



Grafton Lake Lands

A story of people, a place, and possibilities

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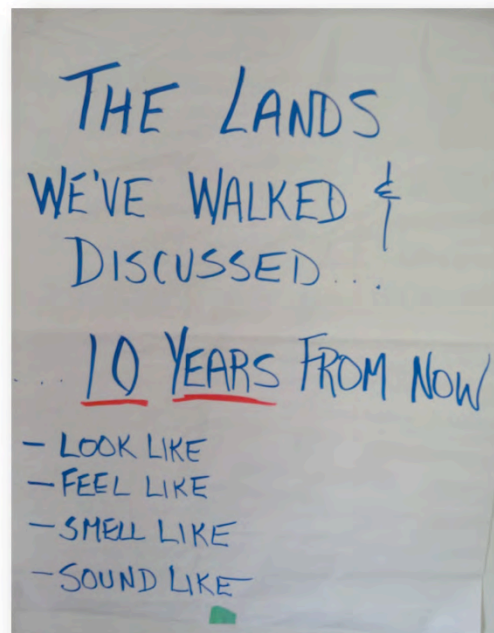
Objectives

- Generate ideas for the development of community space on the Grafton Lake lands
- Engage the community and generate enthusiasm and ownership over the future of the land
- Identify the deep, mythological, archetypal themes of the Grafton Lake story

The first two objectives are the objectives of the overall day's events.

The third is the objective of the personal stories collected at the end of the session.

The Prompt



The prompt is the sole stimulus for the stories. These are the words that inspired the stories.

Observations from the stories

- ❑ Grafton Lake: a sensuous story
 - A symphony of all the senses: sights, sounds, smells, etc.
- ❑ Three generations share the experience
 - Mom's and kids
 - Grandparents and grandchildren
- ❑ The 'process' is as important as the 'product'
 - Grafton Lake is a journey, not the destination
 - Ever evolving
- ❑ Grafton Lake stories mirror some findings from the 2014 Visitors' Survey

The Grafton Lake (GL) stories are a symphony of sights, sounds, smells, etc. Granted we asked participants to write about 'sights', 'sounds', 'smells', etc. But those are directions we give to every participant of every project we've ever conducted. The richness and sensuousness of GL stories outshine the stories of all but a very few of our projects.

Three generations are often portrayed in the stories. Kids, parents, and grandparents. Mothers with their kids are more prevalent than dads with their kids. The presence of grandparents is interesting. They symbolize wisdom, experience...they are the elders. They are connectors, links to the past. Children symbolize hope; they are connectors to a hopeful future. We'll explore this in more detail in the coming slides.

The process is as important as the product. This may be *the* critical learning from our workshop! A successful effort of community engagement and participation will be as important as what we produce as an outcome. As one participant's story stated so well: "*I feel I've been on a long journey through a little growing labyrinth.*"

There are a number of instances in the stories, where we are seeing similar—sometimes very similar—words, phrases, imagery as appeared in the Visitors' Survey conducted last summer by the EDC.

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Themes

- ❑ Completes the statement: *Grafton Lake ten years in the future* is about.....
- ❑ Secondary themes = content and context
 - Vary in strength, but present in many of the stories
 - Necessary parts of the Grafton Lake story
 - Help define the emotions around the Grafton Lake story ...but are **not** emotionally powerful themselves
- ❑ Core themes = speak to the deep emotional, mythic and archetypal essence of the story
 - Subtle
 - Emotionally and potentially archetypically powerful
 - Clues to the deep emotions associated with the Grafton Lake story

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The themes completes the statement: *Grafton Lake ten years in the future* is about.....

We are going to be exploring two types of theme.

