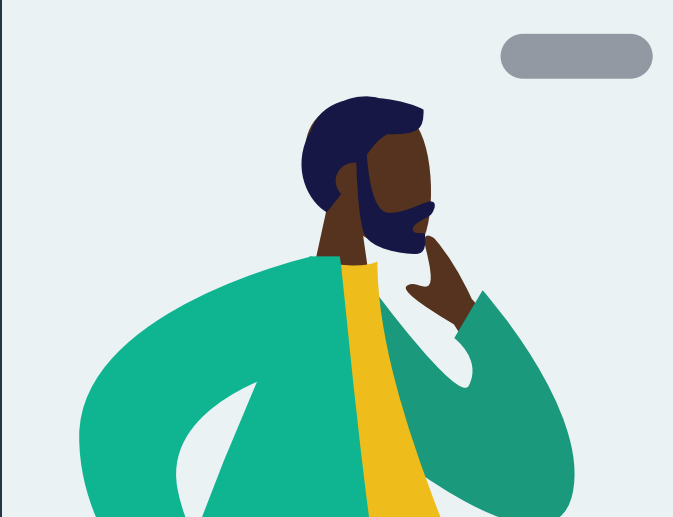
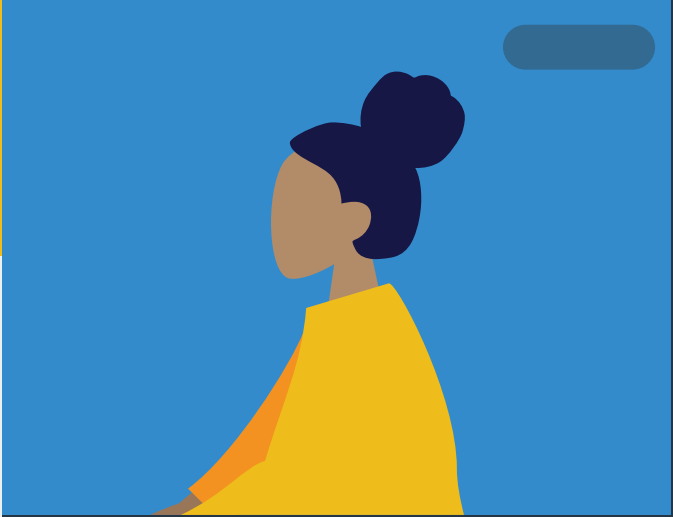
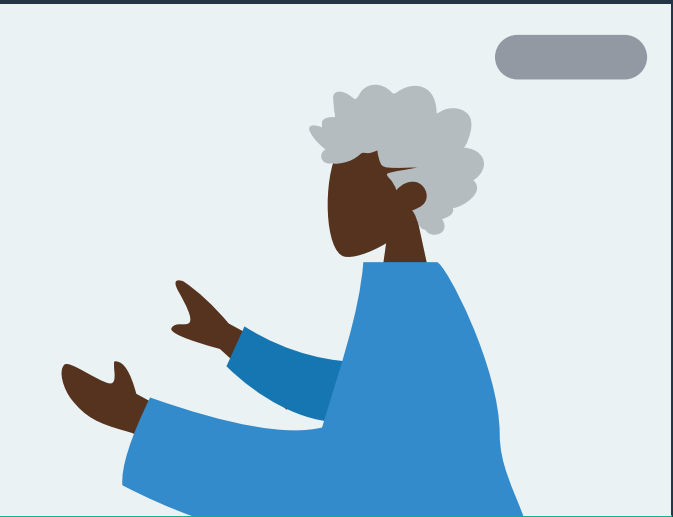


Northern Ontario Research, Development, Ideas and Knowledge



# LEARNING IN/THROUGH TIMES OF CRISIS



ANNUAL RESEARCH REPORT

2020/2021

# Board of Directors

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# The Director's Report



**2020 was a critical year around the globe, and the same was true for Northern Ontario.**

As we all contended with and confronted the COVID-19 pandemic, a host of interconnected challenges emerged that tested the strength and resilience of our communities. Remote work and learning were the most immediate and obvious to those of us working in the research and education sectors, but soon the structural inequities that placed some populations at greater risk and disadvantage were surfacing at a rapid rate after decades (and centuries) of denial. The discovery of the 215 unmarked graves at the former site of the Kamloops Indian Residential School in May, 2021 also rekindled attention on the movement for truth about residential schools, and more broadly the fight for justice for Indigenous peoples. Meanwhile, the increasing severity of climate change crept further into our daily lives.

While these moments have given us pause to reflect on how we build and maintain community, they have also underscored the dire importance of the work for environmental, economic, social, and racial justice.

Many of our projects and commitments from previous years continued, adapting to new platforms and media for organizing. By consequence of most of our work being performed remotely, this report contains very few photos (there are very few variations on a Zoom screen shot that can tell a unique story).

Yet many of our team were also confronting new manifestations of the social, political and economic crises of our times. Ranging from new attacks on the Colombian peace process, to the decimating impact of the pandemic on Northern Ontario's tourism industry, to the growing urgency of the environmental crises that are binding local and global experiences of existential threats. The research surveyed in this report reflects the adaptations and responses to these times of crisis, and growing commitment to work collaboratively for the justice our communities, region, and world so desperately need.

2021 marks the end of our strategic plan and more so an important time to take stock after two years of unprecedented upheaval. What follows is a review of the anticipated outcomes from our previous five-year plan organized by the strategic objectives to which NORDIK has aspired.

