

**BUILDING NETWORKS, BUILDING CAPACITY: URBAN INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

According to the 2001 Census, 50% of Indigenous<sup>1</sup> people are now urban residents, and this trend is expected to continue. While Indigenous people in urban areas are socio-economically slightly better off than their on-Reserve counterparts, they lag significantly behind the non-Indigenous population. Given the emerging concerns about labour shortages in the face of a growing economy and aging workforce, urban Indigenous people are potentially well positioned to make a significant contribution to the overall economy and to benefit from it. Although there is an emerging body of research on success factors in urban Indigenous economic development, and in building capacity in urban Indigenous organizations to support community economic development, there is currently no national resource or network to share and exchange knowledge in this discipline. This lack of knowledge sharing hinders urban Indigenous economic growth while at the same time inhibiting the advancement of future research. It is essential that knowledge about the success factors involved in urban Indigenous economic development be mobilized, shared, and disseminated between researchers, policy analysts, and urban Indigenous communities nationally. The dissemination of research findings, and knowledge about models of traditional and non-traditional economic development and organizational strengthening, is a key enabler of increased participation of urban Indigenous people in the Canadian economy.

The objective is to develop an open and inclusive multi-stakeholder national network of scholars and practitioners working in urban Indigenous communities and organizations, universities, federal/provincial/municipal governments, private industry, and NGO's. The network will be focused on mobilizing knowledge on urban Indigenous economic development and organizational strengthening in order to foster increased understanding and capacity building amongst researchers, policy analysts, and community practitioners. The team leading this network includes various academics who have undertaken significant scholarship on Indigenous issues including research into urban Indigenous issues, and practitioners with extensive experience in Indigenous community economic development and government policy development.

The Network's activities would: regionally explore case studies, survey work, gather existing knowledge, connect established networks, and disseminate knowledge through research conferences, dialogues, and colloquia. At the local level, 'Learning Circles' will be established in at least seven urban communities in Canada, which will include scholars and practitioners dedicated to the exchange of information that will support community development, while assisting scholars to benefit from traditional knowledge and local wisdom. The Network will:

1. Collate, organize, and share available research on innovative approaches to urban Indigenous economic development while also identifying gaps in knowledge.
2. Explore strategies for urban Indigenous organizational development and models of governance/business administration, and
3. Survey work in the regional areas on strategies for building local economies.

The Network will also host a national conference on urban Indigenous economic development involving scholars and community leaders/activists, establish local, ongoing Learning Circles to facilitate knowledge exchange, and support action planning to identify steps forward in strengthening the local economy and organizational capacity building. Ultimately, the network will enhance research on urban Indigenous economic development, assist community practitioners in developing successful ways to kindle the Indigenous economy, and build economic capacity in the urban Indigenous community for the benefit of all Canadians.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this proposal and exclusivity "urban Indigenous" refers to the urban Métis, Non-Status Indian, Inuit, and First Nations population in Canada.

## Situation and Opportunity

Over the last two decades, there has been an extraordinary growth in our understanding of the situations and issues impacting land-based Indigenous communities, and a concomitant exchange of knowledge between scholars and Indigenous leaders and community members. Even if solutions are often still elusive, the knowledge of the impact of European settlement is widely understood – there is abundant literature on the history of colonization of Indigenous peoples, their response to it, and the current strategies of Indigenous peoples to refashion and rebuild their communities. Indigenous people have been able to draw on that knowledge base as a strategic resource in community development and in the struggle for Indigenous rights. Yet while there is an increased understanding of land-based Indigenous people and communities, there is the largely untold story of the movement, particularly in the post-war era, of Indigenous peoples into urban areas. Today, according to the 2001 Census, more than half of the Indigenous population lives off-Reserve, often well outside of their traditional territory (Beavon, White et al. 2003).

In contrast to the burgeoning growth of urban Indigenous communities, there is a more limited academic literature on the community and economic development of urban Indigenous communities. While the contributions of individual scholars and particular projects are strong, there is not yet a critical mass of scholarly interactions and research connections that can enable a synergistic effect. Consequently, while over half of the Indigenous population lives off-Reserve, the overwhelming majority of academic work remains focused on the issues facing land-based Indigenous communities. Therefore, when urban Indigenous community leaders, activists, intellectuals, and practitioners look outside their immediate context for concepts, evidence, and arguments that can inform their strategies and advance their struggles, they find a scholarly voice that is diffuse, geographically dispersed, and uncoordinated.

It is the purpose of this proposed project to strengthen the ability to respond to the demographic reality of urban Indigenous people by creating a network of academics, policy analysts, and members of the Indigenous community that can accomplish two objectives: the creation of a scholarly network to articulate a coordinated, comprehensive, uniquely Canadian perspective on the issues facing urban Indigenous communities, and; the building of capacity of leaders, activists, and organizations in urban Indigenous communities through ensuring better access to the most current thinking and evidence about economic and community development. Both objectives are achieved through the core activity of this project: a sustained, focused dialogue between the urban Indigenous and academic communities. In particular, the proposed network will concentrate on the issue of *economic development* in urban Indigenous communities. The lack of participation of urban Indigenous people in the broader economy is both a significant limitation to the aspirations of community members and a significant cost to the economies of those urban areas. Given the emerging concerns about labour shortages in the face of a growing economy and an aging workforce, urban Indigenous people are potentially well positioned to make a significant contribution to the overall economy and to benefit from it.