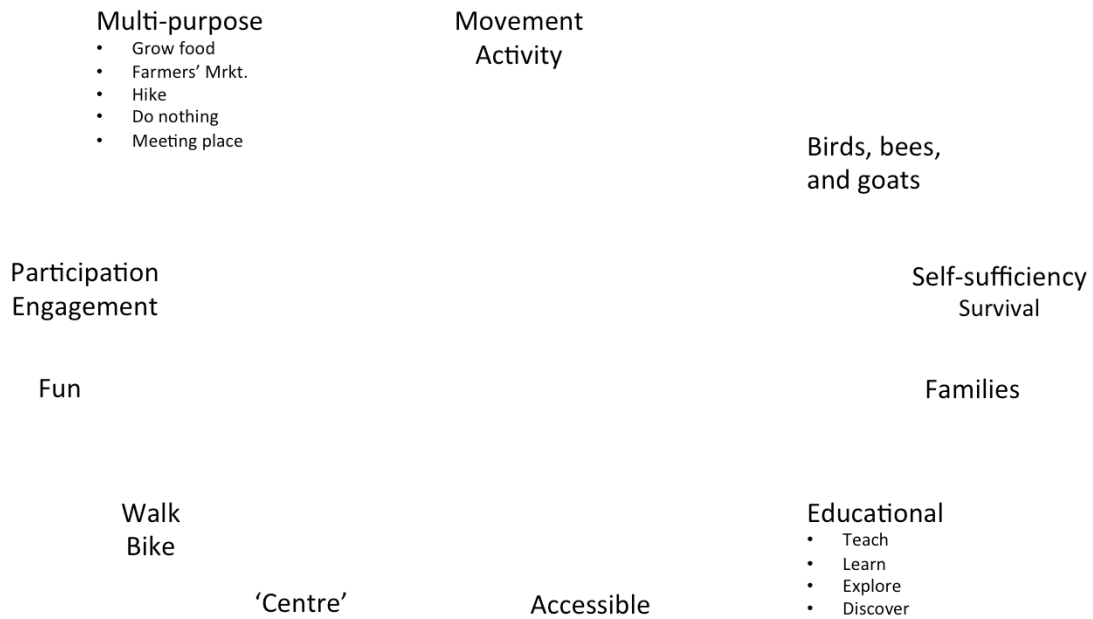
Secondary themes, which are about the content and context of the story. They provide the tone, the feel, the key characters that make the story come alive

- They vary in strength, but we see them in many of the stories.
- They're necessary parts of the story, but they are not emotionally powerful.
- You can't tell the Grafton Lake story without the secondary themes, however they, by themselves, do not have the power to be emotionally compelling.

The **Core themes** speak to the deep emotional, mythic and archetypal essence of the story. Because of their emotional power, it is the core themes that are the strongest motivators of behaviour.

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Secondary themes



Secondary themes

There are eleven secondary themes of the GL story. In no particular order, they are:

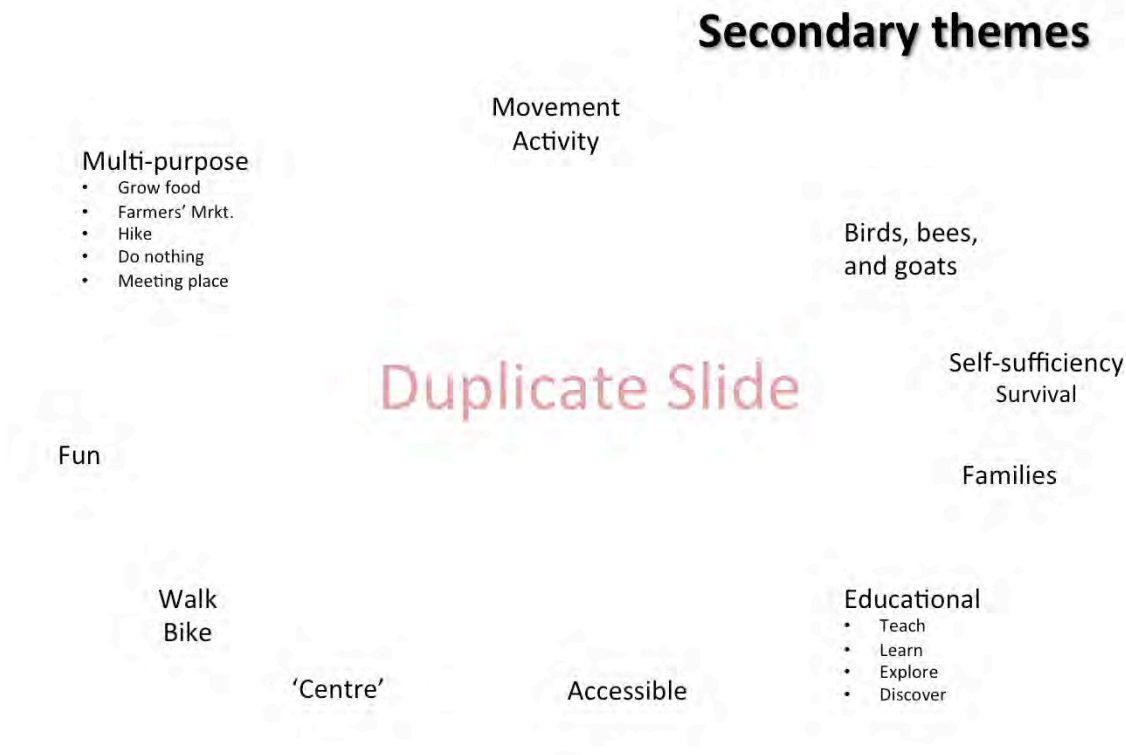
Movement and Activity: Movement is life and there is plenty of life in the stories of the GL lands. People of all ages are working, sharing, and having fun. The air is full of the sounds of birds chirping, bees buzzing, laughter and conversation. Activity is everywhere; except of course, in those designated places for quiet and contemplation. GL is alive with activity!

