

Pedagogical Pathways for Indigenous Business Education  
Learning from Current Aboriginal Business Practices.

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## **Key messages**

This study provides a brief look into three co-operatives that are strongly integrated into their communities located in Canada's far North. Each co-operative provides multiple services for their communities to meet their community's needs. The integration of the co-operative into the community means that in order to be effective at managing, directing and working for the co-operative you need to understand the community the co-operative serves. This study found that:

- 1) There is a link between the community and the co-operative that needs to be encouraged and developed to keep the economic activity of the community in the community.
- 2) Skills training to increase capacity of community members to better provide for the co-operative's growing need for business acumen needs to be developed and;
- 3) Skills training needs to include a cultural sensitivity components to ease transitional issues when new individuals wish to work for the community co-operative. As the co-operative is a key component of the community it is important for those working for the co-operative to understand the community.

## **Executive summary**

There is a growing population of Indigenous youth preparing for postsecondary education (Assembly of First Nations Education, 2012; Macdonald & Wilson, 2013). Business education is one of the highest enrollment areas in Canadian Universities, but the information on Indigenous business practices are scatter across disciplines (Klinga & Canadian Career Development, 2013; Statistics-Canada, 2014). This project will consolidate the information on the business culture and place-based nature of Indigenous businesses in rural and remote communities.

Three communities in Canada's North were visited for this study, 1) Old Crow, Yukon Territory, 2) Naujaat, Nunavut, and 3) Ulukhaktok, Northwest Territory. Old Crow, Yukon represents a Vuntut G'witchin community that is self-governed, while Naujaat and Ulukhaktok represent Inuit communities.

The key informant interviews for this study included staff, managers, directors and members of the co-operatives. Each individual interviewed, however, has many roles in their community. Some of the directors for the co-operative act as community government leaders working in the Hamlet offices or other positions within the community's government. Co-operative members represent a large cross section of the community including teachers, cashiers, cleaners, priests, and many more occupations within the community. This broad cross section of the community does provide a strong indication that the co-operative is strongly integrated into community life.

Each of the key informant interviews captured on video are to be edited for multiple uses including social media, tutorials and longer documentaries. A total of fifteen interviews were completed in the communities.

The survey of co-operative members conducted during this study provides insight into the educational needs and the most useful format for educational tools to meet the community's needs. A total of 66 surveys were completed with an average response rate per community of approximately 8%.

The overall results from the survey and the key informant interviews point toward three overarching categories present in each of the three communities:

- 1) There is a link between the community and the co-operative that needs to be encouraged and developed to keep the economic activity of the community in the community.
- 2) Skills training to increase capacity of community members to better provide for the co-operative's growing need for business acumen needs to be developed and;
- 3) Skills training needs to include a cultural sensitivity components to ease transitional issues when new individuals wish to work for the community co-operative. As the co-operative is a key component of the community it is important for those working for the co-operative to understand the community.

The major impact of this project has been the mobilization of existing Indigenous business knowledge. Northern Indigenous communities have developed innovative

business practices to improve their community's economic status that need to be incorporated into current post-secondary business curriculum. Sharing the existing practices and synthesizing the information into user-friendly case studies and videos will assist Indigenous communities in communicating their business practices to future Indigenous business leaders. The results from this study, including videos and case studies, have been incorporated into five new business courses at the University of Winnipeg as part of the Co-operative Enterprise program. In addition, co-operative advocacy groups such as Co-operatives First have incorporated the videos produced by this project into their social media, websites and promotional materials to help develop Indigenous co-operatives in rural and remote communities across Western Canada.

The strengths of the knowledge synthesized by this project include the broad scope of participants involved in both the interviews and surveys. Managers, Directors, Staff, and Community Members participated in video interviews discussing the role of the co-operative in the community. As there are few, up-to-date videos available that include Indigenous participants as key informants this project fills a gap in knowledge that exists in Indigenous business studies. The videos produced by this project will present Indigenous business leaders discussing their role in a viable business that Indigenous business students can identify with.

A gap in the knowledge that this project could not address is the need for a better understanding of the link between current educational training programs in the communities and co-operative business educational needs. There are significant resources available in each of the communities that took part in this project. Each community has an educational infrastructure that rivals some of the post-secondary institutions in the South. Nauyasat, Nunavut, for example, has a new \$27 million-dollar school complete with science labs, tool shops, and smartboards (Parkin-Architects-Ltd, 2012). Ulukhaktok's school has an active youth program including a café and bakery that are linked to the co-operative. As this project was not focused on the link between existing educational programs and the co-operatives within the Inuit and First Nations communities this knowledge gap was not addressed by this study. It is an important gap in the knowledge base linking Indigenous business and community that should be addressed. The utilization of existing educational infrastructure and programs partnering with Southern post-secondary institutions could provide skills training and opportunities for the youth of these communities while allowing them to remain in community.

This project provided the first step in examining the role of a community centred co-operative business within an Indigenous community. The results point to a need to further understand the cultural sensitivities that a community based business must take into account when working for and with the community it serves. Within these rural and remote Northern communities, the co-operative businesses take on multiple service provider roles making them a key actor, not only in the economic activity of the community, but in the social and cultural life of the community. Further study into the integration and interaction of these firms into Indigenous communities is need in order to provide educational and business tools that are best suited to the community's needs.

