



## Case Study 2: The Rocky Mountain Flatbread Company ~ From Green to Great

### The Organization

The Rocky Mountain Flatbread Company is the creation of Dominic and Suzanne Fielden, a Canmore couple “who care deeply about...community, food and celebration.”

Originally from the UK, where they worked for over a decade as leadership and management consultants on culture change and leadership development programs (including how to integrate social and environmental agendas into corporate strategy), the couple decided in the late 1990’s to put their consulting experience to practice and start their own business.

It took five years of research and development, but they finally settled on a restaurant as the type of business, partly because of Dominic’s background – his grandfather had been a restaurateur – and partly because of his passion for good food. Further, they wanted to create a brand that stood for positive change in the world, and what, they reasoned, was a better product to create a positive brand around than pizza – a food that almost everyone loves and eats on a regular

basis. Finally, they wanted “to create a business with a brand that differentiated them from other pizza companies by merging three agendas - economic, environmental and social.”

After researching a number of communities from which to launch their business, they settled on Canmore. As Suzanne states, “We wanted to be in the mountains, and Canmore, aside from being very beautiful, was more than just a resort – it had a solid sense of history and community.”

Both to “maximize their assets” and to achieve their goal of inspiring others to become responsible entrepreneurs, they created a company comprising several interconnected businesses – a restaurant, a wholesale enterprise, an educational society, and a mobile caterer.

For the restaurant and wholesale sides of the business, the couple needed a chef that shared their philosophy, and they found one in Ralf Wollman, a Red Seal certified Chef from Germany. In his job interview, Ralf made a lasting impression when he said: “Any good chef can take expensive ingredients and make good



food. To make great food that everyone can enjoy, a chef needs to be able to take simple, wholesome ingredients and add plenty of passion and creativity.” Ralf’s food was as compelling as his philosophy, and he soon became Rocky Mountain Flatbread’s executive chef and its third business partner.

Even before opening the restaurant, Suzanne launched their community and social responsibility programs via the Rocky Mountain Flatbread Company Education Society. Her first venture was a program called “Local Heroes,” in which students from Canmore’s Mountain Gate Community School researched who contributed to making Canmore a special community and then appointed them as local heroes. The people included local vets who went that extra mile to help injured wildlife, a woman who supported cancer patients by providing complimentary therapies for free, local painters, local volunteers, local supermarket owners and more. The students invited the local heroes to the restaurant to celebrate their contribution to Canmore for one of their opening evenings - providing a good example of how good business and good community service can proceed hand-in-hand<sup>1</sup>. From

---

<sup>1</sup> Aside from the Local Heroes program, the Rocky Mountain Flatbread Company Education Society designs and delivers two other hands-on classroom sustainability programs. The

the beginning, Suzanne and Dominique wanted to create a unique brand of pizza that could be franchised. In 2005, in pursuit of that goal, the couple decided to open a second restaurant and wholesale manufacturing centre. The wholesale business was already booming – in less than two years they were selling their pizzas in over 80 locations in Alberta and B.C. – and they felt the time was right to expand. Vancouver was a logical location for a second operation, and the couple decided to make the city their new headquarters. Leaving the Canmore restaurant in Ralf’s care, they moved to Vancouver in early 2006.

---

“junk fuel” program pairs students with local businesses in closed-loop zero-emission projects. In 2004 – 2005, for example, students from the Banff Community High School manufactured bio-diesel from waste kitchen grease from the Banff Springs Hotel, and the fuel was used to power equipment used by the Banff Springs Golf Course. The manufacturing by-product, glycerin, was used by the local soap company. The “responsible entrepreneur” programs challenge students to create a business that generates a financial, social, and ecological return on investment. In 2005, elementary students at Mountain Gate School created FASHOOKIE, a business that sells organic cookies, hemp tee-shirts, bracelets and key chains. The profits were split among the students, the school, and the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative.



## The Natural Step to a Sustainable Canmore

The Fieldens were well acquainted with The Natural Step as an approach to sustainability even before moving to Canmore. After one of the companies they worked with in the UK adopted The Natural Step as a management tool, Suzanne and Dominic became trained in the approach and taught Natural Step workshops for three years. They did not use The Natural Step by itself to develop their business plan; but rather integrated it with other models they had learned during their decade of consulting. Suzanne says the flexibility and simplicity of The Natural Step Framework made that task a relatively simple one "Because The Natural Step functions at an overarching systems level," she says, "it can be used as a stand alone planning framework, or it can easily be integrated with other models."