### The Creation of a Scholarly Network

Broadly speaking, work on urban Indigenous issues has its historical genesis in studies focused on the Indigenous people's 'adjustment' to urban settings: empirical assessments of off-Reserve conditions (Brody 1971; Stanbury and Siegel 1975), the impact of anti-poverty programs on those conditions (Dosman 1972; McCaskill 1981), analyses of urban organizations (Nagler 1970; Breton and Akian 1978), and discussions of programs and services (Hawthorn, Belshaw et al. 1958; Anderson 1984).

Today, the field is somewhat richer and, to a certain extent, broader than its initial concern with the 'success or failure' of Indigenous people in urban society. While maintaining a focus on programmatic

responses to social fragmentation (RCAP 1996) and on descriptions of social and demographic conditions (Beavon, White et al. 2003; Siggner 2003), the field today includes detailed studies of specific policy issues (e.g. Wentz 2000; LaPrairie and Stenning 2003), the dynamics of community development (Proulx 2003; Silver and Hay 2006), and broad discussions of urban Indigenous policy issues in general (Hanselmann, Dinsdale et al. 2005). As well, there have been discussions on models of governance in urban areas (Peters 1995; Graham 1999) and some work on economic development (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada 1997; Loxley and Wein 2003).

But this body of research, as important as it is, do not yet add up to a vigorous, national debate that can keep up with the emerging reality of the urban Indigenous community. There are still few points of connection between the issues, and general theoretical or normative frameworks are limited in their scope. The field is not yet strong enough to draw people out of their disciplines into a common conversation. This is reflected by the policy vacuum in government, where urban Indigenous issues are generally viewed as no more than a particular kind of social problem to be solved by better programs. In comparison, the scholarship and policy regarding land-based Indigenous issues enjoy a substantial, cohesive, and established conversation, have significant and sophisticated literature, and have well developed circuits of conferences, scholarly journals, publications, and policy networks.

This network will facilitate the bringing together of the various conversations occurring amongst small groups or along particular research lines and turn these into the basis for a more comprehensive, organized community of academics, researchers and research centres, and policy analysts capable of forging shared understandings of issues through dialogue with leaders and practitioners in urban Indigenous communities. This understanding can both suggest a more coherent policy response and provide strategic resources for urban Indigenous struggles. The project can work to inform these conversations and do justice to the serious social and economic issues facing the community.

### **Building Capacity in Urban Indigenous Communities**

The second overarching goal of the proposed project is to build the capacity of leaders, activists, and organizations in urban Indigenous communities across Canada. For if the scholarly community is still in formation, so to is the urban Indigenous community. The Indigenous community is still determining economic development strategies that are effective in an urban context; how those relate to other social and political development goals; and what role existing and future organizations and institutions should play in those strategies. A central goal of the proposal is to bring together community practitioners with academics, researchers, and policy analysts to build capacity to make decisions and take action.

At present, that collective work is done by Indigenous people with limited access to the few intellectual resources available. The dominant study still cited in Indigenous economic development policy discussions in Canada, for instance, is the Harvard Economic Project, an American set of studies focused on the conditions for success in land-based American Indian Tribes. Alternatively, community leaders have to rely on Canadian or regional works that are largely silent on urban issues. In either case, the same challenge arises: the need to adapt these works for a very different set of conditions and opportunities that face urban Indigenous communities in Canada today.

The proposed project will work to introduce relevant research to urban Indigenous communities while also enhancing the capacity of urban Indigenous communities. As the voices of the academic community are strengthened and coordinated through the network, the knowledge, skills, and capacity simultaneously become more easily discernable to the eyes and ears of busy, under-resourced, and intellectually pragmatic community leaders. This dialogue must be more accessible to communities seeking effective strategies to develop their organizations and communities to meet the challenges they

face. In addition, through the proposed network activities, a physical and intellectual interaction will be created that enables participants to inform each other, and to collectively deepen the ability to provide effective, grounded, and informed support towards the development of urban Indigenous communities.

### **The Specific Objectives**

Through the network of scholars, and working with practitioners from urban Indigenous organizations and communities, particularly those involved in Indigenous economic development, the proposed project will facilitate a knowledge exchange that will:

- Establish an on-going national academic network of academics, researchers and research centres, and policy analysts with interests and knowledge about urban Indigenous economic and community development;
- Summarize and package current knowledge pertinent to practitioners in urban Indigenous communities, examining areas of commonality and identifying knowledge gaps;
- Evaluate that knowledge through a representative group of practitioners from across the country;
- Establish and support on-going Learning Circles in each of the urban settings selected. Learning Circles will include scholars and practitioners, and act as nodes for distribution of information;
- Initiate additional Learning Circles in each urban setting, based on mutual interest;
- Assess how knowledge is received, its value and limitations, and identify additional information needed to support urban Indigenous organizations and economic development;
- Provide the additional information if available, and if not, identify research required; and
- Share knowledge with the network of scholars and practitioners at a national gathering.