## INCLUSION, PARTNERSHIP & JUSTICE WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The last five years have marked important advancements in NORDIK's place in the struggle for justice with Indigenous peoples. As an institution, it has strived to be cross-cultural in nature and enshrined this through Indigenous leadership on our Board of Directors and our collaborations with First Nations, the Métis Nation, and Indigenous organizations and community groups.

Though Indigenous perspectives and participation are built into all of our work, some projects and partnerships stand out as particularly significant in their contribution to this objective. In collaboration with the **Ontario Native Welfare Administrators Association**, we conducted a review of income assistance programs on First Nations in the Ontario region informed by clients, administrators and community leadership. This was part of the first review of Income Assistance programs in First Nations throughout Canada in more than forty years, and has informed recommendations for reform that will reorient IA programs to local contexts and needs. Though the **Urban Indigenous Youth for Change** initiative has concluded, it has morphed into a strong partnership with the **Indigenous Women's Anti-Violence Task Force** and ongoing engagement in the justice sector to advance restorative justice practices, address Indigenous over-representation in the criminal justice system, and support the cause of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. We also worked with a circle of Indigenous youth and Elders to create the **Indigenous Youth Leading Youth Anti-Racism Program**, and though a government transition prevented active training, the resource remains accessible through our website and is being used by educators across Ontario. And the **Ethnic Peoples & Peace Global Network** has played an important role in foregrounding the struggles of Indigenous and Afro-Colombian peoples and the unmet obligations to these communities in the Colombian Peace Accords.

While staffing fluctuates throughout the year depending on project timelines, overall we have averaged that at least one third of our workforce are of Indigenous ancestry. Nonetheless, we have also taken new moves to ensure that our employment opportunities are reaching Indigenous candidates so that we may better meet this commitment in the future.

## STRENGTHENING CHANGE-MAKING CAPACITY

Over the last eight years we have been able to support change-makers across Northern Ontario in developing an extensive partnership resulting in an active social entrepreneurship ecosystem. Social Enterprise and Entrepreneurship (SEE), both through the Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs-Social Enterprise Partnership (ONE-SEP) and the Women of Ontario Social Enterprise Network (WOSSEN) has delivered regular workshops and training opportunities to aspiring social entrepreneurs throughout the region, far exceeding our original goals, and have put in place a sustainable ongoing training and financing system.

To celebrate our 10th anniversary in 2017, we also completed a survey of NORDIK's social impact, highlighting over \$4,000,000 of investment in research and the completion of over 100 research projects, contributions to building regional community development capacity, the training of researchers, contributions to policy development, and strides forward in relationship building. This retrospective served as an important benchmark for conceptualizing our impact, and now for envisioning the next five years.

Aspirations for a pan-Northern public policy partnership were ultimately unfulfilled, however NORDIK and its growing team have provided evidence-based contributions to realms such as **Indigenous social policy, agricultural and food-policy, language and cultural policy, and education policy**, as well as intervening in the **Ring of Fire Regional Assessment**.

## FOSTER INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY AND IDENTITY RECOGNITION

NORDIK's work has consistently reflected the voices and aspirations of equity seeking groups, which has remained among our strengths as our society and political establishment are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of diversity, and the structural barriers that impede it.

Projecting the form that interventions in the cultural and tourism sectors would take, however, makes our otherwise successful record seem to have missed the mark of our anticipated outcomes. We ultimately did not establish an eco-cultural-tourism collaboration hub, nor establish an arts and culture partnership on the model of SEE and RAIN, nor was Algoma-Sault Ste. Marie designated a cultural industry cluster. However, our engagements in these sectors has deepened, and important structural changes have occurred as a result of the research and advocacy of NORDIK staff and faculty. Perhaps most significant among these was the adoption in Sault Ste. Marie and Hornepayne of the **“Four Pillars” approach to community resilience**, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of environmental sustainability, cultural vitality, social equity, and economic diversity. This has had very visible impacts in Sault Ste. Marie, with greater investment in the cultural sector, diversification of tourism initiatives, and the growth of this region's place in the film industry. The **Valuing Northern Libraries Toolkit** was also pivotal in advancing the conversation on the important role of libraries as cultural institutions while providing libraries a systematic means to demonstrate their impact and value to the communities they serve. **Mapping Northern Creative Spaces**, commissioned by Arts Build Ontario, both highlighted the arts infrastructure needs in four northern communities, and helped link local artists and arts organizations with a provincial advocacy group. Our relationships with tourism agencies have also evolved over the last five years, culminating in a survey of

**impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on visitors and tourism operators.** Likewise, collaborations with partners such as Thinking Rock Community Arts on **The Story of our Stories** project, or collaborating with Algoma University classes such as Laura Wyper integrating Slow Food International's **The Ark of Taste** into examinations of the place of food in the nexus of culture and place.

Concurrently, two doctoral dissertations were completed by NORDIK affiliates focused on questions of culture, identity and place, including Jude Ortiz' (2017) *Culture, Creativity and the Arts: Building Resilience in Northern Ontario* and Sean Meades' (2021) *Language Ecology and Shift at Baawating, 1600-1971*.

## FACILITATE RESILIENCE & SUSTAINABILITY OF NORTHERN ONTARIO

Obtaining funding for a 5-7 year collaborative initiative proved impossible, as such predictable funding structures became increasingly rare in an era of short-lived governments and annual funding cycles. However we have continued to have a strong list of engagement from year to year that have contributed to the resilience and sustainability of the region, and our own revenues have increasingly derived from partnership and contracted services.

