



**CWEIA'S STRATEGY TO IMPULSE WOMEN'S
ENTREPRENEURSHIP 2017-2020**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1: CONTEXT OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP.....	3
1.1 Context of Aboriginal Women Entrepreneurship (AWE).....	3
1.2 The Economic System in Eeyou Ischtee.....	3
1.3 Challenges Facing Cree Women Entrepreneurs	5
1.4 Reasoning Behind CWEIA's Entrepreneurship Strategy	6
SECTION 2: WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP STRATEGY	8
Strategy Overview	8
Strategy 1: Promote and Support Individual Women Entrepreneurs.....	9
Strategy 2: Nurture the Birth of Women Collective Businesses	12
Strategy 3: Develop Social Economy Initiatives for Community Development	15
SECTION 3: IMPLEMENTATION.....	19
3.1 Communicate the Strategy in Eeyou Ischtee and Beyond	19
3.3 Execute the Strategy Through Funding Agreement and per Project	21



SECTION 1: CONTEXT OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

1.1 Context of Aboriginal Women Entrepreneurship (AWE)

Little is known about female entrepreneurs in Eeyou Ischtee. There is virtually no literature, documentation nor statistics on Cree women entrepreneurs. As in various domains, women are mostly under-represented when compared to men and entrepreneurship is no exception.

Worldwide, in the general population, some authors estimate that women own 25-30% of businesses. Similarly, among the First Nations in Canada, 32% of start-ups are propelled by women and 68% by men. In Quebec, the Foundation of Entrepreneurship Strategic Surveillance project has mentioned that 14% of businesses are owned by women in the general population whereas this proportion drop to 9% for First Nations.

Elsewhere, in the Atlantic region, a 2014 study about Aboriginal Women Entrepreneurship (AWE) from Francis-Xavier University found that among Aboriginal women:

- 33% of respondents owned a business;
- 26% who do not currently own are trying to start a business, 19% had tried in the past, 12% were past owners, 51% no involvement in business;
- Current business is concentrated in the crafts sector and 88% are microbusinesses, which parallels the general women population (non-native = 85%);
- 83% are sole owner, 74% operate on reserve, 86% operate from home;
- Women entrepreneurs have limited resources and little support or formal assistance, relying mostly on their personal savings and family support.

The above study, although not done directly in Eeyou Istchee, is coherent with the overall observations of the Cree reality, especially about small, home-based businesses. The next section describes the current system of support to entrepreneurs in Eeyou Istchee.

1.2 The Economic System in Eeyou Ischtee

The supporting economic development system in Eeyou Ischtee is divided into five levels.

- The Department of Commerce and Industry (DCI), which is part of the Cree Nation Government, is the administrative arm of the Grand Council of the Crees. The mission of the DCI is to support the economic growth and well-being of Eeyou Ischtee by ensuring all Eeyouch and Eenouch have the opportunity to benefit from economic growth while ensuring that Cree culture and values are preserved and enhanced. The goal of the DCI is to take a strategic role in the development and implementation of economic initiatives throughout Eeyou Ischtee by working with key partners to achieve their visions and ensure all other impacted partners and sectors are considered. The DCI acts mostly at the regional level and manages agreements with the governments of Quebec and Canada. One area where women are more present than men is in the social economy. The DCI is coordinating the Cree Social Economy Regional Table (CSERT), where CWEIA sits.



- At the local level, each community has an Economic Development Department. The economic arm of the community's administration, it can invest and manage community businesses through a corporation, usually a Development Corporation (DC) with a Board of Directors. Whenever possible, while giving contracts, corporations tend to favour entrepreneurs in their communities or from other Cree communities. However, it is not always the case; DCs have criteria for awarding contracts. Each community also has an Economic Development Officer (EDO) to help entrepreneurs (men and women) to start or grow a business. There is usually nothing specific to women or any particular awareness regarding the special needs of women entrepreneurs.
- All EDOs gather and form the majority of the Board of Directors of Eeyou Economic Group (EEG), a Cree Community Futures Development Corporation. EEG's mission is to deliver professional business services to Cree clients, thus helping to foster economic development throughout Eeyou Ischtee. EEG manages an Investment Fund to provide loans to entrepreneurs. EEG also has a youth program and a youth advisor. EEG's mission is mostly related to its funding agreement with Economic Development Canada. EEG can receive requests for funding from all entrepreneurs of all communities without gender distinction. Nevertheless, women represent a tremendously low percentage of requests.
- Another level of intervention in economic development is made out of regional entities established through various agreements: the Board of Compensation, the James Bay Eeyou Company, etc. Recently, the Cree Development Corporation (CDC) was established to become an umbrella for economic development, a major component of the Paix-des-Braves Agreement. This re-structuration is in progress; the CDC will take over the Cree regional enterprises (CREECO), which had been previously a subsidiary of the Board of compensation, its sole owner. CREECO controls most of the well-known big enterprises in the Cree world, in the sectors of transport, mining, lodging, construction, catering and janitorial, etc.
- Finally, Cree people, like any other Canadian citizen, are entitled to receive all services from the federal, provincial, and regional (Eeyou Istchee-James-Bay) support systems to entrepreneurs. However, for many reasons, ranging from geographical to cultural considerations, Cree entrepreneurs are not using said services and or unable to access them directly.

From this overview of the current economic development system, we can see that the support agents that deal directly with Cree entrepreneurs are EDOs in each community and, to some extent, EEGs agents who can provide loans to start businesses. With regards to Cree women entrepreneurs, we find that no program or service is adapted to their needs. In fact, Cree businesswomen access the current support system through their local EDO, just like businessmen do.



1.3 Challenges Facing Cree Women Entrepreneurs

From the literature as well as from our own data collection with Cree women entrepreneurs and EDOs, we can identify two levels of challenges faced by Cree women to start or to own a business.

Structural Challenges

Structural challenges refer to how public services supporting women's entrepreneurship are functioning in Eeyou Istchee. Below are four such challenges.

- **Focus on big versus small business.** Cree women usually hold the belief that opportunities exist, but are rather difficult to access for women, because the focus of Eeyou Istchee's leadership is at the macro level meaning, on the big businesses. This perception holds true at the community level as well as at the regional level. Resources of the Cree Nation are largely, and many too much, oriented towards big public initiatives. Although eventually one may posit that those big projects trickle down to benefit all Cree, the core idea of entrepreneurship is about innovative private initiatives rather than public projects.
- **Lack of resources such as space, information, administrative support and access to capital.** In most communities, this reality is hitting all entrepreneurs. For example, most businesses are home based in their owner's basement. EDOs are doing their best to support entrepreneurs, but they cannot solve these structural issues.
- **Silo effects whereby some sectors are already designed to be filled in by Cree entities in agreements, yet they sometimes compete with private initiatives.** For example, in the arts and crafts sector, the Cree Nation Arts and Crafts Association (CNACA) is an entity created in James-Bay Agreement and mandated to support artists and craftspeople as well as to commercialize and distribute products. However, commercialization is not yet set-up through CNACA.
- **Public services to entrepreneurship at the provincial and federal levels are out of reach for Cree women entrepreneurs.** Those services, although relevant, are too far away from the Cree women entrepreneurs' reality and homes for them to gather up their confidence and go knocking on the funders' doors. Furthermore, most are not culturally adapted to serve Cree entrepreneurs well.

Individual Challenges or Characteristics

Individual challenges refer to how Cree women perceive or don't perceive themselves as entrepreneurs. According to some studies, these perceptions by Cree women are mostly in line with women's views generally. In fact, studies about AWE generally concluded that women have more risk aversion than men. Here are a few individual challenges or characteristics.

