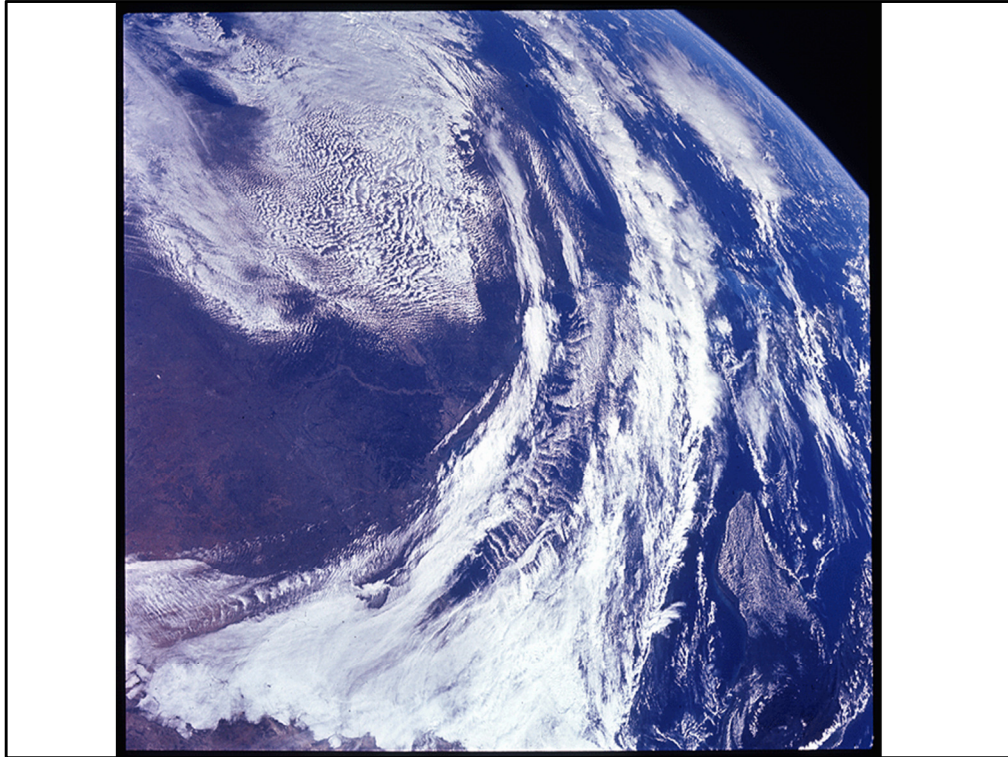




Here is the Mad River Valley, home to many including Yestermorrow.



As with every part of the earth, every place on earth plays certain roles. It has certain work to do, just like every part of our bodies. Some of those roles are hydrological. Some have to do with nutrient cycling... But every place has work to do and does it in particular ways.



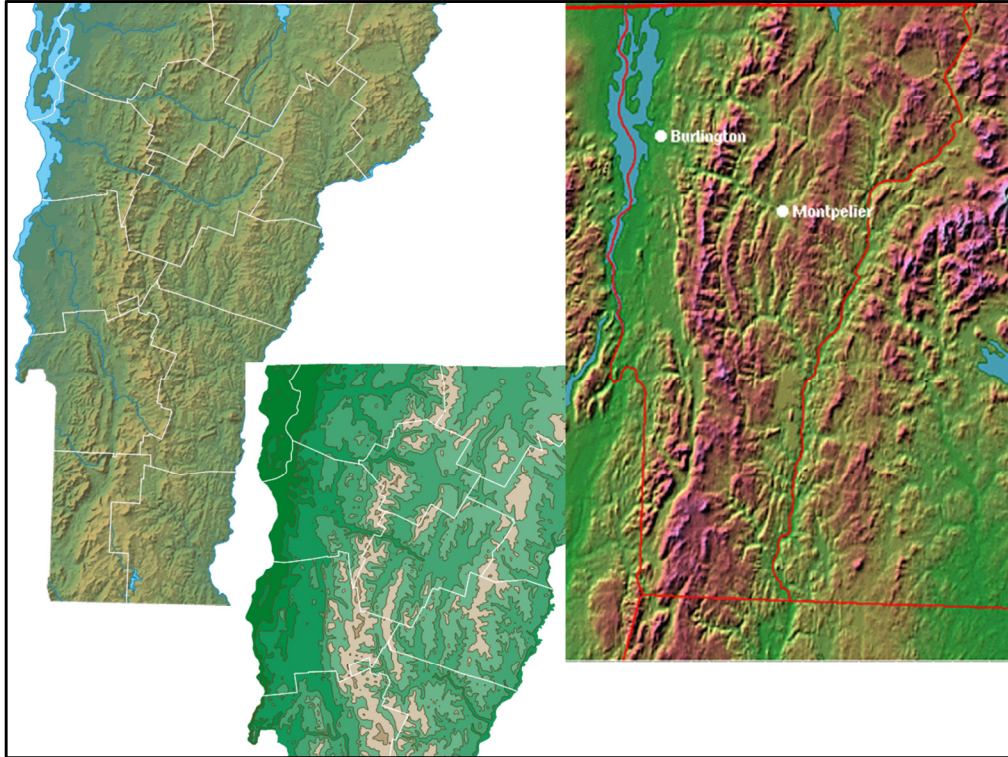
This valley does things in particular ways. Right off you can see how defined and contained it is. It is naturally contained, holding and defining what happens within it.