## **Context – the issue**

There is a growing population of Indigenous youth preparing for postsecondary education (Assembly of First Nations Education, 2012; Macdonald & Wilson, 2013). Business education is one of the highest enrollment areas in Canadian Universities, but the information on Indigenous business practices are scatter across disciplines (Klinga & Canadian Career Development, 2013; Statistics-Canada, 2014). In a recent collection of essays by Brown, Tulk, and Doucette (2016) the consolidation of Indigenous business knowledge was begun. What needs to be captured, however, is the place-based context of Indigenous business practices. As Battiste (2010) states, “Each group develops expertise in their ecosystem that spans trans-systemic approaches to knowledge, which animate and manifest in languages, communication forms, ceremonies and teaching”. Siebers (2004) discusses the need to understand the aspirations and interests of the people within their life-world referring to the place-based knowledge embedded in transformational activities including business practices.

This project will consolidate the information on the business culture and place-based nature of Indigenous businesses in rural and remote communities. The information synthesized from the Indigenous businesses in this project will be consolidated with the existing literature on Indigenous place-based economic knowledge (Chambers, 2006; Korteweg, Gonzalez, & Guillet, 2010; Scully, 2012; van der Wey, 2001).

## **Implications**

Business education includes the use of case studies of which there are precious few that incorporate Canadian Indigenous businesses from Northern rural communities. One of the goals of this project is to synthesize existing Indigenous business knowledge into case studies, with accompanying videos, to contribute to the availability and accessibility of Indigenous business resources for educators. Use of Indigenous focused case studies will help Indigenous students see themselves in the role of future business leaders encouraging their attraction to and retention in business programs. The case studies developed from this project will respectfully incorporate Indigenous Ways of Knowing into business studies, which will help educators engage Indigenous students (Aikenhead & Michell, 2011; Cochran et al., 2008).

Impacts: The major impact of this project will be the mobilization of existing Indigenous business knowledge. Northern Indigenous communities have developed innovative business practices to improve their community’s economic status that need to be incorporated into current post-secondary business curriculum. Sharing the existing practices and synthesizing the information into user-friendly case studies and videos will assist Indigenous communities in communicating their business practices to future Indigenous business leaders.

In addition, existing business pedagogy will be enhanced through the incorporation of Indigenous Ways of Knowing business. The need to expand business education to incorporate Indigenous culture and a place-based understanding of business will be crucial if rural and remote Canadian Indigenous communities are to become sustainable places for business for future Indigenous business leaders to live and work.

### **Approach – methodology**

Arctic Co-ops will assist in asking three Indigenous businesses to participate in this project. The three businesses will be chosen to ensure the widest geographic coverage ensuring that all aspects of place-based business practices are captured. A community-based participatory approach will be utilized throughout this project.

This project will utilize semi-structured video interviews to capture information on Indigenous business practices. Directors, managers and staff (minimum of 9 interviews: 3 Directors, 3 Managers and 3 Staff) will participate in the interviews to provide a thorough review of the business. Arctic Co-ops will assist in arranging for the interviews on site. Questions will focus on governance, management and human resource training and needs. The questions for the semi-structured interviews will be developed in partnership with Arctic Co-ops and the University of Winnipeg Elder. Examples of questions include, 1) Please explain the current governance structure of your business, 2) As a manager please describe a typical day/month/year and 3) As a staff member what skills would you like to develop? The semi-structured interview method will allow participants to discuss any and all aspects of the business that they feel relevant. In person video interviews allow for the collection of the place-based context of the Indigenous businesses. Skype or other distance interviews techniques are not effective, as rural and remote communities do not have access to broadband connections.

To avoid any personal bias interfering with the analysis of the interviews, one individual was tasked with collecting the interviews and a second with transcription and analysis of the responses. Responses were transcribed and time stamped to allow for the ability to quickly review specific sections of the interview.

In addition to key informant interviews a survey of the co-operative membership was completed. The survey focused on skills training and the co-operative's role in the community. To ensure co-operative members had the opportunity to review the questions for the survey, the survey document was posted on Facebook prior to the research teams arrive into the community. Facebook is utilized by most community members as a means of communication and represents the most effective way to reach co-operative members. The research team made themselves available at the local co-operative retail store to collect completed surveys. To encourage participation a ticket for a draw of a \$300 gift certificate was provided upon receipt of a completed survey.

Utilizing a cross case comparison analysis two randomly selected interviews were analyzed to identify categories based on responses by the interviewees. Utilizing Glaser and Strauss (1967) method, four stages of analysis were completed on the data from the interview:

- 1) Comparison of responses to each category.
- 2) Integrating categories and their associated properties.
- 3) Delimiting the theory.
- 4) Writing the theory.

Based on the initial analysis of the first two interviews tentative categories were developed. In line with Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg, and Colemand (2000) method this initial category identification of the co-operatives based on the responses undergoes continuous refinement throughout the data analysis process and continually feeds back into identification of the category. Interviewee's responses were identified with a category and responses from the remaining thirteen interviewees were then placed into the identified categories. By categorizing responses from each interviewee into categories we are able to reduce the complexity of the overall responses by the interviewees and organize the responses based on the conceptual nature of the response (Dey, 1993).

