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Exploring Craft Cooperative Potential in Paqtnkek Mi'kmaq Community

Final Report

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Exploring Craft Cooperative Potential in Paqtnkek Mi'kmaq Community

Introduction – Collaborative Research Design

This project explored Indigenous values, practices and observations, and their relation to the social economy in Paqtnkek Mi'kmaq Community. By understanding the elements of the social economy in Paqtnkek and their differential impacts upon individual artisans and craft producers, we were able to emphasize perceptions of sustainable economic development and identify the opportunities and the challenges of entrepreneurship in this location.

A series of consultation meetings with members of the Mi'kmaq Nation who were interested in socioeconomic development, led to a one-day working seminar, “Mapping the Social Economy with Mi'kmaq Communities”. Aboriginal craft producers and artisans from across the Atlantic region were invited come to Paqtnkek Mi'kmaq Community, located centrally to many Atlantic Mi'kmaq communities in northwestern Nova Scotia, to share their stories, display their wares and demonstrate their skills. Four students were hired and trained to work on this seminar, coordinate the activities, collect information and write up the results. The forum took a participatory action research approach to consulting with and developing networks in the local social economy and pulled together SES/ESD network members and those interested in exploring craft cooperative potential. Through a “Made with Mi'kmaq Hands” sharing circle process, community members were consulted regarding their ideas about creating and maintaining a craft cooperative. The sharing circle was coordinated by university partner and principle investigator, Dr. L. Jane McMillan, Canada Research Chair of Indigenous Peoples and Sustainable Communities at St. Francis Xavier University, and community partners Kerry Prosper of

the Paqtnekek Band Council, Deborah Ginnish of the Mi'kmaq Association of Cultural Studies, and Louie Joe Bernard of the Union of Nova Scotia Indians. The day began with an opening prayer, Mi'kmaq drumming, and welcoming remarks by Kerry Prosper, Dr. L. Jane McMillan, and Dr. Leslie Brown, Director of the Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network, Mount Saint Vincent University. Dr. Brown presented to the audience her reflections on what is the social economy and the ideas of social justice associated with her vision and the work of the Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network.

From the Mi'kmaq communities, the first keynote speaker, Tim Bernard, Director of History and Culture of the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM), shared his experience of working on a collaborative project with a Mi'kmaqwey Debert Elders' Advisory Council. Mr. Bernard focused on turning a vision of Mi'kmaq cultural revitalization, through tourism, into a reality. He described a cultural reawakening among the planning members as they began to take part in the planning process, and presented an idealization of a design plan for visitor experiences at the Mi'kmaqwey Debert Cultural Centre (MDCC).

Clifford Paul, Moose Management Coordinator of the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resource Management (UINR) and a jewelry maker, shared his perspectives and strategies as an individual entrepreneur. Clifford coined the term "Made with Mi'kmaq Hands". While relating how his crafting experiences and role as Natural Resource Manager on the Moose Management project overlap, he illustrated how the social economy has played out in his day-to-day life. Through crafting, Mr. Paul has reconnected to the natural world, his Mi'kmaq cultural identity and traditions. He

participates the local social economy selling his products at powwows and other Indigenous gatherings. A key lesson he shared with the group was the importance of accommodating client. If a person wants a particular colour scheme or fastener for a necklace, he makes the adjustment to capture the sale on the spot; his pride in his work is derived from pleasing the client.

The final keynote speaker of the day, Randy Angus of the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island, offered a presentation on Craft Cooperative Potential: Resources, Partnerships, and Possibilities. Mr. Angus' lecture provided useful tips and strategies for developing a successful, sustainable business.

The second half of the day consisted of a sharing circle. Audience participants were invited to share their experiences in the procurement of raw materials, craft production and training and marketing. As participants shared their personal stories of successes and challenges, several themes emerged. Producing crafts or works of art tended to connect individuals to processes of cultural revitalization and created opportunities for knowledge transmission. People expressed their cultural identity through their products and some people articulated an important bond to natural resources in the procurement of the materials needed to produce their pieces. Participants actively engaged in building on each other's experiences as they voiced their ideas and concerns for sustainable futures in craft production. The outcome of the day's events, and the information shared and gathered, helped build networks to consider strategies to overcome challenges and to share stories and lessons of success. These findings led to the next phase of the research described below. During the seminar, a dire need to develop community based socioeconomic self-sufficiency was identified by members of the

Paqtnkek Mi'kmaq Community.

Paqtnkek Mi'kmaq Community Description

Paqtnkek Mi'kmaq Community is located on 218.3 hectares of land at site 23 near Afton and Pomquet in Antigonish county, northwestern Nova Scotia and is home to approximately 538 registered band members, of whom 389 live on-reserve.ⁱ The community owns other parcels of land at Franklin Manor near Amherst and Summerside east of Antigonish.ⁱⁱ The community is governed according to the *Indian Act* and has one chief and five band council members who are elected to their positions every two years. The band receives \$3 to \$3.5 million in government funding each year.ⁱⁱⁱ According to the Community Wellbeing Index (CWI) generated by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) the income score for Paqtnkek is 41/100, education is 41, housing is 72, labour force activity is 66 and the overall community wellbeing is 55, well below the Atlantic region wellbeing average of 73.^{iv} Residency in Paqtnkek is stable, as people do not tend to move away even though the employment rate is only 34.8 according to the 2006 census data.^v Many families are single parent. The female lone-parent income is \$13,152 (\$28,330 for Nova Scotia equivalent) and male lone-parent income average is \$9,248 (\$39,709 for Nova Scotia equivalent).^{vi} Education attainment levels for the community are significantly lower than the provincial average, but there is an adult learning program to increase high school equivalency and community efforts to encourage members to attend post-secondary institutions.

Paqtnkek Band, the largest employer on reserve, employs 30 to 40 people who work in various administrative positions and in construction, fisheries and other health,

education and social activities. 42.7% of the population receives social assistance. According to Statistics Canada Census (2006) no one identifies as working from home or in the fields or art, culture, recreation or sport. There are several private businesses selling tobacco and sundries, one gas station and a recently opened gaming room in the community. Future economic development initiatives are focused largely on the Highway 104 – Commercial Development Project, which is designed to occur as a new grade separated interchange to Highway 104 is projected for completion by 2012.^{vii}

The Highway 104 Commercial Development Project has four key markets: retail sale from local trade area; highway traffic including commercial and tourist traffic; long haul trucking; and Native-owned and joint ventures business opportunities.^{viii} The proposed gas bar and store and entertainment centre as key stones of this development project may address the access to market concerns raised by the participants of this research interested in craft cooperative potential. Paqtnkek Band has produced a community plan in anticipation of the new highway.

The Paqtnkek Band conducted a series of community consultations in the design of their community plan following INAC recommendations that suggest the plan contain: a vision; goals and objectives; policy statements including governance, economic development and land use; and mapping. The community vision statement speaks to the desire for cooperation, self-governance and cultural health:

“Kesaaultiks” – The Paqtnkek First Nation is committed to improving the physical, spiritual, emotional, cultural and mental well-being of the entire community. We are committed to the provision of equal opportunity and safe and secure living to all

band members. Through co-operation and dedication we shall envision a self-reliant and healthy community in all aspects of our lives. Protecting and taking ownership of our language, culture and treaty rights through self-reliance that would embrace pride, respect and spirit of community. Tliaj.^{ix}

In conjunction with this vision statement, the community planning process has explored the possibilities of establishing a Paqtnkek craft store and culturally aligned eco-tourist hiking trails. These coterminous enterprises offer exciting opportunities for sustainable education programs and employment.

Project Description and Findings in Brief

The “Exploring Craft Cooperative Potential in Paqtnkek” project has three central concerns: the mobilization of natural resources in keeping with Mi’kmaq values and ways of life according to treaty and title rights; generating opportunities for capacity building through the dissemination of craft production skills and student training; and the delineation of sustainable strategies for cooperative development relevant to community member’s cultural competency. We conducted an environmental scan of the skills of craft producers and consulted with community members regarding their ideas and desires about creating and maintaining a craft cooperative. Underlying this participatory action research approach is the concept that creating opportunities in meaningful work will improve the social and cultural health of the community and contribute to nation rebuilding. Key to this process is knowledge translation. What are the best practices for teaching community members craft production skills? What infrastructure is needed to

assist craft producers in the extraction of raw materials? What facilities are necessary to create competitive market quality products? What programs will enhance Mi'kmaq access to markets in ways that valorize Mi'kmaq worldviews?