Though the struggle to restore passenger rail service connecting Hearst and Sault Ste. Marie and then to Sudbury has persisted, the **Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains** has fostered deeper connections and supported a pivotal effort by the Missanabie Cree First Nation to develop community-owned rail service in the shape of the **Mask-wa Oo-ta-ban**. This initiative has gained great support from numerous stakeholders and levels of government. The primary obstacle remains Transport Canada.

Growth of the agricultural and wild-foods sector in the Algoma District has been significant since the development of the **Rural-Agri Innovation Network**, and RAIN's growth has led to it becoming a partner rather than a project. Unfortunately there were no regional baselines by which to systematically measure the growth in the social economy, however programming interventions including **SENO**, **SEE**, and **WOSEN** have provided training and resources to hundreds of social entrepreneurs throughout the region, while the systemic change encouraged by **ONE-SEP** will ensure that entrepreneurial training and resources are accessible to a wider variety of clientele and business models. Census data to be released in 2022 will help develop a more accurate picture overall as to whether and how the Northern Ontario economy has diversified over the last five years, which is the primary measure of our efforts to support community economic development.

## THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

As we prepare for the next five years, we're particularly guided by what we have learned through these times of crisis. Focusing on the strengths and skills that NORDIK offers and our strong commitment to collaboration, our goals highlight what we are best placed to bring to our local and regional struggles for justice. Our strategic goals for the next five years include:

1. Advance partnerships for Indigenous research sovereignty;
2. Foster local and regional evidence-based dialogues on issues critical to Northern and Indigenous communities;
3. Cultivate Northern research talent with a supportive, inclusive, team-based atmosphere; and
4. Connect students, researchers and community in projects that contribute to social, economic and environmental sustainability and justice for Northern and Indigenous communities.

Much of our past success is not in the explicit actions that we have taken, but the catalyzing and cascading role that this work had for policy change, collective searches for knowledge, and community building. Likewise, our impact in the next five years will take a similar form. While that impact is hard to measure, it is foundational to the change our communities need and deserve.



# NORDIK Welcome Three New Affiliated Faculty



## AARON GORDON

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Aaron's research interests surround leveraging human resource systems through effective project and change management planning. His publications focus the application of project management theory in government context and was invited to speak at the Project Management Institute's Research and Education Conference in Portland, OR - Topic: *The Symbiosis of Project Management and Change Management During Healthcare Integrated Planning: A Case Study of Ontario's Healthcare System*. In addition, Aaron has collaborated and published with renowned project management expert - Dr. Julian Pollack (University of Technology Sydney, Australia).



## ANDREA PINHEIRO

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Andrea Pinheiro began her art studies at White Mountain Academy of the Arts, an art school dedicated to teaching Anishinaabe and western art in Elliot Lake, Ontario. After traveling west for further studies and to work in artist-run centres in Vancouver, she returned to the Algoma region to teach in Visual Arts at Algoma University. Pinheiro works in photography, print, paint, film, clay, land-based/ ecological art, and installation, weaving together elements of documentary and collecting practices with the poetics of embodied experience. Her work is distilled from experience of place, and is intertwined with consideration of the long and complex histories of land, objects, and materials. Referencing historical events, significant sites, or other artworks, the images and materials in Pinheiro's work become vessels that record her interactions; gestures that oscillate between creative and destructive processes of transformation. Pinheiro has exhibited across Canada and internationally. She has completed numerous national and international residencies. Her work is represented by Cooper Cole Gallery in Toronto and Republic Gallery in Vancouver. She is the Founder of 180 Projects in Sault Ste. Marie, and lives and works along the Goulais River in Searchmont and often Big Basswood Lake. Her research interests include land-based art, digital art, photography, film and video, ecological art, uranium/ nuclear industry - environmental and cultural impacts, invisibility, memory, perception, human legacy, wild ceramics, foraging and collecting, art in community, art and wellbeing. You can see more Pinheiro's work at [andreapinheiro.ca](http://andreapinheiro.ca)



## JODY REBEK

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Jody Rebek is a teacher, mother, outdoor enthusiast/athlete, adventurer, traveler, artist, musician, and serial social entrepreneur. As Assistant Professor at Algoma University, in the School of Business and Economics (Sault Ste. Marie, ON), Jody explores ways to strengthen transformational/benevolent leadership, entrepreneurship, teams, strategy and strength-based cultural developments. She has enjoyed engaging others in transformation efforts that renew focus, positive growth and results-oriented action plans for individuals, organizations and communities. With a Ph.D. in Educational Studies in Leadership and Policy (Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, ON), she was introduced to the importance of narratives, and arts-integrated approaches in research. She explored intrapersonal development in her research, looking to investigate ways to strengthen self-awareness via contemplative approaches to leader development. She is also a Leadership Consultant at *Vive Strategies Consulting* where she custom-designs training for leadership and team development, and is co-founder of *Hearterra*. She received a Canada Graduate Scholarship (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada) to complete her Masters of Arts degree in Leadership and Training (Royal Roads University, Victoria, BC). Some accolades include: the Athena award, the Innovative Educator of the Year award, and is delegate of the Governor General's Canadian Leadership Conference 2022.



