



# **Faith-Based Organizations Engaged in the Social Economy in Western Canada**

**Final Report**

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## Faith-Based Organizations and the Social Economy

### Introduction

Community organizations in what is now called the social economy have been an important part of Canadian economic and community development for generations. Local communities from coast to coast to coast have organized grass-roots economic initiatives to provide needed jobs, goods and services when the dominant economic systems have proved to be inadequate. Every region of Canada has stories of the birth and growth of producer and consumer cooperatives, credit unions, grain pools, and other forms of “third sector” grass roots community economic development. While the historical influences for this movement can often be found outside of Canada’s boundaries in Europe or the United States, Canadians have very much made this movement their own.<sup>1</sup>

In many cases, religious faith organizations and faith-inspired individuals have been key players in the development of the social economy in Canada. Up until recently, these faith organizations were associated almost entirely with Christian churches and religious organizations. In recent years in Canada, there have been social economy initiatives connected to organizations and individuals from different world religions including Aboriginal spirituality.<sup>2</sup>

In these early Canadian social economy movements, the important contribution of faith organizations is well known. One famous example is the Antigonish Movement,

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<sup>1</sup> Burt Galway and Joe Hudson, eds., Community Economic Development: Perspectives on Research and Policy (Toronto: Thompson, 1994); William Ninacs with Michael Toye, “A Review of the Theory and Practice of Social Economy/Economie Sociale in Canada,” SRDC Working Paper Series 02-02, Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, August 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Jim Silver, ed., In Their Own Voices: Building Urban Aboriginal Communities. (Halifax: Fernwood, 2006).

which started in the 1920s in Nova Scotia. The founders of the Antigonish Movement, Moses Coady<sup>3</sup> and Jimmy Tompkins,<sup>4</sup> were Catholic priests working at St. Francis Xavier University. While the names of these two Catholic clergymen are often recognized, Catholic female and male lay leaders and Catholic nuns also served in leadership roles. Additionally, there were also clergy and laity from other Christian denominations serving in important roles in the movement. The coops and credit unions of the Antigonish Movement were community organizations, not religious ones. Yet, the religious inspiration and foundations were unmistakable.

In Quebec the network of “caisse populaire” credit unions and cooperatives, was strongly supported by the Quebec Catholic hierarchy. These enterprises were organized and supported through the provincial network of local Catholic parishes, with Catholic priests serving as chaplains and participating in the leadership of these social economy organizations.

The different world religions all share certain beliefs on the right relationship between the divine, humans and all creation, which in turn speak of ethics and community and economic development. The Christian churches have developed explicit formal teaching about economic justice, human rights and participation in community. The Vatican documents of Catholic Social Teaching and the statements of the World Council of Churches are two distinct international examples of this type of teaching.

Many of the Christian churches in Canada individually and collectively have spoken publicly about economic justice concerns repeatedly over many decades. This

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<sup>3</sup> Jim Lotz, *The Humble Giant: Moses Coady, Canada's Rural Revolutionary* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2003); Michael R. Welton, *Little Mosie from the Margaree: A Biography of Moses Michael Coady* (Toronto: Thompson, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Jim Lotz and Michael R. Welton., *Father Jimmy: Life and Times of Jimmy Tompkins* (Wreck Cove, Cape Breton Island: Breton, 1997).

can be seen in the leadership statements of the Canadian Catholic Conference of Bishops and in the public statements of the United Church of Canada. In the last forty years, several Canadian churches have developed a growing working consensus on economic justice concerns, and have built ecumenical organizations and coalitions to work together on these issues.<sup>5</sup> Frequently this ecumenical collaboration has affirmed and supported the social economy sector in Canada.