- **Entrepreneurship is culturally a men's world.** Although it is relevant for women as well, Cree women say they have to work twice harder as men to get to similar results. Most of the home responsibilities are still culturally disproportionately held by women. So many businesses managed by women are part-time and as such, it is hard to get funding, because funding criteria tend to favour full-time businesses. Among women, a dominant value is sharing/collaboration and collective well-being. Competition is seen



as an opportunity of sharing information and sharing customer’s demand with a fellow entrepreneur; women tend to want their competitors to succeed too.

- **Lack of self-confidence** is another cognitive barrier that prevents women to get into a business. Centuries of colonization and racism created intergenerational trauma resulting widespread state dependency syndrome and, more importantly, lateral violence, whereas Aboriginal people tend to abuse their own people in the way they have been abused. These very strong barriers require mental and social healing. Entrepreneurship could be part of that healing process, because entrepreneurship is about being active, taking risks, developing self-confidence, facing and overcome hardships, etc.
- **Many unmet training needs such as coaching, mentoring and funding.** There is a lack of support for women. Our discussions with Cree women entrepreneurs show that these capacity-building activities must be offered by Cree women who act as role models. Hence, successful entrepreneurs can play that role and be examples of success. Other needs relate to finance and accounting, management, administrative work, networking, etc. Moreover, there is little knowledge of the business development process, so the vast majority learns by doing without much external resources to draw from. There is no opportunity to learn about key aspects of starting a business and no mean or tool to assess the viability of a project.

1.4 Reasoning Behind CWEIA’s Entrepreneurship Strategy

CWEIA has recently developed a five-year strategic plan, which highlights socio-economic development as part of the organization’s mission:

« To inspire and value Eeyou-Eenou Iskweu through healing, culture and socio-economic development ».

CWEIA clearly supports aboriginal women’s entrepreneurship, either individually or collectively. CWEIA supports women entrepreneurship in a spirit of solidarity and community. CWEIA wants to contribute to economic development and to empower women in their economic and social well-being. The second orientation of CWEIA’s strategic plan specifically states entrepreneurship support as a priority. Table 1 details that orientation; see particularly 2.4 in bold.

Table 1: Women’s Entrepreneurship in CWEIA’s Strategic Plan

Orientation 2: Nourish the Ground for Women’s Empowerment
2.1 Ensure there is a safe space in each community where women can access support, information, and resources
2.2 Provide guidance and support to local women’s associations in each community
2.3 Organize and implement conferences, retreats and workshops to foster a sense of empowerment in Cree women
2.4 Develop and support women’s individual and collective entrepreneurship



CWEIA believes economic empowerment to be at the core of its work and for the organization. Entrepreneurship is one significant area where women can be financially secure. Although they lack some knowledge, we know they can be successful! CWEIA can help them learn about management, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and leadership.

In its strategic plan, CWEIA wants to support and deliver services to support **women's individual and collective entrepreneurship**; we realize there is a lack of knowledge on this question and that it is challenging to support women entrepreneurs in our region given the distances, literacy levels and the lack of access to capital.

In the past, CWEIA hosted a few well-organized workshops on the **social economy** and we know our members and our elders think it is the way to go for our association. We intend to create a business arm for CWEIA that supports our mission and generates revenue for our activities. There is a longtime need for expression through arts and crafts. For many years, CWEIA has been looking to structure and implement a collective business in arts and crafts. There are also much more to do beyond arts and crafts, such as catering, home care services to elders, natural resources, environment, etc. CWEIA intends to grab the opportunity to learn in our traditional field of excellence in arts and crafts, so we can expand our work by pursuing other opportunities later.

However, we must be clever as there is one major difficulty: **human capital**. Being an entrepreneur is not for everyone, entrepreneurs usually possess leadership, vision, risk-taking, passion, ambition, resourcefulness, perseverance, motivation, are good sellers, etc. For the EDOs who help entrepreneurs, it is not easy to distinguish real entrepreneurs that need just a helpful hand to get going from those wannabe entrepreneurs who grab opportunities, such as available grants, privatization of public services, connections to public leaders, etc. Entrepreneurs usually expect the EDOs to do almost everything for them, from business plans to securing funding. They have an idea and request help from their community EDO for all aspects of their business development.

There were many attempts in the past undergone by proactive EDOs, who have put out many ideas that proved to work elsewhere: cooperatives, incubators, training, etc. However, most of these attempts did not really come to fruition and stayed at the level of ideas, not implemented in practice. In reality, any good ideas required real entrepreneurs with enough goodwill and perseverance to make their projects come true.

EDOs are limited in what they can do. They have had to deal with many government orientations throughout the decades. In various moments in time, a federal policy might have wanted restructuring and privatization whereas at another moment, another government wanted to better subsidize entrepreneurs. Because funding is mostly tagged to the federal and provincial governments, EDOs and Development Corporations tend to act in line with these directives. Consequently, there is no strong vision and continuity in support policies, which impedes economic development and entrepreneurship.

As such and knowing this reality, we must be very strategic in our effort to support Cree women entrepreneurs.



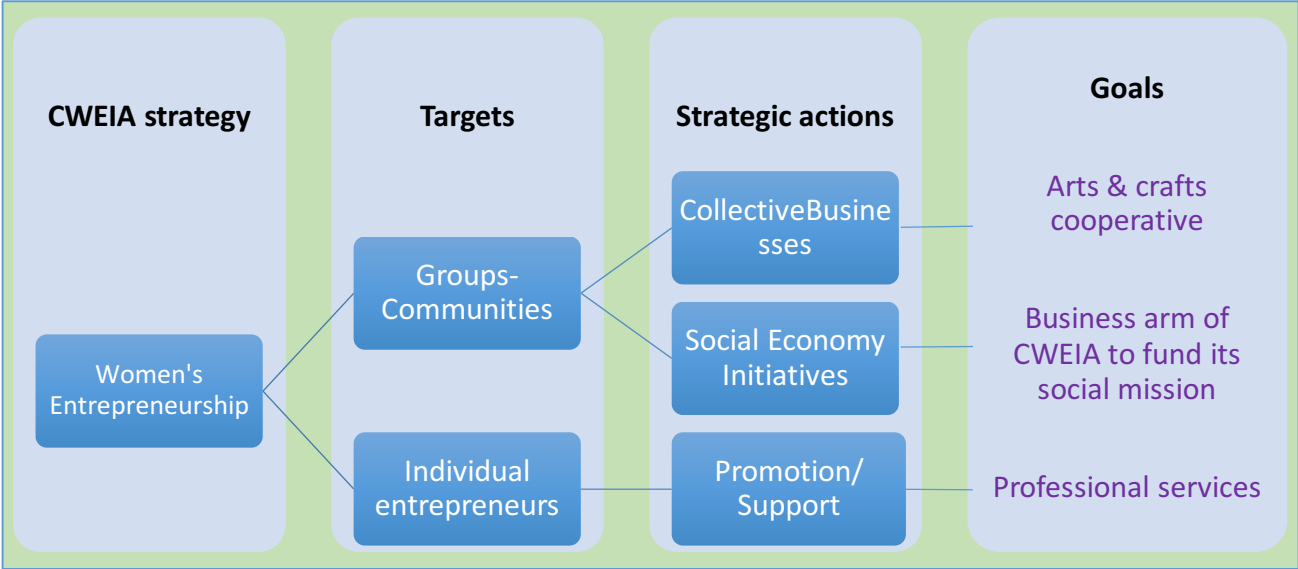
SECTION 2: WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP STRATEGY

Strategy Overview

The strategy to stimulate Cree women’s entrepreneurship in Eeyou Ischtee is based on available literature, our knowledge of the field and focus group discussions with women entrepreneurs and with members of our board of directors. Our intention is not to duplicate the current system of support, but to add value as well as act as a connector between potential women entrepreneurs and those who can help them. Hence, our strategy is based on the following assumptions:

- **Connecting and Partnering:** The current system supporting Cree entrepreneurs is not perfect, but it is helpful to Cree women. EDOs and EEG work for both men or women;
- **Strategically Realistic:** We must act within the limit of available resources, since entrepreneurship is only one of many actions we must undertake for women. We might have one professional intervene for the whole of Eeyou Istchee. So feasibility of the strategies is a key factor;
- **Specific:** CWEIA is a women’s organization. We know and are sensitive to the specificities of women’s entrepreneurship. Because we know women better than any organization, we will add value and better support women entrepreneurs. A focus on collective well-being, a sense of community and sharing success are among the characteristics of women’s entrepreneurship. Thus, supporting collective entrepreneurship will be important.
- **Continuity and Sustainability:** The pace of change will be slow, yet there is much to be done. Because building human and social capital with regards to entrepreneurship won’t happen overnight, we must envision our action in the long run, along with continuous efforts with regards to education, promotion, recognition and training.