### **Strategic Considerations**

The core strategy for the knowledge mobilization project is to create three concentric circles of discussion that will build on each other to mobilize knowledge across Canada and amongst academic researchers, policy makers, and community practitioners.

1. *Circle One: Forming a community of Scholars:* The first circle is designed to bring together academically-based researchers and research centres, and through identified networking activities, coalesce an initial core group (20-25) of scholars, researchers, and policy analysts. This academic networking circle will enable the formation of an academic community which can share and spread concepts, research, and ideas regarding urban Indigenous economic development, identifying gaps and commonalities in knowledge and research. The development of this circle will be the focus of the initial portion of the project's first year, and will produce a summary report of the current state of knowledge on urban Indigenous economic and community development. This report will collate and organize available research on innovative approaches to urban Indigenous economic development, with a particular focus in the areas of social enterprise, co-operative models, and micro-lending, especially those cases where women have been instrumentally involved.
2. *Circle Two: Joining with practitioners:* The second circle will bring together the researchers, scholars, and policy analysts from the academic networking circle with a core group of community leaders, activists, and policy leaders to initiate the process of knowledge exchange and mutual dialogue. This community networking circle will allow for the exchange and sharing of research and ideas with those members of the urban Indigenous community who can operationalize them. It will allow community practitioners to share their concerns and interests with researchers, creating a proactive and responsive research agenda, and allow researchers to benefit from local knowledge and traditional wisdom. This circle can explore strategies for urban Indigenous organizational

development and models of governance/business administration. This community networking circle will be established in the latter portion of the first year of the project, and will specifically identify such topics, themes, and issues for further focused discussions.

3. *Circle Three: Learning Circles:* To deal with the issues of urban Indigenous economic development brought forth in the second circle, the project will foster and support a third series of circles, the 'Learning Circles'. The Learning Circles will focus on specific issues, and will facilitate in-depth knowledge exchange. These Learning Circles will connect the work of academics and policy developers with the pragmatic needs and interests of particular communities. Depending on the topic or issue, Learning Circles will utilize other scholars or practitioners who may not be focused on urban Indigenous communities. Such Learning Circles will not only form a more organized community of researchers, but also encourage other scholars from other academic areas to become involved in urban Indigenous issues. Involving such a wide range of people (lawyers and judges, social theorists, educators, even engineers) will help make issues of urban Indigenous economic development visible. Ultimately, these circles will identify steps forward in organizational capacity building and identify ways to strengthen local economies. Learning Circles would be started early in year two, develop through that year, and would increase twofold in the third year. It is anticipated that a number of these Learning Circles will continue after the three year project cycle is complete.

The success of improving urban Indigenous economic development at a practical level is contingent upon the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and research amongst academic researchers and community practitioners that is promoted by these three inter-connected circles. There is a special opportunity here for valuing and incorporating Indigenous knowledge, the knowledge of the elders, and an understanding of traditional trading and economic systems through the Learning Circles (Mills 1994; Berkes 1999). This can be extended by sharing Success Stories around contemporary economic development models based upon traditional systems. In Indigenous communities, economic success is highly contingent on the development of a well-functioning, stable institutional environment (Cornell et al. 1992). A report from the Harvard Project noted that, "poverty in Indian country is a problem of institutions – not a problem of economics *per se*" (Jorgensen and Taylor 2000: 3). Work by Chandler and Lalonde (2000) in Canada also supports the critical role of effective institutions for self-determination. Therefore, the focus on economic development needs to enable participants to exchange business and management knowledge, not just to the specific case of business development, but more broadly to organizational management and development (Begay et al. 1997; NWTT 2005; Silver and Hay 2006).

To promote urban Indigenous economic development, the effectiveness and capacity of such Indigenous organizations needs to improve on a broad scale. The establishment of the three circles of discussion allows for this sharing of knowledge to occur. This strategy also has the benefit of allowing scholars and community leaders to identify how they can best contribute to economic success by supporting knowledge exchange across a range of management and organizational issues, such as improving human resource management, planning for change, and incorporating a cultural approach to management.

### **Target Population and Geographical Focus**

The key population being targeted is the urban Indigenous population. While urban Indigenous people are generally socio-economically slightly better off than their on-Reserve counterparts, they lag significantly behind the non-Indigenous population (Loxley and Wien 2003). Indigenous families are often economically depressed: a substantial proportion of families had incomes lower than \$20,000 in the year 2000. Urban Indigenous women and children bear the brunt of economic non-participation, a key reason why Indigenous women are a focus of the project. Forty percent of urban Indigenous children are in single parent families, most of which are single parent women, and half of Indigenous

children in urban areas are in low income families. It is hoped that the network will make a real difference in the lives of urban Indigenous families by providing knowledge, techniques, and research which can help activate urban Indigenous economic development.