## **Results - outcomes of the research synthesis and how they support the conclusions**

### **Old Crow - Vuntut G'witchin First Nations**

Old Crow, Yukon Territory is an isolated community located on the banks of the Porcupine and Crow Rivers just above the Arctic Circle within an area known as Old Crow Flats. The community, the river, the mountain and surrounding area of Old Crow was named in honour of Chief Deetru `K`avihdik whose name means "Crow May I Walk" who died in 1870's.

The community of Old Crow, is a small community of approximately 221 Vuntut G'witchin. The average age of the residents of Old Crow is 39.6 years with a median age of 38.7, which makes this community the oldest of the communities in this project. When discussing language only 215 individuals completed the 2016 census outlining the majority of individuals, 210 in the community, as speaking English with 10 indicating they speak both French and English. The mother tongue for the community members is mostly English, 170 individuals, followed by G'witchin at 30 and 5 individuals indicated that French was their mother tongue. At home 200 individuals indicated that English was the language most often spoken followed by G'witchin with 10 individuals and finally 5 individual indicated French was the language of the home (Statistics-Canada, 2016).

The community sits within a periglacial environment, which means Old Crow has a cold climate and the land is frequently subjected to freezing and thawing cycles. Old Crow experiences annual temperature average daily highs of 20.2 °C (68.4 °F) in July and average daily lows of -33.5 °C (-28.3 °F) in January.

Being located above the Arctic Circle there are days in the summer when Old Crow sees the midnight sun, also known as the polar day. Typically, between May 5<sup>th</sup> and August 8<sup>th</sup> the sun will be shining on Old Crow at midnight local time and that is why it is called the midnight sun. During the winter, between December 14<sup>th</sup> and December 29<sup>th</sup>, the sun will hide from Old Crow during what is known as the polar night.

As the most northern community in all of the Yukon Territory, Old Crow does bring unique challenges and opportunities for its residents. For example, Old Crow cannot be accessed by road making transportation of goods and services difficult and costly. The



Vuntut G'witchin First Nations community, however, took this transportation difficulty and made it into an opportunity by investing in the local airline:

"This initiative is unique, just as the relationship between Air North and the Yukon is unique," said Board Director Greg Charlie, who is also a member of the Vuntut G'witchin First Nation (VGFN), which owns a 49 percent stake in the airline. "It is rare to find a bond between a business and a community as strong as the one our airline shares with Yukoners. We don't take that bond for granted; we cherish it" (Airline, 2017).

The community of Old Crow maintained a single store, the North West Company store (also known as the Northern store) (Statistics-Canada, 2016). The North West Company Inc. is a Canadian multinational grocery and retail-company, which operates stores in Western Canada, Northern Canada, Alaska, Hawaii, and several other countries and US territories in Oceania and the Caribbean. The North West Company profiles itself as a leading retailer to underserved rural communities and urban neighbourhoods. Typically, the Northern store signs multi-year leases for exclusive rights to sell goods to these underserved communities (North-West-Company-Inc., 2017).

The Old Crow community believed that profits were being taken from the community through the North West Company arrangement:

"We had Northern in our community for about 25 years and they wanted to sign a second 25-year lease. The thing with Northern is I didn't see any benefits coming to the community. One day they boasted how much of a profit they made out of the communities and Old Crow was third on the list with \$1.8 million dollars. To see that and not to see it in the community I didn't like it. From the General Assembly, the people directed our Leadership to start looking for something else to provide our groceries" (Rispin, 2017).

The Northern store opened in Old Crow in June 1999 with its first 25-year lease. In 2015, the community of Old Crow declined to renew the multi-year lease and the Northern store closed in mid-November (North-West-Company-Inc., 2017). For approximately 6 months the community was without a primary grocery store (Yukon-News, 2014). Vuntut G'witchin First Nation did set up a temporary store where residents could get staple foods and basic supplies. For a more permanent solution the Old Crow community looked to Arctic Co-operatives Limited.

Arctic Co-operatives Limited is a co-operative federation owned and controlled by 32 community-based co-operative business enterprises located in Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Yukon and northern Manitoba, Canada (Arctic-Co-operatives-Ltd, 2017). By becoming a member of this federation of co-operatives Old Crow felt they could provide the necessary goods and services the community sought and at the same time keep profits

from leaving the community. In addition, the leadership of the community felt by working together within the federated co-operative structure they could lower the prices on goods and services provided to the community:

“We put our buying power with one store together with 32 other stores across the north and Canada.... We can get reduce costs on groceries and our produce has never been greener” (Fleet, 2017).

The establishment of the co-operative store in Old Crow not only assisted in reducing the costs of groceries and improving the quality of the products, it also allowed the community to ensure funding remained to improve the community. The new Co-op grocery store, during its first seven months of operations made an impressive \$1.2 million in sales (CKRW, 2106).

“What people like about the co-op is ... 100 per cent of the profit from the co-op gets invested back into the community.... Because we can't solely depend on our First Nation government to fund everything that we want to see in our community, so this will be another business where we can invest in our community” (Rispin, 2017).