Figure 1: CWEIA’s Strategy with Regards to Cree Women’s Entrepreneurship 2017-2020



Strategy 1. Promote and Support Individual Women Entrepreneurs

As outlined in section 1, we know there are significantly more challenges for women to start and grow their businesses. Since CWEIA is the main entity representing Cree women, we want to use our visibility and our resources to better support women by offering services which complete and complement the current system of support to entrepreneurs while being more effective in responding to the needs of women. Our first strategy will focus on the following priorities.

1.1. Recognizing the Successes of Cree Women Entrepreneurs

The main reason why this action is strategic is that women entrepreneurs are not fully recognized at their fair value. Thus, we must shed light on their successes. Cree women tend to act by following examples of role models. We want to reach the hearts and to inspire others by putting the spotlight on women who succeeded despite the hardship of life. CWEIA is already conducting annual galas to award women outstanding achievements in many areas: business, politics, education, health, public service, arts, volunteering, etc. We can expand specifically outside of women circle the recognition of successful Cree women entrepreneurs through other activities such as the EEG annual gala. By doing so with EEG, CWEIA sheds lights on Cree women, which can inspire other women to dive into an entrepreneurial venture. There are numerous other occasions to promote and recognize women entrepreneurs. CWEIA can replicate the recognition in each community through local women committees across Eeyou Ischtee. Since no one is a prophet in his or her own community, we at CWEIA can take advantage of our regional outreach to cross-promote women entrepreneurs from one community to others as well.

Prices and activities of recognition can be of various natures and scope; from ordinary to exceptional achievements. Imagination is the only limitation! Continuity and objectivity are however important factors to consider. The activities should be meaningful and inspire pride in all the recipients. CWEIA can be inspired by various recognition systems that already exist across Quebec or in Canada, such as:

- Price Égalité Thérèse-Casgrain (Secrétariat à la condition féminine)
- Price Femmes d'affaires du Québec (Réseau des Femmes d'affaires du Québec)
- Contest « Développez l'entrepreneure en vous » (Femmes en Affaires de la Capitale-Nationale)
- Contest Femmes de mérite (YWCA Québec)
- Desjardins Femme d'influence (Les Prix Desjardins Entrepreneurs)
- Mercure leadership : category Leadership Germaine-Gibara (Les Mercuriades)

CWEIA can even send out Cree nominees to these contests outside of Eeyou Ischtee. It will only raise more awareness on outstanding achievements of Cree women entrepreneurs. In return, nominees and winners would inspire other Cree women.

1.2 Creating a Database of Cree Women Entrepreneurs

As stated previously, there is almost no information or data about Cree women entrepreneurs. There is a gap in that area, which was as expressed as a need in our workshop with Cree women entrepreneurs. How this need can be filled and at what cost is not clear. We can work with CHRD, EDOs, and EEG to build such a database and statistics. We can work as well with our local committees to start a list in each community and build up the regional database. Funding will be needed to get accurate data and to continue the inventory work over the years. CWEIA cannot do this alone, since other



entities have more resources and it is closer to their mission. That is why CWEIA is supporting the project idea of establishing a Cree Research Institute in Eeyou Ischtee. Participating in research projects also build up knowledge about women entrepreneurship.

1.3 Offering Training, Coaching, Mentoring and microfinance to Cree Women Entrepreneurs

Since many women entrepreneurs lack skills in areas such as management, accounting, marketing and negotiation, there is obviously a need for training. How it can be done successfully is a challenge. There are already various legitimate organizations that could be acting in this field of training: Cree Human Resource Development (CHRD) and the Cree School Board (CSB). The Sabtuan Adult Education Services (SEAS) is under the jurisdiction of CSB and is offering various training for adult education. Sabtuan is offering various courses related to entrepreneurship, such as *Starting a business* and *Accounting*.

CWEIA's action in training women entrepreneurs would provide added value and be complementary to existing services and infrastructure. It could be enacted by sharing information with potentially interested women, gathering more information about women's training needs, engaging in discussions with SAES, CSB and CHRD so they could develop training courses suitable for Cree women entrepreneurs, encouraging women to take courses, etc. This action does not require a big funding investment but it will be very useful to encourage the development of women entrepreneurship.

In the area of coaching and mentoring, there is more to be done where CWEIA wants to play a lead role. The goal of coaching is to improve work performance, and thus it is addressed to women or businesses already in operation. A business coaching relationship has a narrow focus and is materialized through a time-bound period where services are delivered from the coach to the entrepreneur. The goals of mentoring are related to longer-term personal development and knowledge transfer. Mentors provide business advice as well as support and encouragement to help new entrepreneurs remain focused on what is important for the success of their business. It is a very practical approach, which is coherent with Cree culture, and could complete the training curriculum offered by Sabtuan.

Both coaching and mentoring can be very helpful for Cree women entrepreneurs. In 2008, the *International Coach Federation* conducted a worldwide study with 1200 clients from 64 countries about the satisfaction and positive impacts of business coaching. The results showed an impressive increase on the part of the client in the following areas:

- Self-esteem/self-confidence (80%)
- Communications skills (72%)
- Interpersonal relations (71%)
- Work performance (70%)
- Work-life balance (67%)
- Wellness (63%)
- Business management (61%)
- Time management (57%)
- Etc.

The recipient usually pays for coaching services; however, there are various programs run by CHRD and Emploi-Quebec that can partially fund such services. In the study mentioned above, two firms, Price Waterhouse Cooper and Association



Resources Centre, have established an average 787% return on investment of business coaching. The return on investment was 456% on a personal level and 1150% on a corporate level. The challenge in a remote region like as Eeyou Ischtee is to get a list of trustworthy coaches. Hence, CWEIA can screen and establish a program of mentoring/coaching to help women entrepreneurs.

The ideal expressed by Cree women is to have experienced Cree people (women or men) mentor Cree women. This would represent an innovation in Eeyou Ischtee. CWEIA can organize training for prospective mentors. CWEIA can work in collaboration with the Entrepreneurship Foundation to develop a mentoring program and network. We can work with CHRD, SEAS and CSB to do so. While dealing with mentoring, we must consider a big issue— geographic remoteness. A mentor might be in a different community than the entrepreneur. There is a program of Mentoring Women in Business offered by UN NGO based in the United Kingdom. The initiative founded by Cherie Blair, the wife of ex-Prime Minister Tony Blair, helps women across the globe by using technology to overcome distance (<http://www.cherieblairfoundation.org>). Since its inception 2008, the foundation has reached 130 000 women in 90 countries. We can learn from the best practices from that program.

Last but not least is the possibility to set up a microfinance Fund. This is a optional strategy if opportunity presents by itself. Microfinance and women have proven a very good track record of success with worlwide best practice such as the Grammen Bank, helping so many women to get out of poverty line. We'll evaluate the feasibility of such possibility within the next few years.

