

Editors' Introduction

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Lessons from Research features presentations by the four conference keynote speakers who bring their different training and experience to bear in addressing Aboriginal CED for the 21st century. In their different styles and from diverse perspectives, the keynote speakers encourage us to think beyond the dominant and often comfortable and comforting models of CED that we have inherited. They challenge us to take on new language, new models, and new theories and to learn from places and people that we may not always consider, so that Aboriginal values might again take centre stage in Aboriginal CED. Two of the keynote speakers — David Newhouse, professor of Native and Administrative Studies, Trent University, and Dr. Wanda Wuttunee, professor of Native Studies and director of Aboriginal Business programs, I.H. Asper School of Business, University of Manitoba, both editors of the *Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* — are well-known in CANDO circles for their innovative work in Aboriginal CED. The other two, both at the University of Saskatchewan — Dr. James (Sakej) Youngblood Henderson, Research Director, Native Law Centre of Canada, and a leading expert on treaty federalism, and Dr. Marie Battiste, professor of Educational Foundations and leading authority on the preservation of Aboriginal knowledge and decolonizing initiatives — bring refreshing perspectives from the areas of law and education, reminding us that Aboriginal CED cannot be considered in isolation from other areas of intellectual and socio-cultural activity.

In his piece, David Newhouse challenges conventional notions of development that have been promoted by governments and

academics but that have consistently failed Aboriginal communities and denied or displaced Aboriginal ways of knowing and doing. Instead of replicating the old discourses, problems, and solutions of the past, he urges people to imagine capitalism with a conscience — “compassionate capitalism”, as he calls it. In challenging the dominant story of progress, “the Borg of development”, Aboriginal languages, values, and knowledge must be foundational, Newhouse argues. Aboriginal peoples must be at the centre of development theories with traditional knowledge motivating *conscious* pursuits and not the unconscious, unconsidered practices of the past. Consistent with his call for the sort of critical debate so central to democracy, we include here a sample of the discussion period following Professor Newhouse’s presentation and an afterword renewing the call for Aboriginal ideas and values to be brought to the table to critically define CED futures.

For his part, Dr. James (Sakej) Youngblood Henderson argues for “treaty economy” as the basis of “enriched livelihoods” and a reinvented Canada. Treaties, he maintains, are “tools of economic transformation” and offer models of development that do not perpetuate the “dead capital” or the “fool’s gold” of transfer payments. Instead, “treaty economy” can foster “skills at co-operation”, creative uses of Aboriginal insights, and institutions that do what the mainstream economy cannot. Dr. Henderson finds inspiration and support for his arguments for treaty promises as the basis of “an enriched livelihood” and secure and sustainable development in the work of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) and of economist Hernand de Soto, President of the Institute for Liberty and Democracy in Lima, Peru. Building too on his own powerful work on treaty federalism, Dr. Henderson urges us to “rethink Canada and take on the world, rediscovering and unleashing the economic potential in the treaty economy to create sustainable development and sustainable communities.”

If education is a major instrument of community economic development, universities as much as communities need educating about Aboriginal identities, rights, treaties, cultures, and aspirations. Dr. Marie Battiste reminds us that we all face the challenge and responsibility of understanding “colonial cognitive frameworks” in which we have all been “marinated” in ways that have confined thinking, limited imaginations, and obscured Aboriginal accomplishments and powers. Only by unravelling the colonial experience, reframing discussions and rebuilding alliances, can we develop “a shared and sustainable future” for us all. In this work, she too argues for the rich resources of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, and the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), a report that finds in education a key agent for displacing colonial myths and realizing postcolonial possibilities. For Dr. Battiste, other major inspiration comes from Third World and Indigenous postcolonial writers whose “aspirational practice” can help us discard old practices and policies, put at the centre of things Aboriginal cultures, languages, and values, and thus reshape “a desirable reality”. Especially compelling in this regard is the work of the Maori of New Zealand whose resistance, conscientization, and theory-making give us models for action and a new “high validity language for the development agenda in Aboriginal communities in Canada”.

Dr. Wanda Wuttunee stresses Aboriginal CED as economics with values added: a matter of quality of life, reciprocity, and relationships. She writes about the costs of entering mainstream economy and institutions as well as what Aboriginal people can bring to the business table. She argues for Aboriginal organizations and voices as well as language that speaks to people's experience and knowledge. She challenges those trapped in notions of colonial victimhood to become economic warriors, carrying "the burden of making a home in peace." Inspired by the practice of First Nations Development Institute (FNDI) in Virginia, she urges people to "think about the children" when making decisions, concluding that kinship, family, spirituality, and ethics need to be brought in a concrete way into the development process.