assistant Researcher Anja Novak, who took a leading role in coordinating the research process and organizing the eight Community Breakfast Conversations on Natural Resources events. We also express great appreciation to the team at Decision Partners, a group of leading behavioural scientists and practitioners specializing in stakeholder engagement, for their valuable advice and guidance. While we did not attempt to fully replicate their advanced research techniques, our work benefited greatly from their input and example.

## About the author

Peter Severinson is the Research Director at Resource Works. He contributed to the research design of *Community Conversations* and served as a discussion facilitator in the conversations that inform this report. He has a background as a business journalist, having served for several years as the Assistant Editor of *BCBusiness* magazine. He has a master's degree from the School of Public Policy at Simon Fraser University and has completed research and analysis work for several BC-based institutions, including the Business Council of BC, BC Housing, the City of Surrey, and the Western Region office of the Department of Canadian Heritage.



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# 1. Community conversations on natural resources

In the fall of 2014, the Resource Works Society hosted eight community conversations in eight cities in the Lower Mainland where 120 participants discussed natural-resource issues in BC. Specifically, we asked participants to discuss two main questions: What does responsible resource development mean to you? And how do we build productive public dialogue?

This report is focused on describing what the participants had to say in those conversations. But before we begin that review, here are a few words about why Resource Works undertook this project and what we hope to achieve.

One of Resource Works' core goals is to help British Columbians engage in an informed discussion about natural-resource issues. The society was founded partly in response to a view among many inside and outside the resource sector that public discourse on resource issues in BC is frequently dysfunctional. Discourse on resource issues is too often dominated by vocal interest groups with inflexible positions, heated rhetoric, and contradictory information, which leads to an erosion of trust, the entrenchment of adversarial positions and poor resource-development decisions.

One way Resource Works hopes to improve public dialogue is to help find common ground on resource issues – a set of values that can be accepted by a broad range of British Columbians. It is our hope that British Columbians can achieve more productive public dialogue by first discussing values on which we can agree rather than details on which we disagree. We feel that such discussions will help get conversations started, promote mutual respect, support collaboration and – ultimately – help us reach better decisions.

We initiated the *Community Conversations* project in order to explore what that common ground might look like. After visiting eight Lower Mainland communities and having face-to-face discussions with 120 British Columbians, we are excited to share what we heard.

## Our method

All eight community conversations followed the same format. Each of the two-hour events began with a brief presentation on the natural resource sector's economic impact in BC, including community-specific findings from Resource Works' October 2014 report *Community Impacts*. Participants were informed in the presentation that they would be asked to discuss the concepts of responsible resource development and productive public dialogue. In an effort to avoid biasing the conversations, these terms were not defined.

The majority of each event was spent in facilitated group discussions, focused on three main questions:

1. What does responsible natural resource development mean to you?
2. What values should guide natural resource development?
3. How can we build constructive, meaningful dialogue on natural resource topics in your community?

For each question, participants were first asked to provide brief written answers in a workbook.<sup>1</sup> The majority of the discussion time was then spent sharing and discussing answers in groups. Each discussion involved six to eight participants and was guided by a discussion facilitator. Note takers recorded comments. Our data include the written feedback in the workbooks and the notes from the discussions. These were analyzed to identify key themes, the most prominent of which are discussed in this report.

Events were held in Burnaby, Coquitlam, North Vancouver, Port Coquitlam, Richmond, Squamish, Surrey and Vancouver between October 23 and November 4, 2014. Interest in these events was driven partly by the upcoming municipal elections, which took place on November 15.

## Our participants

The marketing and outreach efforts for these events were designed to bring together participants with diverse backgrounds. Resource Works invited local government leaders and candidates in the 2014 BC municipal elections, industry representatives, union representatives, members of environmental organizations, and unaffiliated citizens.

In total, 120 participants attended the eight events. These participants included 38 candidates running in the municipal elections, including some current council members; 28 community members, including members of community groups, environmental organizations and unaffiliated citizens; and 54 participants with links to the resource sector, including people employed in natural resource industries directly and others working in supporting industries and organizations. Most participants were residents of the communities in which the meetings were held.<sup>2</sup>

## Key findings

After analyzing the comments made during these discussions, we identified eight major themes representing important ideas that were commonly identified by our participants. These are grouped under the two primary topics we explored in the community conversations: responsible resource development and productive public dialogue.

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<sup>1</sup> The full discussion guide that was distributed to the participants and collected by the Resource Works team is available in the appendix.

<sup>2</sup> The two meetings held in Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam were marketed as “Tri-Cities” events, and included a mix of participants from Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody.

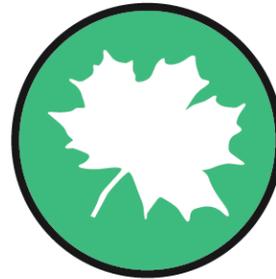
## Understanding responsible resource development

At the beginning of each session, Resource Works staff explained that one of our main goals was to support “responsible resource development.” However, we did not offer a definition of this term. Rather, we asked the participants to tell us what responsible resource development meant to them. Those discussions revealed the following key ideas:



### Working with the community and working for the community:

The idea that local communities, including First Nations communities, should have a voice in natural resource decisions and should enjoy benefits from nearby resource development.