Canadian churches have provided an ethical critique of the dominant economic structures and ideologies in Canada. Gregory Baum suggests that this is the case in the statements of the Canadian Catholic bishops, who wrote:

Many people see clearly today that today's dominant ideologies, whether capitalism or Marxism, contradict Gospel values. . . . a search for new social values, goals and structures, is a mark of the times. . . . In these events, God calls you to break out of inadequate patterns of thinking and acting, to live new lives, to join all men (and women) in building a new society in which there is a real freedom based on love and justice.<sup>6</sup>

Baum, and other commentators, see this search for “new social values, goals and structures” moving in the direction of the social economy. They see the social economy approach better encompassing Catholic social teaching values such as solidarity, respect for dignity in human work, concern for the common good, and a preferential concern for the poor than other economic models.<sup>7</sup> Ted Reeve, documenting the Moderator's Consultation on Faith and the Economy within the United Church of Canada, comes to a similar conclusion:

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<sup>5</sup> Christopher Lind and Joe Mihevc, eds., Coalitions for Justice: The Story of Canada's Interchurch Coalitions (Ottawa: Novalis, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, “A Society To Be Transformed,” 1 December 1977 in E.F. Sheridan ed., Do Justice! The Social Teaching of the Canadian Bishops (1945-1986), Sherbrooke: Editions Paulines and Toronto: Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice, 1987, 332.

<sup>7</sup> Gregory Baum, “The Social Economy: An Alternative Model of Economic Development”. Journal of Catholic Social Thought Vol. 6, No. 1 (2009):253-262;

These folk are concretely seeking to interrelate their Christian values with their economic and social activities. Some are making personal choices about what they consume, asking about the origins and processing of the goods they purchase, and who benefits along the way. Others are working to share the wealth of God's earth, to enable all to live and work in fully abundant ways. Others are thinking about the financing of our activities. How do we raise the capital to launch such creative alternatives? And how can our money work in a variety of ways to create safe and sustainable work, be ecologically responsible, and so on.<sup>8</sup>

There is a literature developing on the engagement of churches in the social economy. One of the largest social economy organizations in the world is Mondragon in the Basque region of Spain. Mondragon was founded in the 1950s by a Catholic priest deeply rooted in the theory and practice of Catholic Social Teaching. Greg MacLeod, a Catholic priest from Cape Breton, makes a connection between Mondragon and his work with some of the recent community economic development initiatives in Cape Breton Island.<sup>9</sup> Writing in 1998, Murray MacAdam, an Anglican, provides a study on the engagement of Canadian churches and religious groups in community economic development, which includes several Canadian case studies.<sup>10</sup> Several Christian writers in the U.S, such as Jim Wallis,<sup>11</sup> Tony Campolo,<sup>12</sup> and John Perkins,<sup>13</sup> support the social economy approach as a model for Christian social ministry.

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<sup>8</sup> Ted Reeve, God and the Market: Steps toward a Moral Economy (Toronto: United Church, 2000.): 175-6.

<sup>9</sup> Greg MacLeod, From Mondragon to America: Experiments in Community Economic Development (Sydney: Univ. College of Cape Breton, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> Murray MacAdam, From Corporate Greed to Common Good: Canadian Churches and Community Economic Development (Ottawa: Novalis, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> Jim Wallis, Faith Works: How Faith-Base Organizations Are Changing Lives, Neighbourhoods and America (Berkeley: PageMill, 2001.:

<sup>12</sup> Tony Campolo, Revolutions and Renewal: How Churches Are Saving Our Cities (Louisville: Westminster, John Knox, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> John Perkins, With Justice for All: A Strategy for Community Development (Ventura: Regal, 2007).

There are “how to” guide books, coming out of the US context, for churches wanting to become involved with social economy initiatives.<sup>14</sup> There are also books for faith-based involvement in specific areas of the social economy, such as housing<sup>15</sup> and employment.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Research Project: “Faith-Based Organizations in the Social Economy”**

The goal of this project is to research and document the roles faith-based organizations (FBOs) are playing in Western Canada, especially in British Columbia and Alberta. As has been noted, most of the literature on FBOs has come from the US context. In Canada, the Quebec reality has been well studied. With the exception of the Antigonish movement in Atlantic Canada, relatively little has been written on the English-speaking Canadian context, especially the Western Canadian context. What is available is quickly getting out of date.<sup>17</sup>

The inspiration for this research project came from the experience of the lead researcher. In thirty years of CED practice, he noticed that many of the successful social economy initiatives in the Edmonton region have had significant FBO involvement. This involvement had happened in different ways, and was not widely recognized or appreciated. Two hoped-for outcomes of this project are that the faith communities would come to see social economy engagement as a more integral part of their social

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<sup>14</sup> Carl S. Dudley, Community Ministry: New Challenges, Proven Steps to Faith-Based Initiatives (Washington DC: Alban Institute, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> Jill Suzanne Shook, ed., Making Housing Happen: Faith-Based Affordable Housing Models (St. Louis: Chalice: 2006).

