



Pan-Canadian Community Development Learning Network Profile of Effective Practice:



Community Opportunity and Innovation Network Inc.

Context

One hour north-east of Toronto, Peterborough is a gateway to the "cottage country" of the Kawarthas, a large recreational region of Ontario. Beginning in the late 1850's, a substantial canoe building industry grew up in and around Peterborough, peaking in the 1930s with 25% of all employees in the boat building industry in Canada working in the Peterborough area. Nicknamed "The Electric City", Peterborough saw extensive industrial growth as one of the first locations in Canada to begin generating hydro electrical power (even before Niagara).

Companies like Edison General Electric Company (later Canadian General Electric) and America Cereal Company (later to become Quaker Oats), located here to take advantage of this new cheap resource.

Peterborough's growth as a manufacturing centre grew until the early 1960s, when the city had the highest per capita level of manufacturing employment in North America at around 60%. Companies like General Electric and Outboard Marine, with their high paying manufacturing jobs, had a major impact on the growth of the city through the first half of the 20th century, but aging facilities and more expensive labour compared with the developing world worked against Peterborough in recent decades. The NAFTA agreement of the early 1990's and pressure to produce ever cheaper goods saw a major shift in trading and manufacturing patterns for many Canadian companies. Since the 1970s, the manufacturing sector has declined as Peterborough has

This Profile of Effective Practice is one of fifteen stories examining how innovative, community-based initiatives are using comprehensive approaches to improve social and economic conditions on a local level.

The profiles were prepared as part of a 2.5-year project of the Canadian CED Network looking at the links between social inclusion and community economic development.

For other profiles, more information on the project and additional resources on social inclusion and CED, see the notes at the end of this document.

Peterborough, Ontario

History – The area's first inhabitants followed retreating glaciers into the area 11,000 years ago. Woodland Indians lived in the region between 1000 BCE and 1000 CE, followed by Iroquoians and Mississaugas by about 1740. In 1615, Samuel de Champlain travelled through the area and stayed for a brief period of time just north of Peterborough. 1825 marked the arrival of 2,000 Irish immigrants from the city of Cork as part of an experimental emigration plan to transport poor Irish families to Upper Canada. Peterborough was incorporated as a city in 1905. By 2001, the population of the greater metropolitan area was just over 100,000.

Economy – The important manufacturing sector of the economy has been through significant restructuring resulting from the impacts of globalization and NAFTA, but Peterborough was nonetheless ranked the number one location for business in Ontario by Canadian Business Magazine in late 2004.

Social Need – Average incomes in Peterborough fall below the Ontario provincial average at \$20,455 (the Ontario average is \$24,816).

Claim to Fame – Peterborough has been home to many famous Canadians, including authors Margaret Laurence and Robertson Davies, musician Ronnie Hawkins, hockey player Bob Gainey, engineer and inventor Sir Sandford Fleming, and Prime Minister Lester Pearson, who spent his formative years there. The Trent-Severn Waterway passes through Peterborough and includes the Peterborough Lift Lock, the world's largest hydraulic lift lock, which opened in 1904. It is also the world's highest lift lock with a rise of 65ft (19.8m).

also emerged as a regional service centre. Today, while the largest employer is now the Peterborough Regional Health Centre, followed by school boards and local government, manufacturing is still the biggest local industry with General Electric and Quaker Oats maintaining large operations in Peterborough. The city is also a 'bedroom' community for workers of General Motors -- the GM plants in Oshawa are actually the largest industrial employer of Peterborough citizens. Lower costs, reliable labour and high quality post-secondary institutions are a competitive advantage for Peterborough, leading Canadian Business Magazine to rank it the number one location for business in Ontario in late 2004.

History

COIN started operations in 1991, following an anti-poverty study and a series of community meetings led by the Peterborough Social Planning Council, the Peterborough and District United Way and other partners. The study and meetings were looking for practical, community-based solutions to poverty that could be implemented locally. Frustrated with waiting for provincial or federal governments to take action, community economic development was identified as a promising strategy social and economic development with low-income people and communities facing significant challenges.

The first work done by COIN was a study on access to apprenticeship and barriers to employment. This led to a pre-apprenticeship course in partnership with the local community college to help people access apprenticeships in the culinary trade.

