

**From Growth to Sustainability:  
Community Discourse on Changing Approaches  
to Resort Governance in Whistler, BC**

by

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## **Abstract**

From 2000-2012 The Resort Municipality Of Whistler (RMOW) took steps to radically shift its governance approach from one based on growth to focus more on sustainable policies through the creation of a Comprehensive Sustainability Plan (CSP) that empowered the community to guide decision-making. The RMOW's status as a pioneer in the realm of establishing a governance approach based on principles of sustainability has been studied by Gill and Williams (2008, 2011, 2012) the findings of which create the foundation of this study. This research employs a path creation lens as described in Garud and Karnøe (2001) to determine what underlying forces influenced the resort's transformation. To observe this transformation a newsprint database was created and analyzed by collecting articles from 2000 to 2012. A total of 2,380 articles from 646 issues of the *Pique Newsmagazine* were collected, summarized and coded for this study. The findings suggest that the path towards sustainability was forged when a group of individuals and organizations, the Early Adopters, began a process of community conditioning to promote local stakeholder buy-in. Ultimately, while significant and meaningful change occurred within the community and local government the sustainability movement, and those who supported that movement, were inhibited to varying degrees by global and local forces beyond their control.

**Keywords:** governance; sustainability; mountain-based resort communities; tourism; newsprint database;

*I dedicate this work to the pioneers, visionaries  
and explorers of Whistler, past, present and  
future.*

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## List of Acronyms

SFU	Simon Fraser University
BC	British Columbia
CSP	Comprehensive Sustainability Plan
CDP	Community Development Plan
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IOC	International Olympic Committee
OCP	Official Community Plan
RMOW	Resort Municipality of Whistler
TBL	Triple Bottom Line
TNS	The Natural Step
TW	Tourism Whistler
VANOC	Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games
WB	Whistler Blackcomb
WCS	Whistler Centre for Sustainability

# 1. Introduction

The importance that tourism has played in the evolution of British Columbia's (BC) economy cannot be understated. An annual average of 128,000 people in the province are employed in the tourism industry which, in 2010, contributed 7.1 billion dollars (approximately 3.5%) to BC's gross domestic product (BC Stats, 2010). The Resort Municipality of Whistler alone contributes \$1.17 Million in daily tax revenue and accounts for 22.5% of the tourism export revenue in the province (RMOW, 2013). British Columbia's stunning mountain ranges and ample recreation opportunities have acted as significant drivers in promoting local development. London Mountain, the former name of Whistler Mountain, at one time only housed a handful of log cabins and was known for its fishing opportunities in the summer. From 1914 when Alex and Myrtle Phillip decided to open Rainbow Lodge with views of 'London Mountain' to 1975 when Whistler became the province's first Resort Municipality the area experienced modest growth, but was on the verge of an incredible transformation. The transformations Whistler was to experience locally were mirrored at the Provincial level as well. With such notable changes as the development of Vancouver and the surrounding area for the World Exposition, hosted in 1986 and then premier Gordon Campbell's call in 2003 to double tourism revenues in the Province by 2010 (to the amount of \$19.6 billion) (Tourism British Columbia, 2009). Shortly after Gordon Campbell's challenge was issued to the tourism industry Vancouver and Whistler won the bid to host the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. The successful bid ignited a boom in tourism infrastructure and development projects from Vancouver to Whistler. Encouraged by these series of economic stimuli in tandem with the unique powers granted to it through the *Resort Municipality of Whistler Act*, Whistler has been and continues to be at the forefront of tourism development in British Columbia.

From 2000 to 2012 The Resort Municipality Of Whistler (RMOW) took steps to radically shift its governance approach from one based on growth to focus more on

sustainable policies through the creation of a Comprehensive Sustainability Plan (CSP) that empowered the community to guide decision-making. The RMOW's status as a pioneer in the realm of establishing a governance approach based on principles of sustainability has been studied by Gill and Williams (2008, 2011, 2012). This study aims to foster a better understanding of factors that help or hinder the evolution of a more 'sustainable' form of governance by examining community discourse as revealed through the creation and analysis of a newsprint archive. The study's results might well inform the development of strategies and practices in other Resort Municipalities and tourism locales interested in promoting community based decision-making relating to a sustainable future.

## **1.1. Whistler, BC**

Whistler, located 120km North of Vancouver, British Columbia (BC) is a comprehensively planned four-season mountain resort community and was the official mountain host of the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. Annually, the resort hosts about two million visitors and has a permanent population base of around 11,000 residents (Gill and Williams, 2014). The RMOW is the community's local government, which was established under the Resort Municipality of Whistler Act in 1975. Its development activities are framed by planning policies and programs that place a high priority on protecting its natural environment and nurturing its strong 'sense of community' (Gill and Williams, 2014). Whistler has become one of North America's leading resort destinations with a world-class reputation for its planned approach to development (Vance and Williams, 2005). The community dynamics of Whistler are complex due to a number of factors including a large temporary work force, the high cost of living and a large proportion of highly educated and engaged community members.

The largest employer in the Resort Municipality of Whistler is the four-season mountain resort operator, Whistler and Blackcomb Holdings Inc. (WB), which is a publically owned company, traded on the Toronto Stock Exchange. The company's four-season operations take place on the two mountains adjacent to the municipality, Whistler and Blackcomb. WB, the mountain operator, is a leader in sustainable mountain resort operations and has received a number of awards including the BC Hydro Power

Smart Excellence Award (2005, 2012), Canada's Greenest Employer Award (2009, 2010, 2012), the Golden Eagle Award for Overall Environmental Excellence by a Ski Resort in North America (2003, 2005, 2010) and the AWARE Environmental Business award (2007) (Whistler Blackcomb, 2013). WB's environmental initiatives include the Fitzsimmons Creek run-of-river project, energy monitoring and implementing stringent composting and reusable wares programs. WB has been instrumental in the championing of environmental initiatives within the community and was a key player in the formation of the *Whistler 2020* governance package.

The legislative base that has provided the tools to Whistler to be a leader in is known as the Resort Municipality of Whistler Act. Formed in 1975 the act provides the RMOW with unique powers not usually granted under the Local Government Act to aid in the success of resorts such as (Ministry of Employment and Investment, 1996):

- Closer Provincial Supervision – Which allows the province to better assert its interests in economic development and environmental protection, and better support the local community in coping with the extreme pressures of growth.
- Less stringent referendum requirements – Which allows Whistler to undertake long-term borrowing for the construction of facilities to support the development of the community without seeking approval from its residents.
- Broadened development permitting powers – Whistler has the enhanced powers to control the external appearance of buildings.
- Creation of a resort business association – Whistler can create an association to encourage the development of the resort.
- Mandatory Fees – Whistler has access to a percentage of funds collected from Hotels known as a Hotel Tax a 2% additional tax on all hotel rooms and lodging.

These additional tools were instrumental in the rapid success and physical expansion of the mountain resort community. An amended version of the Whistler Act known as the Resort Association Act has now grown to include 13 resort municipalities (Rural BC, 2012).

Included within the Resort Association Act are protocols that call for the formation of a resort business association to help increase local tourism. In Whistler's case the resort business association manifested as Tourism Whistler (TW), Whistler's main tourism marketing body. TW has played an integral role in shaping the future of Whistler and controls multiple facets of the resort from media message to online bookings. TW played an important role in the formation of the newsprint archival database used in this research due to the frequent communication between TW and the *Pique Newsmagazine* (henceforth referred to simply as the *Pique*).

The Whistler area has a long history of attracting visitors and residents seeking pristine wilderness, clean glacier fed water and mountain vistas. Faced with possibility of hosting the Olympics and an identification of un-sustainable physical growth within the Whistler area, the community of Whistler demanded a change. The RMOW adopted the sustainability principles of The Natural Step (TNS) after a timely visit in March, 2000, from the organization's founder Karl-Henrik Robèrt (Flint et al., 2002; Gill and Williams, 2011a). The Natural Step organization promotes a robust, science-based framework that helps communities and businesses better understand and integrate environmental, social and economic considerations into their planning (The Natural Step, 2012). The organization encourages its followers to guide decision making and community action towards actions that: eliminate concentrations of substances extracted from the earth's crust, eliminate concentrations of substances produced by society, eliminate degradation by physical means and, eliminate conditions that systematically undermine peoples capacity to meet their needs. The Natural Step has guided the formation of Whistler's current sustainability framework, *Whistler 2020* (Whistler 2020, 2006). These advances in planning towards sustainability have resulted in Whistler being internationally recognized as an innovator in the field of sustainability governance and planning (LIVCOM, 2005).

## **1.2. Sustainable Development and Tourism**

Sustainable development has become the focus of all levels of government as a mechanism to manage the impacts of a growing human population. The field of sustainability originated in the 1970's as society's awareness of global environmental

degradation increased (Lafferty, 2000). The World Commission on Environment and Development defined *sustainable development* as development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland, 1987). Importantly, the concept of sustainable development marked a convergence between economic development and environmentalism (Hardy et al., 2002). However, the equity of this convergence is yet to fully be understood. Focusing on the tourism realm, Williams and Ponsford (2009) observed that an underlying paradox existed in studies analyzing the relationship between tourism and environment. In a tourism context, natural environments are often the principle draws for tourists however; the natural environments that tourists experience are simultaneously exploited and compromised to satisfy the visitor’s consumptive desires. As consumption of the tourist product often takes place in real-time (and in-situ), the effects of increased demand on the local environment are immediately evident. The future of sustainable tourism hinges on action from all stakeholders within communities (Williams and Ponsford, 2009). Analyzing the Whistler sustainability process is valuable in understanding how a local government in a tourism-focused community can create the conditions for businesses and citizens to engage in practices that move towards social, environmental and economic sustainability.

### **1.3. Research Objective and Questions**

The overarching research question is:

**What underlying forces influenced the transition in governance approach from growth to sustainability in the Resort of Whistler, BC between 2000 and 2012?**

This question is examined through the eyes of the media with reporting gathered from a local Whistler newspaper, the *Pique*. More specifically the following questions guide this investigation:

- How and why have attitudes towards sustainability changed in Whistler?
- What were the main factors acting as constraints to change in governance?

- What were the main factors acting as catalysts to change in governance and how did these two sets of forces interact and manifest themselves to promote/resist changes in governance from 2000 to 2012?
- From 2000 to 2012 what aspects of the Whistler governance model have changed and how?
- What policy, planning and management lessons can be learned from the governance processes operating in this destination?

## **1.4. Research Approach**

A literature review provides the theoretical foundation and guiding framework for the examination of this study's research objective and questions. The review seeks to discuss and build upon relevant literature surrounding Whistler, neo-liberalism and globalization, theories on the evolution of destinations, resort governance, evolutionary economic theory, sustainability in resort settings, the case study approach and the use of media as a tool for qualitative analysis.

This research aims to identify how the media portrayed the underlying forces that resulted in a transition in Whistler's governance as discussed in Gill and Williams (2008, 2011, 2012) from 2000-2012. To this end, a case study research design was employed. Archival data research was the main tool used in data collection (see Chapter 3 for Methodology). These data were analyzed using a path-creation/path-dependency lens drawing on various elements of evolutionary economic theory. The results of the case study were interpreted and reported on using 'story-telling' as a tool as discussed in (Dredge et al., 2011; Sandercock, 2003). The quantitative aspects of this research are discussed using a simplified collection of metrics modified from Reason and Garcia (2007).

Following an in-depth search of existing print and web archives it was determined that no databases appropriate for this study were in existence. Therefore, it was necessary, as part of this study, to create a database containing a collection of articles to address the research questions. In order to limit some of the variations in data collection it was decided that a single source database would be created that would contain all

relevant newsprint articles from the years 2000-2012. For reasons addressed in section 3.1 *The Pique* was chosen as the preferred media outlet for this study.

## **1.5. Research Significance**

Methodologically, the creation of a key worded, archival database in order to catalogue events and opinions is not unique within the realm of tourism research. However, the application of a path creation lens to analyze the data is unique and as such it is useful in furthering understanding its use in tourism research. Furthermore, expressing the findings in the form of a narrative that ties together opinions gathered from the news media is an un-conventional method of sharing research findings. This work will be an experiment in and of itself, to better understand the value and importance of integrating story telling into academic research in order to make it more accessible.

At an applied level this work will provide greater insight into the interactions between media, community and government as well as catalogue the challenges and successes that the RMOW and Whistler as a whole experienced in the transition from a pro-growth model of governance to a model that places emphasis on moving towards a more sustainable future. Therefore, this research may be useful for the community of Whistler in understanding its sustainability journey as well as other mountain-based resort communities that are looking to move towards a more sustainable form of governance.

## **1.6. Research Project Structure**

This Introduction is the first of six chapters. Chapter Two reviews and discusses literature relevant to the study. Chapter Three outlines the design and research methods employed, and identifies the research limitations. Chapter Four reports the quantitative findings emerging from the case study. Chapter Five places the project's qualitative findings in the context of broader resort destination governance and planning related literature, and attempts to weave together significant articles and situations to discuss

key lessons learned. Chapter Six offers conclusions and provides recommendations for further research.

## **2. Review of the Literature**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The proceeding literature review is intended to create a theoretical foundation to discuss the findings of the research focused on the Resort Municipality of Whistler. The review will begin with a discussion around global changes such as the rise of neo-liberalism and the effects of globalization. While seemingly grandiose, these concepts are important in understanding why the Resort Municipality had such a significant influence, due to the downloading of responsibility from the nation/province to the locality in question. The review will then discuss the evolution of tourism development research and discuss the increased attention given to resort governance. This will be followed by a discussion of key concepts in evolutionary economic theory focusing on path dependence and path creation. From there, the focus will be placed on a key component of Whistler's story, sustainability. The review will then discuss the ways in which the case study material will be framed through the discipline of story telling. Finally, the role that the media plays within this research and the associated possible shortcomings will be discussed.

### **2.2. The Resort Community of Whistler**

The resort area of Whistler has been a focus of study for those interested in inclusive, sustainable forms of government for a number of years. The researchers with the most experience in this area are Simon Fraser professors: Alison Gill and Peter Williams ( Gill, 2000, 2007; Gill and Williams, 2008, 2011a, 2012; Saremba and Gill, 1991; Vance and Williams, 2005; Williams and Ponsford, 2009). In over twenty years the two researchers have studied multiple aspects of the evolving resort community. Early

work focused on relationships between user groups and outdoor experiences in resort settings and focused on informing the resort operations sector (Saremba and Gill, 1991). However, Gill in 2000 began to shift focus onto aspects of governance within Whistler. She tied the concept of 'growth management' to Whistler's evolving governance structure. Gill (2000) observed that Whistler initially experienced a period of rapid physical expansion backed by a local government model she referred to as the 'growth-machine'. As the resort community grew in size, evolved and became more organized local contestation emerged (Gill, 2000). The community demanded a change through influential organizations such as the Association of Whistler Area Residents for the Environment (AWARE) and groups concerned with the lack of services for young families.

In Gill's (2007) article on 'The Politics of Bed Units' an important feature of the Whistler growth-management landscape is discussed. A bed unit is the measure of the number of 'warm pillows' in the resort. Typically a condo will have two bed units where as a single family dwelling can have as many as 12. In Whistler, this number was initially linked to estimates of sewage and water supply capacity (Gill, 2007). The initial figure was set at 40,000 bed units but in the face of rapid development the figure was raised to 52,500 in 1989. The bed unit figure has been a defacto limiter to growth, although as Gill (2007) discusses, with the introduction of the 2010 Olympics the discourse around bed units shifted to expanding the cap in order to become more 'sustainable' through the creation of resident-restricted affordable housing.

In 2005, Vance and Williams produced a study that focused on an integral piece in the Whistler puzzle, the comprehensive sustainability plan, *Whistler 2020*. Vance and Williams (2005:2) highlighted the multitude of issues facing Whistler at the time:

Confronted with growing difficulties in systematically and effectively responding to shifting travel market trends, increasing real-estate development pressure, escalating ecosystem stresses, diminishing levels of resident employee affordability, emerging climate change impacts and rising infrastructure costs, Whistler reached a cross-roads in 2001.

The combination of these factors resulted in the RMOW embarking on a process to create a new zeitgeist in the community, one that shifted from emphasizing physical

place making to a focus on sustainable place management. The eventual outcome became the highest-level policy document, *Whistler 2020*. A document that is grounded in principles of sustainability and influenced heavily by the Natural Step Framework which aimed to integrate the community in the decision making process.

Gill and Williams (2008), looked further into the changes occurring in Whistler's governance and the effect of the Natural Step on evolving discourse within the community. Whistler's Natural Step journey began after a timely visit from the organization's founder in 2000. The meeting spurred the creation of a group of influential local organizations that were committed to developing a range of sustainability programmes; they called themselves the 'Early Adopters'. The first step in the process was an awareness campaign entitled *Whistler It's Our Nature* that introduced the community to The Natural Step and the concept of 'sustainability'. *Whistler It's Our Nature* was followed by the program entitled *Whistler It's Our Future*. *Whistler It's Our Future* involved the community in a visioning process, compiling member's hopes and priorities for the Resort Municipality as it moved forward. The outcome of this community consultation was the formation of the *Whistler 2020* Comprehensive Sustainability Plan. Gill and Williams (2008), make the important association that the idea of 'sustainability' along with the malleable and implementable tenants of the Natural Step guided Whistler into an action that produced real sustainable policy and spawned a set of programs and conditions for a sustainable agenda to be moved forward. Williams and Ponsford (2009) refer to the Whistler model as potentially the 'best-case' example of current mainstream destination planning that orients tourism towards greater sustainability. The uptake of sustainable programs and participation by local tourism destination stakeholders backed by strong local government leaders was integral to the regions success.

In recent years, academic work has shifted focus to include broader factors acting on Whistler's governance. In Gill and Williams (2011a), the concepts of path creation and path dependency are first tied to Whistler's governance transition. Factors discussed above such as the growth-machine, bed units and the Natural Step were integrated into a larger theory of path dependence (things continue the way they always have) and path creation (a mindful deviation from a set path). These concepts will be discussed further in Section 2.5. Perhaps the most important historical change in Whistlers trajectory, the study finds, were the effects of winning and hosting the 2010

Olympic Winter Games. During the run up to the Olympics the RMOW was faced with a new set of challenges beyond just planning for the games. This included a reduction in real estate growth due to a decrease in developable land and reduced levels of real estate revenues due to a global economic downturn. Additionally, the RMOW was having issues providing affordable housing, which led to worker shortages and a failure to reach its goals outlined in *Whistler 2020*. In response to the increased pressures the RMOW used the urgency and momentum of the Olympic Games to help address these “elephants in the closet” issues (Gill and Williams, 2014). The most notable outcomes were the securing of a grant of Crown Land from the BC government for Games-time athlete housing, which after the games was transitioned into an additional 800 bed units of affordable housing. The BC government also provided the host First Nations with a similar sized land bank and extended both parties reach into the Callaghan valley, lands adjacent to the municipal boundaries that were previously Crown land. The additional land to the First Nations meant an increase in bed units and the introduction of a new partner in Whistler’s future (Taylor, 2010a). This research will aim to identify and reinforce the findings discussed above as well as add different aspects of the ‘Whistler story’ from the media perspective. It also aims to create a more current state of affairs and discuss the changes that occurred in Whistler in the post-Olympic era.

### **2.3. Neo-liberalism and Globalization**

A discussion surrounding sustainability at a community level, in the context of western capitalist society, necessitates an understanding of the neoliberal ideals that influence the way in which sustainable governance is currently operationalized. Neo-liberalism, as a political economic theory, proposes human well-being can be best advanced by maximizing entrepreneurial and individual freedoms through the unrestricted flow of capital. Neo-liberalism functions best under a framework characterized by free markets, free trade, and individual liberty (Benington and Geddes, 1992; Giddens, 1998; Harvey, 2006). Neoliberal thinking dictates that: where markets do not exist they must be created, by state action if necessary. However, once the market is created, state interventions must be kept to a bare minimum because the state

cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals and lacks the ability to be impartial to powerful external interests (Harvey, 2006).

The spread of the neoliberal revolution began in the 1970s in Britain and the United States and influenced political-economic practices and thinking. The outcomes were exemplified by a downloading of responsibility to individuals from the state. These changes spurred on by neo-liberalism manifested in an environment in which many local governments engaged in private-public sector partnerships. More often than not, reasons for this courtship are founded in economic goals. However, a concern raised by Hall (2000) in (Bramwell et al., 2000) is that they are shrouded in political rationalities, related to the broader philosophical perspectives of a pervasive neo-liberal agenda across Western nations. The symbiotic relationship or the joining of two dissimilar entities (public vs private good) has become the model dominating tourism (Gill, 2004). The concern is that these two entities have not evolved evenly to produce a new form of mutualism. Instead, scholars are concerned that government policy, established for the purpose of the public good, is compromised by the principles of the corporate model. In turn, these evolving models fail to consider how public-private partnerships thwart inclusiveness and democracy in the development process (Dinham, 2005; Katz, 2006). However, in recent years, communities empowered, in part, by this downloading of responsibility have often created progressive forms of decision making that include multiple stakeholders in decision making processes.

In tandem with the rise of neo-liberal policies are the processes surrounding globalization. Over the last few decades globalization has shaped and affected all aspects of modern life. This change has seemingly blurred the lines between the local, regional, national and global realms. To conceptualize the links that exist between the global and the local the notion of the global-local nexus is adopted (Alger, 1988). Milne and Ateljevic (2001; p.373), argue that it is essential to look carefully at how interactions between the global and the local shape development outcomes for individuals, households, communities and regions.

Tourism, in simple terms must be viewed as a transaction process which is at once driven by the global priorities of multi-national corporations, geo-political forces and broader forces of economic change, and the

complexities of the local – where residents, visitors, workers, governments and the entrepreneurs interact at the industry ‘coal-face’.