The “bathtub” shape of the valley is obvious here. People have talked about it as pushing everything together; different people, different activities...all pushed together by the shape of the valley whether they like it or not.

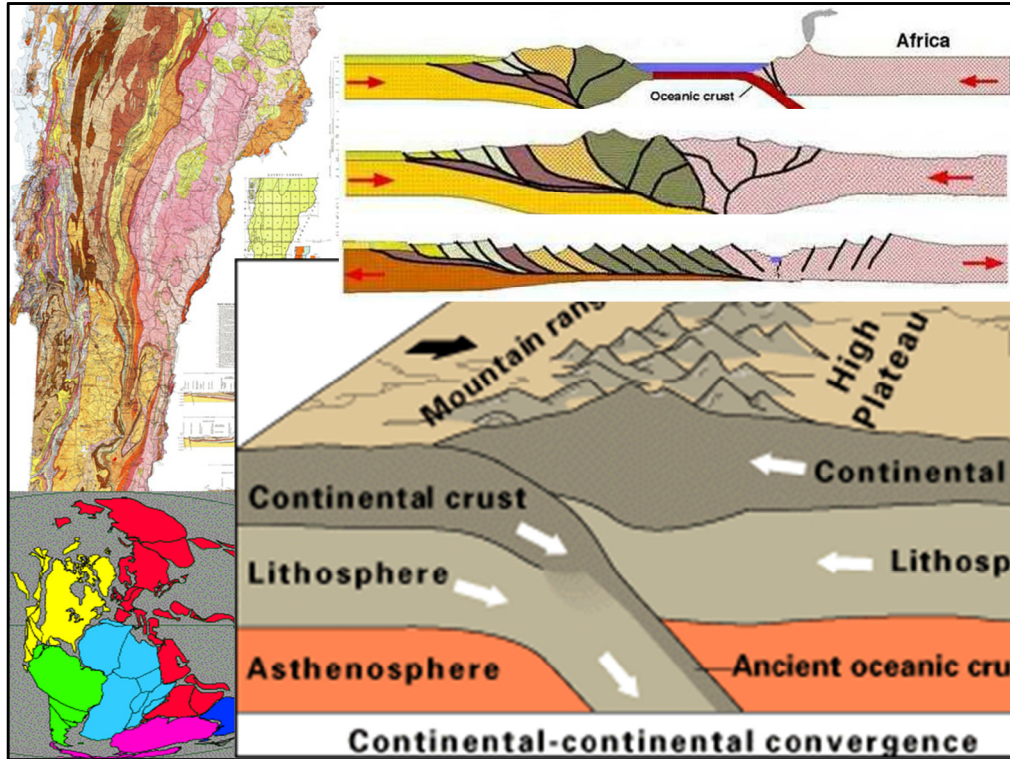




From these images it is obvious how the Mad River Valley is a very defined valley in Vermont. Framed by the crescent-shaped ridge to the east and the long ridge of the Green Mountains on the west.



Again, the clear, defined valley form is obvious. The watershed almost closes at the lower (north) end of this “feather-shaped” valley. This narrow form causes the storm- water from the tributaries to concentrate quickly in the main stem of the river, leading to the flash flooding it is known for.



The shape of the valley, as well as the rest of New England, was formed by the proto-continent of Africa crashing into what is now North America. This caused the uplift of waves of rock, like the folds in a rumped carpet, the ridges and valleys running more or less north and south. The rock was squeezed together so powerfully that the rock was metamorphosed into harder, denser forms.





The standing ridges of rock in this picture show the once flat layers of softer sedimentary rock, having been hardened by pressure, and stood on their edges. The steep, hard banks these forces formed, hold the river in its narrow course.



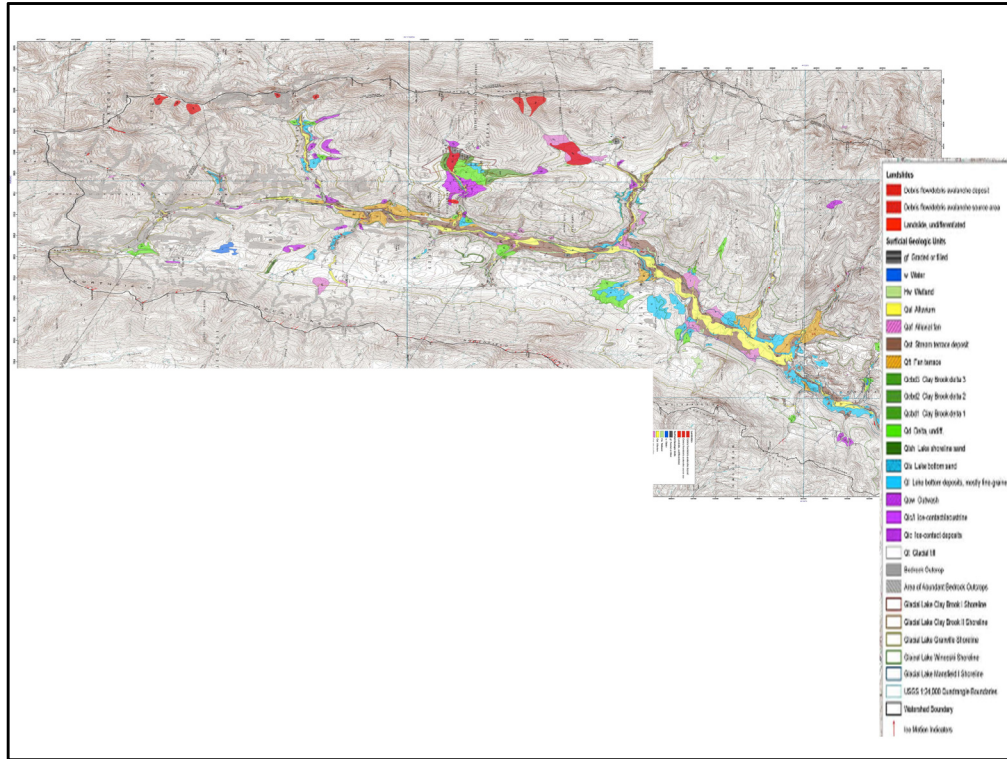
Running on this exposed rock, the water is very clear and pure, particularly in the river's upper reaches, and the metamorphosed rock is clearly hard and dense, polishing to shiny curves by the force of the water and forcing the water into the narrow channels that once ran millwheels.



