WILDFLOWERS INSTITUTE

THE WILDFLOWERS LENS FOR SEEING THE SELF-ORGANIZED ACTIVITIES OF A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

September 2006

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The purpose of this booklet is to share a way of identifying self-organized activities that are often invisible to people outside the community but are essential to its sustainability. Wildflowers Institute focuses on activities that sustain the vitality of community—its identity; social spaces for replenishment, growth, and development; and different services to its members.

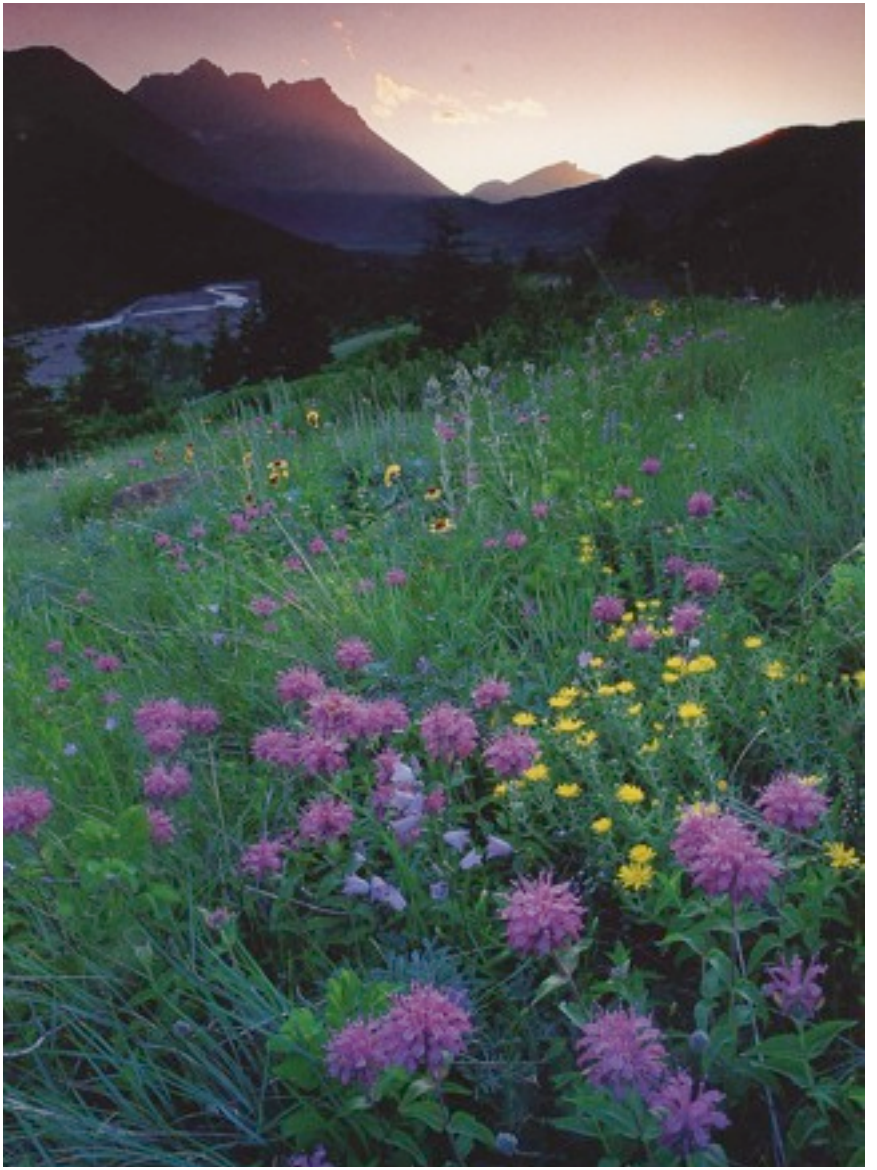
No one activity can hold up the entire community; instead, sustainability depends on many different kinds of invisible and visible self-organizing activities. More visible activities include those of service providers who care for the needs of the community and businesspeople who strengthen the local economy. Less visible activities are performed by spiritual and informal leaders who set standards and examples for the rest of the community and organize events that people are instinctively attracted to. Another invisible example is elders and family members creating safe and caring environments for children and youth to grow up in. While the specific activities vary by community, the important ones share a unique set of values and create social cohesion. Effective visible and invisible self-organized activities rely upon a local formation and hierarchy of community resources.

To share our understanding of self-organized activities, we have decided to use the analogy of wildflowers and their pollinators. Wildflowers grow in clusters and depend entirely on pollinators for their sustainability. Although nature and human communities differ in some of their activities and formations, this analogy introduces you to a way of discovering the power of self-organizing activities in communities.

IMAGINE THE SCENE ON THE RIGHT AS YOUR COMMUNITY.



LOOK FOR SELF-ORGANIZING ACTIVITIES THAT STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN AND BETWEEN COMMUNITIES.



IDENTIFY DIFFERENT KINDS OF SELF-ORGANIZED ACTIVITIES.

SOME SELF-ORGANIZED ACTIVITIES



Outside Support



Entrepreneurship





Informal Leadership



Community Art

UNDERSTAND THE UNIQUE LEADERSHIP FORMATION FOR EACH OF THESE SELF-ORGANIZED ACTIVITIES.

SOME DIFFERENT LEADERSHIP FORMATIONS



Family Leadership



Matriarchal Leadership



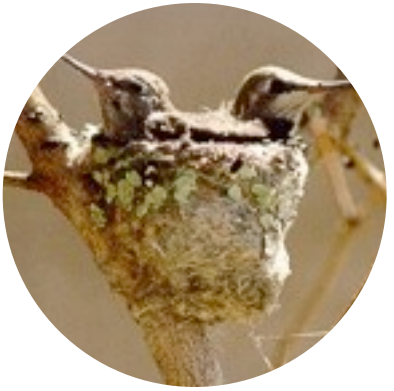
Leadership of a
Homogeneous Group



Leadership of
Diverse Groups

UNDERSTAND THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF EACH OF THESE SELF-ORGANIZED ACTIVITIES.

SOME SOCIAL IMPACT



Helping the Next Generation Grow



Protecting Assets



Celebrating Culture



Bringing Differences Together

HARNESS THE COLLECTIVE POWER OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF SELF-ORGANIZED ACTIVITIES.



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