The additional funds generated by the co-operative for the community allows the Vuntut G'witchin First Nations to plan for the future of their community.

“We are planning for our future. We have a winter road that is coming. We will bring in a new pickup truck for the co-op. The First Nation, the Vuntut G'witchin, they own half the airline that brings that food in, Air North Airline. So, I think they see a bit of a break. Everybody works together and we try to bring the cost of groceries down as much as we can for the people of the community” (Fleet, 2017).


The interview statements collected and outlined here are a sample of the communications that are part of the 82 video clips totaling over 30 GB of high definition video recordings for Old Crow, Yukon. In addition, 15 surveys were completed by Old Crow co-operative members, which represents a 10.5% response rate. The 10.5% participation rate is in line with similar studies within Indigenous communities, which report participation rates at 9.6% on a health related survey over the course of three months and spanning 14 communities (Rochette & Blanchet, 2007). Another example is Stevenson's study, which was able to obtain a 16% participation rate, but only within a specific group within the Inuit community, i.e. teachers, and over the course of five years of research (Stevenson, 2014). There have been no surveys over the past five years on Inuit businesses, such as the local co-operative, making the results from this project of great interest to co-operative theory and practitioners.

The footage from Old Crow, Yukon has been developed into two 3-5 minute videos. Co-

operatives First an advocacy agency for co-operative development is utilizing these videos across Western Canada. The videos are working in conjunction with a brief case study write up to encourage co-operative development in Indigenous communities in Western Canada. Co-operatives First's primary goal is to promote the co-operative business model in rural and Indigenous communities across Western Canada. To reach these populations, Co-operatives First created a video encouraging viewers entitled, "Consider a Co-op." The video is a short 30s promo that Co-operatives First distributed through partner organizations, social media and ad networks. The video received 100,000 views in one month (YouTube/Facebook combination) and the ads created over 4 million impressions across Western Canada within the same timeframe. The partnership developed with Co-operatives First hopes to achieve something similar with the Old Crow story, but more specifically targeted at Indigenous, Métis and First Nation populations over the next 8 - 12 months.

In addition to the knowledge mobilization through Co-operatives First, the information synthesized from the surveys and video recordings from Old Crow have been incorporated into the Fundamentals of Co-operatives, Co-operative Management and Co-operative Entrepreneurship courses within the Co-operative Enterprise program of the Bachelor of Business Administration Degree at the University of Winnipeg. These courses educate approximately 100-120 students per year on co-operatives and the addition of the Indigenous content from the survey results and videos assist in improving the business students understanding of Indigenous business practices within the co-operative environment.

### **Naujaat, Nunavut - Inuit**

Naujaat in Inuktitut is  and translates into "seagulls' nesting place". Naujaat is known as the seagulls' nesting place as it is named after a cliff 5 km north of the community where seagulls migrate from every June. The community itself is located on the Arctic Circle allowing Naujaat to claim the distinction as the only community located on the Arctic Circle. As Naujaat is located on the Arctic Circle the community does experience 24 hours of sun in June and 24 hours of dark in December. The climate for Naujaat ranges from an average annual high of -8.7 degrees Celsius to an average annual low of -15.5 (Environment-Canada, 2014). Along with the cold temperatures Naujaat also resides on the Canadian Shield with a very thin layer of topsoil over bedrock known as Arctic Tundra.

Living in the community of Naujaat are approximately 1082 people as of the 2016 census with 47.7% Female and 52.3% Male (Statistics-Canada, 2016). This population number represents an increase of 14.5% from the 2011 census number of 925 (Statistics-Canada, 2011). The median age of Naujaat is 18.2 years making it the youngest population base within this study. Even with a young population the majority of individuals, 93%, identify their mother tongue as Inuktitut. English is spoken by 90% of the population along-side Inuktitut (City-Data.com, 2017).

This project interviewed seven individuals in Naujaat associated with the co-operative

including the manager, members of the board of directors and staff. With 110 individual film clips totalling over 51 GB of High Definition video recordings this project was able to capture a significant amount of raw video data for analysis. In addition, 38 surveys were completed by the co-operative membership equalling approximately 8.3% of the total membership of the co-operative.

For a number of years Naujaat maintained a single store, the Northern store. In 1968, the co-operative retail store opened in the community (Arctic-Co-operatives-Ltd, 2007c). From 1968 till now the co-operative has expanded its services for the community:

“We have quite a few business entities. We have a retail store, a 20-room hotel. We have a convenience store/restaurant. We are the agent for the local airline, Calm Air. We run the gas station and fuel delivery. We do construction. We have about 10 to 12 rental units that we rent out to various governments and teachers” (LeBlanc, 2017)

Much like the Old Crow community, Naujaat found a need to involve themselves with the transportation industry for their community, Calm Air. By establishing a link to the airline industry Naujaat maintains its supply lines and connection to the South. It should be noted, that due to the terrain found in Naujaat the community has the smallest runway in North making it exceedingly difficult to land in the area. In addition to the link to the airline, the co-operative in Naujaat works with Arctic Co-operatives Limited to bring in supplies twice a year via sea freight.

