

## Fraser Valley Housing Project – an initiative from BALTA

BALTA researchers are currently examining the nature, dynamics and extent of the Social Economy organizations in the Fraser Valley, British Columbia. This growing region is situated on the perimeter of Metro-Vancouver.

Project lead, Dr. Ron van Wyk, Provincial Program Director of Mennonite Central Committee of British Columbia explained that the research team aspires to, “provide a description of what affordable housing is, and what contribution it and the related Social Economy housing providers make economically, and socially to the community they serve.”

Van Wyk also described that there are over

130 non-profit organizations in the Fraser Valley who are working with providing affordable housing strategies.

“These organizations provide more than the service they are known for – they also provide employment” he said. To learn more, the researchers are analyzing annual budgets, revenue sources, and assets in order to learn the complete extent of these organization’s contribution. The group also wants to examine why housing has become unaffordable.

As an outcome, they want to confirm the importance the Social Economy plays in the local economy – like employment and non-market housing. Van Wyk also said that they

want to continue to keep affordable housing on the political agenda of the community leaders, and to continue adding a voice to the cause.

“We’ve already seen progress,” he said. “We’ve been raising awareness that the need continues to grow. And from that, we’d like to raise awareness and mobilize the movement for advocacy. We need, as a society to make public policy decisions to one day have a National Housing Strategy to provide better policy tools and mechanisms to provide affordable housing and a strong Social Economy sector.”

**For more information, please visit:** [www.socialeconomy-bcalberta.ca](http://www.socialeconomy-bcalberta.ca)

## Place-Based Poverty Reduction – CCEDNet

CCEDNet’s Place Based Poverty Reduction initiative brought together four partner organizations from diverse communities to document and promote innovative locally-based CED approaches to poverty reduction and the quantitative and qualitative methodologies that assess the impact of this work on the lives of individuals and their communities. It also brought together a broader learning network of individuals and organizations across the country to inform and share this work.

1. **PARO Centre for Women’s Enterprise**, Thunder Bay, ONT, [www.paro.ca](http://www.paro.ca)
2. **CED Corporation of Trois-Rivières** (ÉCOF-CDEC), Trois-Rivières, QUE, [www.ecof.qc.ca](http://www.ecof.qc.ca)
3. **Trail Community Skills Centre**, Trail, BC [www.communityskillscentre.com](http://www.communityskillscentre.com)
4. **Learning Enrichment Foundation** Toronto, ONT, [www.lefca.org/index.php?module=ContentExpress&func=display&ceid=4&meid=-1](http://www.lefca.org/index.php?module=ContentExpress&func=display&ceid=4&meid=-1)

For more information on this initiative, please visit: [www.ccednet-rcdec.ca/en/our\\_work/employment\\_poverty#final](http://www.ccednet-rcdec.ca/en/our_work/employment_poverty#final)

The four partner organizations developing this work are:



An example of non-market housing in Iqaluit, Nunavut

### Regional Research Centres

Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network  
[www.msvu.ca/socialeconomyatlantic](http://www.msvu.ca/socialeconomyatlantic)

L’Alliance de recherche universités-communautés en économie sociale (ARUC-ÉS) et le Réseau québécois de recherche partenariale en économie sociale (RQRP-ÉS)  
[www.aruc-es.ca](http://www.aruc-es.ca)

Social Economy Centre  
[sec.oise.utoronto.ca](http://sec.oise.utoronto.ca)

Linking, Learning, Leveraging: Social Enterprises, Knowledgeable Economies and Sustainable Communities  
[www.usaskstudies.coop/socialeconomy](http://www.usaskstudies.coop/socialeconomy)

Social Economy Research Network of Northern Canada  
[dl1.yukoncollege.yk.ca/sernoca](http://dl1.yukoncollege.yk.ca/sernoca)

BC-Alberta Research Alliance on the Social Economy  
[www.socialeconomy-bcalberta.ca](http://www.socialeconomy-bcalberta.ca)

### The Canadian Social Economy Hub

[www.socialeconomyhub.ca](http://www.socialeconomyhub.ca)

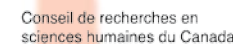
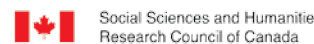
The Canadian Social Economy Hub (CSEHub) is located at the University of Victoria and is co-directed by Ian MacPherson and Rupert Downing. CSEHub undertakes research in order to understand and promote the Social Economy tradition within Canada and as a subject of academic enquiry within universities.

CSEHub is a Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) between the University of Victoria, represented by its principal investigator, and the Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet), represented by the designated co-director. CSEHub is directed by the two organizations and their representatives, with the advice and input of a board of representatives of regional nodes and national partners of the Canadian Social Economy Research Partnerships (CSERP).