In addition to interviews and archival research, we invited the interview participants to attend a day-long craft workshop open to the entire community, to share their thoughts on the social economy of craft production, to transfer their knowledge to those in attendance and to discuss the possibilities of creating a craft cooperative within the broader community. The event was held on a Saturday when there were no competing community events. The day was comprised of hands-on craft workshops, talking circles, question and answer periods, door prizes and a community catered feast using customary foods.

Notices of the event and the agenda were designed by the community youth group and distributed house-to-house and posted at the band office, the health centre and other public buildings. A diverse audience attended the gathering; the majority were youth or elders. We were pleased that many youth were interested in learning more about craft production and cooperative development and that elders and artisans were so generous with their times and their stories. Twelve artisan crafters, 4 male and 8 female set up their workstations at the community hall. They displayed completed articles, products in process, raw materials and their tools. The artisans told their stories of how they learned their trade, acquired materials, and shared their marketing strengths and weaknesses. The audience travelled station-to-station to hear the stories and receive teachings and experience working with the materials of leatherwork, beadwork, dream catchers, quillwork, painting and sewing.

From our interviews and workshops we learned that Mi'kmaq craft producers in Paqtnekek would like to market their products and create sustainable craft production enterprises that improve cultural competency of both producers and consumers. Producers and artisans are most interested in knowledge translation and exchange with other members of their communities as they see their skills as integral to cultural maintenance and revitalization and express great concern that their knowledge will be lost if such translation exercises do not take place. Most research participants indicated that several knowledge holders have passed away and others noted that they themselves are aging and finding it difficult to access the raw materials. All participants were enthusiastic about teaching young people the specialized skills to acquire materials, particularly porcupine quills, birch bark, sweet grass, basket splints and dyes using traditional methods and customary teachings. They are also very interested in accessing markets such as heritage galleries and tourist kiosks. Building business partnerships with other Aboriginal communities and the general public are also priorities for the research participants. Only one of the participants earns a sustainable income through the sales of her products. The rest of the participants feel alienated from sustainable or consistent market access. All participants want to improve their business management skills and all but one expressed interest in craft cooperatives. The majority of participants indicated that a Paqtnekek craft cooperative fits well with their cultural consciousness and their ideas of collaborative tribal capitalism. While interested in the idea of cooperatives, most people had little knowledge of the merits and challenges of various cooperative models and remained skeptical that without a substantial influx of funds little could be done to

get one started. All participants noted that improved access to raw materials, a common market place, business training and community support are key to economic sustainability for artisan crafters.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

1. To foreground Mi'kmaq worldviews in the development of sustainable economic ventures.
2. To investigate whether co-ops offer a mechanism that best meets the cultural, values, and employment needs of this community.
3. Survey current craft production capacity of community members.
4. To assess and evaluate former craft production ventures to determine successes and failures.
5. To assess what training and skills development are desired and necessary for sustainable craft production networks.
6. To determine what resources are available for training, knowledge mobilization and capacity building.
7. To form partnerships within the community for capacity building and knowledge sharing.
8. To form partnerships for natural resource mobilization and knowledge translation toward the production of Mi'kmaq crafts.

Research Questions

1. What are the potential and obstacles to sustainable craft production and marketing in Paq'tnkek?
2. What expertise is available within the community?
3. What expertise is not available within the community?
4. What partnerships will best facilitate positive social economic change?
5. What policies and strategies are needed to implement sustainable socioeconomic development that reflects Mi'kmaq cultural capacity?
6. How can Paq'tnkek improve consumer cultural competency?
7. What do community members want: a conventional for-profit business or a social economy organization, such as co-ops?
8. What are the values and business structures underlying co-ops and social economy more broadly that may be attractive to those only familiar with conventional private enterprise?
9. What are the possible relationship between co-ops [marketing and / or worker] and band councils?
10. What might be the challenges to compatibility between co-ops and band councils and reserve dynamics?

Methodology

1. To conduct a literature review of Indigenous cooperatives and other social economy organizations.
2. To assess capacity building challenges, identify and evaluate past training programs to see who has what skills and who is interested in acquiring skills, sharing their skills, developing their skills.
3. To interview training participants to determine successes and shortcomings of past training programs.
4. To formulate a community survey to identify interests and ideas around craft production and marketing.
5. Interview community members to assess their views on cooperative and social economy organizational development.
6. To hold a community forum to discuss the findings of the surveys and to strategize for capacity building.
7. To collect data on available training, marketing and business programs and services within and outside Mi'kmaq communities.
8. To interview local corporations and government agencies.
9. To hold a community forum with potential local partners.
10. To develop an action plan to fit with the broader socioeconomic development plans of the band.

Literature Review

The body of literature examining craft cooperatives and the impacts of socioeconomic development in Indigenous communities is expanding. Lou Hammond Ketilson and Kimberly Brown (2001) investigated the situation of Canadian Aboriginal co-operatives and their potential for growth.^x At the time of their study there were about 133 Aboriginal co-ops in Canada, the largest number being in the Northern regions of the arctic. The most common co-ops are food and supplies in remote communities. Other co-operatives include arts and crafts, wild rice, fish and shellfish and a small number of housing co-ops in urban areas. Their report examines the environment of Aboriginal co-operatives; it also compares the co-operative model to the economy model that Aboriginal leaders want to promote. The report analyzes eleven case studies to formulate

its conclusions and recommendations for the further growth of Aboriginal co-operatives.

Brown and Ketilson's research found that, "A complicated political and policy environment is acting as a general barrier to economic and community development in all provinces and territories, although in different ways depending on provincial and territorial context. These barriers may help explain the mixed success rate and low take-up of the co-op model over the past few years." The following key points summarize their findings relevant to the Paqtnkek case study:

- Aboriginal communities require educational and development material on co-operatives, customized to their reality and culture, and providing examples of Aboriginal co-operatives. Most provincial and territorial representatives contacted suggested the cooperative federations needed to do more work in outreach and advocacy, while others pointed to the need for new resources for Aboriginal staff, and specialists in Aboriginal economies to make links and promote the model to communities.
- Aboriginal development corporations play a central role in controlling decisions over Aboriginal community development, and consequently play a crucial role in the success of co-operative enterprise. Formal links should be encouraged between co-operative federations and Aboriginal development corporations, particularly in the North, and the views and priorities of these corporations with regard to co-operative enterprise should be identified in the next phase of research on Aboriginal co-operatives.
- Aboriginal people have started and developed co-operatives to meet clearly identified needs, not because someone told them it was a good idea; this basis in

pressing needs will be crucial in determining future success.

