

VOGAR

The Band of 24

V. 1 February 10, 2018

1. Description of the Community when the project began

- **Location:** Vogar is located 193 km (120 miles) northwest of Winnipeg in the Interlake region of Manitoba. Positioned near the wasp-waist connection between the north and south basins of Lake Manitoba, it is surrounded by sloughs, marshes, small lakes and agricultural fields. The nearest town with a full range of services is Ashern, 60 km to the north. The Manitoba First Nation (Indian Reserve Dog Creek 46) is about 10 km south near the lakeshore.
- **Summary**

Vogar is a Metis community surrounded by Icelandic farmers and First Nation people of Dog Creek. The Metis, most often descended from French or English fur traders and Indian women, played a critical role in the early development of western Canada in the early 19th century. The Interlake area was the focus of the first Metis attempts to develop self-government structures under Louis Riel in 1870. It was crushed in 1895. As the English populated this part of Canada, Metis landowners and public officials were displaced to the least desirable lands. The first Metis family settled in Vogar in 1890. Icelanders came to this area in 1898 and began to scabble out a living on the rocky, wet thin soils. The First Nations had already been removed to various reservations.

At the time of the Human Development Consult the village numbered just over 200 people - primarily several dozen families on plots along the single main road. About 40% of the population was under 15. Most of the houses were relatively new government constructed with wells, electricity and indoor plumbing. There was an elementary school where the playground was flooded for a hockey rink in winter. The Lutheran Church no longer had services and the Catholic Church was visited irregularly by a priest. Unemployment insurance, welfare, subsidized legal aid, housing subsidies, and provincial health insurance were available. Those employed work mostly as laborers, but there are also farmers, clerks and carpenters. Fresh water fishing, fish packing, ice fishing, Seneca root gathering, spring trap lines, snake and frog collecting, cattle raising and game hunting were sources of income." Families usually had a vegetable garden. The only business was a small store owned by an Icelandic. It stocked bread, milk and a few staples, housed the post-office and bus stop for the twice daily bus service between Winnipeg and points west.

The wood frame houses and school looked pretty good, but in fact, Vogar was a poor community with few regular employment opportunities, no local health care facility, no public transportation to Ashern or nearby communities, few cultural opportunities and subject to the general mutual prejudices between the Metis, Icelanders and First Nations, as well as some antipathy within the village between those with English forbearers and those with French ancestors.

- **Why did the community invite ICA to come; why the ICA decided to go**

ICA was completing the Band of 24 HDPs, and Vogar was in the last time zone slated for designation. After a road trip by ICA staff and Joe Matthews, Vogar was selected. Having experienced the on-again off-again attention of several government projects,

there was understandably some reluctance among village leaders for this proposed multi-year venture. However, they invited ICA to conduct the one-week consult.

2. The “HDP Consult” Planning Event

- ***The Consult***

In June 19-25, 1977 177 consultants – 85 who lived in the Project area - gathered in a large domed air-tent. All of the approximately 200 residents of Vogar were either directly or indirectly involved, especially through field work contacts

The 92 outside consultants came from 7 of the 10 provinces, as well as from USA, India, and Australia. Five other HDPs were also represented. The consult document lists the skills and experience of these consultants.

Very few local people came to the morning session. Consultant teams went to homes to gather information through kitchen dialogues. However, involvement in the afternoon plenaries grew each day climaxing in the final feast.

- ***Vision and implementation plans***

THIS SECTION NEEDS TO BE COMPLETED BY SOMEONE WHO HAS ACCESS TO THE CONSULT DOCUMENT.

3. Summary of Accomplishments (500 maximum words + links)

- ***Results in the community during the life of the HDP (1977-1980)*** From the June 1980 Vogar Community Report