Globally tourism’s development outcomes are influenced by broad-based economic change, evolving structures of corporate governance and the unrelenting evolutionary pressures of demographics and technological change (Milne and Ateljevic, 2001). Multi-national companies drive business and leisure travel by advocating for the relaxation restrictions on trade and human movements while at the same time are the dominant form of enterprise in the tourism industry. At the national scale macro-economic policy frameworks, infrastructure provisions and issues of socio-cultural cohesion play a vital role in influencing tourism’s development outcomes (Milne and Ateljevic, 2001). Some commentators argue that the role of the nation state has diminished as the ‘stateless’ multinational corporation has come to dominate global economic affairs and neo-liberal policies have led to a retreat of the welfare state (Hirst and Thompson, 1999). However, it has been argued that what Hirst and Thompson (1999) refer to as a wholesale retreat is more of a qualitative reorganization of structural capacities and strategic emphases (Amin and Thrift, 1997).

From a tourism perspective, national governments often appear to be playing a more active role in coordinating the tourism marketing campaigns and broad-based product development that play such an important role in shaping tourism demand and behaviour (Milne and Ateljevic, 2001). In recent decades the region has been seen to be an increasingly vital component in the global-local context of development (Storper, 1997). Regions stimulate economic growth through a mixture of inter-firm networks, and cultural/political attributes have dominated much of the social science discourse on economic development since the early 1980s (Amin, 1989; Sayer, 1995). Additionally, many of the natural and cultural resources upon which the industry depends are regional in nature – ranging from complex ecosystems through to patterns of culture and economic identity (Milne and Ateljevic, 2001). Since the early 1980s the community level has also been viewed more seriously as a key factor in influencing economic development outcomes. Community is of vital importance as an intermediate level of social life between personal (individual/family) and impersonal (global/institutional) (Milne and Ateljevic, 2001). There has been a continual increase in the recognition of the

importance of 'community-based' approaches to planning tourism development. As (Milne and Ateljevic, 2001 p.372) suggest:

The complexity of the global-local nexus – and how its economic, cultural and environmental elements interact to create local development outcomes – is breathtaking. We cannot understand the context of local tourism development unless we grapple with this complexity and better understand how key stakeholders (government, industry, community, tourists) interact both within and between multiple 'nested' scales.

It is important that throughout analysis of the events that took place in Whistler from 2000 to 2012 that the concept of the interconnectivity between the global and local is not lost. While the findings of this paper will surely point to key events at different scales, they cannot be looked at in isolation and must be observed against the backdrop of a multitude of conditions at the global, national, regional and local realms.

## **2.4. Tourism and Destination Evolution**

Tourism is a major global economic force recognized by many as the world's largest industry (Milne and Ateljevic, 2001). Tourism researchers first began to focus considerable attention on the broader context and outcomes of tourism development in the 1970s and 1980s. The approaches that dominated much of the discourse on tourism and development during this period were the dependency perspective (Britton, 1982) and the life-cycle model (Butler, 1980). Both theories discuss the way in which companies minimize 'unit costs' by generating economies of scale. In doing this they increase visitor numbers while allowing tourists to fulfill their desires cheaply and efficiently (Milne and Ateljevic, 2001). When new nations, regions or locals are incorporated into the global 'patch-work-quilt' of tourism destinations the emergent industry is often characterized by relatively high levels of local involvement. As visitor numbers rise local industry soon becomes characterized by overseas or local elite ownership. Locals end up receiving few economic benefits, while having to carry the inevitable costs of rapidly increasing tourist numbers (Milne and Ateljevic, 2001). In both conceptualizations, the ability of local government, industry and individuals to exert some degree of control over their own destinies is omitted.

Of all approaches developed to explain destination growth, the Tourism Area Life Cycle proposed by Butler (1980) has received the most attention and has been tested by numerous researchers (Prideaux, 2000). Butler (1998) reflects that at the time at which it was presented, the purpose of the model was relatively simple, to argue the case that the destinations had a life as a product and this life would proceed through stages and at some point would likely end. It attempts to relate growth, change, limits and intervention in a tourism context, and brings together the demand and supply sides of the equation. Butler's model has faced numerous criticisms during the last 30 years but continues to be the model that receives the most attention. Overall, these frameworks fail to consider the possibility that by empowering locals to have input into development plans, the deteriorating cycle of evolution might be minimized or avoided (Drake, 1991; Priestley and Mundet, 1998).

Another approach to emerge in the 1980s emphasized local agency by seeing communities and their constituent members playing an active role in determining tourism's outcomes (Murphy, 1985). In contrast to the models just described the community approach views locals as being capable of planning and participating in tourism development, making their voices heard when they are concerned and possessing the capability to control the outcomes of the industry to some degree. Murphy (1995) argues that if host communities can define the types of tourism they wish to attract over the long term, they can shape the type of industry that is most appropriate to their needs.

However, community participation can also be a double-edged sword (Drake, 1991). Such approaches promote mutual responsibility between the state and locals, incorporate vital local knowledge into projects, and provide outlets for the channelling of local political discontent (Milne and Ateljevic, 2001). Additionally, local participation is often expensive to run, may generate expectations that far exceed eventual outcomes, and may create new conflicts as marginal groups become more articulate and elites are able to gain a greater slice of participatory benefits through their own networks (Zazueta, 1995). Murphy (1985) admits that within tourist destination communities it is often relatively small groups of people who become involved with tourism development. However, so long as some caveats are remembered working partnerships can successfully be formed between community interest groups and industry. Those caveats

are that: first, residents perceive the industry at growing at an appropriate pace and scale for their community; second, although few may be directly involved in working with the tourism industry, many appreciate being asked and knowing that the opportunity to participate is there if they wished. Finally, the best working relationships are formed when the community and industry are seen to gain from each other's involvement. Murphy (1985) suggests that the best way to address these caveats is to develop a form of tourism that conserves local heritage, landscapes and lifestyles making the community a richer place to live in and visit. These ideas have been absorbed into the current resort development literature, which has become increasingly focused on the ways in which sustainable development can be achieved.

## **2.5. Resort Governance**

Governance encompasses the values, rules, institutions and processes through which public and private stakeholders seek to achieve common objectives and make decisions (Beritelli, Bieger, and Laesser, 2007; Murphy, 2007). Within resorts exists a community-driven need to control and monitor the action of single companies and entrepreneurs who pursue their economic interests by sourcing from the natural and cultural resources of the destination, which are perceived as public assets (Beritelli et al., 2007). Beritelli et al. (2007; p97) conclude that:

1. Destination management in a community context consists of transactional and personal relationship networks; whereas in a corporate model, hierarchical relationships are of interest, emphasizing the dyadic perspective.
2. For community-type destinations, the development process involves informal connections, knowledge, and trust, making the dynamic dimension (and therefore a historical view) crucial for the analysis of the formation and evolution of the network.

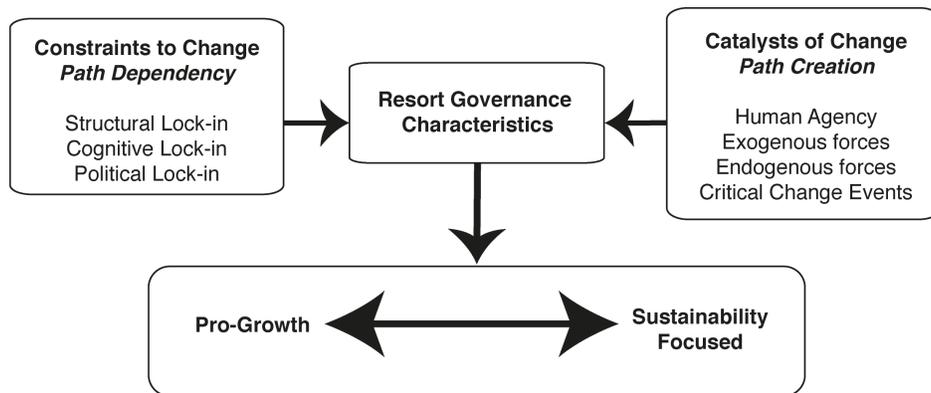
Lahiri-Dutt (2004) suggests the goal of citizen participation is to remedy social injustice through the redistribution of political power within society. In communities, it can be interpreted as the direct involvement of people into public affairs occurring at local grassroots levels (Sailor, 2010). Citizen participation secures the right of citizens to

contribute towards the form, substance and overall dimensions of their respective communities (J. J. Williams, 2006).

Tourism governance literature parallels discussions concerning broader societal discourses on the evolution and evaluation of governance (Peck and Tickell, 2002; Rhodes, 1997; Ruhanen, Scott, Ritchie, and Tkaczynski, 2010; Stoker, 1998). Hall (2011) identifies two overarching meanings of tourism governance. The first refers to how a state or destination operates within existing economic and political environments (Gill and Williams, 2011b). It concerns the process employed by institutions and individuals to develop and implement the rules, policies, and strategies affecting the planning and management of tourism destinations and their businesses (Beritelli et al., 2007). Hall (2011b) offers a second more theoretical meaning of governance built around how the state coordinates the management of socio-economic systems affecting tourism. Bramwell (2011) elaborates on these perspectives by suggesting that tourism governance is the process of applying power, rules and resources in contexts that require the coordination, cooperation and collective action of various parties. In the neoliberal era characterized by governance systems that emphasize market growth, competitiveness and private-public partnerships, the push for new organizational structures responsive to the needs of an increasingly networked world are emerging (Beaumont and Dredge, 2010; Gill and Williams, 2011b).

Resorts vary in character from comprehensively-planned fully integrated resorts instigated by one or more major developers (Stanton and Aislabie, 1992) to catalytic developments that result from a concentration of smaller tourism enterprises associated with a central theme or attraction that evolves over time (Flagestad and Hope, 2001; Gill, 1998). Dependent upon the governance model of the resort, local institutions and residents will be more or less engaged and have varying levels of control on development. Flagestad and Hope (2001) suggest that these models can all be situated on a continuum ranging from community-focused to corporate-directed extremes. Changes at all levels of the global-local nexus have the potential to influence the governance structures of mountain-based resort communities, and through contestation, paths to new forms of governance may be created. To conceptualize changes in mountain-based resort community governance, Gill and Williams (2011) developed a model that employs components of path dependence and path creation to analyze

governance shifts (Figure 1). The concepts of path dependence and path creation are discussed in further detail in section 2.5. However, this model is useful for conceptualizing the way in which forces can act upon a governance structure to create movement in different 'directions'. For the purpose of this study the focus will be on movements and changes that took place within Whistler's governance structure that sit somewhere on a continuum of pro-growth to a model of community integrated decision-making that is guided by principles of sustainability.



**Figure 1. Model for understanding shifts in resort governance characteristics adapted from Gill and Williams (2011b)**

Figure 1 illustrates the lens employed in examining the findings of this research. Event(s) or actor(s) influenced the characteristics of Whistler's resort governance, which as observed by Gill and Williams (2011) ultimately manifested in a shift in governance.

## 2.6. An Evolutionary Economic Lens

The application of concepts from evolutionary economics to conceptualize frame changes in local economics has been growing. In particular, evolutionary economic geography has, over the past fifteen years, drawn upon ideas from evolutionary economics to try and understand processes of economic growth and change, with the concept of path dependence and more recently, path creation, becoming particularly prominent (Martin and Sunley, 2006a). Put broadly, the basic concern of evolutionary

economic geography is with the processes by which the economic landscape – the spatial organization of economic production, distribution and consumption – is transformed over time (Boschma and Martin, 2007). The work has been informed by a relatively small number of empirical case studies and has emphasized the continued importance of regional variety and diversity, shaped by a range of inherited habits, norms and practices (Grabher, 1993; Hudson, 1994; Storper, 2002). Evolutionary economics is concerned with the historical processes of economic change and development (Hodgson, 1997; Loasby, 1999; Veblen, 1898). It follows three key principles of evolutionary thought: the existence of variation among a species or population, continuity, whereby individual characteristics are passed on to future generations; and processes of selection that determine the ability of units to succeed within their environment (Essletzbichler and Rigby, 2007). This lens provides a useful perspective when analyzing historical data. It is important to acknowledge that, the process of economic evolution must be understood as an ongoing never-ending interplay of path dependence, path creation and path destruction that occurs as actors in different arenas reproduce, mindfully deviate from and transform existing socioeconomic-technological structures, practices and development paths (Martin and Sunley, 2006a).

### **2.6.1. *Path Dependence***

A key concept in evolutionary economics is path dependence, which is held to be characteristic of a system or process whose outcomes evolve as a consequence of its own history (David, 2001; Martin and Sunley, 2006b). The origins of the path dependence perspective can be traced to David's (1985) paper which described the evolution of letters on the typewriter keyboard. At the time, the positioning of the keys by employing the QWERTY layout was imperative to combat the binding the machines faced. Eventually the binding issue was solved, yet the use of the QWERTY layout continued. David ascribed this “stickiness” to technology inter-relatedness, economies of scale and quasi-irreversibility of efforts (Garud and Karnøe, 2001). David (1985) suggested that our current use of the QWERTY keyboard could only be explained by employing a historical perspective, one of path dependence.

Path dependency is useful in this study as a tool in understanding policy decisions based on historical data. This idea of path-dependent decision-making has been used in a variety of disciplines, for example by Gill and Williams (2011) to frame the evolution of governance in Whistler. A core concept associated with path dependency is that of 'lock-in', whereby if no exogenous shock disturbs the system a process will continue on a path (not necessarily the optimal one) (Garud, et al., 2010). Lock-in is an important concept that is manifested in situations where actors are unable to move to a new state despite all involved preferring to do so (referred to as a 'penguin effect' in economics) (Katz and Shapiro, 1985). Grabher (1993), identifies three components of lock-in: structural, cognitive and political. Structural lock-in relates to a dependency on an increasing return on investments. Cognitive lock-in relates to institutional embedding and the structure of social relationships that link people to institutional environments, whereas political lock-in has much to do with power relationships (Gill and Williams, 2011). A caveat to lock-in is the issue of time frame, as Vergne and Durand (2010) acknowledge, the VHS is bound to be replaced by another recording system and the QWERTY keyboards by other technologies such as voice recognition systems in the long run. The notion of what 'long run' is can be subjective.

In Gill (2000), the concept of a 'growth machine' is discussed in the context of competition for land in urban localities. In her paper '*From growth machine to growth management*' she discussed how resorts are driven to grow and expand through public-private partnerships and often-allied political and social leaders are both fuelling and profiting from growth and development. Gill (2000) describes the years from the establishment of the resort in 1975 to 1990 as an uncontested dominance of the growth-machine approach. This history still plays an important role in Whistler's decisions today. However, in the 1990's, Whistler came up against a series of factors including a self-imposed bed cap, a sharp rise in real-estate prices, and a push-back from the growing community. To deal with these issues the community required innovation and change.

It is here that the introduction of the second key concept in evolutionary economics is valuable to discuss. In contrast to the concept of path dependence is the concept of path creation. Path dependence celebrates the role of chance historical events in shaping the flow of future events and as such takes on the perspective of an outsider's view to the genesis of innovation (Garud and Karnøe, 2001). In contrast, path

creation focuses on the agents (individual person/group) who mindfully deviate from existing structures to create new futures. Said another way, an understanding of path creation processes provides a tool to help identify and understand how agents/actors escape the path-dependent concept of “lock-in”.

### **2.6.2. Path Creation**

Path creation typically involves innovation and the generation of new knowledge by firms, entrepreneurs, and institutions, sometimes prompted by particular triggers or focusing devices, such as conflictual labour relations, the exhaustion of certain sources of supply, or the identification of new market opportunities (Boschma and Lambooy, 1999; Loasby, 1999; Rosenberg, 1969). Garud et al. (2010, p.770) writes:

In studying path creation it is important for a researcher to study processes in ‘real time’, i.e. place oneself at the time that events occurred even if one were looking at data gathered in the past.

Using these tools to analyze Whistler as a case study, will provide a lens to identify decisions and events brought on by path-dependency and ‘lock-in’ and those that created opportunities for path-creation.

As previously mentioned, this study will adopt a path creation lens as discussed in Garud and Karnøe (2001). In their paper, the authors discuss the differences between path creation and path dependency and some important facets of path creation. They provide an example of using the path dependence lens to tell the story of the genesis of the Post-It<sup>®</sup> note. While some of the nomenclature surrounding the process of path creation covered in Garud and Karnøe (2001) does not transfer well from a technology field to that of governance, the concepts can be re-worked to provide a framework for analysis that economic geographers can find useful. The following are the steps outlined in Garud and Karnøe (2001) with a general explanation as to how they can be applied to the evolution of governance.

1. Mobilizing Molecules – The first step in creating a new ‘path’ begins with a focused attempt to change and create something new. Garud and Karnøe (2001) describe the discovery of a new adhesive at 3M, the company that manufactures various adhesives and ultimately the creators

of the Post-it<sup>®</sup> note, as a mistake that worked. The discovery of a new adhesive was a by-product of focused attempts to change/create something new.

2. Mobilizing Minds – In order to move the new product/idea from the design phase to the development phase the greater community needed to come 'on board'. Overcoming the natural resistance of people for change, indifference and rejection was crucial. In the Post-it<sup>®</sup> note story the main actor discussed the necessary evil of acting as a zealot at times in order to convince people that change was necessary.

3. Boundary Spanning – In addition to step 2, translating an idea into a language everyone can understand was crucial to the Post-it<sup>®</sup> note's success. Translation is a key proposition in literature on actor network theory (Callon, 1986; Law, 1992). Callon defines a successful process of translation as one that generates a 'shared space'. Besides the creation of a shared space, translation also implies the transformation of the idea itself through interactions which sets the bases for the generating buy-in required to mobilize a critical mass around an idea (Garud and Karnøe, 2001).

4. Generating Momentum – Once the idea was in the 'ether' it required the convincing of the first of many champions. Individuals who would help carry the idea/invention from development to testing and finally to production. Without the recruitment of champions the idea/invention could miss its window of opportunity or even worse, never see the light of day.

5. Co-evolution of minds and molecules – As an idea grows the need for individuals to be flexible is paramount. Keeping a certain aspect of fluidity to an idea ensures that it will not stagnate and often times can lead to improvements.

6. Virtuous cycle – The momentum behind an idea creates more opportunities to move it forward. As Garud and Karnøe (2001) write, those attempting to create new paths have to realize that they are part of an emerging collective and that core ideas and objects will be modified as they progress from hand to hand and mind to mind.

7. Mobilizing time – An important facet of path creation is the role of time. Path creation is a process that must be thought of as unfolding over time that is projected into the future and not just as a natural unfolding of historically conditioned events from the past. Francis Bacon (1625) implicitly recognized the importance of time in his essay titled On Innovation 'As the births of all living creatures are, at first, misshapen, so are all innovations'. Time is necessary for an innovation to undergo the proper transformations that will allow it to survive in the real world.

8. Time, timing and temporality – There is a connection between boundary spanners and time, the actors must be in 'it' for the long haul

and as such have a greater chance of being a driver of mindful deviation over an outsider.

History is still important for path creation. However, the place and role of history changes. In path dependence, temporally remote events shape the emergence of novelty. With path creation, attention focuses on the efforts of entrepreneurs who seek ways to shape history-in-the-making. First, they offer 'strategic' interpretations of history. Second, they actively shape emerging structures of relevance and objects, and in the process, leave an imprint on development efforts. Third, they evoke images of the future to 'make' history in a self-fulfilling manner (Garud and Karnøe, 2001).

Path creation does not mean actors can exercise unbounded strategic choice. Rather, actors are embedded in structures that they jointly create and from which they mindfully depart. Mindfulness implies an ability to dis-embed from existing structures defining relevance and also an ability to mobilize a group despite resistance and inertia that path creation efforts are likely to encounter (Garud and Karnøe, 2001, p.3). Often, the actor or actors are 'mindfully deviating' within a system they are familiar with and have the ability to work within. Because deviations can be threatening to existing orders, actors exercise judgment as to the extent to which deviations may be tolerated in the present and may be worth while to create new futures (Garud and Karnøe, 2001). Identifying and studying this type of deviation is useful in forming narratives to tell the story of path creation.

## **2.7. Operationalizing Sustainability**

The post-WWII era saw an unprecedented growth in international tourism (Berno and Bricker, 2001). International tourism was touted as an environmentally benign industry that, unlike 'dirty industries' such as mining and forestry only harvested 'free' resources (sun, sea, sand and experiences with friendly people). However, as early as 1972, the potential negative impacts of tourism were being considered (Berno and Bricker, 2001). Following the popularization of sustainable development as an environmental management concept in the late 80s (Brundtland, 1987), a growing proportion of the tourism research literature has focused on the principles and practice of

sustainable tourism development (Hunter, 1997). At the concept's onset the term 'sustainable tourism' was used to represent and encompass a set of principles, policy prescriptions, and management methods which chart a path for tourism development such that a destination area's environmental resource base (including natural, built, and cultural features) is protected for future development and use (Lane, 1994). The content of sustainable tourism has broadened to include not only environmental but economic, social and cultural issues, political power and social equality (Lu and Nepal, 2009). More recently the United Nations, World Bank and World Tourism Organization, among other important bodies, have also emphasized sustainable, rural and community development (as well as participatory governance efforts) in their funding and policy priorities (Grybovych and Hafermann, 2010). However, despite the attention given to it, sustainable tourism development has proven to be difficult to define and more importantly, operationalize.

One of the difficulties in identifying ways in which sustainability can be operationalized in a tourism context is the difficulty in the understanding of what is the tourism product. Unlike other resource extraction based industries tourism is not the consumption of a basic product. Instead a tourism 'product' is composite in nature and includes tangible and intangible aspects. There are three distinct tourism 'products': the tourism experience; the place product; and, tourism products (O'Fallon, 1994). Additionally, the complexity is furthered by the way in which the industry is built as a collection of private and public entities of varying size. It is not the intention of this study to enter into a discussion surrounding the various concepts and definitions of sustainable development and sustainable tourism. For the purposes of this research it is acknowledged that for an endeavour to be successful and sustainable, it has to be both *community-led and participatory* (Grybovych and Hafermann, 2010). Significant community development takes place only when local residents are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort (McKnight and Kretzmann, 1993). Put another way for tourism or community development to be sustainable, local control over public decision making and planning is needed (Gibbs, 1994). While the way in which sustainability can be operationalized is dependant on local conditions, works such as Grybovych and Hafermann (2010) and Hanna (2005) follow a common theme. The integration of the community in a guided planning process is essential for increasing the

sustainability of a locale. Additionally, where community is not consulted the results are often less than ideal.