<sup>16</sup> Alice Shabecoff, Churches at Work in the Community: Strategies to Improve Local Job Opportunities (Monrovia: CA: World Vision, 1995)

<sup>17</sup> The one survey of faith-based involvement in community economic development by MacAdam, From Corporate Greed to Common Good is now eleven years old.

ministry, and that the wider social economy community could come to see the faith communities as valuable partners.

This research project is a BALTA initiative. BALTA is a regional research collaboration amongst universities and community based organizations in British Columbia and Alberta with an interest in the social economy.<sup>18</sup> BALTA is funded for a five year period through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). This FBO research project has also received research support from Athabasca University.

This project included an initial mapping and analysis of the different roles FBOs are playing in the social economy in Western Canada. Due to the constraints of time and resources, this could not be a comprehensive study. The FBO mapping survey for this project was done in conjunction with a more general BALTA mapping project being led by Mike Gismondi which seeks to map the whole spectrum of social economy players in British Columbia and Alberta. Our FBO research team used the same survey questionnaire as the BALTA social economy survey (minus detailed questions about human resources and finances). The FBO research team added several FBO related questions to the BALTA survey for this project. As with the BALTA survey, the FBO research team promised confidentiality for individual agency's responses to the survey. For FBO organizations of special interest, we did a second round of interviews with selected organizations and received permission from the respondents to publish identifying information about their organizations.

A list of potential FBOs for this project was compiled by asking other BALTA researchers for suggestions, and contacting social justice representatives for dioceses,

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<sup>18</sup> Further information is available on the BALTA Website [www.socialeconomy.bcalberta.ca](http://www.socialeconomy.bcalberta.ca)



presbyteries and synods, and ecumenical and interfaith organizations in British Columbia and Alberta. We also made contact with organizations associated with the Jewish, Muslim, Ismaili and Hindu faith traditions. The research team also contacted a limited number of organizations outside of British Columbia and Alberta who used social economy models which appeared particularly innovative. In some cases, one FBO participating in the survey would recommend other groups for the study. We intentionally avoided FBO groups which were already well researched with information widely available, such as Habitat for Humanity.<sup>19</sup>

We compiled an initial list of approximately sixty FBOs. Thirty seven organizations completed the initial survey. One group declined to participate in the survey, and four failed to respond despite repeated attempts to establish contact. We ended up with a diverse representation of FBO groups from Western Canadian cities and towns, with a predictably heavier concentration in Edmonton and Calgary. The geographic breakdown is as follows: Edmonton (12), Calgary (8), Vancouver (5), Saskatoon (3), Winnipeg (2), Toronto (2), Nelson (1), Ponoka (1), Port Alberni (1), Victoria (1) and Viking (1).

## **Research Results**

### **FBO-Community Partnerships**

The first faith related question asked respondents to identify themselves as either a faith-based organization (FBO) or as a faith organization supporting or in partnership with a secular community organization. We asked this question because faith

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<sup>19</sup> Jonathan T.M. Reckford, Creating a Habitat for Humanity: No Hands but Yours (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007).

organizations often do not participate in the social economy in their own name as a FBO, but as partners or supporters of a secular social economy organization. This often comes as financial support, either through grants or loans. Examples of such partnerships in this study include No Room In The Inn in Edmonton as a funder, and the Canadian Alternate Investment Cooperative (CAIC) from Toronto as a mortgage provider to secular social economy groups. Other examples include a faith organization providing board members or specialized staff to a community partner. Another way of partnership is in-kind support, such as making available office and meeting facilities. Several of the groups surveyed benefited from these types of partnerships.

One example of an innovative and dynamic faith-community partnership is the Greater Edmonton Alliance in Edmonton. The Greater Edmonton Alliance (GEA) is part of an international organization – the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), which seeks to unite organizations and individuals in a broad-based community organization to maximize the collective capacity for the common good. GEA currently has thirty-eight institutional members, which include members from eight labour unions, ten Catholic groups including the Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton, parishes and religious orders, seven Protestant groups including four United church congregations, one Anglican parish, one Moravian congregation, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Alberta, one Muslim community organization, and eight not-for-profit organisations and small businesses.