Incorporated in 1993, the major areas of focus for COIN since then have been team entrepreneurship, social enterprise, and

community capacity building. In the Central Ontario region, COIN has participated in and had an impact on a large number of social and economic development initiatives.

Activities

COIN has three main goals: to support the development of team-based enterprises, to design and deliver practical skill development initiatives, and to support the development of sustainable communities by strengthening capacity building at the local level.

COIN takes a practical approach to carrying out its mission. It does so by:

- Encouraging ideas, plans and programs that aim for long-term financial sustainability.
- Building partnerships that strengthen the community's capacity to support new development initiatives.
- Creating new opportunities that are socially and environmentally responsible.
- Maximizing the community's use of local talent and resources in support of new CED efforts.
- Providing start-up and care taking support of new ventures.
- Supporting the creation of alternatively structured companies.
- Facilitating research and development in the area of CED-based training.

Since its foundation in 1991, COIN has created hundreds of new job opportunities for unemployed people, and supported the development of dozens of new businesses, cooperatives, and not-for-profit enterprises. COIN's current social enterprises include:

TEKdesk – Managed by COIN in conjunction with the Peterborough Public Library, TEKdesk is a client-centred helpdesk that supports public libraries and public Internet access sites.

reBOOT Peterborough – Founded in 2000 in conjunction with reBOOT Canada and COIN, reBoot Peterborough refurbishes and redistributes computer equipment to other charities and non-profits, both locally and through a large reseller network of organizations.

Natural Blends Café – A partnership project between COIN, Peterborough and District Association for Community Living (PDACL) and the Peterborough Public Library to provide on-the-job training to persons with development needs, by operating a café in the Peterborough Public Library.

Community Opportunities and Innovation Network (COIN)

Year Incorporated – 1991

Mission – COIN is a community focused organization that promotes equality, wellness and empowerment through innovative and sustainable economic development.

Mandate

- To support the development of new team-based enterprises that create economic opportunity for unemployed and underemployed people
- To identify skill shortage occupations for the regional labour market, then train / support unemployed people to qualify for these positions.

Accomplishments

- Creating hundreds of new job opportunities for unemployed people
- Supporting the development of dozens of new businesses, cooperatives, and not-for-profit enterprises
- Partnerships that have generated over \$30 million in new economic activity and investment
- Coordinating the development of the Peterborough and Northumberland Community Access Program networks
- Development of a cooperative education program with Trent University
- Creation of a number of COIN-operated social enterprises targeting various people facing significant barriers to employment



Some of the delicious food platters prepared for breakfast and lunch meetings by World 2 Go Foods, a COIN social enterprise.

World 2 Go Foods – A joint venture of Community Living Peterborough, Trent Valley Literacy Association and COIN, World 2 Go Foods employs persons who are developmentally challenged. The company specializes in catering lunches, and offers a wide range of gourmet sandwiches and desserts.

COIN has also managed to help bridge the Digital Divide in the region by signing a long-term agreement with a local utility company to provide high-speed wireless Internet access to dozens of Community Access Sites, allowing residents to maintain a competitive advantage in the current technology age.

Participatory and Comprehensive Analysis

COIN is influenced and inspired by the work of community economic development innovators Mike Lewis and Stewart Perry who have extensively studied the best practices of successful CED organizations in North America. Lewis and Perry found that the most successful CED organizations are multi-functional, providing a range of services within a holistic framework to the communities they serve.

From its inception, COIN has adopted this multifunctional philosophy. This type of approach has allowed them to diversify not only in the programs and training opportunities they offer to the community, but also their ability to access a range of funding opportunities, all the while staying focused on the needs of marginalized people and communities.

COIN's approach is holistic. They see individuals, families, and local organizations as the foundation of communities, versatile and full of opportunity. COIN believes that the strength and growth of communities is founded on the development of social, economic, cultural and environmental factors. So, for example, COIN's assessment process for new enterprise development includes criteria for social and environmental responsibility.