Birds, bees, goats: Fauna as well as flora abound in The GL lands. There are apiaries, free range chickens and ducks, and of course, the 'goat moat' meant to protect growing produce from the ever invasive horse-tails.

Self-sufficiency/survival: A shadow side of the more optimistic GL story portrays GL in the light of an extensive drought and extreme climate change. In this scenario, GL plays the role of the ark (my word), a vehicle of protection and survival until better times appear.

Families: GL is a family place. Three generations at least, as we saw earlier in the Observations portion of this presentation. Families are a key component of the GL story.

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Secondary themes (continued)

Educational: in the stories, education—teaching, learning, exploring, discovering—plays a major role in the future of GL lands.

Accessible: GL must be accessible to everyone. There can be no barriers of participation, financial, or physical, nothing. It is for—and available to— everyone who wants to participate. One possible outcome is GL could serve as a model of 'rural accessibility' for the disabled and the ageing.

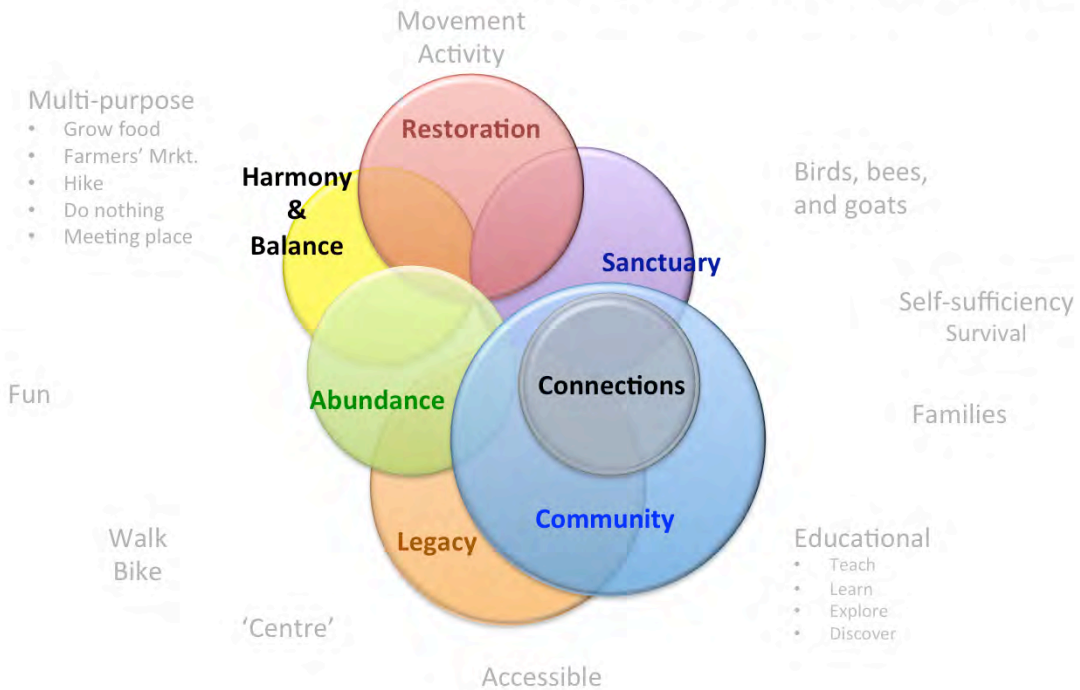
'Centre': This is related to 'educational' (above). The image of 'centre' is seen in a number of stories. In some—because of its geographical location on Government Road — it is spoken of as the 'centre' of the island. A connector or connection between the east and west sides. However, other portrayals are more symbolic. Symbolically, the 'centre' is more about the concept of all that revolves around it; all that it draws to it (like the sun of our solar system). In this sense 'centre' can be seen as the 'heart' of the island; a gathering place where islanders come to learn (e.g. a learning/teaching centre) and share ideas.

Walk/Bike: The rich lushness, and vibrancy of the place does not lend itself to the noise and emissions of the internal combustion machine. In the stories, cars are few, but the bike racks are full.

Fun: The type of agriculture activity portrayed in the stories is labour intensive. Hard work must be paired with fun. There are a number of stories portraying community gatherings with food, music, etc.

Multi-purpose: The GL lands are often described in terms of being multi-purpose and multi-use. It is portrayed as a place of a vast variety of people, plants, animals, and experiences. At any given time GL is a community garden, Farmers' market, learning centre, etc. One can choose to partake in a number of different activities...or choose to do nothing at all.

Grafton Lake core themes



There are seven core themes that emerged from the stories.

- Community
- Legacy
- Restoration
- Sanctuary
- Abundance
- Harmony and balance
- Connections

We'll look at each in more detail in a moment.