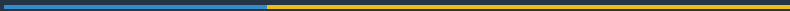
# New Research Associate Advances Community-Based Research



At the core of Elaine's approach is collaboration that results in collective impact, especially in community-based projects (i.e., local implementation with broader scopes in mind). She strives to build lasting partnerships and effective working relationships among diverse organizations, persons and empowered communities, with much of this experience being from youth engagement and, more recently, Indigenous-led projects related to freshwater quality. In her experience, collective benefits such as sustainable development are best achieved by meaningfully working together.

Elaine earned her PhD in Social and Ecological Sustainability (Integrated Water Management) in the School of Environment, Resources and Sustainability at the University of Waterloo. As of 2014, she is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP) through the Project Management Institute. Her experience includes several years of entrepreneurship, founding and operating three small businesses in North York and Waterloo. She has also contributed to the growth and success of several other businesses and non-profit organizations.

# Research





## Community-based monitoring pilot for Garden River and St. Marys River Area of Concern

Led by NORDIK Research Associate Dr. Elaine Ho-Tassone, the project aims to bring together Indigenous and western ways of knowing to generate actionable community-based data and information - which is owned and controlled by the Garden River First Nation community, per the OCAP principles - to influence local and regional water management and decisions in the St. Mary's River Area of Concern. A focus on supporting and fostering the skill development of Algoma University's undergraduate students, as well as members of the Garden River First Nation will take place through identifying and participating in the management of locally important water related issues. Freshwater Explorer test kits from Water Rangers will be used to recruit, train, and build on the community's first water quality 'task force,' which will continue to monitor water quality at various locations on reserve after the project's completion. Project partners including Garden River First Nation, Gordon Foundation, Swim

Drink Fish, Waterlution and Water Rangers are contributing to the project, which currently entails developing training materials to build capacity of the community's monitoring crew. Additionally, Garden River is in the process of setting up an advisory committee consisting of elders and knowledge keepers within the community (to be finalized by the end of July, 2021). This advisory committee will support the community's environmental committee and may be maintained after the project's completion - as a water-focused group to complement the environmental committee - to review other projects in the community moving forward. An undergraduate student from Algoma University has been hired as a summer RA (with other student interns planned for fall and winter), and two students from Garden River First Nation were hired as Community Coordinators with the support of Eco Canada funding - one student who will be on for the summer only, and one student who will continue until at least January 2022.

Mapping Northern  
Creative Spaces

# Executive Summary and Project Highlights

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Dr. Jude Ortiz, Diana Moser and Sean Meades

May 30, 2021



## Mapping Northern Creative Spaces

Key arts organizations and sector representatives from Kenora and Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls, Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie and Wawa partnered with Diane Moser of ArtsBuild Ontario (ABO) and Dr. Jude Ortiz, of NORDIK Institute (NORDIK) to conduct the Mapping Northern Creative Spaces project. The study undertook to map the four communities' existing creative spaces, assess if spaces are meeting current and future needs, and identify the potential demand and feasibility for additional creative spaces within the community. The resulting reports are informational, providing a statistical base for future projects, programs, and advocacy and serve to encourage cross-sector discussion and dialogue to support further development.

The in-person community consultations pivoted to online surveys due to the impact of COVID-19. Each community's data was presented to them, followed by the partners gathering for an online forum to share their reports and steps moving forward. The study identified a common need for more creative space and the existence of underutilized artistic capacity, and itemized the type of space needed (e.g. retail, discipline-specific, exhibition, performance, etc.) in each locale. The final reports include a recommendation to hire a limited-term person to advance the work, which is contextualized with municipal cultural plans or community planning documents.

# The Story of our Stories: Community Engaged Arts in the North

Thinking Rock Community Arts, with support from Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Trillium Foundation, invited NORDIK Institute to participate in the steering committee for its project profiling the impacts and experiences of community-engaged artists across Northern Ontario beginning in March 2019. NORDIK and its Manager of Operations and Communications, Dr. Lisa Meschino, were contracted to assist with the research process under the direction of Thinking Rock staff, Robin Sutherland and Miranda Bouchard.

*The Story of our Stories* drew on interviews, focus groups, a survey and participatory arts-based methods to examine the challenges and opportunities of 30 community-engaged artists living in rural, remote and Indigenous communities throughout the North of Ontario. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic also required a significant shift in the approach to working with participants, as interactions moved to online spaces that were not originally configured for collective arts practice, but were adapted through the ingenuity of the artists and research team.

The research highlights the important roles played by these artists in Northern communities, including building diverse, authentic relationships (across culture, age, skills, communities); anchoring personal growth; creating opportunities for professional development and employment; engaging in social and political activism; facilitating care of place and deeper community engagement; stimulating dialogue and story-sharing on difficult topics or issues; and paying witness to healing.

Among the challenges profiled by the artists included themes of precarity; limited public understanding of or advocacy for the arts; accessing funding; systemic barriers of racism and colonialism; daily administrative chores; maintaining quality of participant engagement and experience; engaging sensitive topics; the balance of self-actualization in community-engaged arts; assessing value and impact; and other limitations of support and employment opportunities. Yet the impact of community-engaged arts in places across the region is palpable, and requires further support to maximize the reach of such significant change-making capacity.

Among a number of comprehensive recommendations to support community-engaged arts, the report calls for the strengthening of cultural infrastructure; greater tax breaks for working artists; creating more community spaces for artists to live and work; concerted efforts to attract artists to the region; and addressing infrastructure gaps, such as limited high speed internet access, which limit opportunities in rural and remote areas. Retaining and supporting artists already living in the region also required greater regional arts administration and human resources infrastructure, such as training, regional networks, and shared health benefits plans, among others. Ultimately, many voices came back to an underlying need that would precede systematic movement on the others, namely the creation of a “central organizing body whose role it is to represent and support community engaged artists across the North.”