### Questions? Please Contact Us!

Annie McKittrick, Manager  
(250) 472-4976  
secoord@uvic.ca  
[www.socialeconomyhub.ca](http://www.socialeconomyhub.ca)

Canadian Social Economy Hub  
University of Victoria, TEF 214  
2300 McKenzie Avenue  
Victoria, BC V8P 5C2



# The Social Economy in Canada: Poverty Reduction

[WWW.SOCIALECONOMYHUB.CA](http://WWW.SOCIALECONOMYHUB.CA)

### What is the Social Economy?

There are many definitions used by practitioners and others interested in the Social Economy. The Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet) National Policy Council has the following definition:

“The Social Economy consists of association-based economic initiatives founded on values of:

- Service to members of community rather than generating profits
- Autonomous management (not government or market controlled)
- Democratic decision making
- Primacy of persons and work over capital
- Based on principles of participation, empowerment.

The Social Economy includes: social assets (housing, childcare, etc), social enterprises including co-operatives, credit unions, equity and debt capital for community investment, social purpose businesses, community training and skills development, integrated social and economic planning, and capacity building and community empowerment. The Social Economy is a continuum that goes from one end of totally voluntary organizations to the other end, where the economic activity (social enterprise) blurs the line with the private sector.”

To provide a context for studying the Social Economy, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada introduces the Social Economy as follows:

“In recent years, in both North America and Europe, there has been increasing interest in what is known as the ‘Social Economy,’ for which some authorities use the term ‘community economic development.’

The social economy refers to those enterprises and organizations which use the tools and some of the methods of business, on a not-for-profit basis, to provide social, cultural, economic and health services to communities that need them. The social economy is characterized by cooperative enterprises, based on principles of community solidarity that respond to new needs in social and health services, typically at the community or regional level.

Social economy enterprises exhibit distinctive forms of organization and governance such as worker co-operatives and non-profit organizations. Such organizations produce goods for and deliver services to the public.”

Social Economy traditions around the world are engaged in numerous activities that respond to people confronting poverty, illness, or community challenges. They are especially concerned with empowering people to cope with issues they face through collaborative effort to improve their situation, individually and collectively. Poverty alleviation, then, is one way to think about some of the direct and indirect impacts of the Social Economy. Though it might be argued that in many Social Economy activities, poverty alleviation is a by-product of work being done rather than a discreet objective in itself.

This thematic newsletter examines some of the work being undertaken within the Canadian Social Economy Research Partnerships that can be viewed as contributing to poverty alleviation. We welcome your comments and we suggest you review the CSEHub website, in addition to those from the regional nodes and the national partners for further exciting work on this aspect of how Canadians can use the Social Economy to their advantage. [www.socialeconomyhub.ca](http://www.socialeconomyhub.ca)

Ian MacPherson and Rupert Downing, CSEHub Co-directors

### The Context for Poverty Reduction and the Social Economy

The following passage is from the article, “Poverty and Social Exclusion” by Shauna MacKinnon, and found in the *CCPA Review* ([www.policyalternatives.ca](http://www.policyalternatives.ca)), September 2008.



“Poverty and social inclusion continue to be a universal problem. Recognition of our failure as a society to adequately address these challenges is leading many governments to adopt comprehensive strategies with time lines and targets aimed at reducing poverty and social exclusion. Social exclusion is preferred to poverty exclusion because “of its potential to move beyond a narrow financial-deprivation definition of poverty.” While creating economic opportunity through employment is often the focus of social exclusion policy, it should be noted that intervention at

this level alone will have a limited impact. Narrowly defined social-inclusion policies that emphasize labour force attachment will not sufficiently address social exclusion. Complementary and equally crucial supports such as raising benefit levels to reduce poverty and ensuring access to child care, recreation and decent housing are required to more effectively reduce poverty and exclusion.”

The Social Economy with its values of empowerment, democratic engagement, and forms of business enterprises whose goals are social, economic and environmental is well suited to provide innovative solutions to the problem of poverty and social exclusion. Social Economy organizations work with community members who previously had difficulties in accessing employment, provide housing, meals and other necessities, nurture children in child care centers, and redistribute profits from credit unions to community organizations.