There are several things I want to point out on this chart. The bubble sizes represent the emotional power of each core theme based on how each plays out in the stories. This is a subjective call that I make, based on years of working with this analysis process. The larger the bubble, the more emotionally powerful the core theme is in the stories. *Community* is the most powerful of the seven core themes, followed by *Legacy*, *Restoration*, *Sanctuary*, *Abundance*, *Harmony and Balance*, and finally, *Connections*.

Also note, how the bubbles representing each core theme overlap. Core themes are *not* discrete entities; they tend to bleed into each other, often sharing some common characteristics. It is apparent from the clustering of the bubbles that four of the seven core themes—*Community*, *Connections*, *Legacy*, and *Sanctuary* are very strongly inter-related. The three remaining core themes are also clearly inter-related but not as strongly.

Themes

Community



- Grafton Lake is truly a community project! By the community and for the community.
- It won't happen by itself. We have to do it. We genuinely have to care about how it turns out.
- It is the result of a shared dream, a common vision and a sense of caring purpose.
 - Community on Bowen = I belong here
 - Safe
 - Recognized

Community

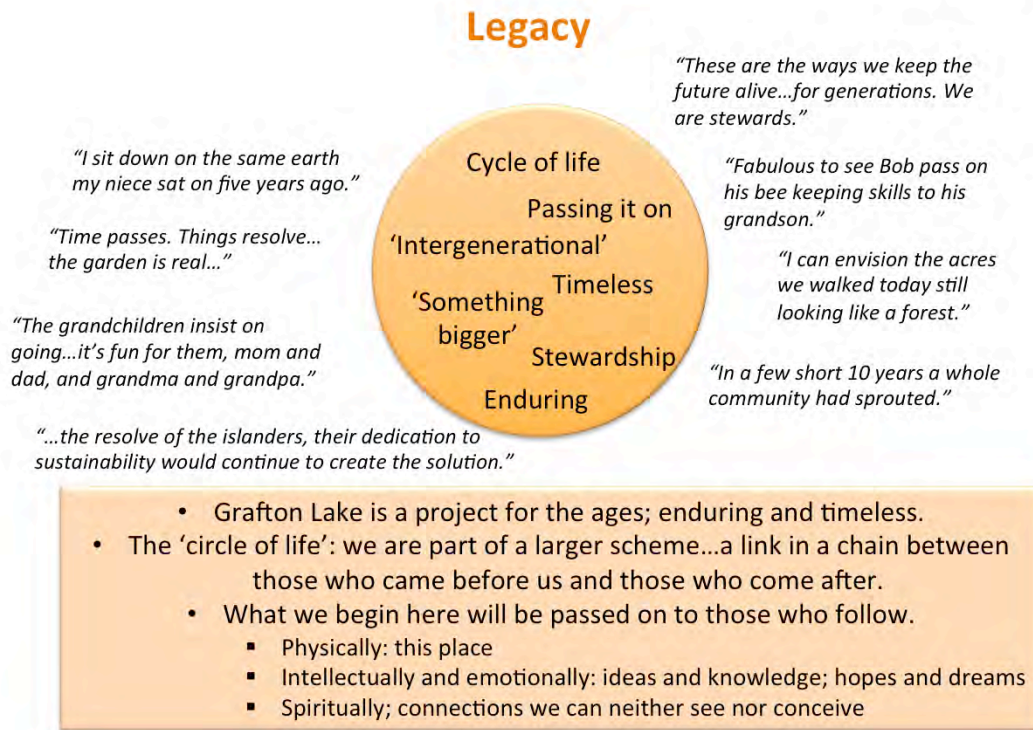
This should not be a surprise. The Grafton Lake lands as they have been positioned to date is a community project, by and for the community. It's clear from the stories that it will take a community effort to make this project happen; it won't happen by itself. We have to do it. And that requires a genuine care about the the GL lands, our island community (and all the various 'tribes' that community encompasses), and our future.

The workshop was the beginning of a shared dream, a sense of common vision and purpose.

If the idea of community is so obvious, why do we even need to highlight it, let alone give it top priority? Because everything we've seen; every bit of research that addresses community at a deep level points to one thing. On Bowen Island community equals the sense of belonging. And feeling that 'I belong' is incredibly powerful. At the unconscious level it is about survival. Belonging means: I am safe (inside the warmth and security of the fire circle). I am recognized. I 'fit in'.

Themes

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Legacy

There are two dimensions to Legacy: *time* and *affect*; both are related to the notion of 'being part of something bigger.' Something 'intergenerational'.