When Suzanne learned that Canmore was embarking on a Natural Step program, she called the Biosphere Institute and offered the company as an Early Adopter and herself as a resource person. The offer, on both counts, was quickly accepted.

## Baseline Evaluation, Sustainable Practices

The Rocky Mountain Flatbread Company was already well along the path to sustainability when it became an Early Adopter. Still, the Canmore program differed in several respects from the British programs that the Fieldens were familiar with, and Suzanne found that the baseline evaluation provided a useful structure she and Dominic could use to take stock of their new business -- to see what they had achieved to date and where more work was needed (See Appendices A and B). Among their achievements:

- They had partnered with the Town and local schools to design and implement healthy cooking classes and responsible entrepreneur programs.
- Their approach to staffing – hiring people who share their vision and then training them to be part of a team that understands every aspect of the business – had allowed them to retain staff in a community that suffers a chronic seasonal turnover, which confirmed their conviction that



a sustainable business means sustainable staffing<sup>2</sup>.

- They were using as many Canadian grown ingredients and organic ingredients as they could afford and were available, thereby supporting the local economy and contributing to a healthy natural environment.
- They were using low volatile paints and varnishes for their renovations, thereby reducing the amount of non-biodegradable or slow-to-biodegrade synthetic substances.
- They were using recycled wood or wood from sustainable forests in their furniture and structural renovations, they were recycling the paper, metal,

glass and plastics accepted at the municipal recycling centre; and they were fuelling their signature clay oven with salvage wood and deadfall.

### Baseline Evaluation, Non-sustainable practices

Although the baseline evaluation highlighted the progress the couple had made, it also, says Suzanne, “pinpointed things that we had lost sight of in our day-to-day busyness. It helped us to think longer term, and to identify areas where we could do better. As a result, we were able to develop some actions that didn’t require too much effort or expense but would still move us ahead.”

#### **1. Contributions to systematic increases of substances taken from the earth’s crust.**

- The Rocky Mountain Flatbread Company’s reliance on gas for food transport is the most obvious, and most difficult, challenge it faces in trying to reduce and eventually eliminate the business’s negative effect on Earth’s lithosphere, atmosphere and natural environment. Both the business and its suppliers transport their goods in gas-fuelled vehicles. As well, the business relies on fossil fuels for heating the building and powering its electrical systems.

---

<sup>2</sup> Bob Willard, author of *The Sustainability Advantage: Seven Business Case Benefits of a Triple Bottom Line* (New Society Publishers, 2002), cites easier hiring of top talent, higher retention of top talent, and increased employee productivity as three of the seven benefits of becoming sustainable. The Rocky Mountain Flatbread Company staff is encouraged to think of projects that would increase the sustainability of the company, to share the staff’s talents, and to initiate new products, services and activities. Staff has responded with a number of suggestions, ranging from the creation of a “special pizza of the day” to a Sunday afternoon “Story Time” reading program for children.



## **2. Contributions to systematic increases in concentrations of substances created by society.**

- Cleaning products. Inexperienced at restaurant cleaning, Suzanne and Dominic signed on to the standard products package suggested by their supplier. The standard package provided easy compliance to health and safety regulations. The baseline analysis, which revealed the negative impacts of the chemicals used in both water delivery and waste water disposal, led them to question their unassuming acceptance of the standard products.
- Pesticides and fertilizers. Although the company makes a concerted effort to use organic ingredients in their pizzas, the ingredients are not always available or affordable, meaning the company does use some products exposed to various synthetic pesticides and fertilizers.

## **3. Contributions to the degradation of nature**

- Tree harvest. Although the Rocky Mountain Flatbread Company packages its products in boxes made of recycled cardboard, there is still a

lot of cardboard, which means harvested trees and forest impacts.

- Landfill. The staff recycles waste from the restaurant that can be recycled. Non-recyclables take up landfill space and recyclables consume energy in transport and the recycling process.

## **4. Contributions to conditions that undermine people's ability to meet their needs.**

- Fossil fuel use. Suzanne notes that the global reliance on non-renewable and diminishing fossil fuels is related to political instability, social displacement, cultural upheaval, air, water and land pollution, and other negative social phenomenon. The baseline analysis helped illuminate the extent to which the company, and Suzanne and Dominic as individuals, are fossil-fuel dependent and thus contribute to a global problem.
- Cleaning products. In order to comply with health and safety standards, the company was using cleaning supplies containing toxins Dominic and Suzanne weren't comfortable with. The baseline analysis motivated them to revisit the question and seek a sustainable solution.



