

Social Enterprise Research FINAL Report

The Great Northern Peninsula Community Place
“Spiraling Upwards”
Mobilizing Community Capital



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Executive Summary

Research is about asking questions and finding answers. Community-based research (CBR) is about communities asking their own questions and finding their own answers and unique solutions. Social enterprise research involves using this lens to find social enterprise solutions to the “wicked” questions that face rural (and urban) communities as they strive to be resilient in the face of local and global challenges.

Some of the questions that we have explored under this research grant include the following:

- What are the best practice models to support the development of the GNP Community Place?
- How can we truly build projects from the ground up, building on lessons learned from the past, in order to ensure a sustainable future?
- What assets do communities bring to the table – environmental, financial, human resources, infrastructure, cultural, historical, economic, etc., and how can these be used to the best advantage?
- Who are the partners and how can we best engage them?
- What are the benefits to the community and how can we meaningfully measure them?
- What baseline data can be used to measure the social impacts that are achieved, as well as the social return on investment, that results from the creation of the GNP Community Place as a place to offer primary health care services?
- How does this project align with current provincial and federal policies?
- How can food security initiatives strengthen and support the GNP Community Place, both through a contribution to improving health outcomes as well as providing a means for revenue generation?
- How does the GNP Community Place embody the principles of the PLACE Model of Social Enterprise development?
- And finally, how does this project contribute to a strong, sustainable post-Covid recovery?

We used a mixed-methods approach to gather evidence and generate answers. The academic researchers associated with the GNP Research Collective were a valuable resource and conducted research into best practice models and frameworks that support the approach that we are taking. This project is truly patient driven, patient centered and community-based; patients and community members have been, and continue to be involved in the design and development of the model at every step of the way. Due to travel restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 we looked locally for answers first; in September 2021 we traveled across the country and conducted a series of informal key informant interviews for feedback on the concepts and new insights into how the model not only reflects what is happening elsewhere, but can inform project development in other communities. One silver lining in the Covid cloud was the increased use of technology to connect researchers all over the world who were seeking solutions to the challenges facing our communities. We used the opportunities provided by the lockdowns to build connections with many partners and organizations that we otherwise may not have connected with. We also reviewed a wide variety of articles and reference materials related to health, community development, social enterprise, and post-Covid recovery.

The conclusions that we came to are the following:

- The Great Northern Peninsula Community Place is a work in progress that is evolving at a critical time in the history of our province;
- It is time to change the narrative of decline that has discouraged investment in our rural communities for so long;
- To date, the community of Port au Choix has invested more financial and human resources in this project than federal and provincial development agencies combined;
- The GNP Community Place can serve as a catalyst, mobilizing community capital to achieve a “Spiraling Upwards” effect;
- Key operational and development principles identified through literature searches and key informant interviews include the importance of flexibility and adaptability to identify and address local needs; the importance of autonomous teams with the ability to make decisions within policies and frameworks; the importance of measuring impacts; the value and importance of networks and connections in achieving goals; the importance of combined approaches and solutions, especially in terms of financing;
- The GNP Community Place model has the potential to provide solutions to many of the challenges facing our health care system and our provincial economy; it aligns with policy approaches of the NL Health Accord, the PT/OT Services Review, as well as the Provincial Economic Recovery Team Report, and the Social Enterprise Action Plan;
- It offers a unique opportunity to conduct research and gather data around the development and impact of a new social enterprise in rural Newfoundland and to study an innovative model of rural health care;
- It is strengthened by the involvement of the GNP Research Collective, an interdisciplinary, community-academic partnership, and by the involvement of many other partners and supporters;
- Food security initiatives are key to the sustainability of our communities and to improving the health of our populations;
- Timing is everything; this period of post-pandemic recovery offers a golden opportunity to do things differently – to enable communities to become more resilient and self-sustaining by giving them access to investments and resources to develop their own unique solutions to the challenges that they face.

This report is intended to be a living document, a framework to guide the development of this project into the future; it will evolve as the project evolves. It will document the model, the partnerships that have been formed, the role of food security, the history of the project to date including the investments by various sectors, and recommendations for next steps.

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the development of this report – patient advisors, community partners, health practitioners, academic researchers and all of our key informants.

We would also like to thank the provincial department of Industry, Energy and Technology, and their staff for their support and flexibility throughout this process.