### **2.7.1. *The Sustainability Fix***

As communities, cities and countries have evolved, especially over the last 50 years, it has been increasingly difficult to off-load associated environmental ills. A successful economy relies on harvesting resources from nature yet the nature that is being harvested has historically been left worse-for-wear. Nowhere is the preservation of nature to ensure a robust economy more evident than in tourist destinations where economic success is contingent upon a preservation of natural surroundings. One way to overcome these issues is by attempting to implement a 'sustainability fix' (While et al. 2004) to deal with the governance dilemmas, compromises and opportunities created by the current era of state restructuring and ecological modernization (David, 2001; Martin and Sunley, 2006b). While et al.'s (2004) work on the sustainability fix looked at the rise of sustainable discourse in urban areas and the resulting programs that were required to be put in place to meet the social pressures of this construct. They found that sustainable development is itself interpreted as part of the search for a spatio-institutional fix to safeguard positive growth trajectories in the wake of industrial capitalism's long downturn, the global 'ecological crisis' and the rise of popular environmentalism. The notion of a 'sustainability fix' does not deny progress on ecological issues, but draws attention to the selective incorporation of ecological goals in the greening of urban governance. A paradoxical relationship exists whereby the rise of urban environmentalism has coincided with a 'growth first' neo-liberalism roll back of state controls. This has given rise to new key players with an influence on governance, such as non-profit organizations and community and environmental groups who seem intent on taking up environmental concerns where government has failed (Pincetl, 2003). However, it should be noted that the increased attention to the environment does not mean that state strategies are being reoriented around deep green or 'strong' sustainability approaches (Myers and Low, 2002). In fact, 'sustainable development' and perspectives such as 'ecological modernization', are not just attempts to promote economic reinvention in the face of evidence of global environmental change, but can also be read as attempts to neutralize environmental opposition by projection of a value-

free vision of 'win-win-win' between economic growth, social development and ecological protection (Dryzek, 1997; Gibbs, 2000). In this sense the 'sustainability fix', for both the public and private sector, is as much about changes in political discourse as it is about material change in the ecological footprint of economic activity (Altvater, 1993; Desfor and Keil, 2004; Wackernagel and Rees, 1996)

### **2.7.2. Guiding Fiction**

An important component in the discussion surrounding Whistler's transition from a pro-growth form of governance to a form of governance focused on more sustainable outcomes will be the concept of a guiding fiction. A guiding fiction represents an ideal position towards which an individual, organization or community wishes to strive. Guiding fictions serve socially valuable functions as long as they stimulate and organize social discourse around problematic issues that remain vague; they stimulate and organize social discourse around problematic issues, but when individuals seek the more specific definitions needed to guide action, this function breaks down as groups argue over the meaning of terms (McCool and Moisey, 2009). However, retaining a 'guiding fiction' can prove useful when dealing with complex issues. In the case of Whistler, Gill and Williams (2008) observed that sustainability was the catalyst to dealing with more overarching issues facing the community. The study found that the Natural Step and its associated sustainability protocols played a role in acting as a guiding fiction in order for the community to deal with the environmental, economic and social problems it faced. Again, this is not to say that ecological goals were not met, it is however, an important component to understanding the underlying forces behind a push for sustainability, change and a reassessment of operations within the RMOW.

### **2.7.3. Community Conditioning – Grooming the Path to Sustainability**

Owens (1990) in (Roseland, 2005) suggests the 'politics of inclusion' has gained a permanent place within the rubric of community development. In part, community participation's fixed permanence serves as a safeguard; ensuring outcomes are not shaped by the most powerful and influential interests. As Roseland (2005), goes on to

state, the principle underlying public or community participation lies in the democratic truism that those affected by the decisions should participate directly in any decision-making processes.

The role of the stakeholder is influenced from the realm of business ethics where it is held that, one entity, party, person, or corporation should not be the sole beneficiary of the benefits or rewards gained (Sailor, 2010). For the purpose of this study, stakeholders are any person, groups, or organization that are affected by the causes or consequences of an issue (Bryson and Crosby, 1992). The integration of stakeholder consultation into decision-making in tourist development has become increasingly important. A growing body of research has found that linkages to the local community are best expressed through community stakeholders (Telfer, Sharpley, and others, 2002).

Researchers have over the past two decades attempted to identify and develop tourism strategies that reflect the desire of the wider citizenry (Sailor, 2010). As a result, there has been a great deal of emphasis in tourism literature directed at the nature of community participation, collaborative arrangements, and partnerships in tourism development (Bramwell et al., 2000; Bramwell and Sharman, 1999; Din, 1996; Fallon and Kriwoken, 2003; Reed, 1997; Tosun, 2006). Sailor (2010), found two main principles of tourism development and its effects on local communities. First, local people carry the cost of tourism development without sufficient compensation. Second, tourism cannot be separated out or partitioned off from other aspects of life for those living in a destination where tourism dominates (Reid, 2003). As a result, the general consensus within the literature coalesces around the notion that community based decisions are more likely to reflect the community's best interests (Sailor, 2010). Additionally, the residents in the community or those that have a stake in the community, are in the best position to make decisions concerning tourism development within their locale (Timothy, Ioannides, Apostolopoulos, Gayle, and others, 2002).

Bramwell et al. (2000), synthesized the benefits of collaborative approaches, suggesting one of the primary reasons for collaborative planning is to strengthen sustainability within the community. They suggest sustainable development is enhanced in four principle ways. First, representation from stakeholders without economic interests

may provide insight into the varied resources needing protection. Second, a more integrative and holistic approach to policy-making may evolve, leading to the third benefit of heightened awareness of the costs and benefits, which reflect more equitable policy outcomes. Fourth, and finally, they argue broad participation has the potential to democratize decision-making, in addition to fostering the intrinsic value associated with individual growth through empowerment, capacity building and skill acquisition.

The role of a political or social elite and the way in which their dominance is asserted is an important piece of the collaborative planning puzzle. The theoretical origins of hegemony are covered in Sailor (2010), but attention needs to be given to the effect that hegemony has on shaping stakeholder perspectives. Gramsci (1971) suggests that leadership, regardless of ideological persuasion, employs two complementary practices. The first is domination using coercion and force against those who resist the ruling authority and their power. The second, hegemonic leadership, appeals to the intellect to impact specific notions of morality to either gain or retain support for those consenting to its rule, thereby establishing an *ethical-political* relationship (Kurtz, 1996). As Sassoon (1982) suggests, hegemony emphasizes the centrality of living one way, which not only informs political practices, but gives way to our norms, values and relations. It is also important to address ideology as it becomes fundamental in the formation of hegemonic relationships. Ideology is more than just a system of ideas; it is 'the complex system of perceptions and representations through which we experience ourselves and make sense of the world' (Green et al., 1990, p.30). The interconnection between ideology, hegemony and politics cannot be overemphasized. Those with political and social power can influence the greater community to restructure its ideology surrounding different issues through means of conditioning the community. Sailor (2010), examined the process by which the community of Nanaimo was conditioned by various interested parties to accept and adopt programs that favoured tourism development through a variety of public documents and processes.

#### **2.7.4. The Effect of the Recession on Sustainability**

As Burns (1785) emoted in his poem 'To a mouse', even the best-laid plans of mice and men oft go astray. During times of economic growth, companies, governments and individuals are far more likely to engage in projects that enhance their respective sustainability. However, what happens to the progress of sustainability during times of economic recession and what steps can be taken to ensure that sustainability does not fall by the wayside? In the early 1930s, John Maynard Keynes posited that it would take some time before the accumulation of wealth would no longer be viewed as the motive for enterprise (Sekerka and Stimel, 2011). He went on to say that if we hoped to rid ourselves of the pseudo-moral principles that tend to guide business practices, a major transformation would have to occur. The recent focus on sustainability had the potential to be the motivating force to this change but was stalled by the major economic recession that began in 2008. Sekerka and Stimel (2011) suggest there are two major perspectives at play when firms determine how they will act towards sustainability, the shareholder and the stakeholder perspective. The *shareholder perspective* is focused on profit maximization. This strategy puts shareholders as the main constituency that leaders must satisfy, given their fiduciary responsibility to investors (Vogel, 2006). Alternatively, a triple bottom line (TBL) approach to business calls for firms to consider social, ecological, and economic concerns to achieve a level of corporate social responsibility as the foundation for business enterprise (Sekerka and Stimel, 2011). In this case, a *stakeholder perspective* typically drives organizations, where the goal of sustainability is on par with profit. In reality the distinction is not mutually exclusive, rather, it is a continuum between the two perspectives. During economic recessions, those with a shareholder perspective may be more predisposed, to cut back on sustainable initiatives that do not impart immediate cost savings, arguing that non-essential activities must be curtailed.

While the recession may spark the impetus to look at how a firm broaches sustainability, it also complicates management's decision-making efforts (Sekerka and Stimel, 2011). As investment has fallen and credit becomes more stringent (Kohn, 2010), the uncertain business environment will guide leaders to choose what they perceive as less risky options (Keynes, 1937). To understand the durability of sustainable enterprise Sekerka and Stimel (2011) propose that a shareholder

responsible model will often lead to a decline in sustainable pursuits during a recession period when compared to a firm that operates under stakeholder responsibility. To describe how the two forms relate to the durability of sustainable enterprise it is important to look at a concept from change management literature, specifically first and second order change within organizations. First-order change incrementally focuses on resolving specific problems (Bartunek and Moch, 1987), but these changes don't alter the system at its core. Rather, they simply move to increase effectiveness or to improve capability by modifying existing processes and practices. Second order change depicts the change occurring at the root of an organization, how people think about and define their work. To alter the culture of an organization towards sustainable enterprise, second-order transformational change is required (Sekerka and Stimel, 2011). When the assumptions that guide, direct, or govern the organization are transformed, the structure of the organization goes through a palpable conversion (Ford and Backoff, 1988). In transformation, the identity of the organization becomes malleable, where form and function can be reshaped and a deeper level of change can emerge (Quinn, 2010). This requires an overt shift in the attitudes, beliefs, and values of organizational members at every level (Bartunek, 1988). The success of transformation emerges when all levels of the organization form a shared desire to build capacity through new attitudes and ideas (Sekerka and Stimel, 2011). This generation of positive emotions has been associated with innovation for sustainability, as appreciation, interest, and empathy are conducive to moral sensitivity toward the environment in business operations (Arnaud and Sekerka, 2010). For such transformations to be sustained, the promotion of sympathetic individuals to key positions within government agencies, changes in the composition of advisory bodies and the development of new sets of institutional arrangements are necessary (Hall, 2011b). An organization that has undergone second order change will be much more likely to continue and enhance sustainable practices in a recession, whereas those who have only conducted first order change are much more likely to have adopted a shareholder perspective and thus cut down on programs at the core of the organization. Crisis, like that which is experienced during a recession, is an important catalyst for transition (Posner and Rothstein, 1994) however, it can also be an impediment if sustainability is used as a cover for programs that attempt to get employees to do more with less. Overall, the structures and core philosophies of an

organization are put to the test when sustainability meets the decrease in available funds from a recession.

## **2.8. The Case Study Approach**

Case studies are gaining status and merit as a method of scientific inquiry as they provide a way to present complex social theories in a real life context. They are a valuable in answering more explanatory “how” and “why” questions in research (Yin, 2009). The case study allows researchers to facilitate their understanding of a more abstract construct through a concrete example. As Flyvbjerg (2006) argues, social science has not succeeded in producing general context-independent theory. The outcome instead is to offer concrete context-dependent knowledge, to which the case is well suited. Learning as opposed to proving is one of the strengths of the case study approach. Case studies have the potential to move beyond descriptive accounts with the potential to yield explanatory insights (Babbie, 2007).

While case study research has been considered an important method of policy analysis since the 1930s (Lowi, 1964), for the tourism researcher interested in community development, advocating a case study approach is relatively new and still a rare occurrence (Sailor, 2010). Among the various criticisms that have been levied at case study research, the most severe is the inability to apply the case in a ‘sufficiently scientific way’ (Hall and Jenkins, 1995, p. 98). The importance of triangulation is often cited in case study research, which places this study’s methods of inquiry on a precarious academic path. Single data source case studies are rare within tourism research. For this reason it is important to acknowledge the short-comings of single source data collection and media bias, discussed in section 3.4.

## **2.9. Story Telling**

Content analysis has been extensively applied to broadcasting media and at present, it is gaining popularity for the study of the world-wide web and other electronic media. It has been the preferred technique for evaluating political campaigns, with a

focus on the study of press editorials, opinion articles and letters (Reason and García, 2007). The findings reported in this study are organized around a story line developed using procedures discussed by Dredge et al. (2011) and Sandercock (2003). However, criticisms of this story telling approach exist, and can be traced back to long standing tensions between the natural and social sciences, between quantitative and qualitative research proponents and between supporters of modernism and postmodernism approaches (Dredge et al., 2011). However, story telling has gained credibility in the social sciences in recent years as increasing numbers of researchers have shifted away from positivism (Dredge et al., 2011). This study aims to utilize Dredge et al.'s (2011) story telling approach as a foundation for reporting of the content analyses findings, to 'make sense' of the evolution of Whistler's governance.

Stories have the capacity to provide investigators with a dose of realism and a grounding in how seemingly irrational and unorganized planning and policy can lead to good outcomes. They also help in explaining how apparently rational, scientific policy making can also lead to unintended negative impacts (Dredge et al., 2011). Case studies transformed into stories can serve as valuable learning tools by intersecting with listeners at different levels – social, cultural, organizational and personal – and in the process, facilitate learning experiences that can be transformative (R. Williams, 2006). Presenting the findings in this un-orthodox manner may increase the utility of this 'story of practice' to a variety of user groups.

The content of a story is only as strong as the manner in which it is told. Sandercock (2003), identifies that story telling in planning can be used: to describe a process; as a catalyst for change; as a foundation for change; in policy making; in pedagogy; in explanations and justifications and as moral exemplars. Similar research produced by Denning (2006) identified eight ways in which stories are used to focus learning in business. These uses include: sparking action; communicating who you are; transmitting values; communicating the company's identity; fostering collaboration; sharing knowledge; and leading people in the future. This study will focus on using a story to share the knowledge collected within the database and attempt to draw parallels with the findings of this study's literature review. Good case studies are good stories that incorporate critical elements, raise questions about the strengths and weaknesses of

literature, and promote engaged and critical reflection about causal relationships and the outcomes and consequences of policy making (Dredge et al., 2011).

## 2.10. Mediating the Media

From headline news to letters to the editor, the media plays an integral role in shaping the way that we view issues in our lives. With the advent of new technologies and new ways to access information the media's influence has become woven into our social fabric and is unavoidable. Observing the interactions that have taken place between the media and communities can help facilitate understanding surrounding how media influence shapes public discourse. While the breadth of research into the relationship between media effects and tourism is sparse, key papers focus on festival tourism and media relations. Much of the tourism and media related literature focuses on the concept of framing, specifically, on the affects of framing on public discourse. Analyzing how the media presents an issue can provide understanding as to how the public interprets an issue. Additionally, public perception can be affected through secondary effects of media such as word of mouth (Shanka and Taylor, 2004). With proper utilization media records can become useful tools to investigate present and historical opinions and frames surrounding significant events.

David Manning White (1950) suggested that journalists act as *gatekeepers* of media messages – that they select from among the day's events those that will become 'news'. The importance of differences between media content and other sources of information about the world lies in the fact that our views of the world, and resulting actions, will be moulded by our predominant source of information: the mass media (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). Thompson (1995), uses the concept of *mediatization* to explain how, 'our sense of the past becomes increasingly nourished by media products, so too does our sense of the group and communities with which we share a common path through time and space, a common origin and a common fate, is altered, we feel ourselves to belong to groups and communities which are constituted in part through media'. Additionally, professional sources have been a part of society since the mass media emerged (Ewen, 1998). From a strategic standpoint, media coverage is optimized

when the professional source has a good serious reputation among journalist, only distributes relevant and trustworthy information, understands the storytelling genres of the media, has a high-ranked organizational position, and is easy to find and contact (Manning, 2001). However, it is unwise to generalize the media as having the same effect on each user. Individuals highly committed to issue literacy tend to show strong resistance to counter attitudinal information, whereas low-commitment people are likely to exhibit a greater amount of attitude change in response to negative information (Ahluwalia et al., 2000). Others have also argued that the relative effectiveness of negative versus positive messages depends upon the individual's processing motivation as well as familiarity with the target (Ahluwalia, 2002; Shiv et al., 2004).

When analyzing a media database it is valuable to understand the significance of the issue-attention cycle. As Downs (1972, p.38) wrote:

American public attention rarely remains sharply focused upon any one domestic issue for very long – even if it involves a continuing problem of crucial importance to society. Instead, a systematic “issue-attention cycle” seems to strongly influence public attitudes and behaviour concerning most key domestic problems. Each of these problems suddenly leaps into prominence, remains there for a short time, and then – though still largely unresolved – gradually fades from the centre of public attention.

Downs (1972) observed that this cycle was a product of the fierce struggle for space in the highly limited universe of newsprint viewing time. Issues fight their way to the top competing against other issues, events and non-news items. In the example of environmentalism, Downs (1972) observed that at the time his article was published public interest in the quality of the environment appeared to be about mid-way through the issue attention cycle. A cycle, which Downs (1972 p.39-40) observed to have 5 stages:

1. **The pre-problem stage:** This stage prevails when some highly undesirable social condition exists (environmental degradation, poverty, racism)
2. **Alarmed discovery and euphoric enthusiasm:** As a result of some dramatic series of events, or other reasons, the public suddenly becomes both aware and alarmed about the evils of a particular

problem. This is often tied to an enthusiasm for society's ability to "solve the problem". The implication is that every obstacle can be eliminated and every problem solved without any fundamental reordering of society itself, if only we devote sufficient effort to it.

3. **Realizing significant progress:** The third stage consists of gradually spreading realization that the cost of "solving" the problem requires major sacrifices by large groups of the population.
4. **Gradual decline of intense public interest:** The previous stage becomes almost imperceptibly transformed into the fourth stage. Due to the complexity of the issue public desire to keep attention focused on the issue wanes. By this time, some other major issue is usually entering stage two.
5. **The post-problem stage:** In the final stage, an issue that has been replaced at the centre of public concern moves into a prolonged limbo of lesser attention.

However, it should be noted that while an issue may begin to fade from public focus, during the time that interest was sharply focused on the problem, new institutions, programs and policies might have been created to help solve it.

The study of media can be done both qualitatively and quantitatively. Quantitative media research typically focuses on the amount a word is repeated or the amounts of coverage of an issue, but it cannot tell researchers what the coverage was like. While measuring the qualitative attributes of media content is difficult, it is often far more revealing than looking at quantitative data alone (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). The study of media content is important because the media has influence on guiding social change. Media content takes elements of culture, magnifies them, frames them, and feeds them back to an audience (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). One area where a direct relationship between tourism and media research has been created is in the area of festivals/mega events and the media's effect on public perception of those events. Both Brennan-Horley et al., (2007) and Falkheimer (2008) report the significance of the printed newspaper over other media in affecting attitudes towards – and attendance at – any given festival. In their study of the information sources of 522 visitors surveyed at a major wine festival in Western Australia, Shanka and Taylor (2004) found that

newspapers were the second most significant source of information which motivated visitors to come to the festival after 'word of mouth'. In this manner newspapers are, at the very least, significant information sources.

In normal circumstances it may be the case that investigative journalism will pinpoint gaps between image and actuality, and thus the reality of social targets will be clear to all stakeholders. An alternative reality is that journalists, acting as variables in the media reporting and broadcasting process, are going to affect public understanding in a way that muddies reality. As the values of journalists are determined by the very media frames they themselves set (Scheufele, 1999) so the perceived outcome for an event may be determined by the coverage given to issues relating to event outcomes and impacts in the wider media environment. While Shoemaker and Reese (1996) admitted that the journalist does play an important role in shaping the message, they found that professional roles and ethics have more of an influence on content than do journalists personal attitudes, values and beliefs. They go on to acknowledge that the control of what is published in media outlets relies on a smaller number of individuals less bound by ethics and professional roles the case can be made that analyzing the information that is published can be beneficial in understanding public discourse at that time, and not just the discourse of one journalist. There are two main ways that the media can influence the topics that people discuss, agenda setting and framing.

### **2.10.1. *Agenda Setting and Framing***

Agenda setting refers to the idea that there is a strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media places on certain issues and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). The agenda setting thesis concludes that media exposure does have an effect upon *what* people talk and think about, but not *how* or in what direction (Falkheimer, 2008). Thus, it is not information about the issue that has effect; it is that the issue has received a certain amount of processing time and attention that carries the effect (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). It is important to identify the distinction between framing and agenda setting. The distinction was outlined by Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007):

The primary difference on the psychological level between agenda setting and priming, on the one hand, and framing, on the other hand, is therefore the difference between *whether* we think about an issue and *how* we think about it.

As such, focusing on framing can be much more effective in analyzing critical events than agenda setting.