Michael Walters, the lead organizer at GEA, pointed out that while GEA is a secular organization, it is influenced heavily by the presence of its labour and faith organizational members. At the time of GEA's founding in 2003, "[t]here was a desire for common

values... the people involved didn't think their values had power. [GEA] used industrial organizing as a basis [for the model they followed]", Walters explained. While the secular identity is strong, Christian values still permeate the organization. He adds: "It is influenced by Christian values – caring for the poor, stewardship of the planet...it influences what we take on, what we care about."

GEA is currently involved in four issues: Affordable Housing, Long-Term Care, Shake the Hand that Feeds You, an initiative that seeks to create direct relationships between local growers and buyers, and Leadership Training for new leadership in member organizations. GEA is also organizing a social enterprise, Sustainable Works Edmonton, which will develop a specialized workforce to implement energy-conserving retrofits for older buildings throughout Edmonton.

The involvement of faith-based organizations was not seen as a liability. Walters explained that this often works to GEA's advantage: "Politicians are a little nervous about churches... GEA makes politicians nervous...if it was just a bunch of unions, they could write us off. The churches' involvement throws them off." Walters suggests that in the future they would like to see the involvement of these groups broaden to become interfaith. Reaching out to Jewish groups, for instance, is one of GEA's goals. He did comment that while the faith identity was sometimes confusing to people coming from a non-religious background, "[t]he Church has the ability to leverage its power in beneficial ways [for social justice issues]." Faith groups have supported GEA through funding and in-kind support for meeting and office support. A faith-based foundation is supporting the Sustainable Works project, and GEA is partnered with Habitat for

Humanity in one of its housing initiatives. The faith partnerships with GEA are mutually enriching partnerships for both sides.

### **Faith-Based Organizations – What They Do in the Social Economy**

FBOs do different things in the social economy. In our research, we interviewed FBOs who worked in the social economy as funders, lenders, housing providers, job creation, service providers, “fair trade” retail sales, and employment training.

#### **Funders**

We identified FBOs who saw themselves primarily as funders of social economy groups. One group is the Catherine Donnelly Foundation, named after the foundress of the Sisters of Service. This foundation is a legacy project for the Sisters. Like many religious orders, the Sisters of Service found that their membership was declining, and the foundation can provide a means to continue their mission in the future when there may no longer be any Sisters of Service.

One creative FBO initiative is the No Room In The Inn project in Edmonton. It is a unique FBO because it is not incorporated, and does not have staff. It is an ecumenical collaboration of representatives from thirteen Christian denominations that has existed for eleven years. Organizationally, No Room In The Inn is a committee of the Edmonton and District Council of Churches. Inspired by the story of Mary and Joseph seeking shelter in Bethlehem, and finding “no room in the inn,” the Committee seeks to alleviate the housing crisis by providing funding for one project at a time. Every year the Committee appeals to churches across the city to donate their Christmas Eve offerings to that year’s housing project. Donations are also accepted from individuals, agencies and other faith

traditions. Each fall, proposed housing projects in the city are reviewed by the Committee. A specific housing project from one organization is selected for that year. The promotional materials for the campaign feature the organization and the project chosen that year. It provides an opportunity for the ecumenical church community to learn about a specific non-profit housing organization and the constituency that they serve.

The 2009 campaign was for Crossroads Downtown Housing Project, operated by E4C, an ecumenical sponsored community agency in Edmonton. Crossroads Downtown is a facility that provides transitional safe housing for homeless women who are leaving the sex trade or situations of sexual exploitation to start over. The No Room In the Inn group has deliberately chosen to retain a pronounced Christian identity in support of its mission, and raises between \$30,000 - \$50,000 each year.

### **Lenders and Social Investors**

We identified FBOs that have specialized in becoming social investment lenders and mortgagers. These organizations have developed sophisticated partnerships, built an organizational capacity to manage investment funds, monitor business plans, and administer a growing mortgage portfolio. One group is the Canadian Alternate Investment Cooperative (CAIC) based in Toronto. It has operated for over twenty five years, and raised several million dollars in loan capital. It is a national fund, and has supported several social economy projects in British Columbia and Alberta.<sup>20</sup> For example, CAIC has provided loans for groups as diverse as the Bread of Life Centre in Port Alberni, BC; Inn-Roads Housing Co-Op in Edmonton, AB; and PAAFE (Prostitution Awareness and Action Foundation of Edmonton).