### A balance between the economy and the environment:

The effects of resource activities on the economy and on the environment were the focus of many conversations. Many participants recognized that responsible resource development means finding a balance between environmental and economic priorities.



### Embracing innovation:

Many participants emphasized that responsible resource development involves a commitment to continual improvement, the adoption of leading practices and the development of new technologies to maximize economic gains and minimize environmental risks.



### A process that can be trusted:

Participants emphasized that they want to be part of a transparent and credible process for reaching decisions about resource development. Common elements that were emphasized include rigorous regulation of industry, credible information, respectful dialogue and leaders who act with vision and integrity.

## Supporting productive public dialogue

Participants were told early in the event that productive public dialogue would be one of the principal ideas we would be exploring. We asked participants to tell us how they would describe this concept. We also asked what challenges threaten productive dialogue and what opportunities exist to support it. Those conversations revealed the following major themes:



### Bringing people to the table:

One of the main elements of productive public dialogue, according to our participants, was that it include a diverse group of people, with a particular emphasis on First Nations people. There was also a strong desire to include more moderate voices in conversations about resource development.



### A discussion based on facts:

A major impediment to productive dialogue identified in these discussions is unreliable or misleading information. Participants expressed a strong desire for credible information that would help them assess the costs and benefits of resource development.



### Real talk, and real listening:

Many participants emphasized that productive dialogue requires as much an emphasis on listening as it does in speaking out. Another crucial component is the capacity for people to change their minds. For many participants, one of the greatest challenges to achieving productive public dialogue is when people arrive minds already made up.



### Working toward solutions:

Another important idea raised in discussions is that dialogue alone isn't enough. Rather, it must be part of a process that moves toward decisions. For many participants, this meant ensuring a credible process where input from community members has a real effect on project decisions.

## Why these findings matter

It is our hope that these themes will help establish common ground that can support future discussions about natural resources. Because these themes represent values that were supported by many participants, we feel they can serve as useful starting points for respectful, productive conversations leading to better decision making.

Taken together, the themes we identify in this report can serve as a useful checklist for anyone concerned about resource development in BC. We encourage anyone who cares about resource issues to review these major themes and ask themselves: How does my project, my position, or my way of thinking align with each of these ideas? Am I considering them all seriously? Are there any I have neglected? Can I do better in any of these areas? Which one deserves my attention today? Which one challenges the way I've thought about resource development up until now?

Resource development is a complex process involving difficult decisions. The findings from this report won't change that. However, how we approach tough decisions matter. And starting with a bit of common ground and a willingness to engage in respectful dialogue is a good start. Thanks to the 120 participants who shared their thoughts with us, we can present a few ideas about what that good start might look like.

## 2. What is responsible resource development?

Part of Resource Works' mission is to promote responsible resource development. One of our priorities in these community conversations was to better understand what this term means to different people. We asked each participant who attended our community conversations to tell us what responsible resource development meant to them. The following section describes four key themes that were prominent in those conversations.

### Working with the community and working for the community

The first major idea that emerged in our discussions is that resource development should be guided by members of affected communities, and those communities should also benefit from resource activities.

The first component, community involvement, was one of the most commonly cited elements of responsible resource development. Participants expressed a desire to be part of the resource-development decisions that affect their lives and their communities. Many participants also emphasized First Nations involvement in resource decisions. We also heard that good community involvement begins early, ideally before project plans are finalized. Many participants said they want to ensure that their values and perspective can make a meaningful difference in how resource projects are designed.

Many participants also agreed that responsible resource development means tangible benefits flowing to affected communities. Most of the benefits described in our conversations were economic in nature. Participants spoke about wanting local jobs, training for local workers, contracts for local businesses and revenues for local governments. Many participants said they felt that resource companies had to do a better job in explaining "what's in it for us?"

Several participants also said they want assurances that the benefits will last for a long time. Communities, as one participant pointed out, last longer than resource projects. Some participants expressed concerns of their communities becoming ghost towns once resource activities ceased. Several participants expressed a desire for long-term funds supported by resource revenues ensuring that resource wealth could be preserved for future generations.

"We need partnerships with First Nations, and consideration of their needs is essential for success."

– Richmond participant

"The people who live in the area want to have their voices heard."

– Port Coquitlam participant

"You need to pursue social license. Companies arriving in BC should be asking, 'How do you want to partner with us?'"

– Vancouver participant

"There is fear that projects will leave as quickly as they came taking the jobs and prosperity with them."

– Richmond participant

In fact, many participants expressed a desire for long-term planning in general. Many expressed worries that resource decisions that affect their communities were too often tied to short-term conditions, such as elections cycles, and expressed a desire for their leaders to build longer, multi-generational visions when considering resource development.