Framing is based on the assumption that how an issue is characterized in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). It is important to note that it does not mean the way in which journalists try and spin a story or deceive their audiences. In fact, framing is a necessary tool to reduce the complexity of an issue, given the constraints of their respective media related news holes (Gans, 1979). Frames, in other words, become invaluable tools for presenting relatively complex issues efficiently and in a way that makes them accessible to lay audiences because they play to existing cognitive schemas. Unlike agenda setting, as a process, framing is based in and bound by culture (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). Additionally, framing is an important aspect of media effects because it informs the way in which populations assimilate news and form opinions surrounding events. Although the event management literature is sparse on theoretical insights about the influence of media frame on resident's responses, the issue of how consumers respond to media publicity has been studied in the marketing and consumer behaviour literature (Ahluwalia, 2002; Klein and Ahluwalia, 2005; Shiv et al., 2004). Publicity in the mass media is often considered as a credible source of information when compared to other types of marketing communications such as advertising (Ahluwalia et al., 2000) and as such it 'actively sets the frames of reference that readers or viewers use to interpret and discuss public events' (Scheufele, 1999). However, much like media effects, the effect of framing is not uniform. One reason for this is that people differ in their level of involvement with an issue. Increased issue involvement is often found to be associated with detailed processing, whereas low issue involvement leads to simple inference making on the basis of peripheral cues (Donovan and Jalleh, 1999; Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy, 1990). Message framing literature demonstrates that negatively framed messages are more persuasive than positively framed messages when individuals have high issue involvement (Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy, 1990).

However, personal experience at prior events or information gained from other sources (e.g. word of mouth) might create an entrenched schema that already resides in memory (Ritchie et al. 2010). How then do frames function to shape how the public perceives an issue?

### **2.10.2. *Salience***

Braun et al. (1997, p.405) define salience as ‘the phenomenon when one’s attention is differently directed to one portion of the environment rather than to others’. Salient information receives increased weighting during processing and will create disproportionate influence over judgment (Feldman and Lynch, 1988). Certain aspects of the information can be made salient in a communication text in such a way as to generate public discourse or moral evaluation (Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 1999). Essentially, a media frame contains attributes of the news and framing effects is referred to the idea that ‘people respond differently to different representations of equivalent information’ (Braun et al. 1997). Consequently, media coverage of a mega-event can be viewed as the creation of a story line that highlights the essence or controversy of a particular issue, such as the events socio-cultural impact (Ritchie et al., 2010). It is reasonable to suggest that positive (negative) event depiction in the media is likely to generate favourable (unfavourable) event perceptions, which in turn, should lead to residents’ support (no support) of the event. Put simply, the media can be seen to provide the public not only with information about a given topic but also how that topic should be interpreted (Robertson and Rogers, 2009). Thus, the framing technique of the news media allows observation of knowledge (how messages are understood) by evaluating linkages between the production of news and how it is consumed (Van Gorp, 2007).

### **2.10.3. *Identifying Frames***

Over the past decades, the study of frames and framing has been rapidly expanding (Matthes and Kohring, 2008). Many scholars have raised concerns about the reliability and validity in the content analysis of frames because it is quite an abstract variable that is hard to identify and hard to code in content analysis (Scheufele, 1999). Common approaches to newsprint content analysis of media frames include:

Hermeneutic approaches (an interpretive account of media texts linking up frames with broader cultural elements), linguistic approaches (analyzing selection, placement and structure of specific words and sentences in a text), manual holistic approach (generates frames by qualitative analysis and then codes as holistic variables) and computer-assisted approach (uses specific words to separate articles into frames). However, a frame is an abstract variable that is both hard to identify and hard to code in content analysis (Van Gorp, 2007). It is important to acknowledge the definition of frames by Entman (1993) who posited that single frame elements group together in a systematic way, thereby forming unique patterns. When these patterns occur in several articles, we interpret them as frames. Matthes and Kohring (2008) propose a new method of framing analysis that creates clusters of subtopics that can be used to analyze in what way issues are framed. The specifics of the method are not as important as is the identification that this method can be used to reliably conduct qualitative data research within an existing database of newsprint media to analyze the frames which can be inferred to relate to public discourse.

### **3. Methods**

The study's methods focused around a case study, in which archival research was employed as a central tool for data collection. This chapter describes the objectives and procedures of the case study, qualitative and quantitative content analysis and concludes by addressing some of the limitations of this type of research.

#### **3.1. Research and Objective Questions**

The overall objective of this research is to understand and identify key historical events underscoring the evolution of the Resort Municipality of Whistler's governance as represented by the media. The research methodology focused on collecting data from the perspective of Whistler's main news outlet, the *Pique Newsmagazine* which circulates approx. 15,000 copies weekly, each Thursday (Verified Audit Circulation, 2011). The *Pique* is one of two major newspapers in circulation in Whistler, the other being the *Whistler Question*. The *Pique* was chosen as the key archive in this study on the recommendations of the author's supervisors due to the calibre of its articles and contributors.

This study elaborates upon the works of (Gill, 2000; Gill and Williams, 2008, 2011 2012) which demonstrated a shift in Whistler's governance approaches over the past twenty years from pro-growth forms of management to a model focused on sustainability and community-integrated decision-making. As such, my research questions are intended to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of this trend from 2000-2012 demonstrated through a time-series analysis case study.

### **3.1.1. Research Questions**

**What underlying forces influenced the transition in governance approach from growth to sustainability in the Resort of Whistler, BC between 2000-20012?**

How and why have attitudes towards sustainability changed in Whistler?

What were the main factors acting as constraints to change in governance?

What were the main factors acting as catalysts to change in governance and how did these two sets of forces interact and manifest themselves to promote/resist changes in governance from 2000-2012?

From 2000-2012 what aspects of the Whistler governance model have changed and how?

What policy, planning and management lessons can be learned from the governance processes operating in this destination?

The preceding literature review contextualized the components that will be used in analyzing Whistler's governance transition. It aimed to situate the study within the context of governance and evolutionary economics while maintaining an understanding of the broad scale of forces impacting on the area (global-local nexus) the unique manner in which this 'story' will be told and finally, the intricacies of working with media data sources.

### **3.2. Case Study Selection**

In recent years case study research has gained merit as a method of inquiry. Increasingly, researchers dissatisfied with grand theories and meta-narratives are seeking ways to capture the complexity of human behaviour within a real life context, and the case study assists in this mandate (Sailor, 2010). Yin (2009) in his most recent edition of *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, suggests that a case study is the study of a concrete entity, event, occurrence or action, but not appropriate for the study

of the abstract, such as a concept, argument, hypothesis or theory. Case studies are valuable in answering more explanatory “how” and “why” questions in research (Yin, 2009). This case study employs a time-series analysis of issues by compiling a chronological database of events and issues reported on by the media in Whistler. The purpose underlying this time-series design is to identify matches between the observed (empirical) trend and a theoretically significant trend specified before the onset of the investigation (Yin, 2009).

The Resort Municipality of Whistler was selected because of the call for additional research by Gill and Williams (2011) to better understand this destination’s governance transition. Additionally, Whistler’s well-established reputation for employing highly strategic and long term focused approaches to governance and management make it an interesting case study (Vance and Williams 2004). During the last twelve years Whistler experienced a range of successes and failures in its efforts to adapt to changing global forces, local markets and socio-political conditions. This study focuses on how Whistler responded to these forces and shifted its governance from a model of pro-growth to a model focused on moving towards sustainability.

Data collection took place during between April 2011 and December 2012. Data were collected in the form of articles from each issue of *The Pique* (produced weekly) from January 2000 to December 2012. Data acquisition began in the summer of 2011 via hard copy editions archived at the Whistler Municipal Library. This time-consuming process was necessary as there was no existing online database of the *Pique* at the time. However, in the fall of 2011, *The Pique* created an online database of its publications and the remaining years were accessed electronically. There were two components in the data collection, an excel spreadsheet that contained detailed analysis of articles as well as a file folder containing PDFs of the articles referenced in the spreadsheet as well as additional articles of interest. In total, 676 issues of *The Pique* were reviewed and a database of 2,380 articles deemed to be relevant to this study’s purposes were catalogued and coded with respect to their content.

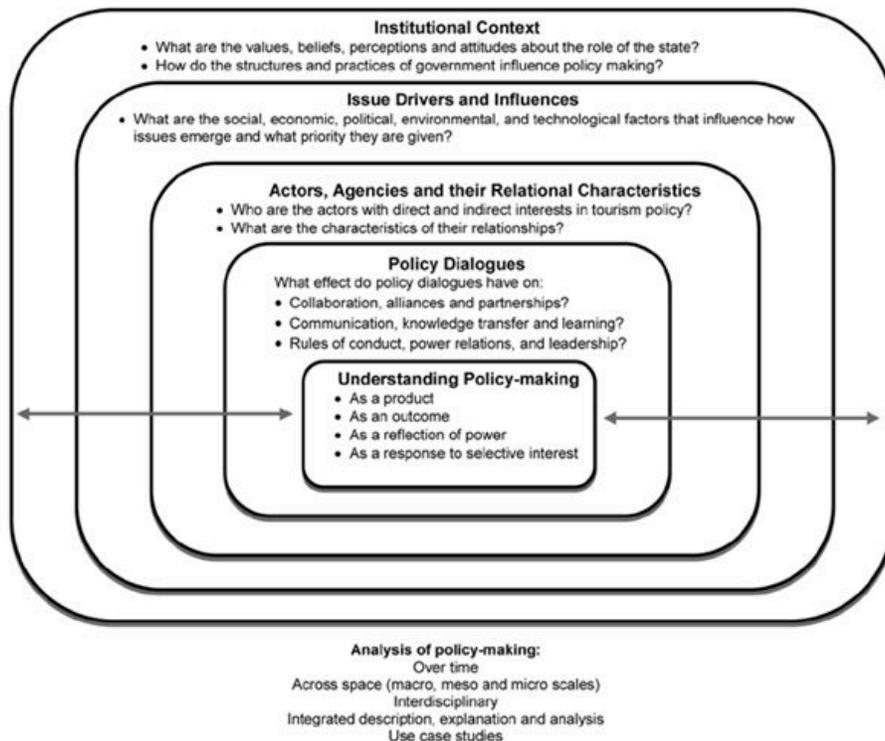
### **3.2.1. Qualitative Data Collection**

A thorough compilation of relevant articles was needed to create the comprehensive database and historical lens needed for the study. Data collection focused on compiling all relevant articles within the years 2000 to 2012. The goal during the data collection process was to collect any and all articles from *The Pique* that related to a broad set of issues concerning governance, events, actors and forces that may have shifted discourse within the community. Throughout the data collection process criteria for selection and inclusion of items in the database remained intentionally fluid so as to capture new information and topics that may not have been originally considered relevant as they emerged. While all newspaper articles contained within *The Pique* were visually scanned for potential use for the years 2000-2003, a preliminary content analysis of the information collected suggested that all of the content in the sports, arts, leisure and classified sections of *The Pique* were largely irrelevant to the study's purposes. As such, articles from these sections of the newspaper were excluded from the data base selection process for the succeeding years. Additionally, while letters to the editor were interesting and useful to further the understanding of opinions surrounding events, the often tangent and strongly opinionated nature of the letters did not lend to the type of analysis proposed and as such were not included in the analysis. Furthermore, the highly specific and often polarized nature of the letters proved to be trivial when observed across a twelve-year span. Additional quotes found in Chapter 5 from the letters to the editor were collected after the completion of the discussion and collected using targeted search parameters within the *Pique's* online database.

Each article included in the database was logged in an excel spreadsheet and included basic profile information such as the date of publication, title of the article and a brief content summary. Key wording was completed post-data collection, which was necessary in determining where smaller events fit in to the broader picture.

Particular attention was given to articles that might provide a better understanding and/or examples of factors related to the framework for understanding tourism policy and planning, (*Figure 2*) as found in (Dredge et al., 2011). To help understand the 'story' of Whistler's governance transition, considerable emphasis was

placed on detailing article content that concerned the three ‘inner rings’ of the figure: issue drivers and influences, actors, agencies and their relational characteristics and policy dialogues (Dredge et al., 2011). *Figure 2* presents a conceptual framework for analyzing planning and public policy-making forces at play in tourism communities. The process of developing knowledge of tourism policy and planning is an iterative process. In order to understand planning and policy, one requires an understanding of the institutional context; the issue drivers and influences that push issues onto the political agenda; the full range of actors and agencies directly and indirectly involved in tourism; and the characteristics of the policy dialogues that take place (Dredge et al., 2011). The decision to include articles or not was contingent upon the information addressing one or more ‘rings’ of the framework. In the interest of not missing any information it was acknowledged that events at micro, meso or macro scales had the potential to be interrelated and data collection was conducted with the understanding that an event occurring at one ‘level’ was likely to affect what happened at other levels.



**Figure 2. Framework for understanding tourism policy and planning (Dredge et al., 2011)**

### **3.2.2. Qualitative Analysis**

Analysis of the qualitative data collected in this study followed a procedure outlined by Reason and García (2007) in an article analyzing newsprint media coverage of Glasgow's year as a European City of Culture in 1990. To perform this study's analysis, the data were compiled and coded in a similar manner to the Glasgow investigation. The ensuing content analysis mirrored Reason and Garcia's approach whereby, collected articles were coded by article length, type and attitude. Current works in newsprint media analysis focus on quantitative methods using text-analysis software that can do automatic word and phrase counts over very large and diverse electronic documents (Reason and García, 2007). However, without an interpretive frame, the analysis cannot go beyond 'quantifying the most straightforward denotative elements in a text' (Ahuvia, 2001) and thus cannot touch on the latent meanings and implications of the material under review. Alternatively, attempting to analyze a large data set in a purely qualitative approach brings difficulties in tackling a large sample set of text. Bryman and Burgess (1994) note that qualitative data is often regarded as a problem because the data are often unstructured and unwieldy. However, 'a coded qualitative content and discourse analysis can aid in identifying themes, dispositions, ideologies symbols, beliefs and principles' (Reason and García, 2007). The hybrid qualitative and quantitative research approach of this study aims to create a better frame of reference for the telling of the 'story' of Whistler's governance transition.

### **3.2.3. Coding Scheme**

To facilitate the quantitative analysis of the data collected, all articles were coded. Tables 1 - 3 illustrate the ways in which this information was categorized and coded.

**Table 1. Length of Article**

Code	Length
1 - Short	< ½ Page
2 - Standard	≤ 2 Pages
3 - Long	> 2 Pages

**Table 2. Article Type**

Code	Notes
1. Editorial	Depending on the editor at the time this section often summarized the 'pulse' in the town and provided insightful recommendations to community and local government.
2. Feature	Features often were 6-8 pages in length and would provide comprehensive coverage of various issues.
3. News/Report	–
4. Opinion/Comment/Analysis	The distinction between 4 and 5 was based on a perception between reportage and explicit opinion.
5. Interviews	–

While Reason and García (2007) defined eight article types this study focuses on the above five. The three types missing from this review that are contained in Reason and García's study are: Cartoons, Preview/Reviews and Statements by public figures.

Cartoons were not made available on the online website as readily, preview/reviews were not an important feature of this study and statements by public figures were often conducted in feature interviews or news reports.

Article keywords were created after all the data has been collected in order to more successfully link themes throughout 2000-2012. There are some specific keywords within the database that are found in both the primary and secondary keyword groups. For example First Nations is both a primary keyword on its own and a secondary key word under various primary key words, for example the Olympics. The key-wording followed a logical progression whereby the focus of the article would receive the primary key word. For example, if the Olympics was the focus of the article and it included First Nations, First Nations received a secondary keyword.

In other instances articles pertaining to less specific issues were put into more general categories such as the primary keyword – Forces or Sustainability. The ‘slush’ designation is not implied as a diminutive and in fact contains many of the important articles within the database. However, where sustainability, for example, manifested itself under the specific category of the Whistler Centre for Sustainability or the Comprehensive Sustainability Plan, those articles were more specifically categorized in order to form a more useable database. Beyond the utility of keywords proving useful in quantitative analysis, the keywords allowed for ease of navigation within the archival document.

**Table 3. Attitudes**

Code	Notes
1. Neutral	Reports with no clearly discernable attitude
2. Pro-Growth	Reports that cover news with a clearly pro-growth / pro-development attitude
3. Sustainable / Inclusive	Reports that cover news with a clearly sustainable / inclusive form of governance attitude.

### **3.3. Limitations**

#### **3.3.1. *Data Limitations***

There are significant limitations to this type of analysis. Due largely to the nature of data analysis and the time associated with data collection, it is difficult to incorporate a large and representative range of media sources. While the Reason and García (2007) study used a pre-collected data archive that contained multiple newsprint sources, this study focused on the creation *and* analysis of a single data source with articles ranging over a broader time period. Because of the extensive nature of the data topics involved, and the need for broad categories to capture the thematic content of the material collected, it is probable that an inevitable over-simplification of the data and importance of certain events occurred. The need to code and position issues into broad categories reduced the ability to delve into the complexity of sub-issues through quantitative means. Finally, the use of coding places absolute values on some of the issues that could be described as murky at best. These are all limitations common to this type of research (Reason and García, 2007). However, the coding undertaken was instrumental in the formation of the narrative expressed in this paper, and it was invaluable in providing quantitative measures of the qualitative data needed to support the story lines developed.

#### **3.3.2. *General Limitations***

As a qualitative study, this research was affected by many of the inherent assumptions associated with this approach. First and foremost, the study findings reported in this paper are organized and interpreted based on events and issues found in a single media outlet in Whistler. As such, it is but one of many possible reflections of the many realities that have transpired in Whistler over the study period. A more triangulated multi-media and multi-stakeholder approach would have been ideal, but limited time, human and financial resources made such an approach unfeasible, and outside the scope of this research. This led to the potential inclusion of biases from the author of each article, the *Pique's* editor and this study's author in creating and analyzing

the dataset (Yin, 2009). Additionally, the two-year and discontinuous data collection process may have added further distortions to the interpretation of the data set, as during this time this study's author was introduced to new theoretical perspectives which may have altered his understanding on the extent to which particular themes in the content were important to the investigation. The inclusion of a second researcher in the data collection and coding process would have also added some additional consistency and accuracy in how the data were interpreted (Duriau et al., 2007).

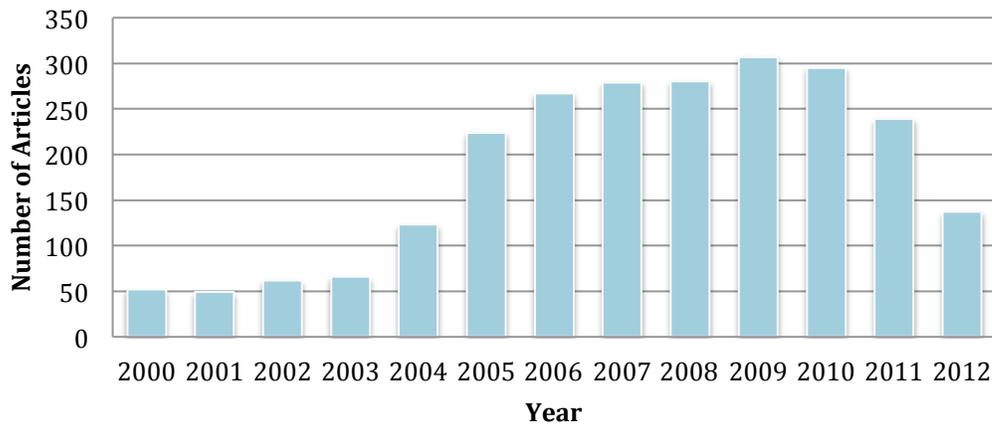
## **4. Results**

### **4.1. Quantitative Analysis**

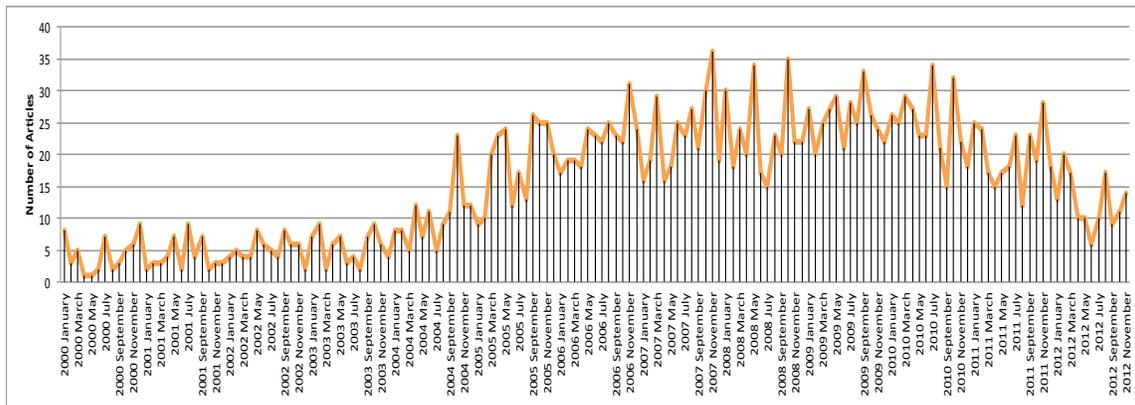
#### **4.1.1. *Extent of coverage***

A total of 2,380 articles from 646 issues of the Pique were collected, summarized and coded for this study. The analysis employed the objective aspects recorded (date, length, article type, author) and combined this with the qualitative assessments of identified attitudes.

The spread of coverage over time (Figure 3) shows a coarse (yearly) view of article collection detailing the number of articles collected for this study. It can be observed that there was an increase in articles collected during the period of 2004 and 2010 and then what appears to be a decline starting in 2012. Closer analysis on a month-to-month basis (Figure 4) shows a series of peaks and troughs relating to significant events and the general news media cycle. The peak month overall was October 2007, it is probable that this was due to the municipal election which were often responsible for spikes in articles collected. The elections in October/November 2004 and October/November 2010 (Figure 4) show similar spikes in number of articles collected. During these times discussions surrounding issues related to governance and sustainability were frequent as candidates tried to distinguished themselves within the Whistler political landscape. May and September typically show a decrease in collected articles, probably due to the 'shoulder season' in Whistler.