In the formation of Learning Circles we will pay particular attention to identifying information and models that could support Indigenous women. They would include practitioners who lead Indigenous organizations that serve Indigenous women. We will also initiate Learning Circles in centres where we find concentrations of specific Indigenous populations. For example, we plan to engage with the population of urban based Inuit in Montreal, and establish a Learning Circle that will address their particular issues. Also, we anticipate forming Learning Circles that specifically include Métis, who form a substantial portion of the urban population in some prairie communities. By the time we are in our third year, we expect Learning Circles to be established that respond to specific local needs.

The network will involve urban Indigenous communities in medium to large urban areas across Canada (see Table 1). These cities are also home to project collaborators and partners. Special efforts will also be made to establish Learning Circles in small urban areas. The identified cities may increase as more communities and partners are identified. Specifically, the project will target key players in the urban Indigenous community – community leaders, business leaders, and practitioners. The project will also focus on those researchers and policy analysts who are investigating Indigenous economic development.

**Table 1. Selected communities and populations**

City	Total Population	Aboriginal Population	Proportion that is Aboriginal
Vancouver	1,967,480	36,855	1.9%
Prince George	84,615	7,985	9.4%
Saskatoon	222,630	20,280	9.1%
Regina	190,015	15,685	8.3%
Winnipeg	661,730	55,760	8.4%
Thunder Bay	120,370	8,200	6.8%
Ottawa-Hull	1,050,755	13,485	1.3%
Edmonton	927,020	40,930	4.4%
Montreal	3,380,640	11,090	0.3%

### **Key tools to Facilitate Knowledge Exchange**

The project will employ four methods to effectively facilitate the gathering and sharing of knowledge, ideas, and understanding regarding urban Indigenous economic development: Learning Circles, Success Stories, meetings (conferences, dialogues, and colloquia), and a website. The key tool being used to facilitate knowledge exchange is the Learning Circle, which is based on the traditional Indigenous concept of a sharing circle – a respectful, open, and inviting method to learn and exchange ideas and wisdom. A Learning Circle is a group of 5-20 people who come together to share ideals, goals, practices and experiences, and ultimately, to learn. Learning is at the core of knowledge exchange. Furthermore, communication amongst academics and practitioners is an important part of the learning process. The ability to engage in dialogue and create a safe and respectful context for sharing ideas, views, and experiences is vital to capacity building and increasing understanding of the issues confronting urban Indigenous organizations and communities.

The learning is focused on the following questions:

- What are the research, case studies, theories, and other data on urban Indigenous development that academic-based participants can bring to the Circle?
- What can traditional knowledge, and explorations of the traditional economic systems of Indigenous populations, bring to the Circle?
- How is this academic information relevant and applicable to urban Indigenous communities?
- What is the local experience of the conditions of urban Indigenous development?
- What is working and not working in the experience of the practitioners?
- What root causes, patterns or assumptions underlie this system?

- What are the differences in perspectives, interests and needs?
- What additional information is needed?

The other tools complete the Learning Circles. Success Stories are a record of how individuals or organizations achieved their goals, and are effective for conveying how a program works and encourage others to try similar programs. Success Stories have been a common tool in business promotion and are now also used in health promotion (Lewis et al. 2004). Conferences, colloquia, and dialogue sessions will be used as a way to share knowledge and facilitate the exchange of new concepts, theories, research, as well as community needs and issues among scholars, policy analysts, and community practitioners. A network website will be created to facilitate the virtual connection of the network, allowing academics, policy analysts, and community practitioners to learn about each other, contact one another, and exchange information. The site will act as a clearinghouse of various research, as well as information produced by the network. It will also act as a main way for promoting the network.

The current methods will be conducted in the spirit of Appreciative Inquiry, will adhere to Participatory Action Research principles (Stringer 1999), and information will be presented in line with the Instrumental Case Study. These methods reflect principles that are consistent with indigenous methodologies (e.g. Dana 1996; McCormick 1996; Duran and Duran 1995; Smith 1999).

### **Rationale for Selecting Methods**

Learning Circles, Success Stories, and conferences are all culturally appropriate modes of learning, utilizing oral tradition and the integration of resource people in the community. The Learning Circles are a grouping of equals based on the first principle of living systems, the concept that “everything is connected”, or as stated by the Nuu-chah-Nulth First Nations, *hishuk ish ts’awalk* – “everything is one”. This principle informs the work of seeking to make the whole system visible. Based upon Indigenous sharing circles, our Learning Circles will continue the traditions of promoting deep sharing and listening, of fostering respect, and resolving conflict (Graveline 2000). This traditional way of sharing and building consensus recognizes that it is fundamentally critical for Indigenous people - youth and women in particular - to speak for themselves in their own communities. Finding one’s voice is an important step in empowerment and decolonization through the acknowledgement of the traditions of oral history and story-telling (Allen 1986; Anderson 1996; Smith 1999).

Success Stories employ a narrative, which are a traditional tool for framing knowledge. Indigenous people have used narratives to weave together diverse experiences, to reinterpret previous events, to anticipate future activities, and to impose meaning on unexpected happenings. Using Success Stories is a culturally appropriate mode of learning.