- Co-operatives contribute to the physical infrastructure of communities by contributing to better transportation and communication systems in remote communities; by creating employment in resource industries; and by providing essential services, such as cooperative housing.
- Co-operatives have contributed significantly to the social capital of Aboriginal communities by enhancing educational programs, supporting business management skills, providing understanding of other societies, and fostering community action.
- Aboriginal co-operatives have emerged in part because of the dedicated and informed leadership from either outside or within the communities they serve. The leaders emerging from co-operatives have played important and diverse roles in their communities.
- Aboriginal co-operatives have secured funding from a variety of sources, but there is a need for greater collaboration with government funding sources, Aboriginal economic organizations, and the co-operative sector.
- There is need for more research on how co-operatives “fit into” Aboriginal communities—their social structure, other economic organizations, and political systems.
- Like all co-operatives, Aboriginal co-operatives have a significant challenge in ensuring strong interest and involvement by their members
- The following kinds of co-operatives would appear to offer the most promise for development in the near future: arts and crafts co-operatives; co-operative stores,

particularly in remote communities; co-operative financial services; co-operative housing, both on and off reserves; co-operative development of the resource economy; and the delivery of social services.^{xi}

In their 2009 study, Ketilson and Brown examine the challenges and opportunities for Aboriginal Financial Institutions (AFI), particularly credit unions and found that, “Unfortunately, many AFIs struggle to cover operating costs and maintain their capital bases. Overall, the financial health of the AFI network is declining steadily and some AFIs have considered alternative institutional arrangements. Their motivations for exploring new models are influenced by local factors and conditions, with two common issues prompting them to consider the creation of a deposit-taking financial institution in their communities: to improve the level of access to a broader range of financial services for Aboriginal individuals and First Nations governments; and to reduce the leakage of resources from their communities.” Thus, the authors recommend partnering with existing credit unions rather than going it alone.^{xii}

Roness and Collier (2010) examined the effectiveness of labour force participation of Aboriginal people in Atlantic Canada in the last five years. They found that barriers to Aboriginal employment continue to exist. “These include: a lack of education and training, systemic racism, more than average scrutiny, exclusion, inappropriate testing, and narrow approaches to what constitutes ‘job-related experience’. There is also reluctance among the working age Aboriginal population to leave their First Nation to work.” Additionally their research confirmed, “that a successful Aboriginal labour force

participation strategy is one that is developed and endorsed at the highest levels of an organization and which is integrated throughout the company and supported in principle, in practice, and financially. It is one that is responsive to both corporate and Aboriginal needs, meaningfully engages the Aboriginal community and which is monitored. Thus, champions within organizations, both within Aboriginal communities and organizations and employers, must be identified to move forward with more proactive and results oriented Aboriginal labour force participation strategies.^{xiii}

The Government of Canada has sponsored research examining economic development in Aboriginal communities and created a Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development. The 2009 framework recognizes the need to improve the involvement of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the Canadian economy. The framework is intended to guide the federal government to help Aboriginal people develop their economic potential. The new framework is making sure the government's roles and responsibilities are aligned. It is supporting training and skills for Aboriginal people. It is leveraging investment and encouraging partnerships between Aboriginal people and the private sector. It is also removing barriers for Aboriginal business and leveraging access to commercial capital.^{xiv} The report emphasizes the following strategic priorities: strengthening Aboriginal entrepreneurship, developing Aboriginal human capital, enhancing the value of Aboriginal assets (land and resource management), and forging new and effective partnerships. Nowhere in the document was any attention given to cultural sustainability, Indigenous knowledge, or Aboriginal rights.

Research that is rights centered and valorizes Indigenous knowledge as a central component to sustainable economic development, indicate the greatest promise of countering Indigenous community impoverishment. The authors of this report agree with the positions taken by Le Vangie (2008)^{xv}, Atleo (2008),^{xvi} D’Ambrogi and Novaczek (2009)^{xvii} and McMillan and Davis (2010)^{xviii} that issues of inclusion, rights mobilization and recognition and respect for Indigenous customary knowledge are integral to decolonization processes engaged in strategies of empowerment and sustainable development.

Potential for Cooperative Development

In 2007, Saint Mary’s University Business Development Centre was contracted to design a business plan for a Paqtnkek First Nation Craft Store. After conducting industry and market analyses, the plan recommended that the “craft store will be set up as a cooperative of craftspeople within the community. The store will present on-site demonstrations, unique and authentic crafts, and take home kits as part of their unique selling proposition.”^{xix} The report also indicated that, “a craft store on its own, with no other businesses, may not be enough to attract sufficient tourism to sustain the operation” (p. ii). The business profile design suggested starting out as a consignment store with a move toward a retail operation pending warranted demand. The venture would sell hand-made crafts such as dream catcher, wooden flowers, leather goods, beadwork, baskets and moccasins with a “marketing focus on authenticity, tradition, uniqueness and culture” (p.1).

According to the St. Mary's University report, establishing a cooperative of local craftspeople would serve a number of community purposes in terms of income generation, employment opportunities and knowledge translation and mobilization. It recommended that such a store be open six months of the year during the height of tourist season, May to September. The report suggested the following as benefits of a cooperative structure:

“As a cooperative members would pay a monthly or yearly fee to offset the costs of rent/space usage and overhead costs...A Board of Directors should also be established to oversee operations and make decisions on behalf of the cooperative...Setting the store up as a cooperative will give artisans control over their needs, solutions, strategies and evaluation. It will enable a network of support amongst them and facilitate an increase in knowledge transfer depending on each artisans skill set. Cooperatives promote local pride and social integration, local control and local reinvestment. A cooperative decreases the costs to any one individual as costs and profits are then shared by members” (p.13).

In the three years since the completion of this study no community craft cooperatives or artisan enterprises were established. Kerry Prosper, a Paqtnkek Band Councilor and community researcher wanted to know why.

Research Findings

Kerry Prosper, Dr. McMillan and the research team met with community members to survey and inventory their skills and ideas and determine what are the potential benefits and obstacles to sustainable craft production and marketing.^{xx} First, the team explored what expertise and assets were available in the community. The team consulted with and interviewed nine community members identified as proficient craft

producers, who supplement their incomes, or rely entirely on craft production, and have received some training in craft production. The team wanted to learn about the history of craft production in the community so that any future direction and possibilities for social change be made in the appropriate context. We conducted archival research and interviews to access this information.

Paqtnkek is located in the Eastern part of Nova Scotia in Antigonish County and is situated along St Georges Bay. The people of Paqtnkek live and have a long historical relationship with the surrounding environment of Antigonish and Guysborough counties.

Craft Production in the Past

According to the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History the Mi'kmaq were adept tool makers and artisans long before the arrival of Europeans^{xxi}:

“Before the arrival of Europeans the Mi'kmaq people had mastered techniques which enabled them to make tools and equipment from animal bone, ivory, teeth, claws, hair, feathers, fur, leather, quills, shells, clay, native copper, stone, wood, roots and bark. Axes, adzes and gouges were made by pecking and grinding stone to a sharp edge and smooth surface. In turn, these tools were used to cut and carve wood. Fine carving was done with sharp beaver teeth. For killing game and butchering meat, they used spears, knives, arrow points and scrapers, all made from special stones like chalcedony. This rock fractures in a way which "peels" the stone away in flakes, creating a razor-sharp edge. Bone points were used to harpoon sturgeon and porpoise, and for the wood-and-bone fish spears. Awls, painting tools and sewing needles were also of bone. Copper was worked into needles and fishhooks. This type of equipment was usually made by men, who also fashioned baby-carriers, sleds, snowshoe frames and tobacco pipes of stone, bone, bark, wood and even lobster claws.”^{xxii}

After the arrival of the settlers in Mi'kmaq territory, the Mi'kmaq artisans, craft and tool producers engaged in economic exchange with the newcomers.

“After 1600 Mi'kmaq women began making a variety of items solely for sale to Europeans. This included their famous porcupine quillwork on bark, where hundreds of brightly-dyed quills were used to make a mosaic on top of birchbark. The quill ends were inserted into holes in wet bark, which quickly contracted around them to hold the quills in place. Bark ornamented like this was then made into boxes, chair upholstery, and many other "European" items. The women also sold settlers an enormous variety of baskets, now being made of wood splints. Dyes and decorative weaves made these as pretty as the older reed bags. Bead-work items were for sale, too, and examples of lavishly beaded and appliquéd tea-cosies, purses and men's vests still survive in museums.”^{xxiii}

In the centuries since the arrival of the settler society, the Mi'kmaq have experienced extreme economic marginalization due to colonial strategies and policies that made it illegal for them to access resources in their customary ways.^{xxiv} The economic situation in Paqtnkek was dismal; poverty and suffering were widespread during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Self-sufficiency was maintained through extended family kinship networks to make and share products for household utility. Ornamental craft production was not the key to livelihood during this period. Families worked cooperatively in order to survive. The political economy of Nova Scotia shifted toward an increasing commodification of production activities, the scales of production expanded as technology expanded and increased competition over resources. The Mi'kmaq, already marginalized by systemic discrimination and racism, and alienated from the markets by a series of laws and *Indian Act* articles, experienced greater surveillance of their customary activities, physical containment on reserves, an extreme retraction of their traditional land base and the criminalization of their natural resource use, resulting in penalties for their

productivity.^{xxv} The results limited opportunities for diversification of income, removed decision-making powers from aboriginal communities, increased dependency on social assistance and external funders and instigated a cycle of poverty that persists today. Decreasing access to markets and resources leads to tensions and conflicts, as well as colonial and systemic rejection of Indigenous knowledge and practices.