**Figure 3.** *Number of articles collected between 2000 – 2012*

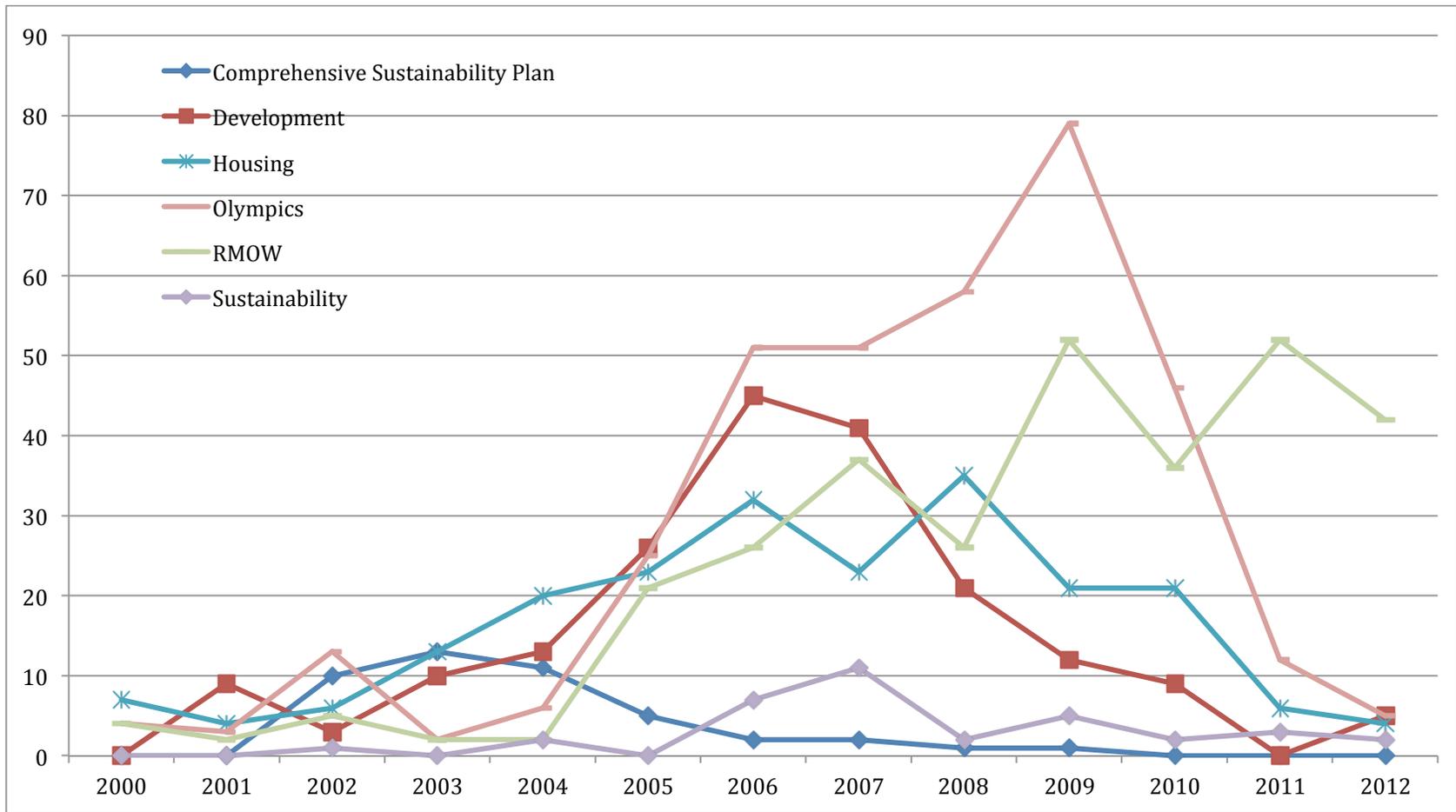


**Figure 4.** *Number of articles collected between 2000 – 2012 by month*

This large archive provides the study with a broad and substantial amount of thematically and chronologically organized findings. It would be possible to micro-analyze the articles collected but it is important to note that this database is the reflection of a search for a broad range of articles relating to Whistler’s transition to more sustainable governance approaches. Acknowledging this generality the collection of articles is a subjective, not definite, reflection of all the Pique’s content. However, with the use of an objective coding system this study provides strength and depth in discussing more qualitative findings that can be found within this study.

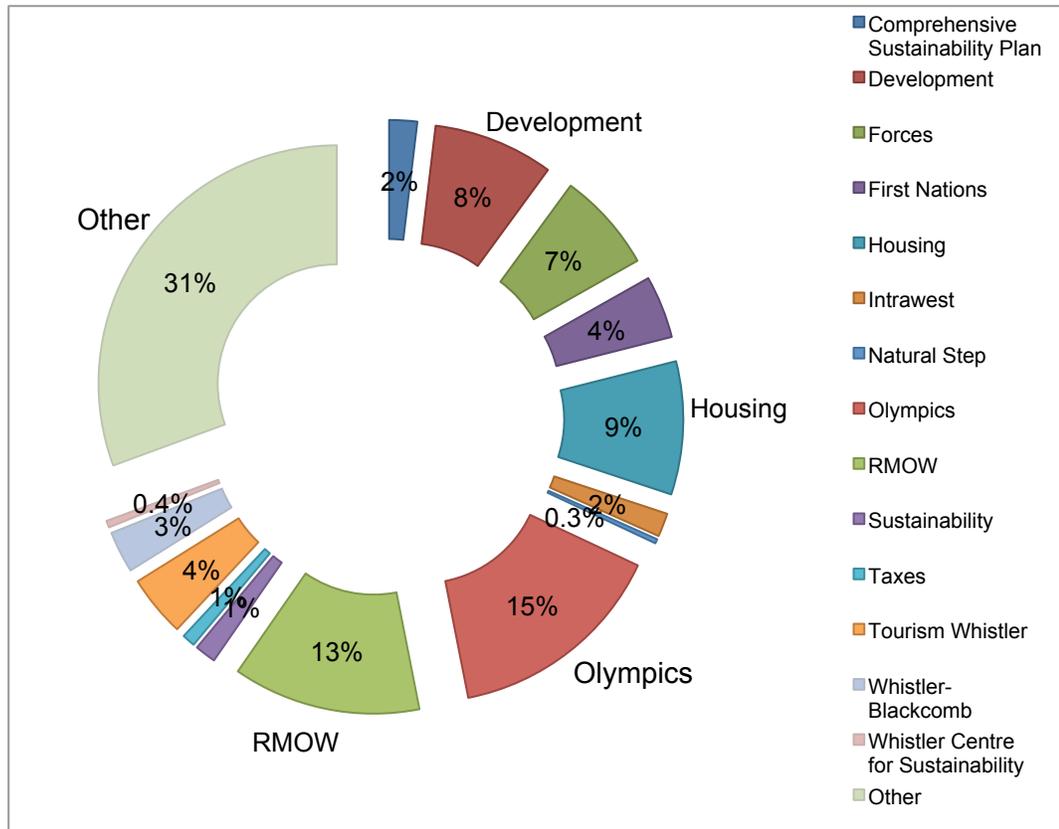
#### **4.1.2. Themes**

A total of 55 Primary Keywords were assigned to the varying articles, with a further 123 secondary key words. Each article was given a primary keyword a further 1,170 articles (49%) were given a secondary keyword. It would not be useful to discuss each keyword in detail, however, a comprehensive list can be found in the Appendix. Figure 5 shows an excerpt of the most frequently used primary keywords, the most frequent being articles related to the Olympics (14.6%), RMOW (12.7%), Housing (9.0%) and Development (8.2%). Other keywords such as Forces (a category to capture major global forces that did not fit in one specific category) (6.7%) and Sustainability (1.6%) are important to mention because, as discussed in section 3.2.4 they often acted as a 'general' category for articles that did not pertain directly to the greater themes in the study. It is interesting to further analyze the important and most frequent keywords to observe the shift in the importance of issues during the 12 year study period (Figure 5). The Olympics, for instance, shows a predictable increase in the number of articles collected that increased steadily from 2003 and rapidly drops off after the event took place in 2010. The articles relating to housing may aid in providing evidence that the issues associated with housing in Whistler had been 'solved' as shown by a decline in material covering housing after the acquisition and construction of multiple resident-restricted Whistler Housing Authority units. The bulk of articles collected discussing sustainability can be found from 2000-2005 (the years of the *Whistler 2020* process), at which point one might infer either that the community was sufficiently conditioned to the topic of sustainability and direct discussion on the topic gave way to integration of sustainability into all of Whistler's issues or that Whistler experienced an attitudinal change whereby sustainability was no longer a high priority.



**Figure 5** Key themes (Primary Keyword) by year 2000-2012

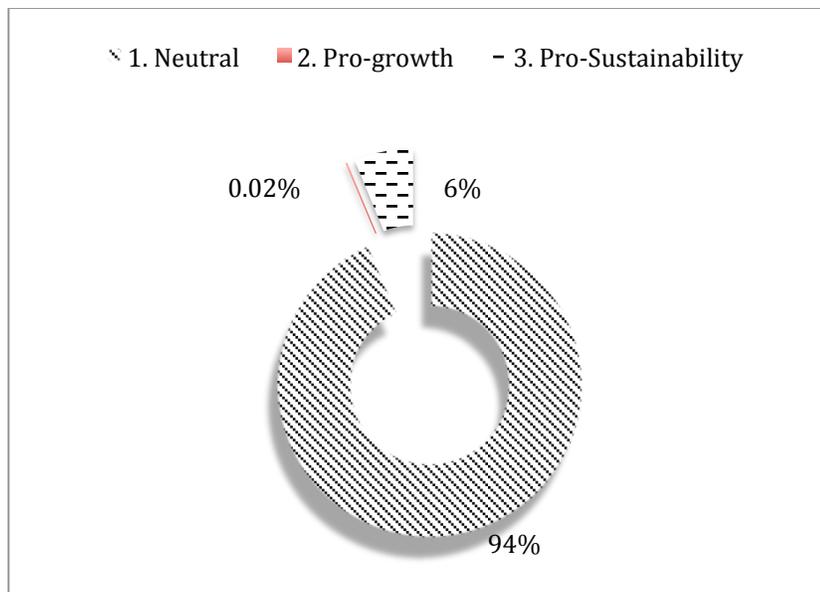
Figure 6 shows the 14 most used Primary Keywords, comprising 69% of all of the articles collected. Each keyword listed below could in-itself be an area for further research. However, it was observed when collecting the data that on the surface many of the articles were quite mundane when observed in isolation. However, when grouped together in chronological order, a set of primary key-worded articles tells a complex story.



**Figure 6 Articles by Primary Keyword**

The issue of determining if articles were 'pro-sustainability' or 'pro-growth' (Figure 7) proved to be a significant challenge. The relative objectivity of many of the articles collected meant that only a small portion of articles fell on either side of 'neutral', only 6.02%, the majority of which (6%) were identified as pro-sustainability. This coding proved to be difficult in cases where pro-growth and sustainability were not necessarily opposing forces. For example, development in the form of constructing Whistler Housing authority housing for locals was put forward under the banner of sustainability leaving a simplified coding system of this nature at a disadvantage. In addition, there were weekly

columns written by local sustainability advocates and eventually the Whistler Centre for Sustainability that were used to provide information to the public surrounding sustainable initiatives. In order to create a more realistic snapshot of a change in public opinion articles written specifically by biased sources such as the Centre for Sustainability were not catalogued in the database. Overall it was concluded that the article by focus category was not significantly useful in identifying community views on the matter. A pro-sustainability or development coding system could be useful in an analysis of the letters to the editor section but the parameters of what is considered pro-sustainability or pro-development would have to be more thoroughly defined than they were in this study.



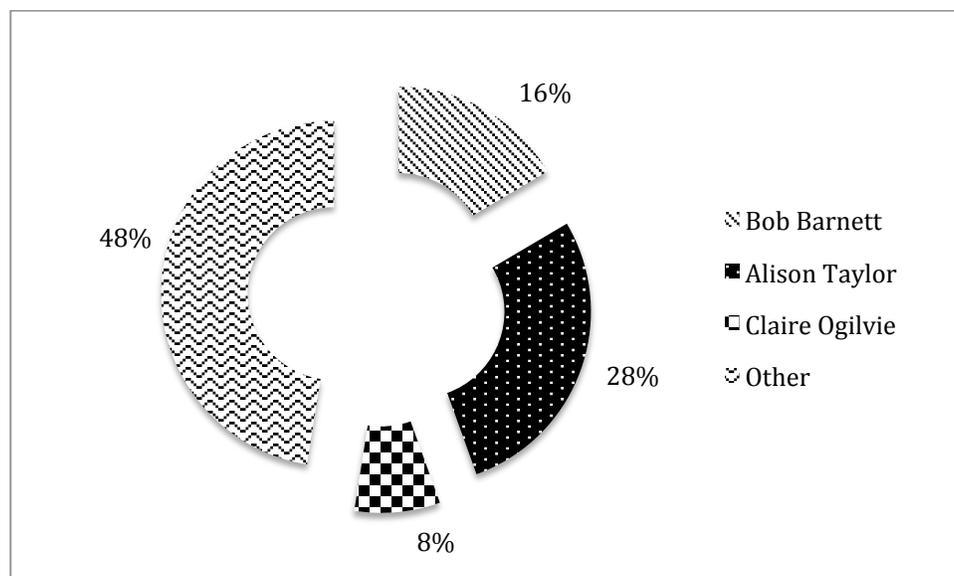
**Figure 7. Articles by Focus**

An integral part of this analysis is the identification of bias contained in the database, to this end it is important to understand that although the database contained over 2,000 articles the relative perspectives included in the database are somewhat limited. In all the articles collected over half are from just three writers, Alison Taylor (28%), Bob Barnett (16%) and Claire Ogilvie (8%) (Figure 8). Alison Taylor whose tenure spanned the length of this research period was responsible for news reports that were most often factual summaries of current events. Bob Barnett is the founding publisher of the Pique and his articles were often collected in the form of editorials. Barnett was a very strong voice within the Whistler community and his editorials were read and valued

by many Whistlerites. On a personal note, it was Bob Barnett's writing and influence on community discourse that I witnessed while living in the Whistler community prior to this research that inspired this study. Barnett has an incredible ability to connect the global to the local and vice versa. As Barnett himself wrote in his final editorial in (2013):

That employee housing has become a non-issue in post-Olympic Whistler is a tribute to successive councils, municipal staff, concerned citizens and more than a few developers... *Pique* didn't build any employee housing but I think we can take some credit for keeping the issue front and centre, particularly in the midst of the development frenzy of the '90s.

A large number of his articles create valuable snap-shots of the issues and pressures acting on Whistler as well as succinctly describe local feelings towards those issues. His contribution to this archive is significant, however, the *Pique* was Barnett's paper and as editor/owner his bias was clearly reflected in the content of this study. Claire Ogilvie's role changed throughout the data collection period from contributor to editor. Her contributions most often took the form of news reports however in the latter portion of the study Ogilvie took on some Editorial tasks as Barnett stepped back to focus more on the business aspects of the publication. However, Ogilvie's more general commentary editorial style meant that her editorial comments were rarely included in the study's database.



**Figure 8. Major contributors to data collected**

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. The Whistler Story

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Bob (Barnett) for his many years of “Opening Remarks.” If ever I wanted to understand the hot topics of the day, this is where I always got the balanced goods. Bob has an incredible grasp of what makes this place tick and was particularly good at suggesting directions that the community could go to solve problems. He never seemed to get frustrated when we chose to ignore his advice. I think we will all miss his voice in the community. Good luck Bob and thank you. - Meredith (2013) in the letters to the editor section of *The Pique* on Bob Barnett’s retirement.

Following in a mostly chronological order, this chapter aims to discuss the findings of the study derived from the database outlined in Chapter 3. This discussion draws on the Literature Review presented in Chapter 2 in order to make connections between the study’s results and the relevant literature. For the purpose of efficient and effective discussion, a relatively small sampling of articles are referenced when compared to the database as a whole. The sections of this chapter are comprised of key articles collected in this study, which form a narrative, telling the story of Whistler’s governance evolution. Additionally, each section is introduced by a quote drawn from the letters to the editor. It should be noted that the database this study is built on did not collect data from the letters to the editor due to the sheer number and variety of the entries. Instead, the selection of quotes from the letters to the editor were collected after key themes were developed based on a more targeted search than the articles collected for the database. The intention of the quotes from the letters to the editor are to ‘set the scene’ for each section by expressing one or more public opinions surrounding the key issues of that time. The following sections were created following an analysis of the newsprint database through the grouping of important articles following chronological themes. The sections of this chapter are the Bed Cap, Robèrt’s vacation and The

Natural Step, Community Conditioning, Olympic Lead-up, Economic Downturn and Post Olympics. These themes provide a rudimentary road map identifying the important points along Whistler's path to a form of governance focused on sustainable outcomes through the promotion of community guided decision making.

## **5.2. Bed Unit Cap**

News flash! – people are leaving. Pique reported a few months ago on the rising popularity of Pemberton and quoted an Intrawest manager, who had relocated from Whistler with his family. The ordinary worker, let alone Intrawest managers, cannot afford to live here and the punitive tax situation only exacerbates the problem. They cannot be blamed if they sell their homes and relocated to Pemberton or Squamish. "Aspenization" is already here [...] "Sustainability" becomes a joke when the only logical choice is to sell and get out. - Nylander (2002)

The Whistler story began in 1975 and as discussed above (in section 2.1) was characterized by years of uncontested physical growth. Originally, a bed cap was proposed to act as the limiter on Whistler's growth, based on a limit of the municipal sewage treatment capacity. This historic figure was held to be an absolute, however, as the housing capacity slowly approached the imposed limit the issues typically associated with a cap on growth (supply v. demand) soon started to affect Whistler home owners. As the limit approached, housing prices skyrocketed, rental units became scarce and local workers started making moves, out of necessity, to nearby Squamish and Pemberton. The loss of a truly 'local' workforce led to fears within the community that Whistler was beginning down a path of 'Aspenization'. Aspenization is the process by which a tourist-oriented town becomes un-affordable for its local residents. The decline in available potential real-estate development led to further problems for the RMOW, as historically, development had been used as a way in which to fund public projects. A variety of factors began to place increasing pressures on the Whistler taxpayer and by the beginning of 2000 Whistler had reached a crisis point. These stresses on the community created an environment that desired and in fact, required significant change. This is where the story of Whistler's journey towards sustainability begins.

### 5.3. Robèrt's vacation and The Natural Step

Sustainable Business thinking is on a wave that is just about to crest, let's hope that our community and major employer, with their respective Environmental Vision Documents, are committed to ride this wave all the way to the beach. - Wilson (2000)

If our town isn't growing, then it's dying. Our unique little piece of paradise will certainly at some point grow past its "cap". Whistler will need to use its considerable leverage to acquire what it needs and when it needs it, by allowing others to build what we can accept. We are pricing the fun out of Whistler. The people who came here for the sole purpose of being in the mountains can't find a decent, affordable place to live. The stories of five-six people in one- or two-bedroom suites aren't fantasy. Good young families are leaving. We are no longer giving the backbone of our community much of a chance. I remember at the last election, the analogy of a pyramid was used to describe our housing needs. The bottom was the employee housing and the point was a "trophy" home range. With an important amount of affordable and market value housing resting in between. I think our pyramid has turned into a lollypop. If council keeps doing this to us than we are all going to be suckers. - McBean (2001)

The first piece in the puzzle of articles collected in this study was collected from March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2000. Dan Wilson (current community sustainability planning specialist at the Centre for Sustainability Whistler) wrote a short article announcing that on March 14<sup>th</sup> Whistler's key environmental stakeholders were to meet with Dr. Karl Robèrt of The Natural Step (TNS). This is the first print introduction within the database to discuss the founder as well as the four conditions of the Natural Step. The four conditions as stated by Wilson (2000) are:

In order for a society to be sustainable, Natures functions and diversity are not systematically...

1. Subject to increasing concentrations of substances extracted from the earth's crust
2. Subject to increasing concentrations of substances produced by society
3. Impoverished by physical displacement, overharvesting or other forms of ecosystem manipulation.
4. In a sustainable society, resources are used fairly and efficiently in order to meet basic human needs.

While the introduction of sustainability into Whistler's vernacular had a heavy environmental tone, at the beginning of 2000, much of the discussion in the community, as indicated by the articles collected, surrounded housing affordability. At the time, Whistler was experiencing a significant worker shortage because of a lack of affordable housing, which had businesses and community members pushing for the municipality to take action on the issue. On November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2000, Bob Barnett, commented on the status of sustainability within the community with an editorial entitled *Sustainability applies to the economy, too*. In it he discusses how sustainability was increasingly becoming part of the Whistler vernacular and that it was important to recognize sustainability in its fullest sense.

But sustainability isn't a principle that applies to the environment alone. The economy is a much less emotional, less righteous issue than is the environment, but the principle of sustainability applies to it too. - Barnett (2000)

Barnett's article went on to discuss the municipality's need for long-term, sustainable solutions in the form of additional taxation tools to generate revenue from people who use the resort's services. He concluded his article proposing that maybe building large homes may be more 'sustainable' because of the contribution of those homes to the local economy in the forms of tax revenue and build time/cost. This indicates another issue the RMOW was facing at the time, a decline in development bonus funds. Historically developers would trade increases in density or bed units in return for contributing amenities to the RMOW's cache. However, as the amount of available developments began to run dry the RMOW was faced with a loss of this revenue combined with maintenance costs of aging existing infrastructure, the burden of which was placed on the local taxpayers. Soon after, an article by the RMOW (2000) appeared in which the authors (planners within the municipality) discussed the visit from Dr. Karl Robèrt earlier that year. During Dr. Robèrt's visit he spoke to a group of representatives who would shortly after receive the moniker of the 'Early Adopters'. This group included: The RMOW, Whistler Blackcomb, Chateau Whistler Resort, Tourism Whistler and One Hour Photo. The group planned to host a symposium on the Natural Step framework to map out a series of steps that would help move their respective organizations towards sustainability. This is an interesting touchstone moment in the

path to sustainability and relates to the work by Garud and Karnøe (2001) who referred to the first step in the creation of the Post-it© note (see section 2.5.2) as “mobilizing molecules”. The results of the meeting with Robèrt and subsequent symposium were a focused attempt to change and create something new in Whistler. Garud and Karnøe describe the invention of the Post-it© note adhesive as a ‘mistake that worked’. In the case of the Early Adopters the coincidence of Robèrt’s visit may be too convenient, however, the principle remains the same, through experimentation, in this case through the exploration of different sustainability packages and programs the ‘Early Adopters’ found their ‘new adhesive’ or stated more accurately, a program they hoped would stick. A similar article (Pique Staff, 2000) in the same issue announced that the Natural Step would be adopted by the Municipality and would be incorporated into the draft Environmental Strategy. By the week of December 15<sup>th</sup> 2000 the RMOW and the Early Adopters ran an all day seminar and workshop in which the group stated upfront:

“It is no longer a question of *if* environmental sustainability is in Whistler’s best interest, but *how* and *when* it should be implemented.” – The Early Adopters in Mitchell (2000).