Annie McKittrick, Manager CSEHUB



## Resources

### CCEDNET

[www.ccednet-rcdec.ca/?q=en/our\\_work/employment\\_poverty](http://www.ccednet-rcdec.ca/?q=en/our_work/employment_poverty)

### Counting Women In - A Toolkit for Rural Action on Poverty

[www.endabuseNOW.ca/node/149](http://www.endabuseNOW.ca/node/149)

### Make Poverty History

[www.makepovertyhistory.ca/en/povertyplan/manitoba/action](http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca/en/povertyplan/manitoba/action)

### The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

[www.policyalternatives.ca](http://www.policyalternatives.ca)

- **The View From Here: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy**
- **Poverty and Social Exclusion: Solving Complex Issues Through Comprehensive Approaches**

### Dignity For All – the campaign for a poverty free Canada

[www.dignityforall.ca](http://www.dignityforall.ca)

**Tamarack** [tamarackcommunity.ca/index.php#1](http://tamarackcommunity.ca/index.php#1)

**PovNet** [www.povnet.org](http://www.povnet.org)

**Alternatives North** [www.alternativesnorth.ca](http://www.alternativesnorth.ca)

### Public Interest Alberta

[www.pialberta.org/events/wecandobetter](http://www.pialberta.org/events/wecandobetter)

### Income Inequality and Redistribution Canada: 1976-2004

[www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2007298-eng.pdf](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2007298-eng.pdf)

## Poverty Reduction Telelearning Session

In October 2009, the CSEHub hosted two telelearning sessions on Poverty Reduction – one in English, one in French. Two main questions were covered:

1. What are some public policy trends and instruments supporting poverty reduction in Canada?
2. What are some community-based approaches to poverty reduction in Canada?

The English session was hosted by Jessica Notwell, Manager of the Women's Economic Council. The two speakers were Jean Marc Fontan, Professor at UQAM/Co-director of the Social Economy Community-University Research Alliance in Quebec; and Shauna McKinnon, Director of the Canadian Centre for Policy. The French session was hosted by Pascale Knoglinger of the Rural Francophone Network of British Columbia. Ethel Coté, from the Canadian Centre for Community Renewal and Juan-Luis Klein, Geography Professor and Co-director of the social innovation research centre at UQAM were the two speakers.

The sessions offered Canada-wide perspectives on poverty reduction theory and action. Of particular note is the government of Québec's role in poverty reduction. In 2004, they acknowledged the growing trend toward poverty and exclusion policy and passed the Act to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion 2004. To learn more about this informative session: please listen to the recording on the CSEHub website: [www.socialeconomyhub.ca/?q=content/telelearning-sessions](http://www.socialeconomyhub.ca/?q=content/telelearning-sessions)

## Questions and Answers with a Northern Researcher

University of Alberta Master's Student Zoe Todd is working with a team of researchers from the Social Economy Research Network of Northern Canada to discover the **"Impact of Participation in the Wage Economy on Traditional Harvesting, Dietary Patterns, Social Networks and Social Economy structures in the Inuvialuit Settlement regions."**

Group members include: University of Alberta researcher Brenda Parlee, and others from: the Hamlet of Paulatuk, Paulatuk, NT; the Hamlet of Paulatuk, Paulatuk, NT; and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, Inuvik, N.T. For complete details on this project visit: <http://dl1.yukoncollege.yk.ca/sernnoca/Project2a>. To learn more about these studies, the CSEHub asked Zoe a few questions:

### What are some practical outcomes you hope to achieve from this project?

This project will determine which types of work (full-time, part-time, seasonal, rotational) best facilitate harvesting activity in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. Harvesting is impacted by a) the flexibility of work (part-time, seasonal and rotational vs. full-time), b) the time of year during which employment occurs and c) the type of employment (ie: on the land or off the land). Seasonal and part-time employment offer the most flexibility to accommodate harvesting activities.

From a food security perspective, the project explores what factors enable individuals to balance their need for healthy foods both from the land and from the store. The data suggest that the cost and availability of store-bought foods in Paulatuk is a concern and that the availability of traditional foods is influenced by employment (availability of time), cost of equipment and supplies, social networks, wildlife regulation and environmental factors. The project's findings can help with developing policies and guidelines that ensure employment structures facilitate harvesting activity and can also identify key food security concerns in the community.

### Why is this project important to the people living in these two communities?

The project identifies issues that impact day-to-day activities and realities in the community. Harvesting activity in Paulatuk is very high, so it is important that employment opportunities respond to the needs of individuals in the community. The community has also expressed concerns about the cost and availability of food in the community, so it is important to be able to identify issues that governing bodies can address.

### How does this project relate to poverty reduction?

Harvesting is important from a health and well-being perspective—foods from the land are sources of key nutrients and micro-nutrients and spending time on the land provides important social, cultural and health benefits. Harvesting also allows individuals and households to balance their needs for healthy foods, given that the cost and availability of nutritious store-bought foods is often limited in the community due to various factors. Furthermore, by identifying what types of employment best facilitate harvesting activity, employment opportunities can be structured to ensure individuals can maximize their participation in the mixed-economy—thus building resilience in fluctuating resource economies such as those found in many regions of the North.

### Can you briefly tell me about a success or revelation you have experienced so far with your research?

The development of the food security portion of the project was a success from a community collaboration standpoint. Community members offered feedback and input that made it clear that food security concerns needed to be addressed—and that the connections between employment, harvesting and food security are very important in the community. Thus we developed a workshop to investigate food security concerns in depth.