Time

Participants are very much aware that there is a link between who and what came before them and what will be in the future. As we pointed out a few slides ago, grandparents and children often play this role of 'connector'. The grandparents are our link to the past. They are the elders, the keepers of the story (family, clan, tribe, etc.) and in this role they have the responsibility to pass on their knowledge to their children and their children's children, i.e., *"...Bob pass on his bee keeping skills to his grandson"*. Also, grandparents and elders are witnesses and guides at significant transitional and transformational moments of our lives; our rites of passage.

Children are our links to the future. They are the hope of something better to come; the symbol of fresh and optimistic possibilities. In our children our unfulfilled dreams and aspirations live on.

Affect

The second dimension can be described as affect or impact. What we do affects others and what others do affects us. This suggests the idea that Legacy has several layers:

- physically—this place, Grafton Lake, if we do this right it will benefit our children and their children
- emotionally and intellectually—by passing on our ideas and knowledge, our hopes and dreams will live on in the future.
- spiritually—being connected—both with our ancestors and those who come after us—gives meaning and purpose to what we do. It places us in a transcendent world view. We are part of something bigger.

Themes

Restoration



Restoration

In the GL stories, Restoration evoke a number of separate—but similar—connotations.

- **Healing**: physical, emotional, and spiritual restoration. In this situation, healing is a restoration to wholeness. What was broken (a heart) is mended; what was diseased is cured. In both cases there is the sense of restoration. *already...he can slowly heal himself from his loss.*”
- **Reconciliation**: The restoration of relationship. Our relationship with the land: *“To see what became of land that had once been abandoned.”* And our relationships with others *“He has made friends out of people who were former political enemies.”*
- **Reclaiming**: Understanding that something dear to us has been lost and actively taking it back, embracing it more deeply in the process. *“...moves agriculture out of the ‘industry’ and back to the home.”*
- **Returning/rethinking**: We return to what we originally knew or understood, but the process of going forth and coming home leads to renewed understanding, a rediscovery. What was once mundane or ordinary is seen in an entirely new light. As the poet T.S. Eliot writes so elegantly in the **Four Quartets**: *“...to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.”*

We see the healing—physical, emotional, and spiritual very strongly in the Visitors’ Survey. The notion of reconciliation, reclaiming, and coming back are *less* apparent in that survey than they are in our GL stories.

Themes

Sanctuary

"The whole place has a comfortable homey feel to it—as though it is well loved...all very enticing to linger and savour."

"The Reid sanctuary...everything lush and green and fresh air."

"She sits, meditates, and reflects...."

"A soft tinkle of wind chimes...."



"Zone 4 was a retreat away from the busier Zone 1 and 2."

"...looking to spend the evening among plants and trees after a long day in the city."

"Here they can hike up to quiet spots and feel entirely alone."

"Peace and happiness wash over her...."

- A retreat, a place of quiet peace and solitude
 - Safe, (emotionally) comfortable
- No rush, no bustle, everything is unhurried
- A place of rest, reflection...where we can take a momentary break just to relax, recharge, reflect
- Shares a number of similarities with the Visitors' Survey