More than 200 people attended the seminar and took part in smaller group workshops that asked participants what it would take for them to buy into the program (Mitchell, 2000). The suggestions were recorded with the promise of seeing the findings integrated into the package before TNS was introduced to the general public in Whistler in March 2001. Around the same time, the Olympic bid process began ramping up and the 2010 bid committee started to form, establishing its base in Vancouver and Whistler. The Olympic bid would prove to be one of the most significant drivers in assisting the Whistler community in achieving its goals of reaching a form of governance more focused in sustainability.

## **5.4. Community Conditioning**

At the moment, even with my advanced science degree, I am not quite sure what the “Natural Step” is other than good common sense, and I have fears that this is some consultant’s Ponsi scheme trying to rip off our community. The first “product” has been a handbook called “The

Household Tool Kit” that should have been rightfully been distributed at Myrtle Philip Elementary School but has rather added unsustainable mass to our rapidly diminishing landfill near Odiferous Junction. - Mathews (2002)

I was sorry to read the criticisms of the booklet “Whistler. It’s our Nature.” Disparagement and criticism are so easy. I did learn from the booklet even though already absorbed in environmental issues, and it may well be that others will also learn and comply. No doubt the pamphlet was expensive in money and volunteer time, but the effort was worth it: a beginning, and incentive to others. More power to the authors - Jones (2002)

*The Pique* always contains one feature article, usually 5-6 pages in length that provides significant detail about an issue, event or interest. On March 9<sup>th</sup> 2001, professional planner, Caroline Lamont, wrote a feature discussing the current state of affairs in Whistler and her opinion on what steps needed to be taken to ensure Whistler maintained its quality and appeal. In the feature she discussed the need for Whistler to update its Official Community Plan (OCP) and Community Development Plan (CDP) in order to keep pace with the issues the community faces, specifically a lack of developable area for community housing and amenities. While there is no way to tell if her comments directly influenced the planning department at the RMOW or not, they would soon be addressed by the RMOW in the form of a Comprehensive Sustainability Plan (CSP).

Despite a buzz around Whistler the roll-out of the Early Adopters backed program did not go as smoothly as planned. In August, Andrew Mitchell (2001) wrote an article entitled ‘Natural Step launch delayed until ‘pieces are in place’ in which he writes that Councillor Ken Melamed addressed the local environmental organization, AWARE, saying that he was nervous about TNS not being accepted by the community. To ensure that the program was accepted the RMOW made ‘huge’ efforts to condition the community. In this way the RMOW appealed to the intellect of the Whistler community, imparting specific notions of sustainability and the positive effects the program could have. Again, distinct similarities in Whistler’s adoption of sustainability measure can be drawn with Garud and Karnøe’s (2001) work. The Early Adopters were ‘mobilizing minds’ in order to overcome the natural resistance of people for change. What councillor, Ken

Melamed, was worried about was facing the indifference and rejection that often comes with large ideas such as sustainability. In many ways Ken Melamed (representing the RMOW) and the other Early Adopters had to, at times, act as zealots in order to convince people of sustainability's importance. In order to 'recruit champions' the early adopters spread information in the form of education packets for small businesses and residents as well as a video explaining the framework for environmental sustainability. Part of the education process was a speaker series that began with Ray Anderson, the CEO of Interface Inc, a billion dollar company that had successfully integrated TNS. The speaker series took place over a number of weeks and concluded with Dr. Robert speaking to the Whistler community.

At the end of November 2001 (Mitchell, 2001b), the Early Adopters of the Natural Step rolled out the program entitled *Whistler It's Our Nature*. Hosted at the Whistler Conference Centre, the launch featured displays, toolkits for residents and businesses, an introductory video and a presentation by Ray Anderson. In many ways this aided the program in a process that Garud and Karnøe (2001) refer to as becoming 'Boundary Spanning'. In Whistler this process first translated the principles of TNS and sustainability into a language everyone could understand and then through interactions with stakeholders generated the necessary critical mass for buy-in within the community. This course of events could also be viewed as an example of a group attempting to implement a 'sustainability fix' (While et al., 2004). In many ways 'sustainability' in its earliest form in Whistler represented a means in which to safeguard positive growth trajectories in the wake of global and local stresses. By February 2002 (Pique Staff, 2002), the RMOW announced that it would be accepting the community's input in choosing a group of consultants to begin updating the 1993 Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) with an unprecedented Comprehensive Sustainability Plan (CSP). Mike Purcell (2002, p.1), the municipality's general manager of planning and development services, told council that:

A sustainability plan will address key issues such as the ultimate size of the resort, future land use, the relationship between Whistler and other communities in the region, the continued provision of employee housing, infrastructure and environmental business and social sustainability. It is meant to consolidate and supersede existing policy documents such as the CDP and will update the Vision 2002, integrating sustainability in all that Whistler does.

By late July (Taylor, 2002) the first public workshop dealing with Whistler's future took place. This initiated a new phase of the process titled, **Whistler It's Our Future**. Which, using Garud and Karnøe (2001) terminology, helped in 'generating momentum' as well as aided in the 'co-evolution of minds'. As Taylor (2002) observes, the program successfully remained flexible in its infancy in order to ensure that ideas would not stagnate. However, this is not to say the program was without its flaws, one of the first hitches in the community consultation process was scheduling the community engagement sessions during a Whistler Off Road Cycling Association (WORCA) race night. WORCA ride nights often attract upwards of 200 members of the community and the RMOW and its consultants faced criticism for this scheduling error. The first of many criticisms the consulting team would face in the process. This was such an issue that Municipal Administrator, Jim Godfrey and Mayor Hugh O'Reily announced that the first phase of *Whistler It's Our Future* would be extended in order to update people on the process. Around the same time (July 2002) Vancouver and Whistler were awarded the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, setting in motion a series of proposed developments and creating the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (VANOC) (Barnett, 2003b).

The central element in the discussion surrounding sustainability in the Whistler community at the time was affordability. Following a series of meetings with the community the RMOW and their team of consultants set goals to return to the community with 5 scenarios to address the issue of affordable housing. The five scenarios proposed the regions and types of possible future developments in the resort (Taylor, 2003). While the scenarios were being created the newly elected council at the RMOW placed the CSP update at the top of its priority list (Barnett, 2003a).

By September, 2003, Mike Vance a former director of planning in Whistler throughout most of the 1990s returned to Whistler to take on the newly created position of General Manager of Community Initiatives at the RMOW (Barnett, 2003c). Months later, six months behind schedule the **Whistler It's Our Future Plan – Whistler 2020 Comprehensive Sustainability Plan** was released for the public to comment on. Within the package were five scenarios to choose from. Garud and Karnøe's (2001) notion of the 'Virtuous Cycle' helps illustrate how the momentum behind an idea such as this creates more opportunities to move it forward. As those attempting to create new paths

(the Early Adopters) realize that they are part of an emerging collective. In this way the RMOW embarked on a process of engaging the residents of Whistler to decide which future they desired. To say that this process was applauded by all would be not only false, but would be next to impossible in municipal politics, however, despite the inherent tensions within the community regarding change, the movement continued to gain momentum.

G.D Maxwell (2003), whose often witty and controversial commentary can be found at the back of *The Pique* every week gave his summary of the RMOW's five proposed options as follows:

1. Lock the gates - no new growth. Bed limit stays the same, town stagnates, everybody moves to Squampton [Squamish] 'cept the rich folks who show up for holiday and wonder where all the people are.
2. Build more worker bee housing through infill projects in existing neighbourhoods.
3. Build more worker bee housing down in the Callaghan
4. Build more worker bee housing down in the Callaghan and Lower Cheakamus and diversify the economy.
5. Let the evil, nasty developers build rich folk housing and, quid pro quo, make them build worker bee housing in Alpine and Lower Cheakamus to atone for their sins."

By January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2004 the preliminary results of the CSP planning process showed that most Whistler residents supported a future with resident housing within the existing corridor (not creating housing in the Callaghan Valley – 15km South of Whistler). Despite the discussion in the community surrounding sustainability, the least favourite scenario was one that stayed true to Whistler's current development cap showing no new growth (Taylor, 2004a).

The CSP project had some 'bumps in the road', one of which was the fact that by March 2004 the project was already \$430,000 over budget (Taylor, 2004b). The first draft produced by Mike Vance, General Manager of Community Initiatives, took into consideration the blended future (an option that included various elements from the five different proposed scenarios) that the community expressed interest in (Taylor, 2004c). The Report found 61 sites within the borders of the RMOW from Function Junction in the South to Emerald in the North that could be suitable to developed resident housing,

finding that if only 20% of the land was developed, it could produce almost 1,700 resident housing units (Taylor, 2004d).

In April, 2004 Bob Barnett (2004) commented on an important issue in Whistler, the apparent growing financial strain on the RMOW with no means to pay for it. With the agreement of hosting the Olympics the RMOW dove head-first into infrastructure and amenity projects. To aid in those projects the Provincial Liberal government promised Whistler the financial tools to aid in construction costs, maintenance and improvement for the 2010 Olympics Games.

Speaking of the budget and the Olympics, one might wonder what ever happened to the financial tools Premier Gordon Campbell promised Whistler as part of the deal for hosting the Games. Apparently the rest of the Liberal caucus didn't have as much appetite for handing over financial tools to municipalities as the premier. – Bob Barnett 2004a

Without these tools, tough decisions had to be made between building of new facilities and maintenance of existing ones. Barnett went on to comment that with the renewal of the five-year financial plan it was indicated that financial sustainability would be an issue, especially with the plans put forth within the CSP. The Draft CSP was released the week of June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2004 and distilled Whistler's priorities into 5 areas: Enriching Community Life, Enhancing the Resort Experience, Protecting the Environment, Ensuring Economic Viability and Partnering for Success. The plan looked at Whistler and the global impacts acting on it however, Barnett's comment on the plan found that it fell short in discussing the financial sustainability of the municipality (Barnett, 2004b).

Employee housing demand reached a new high in September 2004 when the waitlist for WHA housing reached 400 individuals (Taylor, 2004e). At the time the only new employee beds on the books were the Nita Lake Lodge development that promised to deliver 120 units in the coming year. This issue was discussed further by Barnett (2004c) commenting that:

The actual building of resident-restricted housing has slipped off the radar screen in the nearly two years since the last election. As work on the CSP and preparation for the 2010 Olympics has consumed much time and energy of council and staff.

Shortly after Barnett's editorial the previously made pledge to deliver 500 beds of employee housing by the end of the councils term was reiterated. This task would be possible through the 300-acre land bank and \$5 million in the WHA bank account. The goal of maintaining 75% of employees in Whistler living in Whistler was reaffirmed by council as it worked its way through the CSP (Barnett, 2004d). To address this challenge, councilor Nick Davies motioned to investigate new employee housing opportunities on infill sites. In the fall of 2004, Steve Bayly was hired by the municipality to deliver employee housing within the year. As a founding board member of the WHA Bayly had been instrumental in delivering employee housing projects in Whistler for almost a decade. In a Taylor (2004f) article Bayly commented that:

I truly believe accommodating the people who work here gives the whole town a leg up, makes it better, gives it vibrancy.

On the week of December 10<sup>th</sup> 2004 the CSP volume 1 was officially adopted by council with considerably less fanfare as the CSP launch nearly three years ago. The plan was renamed – *Whistler 2020* – Moving to a Sustainable Future (Taylor, 2004g). General Manager of Community Initiatives Mike Vance (in Taylor, 2004g) presented it to council as:

A 42-page document describing all that Whistler aspires to be in 2020.

*Whistler 2020* was the resort's long-term, overarching, community-wide plan guided by Whistler's values and sustainability principles. How Whistler would go on to realize its vision was not included in the volume and was instead promised to be presented later in Volume II of the CSP. Volume II was further shaped by the different task forces assigned to the 16 different strategies of the Volume 1 CSP. The sixteen strategies included in the *Whistler 2020* document (Table 4) were:

**Table 4. Whistler 2020 – 16 Strategies**

Arts, Culture and Heritage	Visitor Experience	Built Environment
Economic	Water	Energy
Finance	Transportation	Health and Social
Learning	Resident Housing	Materials and Solid Waste
Natural Areas	Resident Affordability	Partnership
Recreation and Leisure		

The task forces had the components of a truly community informed decision making process in which groups of individuals interested in one or more of the 16 different strategies were able to directly inform community decision making. As discussed in Section 2.6 for an endeavor to be sustainable it has to be both community-led and participatory (Grybovych and Hafermann, 2010) An article from the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2004 provides a window into the task forces of the *Whistler 2020* plan. In it, Alison Taylor discusses one of the task forces and the way in which nine ordinary citizens were helping to develop the resident affordability strategy which looked at both temporary and long-term resident affordability (Taylor, 2004h).

Royal Bank manager, Greg Newton, who volunteered to be a member of the task force, said he always reads about the work of the ‘Garry Watsons and Pat Carletons’, the politicians who shaped Whistler in the early days, but rarely do the regular citizens get the chance to take part in developing local policy to mold the future. “Maybe it’s something we can tell our kids... that (we) were involved (in shaping the community) just before the Olympics came.”

In this manner, the RMOW progressed into a phase of governance that focused on the *stakeholder perspective* (Sekerka and Stimel, 2011) an approach that focused on the triple bottom line approach, incorporating the social, ecological, and economic concerns within the community into each of the 16 strategies.

By early March 2005, Whistler made a significant step in addressing resident housing needs. Housing Expeditor, Steve Bayly, initiated a deal between Whistler Rainbow Properties Ltd and the municipality to develop a 45-acre parcel of land between Alpine Meadows and Emerald estates. The deal included an array of employee housing opportunities as well as market housing (Taylor, 2005c). The RMOW got a further bit of good news late April 2005, when the federal government announced that the municipality would receive \$840,000 over the next five years, a share of the federal gas taxes as part of Prime Minister Paul Martin's 2002 New Deal agreement (Mitchell, 2005). However, the federal funds did nothing to address the rise in housing demand, by summer 2005 the Whistler housing list topped 500 individuals (Taylor, 2005d). Tim Wake, general manager of the WHA, said the increase was likely due to a potential large development project between Alpine and Emerald on the horizon. When the news of the Rainbow project was made public the list started to grow.

Later that summer the CSP, *Whistler 2020 Volume II* was released in what Mike Vance called a 'milestone event' at the Westin Resort and Spa (Taylor, 2005a). The plan, which was three years in the making, outlined exactly what Whistler wanted to achieve in the next 15 years in order to make the resort community both successful and sustainable. More importantly, it set out all the steps to get there and the partners needed to make that happen. In addition to the municipality, 15 community partners, such as Whistler-Blackcomb and Tourism Whistler signed the plan to help in moving it forward. The plan was adopted the week of August 5<sup>th</sup> 2005 (Taylor, 2005e), shortly after which Hugh O'Reilly, Whistler's longest serving mayor (three terms as a councillor and three terms as mayor) announced he would not be running for mayor again, and would be moving to Hawaii for the remainder of his term (Taylor, 2005b). A rare and unusual move, O'Reilly described his last term as his most frustrating, saying that the current council had become too involved in day-to-day matters and the municipal staff were demoralized. He found that the conflict among council members was a significant issue in getting things done, an issue he blamed on himself. At the time Bob Barnett commented that, from his perspective, the issue within council was Mayor O'Reilly and Chief Administrator Jim Godfrey's close relationship. While previous councils were ok with this relationship the current council was not (Barnett, 2005a).

What hasn't been said, but is an open secret, is that some members of Whistler council have been frustrated by what they see as a concentration of power and control of information that has developed in the pairing of Godfrey and Mayor Hugh O'Reilly. They became mayor and administrator at the same time, nearly nine years ago, and have been instrumental in setting direction on things such as the *Whistler 2020* document, adaptation of The Natural Step and making "sustainability" a part of our vocabulary. The mayor and administrator also sit together on the boards of Tourism Whistler, One Whistler and VANOC and therefore are the connection between these organizations and the rest of council. That seems to be where the frustration lies, in the venture of the mayor/administrator and through which all information and direction must flow. Or not flow (Barnett, 2005b).

As the election race heated up in October 2005 Ken Melamed announced he would be running for mayor. A long-time dissenter on council Melamed had a history of being the hold-out, often the lone hold-out, on many development projects. He appealed to the electorate in a quote saying (Taylor, 2005f):

As Mayor, my role will be different, I'll be more focused on balancing the various and diverse needs of the community as a whole rather than the constituency I felt elected me.

Melamed went on to discuss how his focus would be on the economy, moving towards the Olympics, which would be guided from the *Whistler 2020* vision document. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2005 Ken Melamed was elected the mayor of Whistler (Barnett, 2005c). He stated that:

I'm concerned about what seems to be a polarized split in the community... clearly the business community doesn't feel like it's being served by the mayor, by municipal hall, by council or by the combination of all three... And one of the things that I think needs to happen is to reach out to that sector, to try and end that polarization – not end it, but maybe mend it. – Ken Melamed 2005

Later that year, Bill Barratt was appointed new chief administrator to lead the resort municipality. The administrator seat was left empty after council moved Jim Godfrey from the position to a newly-created senior position at municipal hall – executive director for the 2010 Olympic Games (Taylor, 2005g).

## 5.5. Olympic Lead Up

With the Olympics now unavoidable, something must be done with the 600 acres (given to First Nations and local municipalities) of Crown land being freed up. Perhaps the Callaghan Valley offers us an opportunity to build a subdivision of affordable, moderately sized homes with environmental sustainable techniques. Doesn't it make sense to focus our attention on an area where upwards of \$50 million is going to be spent on new facilities already? Would this not also be more efficient and less obtrusive to all living here now? The Olympics will leave a legacy to be remembered. Will it be when property values went from ridiculous to absurd and they developed every greenspace in the valley, or ... - Wragg (2004)

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 2001, the International Olympic Committee announced that it was increasingly looking at environmental sustainability as their selection criteria. While the RMOW embraced TNS in its sustainability planning policy, the 2010 Vancouver Olympic bid corporation opted to create its own sustainability initiative (Pique Staff, 2001). In order to show the nation's commitment to the Olympic games the Federal government and the Province made the announcement that not only would the RMOW and the Host First Nations receive a large land bank in the Callaghan Valley, but also \$620 million would be promised for Olympic facilities (Ogilvie, 2002). This included the much-needed expansion of the Sea to Sky highway, the main route between Vancouver and Whistler and an area that was notorious as a dangerous highway, especially in the Winter. An interesting feature to develop in Whistler during this period was the integration of First Nations into decision making. As Bob Barnett discussed in his 2004 article, the Nordic Centre – and the possibilities it represents – is perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the new deal (Barnett, 2004e). The intrigue, Barnett writes, grew as the Squamish Nation Chief Bill Williams told CBC radio that his people would seek court action if their concerns with the current plans for the Callaghan were not addressed. Both the Squamish nation and Lil'wat claim the Callaghan as part of their traditional territory. The local First Nations were part of the Olympic negotiation from the beginning, with representatives on the board of the Vancouver 2010 bid corporation and the newly formed Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (VANOC). The Host First Nations agreed to relinquishing any claims on the Nordic Centre area in exchange for a number of criteria outlined in a Shared Legacy

Agreement that included: 300 acres of Crown land; \$50,000 toward a feasibility study on land location and development opportunities; \$2.3 million for a Skills and Training legacy projects, among others. A year later, ground was broken on the Squamish, Lil'wat cultural centre located on a five-acre site of Crown Land just outside Whistler's upper village. With the intention of offering an interactive experience profiling the Host First Nations during the Olympics and beyond (Ogilvie, 2005).

One of the greatest proposed legacies of the 2010 Winter Olympics was the construction of the Whistler Athletes Village opposite Function Junction in the South end of Whistler. The athletes village was constructed to house the 2,400 athletes and support staff during the winter games, after which, it would be transitioned into housing to support 1,500 to 2,000 residents after the games (Taylor, 2006a). The *Whistler 2020* Development Corporation was formed to oversee the construction on the 107 acre site. This was made possible through a contribution of \$45.5 million towards the construction of the village, site and associated facilities by VANOC. Just as the community began to see the rewards from the initiatives it had been working towards since before 2000, factors out of the control of the RMOW, the Early Adopters and even the Province of BC took hold.

## **5.6. Economic Downturn**

Here's a good question for council and Intrawest: please tell us just one group of visitors on our planet expected to be anywhere near as well off this year as last. Then tell us why price increases in excess of inflation for parking and lifts is even considered. Today's environment calls for price cuts to preserve the loyalty, rather than layering on costs increases under the auspices of that overused crappy line "improving the resort experience."

And we can forget about incremental visitor growth from Europe to fill in the hole, home prices there have eroded just as fast as in America while their economies are in much worse shape than ours. One needs only consider that Ireland's liquor consumption has fallen 7 per cent this year — and 14 per cent in August — to know how bad Europe is fairing.