## A balance between economy and environment

Two of the most common characteristics of responsible resource development proposed by participants were supporting the economy and protecting the environment. While some participants prioritized one of these ideas over the other, it was quite common for participants to list both in their descriptions of what made up responsible resource development. Many participants expressed a desire for a good balance between environmental issues and economic issues.

When discussing the economic benefits of resource development, participants highlighted job creation, revenues for government, training for workers, profitability for companies and the idea that natural resources should be put to productive uses. Many participants also said that these benefits should be shared equitably between resource companies, resource workers, governments and local communities. For instance, it was common to hear that local businesses should be favoured to provide services for nearby resource companies. Another common idea raised in the conversations was that there is a lack of understanding of economic fundamentals in BC, with several participants expressing that other British Columbians don't comprehend the importance of the resource sector to the broader economy.

In conversations about the environment, many participants emphasized the importance of rigorous environmental regulations, with some saying that sites affected by resource development should be returned to their natural state once industrial activity has stopped. Many also highlighted the importance of global and long-term environmental effects, climate change especially.

Arguably, environmental and economic issues could have been discussed in separate section in this report. However, we chose

“Finding ways to meet growth needs and achieve sustainability. We need to do both.”

– Burnaby participant

“It should be sustainable, environmentally sensitive and generating employment.”

– Coquitlam participant

“It's generally accepted that resource extraction is important to the economy; however there is a concern around the long term vision, and a desire that negative impacts are reduced as much as possible.”

– North Vancouver participant

“We have to point out to people why we need this. We need jobs. We can do this responsibly. The majority of people are going to win on this one.”

– Port Coquitlam participant

“Balance is key – economy, environment, social”

– Vancouver participant

to include them in the same section because many participants in our conversations also emphasized that responsible resource development means achieving a balance between economic benefits and environmental priorities. (Several participants also included social priorities, but these were generally not the focus of many comments in our conversations.) To achieve such a balance several participants called for clear assessments of the risks and benefits associated with proceeding or not proceeding with a resource project.

Another issue raised by many participants that relates to the concept of balancing environment and economy is the idea of sustainability. Many participants spoke of sustainability in terms of good environmental practices. There were, for instance, several participants who expressed a desire to use more renewable energy and phase out the use of fossil fuels. However, economic sustainability was another concept that enjoyed much support, often being described in terms of long-term jobs and economic stability.

## Embracing innovation

Innovation is another concept that was identified by many participants as playing an important role in responsible resource development. Many participants said that responsible resource development must include continuous improvement, adaptability, and the development and use of new technologies. To some, innovation was seen as a means by which the BC resource sector could increase its competitiveness while also reducing its impact on the environment. Many participants expressed a desire for BC-based resource projects to adopt global best practices and leading technologies, with some saying they would like to see BC take a leadership role in developing new resource-related technologies that could benefit the rest of the world.

Some participants said that British Columbians should be better informed about the technological sophistication of the resource sector, pointing out, for instance, that oil pipelines and tanker ships are far safer than many people think.

“If the status quo is good for you, you are not doing enough. Always improve practices.”

– Squamish participant

“Industry must be flexible and change with technology and innovation”

– Vancouver participant

## A process that can be trusted

The fourth major component of responsible resource development identified by our participants is the quality of the rules and processes that govern resource operations. Key issues include environmental regulations, project assessments and public consultation processes.

Many participants expressed a desire for strong environmental rules enforced by independent regulators. Participants emphasized that resource companies should be accountable for any problems associated with their projects – that the risks fall on them and not on communities. The role of government was much discussed in these conversations, with many participants emphasizing that it is government’s job to enforce good resource practices and not to promote resource development.

The role of public consultations was another prominent topic in these conversations. Many participants said they want consultations to be open, transparent and inclusive of diverse opinions. Many said they were concerned that highly polarized views on resource development were dominating these discussions, and many expressed a desire to give moderate voices more prominent roles in public dialogue. Several participants said they want to engage in a process where there is a clear and credible assessment of the risks and benefits associated with a new project. However, many also expressed concerns about the difficulty of finding reliable information when resource debates become heated. Many participants said they see the news media as contributing to the polarization of resource debates.

Many participants said that they find it difficult to determine who to trust in discussions about resource development. Many participants emphasized that they wanted leaders in government and industry especially to show high levels of integrity, practicing honesty, openness and transparency. Some participants called for independent third parties to play a role in project assessment, regulation and consultation. However, no clear sense of who that trusted third party might be emerged in these conversations.

“Industry and government cannot walk hand in hand.”

– Burnaby participant

“There is polarization between industries and environmental NGOs. The average citizen deserves a balanced conversation without bias.”

– Coquitlam participant

“Average people buy into misinformation, not because they are not smart, but because the Internet provides easy information. Facts need to be more easily accessible.”

– Richmond participant

“Political parties communicate messages to support their party and not to share the truth.”