“Freight service to Co-op stores in the North is a major factor in our business. Nunavut Sealink and Supply Incorporated (NSSI) was established in the year 2000. NSSI is a partnership formed by Arctic Co-operatives Limited, Desgagnes Transarctik Inc, Qikiqtaaluk Corporation, Sakku Investments Corporation and Kitikmeot Corporation, to provide door-to-door transportation and supply services in Nunavut. Each of our 32 Co-ops is owned by its members - who collectively own 37.5% of Nunavut Sealink and Supply Inc. Profits from this business are returned to members through Arctic Co-ops' patronage dividends. The main services are product supply and sea freight that include warehousing, product sales, maritime packaging, containerization, sale and repair of containers, transportation of all commodities, and cargo insurance” (Arctic-Co-operatives-Ltd, 2007a).

The link to a transportation industry is not the only similarity between Old Crow and Naujaat. Much like Old Crow, the people in Naujaat feel the co-operative offers the community more than a standard, Southern style store, providing for the needs of the community including jobs, housing, and sponsorship for community programs.

“Seeing how the co-op fits in the community. How they give back to the community. Different things they are providing. Obviously jobs for the


locals. they also have housing out there. Many different things in the different community they sponsor. That they offer. They try to make available. They try to make the community better” (Nyhof, 2017).

While the co-operative was seen as giving back to the community the discussion on human resourcing issues provided information on the need to understand cultural differences within the community,

“There are many culture differences that you must adjust to. Some are easy to adjust to; some are very hard. You have to be very sensitive. Coming from a Southern atmosphere retail business it’s quite a bit different. You have to open your mind to so many different changes. I love the community. I love the people. I wish to stay because of the people. The people make it better. I have been to some places down South that you are just a guy, that has a tie on, that goes to work and you’re a number. Here you’re somebody. The people respect you and you give respect back. They make your day better, especially the elders. The elders in the North are some of the most wonderful people I have ever met. People can make it or break it, but in this community they make it” (LeBlanc, 2017).

The information outlined in the interviews on human resourcing will form the basis of educational videos for the Co-operative Enterprises program at the University of Winnipeg as well as program material for our partner organization, Arctic Co-operatives Limited. The information will be packed in a Tool Kit to assist in the on-boarding programs for individuals interested in working with the Northern co-operatives.

### **Ulukhaktok, Northwest Territories - Inuit**

The traditional spelling of Ulukhaktok is Ulukhaqtuuq and is translated to “the place where ulu parts are found”. An Ulu, , is a traditional crescent shaped, all-purpose knife used for skinning and cleaning animals, cutting hair, food preparation, and as a weapon. Ulukhaktok does go by many names including Holman and Ulu. Ulukhaktok is home to 396 people.

The climate in Ulukhaktok is much like Naujaat with an average high temperature of -8.1 and a low of -15.5 Celsius (Environment-Canada, 2014). As with the climate, the topography of Ulukhaktok is similar to Naujaat as the two communities both reside near the Arctic Circle with Ulu enjoying full day sun in July.

The people who live in Ulukhaktok’s climate and topography have a median age of 28.4 years putting the population in the middle of the three communities studied (Statistics-Canada, 2016). English is the language most often spoken at home by 390 of the 396 residents of Ulu (Statistics-Canada, 2016). The language spoken and identified as the mother tongue by 130 of the residents of Ulu is known as Inuinnaqtun (Inunvialuktun) (Statistics-Canada, 2016).

While in Ulukhaktok this project was able to interview five individuals associated with the co-operative producing 91 video clips and a total of 26.4 GB of HD film. The survey was provided to the community through Facebook and in the co-op retail store with 13 individuals completing the survey for a participation rate of 5.0%.

The co-operative in Ulu was founded in 1961 making it one of the oldest co-operatives in the study (Arctic-Co-operatives-Ltd, 2007b). Much like Naujaat and Old Crow's co-operatives, the focus of the co-operative members in Ulu was on the role the co-operative plays in the community:

“It feels a lot better to serve in a co-operative environment as opposed to a company where you send all your profits out to shareholders in other countries and things like that. To be able to be in a community that is as isolated as it is, it is difficult to have the stability of regular income and regular price food these kinds of things. To be in a business that does what it can to put it back into the community, that is the biggest benefit” (Gallant, 2017).

“It makes me feel good that I am now working with them as a board member trying to help out the rest of the community” (Kaodloale, 2017).

Other similarities between the co-operatives include the involvement in multiple sectors within the local economy including transportation. Aklak Air maintains a strong relationship with Ulukhaktok's co-operative as the co-operative acts as the airlines agent. Ulukhaktok's co-operative, similar to Old Crow and Naujaat, also operates the local hotel/restaurant. One unique sector that Ulukhaktok operates in is the telecommunications sector providing 45 cable channels to the community.

“We have the retail operations here where we sell everything from food to snowmobiles, furs, guns, bikes, absolutely everything we can get that people want. Whenever people are looking for new things we try to bring it in however we can. We have the hotel and the restaurant that are doing fantastic. We have cable TV with 45 channels. We do the post office which is in the co-op store. We are the agent for Aklak Air, so we are out at the airport three times a week for them. Doing bookings here at the co-op as well” (Gallant, 2017)

The multiple sectors in which the co-operative operates provides unique opportunities and challenges for the co-operative and community. Ulukhaktok does maintain a Northern Store along with a convenience store and the co-operative. It is, however, the co-operative that offers multiple services over and above basic retail. The distinction between community and co-operative does become blurred by board members and management as they see the two entities as somewhat interchangeable.

