6 Ingredients for Community

Contents

This is an article expanding on the video

Six Ingredients for Forming Communities

(That Help Reduce Conflict Down the Road)

by Diana Leafe Christian

From the Intentional Community site

"I found the land!" jack exclaimed over the phone. As the originator of Skydance Farm, a small forming community in northern Colorado, he had been searching for just the right community land for years, long before he and a circle of acquaintances had begun meeting weekly to create community. He was so sure it was the land, he said, that he'd plunked down $10,000 of his own savings as an option fee to take it off the market long enough for us to decide.

I had joined the group several weeks earlier. I knew nothing about intentional communities at the time. However, it had seemed in their meetings that something was missing.

"What's the purpose of your community?" I had finally asked. "What's your vision for it?" No one could really answer.

That Saturday we all drove out to the land to check it out.

And promptly fell apart. Confronting the reality of buying land, no one wanted to commit. Frankly, there was nothing to commit to. No common purpose or vision, no organizational structure, no budget, no agreements. In fact we hadn't made decisions at all, but had simply talked about how wonderful community life would be. Although Jack tried mightily to persuade us to go in with him on the land, there were no takers, and he barely got his money out before the option deadline.

I became intensely curious about what it would take for a newly forming community to succeed. So over the next seven years, first as publisher of a newsletter about forming communities and then as editor of Communities magazine, I interviewed dozens of people involved in communities forming in the '90s as well as founders of long-established ones. I wanted to know what worked, what didn't work, how not to reinvent the wheel.

I learned that no matter how inspired and visionary the community founders, only about one out of 10 new communities actually seemed to get built. The other 90 percent seemed to go nowhere, occasionally because of lack of money or the right land, but mostly because of . . . conflict.

And usually, conflict accompanied by heartbreak, and often, lawsuits. Many of these community break-ups resulted from what I call "structural conflict" - problems that arose when founders didn't explicitly take care of certain important issues at the outset, creating one or more flaws in their organizational structure. Several weeks, months, or even years later, the group ran into major problems that could have been largely prevented if they had handled these issues early on. Naturally, a great deal of interpersonal conflict arose at the same time, making the initial conflict much worse. I've seen forming communities founder and sink on such issues as:

"But our main purpose is not to run a retreat center; that's just a business. We can't spend money on that until we take care of our needs first!"

"What? I have to cough up $10,000 more for 'land development'?"

"My brother can't live here? But he's my brother. I didn't agree to this!"

"What do you mean I can't get my money out again when I leave?!"

"Maybe you think it's important to stay in the room and 'resolve the conflict' but I'm outta here! Have your 'conflict resolution' session without me!"

"Ever since Carl joined we've been dealing with his hurt feelings. It's exhausting. How did we let this happen?"

You get the picture. While interpersonal conflict is normal and expected, I believe that much of the structural conflict in these communities could have been prevented, or at least greatly reduced, if the founders had paid attention to six "ingredients":

Choosing a fair, participatory decision-making process that is appropriate for the group. And if it's consensus, getting trained in it.

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Identifying their vision and creating a vision statement.

Learning what resources, information, skills, and tasks they would need, and then either learning or hiring them.

Drawing up clear agreements, in writing.

Learning good communication skills, and making clear communication a priority, including ways of reducing conflict.

Selecting cofounders and new members for emotional well-being.

To be fair, a number of well-established North American communities never included many of these structural ingredients at their origin. In the '60s, '70s, or '80s, people usually just bought land and moved on. Some of these communities are with us today, and proud of it.

Nonetheless, I recommend these "ingredients" for communities forming now. Why? Because establishing a new community is not easy. Since the mid '80s through the early '90s, the cost of land and housing has skyrocketed, relative to people's assets and earning power. Zoning regulations and building codes are considerably more restrictive than in earlier decades. And because of the media coverage that highlights any violent or extreme practices of a group, the "cult" stereotype is still in public consciousness, and may affect how potential neighbors feel about your group moving into their neighborhood.

The challenges facing new communities today have convinced me that nowadays community founders must be more organized and purposeful—not to mention better capitalized—than their counterparts of earlier years.