The valley's form shapes the narrow band of agricultural lands in the ribbon of floodplain. There is not a lot of good farmland here, but what there is is highly concentrated and defined.

The limited soils and other resources, as well as relative isolation, long cold winters, and spring floods, have always limited the human population and its makeup. Many people get scrubbed out.





This band of rich soils eroded from the valley sides can be clearly seen concentrated in the brightly colored areas in the narrow valley floor. Much of this soil accumulated in the valley floor as layers and pockets deposited by glacial meltwater often as sediment on the bottoms of the various glacial lakes that filled it between periods of glaciation. The lack of soils makes them precious.



So, what is the difference between this place and Stowe? How are the ski areas different? And how about their relationship to the valleys they are in? Does the barnlike façade of Sugarbush vs. the alpine lodge look of the Stowe lodge reveal anything about this difference?

At one time the valley and its' chamber of commerce and postal code was referred to as "The Sugarbush Valley" much like the Stowe Valley. The community pushed back and insisted on being called The Mad River Valley which it was.



What does the Mad River Glen and its single chair and this pared-down advertising campaign say? The ski area is constrained by the landscape, and they insure a small operation and customer base through the refusal to replace the single chair with a bigger one. The ad is similarly restrained.

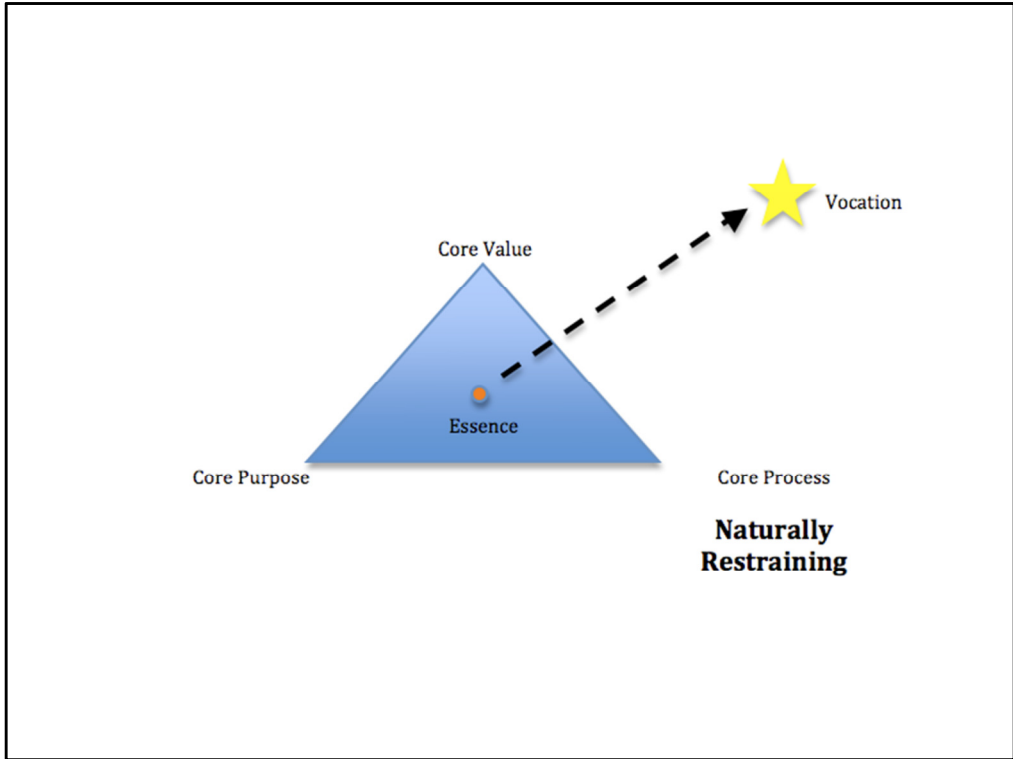




We were told a story about how the July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration was an unbridled party with public drinking. After an unfortunate drunk-driving accident following the party, there was a general agreement to tone it down and to make sure no one got hurt. The party continues, with the conscious restraint provided by going too far.



