

**Paper Title: Social Enterprising model - showcasing epic link between practice and research**

**Presented at the** Pre-SEWF Conference Research Day organized by Mount Royal University and Simon Fraser University in collaboration with the Social Enterprise World Forum, October 1, 2013 in Calgary, Canada.

**Key words:** community-academic partnership, social enterprises, practice research, case studies  
link to research

**Abstract:** Human Endeavour is an Ontario-based non-profit serving diverse population in the York Region since 2005. York Region is the fastest growing region in Canada with large influx of newcomers. The organization and its leadership have been recognized for multiple innovations.

Human Endeavour won the Innovation in Health Award from the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care & Ontario Hospitals Association for its flagship initiative HOPE (Healthy Outcomes of Preventive Engagements). Its Founder & CEO won the 3M & Health Nexus 2012 Leadership Award for demonstrated impact of innovative initiatives on community. These initiatives involved social enterprises and community based health and wellness programs.

Human Endeavour, over the years, has successfully deployed healthy dialectics of policy and practice through close and sustained partnerships with York University and other researchers.

While the researchers studied the ongoing practice, implementation and impact of programs on the participating communities; the implementers benefitted from the findings of the studies.

In the pre-SEWF Conference Research Day, Human Endeavour would like to share a case study of how it envisaged and ensured research-practice harmony over the last several years, and the way researchers and practitioners worked together amiably to inform each other.

The proposed case study will highlight a replicable model of social enterprising based on Human Endeavour's Enterprise Promotion and Innovation Centre (EPIC), to share how research and practice can work together to strengthen each other.

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## Research Paper

Human Endeavour is an Ontario-based non-profit organization serving diverse population in the York Region since 2005. York Region is the fastest growing census division in Ontario and the third fastest growing in Canada. It's a popular destination for newcomers. York Region's population grew by 22 per cent between 2001 and 2006, immigrants accounted for 60 per cent of that population growth. In 2006, approximately 46,000 recent immigrants (those who immigrated to Canada between 2001 and 2006) made York Region their home. (The Regional Municipality of York, 2011)<sup>1</sup>

The organization and its leadership have been recognized for multiple innovations in programming that successfully addressed the needs of the diverse population. Human Endeavour won the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care & Ontario Hospitals Association's Innovation Award 2010 in Evidence Based Practice category for its flagship initiative HOPE - Healthy Outcomes of Preventive Engagements. The founder and CEO of Human Endeavour won the 3M Health Leadership Award 2012 for demonstrated impact of innovative initiatives on the community. These initiatives include social economy and community-based health and wellness programs.

However, another important area of programming that has developed over the years is engagement and partnership with higher education institutions and academic research which allows Human Endeavour to deploy healthy dialectics of policy and practice for continuous process improvement in its work and as such serving the clients better. Human Endeavour is engaged in many research projects through close and sustained partnerships with higher education institutions, independent researchers and academia. While the researchers studied the ongoing

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.york.ca/NR/rdonlyres/cip6zqq4xovlcfummdfrgy32b723vbo2yglaym7yfl4vcdgfpj7cnfh54nzjhnatzqei6zhor6uyzz743wgavt7gh/YRChangingLandscapes.pdf>

practice, implementation and impact of programs on the participating communities; the implementers benefitted from the findings of the studies. There is a growing consensus that partnerships between communities and higher educational institutions are a useful strategy for social change and are gaining greater recognition and momentum<sup>2</sup>.

In the Pre-Social Enterprise World Forum Conference Research Day, Human Endeavour would like to share how it envisaged and ensured the research-practice harmony over the last several years, and the way researchers and practitioners worked together amicably to inform each other's work. A case study of a newly initiated project of Human Endeavour will also be a part of this paper. The project aims to create a replicable model of social enterprising in which York University is a research partner.