In order to survive, Paqtnkek formed sporadic economic relationships with the surrounding communities and industries, particularly the local fishing, farming, forestry markets. Historically, members of the Paqtnkek community produced various utilitarian crafts for the local non-native markets. Men made lobster hoops for the local non-native lobster fishery, and they produced wooden handles for the many hand tools that were used in fishing, forestry and farming activities. Handles for axes, hammers, picks, clothes poles and butter tubs for domestic and commercial usage were produced in significant numbers within the lifetimes of our research participants who recall either producing these items or had knowledge of members of their parents' generation producing them. Hockey sticks, for example, were made by local Mi'kmaq for the Antigonish hockey leagues.

The life of the primary producers was challenging. Mi'kmaq men set up camps in the forests to procure ash for baskets and handles. These wood products were, for a time, produced in sizeable quantities and sold to local non-native community hardware stores. Women and men made variously sized baskets for home and commercial use. Laundry hamper baskets were a popular item. Pack baskets, potato baskets, comb baskets and

small decorative baskets were made for the home and local markets.^{xxvi} Ash (white and black varieties) was the main raw material for the baskets and handles, the men worked in the forest gathering raw materials, shaving and pounding splints. Many of the women were at home producing baskets while maintaining the household and raising their children. Mi'kmaq community infrastructure was unable to compete with industrial expansion in the manufacturing of these items. No resources were available to acquire the necessary equipment for factory-based production; hand production, as an art form and for functional use, takes considerably longer. Mi'kmaq land bases were not considered as collateral for investment or loans and resource usage was limited due to settler encroachment on Mi'kmaq territory. Additionally, the community was not well situated geographically to attract investors and thus Paqtnekek members were generally unable to compete with corporate and private enterprises, which chose to locate elsewhere where they had better access to markets and a labour force.

Contemporary Craft Production

The history and tradition of craft production for sustenance and for subsidization of limited incomes generated a body of knowledge within a sector of the population of Paqtnekek. Paqtnekek members were historically successful in sustaining and transferring the craft production knowledge to subsequent generations through apprenticeships and through kinship affiliation. Beginning in the 1980s, craft production for commercial sale was explored as a possible economic development strategy. A series of government sponsored training programs were delivered. Funding for craft skills training was made

available through the Department of Indian and Northern Development. The national Native Women's Association of Canada and other entities interested in combating welfare dependency and improving the economic prospects of Indigenous women, applied for federal funding, put out calls for applications to participate in training programs and vetted applications to access the grants.^{xxvii} We interviewed people who participated in these programs to assess their present socioeconomic impacts.

The community Band Council sponsored and held various craft training workshops and training modules that ranged from ten to twelve weeks in duration. Participants of such programs, sponsored by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada were usually paid for their participation. In the past two decades, various skills training programs were offered through the Band and Nova Scotia Native Women's Association. For example, in 2004, the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association conducted a ten-week basket course and sought four trainees from Paqtnkek. The basket instructor received \$600 per week and was someone trained in basket making, had good communication skills, and able to communicate in Mi'kmaq. The instructor taught the trainees how to locate and identify the proper wood for basket making, pound ash, make strips and tools, and took the students on field trips to craft outlets. These make-work programs helped community members gain eligibility for Employment Insurance benefits upon completion of the course. Craft production continues in the Paqtnkek community and there is a rich knowledge base for future transfer of craft skills, cultural traditions and social economy.

Within the last twenty years, approximately twelve people were given instruction in the arts of basket weaving, leather crafts, wooden flowers, rustic chairs construction, quill box making, moose hair tufting, star-blanket sewing, lobster hoop and handle production. The training programs did not translate into collective or cooperative sustainable economic development. The programs did indeed benefit individual entrepreneurs and there are currently four community members who were trained in these programs that supplement their incomes regularly through craft production and sales and approximately ten people who supplement their incomes irregularly through sporadic craft production.

Other craft training programs have been offered over the years, some led by non-Aboriginal persons and organizations. Such craft skill training programs did not include any related business components and focused solely on production. People participating in the training programs were encouraged to produce items for an individual, often a non-Aboriginal middle person – who was not a community member, who would then sell the Mi'kmaq products within various markets. This process continued for a short period of time, about a year or two. Research participants identified declines in market demand, inability to access raw materials, distance from and lack of direct access to markets, as well as long intensive work schedules, as obstacles to sustainability. Incentives to continue making the items diminished and people were no longer motivated to invest their time and labour for minimal returns.

The most popular training programs are those dedicated to basket making, beading and quillwork. These practices are perceived as the most relevant to Mi'kmaq culture. Mi'kmaq basket making is renowned internationally, but despite recent efforts to revitalize and sustain this tradition, many are concerned these are dying arts.^{xxviii} Basket production in Paqtnkek was a craft skill that was passed down from one generation to another. Formerly many of the families in Paqtnkek made baskets. The baskets were made out of ash, black ash was the preferred wood but white ash worked well also. The products made from the ash were abundant and as the ash tree was processed it made raw materials for many products. Ash splints were made for the production of baskets. Handles were made from ash, these handle were for axes, hammers, shovels, picks and many other hand tools used in the local industries. Hoops for lobster traps and sailing ships were produced by the thousands and sold for pennies apiece. Today ash splints are scarce, rarely locally sourced, they are generally purchased from a supplier in another province.

Comments below from participants in the training courses indicate the many obstacles to sustainable craft production. All of our research participants expressed a need for greater holistic support.

A middle-aged woman noted, *“There is a lack of material, we need help getting the raw material. We also need inspiration. I have no transportation to get to places to sell my products.”* This individual was uncertain of the potential of a cooperative, but stated the following: *“We need a building to display all crafts and we need interest from*

other community members. Craft makers need to meet to teach our youth and to stress its (cultural) importance.”

Another female elder who was trained in beading, leather, jewelry-making, sewing star blankets, rustic furniture, wooden flowers and lobster hoops, suggested that the difficulties in sustaining a livelihood from crafts stemmed from a lack of community support. *“I do know that the proper support wasn’t in place! A crafter needs to have someone to market their crafts. It is difficult to get the raw material and market at the same time as trying to produce. We all need to be taught how to obtain the raw materials.”* In order to have a profitable cooperative she said, *“All the assistance from all sectors is necessary for success.”* Despite the obstacles she remains optimistic that things could change with more training and knowledge exchange. *“There are many factors in crafts that could be explored, like the proper training in obtaining raw material and marketing the products. I would like to get trained all over again to gain new craft ideas. Gathering is interesting and I am also willing to learn about making stain glass. Basket making is another program that was too short. Training programs should at least run for ten months!”*

Quillwork baskets, intricately stylized with porcupine quills and birch bark are considered valuable collectables. Housed in museums, private collections and auctioned on eBay, they sometimes sell for thousands of dollars a piece. Porcupine quill baskets are the most expensive baskets produced today. These baskets tend to be small, decorative pieces using birch bark, sweet grass and other materials considered sacred. Quill

technique requires specialized tools and tremendous patience. Currently there is one quill basket maker producing in Paqtnekek. Today both functional and high quality decorative baskets are produced by a handful of basket makers.