# Participatory Action Research of Freshwater Culture and Entrepreneurship



This research and development initiative is led by Minna Koskela-Wild and Dr. Jody Rebek (Water Wise) and exists to promote the protection of freshwater through a combination of engagement, research and activities (sharing science through stories). An inaugural event took place on **World Water Day** and included student presentations, with Tom Johnston, Research Scientist with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Mike Burrell, Zoologist with the Natural Heritage Information Centre and Trish Westman, Director of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Science and Research Branch. In the evening, Water Wise partnered with the Lake Superior State University's Center for Freshwater Research and Education (CFRE). A virtual panel titled *Invading our Border: Aquatic Invasive Species in the St Marys River* featured presentations by NORDIK Institute Research Associate, Dr. Elaine Ho-Tassone, Director of the Center for Freshwater Research and Education, Dr. Ashley Moerke, and the Invasive Species Center's Rebecca Schroeder. Samara Alani and Alexandra Graves have helped to support both the Cultural Freshwater research and water events, supported by the CreateAction internship program.

## CULTURAL FRESHWATER RESEARCH

The freshwater study investigates the protection, management, and restoration of freshwater, specifically the upper Great Lakes. This research is a catalyst to engage youth in storytelling through arts-integrated methods to deepen relations and connections to the freshwater and share appreciation for indigenous knowledge. The research investigates freshwater challenges, opportunities, and restoration priorities, along with social, economic, and cultural skills in the region via online surveys, interviews, focus groups, document analysis, and workshop artifacts, using convenience sampling.

## BLUE ECONOMY ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH

The Blue Economy topic is scarcely investigated in the Algoma and Great Lakes Region. A proactive effort to make the freshwater lakes cleaner and more sustainable while enabling future economic growth is needed more than ever. NORDIK researcher, Dr. Jody-Lynn Rebek and Dr. Ahmed Aziz are working together to investigate opportunities and barriers of a sustainable Blue Economy, while identifying innovative practices that recognize indigenous wisdom in using and managing freshwater in the upper Great Lakes. Online survey and focus groups and participatory collective actions will frame the data collected. Thomas Barber is the Research Assistant for the Blue Economy Research - a fitting project to launch him into a Masters in Economics in the summer. Barber will graduate Algoma University in summer 2021 with a BA (Honours) in Economics.



## Sustainable Agricultural Entrepreneurship

The sustainable agriculture research project led by Dr. Jody Rebek will evaluate our local vegetable landscape and local makers to help identify and promote sustainable agriculture production in the region, and more regional food sovereignty. We aim to identify gaps and opportunities to improve healthy food availability that is produced locally, and also in reducing food waste. The Participatory Action Research will be displayed in a short film documentary format, following a series of surveys, interviews and focus groups. This research will also help populate a mapping database created by Dr. Epp (Sustainable Agriculture, University of Guelph).

## Mindful Leader Development of Undergraduate Students



Dr. Jody Rebek has received Research Ethics Board approval from many post-secondary institutions across Canada for a mindfulness-based research study called “Awaken U: Mixed Method Research of Mindfulness in Undergraduate Development.” Working in collaboration with Dr. Nirosha Murugan and Dr. Nick Rouleau, this study engages students in an eight-week session that consists of weekly mindfulness activities, arts integration, and

leadership development. Initial participants had the opportunity to design the contents and timing of the weekly program “Awaken U” by voting on their preferences and sharing opinions in an online survey. This study investigates both asynchronous and synchronous learning engagement, and evaluates psychological, leadership development and mental health impacts. We are curious to see if participants’ emotional regulation, self-esteem, self-care and authentic leadership are impacted by the mindful leader development activities. We anticipate many youth will renew hope, establish personal coping strategies and strengthen their wellbeing. This project has been gifted with two research assistants who have shared their talents and made this study meaningful - Cameron Mihell and Hayley Casey. For more information, email [awakenu2021@gmail.com](mailto:awakenu2021@gmail.com).

## Northern Ontario Tourism Development and Recovery Strategy

Dr. Nustrate Aziz, Dr. Sean Meades and Dr. Tamanna Rimi began conducting research on market trends and development within the tourism sector in Northern Ontario. This was done through a combination of surveys and focus groups. Tourism Sault Ste. Marie, Algoma Country, Destination Northern Ontario, le Société Économique de l'Ontario, and Indigenous Tourism Ontario expressed their support and intent with the research, informing the development of research implements and the dissemination of any surveys or fundings to their members and partners. Through the submission of a request for a Canada Summer Jobs student, Graham Slater later joined the project as a research assistant.

The survey of visitors to the region collected 334 responses while 85 tourism related enterprises participated in the research. Preliminary results demonstrate that operators have been hard-hit by the pandemic with more than half of respondents experiencing a drop in revenues of at least 50%, and that there is a notable desire for more training and investment programs. Among visitors, many expressed the need for greater transportation options, namely by rail and air, as well as high speed internet access. Final results will be available in late 2021.