*All fieldwork and data analysis are completed, and Zoe is currently writing her thesis with the aim to deliver the reports to the community in April of 2010.*

## Linking, Learning, Leveraging: Poverty Reduction Projects

CSERP's Northern Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan Social Economy Regional Node, otherwise known as *Linking, Learning, Leveraging: Social Enterprises, Knowledgeable Economies, and Sustainable Communities* — is involved in more than sixty projects. Below are three projects that address poverty reduction in a variety of ways.



**Ohpahow Wawesecikiwak Arts Marketing Co-operative, Big River First Nation, Saskatchewan:** Economic development is often discussed in terms of stimulus packages, tax incentives, and cash injections. These methods rarely yield long-term stability and often result in temporary growth, large industry, or outside investment. Community economic development (CED) focuses on the needs of the whole community and uses internal resources to create lasting results. It also centres on local solutions for local problems, with communities using their own resources, skills, and abilities as the starting point for growth. In addition, CED creates a long-term plan that includes environmental, economic, and social outcomes. It promotes local ownership and local capacity building so the benefits of economic growth stay in the community.

Artisans on the Big River First Nations Reserve in northern Saskatchewan are using traditional Cree skills passed down through generations to paint, sew, and carve their way to cultural revitalization and stable incomes. The Ohpahow Wawesecikiwak Arts Marketing Co-op grew out of a community strategy to achieve self-reliance. Drawing on time-honoured skills and traditions, the artisans are preserving and promoting language and culture as well as bringing economic development to the region. Learning to market their art collectively, the artisans have gained additional knowledge about technology, customer service, networking, marketing, and the co-operative business model, which has increased their capacity to achieve their goals. When a community values and uses its own resources to address local social and economic issues, just one successful development can often be a catalyst for others. Buoyed by a sense of pride, accomplishment, and skills improvement, community members see possibilities for renewal in many areas.

They have started a community garden to address the issue of food safety, and are developing a worker co-operative to offer employment opportunities. The achievements of Big River First Nation have become an inspiration to nearby communities, who now look to it for guidance in their own development activities. For more information, <http://usaskstudies.coop/socialeconomy>

### PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise, Thunder Bay, Ontario:

PARO is a Latin term that means "I am ready." This is a fitting motto for the innovative organization that has enabled hundreds of women across Northern Ontario to build the skills and confidence, and acquire the funds, to become successful entrepreneurs. PARO helps women start their own small businesses. The organization offers training in important skills such as how to write business plans, apply for loans, and manage customer service. PARO also sets up peer networks that provide personal support and access to funding. PARO's goal is to give women the confidence to be independent and self-sufficient in both their business and personal lives. An added bonus is how this contributes to stronger families and communities.



People need money to start a businesses or expand one, but not everyone can meet the banks' requirements — minimum loan amounts, good credit history, and collateral. PARO uses an innovative financing solution to help women access money for their businesses. Peer lending circles provide members with advice and support for their businesses, using a nontraditional lending model to access capital. Members review and approve one another's loan applications, give references for each other, and are collectively accountable for loan repayment. Capital comes from PARO's partners in the local financial community. Giving women access to financing for their micro-enterprises increases the entire community's capacity for economic self-reliance. A recent PARO-sponsored conference focused on supporting sustainable community economic development in the region by showcasing and encouraging women entrepreneurs. Delegates came away focused on finding innovative solutions to the unique economic challenges in the North. For more information, [www.paro.ca](http://www.paro.ca).



**Community Research Hub, Winnipeg, Manitoba:** Where does knowledge come from? How do we learn about the world? We learn by asking questions, by observing, by doing research. The more we know, the better decisions we make. Research also informs public policy, government activities, legislation, and consumer services.

The Community Research Hub (CRH), in Winnipeg's Spence Neighbourhood, takes an innovative approach to research. Members research the community they live in, talk to people they know, and examine their own circumstances to increase knowledge about low-income neighbourhoods. Demand has grown for CRH's unique approach, which unleashes local knowledge and creates fresh understanding of Winnipeg's inner city. Tapping into local knowledge and accessing personal networks, CRH is able to deliver more meaningful research findings to government agencies, policy makers, and service providers, enabling them to better understand the needs of their clientele.

This contributes to innovative solutions to community issues, provides employment, and empowers local people. CRH is owned by its workers, who make decisions democratically and promote an atmosphere of solidarity. Low-income people can be marginalized by circumstances; however, low-income Spence neighbourhood residents are finding a voice through CRH, creating their own solutions and providing a model for change. With a new voice and new skills, people are getting involved in planning a new future, a future in which poverty is not a given, a future in which everyone is able to participate. For more information, <http://usaskstudies.coop/socialeconomy>.