The table below summarizes our actions to support individual women entrepreneurs.

Table 2: Main Actions for Strategy 1: Promote and Support Individual Women Entrepreneurs

	Main Actions	Expected Outcomes	Core Partners	Timeline
1.1.	<p>Recognizing the Successes of Cree Women Entrepreneurs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elaborate or adapt messages about services and funding available for women entrepreneurs • Launch initiatives to promote women entrepreneurship with EDOs, EEG and CNG • Design recognition awards and criteria • Promote winners and nominees • Promotion campaign about women entrepreneurship in Eeyou Ischtee • Set-up CWEIA as a first contact for women entrepreneurs and connect them to EDOs and services 	Recognition and promotion activities	EEG, CHRD, CNG	2017
1.2.	<p>Creating a Database of Cree Women Entrepreneurs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design database format and fields • Seek funding and create the database 	Database initiated, Events for women entrepreneurs	Local committees, EDOs, CHRD	2018



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete data on existing entrepreneurs through EDOs and local committees • Create events to share and learn from women entrepreneurs (Association of Cree business women ?) • Expand the database 			
<p>1.3. Offering Training, Mentoring and Coaching to Cree Women Entrepreneurs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate work with the Entrepreneurship Foundation • Learn and adapt from experiences such as the Cherie Blair Foundation • Build a mentoring program • Enroll Cree and non-Cree mentors • Elaborate a training and coaching program for Cree mentors and entrepreneurs • Promote the program • Implement the mentoring program • Evaluate the outcomes and identify areas for improvement • Evaluate the feasibility to set up a microfinance fund. 	<p>Mentoring program operating, Lists of coaches and mentors</p>	<p>Entrepreneurship Foundation</p>	<p>2019</p>

Strategy 2 : Nurture the Birth of Women Collective Businesses

Cree women tend to prefer a sense of community over individuality and competition. A long time need of Cree women is to get support to market their arts and crafts. It is not only about money. It is about cultural continuity and re-appropriation, solidarity and knowledge transfer. This sector represents a natural area of knowledge and skills for many women. So within the next three years, CWEIA wants to support craftswomen in setting up a collective arts and crafts business. We want to help through the implementation an arts and crafts cooperative. By doing so, we'll experiment and learn how we can play our role in supporting women entrepreneurship in a collective fashion. Our action will focus on the following steps.

2.1. Mobilizing Craftswomen and Choosing an Arts and Crafts Collective Structure as part of a Cultural Re-appropriation

Although there has been a need for a long time, there are a lot of education and mobilization to be done to reach most of the craftswomen. In addition, a collective business can take various forms. We have to think of a structure as something that supports and serves the purpose. Deciding the appropriate structure avoids the initiative becoming in service of the structure (see next page Table 3).

In 2016-2017, we want to gather interested women to choose the collective business structure. For instance, a cooperative seems a plausible structure and women have voiced their interest to establish a coop in recent years. A coop is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise. The cooperative's values and principles are very coherent with the Cree culture.



Table 3: Advantages and Drawbacks of Various Structures

Structure	Advantages	Drawbacks
Non-profit	Transforming existing clients into active players	Dependent on government grants which can influence decisions based on funders' criteria
Cooperative	Sustainable, Low dependency to grants, Democratic decision process, Close to Cree way of decision-making	Large initial effort in creating and maintaining a structure
Private	Possibility to raise private investment, Fast and agile decision-making	Volatile like the market, Could be sold to private interests in the future, less support from Cree entities and communities
No formal structure	Close to Aboriginal way of managing, Fast and agile decision-making, Can deal easily with ambiguity	Challenge to communicate with existing structures, Challenge to get outside recognition, Dispersed efforts (similar to today's situation for craftspeople)

In fact, a cooperative is based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. Traditionally, members of cooperatives believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others. In the upcoming year, we will clarify the right structure with the entrepreneurial craftswomen. There are various forms of cooperatives to choose from: workers', producers', consumers' or solidarity cooperative. Furthermore, a cooperative is not a solution for everything. It is a collectively owned private enterprise. There is space for other initiatives. Instead of a cooperative, an arts and crafts business could become a project inside of CWEIA. Once it's done, CWEIA will support the cooperative's members in the incorporation process and in establishing their governance by-laws. We think this is the most useful role CWEIA can play. Education, sharing information and training will also be a big part of our work so that more craftswomen are aware of this project.

2.2. Drafting business Plan for Collective Arts and Crafts Business and Seek Funding

Once the structure is chosen, the next big step is to help the group of artisans developing a full understanding of their business through a business planning process. This is where craftswomen will think strategically about the type of business they want, services they want to implement and receive from the business, the marketing strategy (the 4 Ps: products, price, promotion, place), management and human resources, risk management and, of course, the financial business planning (revenues, expenses and funding strategy).

Usually, elaborating a business plan is seen as a complex task for many Cree entrepreneurs, especially women who are not used to such vocabulary. That is why CWEIA's support in this area would be very useful. We have the staff or the knowledge to help in this task at the satisfaction of funding agencies. Moreover, a business plan is not written for the needs of others, it is a



themselves. CWEIA will thus craft the business plan in a participatory way with the craftswomen, so they really own their business plan. There is a fund at Plan Nord that can support activities such as business planning, etc. Other funds exist for cooperatives at the provincial or federal levels.

2.3. Implementing and Monitoring the Business

The right implementation of the business plan is the main risk of any business. Once the business plan and the funding are in place, common weakness lay in management and accounting. It is essential for the business to hire a good manager from the onset. CWEIA will be there to coach or at least to provide a staff person to fill that role for a limited period of time. We estimate this support for the period when the business doesn't generate any revenue. Management, accounting and training practices will be implemented.

2.4. Building Research Partnerships on Aboriginal Women Entrepreneurship

Aboriginal women entrepreneurship is a rare topic where there is little knowledge across Canada. CWEIA can contribute in this area with a partnership strategy with research centres. While public funding opportunities for studies exist, there is a lack of collaboration between the researchers and Aboriginal people. Although it is not our core mission to conduct research, applied studies can be useful for our actions and we do have the field knowledge and the connections that are useful for researchers. We have started implementing this strategy already.

In fact, we have signed a partnership with Niska and CIRADD to conduct a research based on our need. Niska is a research and consultation firm in organizational and sustainable development, and CIRADD is a collegial technical knowledge transfer centre in the area of sustainable development social innovation. Through this partnership, we succeeded in receiving significant funding grants for a research to be conducted in Eeyou Ischtee with regards to how CWEIA can better support women entrepreneurship through a pilot project in arts and crafts. This research is directly linked to our project to support Cree craftswomen to establish their collective business. For the next 18 months, we will receive the help from experts during our project and we identify lessons learned for our future actions. We'll also receive funding to pay a staff person on this project. Moreover, the public grants cover most of the travel fees for the researchers, which represent an expense we won't have to pay. This is a win-win partnership.

In the future, we'll be looking for such win-win partnerships in other subjects that suit our needs. CWEIA will make sure to get access to intellectual rights of the studies in which we collaborate. We will adhere to the First Nations Ownership, Control, Access and Property (OCAP) principles in regard to studies and data collected in our Cree communities. These principles were issued in 1998 by the First Nations Governance Information Centre. OCAP asserts that First Nations have control over data collection processes in their communities and that they own and control how this information can be used (see this website for more details: <http://fnigc.ca/ocap.html>). It is important for CWEIA to adhere to OCAP principles since we'll be dealing with knowledge that belongs to our collective Cree culture. Traditional knowledge of our elders is important to protect and we don't want to give it away when we collaborate in research projects.