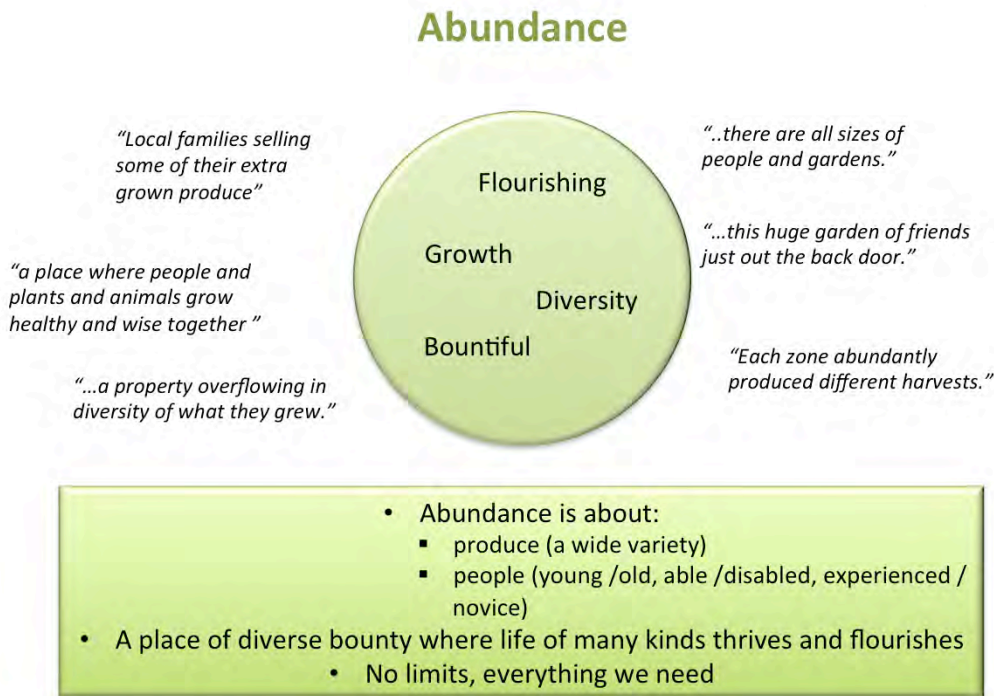
Sanctuary

In the stories, a number of participants described parts (not all) of the GL lands as places set aside for quiet, peace, and solitude. These *are* "places where one can just sit alone, rest and reflect—if only for a moment—to the "soft tinkle of the wind chimes". The hustle and bustle of daily life is held at bay in these isolated places. There is no hurry, no rush...and minimal worries. No need to do anything at all, if that's what we want.

These are places where one feels 'safe', 'comfortable' (at home)...where the 'RE' words ('refresh', 'relax', 'recharge', 'rejuvenate') reign.

In the Visitors' Survey, we saw similar images and words in the emotional benefit, Haven. In that survey's findings, Bowen Island is portrayed as a haven of escape from the challenges and stresses of the mainland. In the GL stories, GL is portrayed as a sanctuary within that haven...a double escape?

Themes



Abundance

There are two aspects, two distinct characteristics to this notion of abundance that are portrayed in the GL stories.

The first characteristic is about the produce (mainly food) from the lands themselves. In the right hands and with the right vision, GL can be an abundant food supply, providing Bowen Islanders with many varieties of locally grown foods. In the more apocalyptic stories, this abundance was critical.

The second aspect speaks to the abundance different types of people draw to the lands. The stories abound with portrayals of the young and old, able and disabled, the emotionally wounded and the incredibly strong, the experienced farmer/gardener and the novice...and the list goes on.

Both of these characteristics speak to a place of diverse bounty, where everything and everyone thrives and flourishes.

In these portrayal there are no limits. Everything we need, we have.

Themes

Harmony and Balance

"Some are super organized and grow traditional vegs. Some are more whimsical and are a mixture of vegs and flowers."

"...moves agriculture out of the 'industry' and back to the home."



"There is no battle. The horsetail is a plant that is much like a canopy, protecting the soil..."

"Grass, clover, and flowers grow between the plots to remind everyone that nature is still here."

- No right way or wrong way...no battle; a place for everyone and everything
 - Let nature show us the way
 - Inclusive
- Shares a number of similarities with the Visitors' Survey

Harmony and Balance

In the stories, GL is an inclusive place...the proverbial 'big tent' with room for many different points of view and ideas. There is no right or wrong way of doing things; no this or that. Rather this and that.

There is ample space and imagination for both 'traditional' agriculture and also for some 'whimsical' experimentation. GL let's nature lead the way, herself. As one workshop participant put it so succinctly: *"There is no battle..."* This is one of the ongoing lessons GL will be teaching.

We see Harmony and Balance in the Visitors' Survey also. There it is less a lesson to be learned and more of delight to be experienced and appreciated. GL workshop participants describe the lands as an inclusive place where multiple views and ideas can thrive side-by-side. Visitors, on the other hand, see Bowen as a place where sometime disparate notions are reconciled, For example Bowen Island is both 'rustic' and 'sophisticated'; 'far away and 'close'; etc.

Themes

Connections

"People loved coming to this space to touch the land and reconnect with each other"



"Immediately feels connected and one with nature."

"Connecting with the earth and growing their next meal....quiet time with herself....she sees how interconnected everything was and is"

- Shares many characteristics with 'Community'
 - Community is being connected
 - Being connected is more than community
- Connections is about being in touch, aware of what matters most in life
 - Transcendent and transformative
- Shares a number of similarities with the Visitors' Survey

Connections

At first, I wanted to merge 'Connections' into the core theme 'Community'; they share numerous characteristics. However, after careful re-reading of the stories, it is clear that although they share numerous characteristics, for GL they need to be addressed separately.

In the stories it is clear that community is about being connected. However, being connected is so much more than merely being in community. The stories portray connections as a transformative and transcendent awareness about those things in life that matter most.

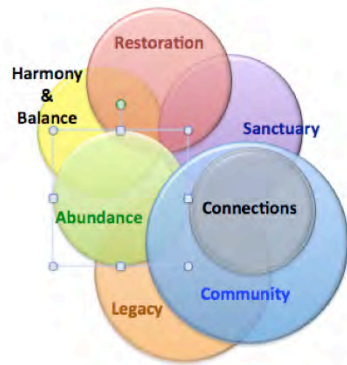
Connections are transcendent when they lead us to awareness of so-called 'universal truths': e.g., the generative power of nature as we watch crops grow to fruition; our need and longing for community; the circle of life as we grow and age, etc.

Connections are transformative when they lead us to fundamental changes. Not just doing things differently, but doing different things.