Repeatedly, various stories of the valley spoke of its natural beauty and naturalness as well as various forces restraining, often as in the July 4<sup>th</sup> story not through imposition, but naturally. We have called the Core Process of this place: Naturally restraining.







Given all of the natural restraints; the harsh winters, the spring floods, the isolated nature of this place, the scarce resources, everyone who has lived here has needed to be creative and resourceful to make it here.



There has long been and continues to be a surprising amount of innovation and creativity in this valley, from Mad River Canoes, to Green Mountain Coffee, the first Vermont Castings Stove, Small Dog Electronics, the first composting toilets manufactured in the US, Mad River Glen and Northern Power... It made us wonder: How long has this kind of creativity had gone on here?



The isolated and extreme nature of this place has always required creativity, from horse-powered log splitters to tracked steam engines.



# Make Your Own MAPLE SYRUP

It takes about 10 gallons of sap to make 1 quart of syrup. An average maple tree with a single tap will yield about 10 gallons over the course of a sugaring season.

**Sugaring season is from late February through early April**

Identify a sugar maple at least 12 inches in diameter.

On the sunny side of the tree, find a healthy spot at waist height. At an upward angle, drill a 2-inch deep hole large enough to accommodate the spout.

Use a mallet to drive your spout (called a spile) into the hole. Multiple taps in the same tree should be at least 6 inches apart.

Hang a clean, covered container to catch the sap as it runs out of the spile.

Collect the sap each day and keep it cold to prevent souring. Boil it as soon as possible.

Start the boiling process outdoors. As the water in the sap begins to evaporate, continue to add cold sap to the boiling sap. Don't overfill the pan because it could boil over (apply melted butter to the rim of the pan to help keep the boiling sap from foaming).

Keep at least an inch of sap in the bottom of the pan at all times to avoid having it burn. Use a candy thermometer to monitor the temperature. The finished syrup should be 7.5 degrees above the boiling point of water, which varies by elevation.

Filter the boiling syrup through a clean, wet white felt or paper filter into a glass jar. Seal the jar and tip it on its side for several minutes as the syrup cools. Sealed jars of syrup can be stored at room temperature but should be refrigerated after being opened for use. Properly prepared syrup can also be stored in the freezer.

Use hot water, but not soap, to clean equipment.

Taps should be removed from the trees when the first buds appear.

## THE GRADES

<b>Grade A Light Amber</b> , is very light and has a mild, more delicate maple flavor.	<b>Grade A Medium Amber</b> , is a bit darker, and has a bit more maple flavor.	<b>Grade A Dark Amber</b> , is darker yet, with a stronger maple flavor.	<b>Grade B</b> , is made late in the season, and is very dark, with a very strong maple flavor.

Graphic: By Shawn Briley/www.shawnbriley.com

Even jus the making of maple sugar and syrup are very creative responses to the environment.



To make it here has always required creativity in making a living as well. Unlike the richer, lower valleys, it often required numerous occupations in different seasons of the year. A little farming, a little logging, sugaring in the spring, and butternut harvesting in the late summer/fall... Diversified farming was the rule as no rail-line enabled easy shipping of large production and the limited, narrow growing areas did not permit the same production monocultures as in the Connecticut and Champlain Valleys.



This same diversity of farming and the diversity of skills, still persists for many of the same reasons.





It also continues to require a creativity and resourcefulness to make it work.



This creativity and diversity of resourcefulness can be seen in the parades and celebrations.





As well as the farmer's markets



**MAD RIVER VALLEY Localvore Project** *Celebrating and supporting local food in the Mad River Valley - those who eat it and those who grow it - through education, community connections, and collective wisdom.*

HOME MAD RIVER FOOD HUB WORKSHOPS & EVENTS SCHOOLS RECIPES/SOURCES BLOG/NEWS LEARN MORE ABOUT

Don't eat food that won't rot.

Michael Pollan  
On NPR's Wait Wait Don't Tell Me  
April 4, 2009

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TO OUR BLOG  
RIVER VALLEY PROJECT BY

**FARM TO PLATE & MAD RIVER FOOD HUB PRESENTATION**  
Tuesday, May 10 in Waitsfield, VT

*farm to plate*  
new initiatives for the Mad River Valley

**TUESDAY, MAY 10 @ BIG PIC**

7:00-8:00 PM  
Farm to Plate: A night of local food, local music, and local fun!

8:00-8:30 PM  
Farm to Plate: A night of local food, local music, and local fun!

8:30-9:30 PM  
Farm to Plate: A night of local food, local music, and local fun!

9:30 PM  
Farm to Plate: A night of local food, local music, and local fun!

The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund has been developed a road map for agricultural development in Vermont and Ellen Kahler, Executive Director Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, will lead this presentation to discuss the initiative's 18-month research and development plan.