### ***New Questions, New Answers . . .***

One of the often-cited benefits of The Natural Step framework is that it forces people to look at their organizations in new ways, which opens the possibilities of new questions and new answers. That was the case for Suzanne and Dominic, who, in working through the baseline evaluation of their business, discovered a brand new approach to the wholesale end of their business.

When first mapping out the expansion of the wholesale business, Dominic and Suzanne used the conventional model of building one central plant in Canada. This, however, would significantly increase their business's reliance on fossil fuels as Canada is such a vast country to ship across. The Natural Step Framework pushed them to think of alternatives. The alternative was to continue the model they created in Canmore – i.e., a combination small scale local wholesale production unit and restaurant. Their choice was to open one more of these in Vancouver to supply the BC market and another back East. This model enables them to produce and supply their products to retail shops locally.

Among other benefits, they realized that by reducing the transportation costs of moving product into and out of the communities, they could reduce their impact on natural environments and their use of non-renewable resources, which would help ease the political instability associated with the distribution of those resources. As well, working with locals creates more local work, allowing the company to both contribute to the local economy and demonstrate that being equitable employers has its benefits – i.e., committed, productive employees that stay with the business.

## **Sustainability Vision**

The Rocky Mountain Flatbread Company took The Natural Step to a Sustainable Canmore as an opportunity to revisit their company vision. The revised version now reads:

RMFC's vision is to be a restorative organisation and be a part of restorative communities.....This means to design our business in such a manner that our practises honour, support and cooperate

with nature's inherent ability to sustain life.

- We will take personal responsibility for our social, ecological and financial performance.
- Our Vision also means being a part of and encouraging local government, NGOs, business and members of the public to work together to live and work in ways that support nature to sustain life.



In imagining what such a business would actually look like, the owners developed a list of sustainability characteristics:

- We generate only benign emissions;
- We derive 100% of our energy from renewable resources;
- Our organization has zero waste;
- Our fixtures and fittings come from recycled materials;
- We have a net carbon impact of zero – no net carbon will accumulate in the atmosphere as a result of our operations;
- We encourage people to make simple changes to their day-to-day lives that are more sustainability – e.g., to buy local organics whenever possible;
- We work closely with schools, NGOs, local government and local businesses to explore how to live and work in sustainable ways;
- We work in partnership with schools to encourage responsible entrepreneurship; and
- We celebrate anything and anyone who represents community

## Action Plan

The Rocky Mountain Flatbread Company action plan is divided according to each of the systems conditions, and further by a variety of overarching strategies that range from reducing waste to increasing value. The following are highlights from the action plan, outlined in Appendix C.

As “low-hanging fruit,” the company reduced its use of fossil fuels by reducing the time the lights and computers were on, and by creating a staff anti-idling policy.

The company has revisited their cleaning products and asked their supplier if they could offer them more environmentally friendly products. They have since started using their supplier’s green product line, as well as reducing their product consumption by maintaining a rigorous cleaning schedule and reducing the amount of product used.

Longer term goals include exchanging the company’s gas-powered vehicles for ones fuelled by bio-diesel; encouraging their suppliers and distributors to do the same; and purchasing renewable energy for their heating and electrical needs.

In building a second restaurant, Dominic and Suzanne chose to renovate an already existing space as a less resource-intensive alternative to building new. As well, the



restaurant offered them an opportunity to apply the green construction knowledge they gained through the Natural Step workshops, and they hired a like-minded contractor who is keen to do his own research and work hand-in-hand with them to build as green a restaurant as their current means allow. Some of their plans for the Vancouver location includes:

- MDF tables made of previously discarded plant stems;
- Washable wallpaper (a health requirement for public washrooms) that does not contain PVC; and
- A bar top of cement made from recycled material.
- Looking even further ahead, to franchised restaurants in other locations, they plan to incorporate:
  - Brown sites for all restaurant locations;
  - Grey water recycling;
  - Composting toilets;
  - Recycled, repurposed or sustainable building materials and furniture; and
  - Renewable energy for power and fuel.

