

B.C.- Alberta Social Economy Research Alliance (BALTA)

BALTA Project Proposal – Golden Mussel Project

A. Title of project:

Leveraging Social Ownership of Proprietary Trademarks related to the Golden Mussel as a Base for Expansion of Social Enterprise in Coastal B.C. Aboriginal Communities

B. Brief description of project and project objectives, outputs and proposed outcomes:

A brief context is necessary to facilitate understanding of the project. The golden mussel is a specialty product that has been developed over the last 10 years by Blue Frontiers Inc. The product is currently produced at a level of 30-40 tons/year and is highly sought after in the market at premium prices. Blue Frontier has also developed the technologies for turn key grow out operations. Based on industry growth patterns in PEI and New Zealand, an industry the size of 10,000 tonnes in 10 to 15 years is achievable.

The transfer of trademarks to the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia is a key transaction. This is a priority for the president and owner of Blue Frontiers Inc. and is the means of putting proprietary rights into social ownership. How this ownership is leveraged will condition the way the industry develops. Clearly, social enterprise and in particular co-operative ownership could play a central role and the NBBC is committed to moving in this direction.

The original project outlined in the SSHRC proposal anticipated this project extending over the life of BALTA. It was viewed as a unique opportunity to accompany the development of the industry, the role of social enterprise in its development and the evolution of the development system to support it. However, given Steering Committee feedback to keep initial project planning to two years, modifications have been made. Thus this project provides a level of specificity to facilitate the comfort of the steering committee while still accomplishing work consistent with the longer term tracking of the project's evolution.

Four year objectives

1. To contribute directly to the initial planning and implementation of the Golden Mussel initiative through two initial pilot operations and to track and report on the progress of all the elements of the project that either support or obstruct the application of various social enterprise models to securing aboriginal ownership in the expansion of the Golden Mussel industry in coastal B.C.
2. To undertake research and conduct ongoing analysis of project research results relevant to the design and implementation of the overall development system required to expand the industry: (1) how trademarks and other proprietary rights are transferred to aboriginal ownership; (2) how ownership of these rights is exercised to condition the promotion and development of social enterprise models as central to industry development, and (3) how findings inform the design of infrastructure and associated requirements that must be taken into consideration to move from the two pilot projects to a coast-wide First Nation owned and controlled golden mussel industry owned and operated by aboriginal people and communities using social enterprise models.

Two year objectives

1. To determine options for structuring collective ownership (NBBC) of the proprietary rights in order to optimize the social and economic position of coastal aboriginal people within the expansion of this industry
2. Within the continuum of social enterprise models that exist, to determine the relative advantages and disadvantages of each in relation to their application to various businesses within the industry, for example, the production operations, the hatchery/nursery, marketing, product transport, processing.

3. Given the turnkey features the production technologies developed, to determine and elaborate the key supports needed to systematically package, transfer, train, and qualify aboriginal producers to become part of the industry.
4. To identify and elaborate the key components of an industry development system relevant to systematic expansion of aboriginal participation in the industry using appropriate aboriginal models.

Two year outputs

1. An operational framework to leverage social ownership of proprietary rights to ensure the promotion and establishment of appropriate social enterprise models relevant to the key functions integral to expanding the golden mussel industry.
2. A report that documents the evolution of discussions, decisions and progress (or lack thereof) related to establishing the infrastructure/development system necessary for successfully securing effective aboriginal ownership of the industry using social enterprise models.
3. One annual tele-learning seminar targeting all project participants, First Nations economic developers, CED practitioners, social economy organizations, government policy makers and program managers in the federal and provincial governments.
4. A research paper target for academic and practitioner publications

Two year outcomes

1. A significant knowledge base from which to better understand the application of various social enterprise models in rural and remote aboriginal settings.
2. A significant knowledge base from which to better understand the application of various social enterprise models in the shellfish aquaculture industry.
3. Significantly increased understanding of the challenges, tasks and factors that affect the evolution of development systems necessary for industry and social enterprise development.

C. Purpose and significance of the study, including congruence of the proposed research with the over-all strategic research objectives identified for the SERC and BALTA. Why should this project be approved, given BALTA's limited resources?

This project directly speaks to several of the key research interests of BALTA.

Re-inserting social goals into economic life: to better understand and *critically analyze* the impact of inserting such social processes of reciprocity, solidarity, and sustainability into economic life, in practice and in theory.

The issues related to transferring proprietary rights from private to social ownership and then leveraging it to condition the design and evolution of an entire industry is a unique opportunity to critically assessing the impacts of deliberately elevating social goals into every aspect of the industry development.

Second, the design of a social enterprise development strategy in this specific sector is directly relevant to exploring how reciprocity and co-operation/solidarity can be concretely and pragmatically advanced at the enterprise level and at the development system level.

Relationship between territorial and enterprise approaches: to better understand and *critically analyze* how territorial (CED) and social enterprise approaches can interact to enhance the overall potency of the social economy.