**EAT LOCAL YOU CAN!**

7:00

**Sunday, May 22 in Waitsfield, VT**

**Slow Food**

Slow Food Vermont comes to the Mad River Valley! Join the folks from Slow Food Vermont who are coming here from Burlington to spend some time in the Mad River Valley. There will be a tour of Small Step Farm in Waitsfield and then a special screening of Amodovar's "Women at the Verge of A Nervous Breakdown" as part of the Tuesday Night

The need to build off of the resources that are here, both natural and human, continues to be seen and worked on creatively. The constrained nature of the valley means that neighbors continue to depend on one another for help and sharing of knowledge, skills, and work.



We were told several stories that exemplified this depending on and supporting one another:

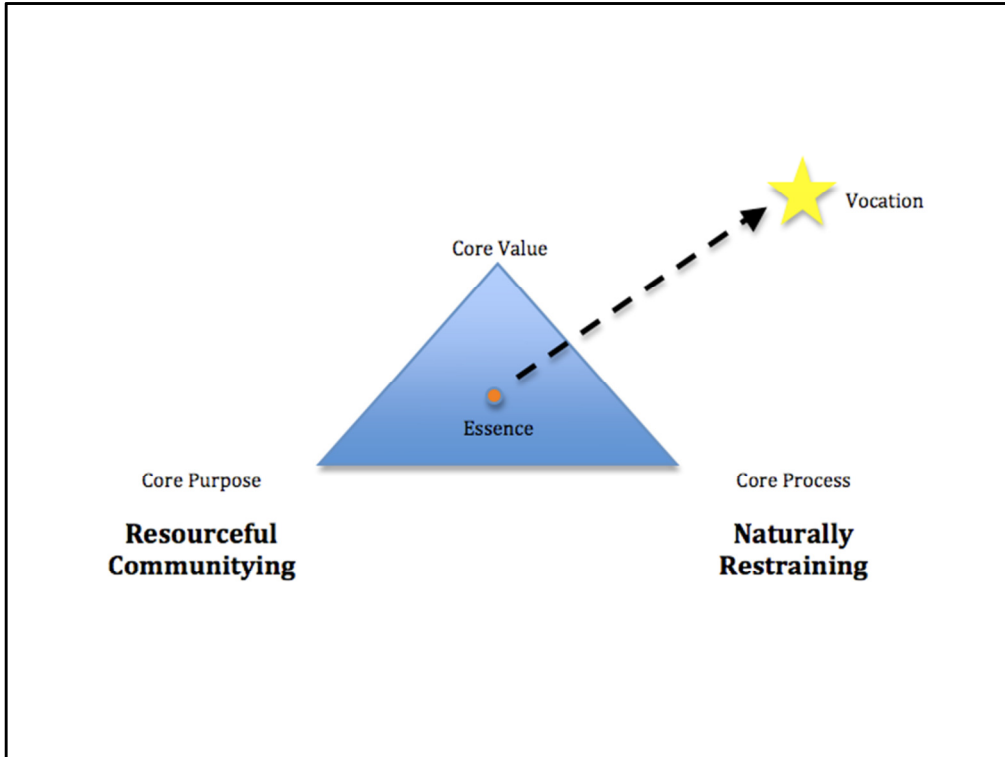
To address the Big Picture's high energy costs, a group of folks volunteered to put on fundraiser.

Both what is now the Food Bank Farm and the Yak farm were put together very quickly through informal groups working together. The Yak farm came into being on the back of a napkin in The Big Picture.

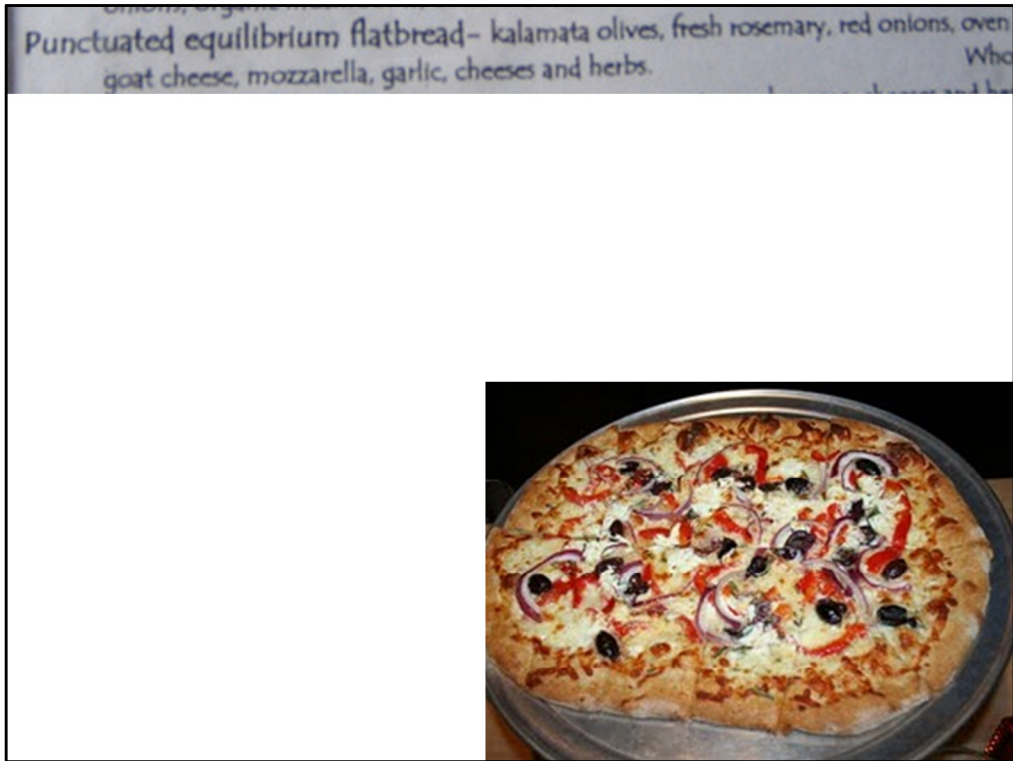
A diversity of stoves (including the Vermont Castings and The Elm) as well as many other projects spun out of the old button factory

More than once, farmers have gotten together to put up the hay of an ailing farmer.