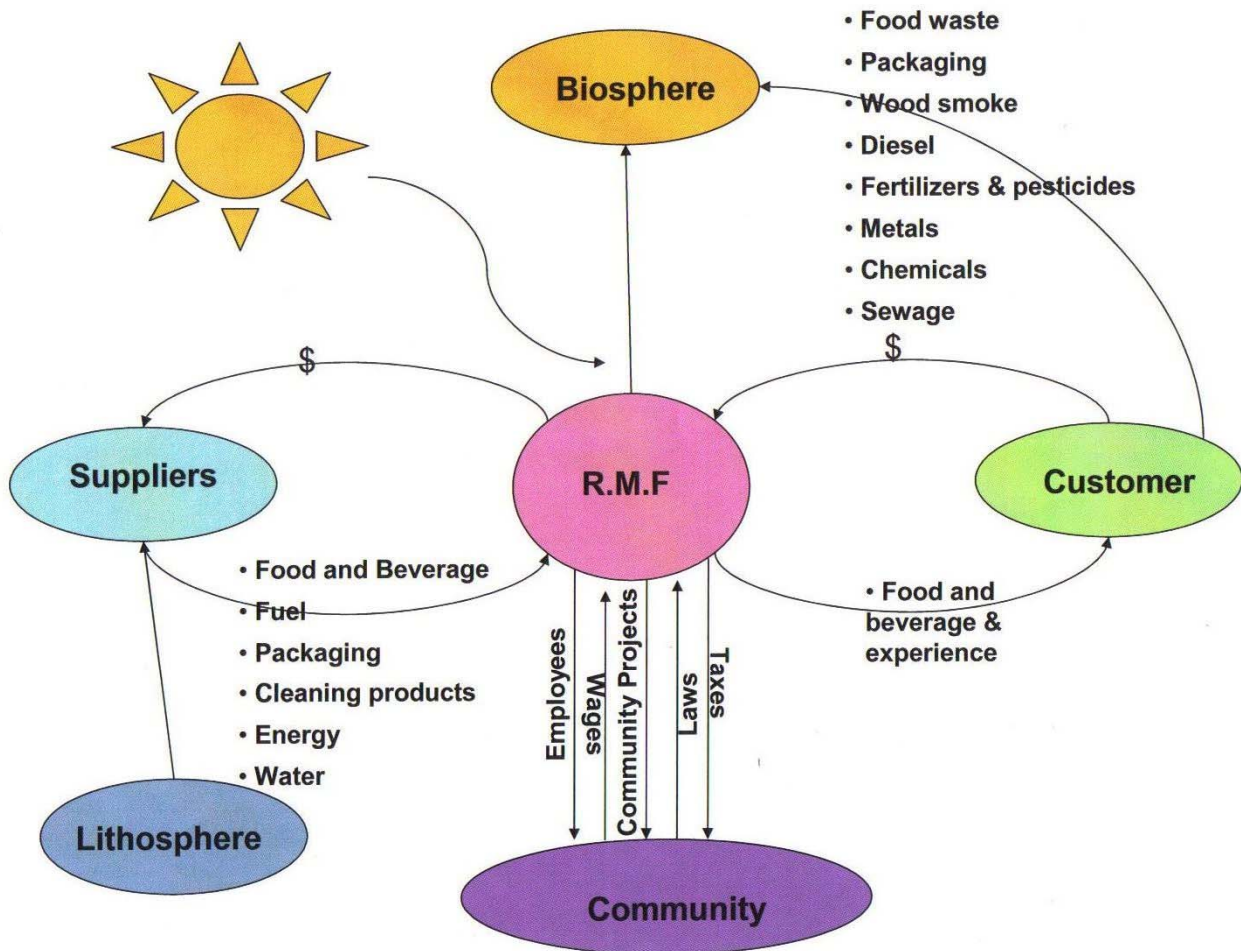
## Last Words

Sustainability and The Natural Step was part of the breeding of The Rocky Mountain Flatbread Company, and sustainability is reflected in the people, products, programs and physical structures of the business.

Suzanne's participation in The Natural Step to a Sustainable Canmore was invaluable. Her experience, combined with her ability and willingness to share her knowledge, resulted in faster learning, stronger buy-in, and increased networking for the other early adopters.

At the same time, as she quickly admits, she learned a lot by participating. Despite her extensive grounding in sustainability, The Natural Step to a Sustainable Canmore gave her an opportunity to step back from the day-to-day operation of the business, evaluate its sustainability practices and overall performance, and talk with experts from fields as diverse as geo-exchange and green procurement. The result was new concepts and new ideas to apply to a multi-faceted business. As she stated after the second workshop, which was designed to generate ideas and possibilities to be used in creating a compelling vision, "The more I learn, the more I see that can be learned, and the more there is that can be done."