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<sup>20</sup> Murray MacAdam, ed., From Corporate Greed to Common Good, 87-89.

The Jubilee Fund – Ethical Investing in Manitoba is an ecumenical Christian organization that was started in 2000 as a Winnipeg-based expression of the millennium celebration of debt relief. It was inspired by a Jewish practice described in Hebrew scripture that calls for the periodic redistribution of wealth and cancellation of debt. The Jubilee Fund was started in the hopes of restoring equity in society. Their investments are geared toward encouraging self-reliance, self-respect, dignity and an overall improved quality of life for communities. This is achieved through a number of different fundraising strategies, a creative approach to marketing, and a consistent financial approach to resource management.

The Jubilee Fund receives financial support through different means, including memberships, fund raising events, grants from the Manitoba government and the Winnipeg Foundation, donations, and interest from certificates. It is actively working to achieve its goal of living in a world in which equitable economic opportunities are available to all members of society. They provide flexible financing in the form of loan guarantees for people who may not qualify for traditional financing.

The Jubilee Fund offers loan guarantees to worthy individuals in three different categories: “community projects,” “business projects,” or “housing projects.” Community projects not only provide services to families in a particular area, they also create employment opportunities. The Jubilee Fund has been involved in eleven of these projects. Business projects involve loan guarantees for small business owners as well as for worker co-operatives. The Jubilee Fund has supported twelve of these projects. Housing projects require the Jubilee Fund to work with organizations to provide for low-

income individuals and/or families. The funding may be used for new construction, renovations, or in-fill. The Jubilee Fund has been involved in ten of these projects.

The Jubilee Fund has only been in existence for nine years. It has deftly cultivated a broad ecumenical base of support – congregational, religious orders, and ecumenical organizations all contribute financial, moral and spiritual support. Corporate sponsors and foundations have also contributed. The Fund is looking forward to expanding to include other faith traditions and becoming multi-faith.

### **Fair Trade Retail Sales**

Faith organizations have formed social economy organizations that sell goods and services. One approach is to meet an important community need for goods and services in a fair and affordable way. Serenity Funeral Services in Edmonton is one example of this approach. Another approach is supporting sales of fair trade products. One prominent example is fair trade coffee, which has been sold in church basements across Western Canada for decades.

One of the leaders of the fair trade movement is Ten Thousand Villages, a not-for-profit business organized through the Mennonite Central Committee. This organization traces its origins to the efforts of Edna Ruth Byler, a Mennonite Central Committee worker over sixty years ago. She devoted most of her life to championing the cause of developing long-term economic opportunities for Third World artisans by creating a market niche for their products in North America.

The name, “Ten Thousand Villages,” is derived from a quote from Mahatma Gandhi: “...India is not to be found in its few cities but in the 700,000 villages...we have hardly ever paused to inquire if these folks get sufficient to eat and clothe themselves

with.” Within each one of those villages a special culture exists, with different people and customs, which buyers have the opportunity to share through the villagers’ unique and beautiful products. The village logo used by the organization represents this idea and more – it seeks to embody a global reality in which all people are capable of earning a fair wage, are treated with dignity and respect, and are allowed to live a life of quality.

Diane Reddekopp, the Edmonton store manager, explained the mission that Ten Thousand Villages hopes to achieve through promoting fair trade: “Men and women around the world have a simple dream – to earn an honest living, to provide for their children and to be gainfully employed in a job that brings dignity and joy. Ten Thousand Villages partners with thousands of talented artisans in healthy business relationships,” she points out. The organization’s philosophy is based on fair trade, a business principle which advocates that trade should have a conscience. The artisans represented by Ten Thousand Villages earn a fair value for their work and are treated with respect and dignity. Artisans come from diverse locations, such as South Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean. These are often people who might otherwise be unemployed or underemployed, and in many situations, the work creates sustainable micro-economies in their villages. The Mennonite Central Committee follows a business model that does not proselytize in Third World countries in its social economy projects. There are Ten Thousand Villages stores in many major cities across Western Canada.