Table 4: Main Actions for Strategy 2: Nurture the Birth of Women Collective Businesses

Main Actions	Expected Outcomes	Core Partners	Timeline
<p>2.1. Mobilizing Craftswomen and Choosing an Arts and Crafts Collective Structure as part of a Cultural Re-appropriation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share information on the project • Mobilizing a group of founding members • Visit the Inuit coop structure • Gather and choose the right structure • Incorporate and write by-laws 	Right structure adopted	Local committees	2017
<p>2.2. Drafting business Plan for Collective Arts and Crafts Business and Seek Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drafting business plan • Seek funding and programs (Plan Nord, etc.) • Education & Information 	Business plan funded and written	Niska	2018
<p>2.3. Implementing and Monitoring the Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire management • Conduct training • Start operation of the collective business • Monitor its operations • Build strategic partnerships for production and distribution of arts and crafts 	Business in operation	CHRD, CNACA, Niska, CIRADD	2018
<p>2.4. Building Research Partnerships on Aboriginal Women Entrepreneurship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships for a research proposal (done 2016) • Research committee and ethic protocol agreement (OCAP) • Execution and monitoring of the research activities about the collective business • Report diffusion and education 	Research conducted and lessons learned about how CWEIA should support women entrepreneurs	Niska, CIRADD	2017-2019

Strategy 3: Develop Social Economy Initiatives for Community Development

From September 7 to 9, 2016, the World Social Forum was held in Montreal. Over 35 000 representatives from 62 countries attended. People gathered together to think and take actions in supporting Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE). The final declaration of the forum says:

The SSE seeks to integrate economic efficiency, social inclusion, sustainable development and increased participation in the functioning of the economy and urban development. Cooperatives, community-based businesses, social enterprises, credit unions and mutual insurance, social finance and non-profit institutions together constitute the SSE. The philanthropic sector as well as social investors also contribute to its development. In short, the SSE encompasses all those who do not put increased profit as the main or sole purpose of economic activity. In order to progress, the SSE must assume its full place alongside the private and public sector.



The SSE is essential for all societies and questions our current development model. It gives hope to vulnerable individuals and groups who are unable to find decent work and lack access to housing or adequate services that conform to the minimum standards of living. The SSE supports a development model that protects the environment through collective ownership of natural resources and through sustainable forms of production. The SSE is also the foundation for revitalizing participatory democracy through collective action at the heart of economic and social activity. Democratic processes and collective decision-making inherent in the SSE are essential to meet our challenges.

Such a mindset is very close to what Cree women think about economy and community. In fact, Cree women want to contribute to family and community development. This is how the social economy can contribute significantly, since its objective is more about community development and fostering well-being for groups of people rather than the individual wealth accumulation. We believe CWEIA has aspirations that fit very well with the social economy. We can develop a social economy function inside of CWEIA or alongside our organization through non-profit corporations fully owned by CWEIA.

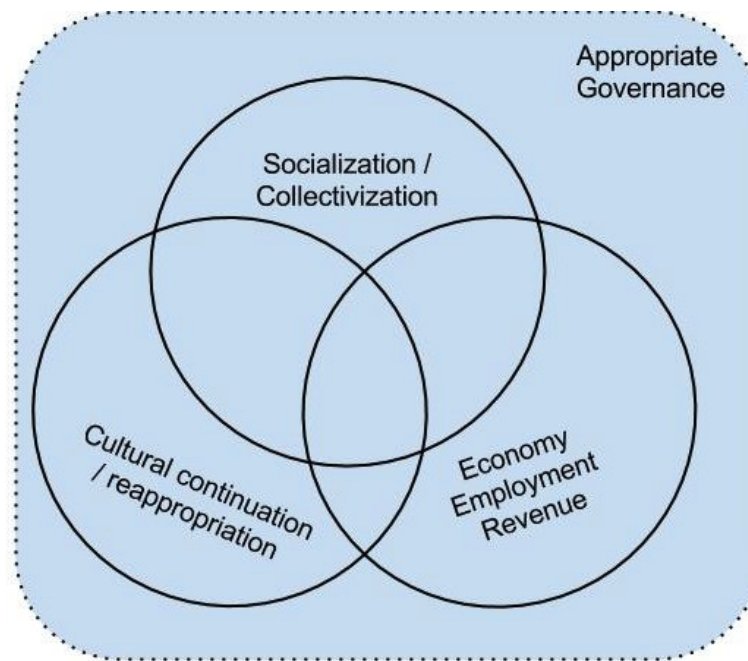
3.1. Developing Our Own Social Economy Model

Becoming an established social economy leader is a long-term for CWEIA. We cannot execute this strategy overnight, nor within this three-year plan. But we can set the stage and be aware of opportunities that may arise. We must learn to develop our own social economy model. The general view of social economy contains two dimensions: economic and social. By listening to our members, the early premise of our model has four interdependent dimensions: Economic, social, cultural re-appropriation and governance (see next page Figure 2).

The economic dimension allows CWEIA to initiate projects that generate income for CWEIA and employment for women. Income is very important; otherwise, if services are provided for free, we are not in a social economy logic. The social dimension is very important and intends to break women's isolation, allowing women to get together and express solidarity through socializing, as well as transcend individual weaknesses and build collective strengths. The cultural continuity or re-appropriation dimension is always an important criterion in whatever we do. Our core mission relates to women's rights and healing programs, so in anything we do, even in social economy initiatives, our focus is on our culture. Social economy projects must provide opportunities for cultural learning and transfer.



Figure 2: CWEIA's Social Economy Dimensions



Finally, the governance model that will be put in place for each initiative will have to foster empowerment and efficiency. CWEIA will have to support the initiative in the first place, and then let more and more space and decision-making to the people involved in the initiative as time goes by. This is depicted by a turning wheel, where the role of CWEIA is to support the momentum of the wheel and slowly fade away, letting a new model of governance emerge from the project itself. The governance must then be flexible.

The arts and crafts can be an example of the governance flexibility. In the early stages, CWEIA would be very involved, providing its staff and resources to the cooperative. As the business evolves and becomes more solid, CWEIA's role will become less prominent and the cooperative will then operate as a standalone business fully governed by its members.

3.2. Identifying Unmet Needs and Developing a Network

Currently, the social economy is more a strategic intention than a reality. CWEIA can invest many areas beyond arts and crafts, such as catering, home care, lodging, retailing, transportation, etc. Social economy opportunities are as diverse as the economy itself. CWEIA can dedicate gatherings focusing specifically on identifying unmet needs in communities that would be suitable for social economy opportunities. CWEIA can start reflection by planning at least a workshop on this topic in its upcoming AGA or any other event. It seems important to keep this strategy alive in our future reflection and events.

Meanwhile, we can develop our network. We have started doing so. CWEIA's regional coordinator sits on the board of the Cree Social Economy Regional Table (CSERT), which acts as our regional social economy body. Being there allows CWEIA to be directly connected to opportunities and programs. We can also network with the rest of the province. In fact, the Government of Quebec's action plan states it will invest



\$100 million in the social economy in five years. CWEIA must be connected to various networks in social economy so we can grab opportunities.

3.3. Implementing a Social Economy Project

Once an opportunity will be identified and chosen, the regular business development process will take place: feasibility study, business planning, funding, implementation, start-up, expansion, consolidation, growth and evaluation. All these stages are yet to come, but we should be able to initiate a social economy project by 2018-2019.