1. Fair, Participatory Decision Making

It's probably pretty obvious that a great deal of conflict would arise if people didn't feel that they had enough say in community decisions, unless the community has explicitly created a structure in which members are not expecting to participate in decisions, such as one where a leader or small group of members make decisions, as is sometimes the case in spiritual communities. So, one of the first things I believe a forming community not structured this way should do is to choose a fair, participatory form of decision making.

Most communities I've observed use consensus. However, herein also lies a source of potential conflict. First, the group needs to know that consensus is right for them, which presumes that everyone has equal access to power. It may not work out if one person is the landowner and the rest tenants, for example.

Second, the group needs to get trained, and, ideally, have a consensus facilitator for meetings. Consensus does not mean, as many mistakenly assume, "We'll just keep talking about a proposal for hours and hours until we all agree." It's far more complex and subtle than that. (See the article that immediately follows, called "Consensus Basics.") Unlike majority-rule voting, in which people argue for or against a proposal and it either passes or not, in consensus the proposal itself is modified as people express their concerns about it. If everyone can support a final revision of the proposal, it passes; if even one person blocks the proposal, it doesn't. Consensus therefore only allows decisions that the whole group can live with and implement without resentment. The process should not take hours and hours. If it does, it means the group is not well-facilitated. A good facilitator schedules breaks, suggests issues be tabled for later discussion, or suggests certain items be sent to committee. Blocking is used rarely, and only when someone, after long and heartfelt soul-searching, feels that the proposal would harm the group in the long run—morally, ethically, financially, legally, or in some other way.

Unfortunately, many well-meaning but untrained groups fall into using what I call "pseudo-consensus":

"Everything we decide on must be decided by consensus! It 'betrays' consensus to use any other method."

"Everyone in the group must be involved in every decision, no matter how small."

"We'll stay in this room until we make a decision—no matter how long it takes!"

"I block! This proposal just won't work for me."

"I plan to block the proposal we're going to discuss today. So, since I'm already against it and plan to stop it, there's no need to even bring it up!"

Consensus is like a chain saw. Consensus can chop a lot of wood; "pseudo-consensus" can chop your leg. While majority-rule voting can trigger conflict because up to 49 percent of the people can be unhappy with a decision, poorly understood and improperly practiced consensus can generate every bit as much conflict.

In the consensus process, deciding on a proposal usually takes more time than with majority rule voting. However, implementing a proposal once it's agreed upon usually takes far less time, since everybody is behind it. Nevertheless, because of the time factor, some

community veterans recommend having two, or more, participatory decision-making methods, for example, consensus and one other "agreement-seeking" method, such as 70 percent voting, 80 percent voting, 90 percent voting, consensus-minus-two, or consensus-minus-one, etc. Some cohousing groups have an alternative method in place for when they need to make exceptionally fast decisions, such as when they have a narrow window of opportunity to tie up a parcel of sought-after land, or when they make decisions involving some but not all the members. And some communities may split up the kind of decisions made, for example using consensus for most decisions and an alternate method such as 90 percent voting for decisions affecting property value and only among members with equity in the land.

On the other hand, other experienced communitarians caution against using two methods. They assert that consensus is not a method but a philosophy of inclusion, and when people are less able to influence decisions while using a faster method it breaks down the trust and the cohesion of the group.

I believe that the decision-making method best for you depends on whether your group is together primarily to build the physical infrastructure of a community (regardless of what members you may lose due to a faster decision-making process), or for your connection and friendship (regardless of the great land deals you may lose due to a slower, more inclusive process).

Whatever method or methods your forming community chooses, if one of them involves consensus, please get good training in it first!

2. Vision and Vision Statement: "What We Are About"

Your vision is a compelling idea or image that inspires and motivates your members to keep on creating community, to persevere through the rough times, to remember why you're there, and to help guide your decisions. This is not necessarily verbal, but can be a feeling, or an energy presence. It gives voice to your group's deeply held values and intuitions. It is your picture or "feel" of the kind of life you'd like to lead together.

The vision is often described or otherwise implied in your collection of written expressions—your agreements, flyer, brochure, and/or Web site. These documents often include a paragraph or two describing what your community will be like, a list of shared values, a list of goals, often a "how we'll do it" mission statement, and . . . the vision statement.