– Vancouver participant

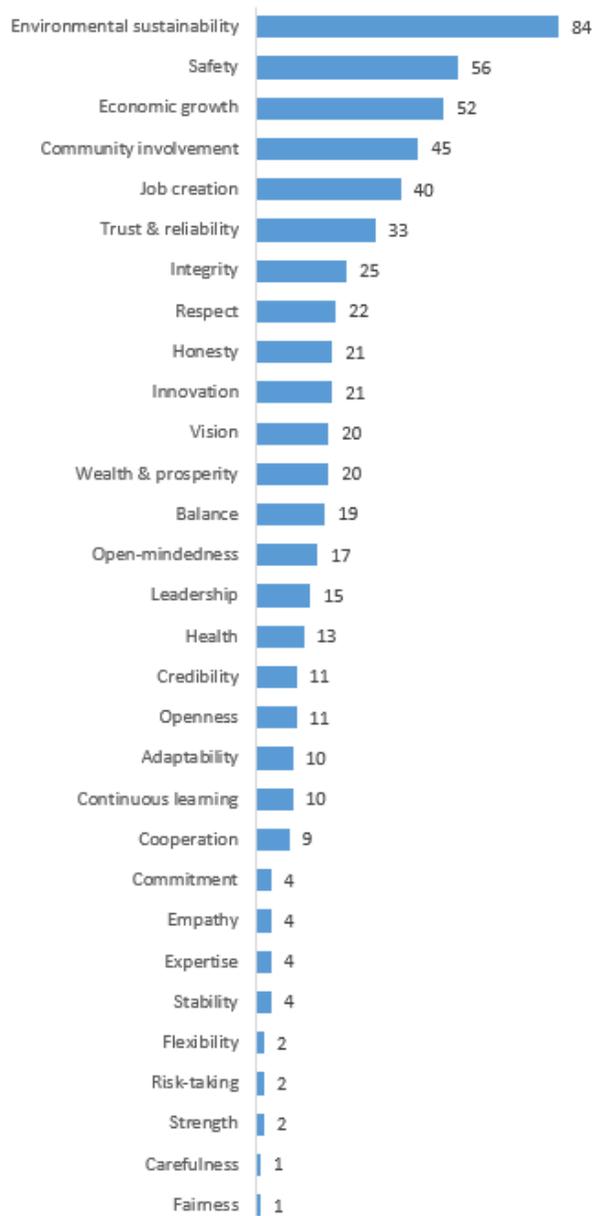
“We need public confidence that projects are vetted in a way that can be trusted. That is missing right now. There’s entrenched scepticism.”

– Port Coquitlam participant

# What values should guide responsible resource development?

As a follow-up to these discussions, we asked all participants to identify which values they felt should guide natural resource development. Each participant was provided with a list of options and asked to select their top five choices. Participants were also invited to write in their own values if they wished to do so. In order to show all the ideas that were provided, we present two lists. The first includes only those values suggested by us in the participants' workbooks. The second list includes all those items that participants wrote in themselves.

## Values listed in the workbook



## Values added by participants

- Accountability, liability
- Collaboration
- Detachment from global
- Different economic models (not just fast growth)
- Duty to public interest
- Economic and environmental sustainability
- Economic sustainability
- Economic wisdom, resilience
- economic, environment
- Education
- Global, holistic thinking
- Humility
- Impact
- Justice, truth
- Legacy
- Local vision
- Long-term perspective
- market oligarchs
- Meaningful job creation
- Mutual respect
- Renewable only
- Resilience and stability, social,
- Skills and training
- Sustainability
- Systems thinking
- Transparency
- True engagement
- Understanding
- Wholistic, long-term perspective
- Willingness

### 3. Building better public dialogue

The second major topic we addressed in the community conversations was public dialogue on natural resource issues in BC. We asked participants to describe their ideas of healthy, productive public dialogue, asking them to also describe the main challenges standing in the way and the main opportunities for improvement.

#### Bringing people to the table

One of the most prominent topics that arose in discussions about building productive dialogue was the need to include many diverse voices. Many participants expressed the idea that resource development decisions should be based on broadly inclusive dialogue and consultation involving a range of perspectives. The importance of including First Nations communities in these discussions in a meaningful way was emphasized many times in the discussions.

Many participants said the current discourse on resource issues is frequently dominated by powerful interest groups, especially those with strong pro- or anti-development positions. Many participants said they felt there was a need to bring more moderate voices into discussions about resource development. Many also expressed a desire for these discussions to bridge important social divides, especially those separating Vancouverites and other urban British Columbians from more remote resource-dependent regions such as the North.

The format of public discussions on resources was also a topic of much discussion. Many participants pointed out that it can be difficult for regular people to get involved because they already live busy lives and have little extra time to spare. Participants called for extensive outreach and promotion of consultation events to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to participate. Many participants also supported the idea of holding multiple events over a long period of time so that more people could engage in opportunities for dialogue.

