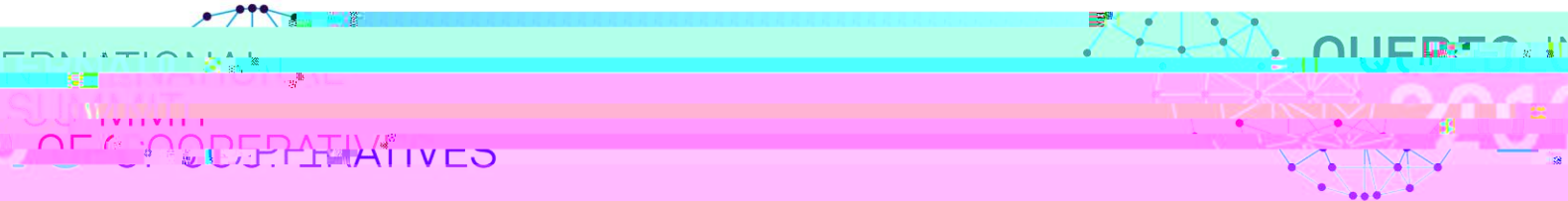


*Cooperatives : The Power to Act*  
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# GATHERING CIRCLES FOR INDIGENOUS ECOPRENEURSHIP AMONG FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES OF SOUTHERN QUEBEC

Stephen PENNER<sup>1</sup>, Simon BERGE<sup>2</sup>, Ryan Paul RICE<sup>3</sup>



## **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to present a feasibility study on the Gathering Circle Co-operative. The Gathering Circle Co-operative is a concept of Indigenous business aimed at strengthening Indigenous economic activity on a reserve through the promotion of the food co-op as the choice of chefs, dinners and consumers who appreciate local food. The competitive advantage outlined for the Gathering Circle Co-operative involv



further compounded by the lack of a community-based response, as most development models encourage first nations people to, D F F R U G L Q J W R : X W W X Q H H ¶ V ¶ U e s s a y U n Q F H L Indigenous methodology, <sup>3</sup> W R H Q W H U W K o s e y, H a p i t a l B o y s t e r H that has marginalized many R I W K H P I R (P r o s h a n e t a l, 2 0 0 4: 2 4)

There exists a belief system and a perspective within these communities that has shown us how we can walk with the indigenous people of Canada <sup>2</sup> more specifically the first nations of Southern Quebec. These beliefs are based on the traditional teachings of Mother Earth and are commonly referred to as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) providing communities with blueprint to create their idea of the good life, be it by: creating independence, developing cultural programming or capital projects. The ability to meet the disenfranchisement with an economic model built on TEK would provide, <sup>3</sup> k p a n d e d opportunities to earn income, better nutrition, modern knowledge about illnesses, and access to P R G H U Q K H D Q 2 0 0 5: 7). \* G o d o y (2005) may not have identified the goals correctly as he does not, according to Chilisa (2012), put himself into the community. But, what Godoy did identify is the entry point to achievement to which Indigenous communities can use to build a sustainable economic system for their communities. By utilizing the harvest of the Three Sisters (squash, corn and beans), the gifts of the moose and the deer, the unique fresh water fish resources, berries and maple syrup honorably for economic purposes allows the ecopreneur to build a sustainable community in the ecology of Quebec, namely around Montreal.

Despite the burgeoning contributions by many authors, most literature that reviews the issues surrounding the concept of the Gatheman J E T 3 c C i ( m ) - 3 c l e E c o p r e n e u r s h i p I d e n t i f y ( a n ) [ ( J E T 3 c n e ) 3 ( w ) 1 5 ( ) - 8

The purpose of this concept case study is to explore the role of Indigenous Ecopreneurship in a <sup>3</sup> \* D W K H U L Q J & L U F O H ' i n R e s p o n d e n c e t o F i r s t N a t i o n s o f S o u t h e r n Q u e b e c. Gathering Ci(m)-3cles is a frame of reference that applies to the centerprise model as used by Farm-to-Table development practitioners and thusly should serve to expand its understanding. This concept case study will measure before and after effects of attitude shifts with surveys, explain the use of traditional approaches to the Farm-to-Table movement and explore the multiplier effect on the social economy of a First Nations community. Analyzing what social entrepreneurship is as it applies to the social economic revitalization will aid in our understanding of the meaning of social entrepreneurship in the present conditions, from the point of view of indigenous peoples and more signif08 223.01 Tm [(c)11(ase)hrs





## Definition of key terms

**Indigenous ecopreneurship:** Using TEK in a modern context of creating wealth for communities through using the platform of the harvest.

**Farm-to-**

Whi O H W K H F R Q F O X V L R G r a w i k d a w e n t e r p r e n e u r s h i p p r o v i d e s a path to many different forms of independence, their stance seems to be centered on government actions to induce entrepreneurship rather than individual motivation towards this goal.