While not a traditional method of exchanging knowledge, the network website is an excellent way to stay in contact across the country; virtually continuing to exchange knowledge and concepts. It also provides a venue for promoting the network, events, publications, and acts as a tool to educate other academics, the larger Indigenous community, the public, and the media.

### **Composition, Strength and Creativity of Team**

The team includes scholars from varying disciplines and regions, policy people from different levels and departments of government, and practitioners from both national policy bodies and those delivering regional services to the urban Indigenous communities. Many of the practitioners, policy analysts, and academics have worked together or are aware of one another’s work from conference presentations. There is substantial social capital among those on the steering and advisory committees.

The biggest strength, however, is that most of involved academics have extensive experience working with Indigenous organizations and in Indigenous settings. In most cases they have an established working relationship with the participating practitioners. The practitioners already within the network are experienced in economic development projects and approaches, as well as experienced in the operation of Indigenous organizations. Maintaining our commitment to an open and inclusive network, we expect that participation will grow within the academic, policy analyst, and practitioner communities over the term of the project.

### **Governance Provisions**

Five circles of governance are involved in managing the project (see Figure 1). Greg Halseth and Ray Gerow will co-manage the project and will oversee the day-to-day administrative decisions. They will be guided by a seven-person steering committee composed of scholars, practitioners, and policy people – the core group in this project initiative. The steering committee itself will be guided by an advisory committee consisting of senior scholars, national Indigenous organization representatives, a youth representative, and at least one Elder. The advisory committee will support the participation of key people who are unable to be involved in the administration of the project. The network will act as the fourth circle of governance. Through meetings and conference gatherings, participants will have the opportunity to make decisions around identifying priority knowledge and effective local strategies. Learning Circles will complete the final governance circle, providing recommendations and guidelines based on their local dialogues.

### **Intended Outcomes and Impacts**

The proposed network expects to generate a considerable range impacts that will contribute to the long term viability of urban Indigenous economic development. A network on urban Indigenous economic development will result in a series of broad goals, each with a set of outcomes:

1. Link academic researchers and research centres
  - a. Create a network of researchers, academics, and policy analysts to facilitate exchange of academic-oriented information on urban Indigenous economic development;
  - b. Identify common understandings as well as information gaps.
2. Link academic researchers and research centres with policy and practitioner communities
  - a. Create on-going Learning Circles dedicated to facilitating knowledge exchange, Indigenous capacity building, and urban Indigenous economic development;
  - b. Hold a national conference involving 60-75 key people including academics, policy analysts, and community practitioners to facilitate exchange of knowledge, develop research opportunities, and identify future project developments. Special emphasis will be placed on engaging Elders, women, and youth. The network will also work to ensure that organizations like the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, chambers of commerce, associations of small businesses and trade councils, and health and social service organizations become part of redressing inequality and enhancing urban Indigenous economic participation. To do this, the network's first steps will be to include representatives from these organizations in our workshops and conferences.
  - c. Foster a greater understanding and appreciation of the issues and barriers faced by urban Indigenous organizations and economic development practitioners, and knowledge about the information needs of the practitioners;
  - d. Identify new strategies for capacity building and economic development.
3. Develop a series of knowledge mobilization products
  - a. Based on work by the academic circle, produce a report on the state of urban Indigenous economic development, identifying case studies, information gaps, and common



- knowledge. This will include innovative approaches to urban Indigenous economic development including social enterprises, co-operatives, and micro-lending, in particular where women have been instrumentally involved;
- b. Based on discussions and proceedings at the national conference, produce a report on urban Indigenous economic development.
- c. Produce a collection of Success Stories that can be printed and distributed nation-wide;
- d. Support action planning from each of the Learning Circles that will identify steps forward in organizational capacity building and strengthen the local economy;
- e. Create a network website to act as a way to link academics and community practitioners, as well as a clearinghouse of information.

**Work Plan**

Year	Timeline	Tasks to be completed	Personnel Involved	Outcomes	Budget
Year 1	March–May	Establish network	Steering Com.	40 key scholars & practitioners	\$15,000
	March-Sept	Assemble knowledge	Advisory and Steering Com.	Success Stories and case studies assembled in useable form	\$40,000
	Nov	Convene National network conf.	Steering Com. & National network	Network est. & Knowledge and strategies identified	\$80,000
Year 2	March-May	Establish Circles	Steering and Advisory Com and practitioners	6 Circles are operating in each of 7 urban settings.	\$50,000
	May-Oct	Respond to requests for additional knowledge	Steering and Advisory Com. and practitioners	6 Circles - Additional knowledge and applications identified only with new partner monies	\$50,000
				Assembly of additional specialized knowledge	\$20,000
	Oct-Feb	Make action plans	Steering and Advisory Com. and practitioners	6 Circles - discussion on applications and constructing action plans for each of the participating practitioners	\$51,000
Year 3	March-Nov	Continue Circles and double the number convened	Steering and Advisory Com. and practitioners and Elders	Learning Circles – double	\$85,000
				12 convened	\$20,000
	Feb	National network of 60 people	National network	Summarize progress, and identify required research directions	\$80,000
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>\$491,000</b>

It is anticipated that in Year 2:

- March-May: 7 Learning Circles will be required to establish an open/sharing climate, exchange knowledge, discuss core issues, and identify further information that is needed.
- May-Oct: 7 Circles will be dedicated to bringing additional knowledge into the Circle and to discussing it implications.
- Oct-Feb: 7 Circles will be convened to bring in practitioners, academics, Elders, women, youth, and others as required, to provide knowledge.