## Restorative Justice: Anti-Racism Youth Diversion Initiative

Dr. Vivian Jimenez-Estrada, Zachary Low, The Indigenous Women's Anti-Violence Task Force and the Indigenous led Baawaating Justice Committee with support of Dr. Sean Meades are in the beginning stages of a research project which will investigate young Indigenous peoples experiences with the criminal justice system. The research will contribute to the development of a community-based justice model in and throughout the Baawaating area. The justice strategy will coordinate culturally appropriate diversion opportunities to reduce the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth interacting with the criminal justice system. This initiative aims to increase the capacity of all service providers in the justice system to contribute to more equitable outcomes for Indigenous communities. The Baawaating Justice Committee meets monthly and will oversee the development of the community-based justice strategy.



## PromoScience Application - Indigenous Youth Environmental Monitoring Initiative (IYEMI)

Co-leads Sue Chiblow, Vanier Scholar and York U PhD candidate and Haley MacLeod, PhD candidate (Lakehead), with support from NORDIK Research Associate Dr. Gayle Broad, are co-leads on an application to NSERC's PromoScience fund. The 3-year project (if funded) will deliver a one-week summer experience camp to 60 Indigenous youth in Grades 7-10, to encourage greater interest and participation in post-secondary science programs. The water-themed project, with a focus on Indigenous science, is overseen by an Advisory Committee drawn from both the Northwest and Northeast portions of the region (the latter including Marnie Yourchuk of Mamaweswen Tribal Council, Mary Wabano-McKay of Algoma University and Carolyn Hepburn of Sault College. NORDIK Research Associate Dr. Elaine Ho-Tassone will also be providing in-kind support regarding field mentorship, and travel and other support has been offered by Mamaweswen - the North Shore Tribal Council. If successful, the project will run between 2022 and 2024.

## Reaching Home Strategy and the IFC in Sault Ste. Marie

Dr. Sean Meades worked with the Indigenous Friendship Centre (IFC) to do an environmental scan and information gathering related to the IFC'S prospective involvement in the federal government's Reaching Home strategy to tackle homelessness. The scan included a review of the information currently collected by the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System, its relevance to the IFC, an assessment of the challenges related to OCAP Principles, and options for how the IFC can move forward in relation to the federal strategy and local partners.

# Development

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## Bring Food Home Initiative

The Bring Food Home Initiative seeks to promote local food policy that supports food security and food sovereignty. NORDIK's engagement with the initiative is being led by faculty affiliate Dr. Laura Wyper. Representatives from Algoma Public Health and the City's Social Equity Coordinator have joined the working group and there is continuous dialogue with the United Way on strategies to promote local food policy reform.



## CAPT Continues Drive for Community-Owned Rail with MCFN

Over the past year the Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains (CAPT) has focused its passenger rail advocacy work on support for the proposed Mask-wa Oo-ta-ban (Cree for Bear Train) under the leadership of Missanabie Cree First Nation (MCFN). The Bear Train would restore passenger train service between Sault Ste. Marie and Hearst. There has been no passenger service on that line since the federal government cut the operational funding in 2015 which leaves most tourism businesses, First Nations, property owners and communities along the rail corridor with no ground transportation. There is no public road access into 400 km of the 470 km of the rail corridor between the Sault and Hearst.

During 2021 the owner of the line--CN--has been in the process of selling it. Watco will

be the new owner but the final sale has not been finalized. Missanabie Cree First Nation, led by Chief Jason Gauthier, has signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Watco. Their proposed partnership plans to work toward the start-up of the Bear Train. CAPT chair, Dorothy Macnaughton, and CAPT board member, Dr. Linda Savory Gordon, are working hard on the board of the MCFN-led Mask-Wa Transportation Association Inc.(MTA Inc), the not-for-profit organization that will lead operations of the Bear Train. MTA Inc successfully obtained \$50,000 funding to hire Jeronamo Solutions to develop a marketing plan to add to the Bear Train's business plan. The MTA Inc board is now in the process of updating the business case for the Bear Train to use in applying to private and public funders for operational funding.

# The Story of WOSEN: Reshaping the Social Enterprise Ecosystem

The Women of Ontario Social Enterprise Network (WOSEN) initiative aims to reimagine the social enterprise ecosystem — who it serves and how it functions — with a focus on addressing systemic barriers that hinder or exclude women-identified and gender non-binary social entrepreneurs from reaching their potential. It also aims to support underserved and underrepresented communities, including Indigenous women, women in rural or remote regions, racialized women, newcomer women, LGBTQ2+, and women with disabilities.

Dr. Jude Ortiz has led the design and integration of a Developmental Evaluation approach and has recently completed a review of the project mid-way through the three and half-year initiative (2019-2023), assessing the collaborative's progress in meeting its goals including practitioner learnings and impact on participants, as well highlighting its innovative approaches and successes.

A significant contribution has been the creation of the WOSEN Design Principles. Two knowledge products are in development to support facilitators and entrepreneurial stakeholders in adopting into their practice. The seven principles are: inclusive and accessible; responsive; anti-oppressive; systems informed; ecosystem approach; human centered and decolonized.

The **Investment Readiness Supports** program is piloting an ambitious initiative, unlocking capital by matching funders to women founders who are seeking investment within the year. The **Social Enterprise Ecosystem Development** is a bold program that has engaged those who support the field, including leaders, to study the principles of an inclusive economy and a just recovery, increasing understanding of how and why the current business support system fails women-led entrepreneurs. Participants

also explored their own identity, power and privilege and how those factors may impact the communities they support. **Start** and **Grow** accelerators and **Women-Centered Innovation Learning** round out the core program offerings.

The project engaged more than 700 participants from 120 different communities; 97% were from underrepresented groups; 248 were early stage entrepreneurs and 121 were resilient/growth founders. The project unlocked approximately \$1 million in investment for participants.