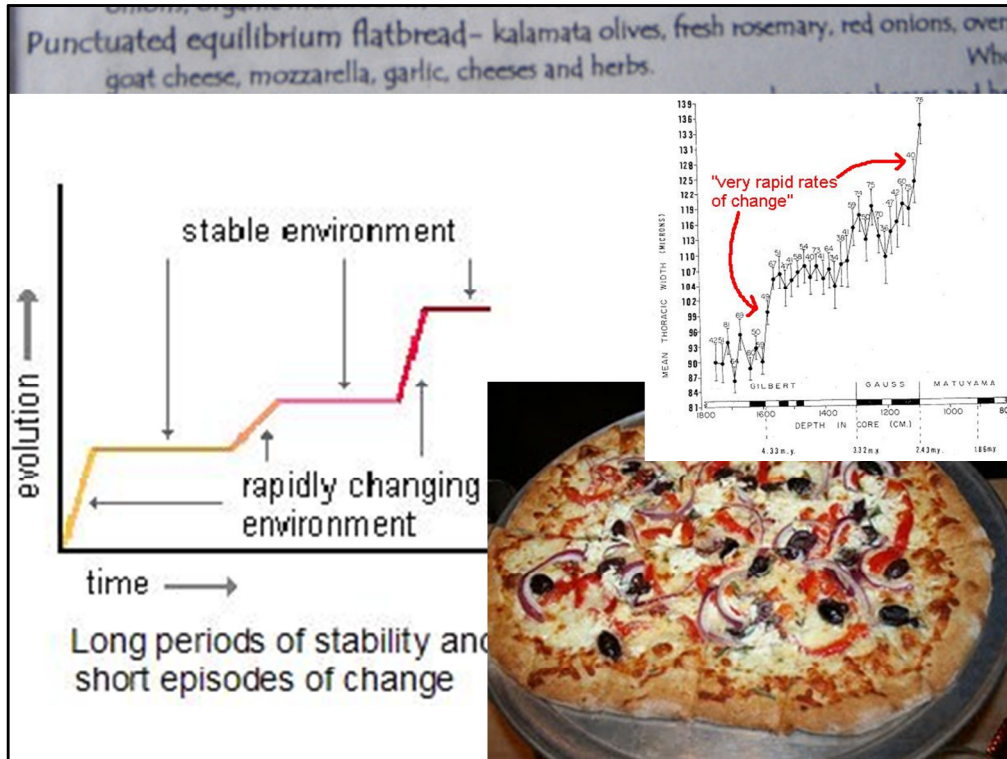
We called all of this, what good comes out of the Naturally Restraining, Resourceful Communitying.





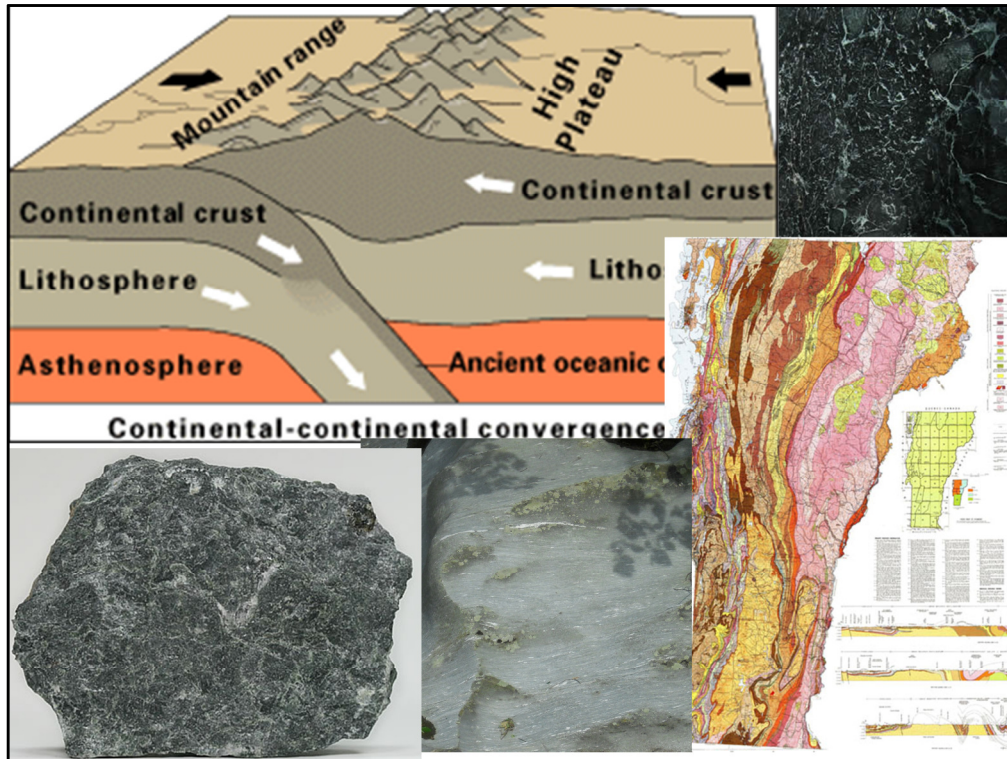


What is Punctuated Equilibrium? Why name a flatbread from here that?