Human Endeavour's first formal collaboration for a research project started in 2008 with a York University project titled: "Worked to Death, Gendered and Racialized Aspects of Retirement in Canada". The project looked at recent retirement experiences of Canadians, particularly experiences of immigrant men and women because of the challenges they face in the labour market and the need for taking care of children and elderly relatives at home. Human Endeavour works closely with immigrant seniors and offers programs and services for immigrants facing economic challenges. It was approached to support the proposal and be a community research partner in the project. York University was able to recruit the project participants through Human Endeavour. CEO of Human Endeavour became an affiliate with CERIS- the Ontario Metropolis Centre which is a 'research knowledge creation and transfer network that focuses on the resettlement and integration of immigrants and refugees in Ontario.'<sup>3</sup> As a result of this affiliation, Human Endeavour became a part of a wider international network for comparative research and

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<sup>2</sup> <http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/principles.html#principles>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ceris.metropolis.net/>

policy development which included universities, community organizations and different levels of government. Human Endeavour also presented research papers in the National Metropolis Conferences in 2011 and 2012. Following papers were presented at these conferences:

1. **Social Enterprise: A Route to Economic Self-Sufficiency for Aging Immigrants**, Metropolis Conference Vancouver, BC., Canada March 25, 2011
2. **Community-based Approaches to Health and Well-being for Immigrants who are Seniors**, Metropolis Conference, Toronto, ON., Canada, March 2, 2012

A long-term impact of such partnerships is connecting with a broad network of organizations and institutions having similar research interest. Human Endeavour's work for immigrants' economic and overall well-being through promotion of social economy and community based enterprises connected Human Endeavour with the Social Economy Centre of University of Toronto and consequently with Association for Nonprofits and Social Economy Research (ANSER-ARES). Human Endeavour CEO participated in last three conferences organized by the ANSER and presented the latest work done by Human Endeavour in the field of social economy and his own research. The titles of the papers presented at these conferences are given below:

- **Immigrants' Sustainable Economic Integration in Canada through Social Enterprises**, presented at the 2011 Annual Conference of Association for Non-profits and Social Economy Research (ANSER-ARES), June 1-3, 2011 Fredericton, New Brunswick
- **Endeavouring for Economic Certainty through Social Innovations**, presented at the Annual Conference of Association for Non-profits and Social Economy Research (ANSER-ARES), May 30 - June 1, 2012 in Waterloo, Ontario
- **Disruptive innovations to enhance productivity of Canadian public sector**, presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Association for Non-profits and Social Economy Research

(ANSER-ARES), June 5 - June 7, 2013 at University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

Further collaboration with York University resulted in a joint paper co-authored by Professor Nancy Mandell, Sociology Department and the Human Endeavour CEO, Mr. Noor Din and titled: Healthy Aging: The Role of Community Groups in Facilitating Social Integration. The paper was presented at ICACR, November 18-20, 2012, Jamaica and later published in the Journal of Aging in Emerging Economies, the Kent State University, OH, USA.

(<http://www.kent.edu/sociology/resources/jaee/index.cfm>). This led to Human Endeavour being connected to the research institutions outside Canada with similar research interests. Human Endeavour came into contact with the Kent State University, Ohio at the above mentioned conference on Aging. Subsequently, a delegation of the Kent State University professors visited Human Endeavour in July 2013 to discuss and explore possibilities of collaboration, joint research, learn about diversity in Ontario and examine the impact of Human Endeavour's community-based programs and services. Human Endeavour has since been able to further strengthen its partnership with the Kent State University. The Nursing Faculty of the university will work with Human Endeavour on Community Based Health and Wellness model. Joint research and publication work is already in the process with collaboration of Ms. Mary Lou Ferranto, Assistant Professor of Nursing at Kent State University and some of this work will be presented at The International Istanbul Initiative on Ageing Congress, taking place in Turkey from October 4-6, 2013.

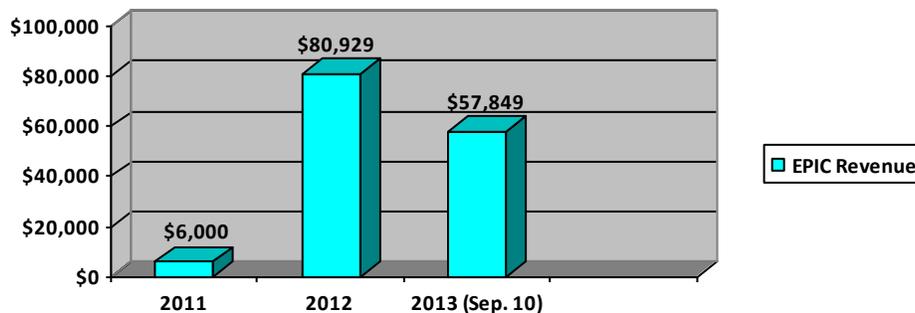
These were some of the examples of the research partnerships and collaboration that Human Endeavour entered into but for the purpose of this paper Human Endeavour will like to present the case study of a social economy project where an academic institution became a formal partner in the project to ensure that a replicable model of social economy is created and documented.

