



## **ACTivate – Building Strong and Resilient Communities Program Details – Community Leaders**

### **Background**

The Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism (GMIST) and its partner the Coady Institute at St. Francis Xavier University (Coady) have embarked on an ambitious and exciting project which takes a fresh approach to community development in Atlantic Canada. Through the development and delivery of this new program, we are seeking to flip traditional thinking about tourism to viewing it as an asset for community development that can enhance community well being. This will not be a destination development program, but rather is focused on building the community from within through a strengths-based approach, rather than a deficit-based approach. The ACTivate Program takes a citizen-led approach and aims to provide participants with tools, knowledge and skills to enhance and build on the strengths in their communities.

The program will build on the belief that a good place to live is also a good place to visit. Each participant's journey through this program may lead them to different outcomes within their work and within their communities. We are looking to the future with a goal to help facilitate a culture of wellbeing in communities throughout Atlantic Canada. We believe that every community is unique, but all can find success with tools, resources, skills and support.

This call for Expressions of Interest (Eoi) is an invitation to participants who wish to engage alongside GMIST, Coady and partners to explore community development through a different lens. Throughout the learning journey, everyone will learn collectively from each other, experiment and share ideas and discuss a wide range of topics. GMIST and Coady definitely do not have all of the answers when it comes to community development, but we invite you to come along with us as we learn about and explore new approaches.

### **What is Asset Based Community Development – (As described from [Nurture Development](#))**

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) builds on the assets that are found in the community and mobilizes individuals, associations, and institutions to come together to realise and develop their strengths. This makes it different than a Deficit Based approach that focuses on identifying and servicing needs. From the start an Asset Based approach spends time identifying the assets of individuals, associations and institutions that form the community. The identified assets from an individual are matched with people or groups who have an interest in or need for those strengths. The key is beginning to use what is already in the community. Then working together to build on the identified assets of all involved. It is essentially development BY the community as opposed to development FOR

the community.

The first key method of the ABCD approach is that development begins with the recognition of asset categories that can be uncovered in any community and place. When applying ABCD principles communities are not thought of as complex masses of needs and problems, but rather diverse and capable webs of gifts and assets. Each community has a unique set of skills and capacities it can channel for community development. Empowerment and community connections have to start at the micro level. Powerful and inclusive communities can seek assistance from or focus on outside assets when they need to.

Asset Based Community Development categorizes asset inventories into five groups: Individuals, Associations, Institutions, Place Based and Connections.

#### INDIVIDUALS – EVERYONE HAS ASSETS AND GIFTS.

At the centre are residents of the community who all have gifts and skills. Individual gifts and assets need to be recognized and identified. In community development you cannot do anything with people's needs, only their assets. Deficits or needs are only useful to institutions.

#### ASSOCIATIONS – PEOPLE DISCOVER EACH OTHER'S GIFTS.

Small informal groups of people, such as clubs, working with a common interest as volunteers are called associations in ABCD, and are critical to community mobilization. They don't control anything; they are just coming together around a common interest by their individual choice.

#### INSTITUTIONS – PEOPLE ORGANISED AROUND ASSETS.

Paid groups of people that generally are professionals who are structurally organized are called institutions. They include government agencies and private business, as well as schools, etc. They can all be valuable resources. The assets of these institutions help the community capture valuable resources and establish a sense of civic responsibility.

#### PLACE BASED ASSETS – PEOPLE LIVE HERE FOR A REASON.

Land, buildings, heritage, public and green spaces are all examples of assets for the community. Every place where people choose to be was chosen for good reasons, and whilst people remain those reasons remain. A place might be a centre of natural resources, a hub of activity, living skills, transit connection or marketplace. Whatever the strengths of a place are, the people of the community will be the closest to understanding it.

#### CONNECTIONS – INDIVIDUALS CONNECT INTO A COMMUNITY.

Asset Based Community Development recognises that the exchange between people sharing their gifts and assets creates connections, and these connections are a vital asset to the community. People whose gift is to find and create these connections are called connectors. It takes time to find out about individuals; this is normally done through building relationships, person by person. The social relationships, networks and trust form the social capital of a community. ABCD recognises the value of these assets, and is a practical application of building relationships to increase social capital.

## Program Schedule

### *Level I*

Program participants will be selected in January 2023 and the program will start in February. Please note that in order to receive the certification, all elements of the program must be completed.

February 28	Onboarding
March 21 & 23	Two 90 minute online introductory sessions
April 17 -20	3 ½ days of in person learning in Gros Morne National Park, NL
May – mid June	Working on an Action Plan in your own community with coaching and support provided by the GMIST/Coady team (5-6 weeks)
Mid June	Issues & Challenges session (online) + certificate celebration

### *Level II*

We anticipate that some participants from Level I will be interested in furthering their learnings and working more closely with their fellow citizens in their own communities to advance initiatives following the ABCD approach. These participants will be invited to apply, on behalf of their communities, to move to Level II of the program and to have additional citizens to join them in the learning. Several communities will be selected to move into Level II which will commence in Fall 2023 as follows:

Mid September	Additional community members will participate in two 90 minute online introductory sessions
Mid-October to mid-November	In-person community-based workshops will be held in each selected community over three days with support from the GMIST/Coady team. These will engage a broader group of citizens in working toward a project or initiative.
Early February	Issues and Challenges Session - The leadership teams (4-5 per community) will attend this 3 day in person session at a central location in Atlantic Canada
Feb – September	Community teams will work through their Action Plans with support and coaching from the GMIST/Coady team
September/October	Celebration – Graduation

## Who Should Apply?

The program is open to change agents from NGOs, local government and community associations who are open-minded learners and who have a positive outlook on the development of their communities. Applicants with a demonstrated commitment to community through previous work, volunteering or other community engagement are ideal for this program. While the program will address tourism as an important component of overall community development and well-being, applicants working in other fields such as, but not limited to: housing, social issues, education, environment, agriculture and non-profit associations, are encouraged to apply. Applicants must be willing to share ideas in a peer-to-peer learning environment with the other participants in the cohort, and must also be willing to work with citizens within their own communities to share learnings from the program. Selected participants must commit to all elements of the program.