Initially, COIN's programs would end when there was an end to funding. As a result, valuable employees and community programs would be lost. Also, some fixed-term training programs did not recognize that some trainees developed their skills at different paces, thus not always fostering strong skill development. This encouraged COIN

Comprehensive Approach

- The most effective local approaches are multi-functional and holistic
- Diversified programs and opportunities as well as funding sources contributes to flexibility and client-centred focus
- The social enterprise model offers greater sustainability and potential for client focus
- A sustainable approach to programming requires community capacity building work: volunteer and organizational development
- Community partnerships and collaboration are essential

Community Opportunity and Innovation Network (COIN)

to become more centred on social enterprises that have the ability to become self-sustaining while offering more client-centred programs and services than traditional government-sponsored programs.

This shift towards a more sustainable approach to programming required COIN to focus on the needs of the communities they worked with. This kind of development work, which is used to revitalize communities, requires capacity building in terms of: volunteer development, organizational development, and solid infrastructure.

COIN has found that building partnerships with community members and organizations enables them to provide the opportunities and services that are identified as underdeveloped or undeveloped in a community. One recent example of this is COIN's new partnership with a local adult learning and leisure centre to create a training kitchen that serves persons with intellectual challenges during the day and offers adult general interest courses in the evenings.

By working collaboratively with other community organizations and engaging social agencies in alternative approaches to addressing the needs of the community, COIN helps build capacity and transforms the face of community programs to an increasingly empowerment-based model that maximizes the benefits to those in need.

For COIN, using a comprehensive, partnership-based approach to their programs means that they have a greater chance of being successful, they develop greater community integration with other organizations and they expand their support network. According to Kevin Edwards, COIN's General Manager, "When it comes down to it, CED is plain hard work. Many hands make the load lighter, and partnerships, collaboration, strategic alliances and networks all give structure and form to COIN's partnership driven approach."



Peterborough dignitaries, including MP Peter Adams, attend the launch of COIN's high-speed wireless Internet service, reBOOT hiSPEED.

Community Opportunity and Innovation Network (COIN)

COIN strives to ensure that they are fair and equal in their approach to race, gender, and ethnicity in terms of programming and opportunities for the community. According to the 2001 Census, the foreign born population in the City of Peterborough was 6,455, 14% of which arrived between 1991 and 2001. COIN strives to be aware of the new Canadian population in Peterborough and moves to structure partnerships and programming around this information. Most recently, COIN is partnering with the Peterborough New Canadians Centre to provide opportunities and support to new Canadians in the area through a program that will place participants in job training positions with social enterprises in the community or support them in their entrepreneurial endeavours.

Outcomes and Evaluation

COIN has had a significant impact on the local economy in Peterborough. From an internal analysis performed for COIN by a team of Trent University students, the value of COIN-supported CED initiatives has been estimated at \$30 million in leveraged resources, new investment and partnerships.

A very important area of activity for COIN is that of practical skills development, for persons with intellectual challenges in the food services industry, for young entrepreneurs in the basics of business, or for recent graduates who want to break into the technology sector.

For Kevin Edwards, the value of integration is indisputable. "If we're talking about people with disabilities, their quality of life is transformed profoundly by becoming involved in a social enterprise. Social integration is often more important than economic opportunity. Just going from being a dependent member of society, to having the opportunity to contribute however

humbly, that is of profound importance. The health literature shows that people with disabilities, or mental health issues, if they can be integrated in the community in a productive, meaningful way, reduce their chances of going back into the system exponentially. This saves the taxpayer money over the long haul, making social enterprise a very attractive investment of public funds. For someone who is on social assistance, who volunteers for us in a social enterprise and then gets hired as an employee, the impact on quality of life and self-esteem is staggering. This can actually turn their life around."

"One of the problems with traditional training programs is that a person can do six months, [and then the] funding doesn't support them anymore. But with a social enterprise, we can provide a longer-term intervention to help turn things around. Social enterprises can support the person in a time frame



Graduates of COIN's Youth Team Entrepreneurship Program pose for a group picture during a tradeshow at Peterborough's Market Hall.

Community Opportunity and Innovation Network (COIN)

that's appropriate to that person's needs. It also allows us to customize learning and development plans for everyone who volunteers or works with our social enterprises. We have the flexibility to work with the needs of the community and the individual. If we're making money from other places, we can still hire someone and keep them on part-time, or take someone as a volunteer, to respond to their needs, and help to develop that person. This is the essence of the social enterprise advantage. Of course, at the present time the social enterprise approach does not fit many funding programs but we are hopeful that with the federal government's Social Economy Initiative this will start to change."

