



## The Question of Inclusiveness

*Sault Ste. Marie hosts the 2005 National Conference on CED & the Social Economy*

BY DON McNAIR, WITH STEWART E. PERRY

I admit it – I had big doubts about this one. Why hold a national conference out in “the middle of nowhere”? It took me a day to get to Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario from the Okanagan Valley, and nearly as long to get back. (Even Peta-Anne Baker, who came in from Jamaica, spent less time traveling.) Was this the right place for the 2005 “National Conference on Community Economic Development and the Social Economy”?

Yep. Close to 500 delegates streamed into the Sault May 4-7, filled up its little motels and trailed back and forth across the TransCanada between the two venues it took to house all the scheduled events. Yes, it was just the place for the 2005 conference, especially in light of the fact that people were invited there to explore *the building of an inclusive movement*.

Inclusiveness is a basic tenet of CED and social economy. Their practitioners revolt against development practices that ignore groups of people, towns, even whole regions in the race for quantity, economy, convenience, and profit. They challenge the notion that wise economic decisions can be made without reference to social and environmental factors, and that effective social or environmental initiatives can exclude the economic side of life.

But inclusiveness has also become a big strategic issue for people active in CED and the social economy. As a number of articles in this magazine have recently shown, many practitioners now consider alliances with major public and private institutions to be critically important to the success of the community sector. Such alliances are the key to resources and recognition that can turn CED and social economy from a fringe festival into a main event on the national stage.

Finding the ways and means to include both the powerful and the marginalized, without loss of the

movement’s essentially revolutionary character, was the deeper question that delegates were having to probe in Sault Ste. Marie.

### **Including the Marginalized**

One key to inclusivity is not to cope with diversity, but to prize it. The National Conference partners – the Canadian CED Network (CCEDNet), the Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Program (CEDTAP), Algoma University, and Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition – sought to create an event that would recognize, promote, and leverage diversity: diversity in community of identity, in living circumstances, and in professional focus and practice.

Four presentations at the first plenary exemplified this. Each concerned a marginal population and the active part they are already taking in social enter-

---

Networking was just part – but a big one – of the Sault Ste. Marie experience. Photo courtesy of Gilles Gagné.



prise. Yvonne Chiu of the Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative (Edmonton) drew attention to the numerous collectives formed by many of Canada's newcomers. Wanda Wuttunee, business professor at the University of Manitoba, spoke passionately about aboriginally-owned business in this country. Nicole Sauvé (RDÉE Ontario) spoke in a similar vein about Ontario's francophones.

But it was Becky MacFarlane (Ontario Council of Alternative Businesses) who really hit the nail on the head. She didn't make a plea for recognition of consumer-survivor businesses; she made a *demand* for the resources that would enable her constituents to contribute to their communities, as is their right. Inclusion means little unless there is some transfer of the power and opportunity to give of oneself.

A great many of the 60 or more workshops concerned how and where that transfer takes place. It occurs in the halls of government through advocacy

and fiat, of course, but also in the marketplace through the decisions of producers and consumers.

When a multinational owner closed the dairy in Millbank, Ontario for example, local farmers and residents bought it and then reconfigured it. As a processor of goat's milk and cheese, Mornington Heritage Cheese and Dairy Co-op now enables 16 producers and 85 other local investors to do \$1.6 million in annual sales. In another case, Saskatchewan First Nations Co-operative brings together six Bands in a joint purchasing agreement to stock the retail stores on their reserves. A third co-op, InsideArt, involves what must be the archetypal excluded population: adjudicated felons. This Inmate Organized Business markets high-quality works of art created by six prisoners in the Mountain Institute near Agassiz, B.C.

Co-ops and other forms of collective ownership were prominent in the event line-up, as befits a town like Sault Ste. Marie. As one of the pre-conference site

(from top left) Jocelyne Paquette, Lynne Markell, Friday night reveller, Allan Zeeman, plenary session, workshop participant. Photos courtesy of Gilles Gagné.



visits made clear, the town's residents have a long history of stepping up to the plate when private enterprise strikes out. Algoma Steel, Northern Breweries, St. Mary's Paper – in the last 40 years worker buy-outs have essentially spared the Sault a catastrophic loss of industry and jobs. Jean-Pierre Girard made the same case with reference to Québec's health and tourism sectors, but in this case the instrument of choice has been the solidarity co-operative. (See his article in this edition, pp. 5-8.)

In terms of advocacy, several workshops concerned how you make the case for CED and the social economy to funders, government agencies, and other partners. Particularly well-received was an explanation of the analytical framework used by the *Réseau d'investissement social du Québec* (RISQ) to assess the performance of collective enterprises. Developed by specialists in social economy finance, it offered instruments for managing and tracking the diverse inputs and outcomes of these complex

organizations. A second "hit" in this department was an introduction to the evaluation of CED organizations. It broached fundamental issues in choosing the type of evaluation appropriate to your goals and to your current capacity. In other words, make evaluation – not the evaluation specialist – part of your organization's culture.

For the first time there was also a workshop on the "Art of Advocacy" itself. It was a chance first to consider a checklist for effective political lobbying, and then use it to assess the recent campaign against HRSDC misbehaviour conducted by the Centre for Community Enterprise.\* The campaign came out looking shot-through with gaps and inconsistencies – but effective, for all that.