## CASE STUDY

EPIC – Enterprise Promotion and Innovation Centre, a project of Human Endeavour, is a social enterprise incubator that supports prospective entrepreneurs from marginalized communities and community based organizations in setting up small-scale businesses that help them earn stable and sustainable income. Prospective entrepreneurs and organizations are supported in business planning, market identification, sales and promotion, business development and management. However, the success of these enterprises comes from the community commitment to lift their less-privileged members out of poverty, which they show in the form of ‘preferred procurement’. The communities agree to buy goods and services produced by these enterprises on preferential basis. ‘Pooling of skills’ to create enterprises ensures that community members can leverage skills of one another to include community members at the grass root level.

Since its inception in 2010, EPIC has successfully created a number of enterprises which helped Human Endeavour generate a steady stream of income and create work and employment opportunities for the marginalized community members like Ontario Works clients, newcomers and immigrants and senior citizens.

**Table 1: Increase in Annual Revenue of EPIC**



Based on these results, Human Endeavour felt the need to take this project to those areas of York Region where people have fewer economic opportunities. In 2012 York Region provided support to Human Endeavour for a project titled: SEED- Supporting Employment & Economic Development which aimed to strengthen the institutional capacity of EPIC -Enterprise Promotion & Innovation Centre to serve more enterprises and create a sustainable and scalable model of social economy which can be replicated in other remote and low income areas of York Region like Georgina. Human Endeavour sought the research support from the York University to document the best practices in setting up of enterprises and their becoming viable business entities generating sustainable work for community members.

Human Endeavour, Georgina Trade Training Inc. and York University's Knowledge Mobilization Unit got into a partnership to implement this project. The Knowledge Mobilization Unit was a perfect match for this project as it had been providing knowledge mobilization services to researchers, graduate students and their research partners. Another unique thing about this project is that so far in all research partnerships, it was York University that engaged Human Endeavour but in this project Human Endeavour sought the partnership with York University.

The project is still in the implementation phase, but an initial draft of the model has been prepared. The full model will be available to those interested in the last quarter of this year.

However, I would like to share some features of the model here:

**The key principles of the model:**

- At a nominal fee of 10-15% of the funds to be raised jointly, EPIC will help the partners (local community-based organization) to develop institutional infrastructure required to create, support and develop social enterprises.

- Every partnering organization will commit 20% of its purchases through “preferred procurement” process from other social enterprises under EPIC umbrella.
- The model has a double accountability mechanism. EPIC is accountable to its own Advisory Body, and the partner will be required to create their own advisory body. Since the advisory body is recruited from the community, they become a gateway to new opportunities for preferred procurement as well as ownership by the local communities.
- Both EPIC and the partner will benefit from the advice, guidance and knowledge provided by the research partner which in this case is York University
- The partnership model is cognizant of the inherent risk of dependence between EPIC and the partners. Therefore, special attention is being paid to establishing requisite procedures that enable partners becoming sustainable entities in the due course.

Figure 1 & 2 showcase the graphical representation of EPIC; a sustainable, replicable and scalable social economy incubator that is being developed and replicated at Georgina Trades Training Inc. in Georgina, ON through a social franchising setup with research and knowledge mobilization support of York University.