“The decisions that you make can impact the co-op or the community. Either good or bad. Your voice can be heard and you can make an impact on the co-op and your community” (Kaodloale, 2017).

The information gathered in Ulukhaktok, including videos and survey results, will form the basis for human resource training and educational case studies and videos. These outputs from this project will be utilized by Arctic Co-operatives Limited as well as advocacy agencies for co-operatives and the University of Winnipeg for the Co-operative Enterprise program within the Bachelor of Business Administration Degree.

### **State of Knowledge – identify knowledge strengths and knowledge gaps**

The strengths of the knowledge synthesized by this project include the broad scope of participants involved in both the interviews and surveys. Managers, Directors, Staff, and Community Members participated in video interviews discussing the role of the co-operative in the community. As there are few, up-to-date videos available that include Indigenous participants as key informants this project fills a gap in knowledge that exists in Indigenous business studies. The videos produced by this project will present Indigenous business leaders discussing their role in a viable business that Indigenous business students can identify with.

The videos produced by project are HD quality videos and can be utilized in multiple formats. Short 30 second to 1 minute films can be produced for use on social media sites by co-operative advocacy agencies, Arctic Co-operatives Limited, and the community co-operative themselves. Longer 3-5 minute videos can be produced for educational case studies and a longer 30-minute documentary style video can be produced identifying the unique characteristics of Inuit and Vuntut G’witchin First Nation community co-operatives.

The survey component of this research was focused on human resource skill development and the role co-operatives play in the community. The information from these surveys will provide a basis for understanding the current skill training needs for these communities and co-operatives. In addition, a better understanding of the role co-operatives play within an Inuit and First Nations community will help build cultural sensitivity in hiring practices for co-operatives. The unique challenges of boosting a community’s skill capacity has been addressed through immigration from outside the community. The skilled individuals being brought to the community can find it challenging to integrate and adapt to the culture. The results from the survey will provide a greater understanding of these cultural challenges and how to best respond to them.

The skills development component of the survey will provide information on what format co-operative members prefer skills training to be offered. What skills training is needed in the co-operative will also be identified. With this information on skills training it may be possible to develop tailored programs to meet a co-operative’s specific training needs.

The gaps in knowledge that this project did not have the opportunity to investigate include the community side of the co-operative community relationship. The broader community was not the focus of this project due to time constraints. Elders in the community were not interviewed or surveyed leaving a knowledge gap in terms of cultural sensitivity that needs further investigation.

An additional gap in the knowledge not addressed by this study is the need for a better understanding of the interlinkage between current educational training programs in the communities. There are significant resources available in each of the communities that took part in this project. Each community has educational infrastructure that rivals some of the post-secondary institutions in the South. Naujaat, Nunavut has a new \$27 million-dollar school complete with science labs, tool shops, and smartboards (Parkin-Architects-Ltd, 2012). Ulukhaktok's school has an active youth program including a café and bakery that are linked to the co-operative. As this project was not focused on the link between existing educational programs and the co-operatives within the Inuit and First Nations communities this is a knowledge gap that should be addressed. The utilization of existing educational infrastructure and programs partnering with post-secondary institutions could provide skills training and opportunities for the youth of these communities while allowing them to remain in community.

### **Knowledge mobilization**

Indigenous business leaders will benefit from the synthesis of the existing knowledge of current business practices developed by this project. The development of tool-kits and associated videos outlining best practices utilized by Indigenous, rural and remote businesses within their communities will be invaluable to Indigenous business leaders. Arctic Co-operatives Limited has an established network of 32 Indigenous Northern businesses that will benefit from the synthesis of business practices developed by this project. Information from this project will be disseminated throughout Arctic Co-ops' network. Dissemination will consist of printed tool-kits and flash drives containing videos that will be mailed to all 32 businesses within the network.

Indigenous communities will also be a key audience for the outcomes of this knowledge synthesis project. The outcomes from this project can act as training tools for the next generation of Indigenous business leaders in these rural and remote communities. Business topics identified by the project participants, such as governance, human resources, and marketing, will be developed into tool-kits with associated videos aimed at young audiences in order to reach the next generation of Indigenous business leaders within these communities. Indigenous youth will be able to see how their leaders build businesses and their communities in rural and remote areas in Canada.

The audience for the outcomes of this project will be expanded outside the immediate 32 Indigenous businesses within Arctic Co-operatives Limited's network. Outcomes from this project will be presented to Northern communities across Canada, such as the Northern Quebec Cree Nation, that face similar challenges due to their remote locations.



Translating the case studies and dubbing the videos into the French language will allow for the dissemination of the case studies to Northern Quebec communities. Dr. Berge and Mr. Penner have developed a strong network in Northern Quebec having participated in the 2016 Model Arctic Council and the Arctic Science Summit. Mr. Penner has been an active researcher in Northern Quebec working with the Cree Nation Government. The Cree Nation will benefit from the outcomes of this project as they face similar challenges of isolation and a lack of culturally specific Indigenous business resources.