As the industry develops, the interplay between the NBBC industry development focus and the use of social enterprise models to structure ownership will inevitably come into play with aboriginal communities and tribal councils that have specific territorial interests as well as existing development capacity mandated to address economic developments within their territory. While this research project does not focus on this directly, it is anticipated that the tensions, opportunities and methods of managing these relationships will be very important, especially given the ownership of all proprietary rights by NBBC.

Understand the social economy as it currently exists: to better understand and *critically analyze* the social economy as it exists.

Again, this is not a priority focus within the research. However, it is anticipated that right from the initial selection of pilot sites, it will be necessary to assess current capacity of FN applicants. Since it is already known that there is broad interest across the coast, this could be a possible opportunity to collaborate with the NBBC in securing mapping data.

What supports or thwarts adaptation & scaling up: to understand and *critically analyze* key issues, opportunities, and constraints for adapting and scaling up what is working in the B.C. and Alberta contexts.

The dual focus on systematically expanding sector based social enterprise and the infrastructure development to support it forces exploration of the key issues, opportunities and constraints for scaling up social enterprise in coastal B.C. aboriginal communities, albeit not in terms of a currently successful model. However, as noted earlier, evaluation of the continuum of social enterprise models will be necessary in order to design options relevant to the populations being targeted and the industry sector being developed.

Aside from this convergence with research goals of BALTA, this project represents the only aboriginal project in the BALTA portfolio at the moment. Second, it is being advanced by a BALTA partner (NBBC) that joined the alliance with this project as one of two they wanted to see engaged. Third, there is potential for securing additional funding through this project. Fourth, there is presently no other projects in BALTA that will advance social economy alliance building with the aboriginal sector.

D. Lead researcher, organization name and contact information:

At this point Doug Gordon and Mike Lewis will co-lead this project. Interest in direct involvement of an academic researcher will also be explored, in particular, with SFU. NBBC has a letter of understanding with SFU COO and VP Academic, John Waterhouse, which provides an enabling vehicle for accessing resources of the university for projects of mutual interest and benefit.

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E. Names of other researchers and organizations involved:

The Native Brotherhood of B.C. project team will be available to the student as useful. This includes a strong linkage to the SFU business school through Mark Selman. Exploration of Mark Selman or possibly another SFU academic becoming linked to BALTA as a collaborator is being explored.

Kenn Renaud – President, Blue Frontier Adventures Inc. Ken is the owner of the proprietary rights. He views this initiative as central to structuring one part of his legacy. He is prepared to withdraw from his ownership position on a progressive and systematic basis.

We will be exploring with other BALTA collaborators their interest in consulting on this project – John Restakis (BCCA), Dianne Kelderman (Nova Scotia Co-operative Council), Mark Cabaj (Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement) and Jorge Sousa from the University of Alberta.

F. Will the project involve student researchers in a paid or unpaid capacity? If yes, will they need to be recruited or have they already been identified? Briefly describe the roles and responsibilities of students involved in the research project, the skills/experience they will acquire, and how this will complement their academic training.

The project will involve at least one core student researcher. Given the four year time frame and given the scope of the project, the preference would be a doctoral student, although, having framed the first phase into a two year project, a Master's student would be a reasonable choice, especially if they had an existing interest in pursuing a doctorate.

Student recruitment is necessary. Given the nature of the project the student will need to be resident in coastal B.C. because direct engagement with a wide range of interests is anticipated as well as field work.

The student will be undertaking a range of literature searches and secondary research projects that feed into addressing project objectives. It is anticipated that primary research will be featured at several junctures, not all of which have been defined. The monitoring and documentation of the process and evolution of the project itself, particularly putting in place over time the development system, is in and of itself an ongoing research task. However, it is anticipated that more focused research projects will be required, for example, conducting focus groups or key respondent interviews to determine aboriginal views on social enterprise options.

Over the course of this research project the student will interact through his/her supervisors with a wide range of professionals from a variety of disciplines. He/she will be required to undertake a range of research tasks and employ a variety of methodologies. Given the ongoing analytical services the broader team will want from the student with respect to integrating his/her findings, the opportunity for presentations and participation in a variety of meeting, large and small is anticipated, including conventions of the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia.

G. Plan of work and timetable:

Mike Lewis and Doug Gordon will co-lead this project. An additional senior collaborator will be sought from an academic institution. SFU will be targeted due to the existing Letter of Understanding between NBBC and SFU at the COO and VP Academic level.

Co-leads will work with the student to design his/her research plan for the first year and will advise on design of individual research projects associated with achieving the project outcomes. Review of draft products for analytical purposes will also be undertaken.

If this project becomes the basis for a masters or doctoral thesis, we assume that the student's supervisor and thesis committee will also be engaged.

The student researcher will be engaged for two years. It is anticipated that the research will include a variety of individual projects. Those set out below represent an initial list of research projects for the first year. However, it is not exhaustive. Additional research project and work plan definition will be developed in consultation with the student hired and other potential supervisors and advisors to the project.