The vision statement is a condensed version of your vision. The vision statement is a clear, compelling expression of your group's overall purpose and goals. Each of you can identify with it. It helps to unify your effort; it helps focus everyone's energy like a lens. Because it reveals and announces your group's core values, it gives you a reference point to return to in decisions or during confusion or disagreement. It keeps you all inspired, as it is a shorthand reminder of why you're forming community. When times get tough, the vision statement helps awaken your vision as an energetic presence. Ideally it is memorized, and everyone can state it.

The vision statement also communicates your group's core purpose to others and to potential new members quickly: "This is what we're about; this is what we hope to accomplish." It allows you to be specific about what you are—and are not. Some recommend that the vision statement express the "who," the "what," and the "why" of your forming community (and leave the "where," "when," and "how" for the mission statement or strategic plan). I think it's more potent if it's short, about 20Ð40 words.

We have joined together to create a center for renewal, education, and service, dedicated to the positive transformation of our world.

—Shenoa Retreat and Learning Center, Philo, California

We are creating a cooperative neighborhood of diverse individuals sharing human resources within an ecologically responsible community setting.

—Harmony Village Cohousing, Golden, Colorado

We are a neotribal permaculture village, actively engaged in building sacred community, supporting personal empowerment, and catalyzing cultural transformation. We share a commitment to a vital, diversified spirituality; healthy social relations; sustainable ecological systems; and a low-maintenance/high-satisfaction lifestyle.

—Earthaven Community, Black Mountain, North Carolina

While these vision statements leave plenty of room for interpretation, they are considerably more concrete and grounded than many I've seen. Some newly forming communities represent themselves with flowery, overly vague, or just plain pretentious vision statements, and . . . these are often the first to go bust. It seems that communities with vision statements that are more focused, specific, and grounded are often the ones that actually get built.

It is quite possible that people in a forming group have more than one vision among them - which means that the individuals present may represent more than one potential community. It's crucial to find this out early—before the group buys land together.

Imagine founders of a community with no common vision who buy land, move on, put up a few buildings—and begin to run out of money. Now they must decide how they'll spend their remaining funds. But they can't agree on priorities. Some want to finish the community building because they believe that creating a sense of community is the primary reason they're together, and know that having a community building will help focus their community spirit. Others want to finish the garden and irrigation system because they see their primary purpose as becoming self-reliant homesteaders. Different members have different visions, which they incorrectly assume everyone shares. By this time the members are arguing mightily most of the time, but the core of their problem is structural; it's built into the system. This a "time-bomb" kind of conflict, with members unable to see it's not that "John's being unreasonable" or "Sue's irresponsible," but that each member is operating from a different assumption about why they're there in the first place. So what now? Which members get to stay on the land and which ones must either live with a vision that doesn't fit them or move out?

Identifying a vision and crafting a vision statement is an enormous task, often requiring plenty of discussion, meditation, spiritual guidance, and "sleeping on it," through a series of meetings over many weeks.

Many community veterans believe that consensus is the appropriate process for this critical decision. As Betty Didcoct of TIES consulting says, "the consensus process itself fosters an attitude that can help forge a bond and build trust in your group. When the input of everyone is honored, who knows what might surface—a strong single vision that draws everyone, or multiple visions that suggest the presence of more than one potential forming community."

Other community activists, such as Rob Sandelin of Northwest Intentional Communities Association, suggest not using consensus to determine your vision and vision statement. It's a catch-22: for consensus to work well your group must have a common purpose, and at this point, it doesn't. A group needs a method, he says, (such as 90 percent voting, for example) in which some people can diverge radically from others about what they want in the community without bringing the whole process to a crushing halt. I personally agree with this view, although there are groups out there who employed consensus for the vision statement process and it worked just fine.

It is best if a strong, mutually reinforcing relationship exists between your community's values, goals, and vision and the legal structure or structures with which it will one day own or manage its land and assets. (See the article on legal structures, later in this section.) Identify your forming community's values, goals, and vision early in the formation process, and let these determine your legal structures —not the other way around!

3. Know What You Need to Know

Forming a new community, like simultaneously starting up a new business and beginning a marriage, can be a complex, time-consuming process requiring both business skills and interpersonal communication skills. Founders of successful new communities seem to know this. And those that get mired in severe problems have usually leapt in without a clue. These well-meaning folks didn't know what they didn't know.