A profile of a Mi'kmaq porcupine quill basket maker:

Sandra Simon is a 55-year-old elder from the Paqtnekek community. Sandra has produced crafts for over twenty-five years. An Aboriginal person from “out west” taught Sandra to do quill work during a course she took in Paqtnekek in 1985. Sandra works with porcupine quills and sews them into small boxes made of birch bark. Sandra has made many quill boxes and sold them all over the province. In the past Sandra received quills from friends and family who found porcupine in the woods or near the road. She is skilled at removing the quills from the hides using burlap bags. She boils the quills and dyes them using natural and synthetic dyes. She uses specialized tools and takes great care with the fragile quills in order to produce high quality items. Removing birch bark in ways that sustain the health of the tree is a critical skill. Finding the right tree takes time and knowledge of the land. Sandra wishes to pass on her knowledge of the craft to younger people. She said, *“I am the last of one out of my class to pass quill work on. They all died.”* She is one of the few people that are able to produce these small delicate quill boxes. Sandra is concerned that the *“right”* people learn how to work with quills. The *“right”* people are those with patience and tenacity and who are *“not out to get rich quick.”* *“There is a sacredness to making the boxes. I would like to teach and pass on the art of making quill baskets. There are many people who know how to do it and I want to pass my knowledge on to the youth.”* Access to the raw materials is getting very scarce and it is affecting her

craft production. As Sandra says, *“I am getting old and I cannot do it myself. My health is not good anymore. I need someone to go in the woods to get me birch bark and porcupine quills, and I also need sweet grass.”* There are very few people that are gathering the raw materials for the craft producers today, causing interruptions in production.

Sewing classes were periodically available in the Paqtnkek community since 1994. The students were taught the basic skills of sewing. Local community members provided the sewing machines. The students were taught how to make ribbon shirts. These decorative shirts are made with the traditional colored ribbons sewn into the shirt. These shirts are increasingly popular as formal attire for political leaders, powwow singers and dancers. Shawls and dance dresses are also becoming very popular in the powwow circuit. The course included instruction on how to make star blanket quilts, which are used as decorative pieces and for ceremony.^{xxix} Star blankets are used in the vision quest ceremony and these blankets can bring a good price if made well. One of the challenges to sustainability is the cost of maintaining the machines. Sandra, profiled above, attended a training program in 1994 to learn how to make star blankets. She indicated that star blankets are a way to earn extra cash because you can, *“make good money on each blanket. People need blankets and give them as gifts.”* One key to making star blankets is having a *“good sewing machine, not a cheap one, that was our biggest problem. The sewing machine kept breaking and people give up.”*

Sandra indicated a strong willingness to participate in a craft cooperative. For Sandra the key to success are the quality of the craft and access to raw materials. What is needed from Sandra's perspective are: marketing, management and advertizing training; access to local markets; a central production area; community and peer support and; instruction on how to set-up and get involved in a craft cooperative.

Leatherwork, beading, and regalia making are other examples of value added craft production. A series of training courses held in Paqtnkek in 1994, and again in 2002-2003, were dedicated to making ceremonial garments for public consumption. Moose hair tufting, for example, is a high skill craft. Moose hair is woven into leather and birch bark for headgear and breast plates for traditional powwow dancers. This skill is very rare in the Atlantic region; hair-tufting skills are more common in the Prairie Provinces. Leather craft instruction was offered to community members. The instructor was a non-Aboriginal woman. The crafters were first taught how to make simple products like key chains and small ring boxes and then instructed in more complicated production of belts, purses, hand bags, wallets, gun cases and custom made objects that would appeal to local markets. Three people who took the course continue to make leather items. One male artisan crafter, well known for his leatherwork skills, was contracted in 2009, to make leather portfolios for the joint meeting of the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq and the Cabinet of the Province of Nova Scotia.^{xxx} This individual sporadically does made-to-order work to supplement his social assistance allotment. However, he complains that he cannot afford good quality leather, which is a significant obstacle to his ability to earn a livelihood in craft production.

Profile of an artisan crafter entrepreneur:

Mary C. Lafford produces beadwork, jewelry, leather moccasins, key chains, medicine pouches, dream catchers and baskets. Her grandparents significantly influenced Mary at a very early age. She learned to make baskets from ash splints with their guidance. After taking a series of training courses in 1994, and again in 2002-2003, and teaching herself to do beadwork, Mary sought secure markets. Mary is the only Paqtnkek artisan crafter that regularly sells her products in the local Antigonish markets. Her wares are available weekly at the seasonal Saturday Farmer's Market, daily at the Made in Nova Scotia Store and at the Antigonish Tourist Bureau. Artisans rent shelf space at the Made in Nova Scotia store and receive the ticket price, which is collected by the merchant and distributed to the vendors when they refurbish their shelves or pay the rent on a monthly basis. A wide variety of artisans' works from across the region are available under one roof and on line through the store's website. Mary C. also sells from her home where she produces her work independently. Additionally Mary sells her work through the Internet on a Facebook page. Mary C.'s craftwork provides her with a sustainable livelihood. Mary C. wishes there were more materials available locally, (she sources her ash and leather out of province) and agrees that a central production area, community supports and business skills would enhance her success.

Profile of a Mi'kmaq Painter:

Darren Julian is twenty-eight year old Paqtnkek community member who lives in Wagmatcook, Cape Breton. His father was a well-known painter and Darren inherited his

skills. He started painting ten years ago, originally working in oil, Darren switched to acrylic paints because the reduced drying time increases his productivity. Two years ago Darren began working with wood and is experimenting with wood burning and making canes and walking sticks. The paintings are produced in less time and are sold faster than the woodcrafts that take longer to fabricate. Paintings are sold at various prices depending upon their size and the time invested. His woodcrafts are higher in price because of the time invested in producing the finished product. Darren states that, *“Time is essential in determining the prices of a craft. The time has to be relative to a price that is affordable by the consumer. Because more time is spent on wood burning, the canes and walking sticks result in a higher price and less turnover because of the higher prices.”* Darren is employed at the Wagmatcook Culture and Heritage Centre in Wagmatcook Mi’kmaq Community, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, where he spends his days painting and providing cultural information for tourists. The Culture and Heritage Centre opened in 2001 and is located on TransCanada Highway 105. The Centre was designed to provide, “A glimpse into the history of the Mi’kmaq Peoples offering an interpretive learning experience for children and adults alike.”^{xxxii} There is a restaurant, a small craft store and experiential / interpretive learning programs. Among the local Antigonish art galleries, Darren is starting to make a name for himself, and as one gallery director told us, *“He is one to watch.”* Darren’s key concern is, *“The lack of knowledge to market my stuff. Not knowing where to go to sell my work makes it hard to sell.”*

Profile of Regalia Makers:

Trevor Gould and Jennifer Maloney are part of the next generation of Mi'kmaq regalia producers. Motivated by their passion for traditional dancing and singing they are self-taught artisans making exquisite beaded garments for personal use and trade along the powwow circuit. The two dance competitively and are very passionate about designing and making dance regalia. The spirit of exchange of ideas, designs and garments within the powwow is very vibrant. Many participants actively trade materials and share sacred items within the cultural customs of the powwow season. Trevor makes drum sticks and is keeping up with the changing designs in drumming competitions. The cultural exchange in the powwow community is rich and the transfer of knowledge and culture is productive. Powwows and similar ceremonial gatherings were reinvigorated in the Atlantic Mi'kmaq communities approximately twenty-five years ago and occur with increasing frequency. They are locations for craft vendors to exhibit, sell and trade. Some artisan craft producers prefer these venues to non-Aboriginal markets. There is a strong ethos of mentorship within the powwow context. The level of skill displayed in beading designs of regalia and drumsticks are getting more detailed and complex. Trevor looks to his elders for inspiration and guidance in his dancing and craft. These elders who perfected their dance moves and craft designs, set the goals for the youth. The transfer of skill, knowledge and design insures cultural resilience and fluidity for the future generations. For many research participants, powwows are a significant conduit of intertribal transfer of traditions and skills that will keep Indigenous cultural values alive. These powwow dancers and regalia makers are actively mentoring youth in their communities.

Pottery instruction was another course taught in the community. Paqtnkek community members learned how to prepare the clay for pottery production. The crafters produced bowls, pots, plates and flowerpots and other objects and were taught how to fire the clay products. Some of the crafters used hand-building coil methods to make clay pots and pipes that were reminiscent of the early material culture of the Mi'kmaq. Today there is no pottery production in the community.