Participants expressed support for a broad range of event styles in which people could share their views on resource-development decisions, including town-hall meetings, small group discussions, open houses, one-on-one conversations and online interactions

“Right now it is just the people who are for or against. The people who are on the fence need to show up. The undecided are the ones we need to engage with.”

– Coquitlam participant

“First Nations are seeking respect and a fair share. Meaningful consultations are needed to assess concerns and expectations. It is not strictly based on money.”

– North Vancouver participant

“Minds aren’t changed by lectures, they are changed by dialogue.”

– Coquitlam participant

using social-media tools. No engagement style emerged as a clear favourite in these conversations, with participants expressing interest in a variety of engagement methods.

## A discussion based on facts

Another issue that was frequently raised in these discussions is a desire for reliable, factual information to fuel good discussions. Many participants said current discussions on natural resources include too much misinformation, emotion and fear. Many participants said misinformation and overly emotional messaging often comes from interest groups, powerful lobbyists and the news media, who were frequently described as reporting on issues in a way that helped polarize discussions on natural resources. As a result of being exposed to misinformation, many participants said they found it difficult to know who to believe in discussions about natural resources.

Many participants expressed a desire for conversations based on good information and rational deliberation rather than emotion. Participants said they want to hear a good balance of facts coming from various perspectives, and that they want to be presented with clear, understandable information – not overly technical data that is difficult to understand. Many participants also said that information overload can be problematic, pointing out that regular citizens can't be expected to pour through large, detailed technical reports. Several participants expressed a desire for trustworthy technical experts to be present at public engagement events to help guide participants through discussions on complex topics.

## Real talk and real listening

The first two themes addressed in this section describe prominent ideas about who should be included in public discourse on resource issues and the kind of information that should support those discussions. This theme addresses how people should behave within a productive public dialogue. For the most part, discussion participants did not specify which actors ought to behave in which ways. Generally, ideas about how people ought to treat each other in a productive public dialogue were expressed as applying to everyone.

The most prominent behaviours recommended by participants for healthy, productive public dialogue were open-mindedness and flexibility. Many participants emphasized that those taking part in a discussion on resource development should begin with a willingness to listen to others and not participate with the limited objective of changing other people's minds. A prominent idea expressed in these conversations is that

“There’s a lot of misinformation out there. When we have all this crap, it’s hard to weed through it. What’s truthful? Give me the facts.”

– Port Coquitlam participant

“People just want information that supports their bias. Facts are facts, and facts should inform your beliefs.”

– Squamish participant

“Fear of the unknown a major challenge. People don’t understand, and we have elements out there trying to manipulate them.”

– Burnaby participant

listening to others means valuing their perspectives, and that truly values the perspectives of others means allowing those perspectives to influence one's own thinking.

Many participants identified inflexible thinking as a challenge to productive public dialogue. This behaviour was described using such terms as polarization, politicization and nimbyism. Many participants said these behaviours are problematic because they emphasize narrow self-interest instead of broad public interest, and the act of persuading others instead of trying to understand others. Many participants said they want creativity, flexibility, integrity and honesty from participants in public dialogue. They emphasized that people with different perspectives be straightforward about their positions and demonstrate a willingness to adjust them.

The issue of trust was a prominent element of the conversations on good dialogue behaviour and good information. Many participants said that it can be difficult to know who to trust in current discussions about natural resources, but that trust can be built through open, honest and transparent dialogue supported by credible facts.

## Working toward solutions

Another major theme that emerged in these discussion about productive public dialogue is that dialogue must be part of a larger overall process that generates solutions. Participants shared many views about what that process should look like, emphasizing the importance of structure, leadership and results.

Many participants said that public discourse must be structured in order to achieve the objectives discussed above. For instance, rules need to be in place to ensure the meaningful participation of First Nations, the inclusion of a broad range of moderate voices and the availability of credible information. Many participants expressed a desire for professional, neutral discussion moderators to ensure discussions are fair and accessible. Another perspective that received much support in our discussions was that dialogue should be organized in such a way that it is collaborative and not adversarial. For instance, in events that feature debates between actors with fixed positions, many participants said they find it difficult to know who to believe and trust.

“When you acknowledge people’s values, you can create understanding.”

– Squamish participant

“You need to listen to people with a diversity of opinions. You need to look for that common ground. Where is the consensus? It can deflate the negativity to the room.”

– Coquitlam participant

“An ability to adjust your position is critical in constructive dialogue. To be able to argue your position concisely but be able to concede and make adjustments at the end of the day.”

– North Vancouver participant

“The discussion is presented as either-or. You’re trying to kill the environment or you’re trying to destroy the economy. If we focused on values we could focus on our commonalities not our differences.”

– Squamish participant

Participants had many suggestions about how dialogue structures could be used to improve the quality of public discourse. Many of these recommendations appear to involve some trade-offs, however. For instance, some participants said they wanted discussions timelines to be long enough to give people ample opportunity to participate, but others said the process should not last so long that it prevents necessary decisions from being made. Some participants emphasized that discussions should be flexible enough to accommodate many views and priorities, while other said that clear goals were needed to ensure that discussions not be diluted and bogged down by ever-moving goal posts.