### **Housing**

This study identified several FBOs involved with housing, using a variety of organizational models. [The More Than A Roof](#) Mennonite Housing Society is a



Christian nonprofit organization operated by the Mennonite Central Committee of British Columbia. Founded in 1984, it has grown from an initial twenty-six unit complex for families to nine projects in five communities that house 1050 people, including families and singles, with twenty five per cent of the tenants considered “to be at serious risk.” In 2003, the organization incorporated separately from its parent organization, the Mennonite Central Committee (BC), and took on a new name.

More Than A Roof seeks to be more than a social housing provider – they also assume an advocacy role for their clients by facilitating their recovery and independence through helping them gain financial stability, and provide legal and vocational assistance. They do not proselytize - they try to offer hope.

More than a Roof was started by a FBO parent organization with long-standing experience in the social economy. Other groups start with an inspired, charismatic founder. The Champion’s Society in Alberta is a FBO that provides permanent supportive housing to homeless clients who are often struggling with mental illness, developmental disabilities and addictions.<sup>21</sup> Klaas Klooster and his wife Joanne started by purchasing a building in Ponoka as a revenue property. Klooster soon learned about the housing shortage in Alberta, particularly for those suffering with mental illness. Rooted in his Christian faith, he invited others to join him in order to incorporate the Champion’s Centre as a nonprofit society.

The society has grown to three locations, and is now developing a fourth project in Edmonton. Each Centre gives support to their clients through housing and support services which include health support, food, and the development of life-skills. The

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<sup>21</sup> Emily Rush, Jason Halbauer, Noah Hopchin, Room for Change: The Champion’s Centre’s Progressive Approach to Alberta’s Homelessness Crisis (Edmonton: The Champion’s Centre, 2006).

Centres have been able to attract support from local congregations from across the denominational spectrum in each community.

While the Champion's Centres have accepted government funds, the goal is to work towards financial self sufficiency. Each facility has an attached business, which provides the opportunity for job training. The businesses are also part of a mandate for each location to become self-sufficient. "The goal," Klooster states firmly, "is to eventually generate a surplus which will enable them to create more Centres and get away from government help."

### **Employment**

Several of the FBOs spoke of job training and job creation as part of their social economy work. The JustWork Economic Initiative by the Grandview Calvary Baptist Church identified employment as a key concern. Once this issue was identified, the congregation organized three very different types of social enterprises: JustWork Landscaping, JustWork Catering and JustWork Pottery.

The Kids in the Hall Bistro is an Edmonton social economy project sponsored by E4C, an ecumenical FBO. It is an innovative job training program for "at risk" youth associated with a bistro at Edmonton's City Hall. The Kids in the Hall training program includes both life skills training and on-the-job work training at the bistro.

### **Types of Faith-Based Actors: Relationship to Formal Faith Institutions**

The FBOs in this study had a variety of relationships to formal faith institutions.<sup>22</sup> Some had a direct connection with a worshipping congregation. Others had a primary

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<sup>22</sup> Edward L. Queen II, ed. Serving Those in Need: A Handbook for Managing Faith-Based Human Services Organizations (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass 200) 217-225.

affiliation with a non-congregational denominational social ministry organization such as the Mennonite Central Committee or the Catholic St. Vincent de Paul Society. Some of the FBOs identified Catholic religious orders as their primary partners. Several were associated with formal or informal ecumenical or interfaith coalitions. The last type is a coming together of committed individuals. These individuals may be grounded in a single faith tradition or may come together in an ecumenical or interfaith context.

### **Local Congregations**

Several of the FBOs in this study were born out of local congregations. In each case, members of a specific congregation gathered together to incorporate as a separate social economy FBO. One well-known example is the Mustard Seed in Calgary,<sup>23</sup> which started as an outreach ministry organized by members of First Baptist Church in downtown Calgary. Today, Mustard Seed has grown to become a large organization with a significant presence in Calgary, Edmonton and Sundre, and a budget of over twelve million dollars. While Mustard Seed has gained support from many Christian and non-faith organizations and the wider community, it has maintained its strong evangelical Christian (Baptist) identity.