Kevin also noted that it is not always possible or realistic for COIN to cater to the needs of everyone, "so we also need to network with other organizations to respond to the needs of people who need help. In this way our holistic approach to the development of communities also applies to people."

COIN has also played a key role in the establishment of the Community Access Program (CAP) in Peterborough and Northumberland counties, which delivers Internet access to thousands of people who may otherwise have limited access through a network of 30 CAP Sites and 8 Rural Life Long Learning Centres.

In partnership with Trent University, COIN has built a program that educates students in the basics of research assignments while working with local community organizations to launch new CED efforts at the community level. In 2004 alone, the Trent Centre for Community Based Education (TCCBE) placed over 80 upper year and graduate students with community groups, supporting over 40 community development projects. Recently, COIN has actually spun off the TCCBE as a separate non-profit organization.

Through the Youth Team Entrepreneurship Program (YTEP), COIN has helped start 50 businesses between 2001 and 2004, most of which have seen great success.

Success Factors

Social Enterprises – All of COIN's social enterprises are guided by a management committee, mandated to run the enterprise like a business. These committees are comprised of COIN board members, community partners and most importantly business people who know the industry the social enterprise is operating in.

Networking and Partnering – COIN uses partnerships for establishing and supporting their enterprises, primarily through joint-venture agreements. COIN can measure their success with joint-venture agreements by how the organizations can function together. For example, COIN recently partnered with Class Connections to create a training kitchen at the Class Connections Centre that provides food service training to persons with intellectual disabilities during the day, and it is used by Class Connections at night for cooking classes for adult general interest courses.

Teaching by Doing – COIN has a number of enterprises where adults can learn new skills and increase their knowledge and employability through hands-on training. reBOOT Peterborough hires people who learn how to build and repair computers. COIN Food Service trains adults with disabilities to learn food service skills in a real time environment from all aspects of food preparation to customer service skills.

Volunteer Base – A sign of success is a strong and committed volunteer base. Many volunteers come through TEKdesk, reBOOT, and Natural Blends Café as a show of support for the integrity of the programs that COIN offers. COIN has over 120 active volunteers.

Policies and Lessons

As with most organizations surveyed, COIN found the most enabling programs have been those that provided flexible unconditional grants. As the federal government is a major funder for many of COIN's programs, their shift towards multi-year projects provides a level of stability for COIN programming in terms of marketing, structure and delivery. This primarily benefits users of COIN programs and allows COIN to grow the programs that their community will most benefit from. The move to more long-term, flexible, outcome-based funding arrangements has been a great benefit to COIN.

Monique Beaudoin

Monique Beaudoin is the Ontario regional coordinator for the Canadian CED Network. She can be reached at tel: (705) 671-9983, email: mbeaudoin@ccednet-rcdec.ca

For more information on the Community Opportunities and Innovation Network, visit their website at <http://www.coin-ced.org>

References

Interviews conducted with Kevin Edwards, General Manager of the Community Opportunity and Innovation Network (COIN), November 25th, 2004 and on Thursday July 7th, 2005

Community Opportunity and Innovation Network Inc official website <http://www.coin-ced.org/>

Statistics Canada, City of Peterborough Community Profile from the 2001 Census. Viewed August 6th, 2005 : <http://www.statcan.ca/>

Wikipedia contributors (2006). Peterborough, Ontario. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Peterborough,_Ontario&oldid=47723720

More Profiles of Effective Practice and other resources on social inclusion are available at: <http://www.ccednet-rcdec.ca/en/pages/learningnetwork.asp>

This project is funded by the Community Development and Partnerships Directorate of Social Development Canada. The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of Social Development Canada.

Published by:

© 2005 The Canadian CED Network
211-620 View St., Victoria, BC V8W 1J6
Telephone: (250) 386-9980
Toll free: (877) 202-2268
Fax: (250) 386-9984
Website: <http://www.ccednet-rcdec.ca>

*Ce document est aussi
disponible en français.*

An electronic copy of this document
is available on our website