The second paper of note (Doh (2006), which is along the same tract as Anderson et al. (2006). (Doh (2006: 11) E H O L H Y H V <sup>3</sup> W K H T X D - being of Aboriginal Communities and Individuals in Canada will improve if they are properly empowered and provided with opportunities to reclaim control over their lives and sociocultural assets, ' D J D L Q H V S R X V L Q J L Q G H S H Q G H Q F H W K U This G - D L V H O F M G R I W Q L Q D O H paper and again removes the individual from responsibility and places it with the government (Aboriginal) and with the community.

6 D O H V W D W H V W K D W <sup>3</sup> Z K H Q \$ E R U L J L Q D O F R P P X Q L W L H V P D N H W K H L U take and what resources to develop, they consistently outperform non-Aboriginal decision-makers ' ( 6 D O H 2006: 14). This uses a well-meaning methodology but is an overly simplistic Western Colonial approach to Aboriginal entrepreneurship as it does not take into account the surrounding Westernized community or culture.

In stark contrast to the first two papers, Banerjee and Tedmanson ¶ V paper stands out arguing that E D U U L H U V W R H F R Q R P L F H Q W U \ O L H L Q <sup>3</sup> G L V F X U V L Y H S U D F W L F H V and Tedmanson, 2010: 147). The paper employs a participatory research method in remote Kuninjku Northern Australia. Banerjee and Tedmanson ar J X H W a c o n a s b e e n incorporated into management W K H R U \ D Q G S U D F W L F H W K U R X J K G L V F R X U V H R I G L Y H ( B a n e r j e e \ D I I L and Tedmanson, 2010: 151). The authors do not see the mainstream economy valuing the traditional activities of hunting and fishing. This valuation of hunting and fishing is an indigenous approach, but the D X W c o n c l u s i o n does not include other solutions to valuing resources.

Finally, we have Lindsay (2005), whose interpretive paradigm research identifies the roots of Indigenous entrepreneurship, which lie in the appreciation of Mother Earth. Lindsay (2005) postulates that there is les3>-154<00500 is

## Indigenous perspective on ecology and harvesting

Godoy et al. (2005) studied the effect resource extraction had on the well-being of the Tsimane' people of the Amazonian Rainforest. This qualitative study measures the impact of indigenous people upon participation in the market. The findings were, 3LQFUHDV participation in the market HFRQRP\` \*RGR\ HW The findings were, 3LUUHVSHFWLYH RI WUDGLWLRQDO SUDFWLFHV LQFUHDVLQJ LQW LQGXFH LQGLJHQRXV SHRSOHV WR GHJUDGH UHQHZDEOH QDWXU



When taken as whole, the positive ecological outcome that can be developed through taking a traditional approach to nature using TEK can be quite positive. What is not explored and represents a clear gap in the literature are the following . Two of the papers , Godoy (2006) and Lindsay (2005), consider the economic model of sustainable profits. Kimmerer (2012) and Kassam (2010) only view the teachings as impacting the harvest. Land management that can accrue and distribute wealth among our community can be a harvest of its own. If managed with the same care and concern that other economic resources are, community harvests work within a co-operative First Nations model.

The gap that is created by the missing component in Godoy's research is that he narrowly focuses on a conclusion that resource extraction induces indigenous peoples to harm the land and abandon their traditional teachings. Godoy's research is based on a very small sample and provides insight into only one case. One case cannot be a foundation for an economic model, but current research is lacking. An examination of the topic of Indigenous entrepreneurship needs to be examined. This paper provides a conceptual discussion on the potential of the use of a First Nations co-operative model for economic development in light of the dearth of current research.

### Co-Op models and First Nations communities

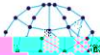
The qualitative work by Berlo (1998) examines and extracts information in regards to the few co-ops that exist in Indigenous communities, e.g. the Inuit Art Co-op. Berlo clearly identifies that co-ops have had a major responsibility for production and marketing arts and crafts since the 1960s (Berlo, 1998: 178). Berlo's research shows that co-operatives, capitalizing on traditional activities and values, were a form of accommodating Canadian ambivalence by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous (Berlo, 1998: 181). Berlo's conclusion is drawn using an Indigenous view but does not consider the co-op formation and that it is imposed upon, as opposed to birthed within the community. Nevertheless, it is the



tax because of co-op HUDWLYH EXVLQHVV PRGHO 6LOF Points Out Where Things V V ¶ V  
may have gone wrong for MEC, but in general they speak to the reasons why the co-operative model,  
when it works, is a tool that can be used in community economic development through the  
incorporation of community into the business.

The last paper is by Berge (2015), who is the current Business Chair of Co-operative Enterprises at the





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3. How has it changed your views of your neighbors and of other reserves?

4.









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## Notes

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