Of all the seven core themes that emerged from the GL stories, Connections shares the most with what we learned from the Visitors' Survey.

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Grafton Lake vis-à-vis visitors' survey



Grafton Lake



Visitors' survey

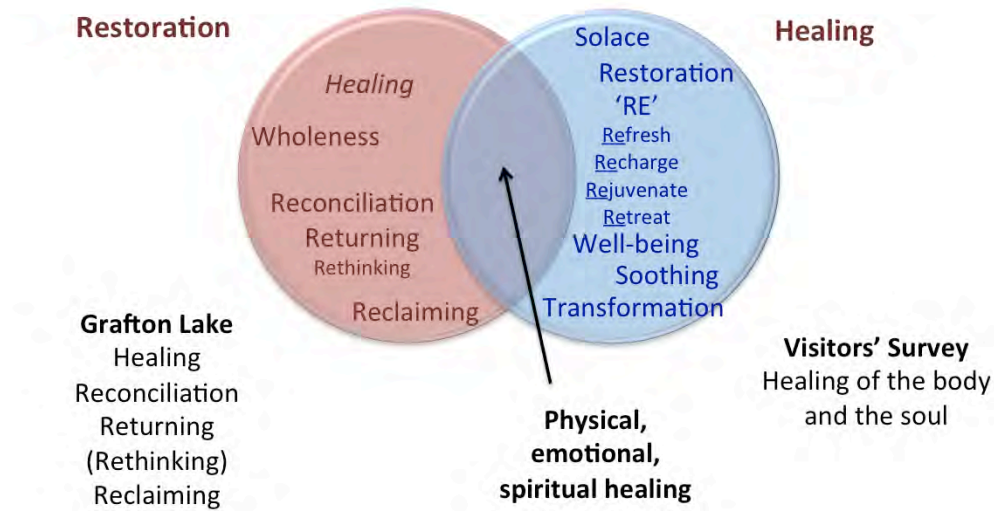
Here's a quick overview of the core themes from the GL workshop stories and the emotional benefits** identified in the Visitors' Survey.

The workshop core themes that share similar characteristics with the emotional benefits of the Visitors' Survey are:

- Restoration and Healing
- Sanctuary and Haven
- Harmony and Balance and Harmony and Balance
- Connections and Connected

**We are using the terms 'emotional benefits' for the Visitors' Survey findings and 'core themes' for the GL stories, for the sake of uniformity and clarity. 'Emotional benefits' is the term we used in the Visitors' Survey findings. In reality the core themes describe and define emotional benefits and vice versa.

Grafton Lake vis-à-vis Visitors' Survey



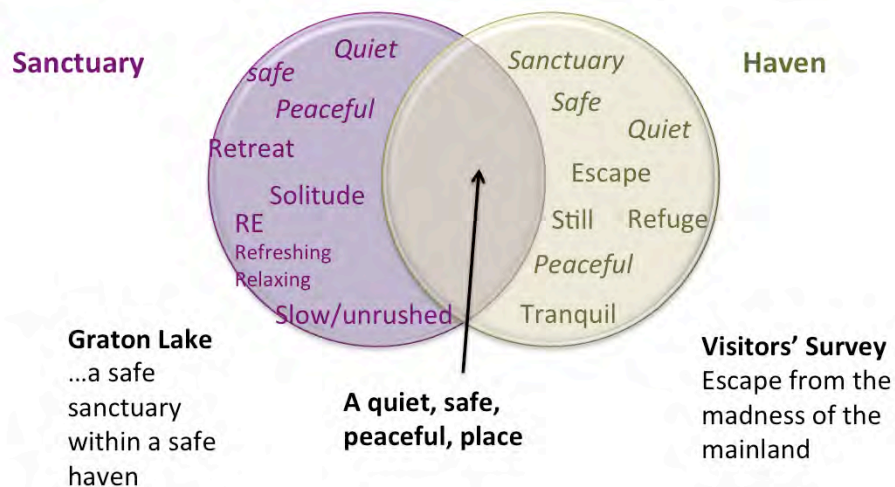
Restoration and Healing

The Restoration stories of the GL lands have a broader scope of meaning than the very obvious references to Healing in the Visitors' Survey. In the GL Restoration stories, we see the notion of healing, and we see it strongly. However, we also see the notions of reconciliation, returning (rethinking) and reclaiming.

In contrast, the emotional benefit associated with Healing in the Visitors' Survey is focused mostly on healing of the body and the soul.

What Restoration and Healing share is the same powerful semantic space—both emotionally and archetypically—of physical, emotional, and spiritual healing.