A prominent topic in these discussions was the roles and responsibilities of government and industry in enabling good public dialogue. Many participants emphasized that they do not want their governments to act as promoters of resource industries. Rather, they expressed a desire for government to act as an adjudicator and regulator with a focus on the public interest. Industry was seen as having a responsibility to providing clear and complete information about projects.

A key point raised by many participants was that both government and industry should respect the outcomes of public dialogue. Some participants said that public discourse is meaningless if it has no effect on final decisions and outcomes. If project proponents, for instance, have no willingness to adjust their practices based on public input, then dialogue becomes mere lip service, explained some participants. They said that this kind of behaviour demonstrates disrespect for the citizens who participate.

This view emphasizes a common feeling among participants that, while good dialogue is important, it is not an end to itself. Participants said that people want to be consulted so that the actions at the end of the day reflect their values.

“Productive dialogue has to be managed dialogue. Too often it is too easy for an opponent to hog the microphone and continue to beat one single message. You don’t want to shut them off, but you want to make sure that you encourage other voices.”

– Coquitlam participant

“Government should act unbiased instead of jumping in to support industry. They are public servants, not industry servants.”

– Richmond participant

“Sometimes the dialogue process is antagonistic – one side against the other. We need to change this to a collaborative process.”

– Vancouver participant

“True engagement means that you do not assume an outcome, letting go of control and accepting whatever comes out from the dialogue.”

– Squamish participant

## 4. Community summaries

### Burnaby

**Responsible resource development:** Participants in Burnaby placed emphasis on pursuing sustainability, with several expressing support for moving more quickly to renewable energy sources. Burnaby participants also emphasized the importance of community involvement in resource-development decisions, including meaningful inclusion of First Nations communities. Several participants also focused on the need for a long-term vision for resource development and the need for a strong regulatory system.

**Productive public dialogue:** The most prominent topic in our Burnaby discussion on productive public dialogue was the need for people to be open minded and flexible. Burnaby participants emphasized that polarization, divisiveness and fear-driven reactions are major challenges to effective public dialogue.

**Top values:** Environmental sustainability, safety, economic growth

**Number of participants:** 18

### Coquitlam

**Responsible resource development:** Coquitlam participants emphasized that natural-resource decisions should reflect input from local communities and First Nations. Many participants also emphasized the need for a transparent and open process, as well as a strong rules to ensure environmental protection.

**Productive public dialogue:** Coquitlam participants emphasized the need for reliable factual information to support productive public dialogue.

**Top values:** Environmental sustainability, safety, economic growth

**Number of participants:** 16

### North Vancouver

**Responsible resource development:** One of the most prominent ideas expressed by North Vancouver participants in these conversations is that local communities and First Nations be consulted about resource developments that affect them, and that they should also enjoy long-term economic benefits flowing from those projects. Participants also emphasized the need for a long-term vision, with a focus on preserving resources and funds for future generations.

**Productive public dialogue:** The availability of reliable, factual information was a prominent topic in the North Vancouver discussion. Participants expressed a desire for clear risk-reward assessments and many said they were concerned about overly emotional dialogue and the spread of misinformation.

**Top values:** Environmental sustainability, safety, trust and reliability, balance

**Number of participants:** 14

### Port Coquitlam

**Responsible resource development:** Port Coquitlam participants emphasized that community and First Nations involvement in resource-development decisions is crucial. Participants noted that nearby communities should also benefit from business to local companies and training for local workers among other local investments. Port Coquitlam participants also focused on environmental protection, bringing up such topics as mitigation

efforts and the strengthening of environmental regulations.

**Productive public dialogue:** The availability of reliable information and the inclusion of diverse groups were the most prominent topics in the Port Coquitlam discussion on productive public dialogue. Many participants expressed a desire for scientific facts over opinion in discussions about resource development, and they emphasized that productive dialogue depends on the inclusion of many diverse voices.

**Top values:** Environmental sustainability, safety, job creation

**Number of participants:** 11

## Richmond

**Responsible resource development:** At the Richmond discussions, community and First Nations involvement in resource-development decisions was one of the most common suggested elements of responsible resource development. Participants emphasized that communities affected by resource development also benefit from employment, business spending and other benefits. Many Richmond participants also expressed desires to balance environmental risks and economic benefits.

**Productive public dialogue:** Richmond participants focused on the different formats that might support productive dialogue, with various participants favouring fact-to-face interactions, open houses and small group engagement opportunities. Participants also emphasized that it was important for such events to be accessible in terms of location and timing, recognizing that it can be difficult for busy people to get involved.

**Top values:** Environmental sustainability, safety, economic growth, community involvement

**Number of Number of participants:** 13

## Squamish

**Responsible resource development:** Community involvement and community benefits were prominent topics in the Squamish discussions about responsible resource development. Participants spoke frequently about the need for communities and First Nations to be consulted about resource plans and also about the importance that these communities receive economic benefits from nearby projects. Other important topics raise include environmental protection, a shift toward renewable energy, and improving resource practices through innovation.