Business Educators will be another of the audiences that will benefit from the knowledge synthesized by this project. The information synthesized from this project will inform pedagogy of education in business. The development of case studies on Indigenous business practices will be disseminated through journal publications such as the Journal of Educational Research, Sociology of Education, and Studies in Higher Education. A ready audience exists within the University of Winnipeg as a number of departments are looking for Indigenous content for their courses to satisfy the University's Indigenous course requirement for graduation. Indigenous high school educators are seeking relevant business content that their students can relate to. This project will develop and disseminate youth focused videos that can be utilized for educating high school students, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, on the opportunities and challenges of living in rural and remote Northern Canadian communities.

Not only will business students be introduced to the case studies and videos in classroom settings, they will gain access to this information via website and social media posts. The video stories collected during this project will be edited for multiple formats on social media, documentaries, distance education, and in-class presentations. By developing the videos into multiple formats, we can ensure that a broad audience will gain access to the information from this project.

Conferences will also play a role in disseminating the information to business educators. Dr. Berge has presented at over two-dozen conferences such as the World Rural Sociology Conference, the Joint Conference of the Canadian Association for Studies in Co-operation (CASC) and the Association of Cooperative Educators (ACE) and Gathering Circles: Indigenous Food Co-ops: Rising Up Conference. The results from this project are timely as CASC is developing a national strategy for post-secondary education in business that would benefit from the outcomes of this project. The information captured on video and within the case study outcomes of this project can be utilized across Canada to inform business researchers and educators of the unique characteristics of culture and place that inform Indigenous business practices.

A direct audience member for this project will be the Master student, Mr. Penner, who will be intimately involved in this project gaining first-hand knowledge of the role of Indigenous culture and place-based business practices. The information gathered through this project will be incorporated into Mr. Penner's major paper for his Masters of Development Practice degree. Mr. Penner will present the outcomes from this research to his fellow Masters students within the Development Practice Program introducing

national and international graduate students to the Indigenous business knowledge collected through this project. Mr. Penner is a fluent French speaker and will work with a video dubbing professional to translate business documentation and dub videos into both official languages to allow for the broadest dissemination of the outcomes across Canada, including the Cree Nation in Northern Quebec.

To further disseminate the information gathered from this project the videos will be edited to produce documentary style presentations for the general public. The University of Winnipeg's Campus Academic Technologies/Media Services has extensive experience in documentary film editing and has agreed to work with our team to produce high quality documentaries. These documentaries will be presented at film festivals such as the University of Winnipeg Film Fest, Canadian Independent Film Festival, and the International Film Festival of Popular Science and Culture. Presenting the documentaries at these film festivals will increase the exposure of Canadians to the communities, business and Indigenous business leaders. The University of Winnipeg Film Festival will present current Indigenous students with a community leadership model they can directly associate with. By popularizing the stories from these Indigenous communities more Canadians will develop an understanding of Indigenous businesses and communities.

## **Conclusion**

The Vuntut G'witchin First Nations community of Old Crow adopted the co-operative for their community as a means to manage their economic sustainability. Funds moving out of the community made it difficult for the community to plan for its future and provide quality goods and services for their residents. Much like the partnership with Air North Airline, the partnership with Arctic Co-operatives Limited and the Vuntut G'witchin First Nation looks to build a community rather than take from the community. The ability of the co-operative model to provide democratic empowerment to the membership allows communities to determine where and how funds will be spent to improve their communities for future generations.

The community of Naujaat, Nunavut has also developed a strong link between community and the co-operative. Members of the co-operative leadership also work as leaders in the local government. The management, directors and staff of the co-operative see the role of the co-operative as one of providing for the community. That being said, it is noted by the management that there are cultural sensitivities that need to be understood to function effectively in the co-operative and the community. The educational needs for co-operative members and leaders could benefit from training products that incorporate cultural sensitivity. As the community and the co-operative are inextricably linked it is not reasonable to work in the one without understanding the other.

Much like Naujaat, Ulu presents a picture of a community focused firm that offers a multitude of services for the community. As Ulu is a small community in comparison to Naujaat there is a skills capacity issue when it comes to the co-operative. While the lack of skills capacity has not stopped the co-operative from successfully offering their community multiple services there is an opportunity to provide skills training in community to improve the co-operative's business and the opportunities available to current residents.

The three co-operatives that participated in this study maintain three key ideas or themed categories in common:

- 1) There is a link between the community and the co-operative that needs to be encouraged and developed to keep the economic activity of the community in the community.
- 2) Skills training to increase capacity of community members to better provide for the co-operative's growing need for business acumen needs to be developed and;
- 3) Skills training needs to include a cultural sensitivity components to ease transitional issues when new individuals wish to work for the community co-operative. As the co-operative is a key component of the community it is important for those working for the co-operative to understand the community.