- Vogar Products began in fall of 1977. It provided jobs for 13 women over several years making hand-quilted comforters. The women perfected their sewing skills, helped design the unique patterns, learned to manage the business, and went on marketing trips to Winnipeg, as well as road trips west to Victoria and east to Montreal.
- A small preschool was held in the Catholic Church and included some of the young children of the women quilters.
- Board sidewalks along the main road employed several men for a time and provided a mud-free walk way during the spring. It was later replaced by half a mile of concrete sidewalk.
- A demonstration garden was established to encourage villages to expand the produce of their kitchen gardens.
- The grocery store was purchased from the former owner, and a husband/wife team became managers, learning business skills on the job. The grocery and household inventory was greatly expanded, and the facility was remodeled and pool tables and snack bar added in the back room. A garage for automotive services and repairs was opened behind the store. By spring of 1980 monthly sales were over \$8,000.
- Vogar Construction Company – originally a partnership then moved to single ownership – Built 5 houses and did other smaller jobs
- Murphy's Mill began operating in December 1979 clearing timber for latter milling; began milling in Spring 1980
- Full time jobs increased from 5 to 15 from 77-80; Total yearly earned income went from \$98,000 to \$185,000 in same period
- 18 new homes were built through Manitoba Metis Federation. Driveways constructed, culverts installed, regular upkeep and landscaping undertaken

- Half mile of concrete sidewalk laid; community hall renovated; 8 acre park cleared and fenced; public areas cleared and brushed
 - Signs throughout the community identifying homes, businesses and public facilities; village drainage substantially improved with 20 new culverts
 - Community volunteers organized youth programs, sports events and community wide social activities.
 - 4 small businesses owned and operated by Vogar residents. They maintain financial books, make managerial decisions and plan and implement business decisions.
 - Sports teams have outfitted themselves and received coaching. The new gym provided opportunity for indoor winter sports,
 - Vogar residents have established working relationships with outside funding and advisory resources. They have met with school trustees, municipal councilor, Manpower officials, Government Housing officials and business consultants
- links to reports, newspaper clippings, etc. See archive files at ICA-Canada Associates
 - unanticipated results

4. Lessons Learned (500 maximum words + links)

- What worked well
 - The businesses that were established began to give a new sense of selfhood and trained many people in practical work and management skills.
 - The preschool prepared kids for school.
 - Residents identified more fully with their community.
- what didn't work well
 - We did not do our networking and authorization broadly enough. It may have lessened the reaction of the community and First Nation organizations to the news from the states. Less backlash. The net result was limited time to have a significant impact on a community/culture that needed long term support to make the project a long term success.
 - We focused primarily on the Metis side of the community as where our work was most needed and did not seriously work with the Icelandic community - "the white folks" - and engage them in helping with the transition and thus support their transition. There was a huge image change going on within the Metis community – which did not have the support from the Icelandic community who sustained the older images.
 - Media backlash from the negative media in the USA undermined our ability to have a long-term relationship with the community.
- what, on reflection, might be done differently -- informative to other communities

5. The "Residue" (500 maximum words + links)

- the current situation in the community
 - Jean – I have no idea! Google Earth coverage is from 2011 (I think) and it looks like the school and store are gone – but hard to tell.
 - Duncan – I don't have any idea either.
- what the community has done on its own since the end of the HDP
 - Unknown

- insights, implications, questions, etc., that have been revealed about community development during the past 40 years.
 - Engagement of local people in planning continues to be critical. Most organizations do not consider doing door to door visits any longer yet when done have proven to be highly engaging.
 - The Community Forum format and formats from the HDPs have been used in doing visioning with communities across Canada and been very successful in motivating communities and in some cases turning communities around.
 - Vision, Obstacles, Strategies, Action Planning are keep steps in any community development. We are engaged in facilitating these types of sessions but not in doing the direct daily community development work
 - ICA has a 6-day Community Development course that is being taught in Canada and the USA based on our community development principles began with the HDPs

NOTE TO ARCHIVE TEAM

Jean Smith and Duncan Holmes provided most of this write-up. Duncan (and Heide) and Jean (and Art) were staff at the initiation of the Vogar HDP in 1977. Duncan has archive files at ICA Associates Canada and Jean sent here few documents to Chicago for the fall 1917 archives sojourn. Neither of us had been to Vogar recently.

Further work:

- Check consult document for Section 2, Vision and Implementation Plans.
- Current situation/what has community done on its own is unknown – does anyone have any relatively current information?
- Insights/implications could use some more comments. Duncan says “Bill Staples has been doing more work on Community development and training than anyone else in our office, so he may have some insights – if that would be helpful.”
- Develop a unifying theme. Maybe the small businesses – the quilt factory and grocery store had an immediate positive impact, difficulties in sustaining them. I (Jean) don't know the history of the construction company.
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