Participants indicated that they left the programs more energized, confident, seeing challenges as opportunities and have less fear of risk. They felt more curious about exploring options, and had increased motivation, initiative and the ability to think creatively. They also expanded their networks, noting they would reach out to other participants or the facilitators when needed.

*“Every session was relevant - I learned something new in each session - I had the opportunity to discuss and ask questions all the time and this made the experience engaging and helped me retain information better”* (Accelerator program participant).

Overall, the project has centered foundational community development approaches – meeting people (participants and practitioners) where they are at and responding to emerging circumstances, this program and project design and development has followed the transformational cycle of Observe, Reflect, Plan and Act underpinned by a developmental evaluation lens. One practitioner aptly described it as *“Programs shift - they gather, assimilate, respond, and repeat.”*

# Colombian Truth Commission in Canada

Dr. Sheila Gruner has received funding from Global Affairs Canada to support the Colombian Truth Commission in Canada. The project will contribute to the documentation of the Truth Commission process in Canada and bring various nodes (BC, Ontario, and Quebec) together in dialogue to share learnings from the process. Dr. Sheila Gruner has become the coordinator for the research team for the Ontario node of the commission which contains 9 active researchers and 5 other support personnel. Although the commission is based in Colombia, Canada and Ontario specifically are among the most significant recipients of people who have been displaced by Colombia's civil conflict. The Ontario node takes a specific focus on the experiences of Afro-Descendants and Indigenous peoples, as well as the impacts of gender and experiences of underrepresented peoples in conflict. The Truth Commission process in Canada had endeavoured to give a voice to the experiences of Colombians living in exile in Canada who were displaced by the five-decade-long armed conflict. Dr. Gruner met with various partners in Colombia and Canada in preparation for the project. The project has been supported by an NOHFC intern, Researcher Andrea Diaz, who has been providing logistical and research support for these projects. The three stages of the project included gathering testimonies, the second stage focuses on acts of recognition for what victims suffered during the conflict and the third stage focuses on the analysis of the findings. Dr. Sheila Gruner with the assistance of Andrea Diaz, continued to work on this initiative and moderated two events relating to the project. Hosted by The Ethnic Peoples and Peace - Global Network, the two events were titled "*Ethnic People and Peace in Columbia: International Implications*" and "*Racism, War, Migration, and Peace-Building: Perspectives and Experiences of Black Communities in Colombia*".

As well, another online panel took place titled "*Ethnic Communities, Territories and Peace in Colombia in the Era of COVID-19*." The 5th National Assembly of the Ethnic Commission for Peace and Defense of Territorial Rights took place and had a selection of guest speakers including Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Arturo Escobar, Regina Plaza and Noam Chomsky.

## First Nation Income Assistance Reform Symposium

The Income Assistance Reform Symposium was facilitated by NORDIK and brought together dozens of stakeholders in First Nation Income Assistance (IA) programs across Canada to consider next-steps following the previous year's review of on-reserve IA programs. Drs. Gayle Broad and Sean Meades led the facilitation team, which included 3 students and 2 past NORDIK employees, including Chelsea Parayko, Chelsea Brunelle, Janie Pépin, Jody Jones, and Krista Bissiallon. CESD Certificate student, Cassandra Spade, was also recruited as a note-taker. Income Assistance deliverers ultimately proposed a set of 39 recommendations for significant improvements to the IA system in First Nation communities, including increased provisions, supports for community and administrator capacity building, supports and controls around case management, integrating traditional knowledge and culture into the IA program, how to promote greater community self-determination, and measures for moving toward community-based wraparound and holistic services. NORDIK promoted the findings with ONWAA in a recorded presentation for the Assembly of First Nations Working Group on Income Assistance.

# NORDIK Submission to the Regional Assessment on the Ring of Fire

In January, 2021, Dr. Sean Meades and then-CESD Certificate Student, Cassandra Spade, with support from Mining Watch Canada, crafted a submission to the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada regarding the Regional Assessment in the Ring of Fire. The submission highlighted ecological, cultural and linguistic, and socio-economic considerations that must be taken in relation to the communities that are most directly impacted by prospective development, highlighting significant concerns around environmental impact and contributions to climate change, impacts on traditional economic practices, and the social challenges posed by “boom-bust” cycle industries. It also argued for a wider regional scope, as extraction of the resources would have further impacts in those communities where they would be processed.



## Buy Local Arts

In response to the negative impacts that the pandemic has had on artists and cultural producers, CESD Placement Student, Joseph Fredin, who completed his 150-hour placement with NORDIK, launched social media accounts to promote local artists and their work. You can follow @buy\_local\_art\_ssm on Instagram or on Facebook by searching the page “Buy Local Art Sault Ste. Marie & Algoma.”

## Clusterfolk

Algoma University music major, Jackson Reed, was hired by NORDIK to work with the Northern Lights Collaborative on initiatives to engage and mobilize youth, working with Andrea Pinheiro and 180 Projects. Clusterfest, an online music festival, was created and successfully organized and launched. The festival was a collaboration with the previously stated partners as well as Catalyst X, Youth Odena, Unsalted Audio, Bad Taste Cinema and Care Records.