## Rocky Mountain Flatbread Co Appendix A: Baseline Mapping





## Rocky Mountain Flatbread Co Appendix B: Baseline Analysis

SC1 Eliminate increasing concentrations of substances extracted from the earth's crust	SC2 Eliminate increasing concentrations of substances produced by society	SC3 Eliminate physical degradation of nature	SC4 Eliminate barriers that undermine people from meeting their needs
<b>System Condition Violations</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Metals</b> (vehicles and fixtures)</li> <li>- <b>Trace Metals</b> (electronics, lightbulbs, computers)</li> <li>- <b>Oil</b> (diesel, gas, transport, food collection, heat, energy, packaging, chemicals, paints)</li> <li>- <b>Other Elements</b> (fertilizer, pesticides, man made chemicals, bleaching paper, cleaning products, paints)</li> <li>- <b>CO2</b> (propane, heat and cooking, diesel and gas for transport)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Emissions: NOX VOCs</b> (energy, transport, paint)</li> <li>- <b>Man Made Materials</b> (flame retardants, plastic packaging, man made pesticides from farming)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Land Ecosystems Degradation</b> (food, hydro-energy, paper, wood, cleaners, land fill space, extraction from lithosphere)</li> <li>- <b>Aquatic Ecosystem Degradation</b> (cleaning and drinking water, marine food, hydro-energy)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Safe Working Environment</b> (cleaning chemicals and smoke from fire)</li> </ul>
<b>Pro-sustainability Practices</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ <b>Locally grown ingredients</b> (use as much locally-grown ingredients as are available and affordable)</li> <li>+ <b>Recycling paper, plastics, and wood</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ <b>Organic Materials</b> (use as much organic ingredients as are available and affordable)</li> <li>+ <b>Low-volatile paints</b> (use low-volatile finishes for renovations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ <b>Salvaged wood for oven</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ <b>Promoting Responsible Entrepreneurship</b> (partnering with Town, local schools and businesses to learn about responsible entrepreneurship)</li> <li>+ <b>Partnering with Yellowstone to Yukon</b> (promoting importance of our last great space)</li> <li>+ <b>Organic Market</b> (for locals at reasonable prices)</li> <li>+ <b>Support Local Clubs</b> (selling our pizzas for fund raisers)</li> <li>+ <b>Work Placements</b> (students from Exshaw)</li> </ul>



## Rocky Mountain Flatbread Co Appendix C: Action Plan

SC1	SC2	SC3	SC4
Eliminate increasing concentrations of substances extracted from the earth's crust	Eliminate increasing concentrations of substances produced by society	Eliminate physical degradation of nature	Eliminate barriers that undermine people from meeting their needs
Strategy: Increase resource productivity of inputs	Increase resource productivity of inputs	Increase resource productivity of inputs	Increase resource productivity of inputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn off lights when not in use</li> <li>• Turn off computers when not in use</li> <li>• Turn off vehicles when not in use</li> <li>• Buy smaller energy efficient vehicles</li> <li>• When introducing new lighting – energy efficient</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce frequency of chemical cleaning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use recycled woods and metals for construction</li> <li>• For new builds introduce composting toilets</li> <li>• Look to use brown water in restaurant for toilets, watering, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actions to improve energy efficiency saves resources for other needs</li> </ul>
Strategy: Create less waste output	Create less output	Create less output	Create less output
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recycle computers, electronics, tins.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recycle all plastics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compost all food waste</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recycling saves resources for other needs</li> </ul>
Strategy: Use more abundant materials from the earth's crust	Use human-made substances that degrade naturally into compounds that do not increase in concentration in the ecosphere	Use lesser land area to deliver similar or greater value	Change the focus from commodity to service to find completely new ways of meeting the same human need.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Source bio-degradable plastics</li> <li>• Source non-volatile paint</li> <li>• Source eco-friendly plastics for countertops, etc...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always use our assets to a maximum – for example, doubling up as a factory and a restaurant</li> <li>• Always develop on brown or developed areas</li> <li>• Reuse our brown water</li> </ul>	
Use renewable materials that avoid materials from the earth's crust	Use materials that avoid substances foreign to nature altogether	Create better management routines that do not degrade productive ecosystems by physical means	Change practices/suppliers to those that do not cause barriers to people meeting their needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase renewable energy</li> <li>• Trade-in vehicles for diesel and use biodiesel</li> <li>• Encourage our distributors to use biodiesel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use orange peel and baking soda to do our everyday toilet and restaurant cleaning</li> <li>• Forge further partnerships with local organic farmers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All wood to be purchased from sustainable forestry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase fair trade for not only coffee but oils</li> <li>• Buy more from local organic farmers</li> <li>• Publicize more about the importance of local organics and what you can do everyday to lessen your ecological impact</li> <li>• Continue to expand our responsible entrepreneur school programmes</li> </ul>