Punctuated equilibrium is where periods of relative stability are broken by rapid and extreme changes. Much like in this place. Everything seems to be concentrated, even the waves of changes, from the tectonic plates colliding to the multiple glacial periods and the inter glacial lakes and then valleys, the clearing of the forests and the sheep craze, and the ski and "last best place" eras. Even the climate and floods of water and visitors, crops and snow tend to be extreme. This weeds out who likes to live here, whether plants, crops, businesses, or people.

Much of the sides of the valley are shaped like these graphs.

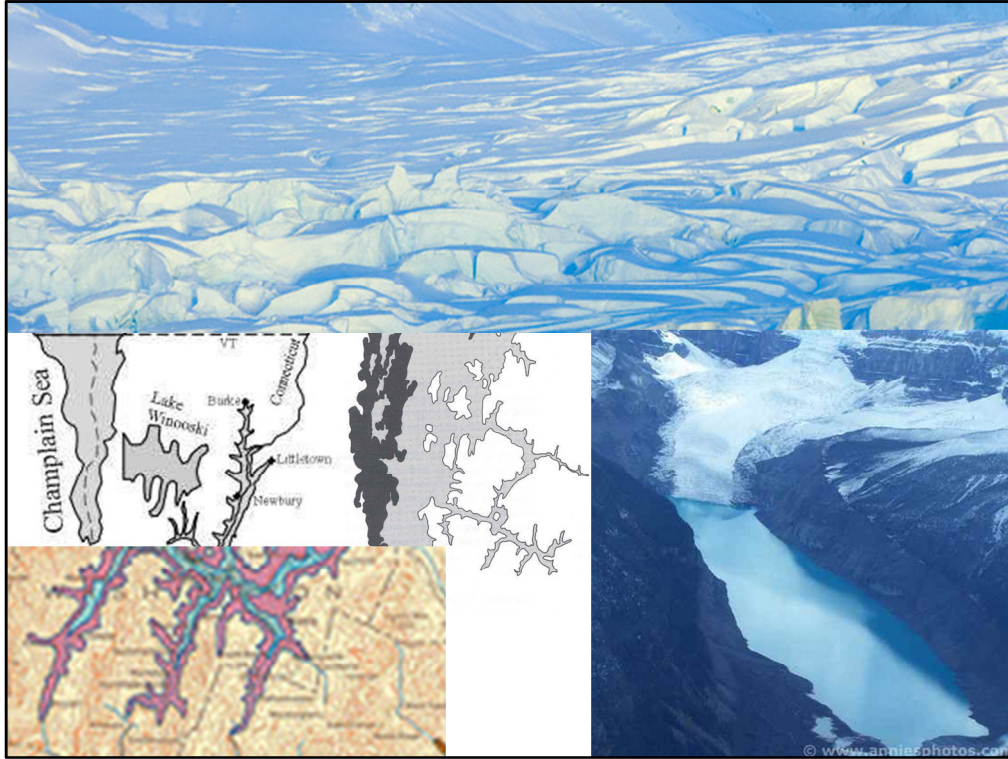


The collision of the tectonic plate, not only created the ridges and valleys, but also metamorphosed the rock into dense, hard, crystalline stone.





The glaciers wore down these high hard mountains to their hard, dense roots.



The glacier meltwater, further sculpted the landscape, while the meltwater lakes, sorted-out and concentrated the rich soils.



Floodwaters have repeatedly shaped the valley landscape and community.





The waters continuously sculpt and polish the rock.



And the water is in turn cleaned by forest and kept clean and clear by running on the polished rock.



The extreme nature of the forces in the valley continues to attract people for extreme sports from skiing to river-running. Many would say that these are the purest most essential manifestation of these sports, that this place has that effect.





The making of maple syrup, which requires the extremes of spring weather, is an essentializing process. Given the scarce resources of the area, people had to harvest the sweet sap the trees concentrated from sunlight to boil it down to its sweet core using the heat concentrated in the wood from sunlight. This has been an important process here for millennia.