This seems particularly true of spiritual communities. I've often seen founders with spiritual ideals and compelling visions flounder and sink because they had no idea how to conduct a land search or negotiate a bank loan. I've also seen people with plenty of technical or business savvy—folks able to build a nifty composting toilet or craft a solid strategic plan—who didn't know the first thing about how to communicate with people. And I've seen sensitive spiritual folks as well as get-the- job-done types crash and burn the first time they encountered any real conflict.

Consider the story of Sharon, who bought and attempted to develop land for a spiritual community. At first it looked promising. Sharon had received zoning approval for an innovative clustered-housing site plan. She met regularly with a group of friends and supporters to envision and meditate. But over the next 18 months this and a subsequent forming community group fell apart, disappointed and often bitter. Sharon struggled with money issues, land-development issues, interpersonal issues. After two years she said she was no longer attempting community, in fact loathed the idea of community, and didn't even want to hear the "C" word.

What had Sharon not known?

How much money it would take to complete the land development process before she could legally transfer title to a buyer.

How much each lot would eventually cost.

That she shouldn't foster hope in those who could never afford to buy in.

That she'd need adequate legal documents and financial data to secure private financing.

That she should make it clear to everyone at the outset that as well as having a vision she was also serving as land developer.

That she needed to explain that she fully intended to reimburse her land-purchase and development costs and make a profit to compensate her time and entrepreneurial risk.

That she needed to tell people that, as the developer, she would make all land-development decisions.

That a process was needed for who was in the group and who wasn't, and for what kinds of decisions the group would make and which Sharon alone would make.

That consensus was the wrong decision-making option for a group with one landowner and others with no financial risk.

That they weren't in fact practicing consensus at all, but some vaguely conceived idea of it.

I believe that community founders would experience much less conflict if they understood the need for both "heart" and "head" skills. The latter include drafting clear written agreements; creating budgets, a timeline, a strategic plan; choosing legal structure(s) for land ownership or any planned business or educational activities; learning local zoning or land-use laws; and understanding finance and real estate, site planning, and the land development process (roads, power, water, sewage, etc.).

Not everyone in your forming group needs to have all these skills—that's one reason you're a group! Nor must you possess all this skill and expertise among yourselves. Many successful groups have hired an accountant, lawyer, project manager, meeting facilitator, and so on.

Nowadays community founders must anticipate challenges not faced by communities formed in earlier times. First, "ideal" land isn't ideal if zoning regulations and building codes prevent your developing it the way you want to. Second, if your group wants rural land, a lack of decent-paying local jobs will affect your attractiveness to future members. Difficulty attracting members will affect your ability to recoup early land investment costs, so think about the site relative to available jobs before you buy the land. And third, keep in mind that the initial impression you make on potential neighbors will affect whether or not they will support you in getting a needed zoning variance. If you call your endeavor a community or an intentional community, people may only hear "hippie commie cult." Perhaps call it a center, a project, or even a household, but be cautious with the loaded term "community" until they have a chance to learn, over time, that you're in fact fine, upstanding neighbors.

Forming communities need enough time, money, and "community glue" to pull off a project of this magnitude. To start with, it takes a great deal of committed time and hard work. Even if you meet weekly, you'll often need people on various committees—gathering information, drafting proposals, and so on—in between regular meetings. In my experience, this amount of work is equivalent to one or more group members working part-time or even full time.

It also takes adequate capitalization, often several hundred thousand dollars—for land purchase, land development if needed, new construction or renovation, and myriad lesser costs. As soon as it's feasible, you'll need to know roughly how much money your project will cost. Some people raise the money from others; some fund the whole thing themselves. And please don't put every last cent down on the land. Keep enough available for land development, construction, etc., even if that means buying a more modest parcel.

Elana Kann and Bill Fleming of Neighborhood Design Build, former project managers of Westwood Cohousing in Asheville, North Carolina, recommend that forming community groups understand and accept the difference between what is and what is not in their control. They've observed that probably 95 percent of the major variables involving a forming community are not in a group's control. (Land criteria is in a group's control; land use may not be if local zoning requirements are in place.) The group would ideally have a mechanism for building on each decision and moving forward, rather than meandering or even backtracking, as many groups unfortunately do. They would learn what questions to ask, how to research answers, how to present information to the group, and how to base decisions on the best information available. And, recommend Elana and Bill, they would talk frankly about the required financial and work commitments, as well as other real-world constraints, from the start.

