



An End *and* A Beginning

Editorial

BY DON McNAIR

With its next edition (the 2009 special edition, “Capital for Communities,” *Making Waves* comes to a close. Or, at least, *Making Waves* as you have known it.

Since 1991, you have known it as a quarterly newsletter about community economic development, then a magazine about CED (1995) and about social economy (2004) – but always a means by which people personally engaged in these lines of work could speak for themselves about what they were doing and wondering, hitting and missing. Researchers, teachers, journalists, and other observers (like me) have been welcome to chime in. But the lion’s share of coverage had to come from practitioners. *Making Waves* urged practitioners to describe and define their work and set the terms of that discussion. We urged them to occupy the Territory of Story, rather than leave it at the mercy of others.

A great many of you have taken up our invitation. At least 300 by my reckoning. The articles went out in print quarterly and, since 2003, have been available indefinitely in *.pdf as well. That rhythm for generating and distributing content on those subjects has been satisfactory to many.

But not to enough. *Making Waves* never managed to attract over 1,000 paying subscribers. We have experimented at length with pricing, content, format, language, and all manner of promotions to raise that number. Arrgghh! The ceiling has remained impenetrable. We at the Canadian Centre for Community Renewal (CCCR) have always based our decisions on what its mission required, not just what the market demanded. But such marginal evidence of demand after practically 20 years of effort (and an investment of around \$350,000) is not a message to ignore. So we would like to try something different.

Not completely different – we remain dead-set on fostering a culture of full, frank, and technical discussion of community-driven change, especially among people caught up in that work. Without that, and without the record of that discussion available to readers now and 10 or 20 years from now, it’s dif-

ficult for us to imagine the accumulation of skill and insight by thousands of people that is essential to a transformation in our ways of life, not just isolated innovation.

Not completely different – but different.

For one thing, we figure *Making Waves* (and The CED Bookshop, its on-line archive) have not done a good job of drawing people into the complex details of strategies, issues, and initiatives. It has been difficult for many practitioners to recognize – at first, second, or third blush – what is pertinent to them in the experiences of other people in other sectors and places, at some other time. Rather than wade into a 3-5 page article, they keep walking. All in-depth content seems to require a front end in the formats preferred by our news media – video, sound clips, photos, brief text. This front end must present each reader with 3-4 routes that she or he might take to pursue the issues latent in each “newsbyte.”

For another thing, we figure that many of the people passionate about community transformation do not use the language of CED and social economy. What they want to move on is Peak Oil, climate change, food insecurity, community resilience, affordable housing, and community-based energy and finance. While the tools and concepts of CED and social economy will prove eminently useful, they do not describe the movements that many people urgently wish to be part of. *Making Waves*, while inclusive of many populations marginal to the Canadian mainstream, has been exclusive of many of the topics that are sure to drive community change over the next generation.

Rather than wait for a print magazine every 3–4 months, then, consider this.

The CCCR continues its year-round process of soliciting, gathering, and editing reports and research. From this torrent of information, we select items from which we continue to build an on-line resource of top-quality materials. These materials broach the principles and practice of CED and social

economy, but more from the perspective of communities contending with the consequences of an oil-based economy, and their withdrawal from it. These reports, and other events, are the basis for bi-weekly website updates to which subscribers are alerted by a selection of thematic RSS feeds.

The updates act as the intriguing “tip” of a content iceberg from which readers may choose to dig deeper into the archive itself and into other quality materials off-site. The materials are available in the language of their origin, and often translated into one or both official languages. Subscribers can range over the entire collection, viewing and downloading at will. Technology permitting, items will be tagged according to visitor preferences (“other readers also liked ...”). By this inter-linkage of items, visitors may also assemble groups of materials suitable for a print-on-demand service for workshops and other events.

Accompany us on this journey. Instead of a quarterly magazine, you will receive bi-weekly opportunities to “dip deeper” into a well of events, experiences, and insights of people across the continent & world, all committed to vital, viable, resilient communities.

But print remains important. It carries authority that other media do not, while being safe to drop on the floor, leave on a park bench, and take to the toilet. A third major provision of the communications suite I am projecting here will be the production of special editions every 12-18 months. As they have since 2005, special editions will continue to enable readers to take the editorial levers and bring together materials selected on the basis of theme and quality. They would be available as electronic publications and on a print-on-demand basis.

Naturally, a communications system like this will have its growing pains. It is likely to take at least a year to bring on stream. We ask you to accompany us on this journey, and invest in it by subscription as you have *Making Waves*. Same cost; greater value. Instead of a quarterly magazine, you will receive bi-weekly opportunities to “dig deeper” – or maybe “dip deeper” into a well of events, experiences, and insights of people across the continent and world, all committed to vital, viable, resilient communities.

So yes, you heard right: I’m announcing an end to something that, so help me, I have loved. But I am also announcing a beginning. Please tell me your thoughts. It is important to know what *Making Waves* did for you, and what it didn’t do, and what you make of our imagining of its successor. It’s important for me, and also, I hope, important for you.

Résumé : Une fin et un début

Après près de 20 ans, *Making Waves* cessera d’être publié avec l’édition spéciale de l’automne 2009 « Capitaux pour les communautés ». Même si ce magazine imprimé a gagné l’approbation de plusieurs personnes impliquées dans le développement économique communautaire et l’économie sociale, les abonnements annuels n’ont jamais atteint 1 000. L’éditeur, le Centre canadien pour le renouveau communautaire, même s’il est mené par sa mission, doit accepter que ce marché est trop petit pour justifier l’investissement que nous faisons dans le magazine.

Nous avons besoin de couvrir des thèmes plus larges tels que le pic pétrolier, les changements climatiques, l’insécurité alimentaire ainsi que leur effet sur la résilience communautaire. Nous devons aussi publier cette couverture plus fréquemment en utilisant le format RSS ainsi que des extraits vidéo et sonores pour relier des personnes aux discussions plus longues et techniques des principes et de la pratique qui sont essentiels à la transformation généralisée de nos façons de vivre. Notre couverture continuera d’être dominée par les rapports des praticiens de leurs expériences. Nous continuerons de publier les matériaux dans leur langue d’origine, et de rendre beaucoup de contenu disponible tant en français qu’en anglais. Reconnaissant la valeur de l’imprimé, nous continuerons de publier des éditions spéciales chaque 12-18 mois.

C’est une nouvelle approche aux communications. Ça prendra au moins un an avant d’être fonctionnel. À titre de lecteurs de *Making Waves*, c’est vous qui perdez quelque chose – mais peut-être voyez-vous aussi ce que vous et les communautés pourraient gagner d’un tel système. Veuillez nous faire l’honneur de vos conseils et commentaires. Merci! ■

For a little while yet, DON MCNAIR is managing editor of *Making Waves* magazine. To reply to his request for comments and suggestions, e-mail mcnair@cedworks.com, or phone 250-542-7057.