There were examples in the study of local congregations that transformed their land and church building into a social economy FBO. Garneau United Church in Edmonton illustrates this model. Garneau was strategically located, close to the University of Alberta and a major hospital, and had been an active participant in the neighbourhood since the 1920s. Faced with an aging and waning congregational membership, the congregation needed to make decisions about its future. They decided

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<sup>23</sup> Gerald W. Hankins, Miracle on Centre Street: The Story of Calgary's Mustard Seed Street Ministry (Belleville: Essence Publishing, 2004).

to reinvent themselves by knocking down their church building, and constructing a high-rise assisted living facility with an accessible worship space on the first floor. The pastor, Rob Hankinson, and congregation members committed themselves to the task of project development and fundraising. Their dreams were successful and today the Ashbourne assisted living facility operates on the site. Garneau United Church continues to share the common worship space on the first floor. Residents of the Ashbourne come from a wide array of faith traditions and backgrounds. Hankinson now serves as an interfaith pastoral care chaplain for the residents.

The JustWork Economic Initiative was born out of the shared vision of the pastoral staff of Grandview Calvary, a small Baptist church on the east side of Vancouver. Grandview Calvary had a number of outreach programs, but there was a continuing need of employment for local residents. The congregation mobilized and launched three very different types of social enterprise: JustWork Landscaping, JustWork Catering and JustWork Pottery.

### **Non-Congregational Faith Organizations**

Some of the FBOs in this study were associated with faith organizations that were not connected with a local congregation. There were housing organizations affiliated with the Catholic St. Vincent de Paul Society in Calgary and Victoria. The St. Vincent de Paul Society is an international lay-led social outreach organization that works through local Catholic dioceses and parishes. There are several St. Vincent de Paul Society branches in communities in Western Canada.

The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is a community outreach organization that is rooted in the Mennonite faith community. There are strong MCC branches in

British Columbia and Alberta. In the previous section, we saw how MCC (BC) gave birth to the More Than A Roof housing society.

Many FBOs have a partnership with a Catholic religious order or group of religious orders cooperating together in a common project. The Canadian Alternative Investment Co-op (CAIC) which has provided loans for some of the FBOs in this study started as a collaboration of Catholic religious orders.

### **Ecumenical or Interfaith Coalitions**

We identified FBOs whose faith connection was not associated with a denominational organization, but to an ecumenical or interfaith coalition. One example already mentioned in this report is the ecumenical No Room In The Inn project in Edmonton, which started as a collaborative effort of the Edmonton and District Council of Churches, the Social Justice Commission of the Catholic Archdiocese, and the community-based Quality of Life Commission. The ecumenical KAIROS social justice coalition which has existed for many years in Calgary has established a housing committee which has partnered with MCC (Alberta) to work together on an Affordable Supportive Family Rental Project in Calgary.

### **Faithful Individuals**

We came across cases where a charismatic individual with vision and sense of mission was able to recruit others to work together to build a FBO and launch specific social economy projects. Earlier in this report, we saw the role of Klaas Klooster and his leadership in creating Champion's Centre which provides supportive housing for "at risk" homeless individuals in three Alberta communities.

Another example is Servants Anonymous in Calgary. This group has an interesting history. Twenty years ago, three people from different Christian faith backgrounds met weekly for Bible study. One day one of the women was on her way to their weekly meeting, encountered a prostitute on the street, and invited her into her home. Other prostitutes moved in. This led to the incorporation of the Servants Anonymous Society of Calgary. Residential buildings were obtained, and support services were put in place, including counseling and employment training. This individual leadership approach for FBOs has been repeated many times in communities across Western Canada.

### **Faith in Faith-Based Organizations**

Faith is present in many different ways in what are generally called faith-based organizations (FBOs). Religious faith can be expressed in different ways in the different parts of an organization. Also the expression of religious identity can change over time in the life of an organization.

The FBO survey asked respondents to indicate where the faith identity showed influence in their organization. Specifically they were asked about faith influence in 1) the history of the organization; 2) the inspiration/mission/value base of the organization; 3) financial support from faith sources; 4) faith expectations for board members; 5) faith expectations for staff; 6) faith expectations for the clientele 7) faith influence in the service delivery and program delivery. It was interesting to see that FBOs in this study answered these questions in quite different ways, which makes a difference in how we define an FBO.