In addition to the scarcity of raw materials, specialized tools for craft production and the procurement of raw materials are not readily available, expensive to obtain and maintain. Various knives such as the crooked knife, the drawknife, special awls, and shaving knives to make wooden splints are required prepare raw materials for production. Draw horses are used for shaving basket handles and basket splint pieces. Splint pounding tools are integral to manufacturing wooden products and the technological knowledge associated with their use is important to keep alive. According to the research participants, hunters, fishers and gathers are always making or acquiring various tools for their activities on the land and water. Knives, axes, spears and poles, pack baskets and other utensils are made by these persons and often traded or shared by others who have access to them.

Hunting, fishing and gathering are livelihoods requiring many skill sets and this complex knowledge base can complement craft development and sustainability in Paqtnkek community. Hunters and gathers have tremendous environmental and land use

knowledge. They know where raw materials are and may be able to supply the knowledge or labour in providing the raw material to the community crafters. The expression of Mi'kmaq rights through hunting, fishing and gathering activities is integral to the socioeconomic health of the community as well as its cultural capital. Hunters and gatherers search the woods for game and many Mi'kmaq are trained the look for other resources during their travels in various landscapes and habitats that have multiple procurement potentials. The hunters, fishers, and gathers constantly record the landscape, this source of knowledge is underutilized, but with has tremendous collaborative opportunities for economic change through an expansion of the outcomes of primary industry activities.

Future Directions – Community Thoughts

Social economy in Mi'kmaq country is embedded in Mi'kmaq customary concepts and practices related to kinship, apprenticeship, knowledge translation and mobilization and the exercise of Aboriginal and Treaty rights. For example, Netukulimk is a natural resource concept that guides the relationship the Mi'kmaq have with their natural environment. This concept is a guiding principal that informs sustainable interaction that fosters wellbeing from the land, sea and air. Recently the concept of Netukulimk is being reinvigorated in a contemporary context as a governance strategy in the expression and implementation of Mi'kmaq treaty and Aboriginal rights. Netukulimk represents, in part, a culturally aligned value system that guides Mi'kmaq social economy activity.

Mi'kmaq linguist Bernie Francis discusses the evolution of the concept Netukulimk:

“This concept has had to evolve to incorporate economic development including gathering berries, shellfish, medicines and hunting that also include the modern day concept of knowledge and money, and we must remind ourselves that our gifts come from the Creator (the land, water, and their resources) are sacred gifts. This was built in physically among the Mi'kmaq. In other words, it doesn't have to be spoken of because it is simply understood” (Francis, APC. 2008).

Social economy and livelihood sustainability are embedded in rights discourses in sectors of Paqtnkek. People are interested in “the formation of some organization with all the crafts people will hopefully allow for the increased production of a quality craft that will satisfy any market out there.” They argue that through the Marshall Decision (1999) and the Bernard Decision (2005), the historical right to sustain a moderate livelihood is well established and that right needs to be reflected in any future relations within the community and between the community and other parties.^{xxxii} According to the court decisions:

115 The parties to the treaties must have intended that the Mi'kmaq would have access to resources in order to have something to bring to the truckhouse. The access was related to a particular use, namely trading for necessities as part of the Mi'kmaq traditional economy. The treaties represented a promise by the British that the Mi'kmaq would be allowed to have access to resources in order to engage in traditional trading activities so

as to obtain a moderate livelihood. It was for this reason that Binnie J. wrote that “the surviving substance of the treaty is not the literal promise of a truckhouse, but a treaty right to continue to obtain necessities through hunting and fishing by trading the products of those traditional activities subject to restrictions that can be justified under the *Badger* test” (*Marshall 1*, at para. 56). The Court reiterated this understanding in *R. v. Marshall*, [1999] 3 S.C.R. 533 (“*Marshall 2*”), when it stated that “[t]he treaty right permits the Mi’kmaq community to work for a living through continuing access to fish and wildlife to trade for ‘necessaries’” (para. 4). (*R.v. Marshall*; *R.v. Bernard*. 2005 SCC 43, [2005] 2 S.C.R. 220).

The court also recognized in evidence the occasional trade of wood products during the treaty making process. The is stated in paragraph 120 below:

120 The evidence in and holdings of the courts below support the conclusion that the Mi’kmaq gathered and may occasionally have traded in “bows from maple, arrows from cedar, birch bark baskets, canoes of birch bark, spruce resin for the seams, spruce for wigwam frames, medicines from a variety of plants, lances, spears and dishes”: *R. v. Bernard*, [2000] 3 C.N.L.R. 184, at para. 83. According to Mi’kmaq oral history and tradition, testified to by Chief Augustine, “[t]here were some trade of canoes, toboggans, modes of travel Snowshoes would be included in there. Because the British and the Europeans wanted to use these equipment to travel through the winter on the ice and the snow, and the toboggans”: *Bernard*, at para. 82. (*R.v.Marshall*; *R.v. Bernard*. 2005 SCC 43, [2005] 2 S.C.R. 220).

With these factors influencing ideas of rights and entitlements, there is an increasing discourse in Paqtnkek that focuses on seeking out relationships with corporate, Federal and Provincial organizations that will facilitate Mi'kmaq exercising their treaty and Aboriginal rights to earn a livelihood. As noted throughout this research, access to raw materials is key to Mi'kmaq social economy rights consciousness.

This research found that relationships with the Department of Natural Resources and local corporations to facilitate sustainable and efficient extraction of the necessary raw materials for craft production are lacking. Community members want to engage in the mobilization of natural resources in keeping with Mi'kmaq values and ways of life according to treaty and title rights. Most raw material resources needed for Mi'kmaq craft production are acquired seasonally. Historically, knowledge of techniques to acquire raw materials was transferred in an apprenticeship process from experienced harvesters and gatherers to neophytes. Today new strategies are needed to benefit local craftspeople, enabling them to meet contemporary market demands and instill Mi'kmaq values and ways of life according to treaty and title rights. All Mi'kmaq people have the right to gather materials, to fish, and to hunt for livelihood.^{xxxiii} The potential for collaborative partnerships with the Department of Natural Resources and other provincial and federal departments must be established on a Mi'kmaq nation level. Negotiations are under way in the Mi'kmaq / Nova Scotia / Canada Tripartite Forum and through the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resource and the Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative or KMKNO to improve Mi'kmaq access to treaty protected lands and resources. It is important to consider the

national political climate when deciding how to organize business partnerships and how to best foster economic change. Local relationships and arrangements can be made without prejudice to the larger provincial negotiations. Local governments and corporations should consider the great potential of inclusive consultation with Paqtnekek community to foster economic growth across all sectors.

According to the community research partner:

Our community's desire is creating opportunities that will improve the social and cultural health of the community. Meaningful work could be translated into how a person can create a craft, and be able to market and sell their product. It will also make them feel pride in their work and will foster cultural health. There are many advantages for the Paqtnekek community and local craftspeople, such as the recognition of their art and pride for their community, by pursuing meaningful economic opportunities. The Paqtnekek community lacks a business group of people that could work as a support group to help sustain individual crafters. The Paqtnekek community also needs a dedicated person understands and is experienced craft production and who can help develop business and marketing plans for potential and current crafters. Paqtnekek needs a person who is familiar with the co-op concept who can set the foundation for the development of a good co-operative.

Lack of internal organization and collaboration, high initial investment costs, social assistance dependency and reliance upon external sources to market craft products, limit the potential of craft sales and production in Paqtnekek. The community struggled with

limited access to the current highway and collaborative marketing strategies from local community craft production remained undeveloped. In order to meet the perceived demand once the highway relocation is complete, will require significant capacity building within the community. Paqtnkek community administration are actively concerned with economic development and business ventures and the timing is particularly right to engage in cooperative mobilization. Paqtnkek community administration is exploring the economic benefits to the community at large from individual and community entrepreneurship capacity. This will help small business development in the Paqtnkek community. Today the Mi'kmaq of Paqtnkek want direct market participation and are favourable to consignment arrangements.