# Ideas, Analysis & Dialogue

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# LEADING INTO THE FUTURE:



## INSPIRING AND ACTIVATING COMMUNITY SOCIAL INNOVATION

### Leading into the Future: Inspiring and Activating Community Social Innovation

Social innovation is a world-wide response to community crises within a world crisis of climate change, deteriorating democracy and economic crisis that intertwines with all the others. The adoption of social enterprise as a viable business model shifts the community's development environment to principle-based innovation, creating space for women and marginalized people to participate within an inclusive economy based on local strengths.

The *Leading* event, a series of three independent discovery workshops was part of Social Enterprise and Entrepreneurship (SEE) programming through the Women of Ontario Social Enterprise Network (WOSEN), a provincial collaborative that focuses on unleashing the entrepreneurial energy and capacity of women and further supporting the ecosystem in moving forward more sustainable, place-based development models. The sessions were designed to reveal opportunities for social innovation, people who are interested in engaging in this work and ways to support their initiatives, with a particular focus on women. It aimed to inspire social innovation, activate local talent and increase resilience. Successful Northern Ontario social enterprises businesses highlighted in the virtual sessions March 2- 4, 2021, included sole proprietorship and corporations, such as

nonprofits and cooperatives, in the sectors of agriculture, cultural retention and vitalization, transportation and waste reduction. Each entrepreneur identified the pressure point, the community issue, the reason for establishing the enterprise; the underlying principles that guide the initiative; and its impact, its social, cultural, environmental and economic contributions to healthy resilient people and places. Place and its strengths or assets play a foundational role by holding space for people to create an original identity through relationships with others and the land.

La Maison Verte, in Hearst, wanted to ensure women, particularly single mothers, were employed; Nickel Refillery aims to create a behavioural shift to encourage zero waste in the Sudbury area; Épicerie Coop Grocery, was formed to ensure the Moonstone area had a quality grocery store; United Manitoulin Island Transit focuses on how young people can be connected to emerging employment opportunities if they do not have access to a private vehicle; AlgomaTrad, on St. Josephs' Island is creating community, inspiration and empowerment through multicultural traditional arts; and, Roots to Harvest is supporting youth employment and development in Thunder Bay.

Shape your passion  
into a business idea!  
Create an Action Plan  
for moving forward.



Key messages from the social entrepreneurs included: It's a long game with funders; value people and pay them; create value statements that communicate why the SE exists and its impact; and, take risks—you need to find people to get behind the initiative without knowing the outcome.

**BUSINESS PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

## **Women's Social Enterprise Development**

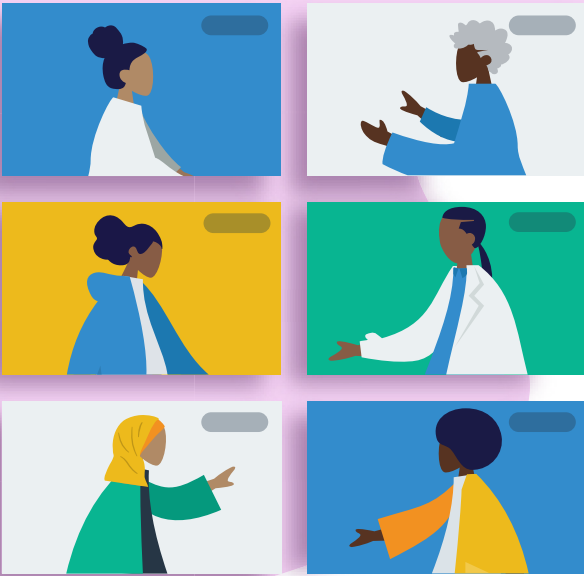
**Create a business plan to move your business forward!**



Two *Start* accelerators were also offered this past year - Ideation to Action Plan and Business Development Plan. They guided women in transforming ideas into viable operations, ensuring they had an action plan to carry their businesses planning forward upon course completion. A storytelling approach, how to create value beyond the financial, supply chains, leading through uncertainty, operations, financial management, tailored 1:1 coaching with women social entrepreneurs from Northern Ontario, guest speakers operating successful enterprises within the north, breakout topics, peer mentoring, asset mapping and networking contributed to making these programs unique and responsive to participants' needs. The next intake for the Start accelerator program is Sept. 2021.

## The Packsack Project

The Packsack Project podcast, a joint initiative with Rural-Agri Innovation Network, was developed from an internship opportunity through FedNor. Jessie Wright, the FedNor intern is working on the podcast which will be profiling how northern communities have built on local strengths and networks to overcome major challenges, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sean Meades, David Thompson, and Gayle Broad will interview members of Northern Indigenous and rural communities, exploring ways we can create greater resilience for our people through real life stories and experiences. We will focus on agriculture, immigration, infrastructure, education and other important topics to uncover regional and cultural factors that are required by Northern communities to achieve their goals.



## Organizing to Eradicate Gendered & Colonial Violence

The Coordination of Indigenous Women in Mexico (CONAMI) hosted a high level dialogue which Dr. Jimenez Estrada and Algoma University alumna Betty Angecone participated in. The panel titled “*Experiences in Organizing to Eradicate Gendered & Colonial Violence against Indigenous women in Canada, the United States and Mexico*” provided a space in which to share the specific experiences of organizations who work for the prevention and/or eradication of violence against Indigenous women in those three countries. Based on the work currently taking place with the Indigenous Women’s Anti-Violence Task Force (IWAVTF), the panelists discussed the challenges and possibilities of working across the Americas on gendered and colonial violence through networks like the Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas (Northern Region).

Northern Ontario Research, Development, Ideas and Knowledge



# Research, Dialogue, Analysis and Reflection

Thank you to our partners and funders:



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