Grafton Lake vis-à-vis Visitors' Survey



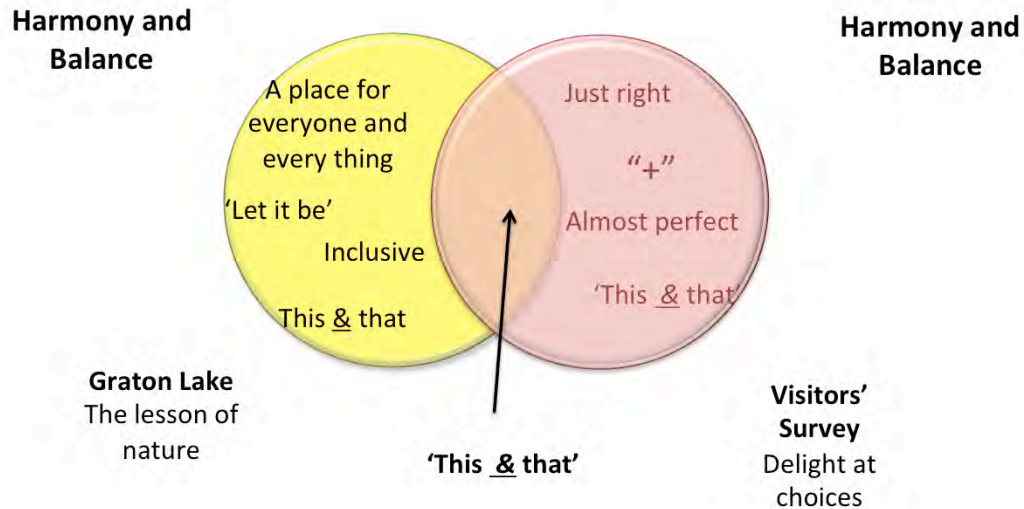
Sanctuary and Haven

One of the most powerful emotional benefits we identified in the Visitors' Survey is the notion that Bowen Island is a safe Haven, a refuge, and escape from the stress and responsibilities of mainland life. If only for a brief time.

The GL stories focus less on an escape from the mainland and describe the GL lands more as a sanctuary on Bowen... perhaps a way to think of the GL lands as a 'sanctuary within a safe haven' (my words).

The characteristics that Sanctuary and Haven share are a quiet, safe peaceful place. Note the words (in *italics*) that both share: '*quiet*', '*safe*', '*peaceful*'.

Grafton Lake vis-à-vis Visitors' Survey



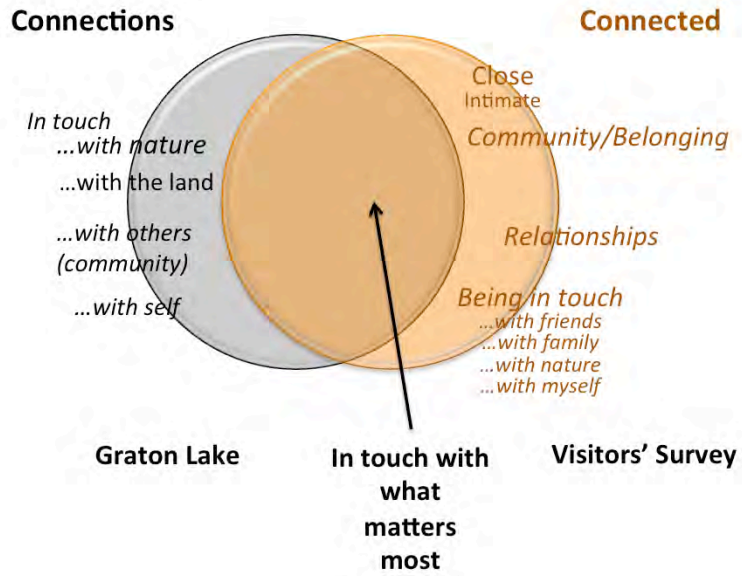
Harmony and Balance and Harmony and Balance

I thought hard and long about using identical words to describe this GL core theme and its corresponding emotional benefit from the Visitors' Survey. I did because they share a very powerful characteristic; 'This & that'. We see 'this & that' occasionally in other StoryTellings™ projects. We call it the 'Goldilocks affect'; when everything is 'just right'.

Where the two Harmony and Balances diverge a bit is visitors' responses focused more on the delight of the choices. The multiple—and sometime disparate— experiences Bowen provide. For example Bowen Island is both 'rustic' and 'sophisticated'; 'far away and 'close'; etc.

On the other hand, the GL stories focus a bit more on the lesson to be learned. Inclusion is necessary. Nature rules. There is a place for everyone and everyone's ideas.

Grafton Lake vis-à-vis Visitors' Survey



Connections and Connected

These two—Connections and Connected—are very, very similar. The both share the notion of being in touch with what matters most.



Final thought

“When I am working on a problem, I never think about beauty....but when I have finished, if the solution is *not* beautiful I know I’m wrong.”

H. Buckminster Fuller