In Year 3:

- Learning Circles will identify specific resources and personnel they want to learn from. Such specialists will be brought in from Indigenous communities, academics, and practitioners from outside the local community.

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## **PLANS FOR ASSESSING OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS**

The proposed network will result in a considerable number of long-term benefits designed to further academic understanding of urban Aboriginal economic development as well as facilitating knowledge exchange amongst community practitioners, creating tangible benefits at the community level. In order to assess the impacts created by the project, make the network responsive to feedback, and improve the overall management of the network, a series of assessment tools are proposed. Assessment tools are organized as per the outlined goals and outcomes stated in the proposal:

- Link academic researchers and research centres;
- Link academic researchers and research centres with policy and practitioner communities; and
- Develop a series of knowledge mobilization products.

### **Link Academic Researchers and Research Centres**

An emerging area of research strength in Canadian universities and research centres is with urban Aboriginal economic and community development. There is, however, no national network through which this research strength can focus. A key role for the network is to connect academic-based researchers and research centres from across the country. The network will:

- Create a network of researchers, academics, and policy analysts to facilitate exchange of academic-oriented information on urban Aboriginal economic development; and
- Identify common understandings as well as information gaps.

Assessment of impacts will include:

- Number of academic researchers and research centres participating in the network, examining level of continuous participation and increased level of participants and their involvement;
- Annual evaluation of the network by mail/email questionnaire to all involved academic researchers. This will examine the facilitation of contacts – did the network lead to new connections or relationships between researchers that did not exist before;
- Attendance of academic researchers at annual workshops and conferences;
- Evaluation of the network through questionnaire/survey given at workshops;
- Ability to secure commitments from involved academic researchers to participate in the network beyond the three-year KIS funding cycle;
- Production of “information needs reports” and their uptake by funding agencies.

### **Link Academic Researchers and Research Centres with Policy and Practitioner Communities**

The network will play a central role in facilitating connections between the research community and the policy and practitioner communities. Current participation in the network already has strong federal government participation, as well as participation from a host of community-based organizations. Capacity building among community practitioners is a key goal in the network’s knowledge mobilization activities. The network will:

- Create on-going Learning Circles dedicated to facilitating knowledge exchange, Aboriginal organization capacity building, and urban Aboriginal economic development;
- Hold a national conference involving academics, policy analysts, and community practitioners;
- Foster a greater understanding and appreciation of the issues, needs, and barriers faced by urban Aboriginal organization and economic development practitioners;
- Identify new strategies for capacity building and economic development.

Assessment of impacts will include:

- The number of learning circles established, and level of participation from policy analysts and community practitioners participating in the network, examining level of continuous participation and increased level of participants and their involvement;
- Annual evaluation of the network by mail/email questionnaire to all involved policy analysts and community practitioners, evaluating ability of the network to mobilize knowledge;
- Level of attendance at national conference over successive years;
- Evaluation of conference via questionnaire to all conference attendees;
- Ability to secure funding support from community partners to broaden attendance at conference and increase awareness;
- Ability to secure commitments from involved policy analysts and community researchers to participate in the network beyond the three-year KIS funding cycle;
- Ability to secure commitments to develop the resources for supporting the conferences and Learning Circles beyond the three-year KIS funding cycle;
- Production of conference proceedings and reports.

### **Develop a Series of Knowledge Mobilization Products**

A central task of the network will be to get information about urban aboriginal economic development into the hands of policy-makers and practitioners. As such, the creation of knowledge products from existing research is a key impact and contribution. Challenging this creation of products will be not only the variety of sources of valued information (academic research, policy and institution information, and traditional knowledge), but also our desire to create and share products through culturally appropriate communication. The network will:

- Produce a report on the state of urban Aboriginal economic development;
- Produce a collection of success stories that can be printed and distributed nation-wide;
- Support action planning from each of the Learning Circles;
- Create a network website to act as a way to link academics and community practitioners.

Assessment of impacts will include:

- The number of products produced;
- A review of products by independent researcher at end of 3-year funding cycle;
- Measure of use of products by target populations by measuring number of reports disseminated via mail and electronically and traffic on website;
- Amount of personal presentations given at meetings and events, and attendance at such events;
- A reader-review of products included in each report as well as through an online questionnaire through the website included when products are downloaded.

## **DESCRIPTION OF TEAM**

A critical issue for this network is that members bring a wide connection with communities of interest, and that they have experience with the topic of interest. Participants in this network application possess both.

The application PI has extensive experience managing large research programs and networks of collaborators. He is a Canada Research Chair, the Director of UNBC's Community Development Institute, and also extensive experience working within an across Canada network setting on multi-year, multi-million dollar research programs.