Partnerships within the community can help facilitate a positive change when crafters form a partnership as a support group in collaboration with band administration and staff. Partnerships with local gathers, hunter and wood workers who have the knowledge of where and the way of getting access to raw materials will help sustain craft production. Partnerships are needed with local community members that may access to machinery and vehicles to allow for better access and mobilization of raw materials. Partnerships with the outside communities and local governments could help facilitate positive social economic change. The Department of Natural Resources has capacity that could benefit the Mi'kmaq craft production.

Local and Provincial tourist bureaus and operators could help develop a diverse experience for tourists that enter the Nova Scotia area by show casing and promoting the

indigenous culture on the Atlantic region as well as the province. Partnerships with local community small business, like the local farmers markets, craft shows and cultural organizations can have a positive impact on craft sales. Access to local non-Mi'kmaq markets is essential to broadening the market target group. The Mi'kmaq Association for Cultural Studies (MACS) may be a positive vehicle for creating a Mi'kmaq Arts and Crafts Society to help individual and artisan collectives through out the province collaborate with other guilds and associations.

Paqtnkek has a large youth population interested in learning craft skills from elders. Today, Paqtnkek has a small group of trained crafters with diverse skill sets. The current cohort of craft producers is unlikely large enough inventory to sustain a cooperative venture unless newly trained artisans commit to long-term involvement through training, production, marketing, and business skill attainment and have available supplies, tools and a location from which to work with each other.

Paqtnkek community has invested in various forms of craft training workshops. A priority is to enhance business skill capacity. Locally, the Saint Francis Xavier University Enterprise Development Centre (XEDC) offers workshops six one-day workshops on developing craft cooperatives in Aboriginal communities. The workshops focus on business plan design, marketing, pricing, production and exporting. The program development was funded by ACOA and last offered in 2003-2004 to Pictou Landing Mi'kmaq Community for a fee of \$250.00 per person. XEDC has expressed a desire to improve its outreach to Mi'kmaq communities including Paqtnkek and will modify and

update its program to suit the community's needs. XEDC also offers free workshops and other courses on how to start a business for modest fees. That these resources are underutilized indicates a systemic distance from local educational and entrepreneurial institutions.

Paqtnkek has a growing number of individuals who are educated in business administration and marketing. The Paqtnkek band administration has an economic development person who can help develop marketing plans for the community and individual crafters. Paqtnkek also employs a training officer who works with the Mi'kmaq Education Training Secretariat (MRTS) who is able to access funding for various training programs in the Paqtnkek community.

Given the imminent geographic changes due to highway construction, access to such programs may assist community members in creating cooperatives of other business ventures. This research recommends that Paqtnkek work collaboratively with XEDC, or a similar development centre, to build sustainable business capacity, to learn about cooperative models, to expand market potential, to enhance negotiations skills with industry and government, and to network with other entrepreneurs for knowledge exchange, mobilization and resource procurement strategies. Highway development within the Paqtnkek community boundaries will bring future marketing potential. Paqtnkek economic development is working toward better access to the local markets as well as exploring culturally aligned tourist potential taking place in other Indigenous communities in Nova Scotia.^{xxxiv} A communication strategy is needed to link Mi'kmaq

artisan crafters to other provincial economic opportunities. Currently consistent, reliable information is lacking in the province and adversely affecting the sustainability of cultural and craft production and sales within Mi'kmaq country.

Policies and strategies are needed to implement sustainable socioeconomic development that reflects Mi'kmaq cultural competency. Political co-operation and support will be needed to help sustain Paqtnkek craft production will have to be provided in different ways than the current one-off training program format. The Paqtnkek Band might consider contributing dedicated resources and personnel to build marketing and business skills capacities of the local crafters. Training in financial management and marketing areas will be needed to help sustain successful craft production. The availability of start up funding for crafts people could generate a financial and marketing plan for startup and sustaining craft production.

Alterations to Paqtnkek administrative policy look favourable for providing a safe environment for outside investment to take place within the Paqtnkek community. The formation of a justice system that has by-laws to accommodate protection and respect of investors and create transparent business and political relationships to prevent and settle disputes fairly may attract investors. This includes establishing consistent terms of office for band appointed positions to allow for continuity in management to see projects through to completion, thus securing community development and a sustainable economic base. Job security will help create a safe and productive working environment can stabilize the economic future for all who are entrepreneurs in the small business

sectors, such as individual craft producers and those deciding to work as a collective. Policy changes to social assistance allocations currently penalize people who subsidize their incomes modestly through sales. This policy could be reconsidered to help break the cycle of dependency on social assistance by not penalizing the crafter for subsidizing their limited income until the crafter can demonstrate a capacity for obtaining stable self-sufficiency. For many of our research participants the risks to let go of social assistance to pursue independent careers as artisan crafter entrepreneurs was too great and they cannot accumulate sufficient capital to invest in enough raw materials to realize a profit.

Establishing a Paqtnkek craft cooperative may be the answer to resolving these dilemmas. The majority of our research participants indicated a preference for establishing a cooperative venture over conventional for-profit businesses. Crafters would like cooperation and support from the community administration. The crafters indicated very strongly the need to form a cooperative setting to help them succeed in future craft production. The desire to work in a cooperative setting in a building where they could set up their work stations would facilitate customary teaching practices through apprenticeship, but also be available as part of educational curriculum for on and off reserve schools to teach and pass on their cultural knowledge. A centralized building to display crafts and gather interest from other community members that could share the space, where craft training programs could be held for longer durations in group setting is preferred to individualistic training that isolates and fosters unproductive competition. Aging crafters need a collaborative effort in order to be able to continue successful crafting through improved accessibility to raw materials. A cooperative can provide a

supply of raw materials. Many crafters travel to Halifax, Maine and New Brunswick to get good black ash and other supplies, at great personal and financial cost.

Home craft production can be cumbersome when dealing with large amounts of raw materials and equipment in a limited space. Paqtnekek, like many Aboriginal communities, has a severe housing shortage. Workspace is at a premium. While the workstation setup in the home has its advantages and its disadvantages, crafts like basket making and leatherwork need larger spaces to contain the raw material production of making ash splints or tanning hides. A central location with designated individual or coworker stations can facilitate increased productivity and communitarianism and limit domestic distractions that arise in a home setting.

Cooperative organization can help organize the group of community crafters to collectively lobby for funds that may not be available to individual or private business. Private business startup costs are too high for individual crafters. Together crafters can leverage more funds and buy larger volumes of raw materials at lower prices. Additionally, the research participants indicated that a cooperative could be a greater representation of the community and the association of the craft produced by a community co-op setting instills a cultural connection to the crafts. Crafts that are associated to a community and culture may be more appealing to the tourist market than individual sold art.

Building positive relationships between the Band administration and a crafter cooperative has many benefits. Economic development workers and training facilities can promote crafts and develop sound financial and marketing plans for the individual and membership. Income generating cooperatives will reduce financial burdens that the band administration currently faces; high unemployment and high social dependency are common.

The benefits of creating a cooperative far outweigh the perceived challenges. Some research participants raised concerns that the band council might feel threatened by the organization and empowerment of a group of people and may make the local government nervous about their economic abilities and responsibilities and services to the community. Many Aboriginal communities are set up to administer the finances and various programs for the people. The main income is social assistance so the people are dependent upon the system. The nature of band elections and the dispersing of programs may be subject to patronage by administrators and elected members. The challenge the community faces is the ability to work together and allow the development of cooperative and individual businesses. The sustainability of the cooperative may depend upon the working relation forged between the cooperative membership and the local political structure. The development of a just and fair playing field for a craft cooperative will be challenging to both band members and political leadership, but can be transparently managed through clearly delineated roles and responsibilities. Business development sustainability in Paqtnkek community and the sustainability of a craft cooperative will be dependent upon the relationship forged with community leadership.

