

## Coastal Community Observatories Network (C-CON)

Memorial University

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**Challenge:** “Ocean science...includes all research disciplines related to the study of the ocean and the coast, and their relationships with societies” (Report of the Expert Panel on Canadian Ocean Science, 2013). How does Memorial University **distinguish** itself as an Oceans Science University?

**Vision:** A network of community-engaged, **coastal community observatories** that work to:

- a) identify key **research** questions relevant to that region, attract funding to support research to answer those questions, carry out community-engaged research and work with stakeholders to identify ways to implement those findings in order to build sustainable communities and regional economies.
- b) provide excellent **training** opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students in community-engaged research.
- c) act as **knowledge hubs** to store data, reports, cultural resources and other products of this research for use by future researchers and community stakeholders.

The network will be made up of nodes located in different coastal communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. They will be connected to each other, as well as to a central coordinating structure, most likely in St John’s.

**Alignment:** The vision of a network of coastal observatories is aligned in a number of different ways to the changing role of universities, and the specific goals of Memorial University. Increasingly universities are being challenged to play a more active role in preparing society for complex and uncertain futures. SSHRC’s “Imagining Canada’s Future” initiative is one example of how Canadian researchers are being challenged to ‘anticipate and be prepared to address emergent issues, society needs and knowledge needs’. A key goal of SSHRC’s initiative is to foster sustainable resilient communities, which is consistent with our proposed network of observatories.

Memorial University is uniquely placed to meet the challenge of the new role for universities: we have a strong tradition of community engagement in both research and outreach; one of the three strategic priorities is engagement; and we have recently established an Office of Engagement. Memorial University is an excellent place to build a network of coastal community observatories.

**Process:** Some initial work has been done to begin the process of thinking how to reach our vision of a coastal community observatories network. Although the idea was first proposed in the Faculty Arts, C-CON has now become a university-wide initiative. We have the support of faculty in Engineering, Medicine, Business, Arts and Science, the Marine Institute, and the Office of Engagement. C-CON will also involve all of Memorial’s

campuses (St John's, Marine Institute, Grenfell, Labrador Institute). We have agreed that this will be a multidisciplinary effort and will build on the considerable experience researchers at Memorial have had in running research and engagement programmes that cross disciplinary boundaries. And we have agreed that best way forward is to start with several pilot sites, which will allow us to test the concept, and to develop a methodology for extending the network beyond the pilots.