Day-to-day management of the Network activities will be under the direction of Ray Gerow of the Aboriginal Business and Community Development Centre in Prince George, as well as the PI. Ray Gerow has considerable experience in project and organizational management. He has served on more than 23 boards or steering committees for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community and economic development groups. A leader in the aboriginal business and community development area for more than 15 years, Ray has the experience needed to be the network co-director. The two co-directors will be assisted by a full-time Coordinator.

The Steering Committee consists of John McBride (an independent scholar working with the Centre for Sustainable Community Development at SFU who has considerable experience with Aboriginal economic development and community economic development), Charles Horn (an independent scholar with extensive experience working with Indigenous communities; most recently with the Aboriginal Mother Centre in Vancouver and the Métis Nation British Columbia), Ian Peach, Cheryl Mathew, and Patrick Boucher (all three are with the Office of the Federal Interlocutor within INAC), together with Ray Gerow and Greg Halseth. Together these members bring an extensive series of connections and networks, as well as a solid foundation of experience with local/regional/national research and sharing projects, and Indigenous knowledge.

Academic participants include representatives from 10 post-secondary institutions, including participation from aboriginal institutions such as the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology and First Nations University of Canada. Frances Abele, Stephen Ameyaw, Robert Anderson, Bob Kayseas, Ron Laliberte, Roger Maaka, Michael Murphy, Wanda Wuttunee, and Verna Billy-Minnabarriet have extensive experience with Indigenous and First Nations groups, and well established track records of publications on community and economic development issues. As part of our efforts to grow the network, and to be inclusive, we are also seeking to include new scholars at an early point in the network's development. As an illustration of reputation, the proposed network participants at this point include 1 institutional vice-president, 3 heads of departments, 1 head of a research institute, and 2 Canada Research Chairs.

The government participants bring extensive networks with academics and with community practitioners. Of particular note are Ian Peach and Cheryl Mathew who recently took appointments with the Office of the Federal Interlocutor after years with Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy and Centre for Native Policy and research Society in British Columbia respectively. Each has extensive experience working with Indigenous community and economic development from the perspective of policy analysts, researchers, and practitioners. Additional federal government participation is through other branches within INAC (namely the Inuit Relations Secretariat and the Aboriginal Economic Development Sector).

In addition, we are very pleased to have participation from provincial governments in Manitoba (Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs – Department of Policy and Strategic Initiatives for Aboriginal Affairs), BC (Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation), and Alberta (Ministry of International, Intergovernmental, and Aboriginal Relations). Network connections to government are especially important due to the ability to exchange policy relevant knowledge.

The network also includes a large number of participants from outside of academic and government sectors. Included in this are Aboriginal Business and Community Development Centre in Prince George, Inner City Renovations Inc. in Winnipeg, The Vancouver Agreement, Métis Nation of British Columbia, Manitoba Métis Federation, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Greater Vancouver Urban Aboriginal Strategy, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, National Urban Aboriginal Strategy. These groups start to bridge many of the constituencies of interest to a national network on urban aboriginal economic development. Several are national organizations with broad representation across the country, while others are more local organizations with mandates to represent and to deliver specific services.

A fundamental building block of this network is a commitment to openness and inclusivity. In this regard, it is understood as a fundamental task to keep growing its membership and to continually broaden its participation. For example, initial discussions have been started with a wide range of community organizations including the Assembly of First Nations, the Aboriginal Mother Centre, the Native Women's Association of Canada, Pauktuuti, the National Association of Friendship Centres, and the British Columbia Association of Friendship Centres. In addition, there is further interest from governmental organizations, namely INAC's Institute on Governance as well as INAC's Public Policy Forum. Connections will also be extended through contact with academic study or specialty groups; such as the Canadian Association of Geographers' 'Native Canadians Specialty Group' or the 'Diversity, Migration, Ethnicity and Race Study Group'.

We recognize that the network is at this point a nascent one; yet we have a clear desire to grow the network by being open and inclusive to those academics, policy analysts, and practitioner organizations that wish to advance dialogue around urban Indigenous economic development. In this regard, the Learning Circles can be a key venue for increasing network participation. The Learning Circles will build upon varying degrees of existing communication between practitioners in the community and the scholars with whom they have worked. The practitioners are, in many instances, already working informally with other practitioners in their community. They will look to build upon these foundations by bridging to knowledge and information projects that are of interest; for example, the work being done by groups like the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres and the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs through their soon to be completed 'Urban Aboriginal Task Force Report'. Through these and other means, we expect the network to grow tremendously over the three years of the KIS grant.



## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS**

Students will be centrally involved with the proposed *National Network for Knowledge Mobilization in Urban Indigenous Economic Development*. At present, it is anticipated that over the three year period of the KIS grant, students will be involved as follows:

### **One one-year postdoctoral position will be supported:**

1 postdoctoral position @ \$31,500 per annum = \$31,500

Given the opportunities and challenges inherent in creating a knowledge mobilization network around urban Indigenous economic development, this postdoctoral position is expected to play a key role. Specifically, the postdoctoral position will be tasked with exploring and refining potential models for the mobilization of research, institutional, and identifying traditional knowledge sources through culturally appropriate communication paths. In this task, the postdoctoral position will be mentored by the PI, the academic lead at their host institution, as well as the Network Steering Committee.