It takes a sense of connection, a shared sense of "us"—the community "glue." This is usually born of group experiences: potluck dinners, preparing meals together, weekend camping trips, solving problems together. Work parties are one of the best ways for people to get to know each other, and not incidentally, great ways to learn each other's approaches to responsibility and accountability. Storytelling evenings are great ways to get to know each other on deeper levels, especially if the topics are self-revealing and personal, such as family attitudes about religion, child raising, or money and social class. Such sharing sessions also reveal issues relevant to community living and shared resources later on.

Gathering this range of skills and information in order to reduce future conflict is complex, time-consuming, and often overwhelming.

Can your forming community afford to do without it? I don't think so.

4. Clear Agreements, in Writing

Many forming communities flounder because they haven't written down their agreements, and when people try to conjure up what they thought they had agreed on months or years before, they remember things differently. Unfortunately even people with the greatest good will can recall a conversation or an agreement in such divergent ways that each may wonder if the other is trying to cheat or abuse or manipulate them! This is one of the greatest stumbling blocks in newly forming communities—and it's so easily prevented.

Many agreements are of course embedded in legal documents such as corporation bylaws, lease agreements, or private contracts. Others are simple agreements with no legal "teeth," but which help the participants stay on track with each other nevertheless. Write out your agreements, read them, and for good measure, sign what you've agreed to, whether or not they're formal legal documents. Keep your agreements in a safe place and refer to them as needed.

What do you need to agree on?

Who your members are.

Your qualifications to become a member and the process to do so.

Whether new people need to attend a minimum number of meetings and be approved by others.

How new members are brought up to speed.

How decisions are made, and who gets to make them.

How meetings are run.

How records are kept.

Who takes notes, how are they distributed, and to whom.

Your group's record of decisions to show new members.

How tasks are assigned to members, and how people are held accountable for them.

Expected expenses, how they are to be paid, and what happens in case of cost overruns.

Any dues structure. (Many groups have found that a nonrefundable investment of some minimal amount such as $100 differentiates those "just looking" from those willing to commit time and energy to the project.)

Who keeps records of what has been paid.

Whether such monies are refundable, and from what source.

Your criteria for whether, and how, people may be asked to leave the group.

Having these and other issues in writing, along with proper legal documents for financial matters such as land purchase, can prevent some of the most heart-rending misunderstandings in the months ahead.

5. Good Communication Skills

Every community experiences conflict—including those which include all the above ingredients at their origin! Interpersonal conflict is a given; it will arise. I believe a community is healthy when it deals openly with conflict and doesn't pretend it isn't there. Healthy communities recognize that community offers living "mirrors" for each other, and an opportunity for faster-than-normal spiritual and emotional growth. Dealing with conflict is an opportunity, not a problem.

Some people are naturally skillful and effective communicators. Most of us, however, probably need to unlearn many of our habitual ways of communicating. Unfortunately, Western culture tends to systematically train people away from any tendencies toward cooperation and empathy. We're taught to be competitive and win at all costs, to see conflict in terms of what's wrong with someone else, and to decide things in terms of "us versus them."

I've usually seen conflicts arise because of a misunderstanding, or when someone wants something he or she is not getting, or wants something to stop, and there's emotional charge on the issue. Conflict is exacerbated when someone refuses to speak up about what they want or need, or asks for it in a way that alienates others. Unfortunately, most people's unskilled ways of communicating about the conflict generates even more conflict than was there in the first place.

Fortunately there are plenty of books, courses, and workshops on communication methods that reduce conflict rather than amplify it.

My personal favorite is Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication model. He suggests that most of us respond to something we don't like with an attitude and language that subtly blames, threatens, judges, or criticizes others, even if that's not our intention. His process involves a perceptual shift and a four-step process that defuses the level of conflict. Many other good methods exist as well. (See the "Conflict" issue of Communities magazine, No. 104, Fall 1999.)

I believe that the higher the degree of communication skill a forming community has, the greater its chances of success. So I urge your group to develop such skills, including some form of conflict resolution—ideally learned with a trainer. And learn these skills early on, when there's little or no conflict, for the same reason schools practice fire drills when there's no fire. Learning such skills at the outset can help reduce the potential destructiveness of poorly handled interpersonal conflict later on.

6. Select for Emotional Well-Being

Some people believe it's not really "community" unless it's inclusive and open and anyone can join. Others believe a community should have membership criteria and a multi-step process for assessing potential new members.