Level I of the program will include a cross-section of participants from communities and agencies throughout Atlantic Canada. Following Level I, participants who would like to proceed to deeper learning with other citizens from their community may apply for Level II. Acceptance into the program will be competitive and is anticipated that there will be no more than 36 participants in Level I and that 4 communities (one from each province, 4-5 community leaders from each) plus several members of support agencies, selected for Level II. Note that both Levels of the program will include community change makers as well as participants from provincial and federal agencies learning concurrently and, in a peer-to-peer format.

### **As a Participant, What Will I Get from the Program?**

Participants who complete the Level I or Level II of the program will receive a St. Francis Xavier University *Certificate in Asset Based Community Development* Level I and Level II.

In addition to the certification, each participant will:

- Gain a strong foundation in Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) through online and in person learning.
- Learn about various community development tools and gain skills such as asset mapping and designing effective action plans.
- Learn how to engage with outside agencies to target necessary supports and learn methods of measurement and evaluation.
- Have access to support and guidance throughout each Level which will help each community put key learnings from the program into action including testing some development concepts.
- Build a network of like-minded communities and practitioners which will provide ongoing support and advice for their communities into the future.

Communities that proceed into Level II of this program have the potential to become learning centres for future iterations of the program. As a learning centre, the community will have opportunities for further skills enhancement alongside GMIST, Coady and partners, information and expertise exchanges with other communities and will assist with sharing the strengths-based community building approach and key learnings to other communities.

### **I'm Interested.... How Do I Apply?**

We encourage interested community leaders working in various sectors with an interest in community and tourism to apply for this program. We have set up several Zoom sessions in advance of the application deadline which we hope will answer any questions you may have about the application process and/or about the program. You may also reach out to [info@gmist.ca](mailto:info@gmist.ca) at any time with questions or inquiries.

You will be required to fill out an application form and you are encouraged to be as complete as possible in your application as it will be a competitive process. Should we require further information or clarification about the information you have provided, we will reach out to you directly so please ensure that your contact information is complete.

## [APPLY NOW](#)

**Application Deadline:** January 18, 2023

**Notification to Selected Participants for Level I:** By January 23, 2023

### **How Do I Apply for Level II?**

After completing Level I, you may be interested in moving into Level II. There will be an application process for this as well. Further information about the requirements will be shared as we move through Level I. Level II of the program will commence in September 2024. If selected, Level I participants will identify and engage with 4-5 additional community-minded and action-oriented citizens from their community. This leadership team will work together to develop an action plan for an initiative in their own community. New team members will have the opportunity to learn some of the tools and skills from Level I of the program and will help to apply that learning to their community work. Each community team, with support and guidance from the GMIST/Coady team, will engage with their broader community to move their initiative forward. Each community will have an on-site workshop, followed by additional immersive online and in-person learning opportunities which will create space for collaboration and support the leadership team over a 12-month period. The four participating communities may become Learning Sites for future offerings of the ACTivate Program.

In general, we are looking for communities which:

- Have an interest in sustainable community development
- Are open minded and interested in learning new approaches
- Have an interest in tourism
- Have established circle(s) of connected citizens or are open to this concept
- Are willing to work in a cooperative environment
- Have a willingness to engage with the community as well as with the larger region to share ideas and learnings and potentially pursue development initiatives

### **About GMIST**

The [Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism](#) was established as an NGO in 2003 to support tourism development at the community and business level across the four most Eastern Provinces of Canada – New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Over the past 20 years GMIST has been instrumental in supporting the industry and communities as they move to more experiential approaches to tourism offerings.

GMIST does this primarily as a developer and facilitator of regional training programs that are hosted onsite in NL or within regions or communities in Atlantic Canada. To date, GMIST has trained close to 4500 tourism operators from the region and across the country.

GMIST and its main parent organization Gros Morne Cooperating Association (GMCA) have been recognized regionally and nationally for their excellence with many awards and have become one of the most well respected and funded tourism support agencies in Canada. Recently, GMIST has embarked on a new chapter that will see the institute focus on two key areas over the next three years. One is experience development within tourism and the other is community development with a focus on the role of tourism.

## About Coady Institute

Established in 1959 by [St. Francis Xavier University](#) (StFX), Coady Institute is committed to accompanying **generations of global leaders** skilled in the application of citizen-led, asset-based, and community-driven **leadership for economic and social change**. The Institute was named in honour of [Rev. Dr. Moses Coady](#), a prominent founder of the [Antigonish Movement](#) – a people’s movement for economic and social justice that began in Nova Scotia during the 1920s.

In collaboration with partners in Canada and across the globe, the Institute is committed to reducing poverty and transforming societies by **strengthening local economies**, by **building resilient communities**, and by **promoting social accountability and good governance**. Coady Institute is committed to breaking down and transforming the North-South divide by bringing people together to exchange innovations and learn from each other. Through relevant adult education programs, effective partnerships, and applicable research, Coady Institute is equipping community leaders and their organizations with the knowledge and practical tools needed to bring about the change they want for themselves.

Located in Mi’kma’ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi’kmaq People, on the campus of StFX, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Coady Institute **includes a network of more than 10,000 graduates in 146 countries globally**.