Jewish Family Services in Edmonton illustrates this point. The Executive Director was hesitant to call it a FBO although Jewish values, beliefs and principles were said to be the guiding principles of the organization. Perhaps one reason for this hesitancy was that Jewish belief was not required for the staff, even for the position of the Executive Director. Mustard Seed in Calgary, takes a different position, expecting a clear Christian faith commitment from the staff. Some of the FBOs, at the level of service delivery, invite their clients to religious events such as bible studies or worship services, but none in this study made this a requirement for housing, food, employment training or other services.

### **Changes In Identity In FBOs Over Time**

In some of the FBOs, the faith identity has changed over the life of the organization. Some FBOs, founded with partners from within one denominational tradition, over time invite new partners from other denominational traditions and assumed a more Christian ecumenical faith identity. This has happened with the Canadian Alternate Investment Coop.

One trend observed pertaining to FBOs with a Christian ecumenical faith identity was that of expansion of their scope to include other faith traditions and become multi-faith instead of Christian ecumenical. The Jubilee Fund in Winnipeg is an example of this approach.

Some FBOs become more secular over time. Faith expectations related to board and staff were relaxed, and the faith relationship became primarily associated with the history and founding vision of the organization. One large Western Canadian FBO

founded in the ecumenical collaboration of several local congregations recently removed the word “church” from its name as part of an organizational “rebranding” process.

### **Faith Identity Helping and Hindering the Work of FBOs**

The survey asked respondents if the faith identity of their organizations helped or hindered their work in the social economy. The responses were varied. One ecumenical FBO involved in job training told a story of a potential corporate sponsor being scared off by the issue of faith identity. One recently formed Christian housing organization thought their explicit faith identity might be an obstacle to receiving certain government housing funds. However, most of the FBO respondents did not see this as a major problem in their social economy work. They were able to function as FBOs with public faith identities and access funds from governments and other sources. The heated and polarized debates that characterized the discussions about government funding of FBOs in the US during the George W. Bush administration<sup>24</sup> did not appear in any of the responses we received from Western Canadian FBOs in our study

Several of the FBOs saw their faith identity as a real organizational strength. It helped to provide a common vision and mission shared by all involved in the organization. Clear faith identity helped with staff and volunteer recruitment, and with fundraising efforts. Some highly successful FBOs saw their faith identity as a source of empowerment and motivation that was integral to their success and organizational growth. A clear sense of mission and vocational call from something/someone beyond themselves can lead to great commitment and persistence in this work. The combination

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<sup>24</sup> One helpful source for the US debate on FBOs and government funding is David Donaldson and Stanley Carlson-Thies, eds., A Revolution of Compassion: Faith-Based Groups as Full Partners in Fighting America's Social Problems (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).



of this sense of mission and practical organization building and financial skills has led to impressive results in some of the FBOs included in this study.

### **Directions for Further Research**

This project provides a limited, initial overview of the work of FBOs engaged in the social economy in Western Canada. A more comprehensive mapping is needed. One way to do this would be to narrow the geographic scope. There are some obvious biases in this study. Most of the FBOs researched in this study are urban. FBOs are playing an important and growing role in rural communities. There is an emphasis on Christian FBOs. A closer look at FBOs associated with the major world religions would be helpful. No aboriginal organizations were included in this study. Future research could study the role of native spirituality in aboriginal organizations engaged in the social economy.

This study has identified some of the issues related to FBOs involved in the social economy. In-depth case studies of some key FBOs could provide information about some of these issues, such as the government funding – faith identity issue.

### **Some Conclusions**

This study has shown that there are many FBOs engaging in the social economy in Western Canada in a wide variety of ways. Stereotypes of these FBOs should be avoided. FBOs are engaged in quite different areas of the social economy. The presence and influence of faith in FBOs takes many different forms. There is dynamism and change in the FBO sector.

It was mentioned earlier in this paper that there exists a rich legacy of social economy projects across Canada that were started by churches and religious orders: the Antigonish Movement, the caisse populaire, the co-op movement, and the development of credit unions. These movements continue to influence the social economy with new churches and players getting involved in different sectors. Our research substantiated this. All of the groups demonstrated a certain amount of flexibility in their work, and a willingness to work with others. While some groups made a conscious effort to retain their faith identity and mission, others chose to put their religious differences aside and partnered with ecumenical or interfaith groups and were able to focus and accomplish their goals because of a shared common vision. We found consistently that none of the groups proselytized in the direct delivery of their services. They were united in their desire to serve their communities and work for the common good.

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