So for us locals it might just be a great ski season, with those nasty lift lineups in little evidence. My personal forecast: an 18 per cent drop in tourist traffic, unless we shape up and cut prices. Just don't ruin your ski day by contemplating how we are going to pay for council's spending spree, which is taking us over \$100 million into debt while municipal revenues will be unable to keep pace with embedded expenditure increases, never mind planned capital costs and their potential overruns.  
– McNeely (2008)

Early in 2006 trouble began for the resort operator, Intrawest, as the company announced that earnings were forecasted to be down \$14 million after a drop in visitors, mainly from the U.S., to Whistler-Blackcomb, which represented more than 40 percent of the company's resort revenues (Ogilvie, 2006a). Weeks later Intrawest announced that it had begun a strategic review of the company (Ogilvie, 2006b). This combined with an increasingly powerful Canadian dollar and rising oil prices were described as a 'one-two punch' that drove visitors away from the Whistler area (Mitchell, 2006). To add to those issues, changes in U.S. border/passport laws, which came into effect in 2007/2008, continued to have an increasingly negative effect on tourism business forecasts.

Perhaps in response to the looming tourism crisis and to the relief of many within the RMOW on May 27<sup>th</sup> 2006 the provincial government finally agreed to provide Whistler and 12 other resort communities with a greater amount of the hotel tax (Barnett, 2006). This meant that Whistler's share of the hotel tax went from around \$3 million to \$9 million annually. While the increase in funding was a relief to some, Mayor Ken Melamed said after council's May 29<sup>th</sup> meeting that despite the increase funding Whistler had been scrambling to find supplementary funding for the 43-hectare future site of Athletes village that will house 2,400 athletes during the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. While the increase in the hotel tax was a blessing, it still failed to cover the gap between VANOC's \$45.5 million contribution and the estimated \$180 million cost of the village. Luckily, one week later the municipality 'heaved a sigh of relief' after receiving verbal commitment for more money from the province to build the Athlete's village, a legacy that would have long-term implications on affordable housing in the area (Ogilvie, 2006c).

By late October 2006 the battered Intrawest, parent company of Whistler-Blackcomb, was acquired by New York-based Fortress Investment Group LCC for \$2.8

billion which was approved at Intrawest's Oct. 17<sup>th</sup> shareholder meeting (Ogilvie, 2006d). While the management change in the resort's largest employer created an uncertain future the RMOW pushed ahead with the *Whistler 2020* initiative.

A unique municipal operating structure was created when RMOW administrator Bill Barratt did away with the traditional model of local government and introduced a revolutionary restructuring of the organization. The old departments of planning and engineering were renamed and refocused to 'jive' with Whistler's sustainability plan. Historically, the RMOW was like most municipalities organized along traditional lines – a department of finance, planning, engineering and public works, parks and recreation. Now, using the five key priorities of the *Whistler 2020* plan – Enriching community life, enhancing the resort experience, protecting the environment and ensuring economic viability – Barratt shifted the focus of the various municipal departments and renamed them accordingly (Taylor, 2006b). The fifth of *Whistler 2020*'s priorities, partnering for success, would overlay all departments at the municipal hall.

Now you've got planners in multiple departments so I think one thing its going to do is aid through the cross-pollination of services and talents in the municipality and I think that will contribute to making us a more effective group. At the end of the day that's what we're here to do is be effective in our delivery of services - Bill Barratt in (Taylor, 2006)

This is an excellent example of how Whistler underwent what could be described as second-order transformational change as discussed in section 2.6 (Sekerka and Stimel, 2011) which occurs when the structure of an organization goes through a conversion such as the one discussed above. This type of second-order transformation protects the values and goals of the current administration to a radical change. It could be argued that the RMOW having experienced an overt shift in attitudes, beliefs and values that centered on sustainable governance underwent this change to ensure the longevity of their work. However, although these organizational steps allude to a monumental shift, Bob Barnett's (2007a) comments provide a more cautious assessment:

Since Whistler adopted the Natural Step several years ago sustainability has become the buzz word – the S-word – in this valley. We've had speakers come to town to talk about various aspects of sustainability; our

comprehensive development plan has become the comprehensive sustainability plan; we've learned there are three legs to the sustainability stool: economic, environmental and social; and Whistler has re-defined its vision to become the premier mountain resort community – as we move towards sustainability... But its not clear that Whistler really gets it, yet.

According to Barnett, businesses in Whistler still did not feel like they were receiving the economic sustainability promised in the *Whistler 2020* plan and residents were feeling neglected when it came to affordability as demonstrated by council's decision to not allow London Drugs into the village retails space (Barnett, 2007a). A decision that would have created more affordable options for locals and tourists shopping in the Village Square but was ultimately rejected due to the amount of space the company required to make its store economically viable.

In the summer of 2007, one of the major Olympic legacies was achieved when the Squamish and Lil'wat Nations and the RMOW received final approval for the legacy land deal, paving the way for a massive boundary expansion. Through the deal Whistler grew roughly 60 percent, which included the RMOW taking over control of the Skier parking lots, a deal that would have significant ramifications in the future for the council of the day.

A new day is dawning for our people. We will be sustainable within our traditional lands again. – Squamish Chief Gibby Jacobs in (Taylor, 2007a)

For the local First Nations, the Squamish and Lil'wat nation, the deal was praised, as they became the holders of the largest potential land development in Whistler. Through the signing of an MOU with the RMOW it was agreed that any future development by the First Nations would be in line with the guides set out within Whistler's official planning documents, like the *Whistler 2020* plan. The new development rights that the First Nations agreed to included a cap on growth. First Nations were transferred 224 bed units and chose eight sites within the resort municipality totalling a matching 300 acres of 'legacy lands'. The 224 bed units were added to the 228 units previously held by the province and given to the first nations, for a total of 452 developable bed units. A number which provided the potential to build 75 single family homes (Talyor, 2007).

It was soon apparent as Whistler headed into one of its most aggressive capital programs in recent years that the timing could not have been worse. The trends plaguing the building industry in B.C. in the summer of 2007 were: labour shortages, the high cost of materials and a plethora of jobs on the horizon influencing the price of labour. Budgets that were put together eight months ago were now being hit with a 20 to 30 percent increase in price (Taylor, 2007b). However, despite the issues with cost the majority of council and the RMOW were focused on the 2010 games as 2007 rolled on. However, something was missing, as Bob Barnett commented in his 2007b article, although there had been a ton of apparent work put towards the 2010 games there remained a disconnect in the community between Whistler's planning for the Olympics and the community itself.

In early 2008, Whistler, having won many awards for environmental initiatives including the Green City award from the provincial government in September 2007 took its next step in developing sustainability initiatives through the creation of the Whistler Centre for Sustainability. The idea of the centre had been discussed in Whistler since 2000, around the same time the municipality adopted TNS framework. The centre was first envisioned as a learning centre which would allow visitors and individuals to come and learn about sustainability (Fraughton, 2008). However, the version proposed in 2007 focused on the business of sustainability and was envisioned as an organization that would work with other municipalities to replicate the 'Whistler model'. Overall, for British Columbia, 2007 was a landmark year on the environmental front. The provincial government created new green building standards, increased funding for public transportation and committed to substantial reductions in green house gas emission (Pique Staff, 2008a). However, as 2008 began, Whistler increasingly felt the pressures of the recession in the U.S.

Any ripple in the U.S., our biggest trading partner, will naturally create waves in Canada and especially in the tourism industry which relies on people having enough discretionary income to spend on luxuries like ski vacations. – Mitchell, 2008a

Whistler was just experiencing a 'turn-around' from the horrible snow year and effects of September 11<sup>th</sup> Mitchell goes on to write, "surviving the economic downturn of this magnitude would be difficult" (Mitchell, 2008a). Early in April 2008, the first 'Après in

Action' convention took place at the Whistler Resort and Spa. Organized by the RMOW, eight topics were chosen through an online survey to be discussed at the convention. The suggestions and input from the conference were directly included in the *Whistler 2020* strategy and added to the action list for 2009. As Sustainability coordinator, Kevin Damaskie ,said to the Pique at the time (Mitchell, 2008b):

For people on the *Whistler 2020* task forces that have been doing this for the past five years it was really important to give the broader community a chance to be as engaged and involved as possible. It's a way to connect with people that don't want to or can't volunteer for a task force, but have good ideas to help the community. – Kevin Damaskie, 2008

The topics discussed at the meeting were cost of living; transportation and pay parking; Whistler's natural experience; how the resort will operate when it reaches build out; making neighbourhoods and buildings green; how the resort can adapt to the potential impacts of climate change; ensuring the long-term viability of Whistler's Olympic legacies; and looking at ways to improve Whistler's waste system. The hope of the conference was to ensure that when the task forces met in late April for action planning, they would come to the table with 10 actions already developed and refined by the community (Mitchell, 2008b). As summer 2008 approached, with the Olympics looming, some community members were dismayed by the level of un-involvement by the community in the 2010 Winter Olympics. Specifically the slow process of communication from the master plans to specifics, as Jennifer Erickson comments in (Barnett, 2008).

This is not so much a question as a plea to the council for some kind of outreach to make this our Olympics. – Jennifer Erickson, 2008

Not only were reports coming in that the Olympics were not meeting local expectations for engagement regarding operations during the event, but that despite the commitment to sustainability VANOC was already falling short of their goals (Ogilvie, 2008a). At the same time there had not been a period in Whistler's history when the RMOW had been committed to so many large capital projects or when there was so much uncertainty over the long-term financial impacts of the limits placed on development. Despite these demands, the RMOW's finances were reported to still be

holding steady (Mitchell, 2008c). Unfortunately, for the residents of Whistler reports on their own financial status were not so fortunate. Reports from the *Whistler 2020* process found that (Piech, 2008a):

The number of residents with trouble making ends meet has increased by 10 per cent over the last year - Wilson, 2008

In late September 2008, Cheeying Ho, former executive director of Smart Growth B.C. and Better Environmentally Sound Transportation took on the role of the first executive director of the Whistler Centre for Sustainability. Her responsibilities as executive director were to help shape the centre's strategic plan, with the new goal of one day making the centre self-sufficient by acting as a consultant for local governments, businesses, event organizers, and others by leveraging Whistler's experiences with the *Whistler 2020* framework, and sharing research on sustainability issues (Pique Staff, 2008b). At the same time, Whistler was still faced with solving one of its earliest 'sustainability' issues, affordable housing. The housing situation was so dire in Whistler that Tim Page, an Australian who has been searching for accommodation for two weeks took to walking around the village with a cardboard sign taped to him reading 'seeking accommodation' (Piech, 2008b).

The week of November the 21<sup>st</sup> 2008, saw Ken Melamed victorious for a 2<sup>nd</sup> term in the mayoral race as well as incumbent councillors Eckhard Zeidler and Ralph Forsyth. New comers to council were Tom Thomson, Grant Lamont and Chris Quinlan as well as Ted Milner (Ogilvie, 2008b). In April of 2009 the new council began to consider the municipal budget and opted to take some of its closed-door budget discussions public in order to get public input on what appeared to be the budget's sizable tax increases. The open discussion was hoped to shed some light on why each individual member of council was considering a 20 percent tax increase over three years.

There's been yelling, screaming, slamming on tables. We're all looking for the magic million dollar savings. That doesn't exist right here, right now. - Councillor Quinlan in (Taylor, 2009a)

The five-year financial plan called for year after year property tax increases totalling 20 percent. Many factors led to this need including: a loss or revenue from

provincial decisions (namely the class 1/6 decision which decreased tax revenue from some private accommodations), the RMOW revenues down as a result of the global economy and capital expenditures from the 2010 games as well as the associated operating expenses of the games (Taylor, 2009a). While few issues attract public ire more than tax increases in early May 2009 the first nail in the 2008-2011 administrations coffin was hammered. Pay parking would become a pivotal issue in the 2011 election and a contentious issue within the community (Mitchell, 2009b). In June that year over 1,500 people joined an anti-pay parking Facebook group, but Mayor Ken Melamed said he had no immediate plans to reverse the situation. Citing that studies were done that place Whistler behind Vail and Aspen in terms of pay parking and that pay parking does not necessarily hurt business (Piech, 2009a). Whistler's pay parking dispute reached a head at the end of July as 100 community members packed into the Millennium Place to voice their discontent. A mass argument erupted among the crowd with people shouting furiously across the room for several minutes. The three hour discussion closed calmly with all seven council members voting to temporarily suspend pay parking at the conference centre and conduct a consultation with the community to develop a 'parking strategy' (Piech, 2009b).

'Several years ago someone at VANOC said there would be high points and there would be low points in the lead up to the 2010 Winter Olympics. July 2009 would be one of those low points, at least in Whistler. Whistlerites are pissed off about a lot of things, and for some the Olympics make a good catch-all receptacle for their frustrations.' – Barnett (2009a)

Bob Barnett observed that the feeling among some people is that if they could just get rid of the Olympics and the current council most of the troubles would be gone. A series of issues were brought to the fore with pay parking at the top of the list, as well as paving various areas in Whistler including the Day Lots, the clearing of trees to create the medals plaza, the composting facility, Olympic jackets and tickets and the cost of living increase to council's wages. However, what made all these issues a tremendous public concern was the increase in property taxes and utility fees due earlier that month (Barnett, 2009a). However, despite community concerns about spending, council continued in its pursuit of a more sustainable operation and gave the municipality's ambitious "Carbon Neutral Operations Plan" the green light. In doing so council

committed the RMOW to drop its carbon emissions 10 percent in 2010 and 30 percent by 2015, purchasing carbon offsets to do so while pursuing carbon emission reduction programs. Earlier in the year council voted to add carbon emissions targets to its OCP (Piech, 2009c).

One year before the Olympics reports began to be released preparing and alerting the community of Whistler to the “Olympic Aversion Factor”. Studies had revealed that almost all Olympic host cities had experienced a steep decline in visitor numbers in the months before and after the Games themselves (Mitchell, 2009a). Although for years Whistlerites had been complaining that there was a significant disconnect between VANOC and Whistler; and that the Olympics weren’t ‘their’ Olympics, things began to change in late 2009.

‘After thirsting for details about the Olympics for so long- years, it seems – it’s all coming quickly now. And so is enthusiasm for the Games.’ – Barnett (2009b)

The 100-day countdown celebration brought more than 2,000 people to the conference centre, when organizers were expecting just 600. Mayor, Ken Melamed, was moved by the turn out, describing the emotional journey to Greece and back to retrieve the Olympic flame (Barnett, 2009b). However, the various issues the community was facing loomed heavy over the mayor and his council. In the same week, the second nail in the 2009-2011 council’s coffin was set. One hundred angry new homeowners forced council back to the drawing board to see about relocating an asphalt plant away from the Olympic athletes’ village. Through a series of clerical errors in the past the new Athletes Village was built in close proximity to an asphalt plant owned by Frank Silveri (Taylor, 2009b).

While Whistler’s sustainability plans had been gaining accolades abroad, including a 10-city international trip for then Mayor Ken Melamed to discuss sustainability, on the home front the movement appeared to be losing popularity. Many in Whistler were realizing that the *Whistler 2020* sustainability plan essentially put an end to growth in the municipality.

It’s been the hardest year of my professional life in politics – Ken Melamed on the 2009 year in (Taylor, 2010b)

The municipality was faced with a budgetary crisis of sorts – how to pay for all the services and upkeep of a world-class resort without relying on new development (Taylor, 2010b)? The municipality wasn't the only organization in Whistler to feel the heavy stresses of the recession and looming Olympics. Just two weeks before opening ceremonies Whistler-Blackcomb's parent company Intrawest under Fortress management began to sell off all its assets including Panorama Resort, Squaw Valley and Sandestin Resort (Ferreras, 2010a). Despite the changes the Olympics took place and were lauded as a great success.

## 5.7. Post-Olympics

It puzzles me that one-industry towns continue to imagine that change will not impact them. Across the country, single industry or dominant industry towns wonder what hit them when the economy changes. Whistler as a tourist town or Pemberton as a seed potato town or Squamish as a lumber town are all standing on one leg. A changing dollar, forest fire, a beetle, a border closure or a landslide can all happen – now! One-industry towns must have an active Plan B, Plan C and so on. – Murray (2010)

It was announced during the week of April 16<sup>th</sup> 2010 that the RMOW would be undertaking an update to its OCP. To kick off the conversation, a survey was to be released in May of that year. The last update was done 17 years prior, in 1993, when Whistler was still in a development phase. At which time, the village had not yet been completed, Spring Creek did not exist and Creekside hadn't been redeveloped (Piech, 2010).

A large part of the OCP update involves implementing objectives set out in *Whistler 2020* into on-the-ground policy. - Sustainability Coordinator Kevin Damaskie in (Piech, 2010)

In the summer of 2010 the housing scenario was very different than it had been in Whistler's recent history. The number of places for rent in Whistler was at its highest point since the Whistler Housing Authority started keeping records of classified accommodation ads in 2002. Even more amazingly, it appeared as though the prices had dropped. Early 2010 saw 640 ads in the first week of April compared to just 183 two

years prior (Mitchell, 2010a). A difference was also seen in the parking lots in Whistler's village. Lots 1 to 3 were practically empty at the beginning of the week as pay parking came into effect June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Lot 4, the 'free' lot was nearly full by 10 am (Mitchell, 2010b).

The RMOW took a proactive approach to engaging residents in the OCP update by holding 'backyard brainstorming' sessions in people's backyards throughout the summer. To facilitate this they created a Backyard Brainstorming Workbook, which provided community members the opportunity to take part in the OCP process on their own terms (Smysnuik, 2010a). An interesting aspect of the OCP update was addressed in an article by Andrew Mitchell, in which he outlined how much of Whistler was left to be developed. The answer, despite at the time the completion of Cheakamus Crossing (Athletes Village), Rainbow, Fitzsimons Walk and Nita Lake neighbourhoods to the RMOW's inventory only 86 percent of the bed units had been accounted for including employee-restricted bed units. Whistler's development cap was estimated at 61,234 bed units, of which only 53,038 had been built (Mitchell, 2010c).

Late in October 2010 Fortress moved to make Whistler-Blackcomb public so that it could relieve the pain of the \$1.5 billion debt it assumed when it bought Intrawest (Ferrerias, 2010b). Weeks later Whistler Blackcomb completed its offering, obtaining \$300 million through an Initial Public Offering. The offering put up for sale a 75 per cent interest in the partnerships that operated Whistler Blackcomb from Intrawest. The remaining 25 per cent interest belonged to a Japanese company Nippon Cable (Ferrerias, 2010c).

Pay parking continued to be among some of the most contentious issues in late 2010 as Lots 1-3 became scapegoats for the lack of people in Whistler village, as Gibbons Hospitality Group Owner Dick Gibbons responded when interviewed by Stephen Smysnuik (2010b).

Our day sales at Tapley's Pub are down at least 50 per cent in September and October. We Attribute pretty much all of that to the pay parking issues. – Gibbons 2010

In addition, homeowners/residents began being very vocal in their outrage over continual tax increases. Historically the parking lots 1-5 were owned by the province but in the legacy land deal, ownership was transferred to the RMOW. This exchange came with the price of managing the Fitzsimons creek land slump, a dangerous geologic feature located upstream from the Whistler village that posed serious flood risk to the area. Pay parking revenues over the next 20 years, were proposed to be used in part to cover the cost of the construction of the barrier as well as covering the costs of paving and maintenance of the lots. Additionally, a portion of the lot revenue was planned to go towards improving transit (Taylor, 2011a).

In a letter submitted to council early September 2011 by the Squamish and Lil'wat chiefs the group stated that the RMOW's OCP did not meet First Nations interest. Both Chief Gibby Jacobs from the Squamish Nation and Chief Lucinda Phillips from the Lil'wat nation said that although they enjoy a "strong and co-operative" working relationship with the Resort Municipality, the OCP does not adequately address the First Nation's legal and cultural interests in relation to provincial Crown lands in Whistler (Ferrerias, 2011). This significant statement placed the future of Whistler's sustainability initiatives in serious jeopardy.

In September 2011, it was announced that the housing demon that had plagued Whistler for years had finally been wrestled to the ground. Taylor (2011b) reported that the feeling of satisfaction from the council table was almost palpable with the news that for the first time ever, in the 14 years of surveys, Whistler employers are finally saying there were no housing shortages. Just seven per cent of businesses surveyed were unable to meet staffing needs last winter, down significantly from the high of thirty percent in 2007/08 (Taylor, 2011b).

At an all candidates meeting hosted by the environmental organization AWARE for the upcoming election the Whistler Centre for Sustainability drew fire from some of the candidates, including mayoral candidates and former councillor member Nancy Wilhelm-Morden in (Taylor, 2011c).

I thought [the Whistler Centre for Sustainability] was an improper use of taxpayers money – Wilhelm-Morden, 2011 in (Taylor, 2011c)

Mayor Ken Melamed jumped to the defense of the Centre citing that it was doing work for the province and in fact was not using RMOW tax dollars as the funding for the centre was drawn from the Resort Municipality Initiative fund. Wilhelm-Morden went on to say it “seemed crazy” that the Centre had a \$190,000 municipal contract to look after the municipality’s long-term plan, *Whistler 2020* (Taylor, 2011c). Shortly after the debate Nancy Wilhelm-Morden won the mayor’s seat by a landslide. The newly elected council was a rare ‘clean sweep’ with the mayor and all six councillors being newly elected. Many of the elected candidates campaigned on a promise of balancing municipal budgets and putting an end to pay parking (Pique Staff, 2011). As could be expected, at the beginning of March the Whistler Centre for Sustainability’s future was unknown as council sat down to discuss if they would contribute the \$200,000 needed for the centre to continue its work on the *Whistler 2020* sustainability plan (Taylor, 2012a). Although the \$200,000 portion of the \$77 million dollar budget was relatively small, the sustainability centre drew the ire of some on council. Fortunately for the centre at the end of March council decided it would commit \$40,000 to the Whistler Centre for Sustainability for the management of the *Whistler 2020* plan’s monitoring program as well as a community life survey (Taylor, 2012b). Was the new council’s reaction to the Centre for Sustainability truly a scapegoat, and if so where did the idea of sustainability sit with the new council? How would sustainability, the OCP process and the future of Whistler play-out with a wholly new council? The future of Whistler and the RMOW was uncertain, what was certain, however, was that from 2000 – 2012 the community of Whistler successfully undertook a process that transformed its governance practices. During that period of time municipal decisions were truly community-led and participatory, a revolutionary form of ‘sustainable governance’.