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## **Appendices – for any detailed material**

### **Appendix A: Project Work Plan**

November 2016 - January 2017 (3 months)

- Ethics - This project will receive ethics approval from the University of Winnipeg Human Research Ethics Board and all principles outlined by OCAP for working with First Nations Peoples prior to any work commencing.
- Environmental scan of current business courses across Canada outlining any courses that include Indigenous content will be completed. A review of Post-secondary business school websites will be completed along with email and phone conversations to obtain an outline for any business courses that include Indigenous content.
- Interview script development - To ensure that all appropriate questions on Indigenous business practices are asked of partnering Indigenous business leaders the Principle Applicant will work closely with Arctic Co-operatives Limited and the Elder-in-Residence at the University of Winnipeg. A complete script of questions will be developed through this partnership to ensure culturally sensitive questions are asked of the partnering business leaders and staff.

January - February 2017 (1 month)

- Video interview with Arctic Co-operatives Limited's management and 2-3 directors to capture the role Indigenous beliefs and culture play in business.

February 2017 – April 2017 (3 months)

- Video interviews with Indigenous business in Nunavut, Northwest Territories, and the Yukon. Three Indigenous businesses (management and staff) will outline current business practices. A graduate student will conduct the interviews capturing all responses on video. The video recording of the Indigenous business practices will also allow for the capture of the place-based nature of the business. The community and surrounding area will be recorded to show the logistical challenges of distance and isolation for these rural and remote communities.
- Documentation collection such as by-laws, policies, standard operating procedures and historical records will be completed at each participating business to inform the case studies.

May - August 2017 (4 months)

- Video editing to develop concise and informative videos for education and knowledge mobilization purposes will be completed along with dubbing in French for greater knowledge mobilization. Key audiences for these videos will be business students, Indigenous businesses, business educators, researchers and Indigenous communities.
- Case Study Documentation - The videos will be coupled with case study documentation. The case studies will inform students, educators and researchers about the role Indigenous culture and beliefs play in business management as well as the place-based nature of Indigenous business.

July – September 2017 (3 months)

- Synthesis of collected documentation will be completed to develop tool kits for business operations such as governance, human resources, and management. The business documentation will also be reviewed for Indigenous content and this information will be used to highlight the unique characteristics of these business activities providing information for Indigenous focused case studies.



## **Appendix B: Survey Questions**

### **Introduction:**

Thank you for participating in this survey.

This survey will contribute to a greater understanding of co-operative businesses. The research is being conducted by the Business Chair of Co-operative Enterprises as part of the University of Winnipeg's work.

If you choose to participate in this survey it will take approximately 20 to 30 minutes of your time. The questions will focus on your perceptions of co-operative businesses. If, at any time, you do not wish to or have an answer for any of the questions, please feel free to move on to the next question.

You will not benefit directly from your involvement in this research project. However, we will be sharing with the participants our findings from the surveys.

The information you provide will be treated in confidence. You may choose to withdraw from the research study at any time, up until publication of the research findings. If you agree to participate in this study you are asked to return this survey in the self-address stamped envelope.

### **Survey Questions:**

#### **Demographics:**

1) First Name \_\_\_\_\_

2) Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

3) Email \_\_\_\_\_

4) Age \_\_\_\_\_

5) Gender \_\_\_\_\_

6) Cultural Identity

(e.g. Dakota, Ojibway, Oji-Cree, Cree, Dene, Metis, Inuk, Non-Indigenous)

\_\_\_\_\_

7) What is the name of the community where you live?

\_\_\_\_\_

8) How long have you lived in this community?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Co-operative Business:**

1) What is your definition of a co-operative business?

2) How do you think a business should interact with the community?

**Skills (e.g. communication skills, time management, decision making):**

3) What skills do you think are needed to develop your co-operative?

4) What would be the best way to obtain skills to develop your co-operative?

Please **Circle** a response that best answers the question.

**1) How interested would you be in a post-secondary course on co-operatives?**

- 1 – Not at all
- 2 – Not very interested
- 3 – Neutral
- 4 – Somewhat interested
- 5 – Very interested
- 6 - Not Applicable

**2) Do you believe that lectures are the best way to develop skills?**

- 1 - Strongly Disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 3 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 - Agree
- 5 - Strongly Agree
- 6 - Not Applicable

**3) Do you believe that video presentations are good at developing skills?**

- 1 - Strongly Disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 3 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 - Agree
- 5 - Strongly Agree
- 6 - Not Applicable

**4) Would you participate in a distance education course on co-operative management?**

- 1 - Never
- 2 – Once a year
- 3 – Once a month
- 4 – Once a week
- 5 – Every day
- 6 - Not Applicable

**5) Should businesses maintain the values of the community?**

- 1 - Strongly Disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 3 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 - Agree
- 5 - Strongly Agree
- 6 - Not Applicable

**6) Do businesses in your community act co-operatively?**

- 1 - Strongly Disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 3 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 - Agree
- 5 - Strongly Agree
- 6 - Not Applicable

**7) Do you feel business could operate better if they reflected community beliefs and values?**

- 1 - Strongly Disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 3 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 - Agree
- 5 - Strongly Agree
- 6 - Not Applicable

**8) Are your community beliefs and values co-operative in nature?**

- 1 - Strongly Disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 3 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 - Agree
- 5 - Strongly Agree
- 6 - Not Applicable