**Productive public dialogue:** Squamish participants emphasized the importance of having public discussions based on reliable facts, and expressed concerns about the effects of misinformation and lack of information. Other prominent topics included the importance of including diverse voices in public discussions and the need for participants to exhibit flexibility and open mindedness as they learn about new perspectives.

**Top values:** Environmental sustainability, safety, integrity

**Number of participants:** 24

## Surrey

**Responsible resource development:** Surrey participants emphasized issues relating to openness, transparency and inclusion in resource-related decision-making, mainly focused on the need for good consultation practices as a part of resource development. Environmental protection was another prominent topic, with many comments on minimizing environmental impacts, rehabilitating industrial sites and preventing long-lasting impacts on the environment.

**Productive public dialogue:** Open-mindedness, flexibility and adaptability were key topics raised in the Surrey discussions on productive public dialogue. Many participants agreed that players in a dialogue should be willing to listen to the views of others and adjust their own beliefs. Surrey participants also expressed a desire for more reliable information to support a more informed public dialogue.

**Top values:** Environmental sustainability, community involvement, honesty

**Number of participants:** 10

## Vancouver

**Responsible resource development:** Many Vancouver participants agreed that community and First Nations involvement is an important component of responsible resource development, both in terms of their ability to provide input to guide projects and their opportunities to enjoy economic benefits. The need for continual improvement and innovation was another prominent topic, as was the importance of environmental protection.

**Productive public dialogue:** Vancouver participants emphasized the importance of having factual information supporting public dialogue, and expressed concerns about misleading information, lack of information, difficult-to-understand technical information and the problem of information overload. Participants also focused on the ability of a broad range of people to be included in public discourse and emphasized the importance of personal integrity, including such values as honesty, respect, trust and authenticity.

**Top values:** Environmental sustainability, economic growth, community involvement, trust and reliability

**Number of participants:** 22

# 5. Conclusion

The purpose of our series of community conversations was to explore two questions that are important to the Resource Works Society and that we argue are also important to all British Columbians: What is responsible resource development? And how do we build productive public dialogue?

We feel these questions matter to BC because of the important role natural resources play in supporting the province’s economic health and because resource-development decisions ought to reflect the values of British Columbians. We posed these two questions to 120 residents of the Lower Mainland in order to advance our own understanding of responsible resource development and productive public dialogue. We also hoped that these conversations would help us identify areas of common ground – shared values upon which we can base future conversations about natural resources.

## Key themes for a better conversation on natural resources

As described in this report, the participants of these conversations have diverse views on these questions, but the conversations also revealed commonalities. When asked to describe what responsible resource development meant to them, the participants emphasized community involvement in resource-development decisions (with an emphasis on First Nations involvement) and the expectation that communities affected by such projects enjoy significant and long-term benefits. Many participants also said they expect resource development that balances economic and environmental priorities. Innovation, a commitment to best practices and continual improvement also emerged as prominent factors. Also, many participants called for a credible process for reaching resource-development decisions based on factual information, inclusive consultation and a strong regulatory system.

The conversations on productive public dialogue also featured prominent themes. Many participants emphasized that good dialogue is inclusive, bringing together a broad range of citizens, ensuring that moderate voices are heard alongside those with stronger positions. Many participants called for dialogue based on credible facts, less misinformation and less fear. Participants also emphasized that people engaging in public discourse be open-minded, willing to adjust their positions as they learn about the perspectives of others. And finally many participants said they want a dialogue that makes a difference, one structured in such a way that its outcomes have a meaningful impact on resource-development decisions.

### Key themes: Responsible resource development



#### Working with the community and working for the community:

Communities and First Nations affected by resource development should be involved in decision making and enjoy long-term benefits from resource development.



#### A balance between economy and environment:

Our natural environment and our economy are both important to our quality of life, and responsible resource development means balancing both priorities.



#### Embracing innovation:

Responsible development means continual improvement, adoption of best practices, and the development of new technologies.



#### Embracing innovation:

Responsible development means continual improvement, adoption of best practices, and the development of new technologies.

## Using common ground to move forward

Our objective in this project has been to identify important themes that can guide future conversations about resource development in BC. We've seen many times in BC that discussions about natural resources can be difficult. Many participants in these community conversations shared how they were personally dissatisfied with the current state of public discourse, saying they find it difficult determining who to trust and they aren't convinced anyone's listening to them.

Resource Works believes that we can do better. We can improve the state of public dialogue and achieve a level of resource development that can credibly be described as responsible. These conversations with 120 Lower Mainland residents helped us identify eight broadly supported themes that we feel can serve as common ground for future conversations. We recommend that anyone involved in discussing resource development in BC consider these themes. Use them to challenge your own thinking, to revive ideas you might be forgetting, to better understand perspectives of others, and to help BC reach resource decisions that reflect the values of British Columbians.

