



Yukon Social Economy



SUMMER 2010

Social Justice

The fair distribution of advantages, assets, and benefits among all members of a society.

www.glenbow.org/mavericks/teacher/english/thm_poli/glossary.html

Special Points of Interest:

- A Northern Summit on the Social Economy to be held this fall (page 3)
- The Yukon Government's new approach to poverty and social inclusion (page 2, 4)
- What is the Social Economy? (page 2)

Youth and the Social Economy

Students making a difference through high school social justice clubs

The term “social economy” is not one that students in the Yukon often hear. This is not a topic that is taught in the classroom. However, while they may not know it, high school students in the Yukon play an active and important role in the social economy through their involvement in social justice clubs.

The social justice clubs at F.H. Collins Secondary School, Porter Creek Secondary School, and Vanier Catholic Secondary School in Whitehorse, Yukon are student-run, with teachers providing guidance and support. Their activities are extra-curricular, and in order to fit around busy schedules, meetings are held weekly at lunch hours. In this short amount of time, students must plan



Students from the Vanier Catholic Secondary School Social Justice Club make sandwiches for the Outreach Van

events and decide on the causes they want to support. Each club has anywhere from 12 to 20 students from grades 8-12. While the number of those who attend varies throughout the year, there is a core group of students that is the driving force of these clubs in the schools. The issues these

students support shows the compassion and concern of the club members for those in need. When students were asked why they are involved, a common response was that they wanted to help people. As a student of one Social Justice Club stated, “I love to help people”.

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Research Spotlight: Old Crow and Cross Border Trade Community concerns over food security

This summer the community of Old Crow is working with a researcher from the University of Saskatchewan to look at issues of food security and food sharing amongst the Vuntut Gwitchin across the US-Canada border. This project, coordinated by David Natcher at the University of Saskatchewan and Jody Butler Walker and Norma Kassi of the Yukon Arctic Health Research Network - Yukon (AHRN-YT), will look at how social and political systems affect access to nutritionally and culturally appropriate foods. The project came about through discussions with community members about their

concerns over how the US-Canada border affects the harvesting, sharing and receiving of traditional foods amongst the Vuntut Gwitchin; for example, in Fort Yukon.

Food security in the North is being threatened by many factors, from climate change to resource availability. This is also the case for traditional foods (e.g. caribou, moose, salmon), which are further at risk with changing dietary habits and the high costs of subsistence harvesting. Other researchers have partnered with the Vuntut Gwitchin in studies to identify environmental factors that influence traditional

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What is the Social Economy?

The social economy, often referred to as community economic development, includes a range of activities that occur outside the government and private sector. They are based on the values of service to community meeting social, economic and environmental needs. In the North, we include traditional activities, co-operatives, volunteer groups, unions, nonprofit organizations, social enterprises and other groups whose main purpose is not for profit or for the state.

What is SERNNOCA?

The Social Economy Research Network of Northern Canada (SERNNOCA) is a five-year research program looking at the social economy of the North. One of six regional networks across the country, it's made up of community partners, colleges and universities to study the social economy in Nunavut, Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavik and Labrador.

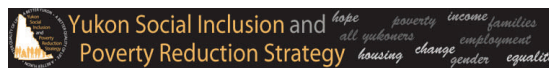
SERNNOCA's work is supported by the largest grant for social science research ever awarded in northern Canada. Dr. Chris Southcott of Lakehead University is the principal investigator of the network. Yukon College is the lead institution to administer the \$1.75 million grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for its implementation.

What does it do?

The program aims to connect researchers and their community partners with others who are researching social economy in the North. The knowledge they collect could:

1. Help develop the social economy in the Yukon
2. Demonstrate the importance of the social economy in the territory
3. Bring a local perspective to the discussion of sustainable development
4. Ensure northern students have a chance to participate and gain experience in the research
5. Improve the way organizations important to the social economy function

Reducing Yukon Poverty - A new approach



There is a new group at work in the Yukon developing a **Yukon Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy**. October 2009 marked the date of a significant advance in social policy in the Yukon, when the territorial government announced the creation of the Office of Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction.

Over the next year, the Office will create a strategy that includes a series of objectives and activities for the government to facilitate their decision making process in regards to social policies. This strategy will be supported by an ongoing process of research, data collection and annual reviews. Led by the Department of Health and Social

Services, the project was launched as a part of the government's initiative to build upon their commitment to the concept of a "Better Yukon".

Working with other groups and government departments, the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy Office has been involved in a number of tasks since its creation. These include:

- Data collection, including a housing adequacy study.
- Consultations with Aboriginal groups, non-government organizations (NGOs) and frontline workers through public meetings, community visits and workshops.
- Meeting with communities to hear their stories and experiences

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"A socially inclusive society is defined as one where all people feel valued, their differences are respected, and their basic needs are met so they can live in dignity" - Office of Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction

Reducing Yukon Poverty: A new approach cont.

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- Information sharing and dialogue, including an online forum.
- A Symposium on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction held in April, with presentations and discussions that circulated around the theme of the conference, titled “Bridges and Barriers”. The symposium brought together a wide variety of stakeholders, including a presentation by the Honourable Audrey McLaughlin. A video of the event is now available at http://www.abetteryukon.ca/symposium_videos.php. A second symposium will be held this fall.