Table 5: Main Actions to Support the Social Economy

Main Actions	Expected Outcomes	Core Partners	Timeline
3.1. Developing our Own Social Economy Model <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design our social economy model • Monitor social economy initiatives • Incorporate lessons and adapt our actions 	CWEIA's Social Economy Model	CSERT, Research centres, CNG	2017-2019
3.2. Identifying Unmet Needs and Developing a Network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate conversations about unmet needs and opportunities • Establish a process for analyzing of opportunities • Connect with relevant social economy networks 	List of identified and analyzed opportunities	Local committees, Board of directors	2017
3.3. Implementing a Social Economy Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose the right project • Follow the CSERT recommendations for project development • Seek funding and supporting programs • Education & Information 	Initiative implemented	CSERT, CHRD, CNG	2018



SECTION 3: IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 Communicate the Strategy in Eeyou Ischtee and Beyond

CWEIA will communicate and educate the stakeholders about our strategy to support women entrepreneurship. This program is summarized in Table 6 below. Our communications plan must be targeted to inside and outside stakeholders. The inside target groups are CWEIA's Board of directors, local committees and members. The outside target groups are our privileged partners in Eeyou Ischtee and beyond, such as CNG, CHRD, CSERT, CSB, EEG, Ministry of Economy, Science and Innovation, Secretariat of Aboriginal Affairs, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, etc. The more they know, the more they can support the implementation of our strategy.

Table 6: Summary of the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy 2017-2020

Main Strategies	Expected Outcomes	Core Partners	Timeline
1. Promote and Support Individual Women Entrepreneurs			
1.1. Recognizing the Successes of Cree Women Entrepreneurs	Recognition and promotion activities	EEG, CHRD, CNG	2017
1.2. Creating a Database of Cree Women Entrepreneurs	Database initiated, Events for women entrepreneurs	Local committees, EDO, CHRD	2018
1.3. Offering Training, Mentoring and Coaching to Cree Women Entrepreneurs	Mentoring program operating, Lists of coaches and mentors	Entrepreneurship Foundation	2019
2. Nurture the Birth of Women Collective Businesses			
2.1. Mobilizing Craftswomen and Choosing an Arts and Crafts Collective Structure as part of a Cultural Re-appropriation	Right structure adopted	Niska, CIRADD	2017
2.2. Drafting business Plan for Collective Arts and Crafts Business and Seek Funding	Business plan funded and written	Niska	2017
2.3. Implementing and Monitoring the Business	Business in operation	CHRD, CNACA, Niska, CIRADD	2018
2.4. Building Research Partnerships on Aboriginal Women Entrepreneurship	Research conducted and lessons learned about how CWEIA should support women entrepreneurs	Niska, CIRADD	2017-2019
3. Develop Social Economy Initiatives for Community Development			
3.1. Developing our Own Social Economy Model	CWEIA's Social Economy Model	CSERT Research centres, CNG	2017-2020



3.2. Identifying Unmet Needs and Developing a Network	List of identified and analyzed opportunities	Local committees, Board of directors	2017
3.3. Implementing a Social Economy Project	Initiative implemented	CSERT, CHRD, CNG	2018

Figure 3 presents the Strategy’s Implementation Roadmap in the form of a Gantt chart.

Figure 3: Implementation Roadmap

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
1. Promote and Support Individual Women Entrepreneurs			
1.1 Recognizing the Successes of Cree Women Entrepreneurs	Green		
1.2. Creating a Database of Cree Women Entrepreneurs	Yellow	Green	Yellow
1.3. Offering Training, Mentoring and Coaching to Cree Women Entrepreneurs			Green
2. Nurture the Birth of Women Collective Businesses			
2.1. Mobilizing Craftswomen and Choosing an Arts and Crafts Collective Structure as part of a Cultural Re-appropriation	Green		
2.2. Drafting business Plan for Collective Arts and Crafts Business and Seek Funding	Green	Yellow	Yellow
2.3. Implementing and Monitoring the Business		Green	Green
2.4. Building Research Partnerships on Aboriginal Women Entrepreneurship	Green	Green	Yellow
3. Develop Social economy Initiatives for Community Development			
3.1. Developing our Own Social Economy Model	Green	Green	Green
3.2. Identifying Unmet Needs and Developing a Network		Green	Green
3.3. Implementing a Social Economy Project	Yellow	Yellow	Green

3.2 Hire a Professional Women’s Entrepreneurship Champion

To implement our entrepreneurship strategy, we need to hire a champion, an experienced Cree person who can navigate through partners, programs and people. This person will be responsible for the undertaking of CWEIA’s Women Entrepreneurship Strategy. With the collaboration of the Regional Coordinator, this person will not only carry out actions, but will also seek funding to implement activities and projects. The budget required for this staff is around \$100,000 on a yearly



basis for salary, benefits, administration, travel and a discretionary budget to act as a leveraged fund to initiate small projects.

3.3 Execute the Strategy Through Funding Agreement and per Project

A good staff can do a lot but cannot do it all. Many aspects of the strategy require funding. Tables 7 and 8 show an estimation of the costs related to the Strategy over a three-year period. Some cost cannot be detailed at this stage, as only further analysis in due time can reveal them.

Table 7: Estimated Budget to Implement the Women’s Entrepreneurship Strategy

	Main Strategies	Types of Cost	Estimated Budget (\$)	Comments
1.1.	Recognizing the Successes of Cree Women Entrepreneurs	Annual prizes	10k	CWEIA can fund it annually
1.2.	Creating a Database of Cree Women Entrepreneurs	External computer and web-based programing skills	10k	Project proposal for innovative project
1.3.	Offering Training, Mentoring and Coaching to Cree Women Entrepreneurs	External computer and web-based programing skills	10k	Project proposal for innovative project
1.4.	Mobilizing Craftswomen and Choosing an Arts and Crafts Collective Structure as part of a Cultural Re-appropriation	Time and travel	25k	Research grants already awarded
2.1.	Drafting Business Plan for Collective Arts and Crafts Business and Seek Funding	Business plan	15-20k	CWEIA (through Fond d'initiative du Plan Nord?)
2.2.	Implementing and Monitoring the Business	Depends on further analysis included in the business plan	Refer to business plan	To be identified in business plan and partially funded though the research grants already awarded
2.3.	Building Research Partnerships on Aboriginal Women Entrepreneurship	Internal staff resources allocation for the research	45k	Research grants already awarded
3.1.	Developing our Own Social Economy Model	No particular cost except the staff to be hired and related costs	100k	Through funding agreement with Ministry of Economy, Science and innovation
3.2.	Identifying Unmet Needs and Developing a Network			
3.3	Implementing a Social Economy Project	Depends on further analysis and type of project	Depends on project	CSERT and CHRD can fund



Table 8: Annual Estimated Budget

Items	Amount
Salaries and benefits	70 000 \$
Administration, travel and representation	30 000 \$
Projects/events/special items (for 3 years)	120 000 \$
Total	220 000 \$
Already funded through research grants	70 000 \$
To be funded	150 000 \$
Through funding agreement with Ministry of Economy, Science and innovation	80 000 \$
<i>Amount remaining to be funded</i>	<i>70 000 \$</i>