Some veteran communitarians point out that people will naturally mature in community because of the (hopefully) constructive feedback they'll receive and the natural tendency to learn from the (hopefully) good communication skills modeled by more experienced members. This happens naturally in community; I call it the "rocks in the rock polisher" effect—everyone's rough edges can be worn smoother by contact with everyone else. Many communitarians know people who were really tough to be around when they first arrived, but who were so motivated that they learned fast and became model community members.

My observation of "the successful 10 percent" taught me that it's all in the willingness of the potential new member or cofounder. If he or she has what I call "high woundedness" (hey, don't we all?), it seems to only work if the person simultaneously has "high willingness" - to grow and learn and change. I have seen several forming communities in recent years—even those with powerful vision statements, fine communication skills, and good consensus training - break apart in conflict and sometimes lawsuits because even just one member didn't have enough self-esteem to function well in a group. The person's "stuff came up" — as everyone's does in community — but theirs was too destructive for the community to absorb. When a person is wounded and having a difficult time in life, he or she can certainly benefit from living in community, and, ideally, can heal and grow because of the support and feedback offered by others. But a certain level of woundedness — without "high willingness"—appears to be too deep for many new communities to handle. I believe one deeply wounded person can affect a group far more than 10 healthy people, because of that person's potential destructiveness to the group. Such a person can repeatedly derail the community's agenda and drain its energy.

This seems especially true of a potential new member or cofounder who has been abused as a child and hasn't had much healing before walking into your meeting. The person may unconsciously be desperately seeking community as a safe haven that will finally make things right. Such a person usually feels needy, and tends to interpret other people's refusal to or inability to meet his or her needs as further abuse. The person usually (subconsciously) expects to be victimized, and tends to seek out, provoke, or project onto others annoyance or anger and then conclude, "See, I knew you'd abuse me."

Where should this person go, besides those communities that are explicitly set up as therapeutic settings? A large, old, and well-established community can often take on difficult and wounded people without damage to itself. A mature oak tree, after all, can handle being hit by a truck. But I don't recommend taking on this challenge if your group is small, or brand new. It's just a sapling, not an oak tree, and still too vulnerable.

How can you determine the level of emotional health and well-being in prospective members and cofounders? One way is through questionnaires and interviews. Let's say you're seeking someone who is fairly financially stable and emotionally secure, who has some experience living cooperatively and a willingness to persevere through the rough spots. Irwin Wolfe Zucker, a psychiatric social worker and former Findhorn member, suggested asking: "How have you supported yourself financially until now? Can you describe some of your long-term relationships? What was your experience in high school or college? If you chose to leave school, why was that? Have you pursued alternative educational or career paths such as internships, apprenticeships, or on-the-job trainings? Where, and for how long? Did you complete them?" ("Admissions Standards for Communities?" Communities magazine, No. 96, Fall 1997.)

You can also ask for references, from former partners, employers, landlords, housemates, and former traveling companions.

I suggest "long engagements" — extended guest visits or provisional memberships of six months to a year, so the group and the prospective member can continue to get to know each other. Sometimes it takes a year to find out what someone is really like when the stress gets high.

"If your community front door is difficult to enter," writes Zucker, "healthy people will strive to get in. If it's wide open, you'll tend to attract unhealthy people, well-versed in resentful silences, subterfuge, manipulation, and guilt trips." Once these people become members, he warns, the energy of the group may be tied up in getting them to leave again.

So the last ingredient is to choose people who've already demonstrated they can get along well with others.

Creating healthy, viable communities is one of the finest projects we can undertake. And we can learn to set systems in place — right from the beginning — that give us the best chance of success.

I know of a new community dedicated to teaching ecological living via a community demonstration model. Its founders mastered consensus and good group process skills and created a new-member outreach process through a newsletter and Web site. They set up telecommuting jobs so they could live anywhere. They conducted a national rural county search, and when they found the right county with no zoning regulations, they took a pro-active approach to finding their ideal land. They raised the necessary land-purchase funds in loans from supporters, and drew up effective agreements, covenants, and nonprofit and lease documents. They set up an impressive internship program to help them build their physical infrastructure. Right now they're living in their new straw bale cabins, eating from their organic garden, and making their own biodiesel fuel. Their new community is thriving. And so can yours.