### **Two one-year doctoral student positions will be supported:**

2 one-year doctoral student positions @ \$15,000 per annum = \$30,000

The doctoral students are expected to play two roles within the network. First, they will be involved in the development of knowledge exchange materials. Second, they will assist in the coordination and delivery of the Network's conferences and workshops. These roles are appropriate as it not only connects the students with this subject matter, but also to a wider network of people and organizations as they start to develop their own careers. In each role, the doctoral students will be mentored by the academic lead at their host institution.

### **Four one-year masters level student positions will be supported:**

4 one-year masters level student positions @ \$12,000 per annum = \$48,000

The masters level students are also expected to play two roles within the network. First, they will assist in the creation of knowledge exchange mobilization materials as suited to our envisioned exchange and experiential learning channels. This will include materials/illustrations sharing case studies of best practices. Second, they will support the activities and operations of the Learning Circles. In each role, they would be mentored by the academic lead at their host institution. In support of the Learning Circles, they would also be mentored by a circle participant experienced in traditional knowledge and culturally appropriate communication.

In assisting with the Network's activities, the students will gain skills, training, and experience in a range of knowledge mobilization techniques. For students at each level noted above, it is our hope that their Network contributions will form an integral part of their educational experience. With respect to mentoring: 1) it is expected that the students will form their own 'peer network'; 2) that the postdoctoral position will take up the opportunity of mentoring participating students; 3) that the significant mentoring experience which already exists within the academic partners of the Network will contribute positively to the students' development; and, 4) that the Network will support opportunities for student exchanges across academic institutions and with community partners so as to broaden student experiences.

## BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

The KIS Program allocates \$100,000 per year support for 3 years from SSHRC. The program requires matching contributions, and for this network application, a matching cash contribution of \$100,000 for the 3 year period is coming from the Federal Office of the Interlocutor within the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Department of the Federal Government. This provides the network with an annual cash flow of \$200,000 confirmed over the three year project cycle.

**Year one** is focused upon establishing the network and the directions:

- Budget allocations include \$60,000 to support a coordinator position (inclusive of benefits). This rate is based on similar coordinator positions at UNBC.
- The second key task will be to assemble available success stories and related background information. The budget allocation is \$45,000 for this critical task. The allocation will support two Master's level students at \$12,000 each. It will also support the specialist knowledge contributions by consultants participating in the network totalling \$16,000.
- The third task in Year One is to convene a national conference. Working with a target of 55 participants, travel costs are estimated at \$60,000, and venue costs (including space, catering, and technical support) is estimated at \$20,000.

***Year one budget = \$185,000***

**Year Two** is focused upon operationalizing the Learning Circles.

- To continue coordinating the network activities, a salary allocation of \$60,000 is made for a coordinator (inclusive of benefits).
- To support 6 Learning Circles, \$50,000 is allocated. This support will be divided between a post-doctoral fellowship position (at \$31,500), leaving \$18,500 to support Learning Circle activities.
- A second round of Learning Circle activities later in the year will also be undertaken. The allocation is \$51,000. This will include support of two Master's level stipends at \$12,000 each, leaving \$27,000 to support this second round of learning circles.
- There is an opportunity to expand the number of Learning Circles by this point, but this expansion will only be undertaken if new monies can be identified from partnering organizations. Given our intent to grow the network, this is considered quite likely.
- There is also an allocation to support one Doctoral level students at \$15,000.
- The final task in year two is to continue assembling additional knowledge through the network's sharing processes. It is expected that this will now be a specialist undertaking, requiring the use of the participating consultants. The allocation for this additional information collection is \$20,000.

***Year two budget = \$196,000***

In **Year Three**, the network will be moving into full maturity.

- We hope to have doubled the number of Learning Circles. In Year III, a budget allocation of \$85,000 is identified to support these Learning Circles and their activities. Of that allocation, \$15,000 is being directed to support a doctoral student, leaving \$70,000 to support the activities, networking, and information needs of the Learning Circles.

- The third year will also require the network to have the assistance of its coordinator at \$60,000 (inclusive of benefits).
- In addition, we expect that specialist knowledge will need to be assembled for dissemination and sharing through the Learning Circles. Again, participation of our team consultants is expected to fulfill this information need, and an allocation of \$20,000 is made for this task.
- Finally, Year III wraps up with a national network conference. Working with a target of 75 participants, travel costs are estimated at \$60,000 (with new partners contributing to cover their own conference travel costs), and venue costs (including space, catering, and technical support) is estimated at \$20,000.

***Year three budget = \$245,000***

***Total budget = \$621,000***

The development of knowledge within urban Indigenous communities has been significant within practitioner organizations. As a result, the network will benefit greatly from the specialized knowledge which three consultants can bring to our project. Ray Gerow, Charles Horn, and John McBride are each experienced experts in Aboriginal and Indigenous community and economic development. They will each be involved in supporting the Learning Circles and the other knowledge sharing activities of this network.