APPENDICES

Harvest of CWEIA's Women's Entrepreneurship Focus Group

February 29, 2016, Centre d'amitié autochtone de Val d'Or

Board of Directors Meeting about Women Entrepreneurship

April 17th, Gatineau 2016

CWEIA's Annual General Assembly

August 25-29, Old Nemaska

Harvest Women's Entrepreneurship Focus Group CWEIA

February 29th, Centre d'amitié autochtone de Val d'Or

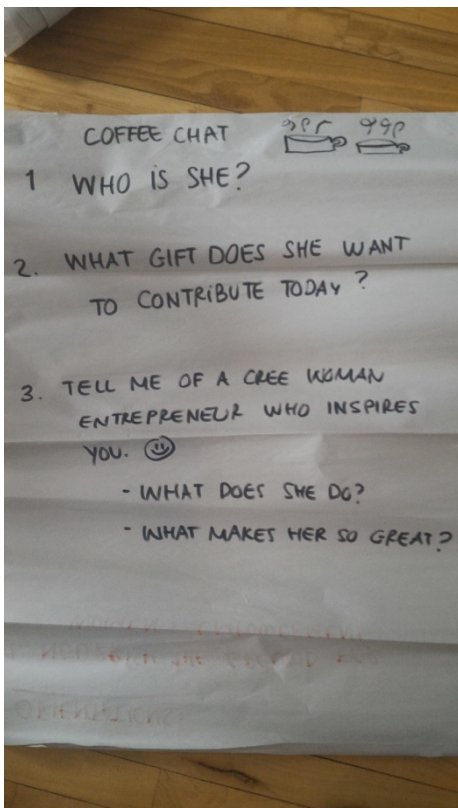


Context

The intention of this participatory focus group was to provide insight to draft an *Action Plan to Support Women's Entrepreneurship in Eeyou Istchee*, which will serve as a basis document to review the Specific agreement between CWEIA and the Ministère de l'Économie, de la Science et de l'Innovation (MESI). We brought together ten women in business and women who have supported business start-ups, to ask them about what CWEIA could do to contribute to economic empowerment for women, through individual and collective entrepreneurship.

The workshop design is inspired by the Appreciative Inquiry philosophy, which suggests looking at the **positive core** of an organization and a system for answers on where to put our energies. The workshop had different times:

- Get to know each other and get inspired! Connect with the gifts we all bring to the ecosystem and what inspires us in women in business
- Understand the realities and needs of women in business in Eeyou Istchee
- Brainstorm and prioritize on what could CWEIA do to respond to the needs currently unmet



Get to know each other and get inspired

We started off by leaving our meeting room (!!) to have **one-on-one 'coffee chats'** with someone we didn't know very well. Each person had about 20min to go through these questions with her partner.

Then, we went around the circle to introduce each other. We captured the following pearls which made us all realize that we were in very good hands for the work we needed to do today!!



GIFTS:

- knowledge of structures
- experience + education in business (management/admin, marketing, consulting, event planning, project management)
- understanding ♡ beat of E.I. ♀
- econ. dev't experience collaboration
- mentor for younger women ♀
- passion to open craft shop + social economy
- perseverance opportunities + challenges
- insight into reality of crafts
- devotion to ♀ issues + community
- entrepreneurial spirit for a long time
- knowledge of traditional ways of arts & crafts
- transfer knowledge & help ♀ take their place
- dser + tool
- passion to help ♀ + vision
- receive gifts from others
- tradition up front
- experience as business owner
- sharing life experience + teachings.

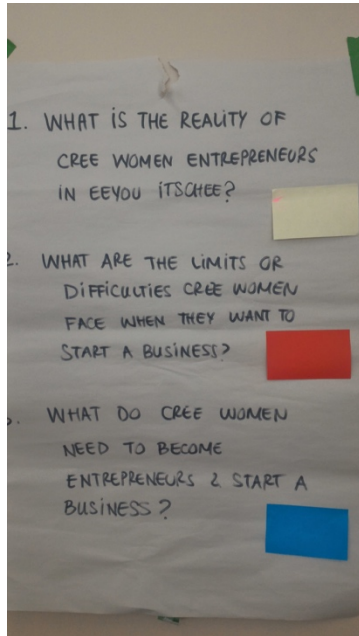
INSPIRATION collaboration, & competition

- humility
- labour of ♡
- excels, moves forward
- involved, present, proactive
- strong role as teacher; beyond production of skills
- carrying cultural component of crafts
- people developing themselves
- run business with ease
- care for people; not caring about the \$
- pleasure + yummy food ☺ the \$ help people (sharing)
- worked when pregnant (kept going)
- coach, guidance, belief in entrepreneurs
- train other leaders
- ripple effect shared leadership
- passion
- knowledge
- perseverance beyond obstacles to find solutions
- sharing the pie; make sure everyone has enough
- 360° transformation (make-up artist)

We then went back to our sunny area and put ourselves in a line based on our month of birth (after Émanuèle had gotten inspired by Irene's sharing about the 13 grandmother moons that morning for breakfast!).



Realities and needs of women in business in Eeyou Istchee



We split up in two groups with a task at hand: answering the three following questions:

We had a bit of time to think about these questions individually, and then write the thoughts that come up on post-it notes; the rule was 'one idea, one post-it!'. Each question was associated with a colour of post-it.

Then, we did an activity called the **metaplan**. Each person presented ideas on each post-it, and then the group put them together into potatoes, representing similar ideas. No idea was put aside. Also, we were careful not to fall in the 'lazy potato' syndrome and try to group everything together under a generic category that didn't mean much! We went to name each potato in our potato salad. Needless to say, we did work up an appetite 😊

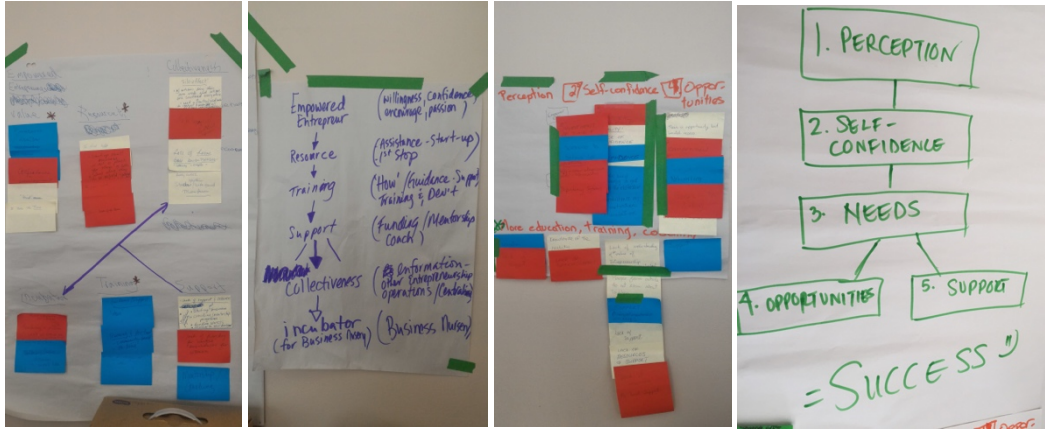


After finishing our metaplans, we did some **collective analysis**. We asked ourselves: What is the story that this board is telling us? We looked at the names of our potatoes, the number of post-it in each potatoes, the variety of colours... We wrote down that story.

Then, we selected an **ambassador**, who was tasked with the important role to answer the other group's questions about our metaplan. We travelled to the other side of the room to meet the ambassador from the other group. The ambassador had to resist the urge to tell the story straight to the new group: we had to work, first by reading the board, and then asking specific questions to the ambassador. Finally, we came back home to report-back to our ambassador on what we saw on the other side!

We found out that one group had focused more on the *human* side of supporting an entrepreneur, and the other group, on more *structural* aspects.