### Key themes: Productive public dialogue



#### Bringing people to the table:

Productive public dialogue requires including diverse groups of people – including moderate voices that are easily drowned out – and giving them the chance to speak, listen and be heard.



#### A discussion based on facts:

Good dialogue requires more credible, factual information and less misinformation and emotional language.



#### Real talk and real listening:

Dialogue is more than a chance to speak. Participants must be open, transparent, willing to listen to others and – most importantly – willing to change their minds based on what they learn.



#### Working toward solutions:

Dialogue alone isn't enough. Processes are needed to ensure that public input leads to action.



# Appendix: Community conversations discussion guide

The following is a reproduction of the discussion guides used in each of the eight community conversations. Each participant was given a guide prior to the discussion. These guides were used to collect written answers and to guide semi-structured group discussions, which were recorded by note takers.

## Community Breakfast Conversations on Natural Resources Discussion Guide

### Welcome

Resource Works believes that a better understanding of values and perspectives of British Columbians is necessary to guide the public discussion on resource development in BC. Your participation today is a valuable contribution to helping us understand the kind of economic future British Columbians want to see in this province. Thank you very much for sharing your time.

Resource Works is organizing eight Community Breakfast Conversations on Natural Resources in different Lower Mainland communities. The information gathered in these sessions will be shared in a report that Resource Works will release in December.

### Conversation goals

Our objectives today are to:

- Create a space where you can freely express your ideas and perspectives
- Learn about your values, interests and priorities concerning the natural resource development
- Work to create a shared understanding on what responsible resource development might look like

### How to use this discussion guide

Facilitator and note-takers at your table will take notes of the conversation so that we can learn from it and share key findings with others. This discussion guide is designed to provide Resource Works with a useful record of this morning's conversation, so please make sure it gets back to your facilitator at the end of the session.

### Structure and guidelines

The dialogue section is broken up into three major topics that we will go through one at a time. Each topic includes a few short written questions. Please take about five minutes to write down your answers in the discussion guide. Feel free to make changes to your answers during the group discussion. We will then take 15 minutes to discuss the topic as a group.

Here are a few guidelines that will create a basis for a safe and open conversation:

1. There are no wrong answers. We encourage you to be open with your table.
2. Active listening without criticising diverse views is vital for an open dialogue.
3. Our time together is limited. Please excuse us if we have to interrupt the conversation to move on to the next topic.

## TOPIC 1: What does responsible natural resource development mean for you?

### QUESTION 1

**How would you describe responsible resource development? (For example, adopting new technology, improving community involvement process, strengthening environmental stewardship, partnerships with First Nations etc.) Please list some characteristics that describe what responsible resource development means to you.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

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### Group discussion questions

How did you describe responsible resource development?

Hearing all of your answers, do you notice some commonalities? Why do these characteristics stand out?

What actions do you think are needed to achieve responsible resource development?

## TOPIC 2: What values should guide natural resource development?

### QUESTION 2

Below is a list of values. Which values should guide residents, local governments and industry in discussing a future resource development project in your community? Please circle your top five choices.

Adaptability	Openness	Job creation	Balance
Open-mindedness	Trust & Reliability	Carefulness	Commitment
Compassion	Health	Wealth & Prosperity	Cooperation
Strength	Community involvement	Environmental sustainability	Integrity
Persuasiveness	Flexibility	Expertise	Leadership
Credibility	Honesty	Economic growth	Vision
Respect	Risk-taking	Innovation	Continuous learning
Empathy	Duty	Stability	Fairness
Safety			Harmony

Or write down your own values:

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### Group discussion questions

Out of the five values you circled above, which two values do you think are the most important for guiding future resource development? Why?

What kinds of opportunities do these values suggest that can help BC residents, governments and industry achieve responsible resource development?

## **TOPIC 3:      How can we build constructive, meaningful dialogue on natural resource topics in your community?**

### QUESTION 3

**What characteristics would you use to describe a constructive, meaningful dialogue?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### QUESTION 4

**What are the main challenges to building constructive dialogue on resource issues in your community?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### QUESTION 5

**What are the main opportunities for building constructive dialogue on resource issues in your community?**

- 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
- 

### **Guided group discussion questions**

What does a constructive, meaningful dialogue mean to you?

Who should be engaged in this dialogue? (For example, residents, First Nations, environmental organizations, etc.)

What opportunities exist to build such dialogue? What actions do you think could be taken (by residents, local government, and/or the industry)?

# Evaluation Form

What did you like the most about this event?

What did you like the least about this event?

How would you rate the research presentation?

1. Excellent
2. Good
3. So-so
4. Bad
5. Very bad

Comments:

How would you rate your facilitator? Facilitator name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Excellent
2. Good
3. So-so
4. Bad
5. Very bad

Comments:

How would you rate the dialogue questions?

1. Excellent
2. Good
3. So-so
4. Bad
5. Very bad

Comments:

Tell us one thing we should improve till our next event.