1. A search of the literature of to determine the international experience of using social enterprise as an ownership format in the shellfish aquaculture industry
2. A search of the literature associated with the development of mussel industries in the Maritimes, New Zealand, Spain and Washington State to determine key supports and functions relevant to their expansion.
3. A search of the literature for best practices in franchising to determine key lessons and analysis of relevance to the golden mussel franchise package.
4. A search of the literature to determine the extent to which social enterprise has been subject to systematic replication in any sector and to determine lessons learned. Priority would be for sectors in a resource related enterprise – marine or agriculture based.
5. Each of these literature searches will be subject to a report. A separate report will analyze findings with respect to key design and developmental questions pertinent to the research objectives.

This secondary research will feed into the design of other research projects, for example, key respondent research focused on assessing players, present and potential, with respect to their possible roles, their strengths and weaknesses, and what resources they have to bring into the ongoing development process. Another example could be the use of focus groups engaging coastal aboriginal people in consideration of social enterprise options defined through the research process.

H. Describe plans for communicating research results *within* the academic community. Indicate audience and specific output(s) i.e., refereed journal articles or other appropriate channels.

Research will have to be done by staff and advice sought from BALTA academics to identify priority targets for journals. Neither of the co-leads are academics. However, there are several audiences/disciplines that will have a direct interest in the results; native economic developers (there is a Canadian Journal), business schools, geography, shellfish journals and institutes, public administration, etc.

I. Describe plans for communicating research results *outside* the academic community to practitioners, policy makers, and other people for whom the research results could be significant. Indicate audience and specific output(s).

The NBBC with the provincial government and potentially the federal government will conduct an aboriginal shellfish aquaculture forum, the first of which is anticipated for late June 2007. The program planning committee also anticipates there will be series of regional forums over the next two years. Specific reports on the development of this project will be incorporated in the programs

The NBBC annual conventions (average of 50-60 aboriginal communities represented plus government, private sector and aboriginal organizations attend) will profile progress on the Golden Mussel initiative every year.

Articles in the Vancouver Sun and regional papers will be promoted, specifically with the award winning columnist and feature writer Jim Hume.

BCCA, CCEDNet, and aquaculture newsletters, as well as *Making Waves* articles, will be targeted.

J. Describe your plans for monitoring and evaluating the impacts of your research project. Feel free to consult with BALTA's Project Coordinator or the Academic Coordinator on designing possible approaches. Note that monitoring and evaluation are extremely important both for ensuring the success of the project as well as satisfying the significant reporting requirements of SSHRC.

Monitoring and evaluation will address both evaluation of the research project and project results as well as evaluation of the student's performance, student learning and potential impact on the student and her/his future career. It is assumed that this will include a mix of written and other reporting, as suggested in BALTA's emerging approach to monitoring and evaluation. A specific plan and tools will be worked out with BALTA's evaluation coordinator.

K. What are the research tools you propose to use in your project?

NOTE: If your research involves human subjects, you MUST provide copies of your proposed research tools (as well as your research plan) prior to commencing any research. Please see the document "Project Development and Management Guidelines" for information about ethical research requirements.

Given the fact that specific research activities involving human subjects are still not defined it is premature to answer this question. Once definition occurs the appropriate approval processes with supervisors, ethical review, etc., will be undertaken.

L. Budget and Contributions

Category	Requested of BALTA	Other Contributions
Student salaries & benefits	Year one - \$12,760 Year two – \$15,000	Year 1 - 2,240 from CDI, subject to approval in June
Researcher Release Time	10 days per year will be taken out of Lewis release time for this project (average for 2 years)	\$20,000 In-Kind from NBBC
Research Support Costs	\$500 – phone & supplies per year	\$9,600 (\$400 per month for 2 years in-kind from SFU – to be confirmed)
Knowledge Dissemination	Some BALTA staff support may be required with dissemination activities, including the annual tele-seminar identified and defining of journal targets for scholarly papers.	
Travel	\$500 - year one \$1,000 - year two	\$2,000 - year one (CDI – to be confirmed)
TOTALS	\$30,260	\$33,840

Budget explanation

The NBBC was approached at the end of February with a request to put in a Co-op Development Initiative proposal on the Golden Mussel initiative. The request came 48 hours before the deadline. The NBBC, through Doug Gordon, approached Mike Lewis. The decision was made to try and take an integrated approach that would cross-leverage resources of CDI and BALTA and that the project, if successful, would be run through CCE. Administratively this was the simplest. Also the co-op person advising us suggested that having CCE/CCCR associated with the project, as well as NBBC and BALTA, would strengthen the project's chances with Ottawa decision makers.

The project submitted to CDI goes beyond what is contained in this BALTA proposal, and includes other work related to the Golden Mussel. Also important to note, the project funding from CDI is only from July to March 08.

The student salary is set at 12,000 per year for the two years. This assumes the maximum for a Master's. However, if the student is a doctoral student, it means that the number of hours available for the work will go down.

Travel is related to actual project related field work and meetings of project researchers.

The supplies are for phone and copying costs. Office space and other supports are being sought from Simon Fraser University under the LOU NNBC has with SFU.

The NBBC in kind contribution is for the time of Doug Gordon. This is what Doug would get if he was being paid on a consulting basis for his work as a senior policy advisor. Doug has agreed to do this work on behalf of the NBBC at no cost. Thus, the amount cited represents 24 days over two years.