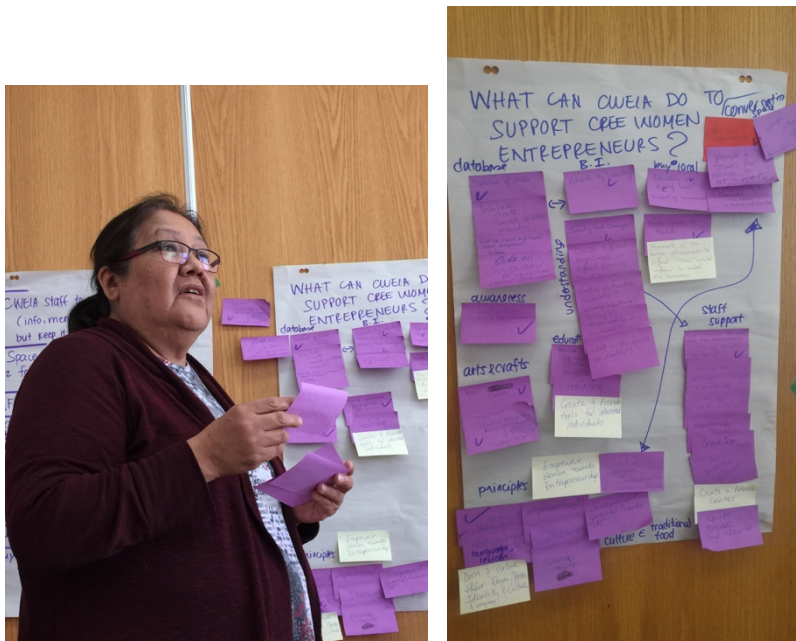


What could CWEIA do to respond to the needs currently unmet?

After a yummy lunch and visit of the famous Val d’Or Friendship Centre, we were almost ready to get to the solutions. But first, Chakda shared with us some results from a study on Aboriginal women’s entrepreneurship. Researchers from St-François-Xavier University in Cape Breton conducted 200 interviews and they pretty much came up with the same content than we did in a half-day. Way to go ladies!!

Now, what are we MOST called to do?

We each individually thought of priorities for actions. We kept in mind that CWEIA can support individual entrepreneurs, be a partner for collective businesses, and also be the initiator of its own social economy business. We wrote one idea/post-it. Then, each person came to the front and presented their ideas so it was as clear as possible.

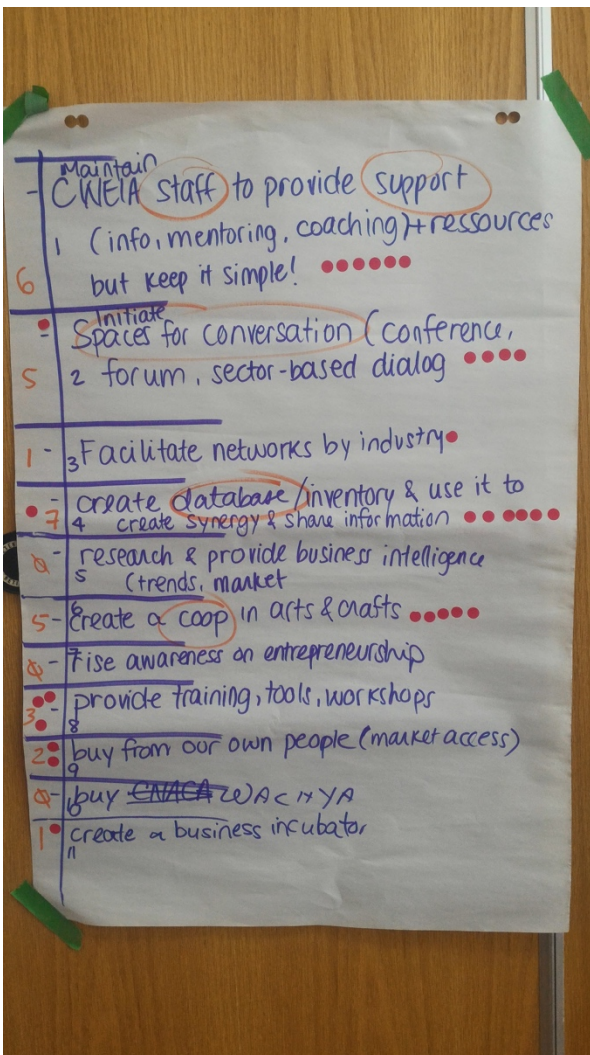


We did some classification as we go, to end up with a list of 11 possible actions. Then, each woman was given 3 red dots and we practice **dotmocracy!** We each put our votes next to the actions we felt had the most potential to contribute to women’s entrepreneurship and made the most sense for CWEIA to do in the short to medium term.





And... here is what came out of the vote!



Closing

All the elements you contributed today will help CWEIA better target its action to support women's entrepreneurship in the next three years! Thank you all for your lights.

We closed in a circle, each person shared one word that synthesises her experience of the day.

MEEGWETCH LADIES FOR THE INSIGHTFUL AND FUN TIME TOGETHER!

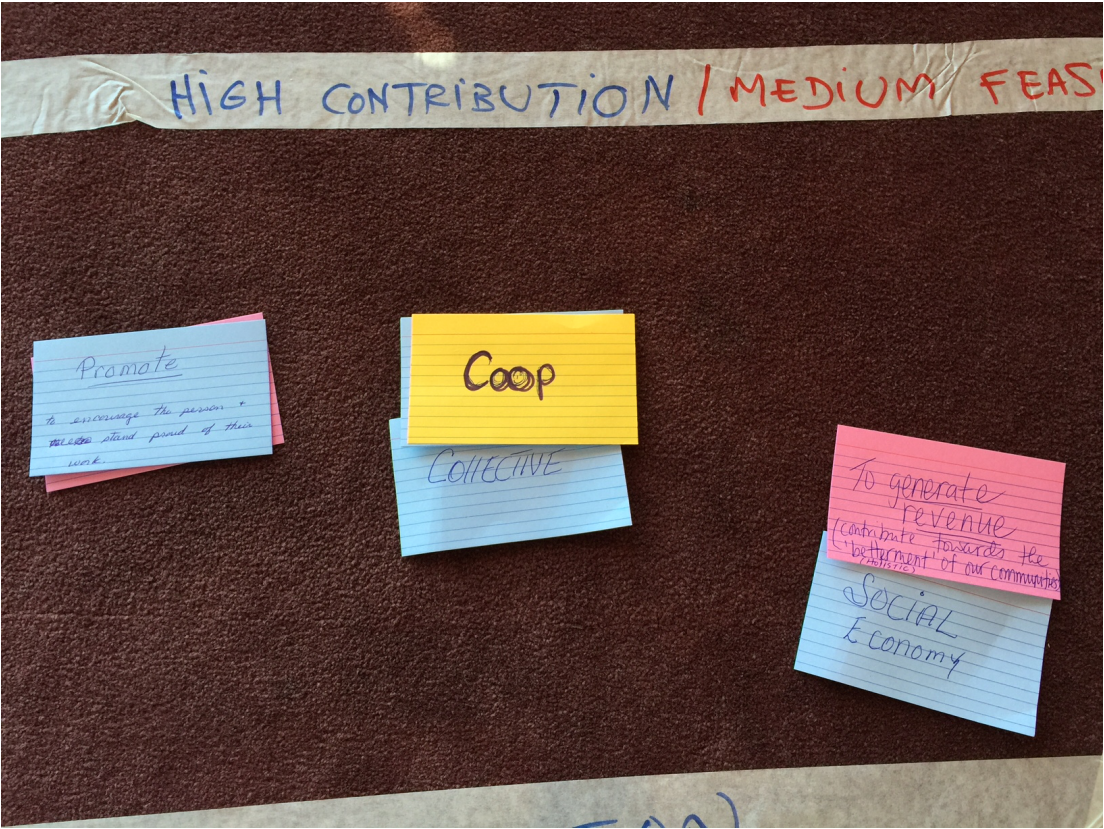




Promote
 to encourage the person +
~~make~~ stand proud of their
 work.

Promotion





HIGH FEASIBILITY

Training
+
Support.

- support worker
within local EDO
offices for
WM

Recognize
or

Acknowledge Women
In Entrepreneurship

HIGH CONTRIBUTION / MEDIUM FEAS

Promote

To encourage the person to
stand proud of their
work.

Coop

COLLECTIVE

To generate
revenue
(contribute towards the
betterment of our communities)

SOCIAL
Economy