The Office continues to work closely with government departments and NGO’s. A key group involved with this initiative is the Yukon Anti-Poverty

Coalition, a local non-profit group with a mandate to facilitate the elimination of poverty in the Yukon through awareness, advocacy and action. The Anti-Poverty Coalition, along with 28 other NGOs, has been invited to be a part of a Community Advisory Committee established by the Office of Social Inclusion. This committee provides a direct channel for community input into the strategy as it develops.

At every stage, the Office of Social Inclusion has made an effort to actively engage all groups, from social economy organizations to the public. In doing so, they will help ensure that the outcome reflects the current needs of the people in the Yukon.

The strategy is set to be completed by March 31, 2011. For more information, visit

www.abetteryukon.ca.

Research Spotlight: Old Crow and Cross Border Trade cont.

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food resources, document traditional foods use, and map changing wildlife numbers. This project focuses on the social and political systems that impact food security. This will give a more complete understanding of how traditional food sharing practices are an important part of northern food security.

The project relies on community participation and involvement. Data is being collected in Old Crow through interviews, focus groups and a food sharing survey. To assist this work, one local person has been hired as a Research Assistant and three high school students are helping with the survey and interviews. The information gathered is intended to benefit the community as a whole. The project aims to generate a set of policy recommendations that will uphold the food sovereignty rights of the Vuntut Gwitchin against the barriers that occur as a result of an imposed US-Canada border. In this way, the research team hopes to create a community-based solution to improve health, nutrition and traditional ways.

Tobi Jeans is working on the project in Old Crow for the summer. This work is part of her Masters in Environment and Sustainability at the University of Saskatchewan. Tobi recognizes that there are challenges that lay ahead for the project. As with any type of research that relies on the experiences of the past, it is a challenge to find primary sources with firsthand knowledge of the time when the border was drawn. The Vuntut Gwitchin have done well to rise to this challenge, and more and more community members are stepping into the roles their Elders once held, and new storytellers are emerging to fill this space.

The importance of the land and networking system that stretches across the border is as evident today as it was in the past for the Vuntut Gwitchin. As elder John Joe Kaye explains, “it is clear to see what is made on this earth, animals, we use that to live upon as Indian people. Our past Elders live on this land and they had lived with us, and they use everything on this land. Now that the Elders have left us, past Elders, our people still use the wildlife on this land, big and small”.



Vuntut Gwitchin elder Fanny Charlie in Old Crow, Yukon - photo by T. Jeans, G. Tetlich

Youth and the Social Economy cont.

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Over the years, the three social justice clubs have expanded their activities in the Yukon and internationally. Local organizations such as the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, Kaushee's Place, the Food Bank, No Fixed Address Outreach Van, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society of Yukon, and Blood Ties Four Directions have all benefitted from the support of these student clubs. This support, whether it is a donation of money, offering a helping hand, or starting an advocacy campaign, is also extended outside the Yukon to international groups such as Grandmother to Grandmother and Free the Children.

Money for the clubs' projects is raised by the students, who receive generous assistance from others in their school and the community as a whole. The clubs regularly hold bake sales or sell pizza to raise funds. These students have shown immense creativity in generating new ideas for fundraising events. This year the three social justice clubs combined their efforts with an inter-high school coffee house fundraiser.

The impact of the social justice clubs is visible in the schools as well as in the community. Those involved say it is a fun, easy way to make a difference. Because they are run through the school, the clubs are accessible to those who want to help out in their community. At the same time, students become more aware of the issues that exist in the Yukon. For local organizations, the clubs offer student support and raise awareness of their projects.

These students play a key role in helping address pressing social and environmental issues. They are an enthusiastic and dedicated group that are actively making changes and set an impressive example for those around them.

Members of the Porter Creek Secondary School Social Justice Club in Guatemala visiting a local child they sponsor and his family - photo by Shannon Thompson



Whitehorse Tri-High Coffee House

hosted by
F.H., P.C., and Vaniers'
Social Justice Clubs
at the CYO Hall
at 406 Steele St.
from 7 PM to 10 PM
on Friday, May 14

Cost: \$5

Beverages, appetizers, and
silent auction
Entertainment: performing
artists and open microphone

Tickets available
from F.H. Collins,
Vanier, & P.C.S.S.
Social Justice
Club members,
or at the door.



A coffee house this past May was held as a fundraiser for the social justice clubs of the three Whitehorse high schools

Would you like to contribute to the next issue of Yukon Social Economy newsletter?

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Northern Summit on the Social Economy

November 2-4, 2010 — Whitehorse, Yukon

The Northern Summit on the Social Economy will take place in Whitehorse this November and will bring researchers, policy-makers and practitioners together to discuss the social economy sector in the Northmore details coming soon. If you would like to be involved or have any recommendations please send us your ideas. Check our website for updates on the event at <http://dl1.yukoncollege.yk.ca/sernnoca> or contact Valoree Walker, SERNNoCA Coordinator, Northern Research Institute at 867-668-8857 or email sernnoca@yukoncollege.yk.ca

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