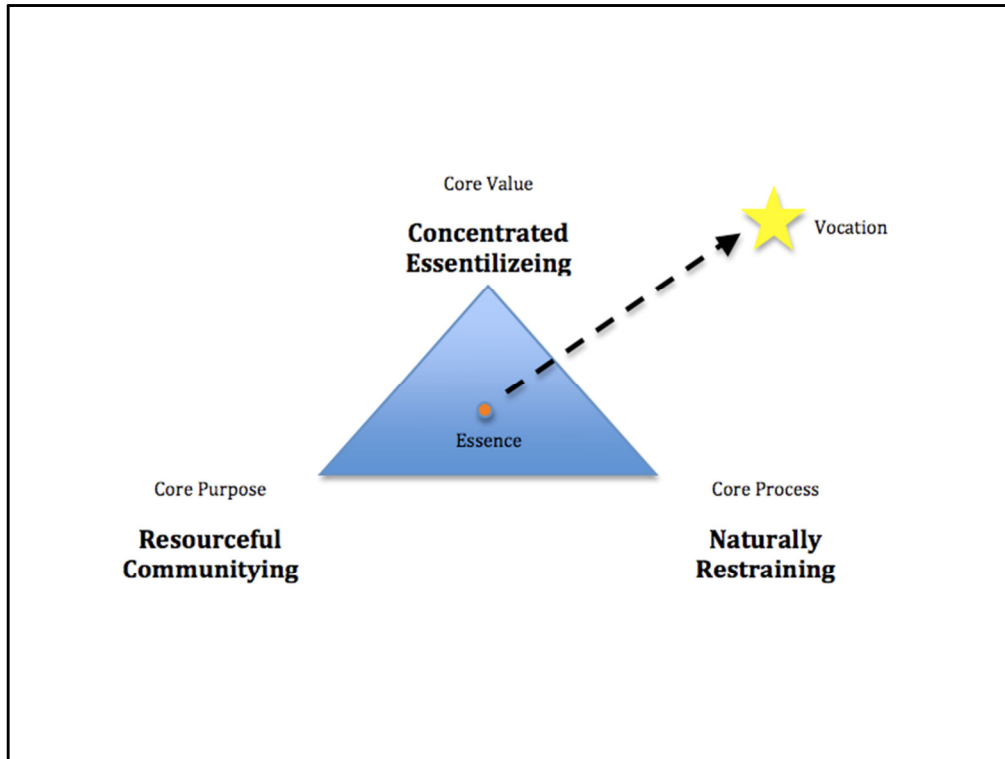


The beaver too gathered sticks to feed on their bark to make their thick fur and fat bodies, and to build the dams that slowed the flow of soil and water to concentrate them in rich pockets on the rocky landscape. They were so effective that they fueled both the fur trade and the farming that followed it.

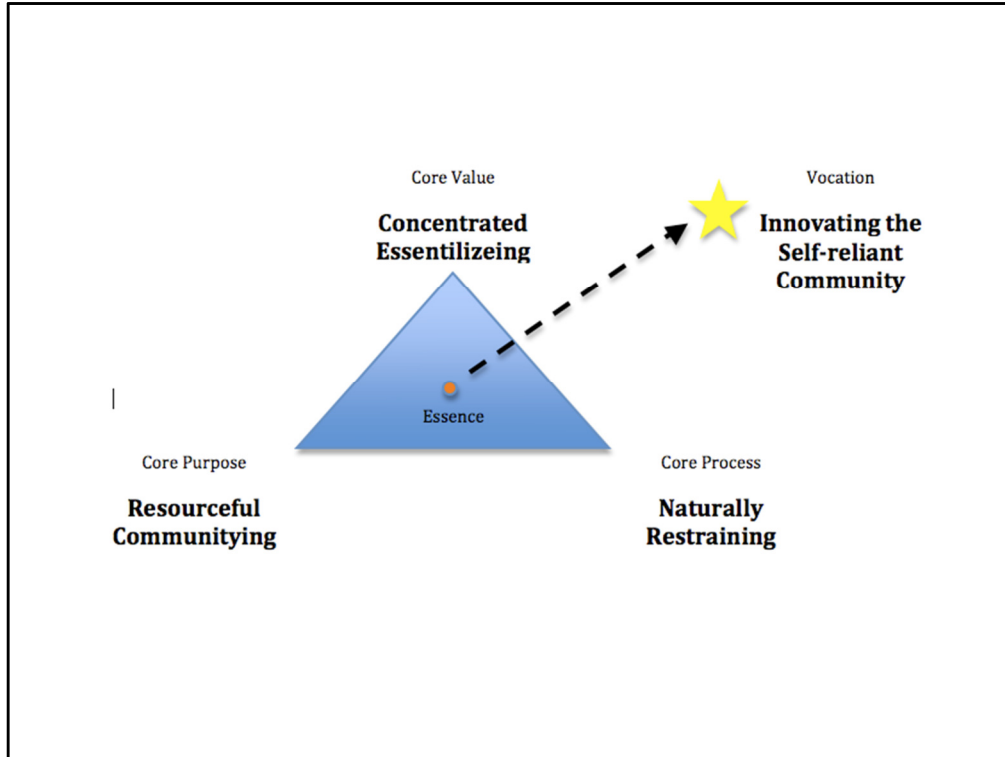


This place tends to concentrate and essentialize everything, including people and personalities.





So, if the restraints that naturally arise here require the inhabitants to be resourceful and creative in how they live in this place and with one another, in a way that essentilizes or strips them to their core, what does that set them up to do? What do they have to offer to the world?



Given the innovative nature of the community and its self-reliant nature, a first cut at the vocation for the Mad River Valley is: Innovating the Self-reliant Community. Working this with a small portion of the community seemed to confirm it as work they could offer to the world, not what has been completed, but an appropriate challenge.