In general the craft producers would like to see the formation of a craft cooperative. Some crafters would like to see this development, but are not idle and waiting for it to happen; many of the crafters will continue to produce crafts on their own. However, none of the crafters articulated an intention to take the lead organizing a cooperative. Thus, it may be best to strike a committee to help people move forward together rather than wait for one person to lead the charge. Some people do not want to be perceived as “thinking they are better than the rest” by mobilizing a project. Others are fearful of failure or rejection. Others think “it is not worth it” or “I don’t have the time” or “I don’t know where to start. Together, the research participants were hopeful their participation will help resolve all obstacles that are currently preventing the community from having successful, cooperative craft production and look forward to improving the social health of the community and help Paqtnkek gain the ability to be self-sufficient. Cooperatives can help artisan crafters avoid cultural exploitation. Paqtnkek has the potential to use cultural tourism to preserve culture, tradition and history without distorting or exploiting Mi’kmaq values and heritage and ensuring the authenticity of Aboriginal cultural tourism products and services.

Below are tables produced by Kathleen Shy Denny, a Paqtnkek community member and student research assistant. The tables represent a summary of craft training, production, marketing, band relationship and desire for the creation of a craft cooperative.

Figure 1

Craft training	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Female	Female
Beading	x	x	x		x		x		x
Leather	x	x			x		x		x

Jewelry	x	x	x		x				
Sewing				x				x	
Rustic furniture									
Painting						x			x
Stain Glass									
Wooden flowers								x	
Ash splints baskets	x				x				
Wood flower splints					x			x	
Lobster hoops, traps etc.					x				
Handles axe, hammers , poles					x				
Spears, craft tools etc.					x				
Gathering					x				
Other explain			Dream catchers	Quill baskets		Wood burning, Canes etc	Drum, sticks, regali		Regalia sewing

Figure 2

Current crafts produced	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Female	Female
Beading	x	x	x						x
Leather	x				x				x
Jewelry	x	x	x						
sewing				x				x	
Rustic furniture									
Painting						x			x
Stain Glass									
wooden flowers								x	
Ash splints baskets	x								
Wood flower splints								x	
Lobster hoops, traps etc.									
Handles axe, hammers , poles					x				
Spears, craft tools etc.					x				
Gathering									
Other explain			Dream catchers	Quill baskets					sewing regalia
				Moose hair		wood burning			

Figure 3

Crafts marketed	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Female	Female
Beading	x	x	x				x		x
Leather	x	x					x		x
Jewelry	x	x	x				x		x
Sewing		x		x					
Rustic furniture									x
Painting						x			
Stain Glass		x							
Wooden flowers		x							
Ash splints baskets	x								
Wood flower splints									
Lobster hoops, traps etc.									
Handles axe, hammers, poles					x				
Spears, craft tools etc.					x		x		
Gathering					x				
Other explain					x				Regalia
			Dream catchers	Quill baskets					

Figure 4

Reason for success	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Male	Female
Quality of craft	x				x		x	x	x
Marketing training skills	x				x				
Access to raw materials	x	x				x		x	
Ease of craft production	x				x		x		
Access to local markets	x				x				
Central production, market location	x								
Advertising skills	x								
Community support	x							x	x
Co-op setting and involvement	x								
Management skills	x								
Peer support and involvement	x	x				x		x	x
Other explain				Dream catchers					

Figure 5

Strategies for success	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Female	Female
Quality of craft	x						x	x	x
Marketing training skills	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Access to raw materials	x	x	x	x	x		x		
Ease of craft production	x	x			x		x	x	
Access to local markets	x	x			x		x	x	x
Central production, market location	x	x			x		x	x	
Advertising skills	x	x	x	x	x		x		x
Community support	x	x			x		x	x	x
Co-op setting and involvement	x	x			x		x		
Management skills	x	x			x		x	x	
Peer support and involvement	x	x			x		x		x

Figure 6

Do you want to be part of a cooperative?	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Female	Female
Yes		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
No								x	

Figure 7

How could the Band help crafters?	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Female	Female
Quality of craft			x						
Marketing training skills	x		x		x		x	x	x
Access to raw materials	x		x	x	x			x	x
Ease of craft production	x		x					x	
Access to local markets	x		x	x	x		x		x
Central production, market location	x		x		x		x		x
Advertising skills	x		x		x		x	x	x
Community support	x		x		x		x		
Co-op set up and involvement	x		x		x		x	x	
Management skills	x		x				x	x	x
Peer support and involvement	x		x		x			x	
Start up costs, loans, grants, etc	x		x	x	x		x		x

Proposal writing etc	x		x			x	x	x	
Other explain	support				Highway access				

Working Paper Feedback

A. Please let us know what you found helpful in this

Working Paper. Include Paper # ____

B. How could the Working Paper Series be improved?

C. Is there anything that needs to be changed in this Working Paper?

D. Your name and contact info (optional)

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SES/ESD Network Research Goals

- . Contributing to the theory and practice of social economy in the Atlantic region
- . Internal bridging, bonding, mentoring & capacity building
- . Encouraging use of the “social economy” as a framing concept in the region
- . Linking Atlantic partners with other parts of Canada and the world

SES/ESD Network Research Themes and Questions

Conceptualizing & describing the social economy in Atlantic Canada

- . What does the social economy look like? What needs does it address?
- . How can we best capture this sector conceptually?
- . What, if anything, makes it distinctive or innovative? How interconnected are its facets,
& to what effect?
- . What are the characteristics of social economy organizations?
- . What are the implications for government policy?

Policy inventory and analysis

- . How are different understandings of “social economy” reflected in government policy?
- . What needs are not being met, & what changes are needed in regulatory environment?
- . What indicators can we develop to aid in policy development?

Community mobilization around issues of common concern (natural resources; food security; inclusion and empowerment)

- . Do social economy organizations contribute to social inclusion, the democratization of the economy, & empowerment?
- . What inputs are needed to overcome obstacles & build capacity?
- . What can we learn from research on mobilization around food security, empowerment
& inclusion, community management of natural resources & energy?

Measuring and Financing the Social Economy

- . What can social accounting, co-operative accounting, social auditing, & other techniques contribute towards a better understanding of the work and contributions of social economy organizations?
- . Where do social economy organizations obtain the financing that they need?
- . What do social economy organizations contribute toward financing the social economy?

Modeling & researching innovative, traditional, & IT-based communication and dissemination processes

- . How can social economy actors best communicate?
- . What can our Network team members contribute by developing & modeling processes and techniques?
- . What can be gained from exploring technology as an equalizer vs. technology as a barrier?

Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network



Partenariat sur l'économie sociale et la durabilité
Bridging, Bonding, and Building | Renforcement des liens et des capacités

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<http://www.msvu.ca/socialconomyatlantic/>

A multiple partner, Atlantic-wide research project | Un partenariat de recherche au Canada atlantique

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- ⁱ <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/scr/at/mp/pg19-eng.asp> - 18.7K
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- ^{xx} In total, seven students were associated with this project. They were trained in research ethics and collaborative methodologies, as well as data analysis, report writing and knowledge mobilization. Five of the seven students are aboriginal.
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- ^{xxiv} Warry, Wayne. 1998. *Unfinished Dreams: Community Healing and the Reality of Aboriginal Self-Government*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
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- ^{xxvi} <http://www.thechronicleherald.ca/ArtsLife/1223580.html>
- ^{xxvii} The literature on Indigenous women's economic and social marginalization is vast. Patricia Albers and Bea Medicine (eds) (1983) *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women*. Is particularly illuminating of the challenges on-reserve women faced and the impacts of the perceptions of settler society on women's work and lives.
- ^{xxviii} Caroline Gould of We'koqma'q Mi'kmaq Community is an expert basket maker concerned with passing on her skills for generations to come.
- ^{xxix} See Beatrice Medicine "Lakota Star Quilts: Commodity, Ceremony, and Economic Development," in *To Honor and Comfort: Native Quilting Traditions*. Marsha L McDowell and C. Kurt Dewhurst (eds). Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press and Michigan State University Museum. 111-117.
- ^{xxx} <http://premier.gov.ns.ca/speeches/joint-meeting-of-assembly-of-nova-scotia-mi'kmaq-chiefs-and-cabinet-of-the-province-of-nova-scotia/>
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