## 6. Conclusion

### 6.1. Research Summary

This research set out to uncover the story of Whistler's governance transition through a researcher-created media database in order to examine the catalysts and constraints to achieving a form of governance that has a focus of moving towards a more sustainable future. The following questions were used to guide the investigation:

- 1. What underlying forces influenced the transition from growth to sustainability in the Resort of Whistler, BC between 2000 and 2012?**
2. How and why have attitudes towards sustainability changed in Whistler?
3. What were the main factors acting as constraints to change in governance
4. What were the main factors acting as catalysts to change in governance and how did these two sets of forces interact and manifest themselves to promote/resist changes in governance from 2000 to 2012?
5. From 2000 to 2012 what aspects of the Whistler governance model have changed and how?
6. What policy, planning and management lessons can be learned from the governance processes operating in this destination?

The findings with respect to each of the above questions are summarized below.

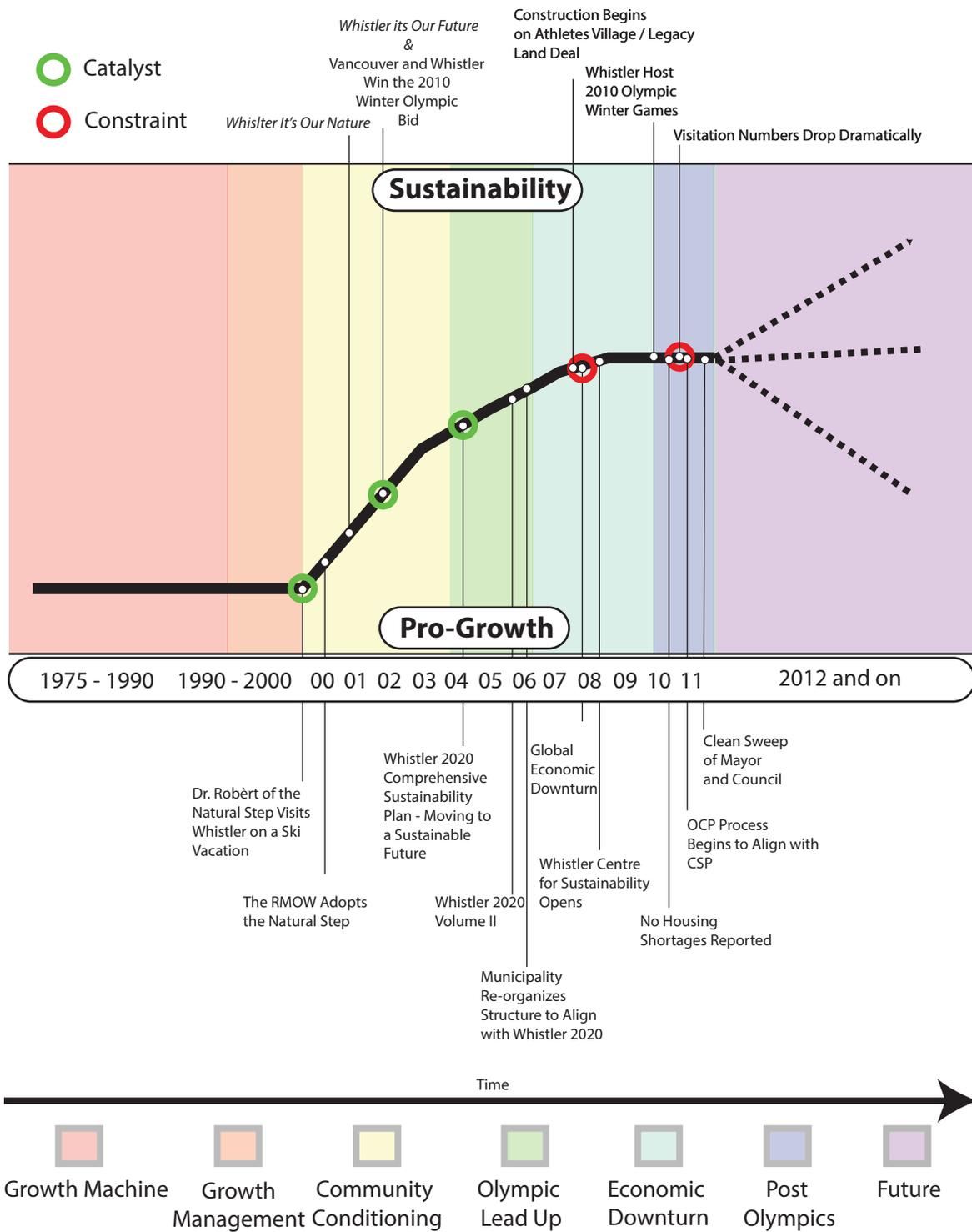


Figure 9 - From Growth to Sustainability - Whistler's Governance Transition

*What underlying forces influenced the transition from growth to sustainability in the Resort of Whistler, BC between 2000 and 2012?*

At the onset of 2000, the Whistler community was overcome with the issues associated with a lack of affordable housing and the formerly gushing tap of development dollars slowing to a trickle. In many ways the community was experiencing a form of lock-in, whereby the same growth-machine path (Gill, 2000) was followed despite clear indications it was failing. Community members were demanding a change to the status quo. The interplay between the forces acting upon the community and various individuals within the community created the ideal conditions to promote change, specifically to promote a shift in the RMOW's governance approach. A solution was needed for the issues of 2000 and that solution came in the form of Dr. Karl Henrik Robèrt on a skiing vacation. The Natural Step framework appeared to be the tool to solve many of the issues in Whistler, while aiding in maintaining the areas tourism product.

At its core, the Natural Step played to the fundamentals of many of the residents in Whistler focusing on the preservation of the area's environment and liveability. At a higher level, tourism in the Whistler area was and still is directly tied to the integrity of the local environment. The lines between the economy and the environment do not exist in the Whistler community to the same degree as they do elsewhere. Furthermore, the ski industry has, over the years, felt the effects of global environmental change affecting quality of the ski season for the residents and money in the tills of local businesses. At all levels, from the global to the local, Whistler possessed the criteria necessary to forward a type of thinking that focused on sustainability. From a social and economic perspective the decline in available housing began to have wide spread, detrimental effects. The town was losing its ability to attract and retain workers, placing undue stress on locals and businesses in the area. While it is not accurate to say that the community instantly understood the Early Adopters' mission and the importance of sustainability in a broad sense, the issue of housing within the community and the role that sustainability would play in the community in that regard was quickly understood. Perhaps the most critical underlying force was that of the Early Adopters, the 'path creators', in this Whistler story. Without their consorted effort to condition and influence

the community through education and promotion of sustainability the 'Whistler Story' would be very different.

*How and why have attitudes towards sustainability changed in Whistler?*

Attitudes towards sustainability evolved tremendously from 2000-2012, the word *sustainability* itself was not truly engrained in the Whistler vernacular until early 2001-2. The community, while at present (2014) is going through its own sets of challenges, has been one of the most progressive communities in Canada in adopting approaches to governance that focus on moving towards more sustainable solutions. What lies in the future is less clear for the mountain community, while sustainability is very much a part of Whistler, the negative economic climate shifted focus on to 'economic' sustainability, a trend that is likely to continue under periods of economic recession.

How those attitudes have changed within the community is clear in the early years of this study but less so in the latter. Attitudes towards sustainability were shaped by an involved and intense program of 'community conditioning' that pushed sustainability as an absolute truth. As the Early Adopters stated in one of their first community sessions: It is no longer a question of *if* environmental sustainability is in Whistler's best interest, but *how* and *when* it should be implemented (Mitchell 2000). However, as the findings of this study show, global circumstances took their toll during the 2008 recession and the post-Olympic fall-out. As discussed above, sustainability is a focus during times of economic growth and prosperity, but how engrained sustainability is in a community will determine if it remains in times of struggle. Furthermore, as Downs (1972) observed, the issue-attention cycle on any issue can only last so long. This was certainly the case in Whistler as the Natural Step, Whistler 2020 and sustainability inevitably faded to be replaced by local events, issues (the Olympics, the asphalt plant and pay parking) and non-news. While Whistler had legislatively put many steps in place to ensure that its progressive sustainable policy remains, attitudinal change, specifically of those now acting as the 'path creators' in the local sphere of influence is less clear.

*What were the main factors acting as constraints to change in governance?*

Determining constraints to Whistler's change in governance is a challenge with the information collected. The neutral form that many articles presented made determining factors acting as constraint difficult to decipher. Reading between the lines is more of an art than a science but given the information collected a few conclusions can be drawn.

At a local level, Whistler's history of constant development and expansion was difficult to shake. In some ways, Whistler's governance did not shift dramatically in that regard, despite the importance the community placed on 'sustainability'. The rapid expansion in the name of development Whistler had experienced during what Gill (2000) refers to as the 'growth-machine' years seemed to have simply given way to expansion in the name of affordable housing and the Olympics. There is no doubt that there were dissenters within the community regarding the Early Adopter's push towards sustainability however, the more significant constraint to change within the community was a lack of concrete tools or vision to address the issues the community faced at that time. A significant constraint at the local level throughout the study period was the general effects of the downgrading of responsibility from the nation/province to the municipality of Whistler (discussed in Section 2.3). This downgrading of responsibility was not attached with the necessary funds from the nation/province in order to meet the needs of the community responsibly. In a common fashion, the municipality was asked to do more with less, creating incredible pressures on the RMOW and an instability that significantly impacted the progress of sustainability within the community.

From a more global perspective, the database illustrates the staggering reality that those elected to the public realm often fall victim to. That despite cohesive, structured efforts to promote change and stay true to policies that at one point had significant community support, a variety of global factors, producing changes at a local level, can significantly undermine an individual or groups efforts. The 2008 recession and to a lesser degree the terrorist events of 9/11, the Olympic aversion effect and changes in the strength of the Canadian dollar were immense global factors that had significant and complex effects at the local level. Additionally, the bold series of development projects kick-started by the Olympics were challenged by the

complimenting severe rise in construction costs worldwide. However, as seen by the community discourse within the database, the scale of these issues are far more difficult to deal with, far more difficult to blame than local programs that can become the de-facto 'cause' of decreased revenues, jobs and business opportunity. A perfect example from this case study is the way in which pay parking became the scapegoat for a lack of tourists in the village. The fallout of which was a wholesale change of the mayor and council. While the mayor and council did not represent the sustainability movement in its entirety, their association to sustainability, specifically former mayor Ken Melamed, cannot be denied. As such, sustainability and the role it will play in Whistler's future may be met with further constraints at both a local and global level.

*What were the main factors acting as catalysts to change in governance and how did these two sets of forces interact and manifest themselves to promote/resist changes in governance from 2000-2012?*

The influence of the Natural Step was the most significant force in changing Whistler's governance between 2000-2012. The set of tools that TNS provided the RMOW allowed for the education and subsequent participation of a broad sector of the community. Through innovative methods of engagement Whistler's locals began to champion an evolution in the community's governance. In many ways TNS gave the Early Adopters a social license to operate, enacting the program with the backing of an external agency and set of criteria combining a set of mother-hood goals with concrete steps to address the stresses on the community at the time. While TNS came from an exogenous body, the Early Adopters truly fostered its growth and acceptance within the community. In essence, the Early Adopters addressed the issue of acceptance of the program before its critics could mobilize. Through a regiment of community conditioning and likely due to a penetration of the Early Adopters at multiple levels of government and private business the program pushed through without significant resistance.

The second most significant force was the winning of the Vancouver and Whistler Olympic bid. This gave the RMOW the capital to think big and undertake a number of significant capital projects that, without the opportunity of games, could only have been funded at the expense of the local taxpayers. The Olympics allowed Whistler to almost

completely address its housing issues and enact a series of infrastructure upgrades without a comparable increase in tax dollars.

*What aspects of the Whistler governance model have changed and how?*

For the purposes of this research it is recognized that for an endeavour to be successful and sustainable, it has to be both *community-led and participatory* (Grybovych and Hafermann, 2010). In many ways the Whistler model met those criteria. As this study demonstrates, the Whistler governance model was completely restructured to meet the *Whistler 2020* sustainability goals. The creation of a Comprehensive Sustainability Plan that superseded the RMOW's OCP was unprecedented in local government and solidified the importance of sustainability to the community. Furthermore, the restructuring of the municipality's departments to be in line with the *Whistler 2020* plan ensured a level of commitment that will continue at an institutional level. A second order change occurred in Whistler whereby sustainability permeated all levels of the municipal government. Decision-making moved from top-down to community led and produced incredible results in a short amount of time. The restructuring of the municipal departments shows the tremendous commitment made by the municipality in support of sustainable initiatives, however, the longevity of this restructuring is less clear. At present, the task-forces have been dissolved there is no evidence that that level of community-led decision making is planned in the future. A significant change in Whistler's governance model has been the introduction of the Squamish and Lil'wat First Nations as a major stakeholder that the RMOW would have to work with. With the two bands now owning the largest remaining amount of bed units (development rights) in the community the success of the relationship between the RMOW and the Squamish and Lil'wat nations will be crucial to the areas future.

*What policy, planning and management lessons can be learned from the governance processes operating in this destination?*

In order to facilitate large-scale change towards sustainability it is extremely useful to have key community stakeholders band together to promote an initiative. Furthermore, a lengthy and integrated community conditioning process should take place that includes consultation, education and discussion. The roll out of sustainable

initiatives in Whistler took place over many years and went to great lengths to integrate the community in its decision-making thereby increasing the amount of community buy-in. It should be noted that the RMOW's first attempt in initiating the Whistler Comprehensive Sustainability Plan process faced heavy criticism for not taking the communities wishes into consideration. This first slight on the community had long-term repercussions and created a barrier to the process as a whole. In a general sense, it should be noted that despite the efforts at a local level, global forces in the form of global recessions, terrorist attacks, changing consumer preferences ect, can wreak havoc on the momentum of a program such as Whistler's sustainability initiative. As such, before a large scale, significant project can begin, those actors responsible for such change must be acutely aware of the exogenous and endogenous opportunities and constraints facing the area at the time. Without the correct local and global conditions, initiatives such as the sustainability initiative in Whistler will fall on their face. More importantly, even if all the conditions are perfect, changes at any order can have significant effects on the success and longevity of a program.

From an opportunities perspective there is incredible value in tying broad governance change, such as moving towards sustainability to events or programs that will spur development. In the case of Whistler the Olympics the associated development funds were critical in creating multiple opportunities to further sustainability in the community. In the same vein, the climate within a community or organization looking to follow the same path Whistler did has to be in the need of significant change. Without the catalyst of the housing crisis looming over the heads of Whistlerites, it is probable that such significant change would not have occurred.

The length of time this study spans produced a unique lesson that while not ground-breaking should be re-stated. In order for a significant shift in governance to be successful it must remain flexible in its beginnings in order to mould itself to the community's wishes. Furthermore, the policies must also be put in place when the local and global climate is right. The RMOW and the Early Adopters moved relatively quickly in the early years, using the momentum created through the education process to modify and shape almost all of the municipality's functions. The greatest advice this case study has for communities looking to replicate the success Whistler has had would be to condition the community, create meaningful, second order change through integrating

and restructuring local agencies around sustainability and prepare for the inevitable shifts in global and local forces.

## **6.2. Study Limitations**

There were many limitations to this study both in academic material available to aid in the discussion as well as the inherent issues with a newsprint database of this kind. Beyond the inherent bias that researchers encounter when interpreting a newsprint database this study had an additional complicating factor, an appropriate database did not yet exist. Therefore, not only did this study involve an analysis of a database but also the construction of one. Constructing the database was a lengthy procedure and took many months to comb through the vast amount of data collected in each issue of the Pique. Furthermore, review of the database, even after coding, proved to be difficult given the sheer amount of qualitative data contained within. Due to time constraints a single data source was used, ideally a database would have included an additional local paper (The Whistler Question) as well as any provincial and national coverage on the area. Further targeted interviews would have added greatly to the findings within the study as interviews with those who 'lived' the Whistler story would aid in uncovering the subtext behind important articles. Furthermore, because for an article to be recorded it had to be identified as 'significant' by the researcher, there is a high probability that some valuable information may have been lost in the process. Although, as discussed in the methods, a broad net was cast in order to avoid this possible error. Letters to the editor by themselves could have been a specific area of study, however, because of the sheer volume within the given time period and the often hyper specific and polarized nature of the letters they were not included. Coding would have benefited from a blind-double coding technique by an additional researcher, however due to time and budgetary constraints this was not done. Furthermore, the assembling of a database itself could have benefited by the addition of one or more independent researchers.

### **6.3. Recommendations for Further Research**

While this study would make for a poor scientific analysis of the events that took place in Whistler it does act as is an amazing tool when coupled with the database in order to create a historical foundation for studies into multiple aspects of Whistler's history. Utilizing the keywords portion of the database and isolating them to create a chronological timeline for important issues in Whistler will be incredibly useful in channelling and guiding future research in the area. Future research would benefit from a more targeted search for specific issues events on smaller timelines and from multiple sources. Additionally, having a second or third coding to identify accuracy would greatly benefit the legitimacy of the database. This method is recommended to act as supporting information for studies based on more structured surveys, one to one interviews or document/policy reviews however, it would not be recommended as a further sole basis of a study.

From a methodological perspective the refinement of search criteria is imperative to ensuring a consistent and accurate database. For the sake of efficiency the method discussed above is not preferred. Casting a broad net in the selection of articles creates unnecessary volumes of data that is incredibly time consuming to sift through, given its mostly qualitative nature. In a similar vein, while the use of a word count was not included in this study, it may be an area for further research and to see if a purely qualitative review of the data draws similar findings to those described above.

Finally, the integration of path creation into the study has merit as was demonstrated by Gill and Williams (2012). As this case study demonstrates, Garud and Karnøe's (2001) Post-it Note© steps in describing the creation of a new path can be used as a lens through which to view the steps that the RMOW took in adopting more sustainable policies. A further area of study would be to see if other governance shifts could successfully be viewed through this lens and to what degree do they show similarities to the Whistler case study.

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## **Appendices**

## Appendix.

### Primary and Secondary Keywords

Primary Keyword	Secondary Keyword
AWARE	Emerald Forest
	Callaghan
	P.A.N.
Asphalt Plant	-
Backcountry Access	-
B.C. Resort Communities Association	-
Canadian Alpine Ski Policy (CASP)	-
Comprehensive Sustainability Plan	Affordability
	Sea Doo
China	-
CUPE	-
Development	Bed Cap
	Boot Pub Land
	Bunbury
	CC1
	Creekside
	Function Junction
	Green River Estates
	Hotels
	Kadenwood
	Library
	Lots 1/9
	London Mountain Lodge
	London Drugs
	Municipal Hall
	Mount Whistler Lodge
	Nita Lake Lodge
	Olympic High Performance Athletic Centre
	Parkhurst Lands
	RR1
	Riverside/Scandinave
Sewer	

	Tim Regan/Whistler 3
	Whistler Blackcomb
	Whistler U
	White Gold
	Zen Lands
Eva Lake Village	-
Fairmont	-
Federal Politics	-
Forces	Provincial
	National
	Global
	Natural
Fortress	-
Four Seasons	-
First Nations	Cayoosh Creek
	Forestry
	Sun Peaks
	Squamish and Lil'wat
	Development
	In-SHUCK-ch
	OCP
Gay Whistler	-
History	-
Housing	Affordability
	Benfield Farm
	Development
	Density Bonuses
	Olympics
	HOME
	Evictions
	Rainbow
	Rental Surplus
	Seniors
	Temporary Housing
Intrawest	Les Arcs
	Financial Report
	Winter Park
IPP (Independent Power Project)	Bill 30
Job Shortage	-
Labour Shortage	Resolved
Land and Resource Management	-

Plan	
Media Coverage	-
Municipal Election	Whistler Municipal Electors Association
Natural Step	-
Olympics	Accommodation
	Austria House
	China
	Callaghan
	Cheakamus Crossing
	Comprehensive Sustainability Plan
	First Nations
	Finance
	Government Grant
	Hotel Tax
	Olympic Bid
	Pemberton
	Sustainability
	Security
Temporary Commercial Use Permits	
VANOC	
Official Community Plan	-
Pacific Northwest Economic Region Conference	-
Pay Parking	-
Pemberton	-
Provincial Politics	-
Pique Staff	-
Real Estate Assessment	-
Resort Quest	-
Run of River	-
RMOW	Affordability
	Class 1/6
	Cultural Tourism
	Environment
	Energy
	Finance
	Fitzimmons Slump
	Gas Tax
	Hotel Tax
	Land Bank
	Lakeside Park

	Legacies
	Media Relations
	Millennium Place
	Municipal Tax
	Non-Conforming Space
	Parking lots
	Personnel Change
	Rainbow Park
	Sustainability
	Wages
Summer Tourism	Crankworx
	Pemberton Fest
Sustainability	Economic
	Environmental
	Social
Sea to Sky Trail	-
Squamish	Gondola
	Geothermal
	Garabaldi at Squamish (GAS)
Squamish Lillooet Regional District	-
September 11 <sup>th</sup>	-
Taxes	Gas Tax
	HST
	School Tax
Tennis	-
Tourism Whistler	-
Tourism B.C.	-
Transportation	Train Service
	Sea to Sky Highway
	Air
	Bus
	Olympics
Waste	-
Official Community Plan	-
Other Mountain Resorts	Vail
	Jumbo
	Red Mountain
	Revelstoke
	Sun Peaks
	Tyrol, Austria
World Economic Forum	-

Whistler-Blackcomb	Blackcomb Gondola
	Sustainability
	Peak to Peak
	Habitat Improvement Team
	IPO
Whistler Centre for Sustainability	-