What was really good about the latter, and many of the other top-notch workshops, was *their* practice of inclusivity. They mined the participants for information, which makes perfect sense when you consider that some of

the most accomplished practitioners in the country were likely in attendance. Similarly, workshop participants became a big part of the show in two role-play events. One, the "Poverty Game," let participants have a go at a living on social assistance. The other, to illustrate the results of CCEDNet's research into social inclusion, assigned such roles as businessperson, social assistance recipient, government agency officer, social agency executive, etc. to participants. They then grappled with creating an inclusive strategy in local revitalization. In both cases, participants were engrossed by experiences that expected them to give as well as receive.

\*Find "Public Institution? or Public Nuisance?" *Making Waves* 15,4:2-4 on-line at [www.cedworks.com/hrsdc.html](http://www.cedworks.com/hrsdc.html). It was succeeded by "From Public Nuisance to Wrecking Ball," on-line at [www.cedworks.com/hrsdc-2.html](http://www.cedworks.com/hrsdc-2.html). Running parallel to this campaign were efforts on the part of CCEDNet to engage Members of Parliament and senior bureaucrats in policy discussions concerning HRSDC.

*Finding the ways & means to include both the powerful & the marginalized, without loss of the movement's essentially revolutionary character, was the deeper question that delegates were having to probe in Sault Ste. Marie.*



The Co-operators is committed to building hope, pride and power in our communities...

Through co-operatives and community based organizations, our Co-operative and CED fund provides financial support to create sustainable economic development for disadvantaged individuals or communities.

CCO

 **the co-operators**  
A Better Place For You™

Home Auto Life Investments Group Business Farm Travel

Looking for INTERNS  
who are ...

reliable ...

committed ...

enthusiastic ...

knowledgeable?

Find them at the  
University of Waterloo  
Internship Fair  
October 2005!

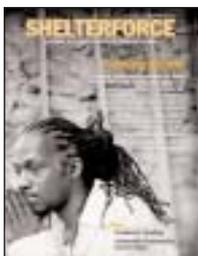


For information on exhibiting  
contact: Elisabeth Adrian  
519-888-4567 x 2590  
emadrian@uwaterloo.ca

## SHELTERFORCE

THE JOURNAL OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

For three decades, Shelterforce has been a primary forum for activists and advocates, professionals and policymakers in the affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization fields.



Shelterforce provides complete coverage of the issues at the core of community development – affordable housing, jobs, safety and education.

For more information:

**Shelterforce  
Online**

[www.shelterforce.org](http://www.shelterforce.org)



SUBSCRIPTION RATES  
US \$18 one-year individuals  
(six issues) • US \$30 one-  
year institutions (six issues) •  
US \$5 single issue/back  
issues

phone 973-509-2888 • fax 973-509-8005

## Including the Powerful

Last May CCEDNet members learned that the federal government was prepared to allocate \$160 million to Canada's social economy. The recognition was gratifying. But one year later, as Allen Zeeman, Director General of Social Development Canada's Community Development and Partnerships Directorate explained at one plenary, the social economy remains a mystery to many in the federal government.

The feds are committed to including the social economy in their agenda. Now practitioners must devote more time and energy to including the federal government in theirs. Practitioners have to work directly with government agencies to refocus existing programs and to design new ones so that the social economy dollars serve to build the capacity of marginalized people and communities.

The same message came through after a presentation by a representative of Bell Canada. Bell's allocation of \$1 million to a Community Economic Development Fund administered by CEDTAP is a major crack in the wall that separates the community sector from corporate Canada. But to widen that crack further requires practitioners, too, to articulate the roles that corporations have to play in community revitalization.

The same goes for organized labour. Beyond the site visits and a luncheon address from the President of the United Steelworkers in this quintessential union town, the linkage between CED, social economy, and labour got scarce attention at this gathering.

Labour, business people, and bureaucrats aren't alone in cultivating a

narrow understanding of what makes communities viable. As one delegate said, "We too have our silo mentalities." There is more – much more – to do at these conferences than network and attend workshops. These are annual opportunities for members and other practitioners to chart out explicit courses of action, like the linkage to government, labour, the corporate sector, and other possible allies.

In fact, there was a session on that very subject: if and how to revisit CCEDNet's policy framework, now well into its fourth year. What should be CCEDNet's policy with regard to the social economy? How about food security, immigration, the environment, human resources, and the role of the public and corporate sectors in each? Participants were keen to broaden CCEDNet's vision and field of action in order to encompass the energy of complementary movements. But they were also determined to root the work firmly in a base of values, and to make it still more accountable in terms of its results.

Is this possible? Or must CCEDNet necessarily "dumb down" CED in order to strike partnerships with others? If the events in Sault Ste. Marie are any indication, inclusion is not just another word for dilution, however mainstream or marginal the people you are addressing. Inclusion is about getting a handle on power, so that the greater community comes to realize just what it's been missing.



DON MCNAIR is Managing Editor of **making waves**. STEWART E. PERRY, a lifetime honorary member of CCEDNet and consulting editor to Making Waves, is also an associate of the Centre for Community Enterprise. Contact them at [mcnair@cedworks.com](mailto:mcnair@cedworks.com) and [stewartp@igc.org](mailto:stewartp@igc.org), respectively. Particular thanks to Gilles Gagné for all photography.

*Must CCEDNet necessarily "dumb down" CED in order to strike partnerships with others? If the events in Sault Ste. Marie are any indication, inclusion is not just another word for dilution. Inclusion is about getting a handle on power, so that the greater community comes to realize just what it's been missing.*