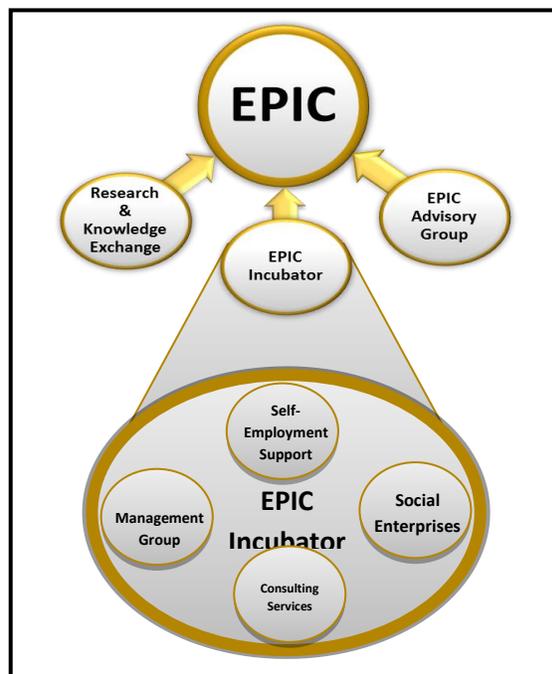
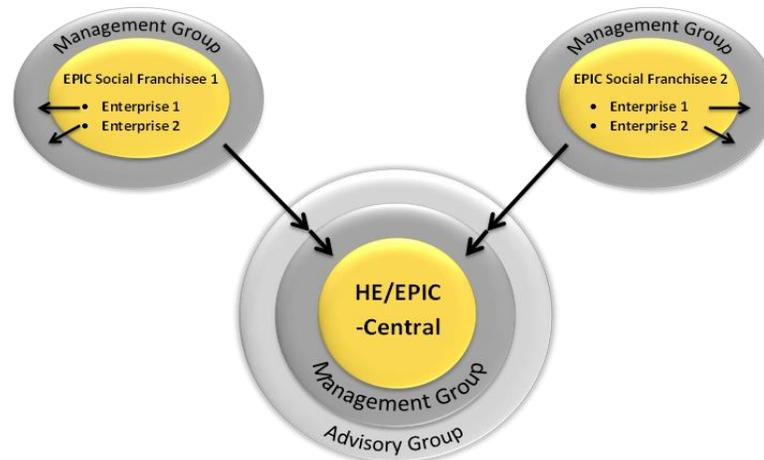


Figure 1: EPIC Functional Structure



**Figure 2: EPIC Social Franchising Organizational Structure**

It was Human Endeavour’s involvement in various Community-Academic research initiatives and exposure to academic and policy level debates and discussions that broadened its perspective and deepened understanding as to how research and practice organically reinforced each other and generated synergies that lead to greater benefits and larger dividends for communities and the partners alike. This research-practice engagement enabled it to conceive and develop a low-cost, sustainable and replicable social enterprising model.

These research partnerships have contributed to a number of significant outcomes for both Human Endeavour and its partners from higher education institutions. Some of these outcomes for our academic partners are:

- Community-Academic partnership resulted in culturally aware students and academic staff members.
- Connection with the community organizations keeps higher education institutions abreast of the current issues requiring academic research.
- Scholars and academics are more engaged with the communities and have easy access to clients for research.

- Access to community resources results in improved time management for academic students and scholars due to community support.
- Community based knowledge mobilizations and recognition of the critical role of the community in research.
- Helps fulfil a strategic opportunity in York University's Strategic Research Plan ("support for socially engaged research")<sup>4</sup>

**Community perspective.** Community-Academic partnerships provide:

- Validation of the effectiveness of community-based program and their value.
- Availability of students with specific educational background and skills.
- Access to academic research networks necessary for broader research.
- Professional and personal relationship development opportunity, resulting in future programs.
- Better understanding of research methodologies and ethics.
- Mentorship opportunities to communities.

**Conclusion:** There are two broad conclusions of this case study. One is that the potential partnerships with academia usually start with individual level contacts but eventually may graduate to institutional partnerships. The other is that community organizations mostly emerge wiser and stronger out of such partnerships with the academia.

Although, equations and relationships with individuals are quick and more manageable, the institutional partnerships seem to work as hubs and offer wider connections within university.

Initially, Human Endeavour enjoyed and immensely benefitted from the individual contacts, however as York's Knowledge Mobilization Unit came on board, it provided an institutional connection between EPIC and the entire research enterprise (faculty and students) of the university.

Arguably, institutional structures such as the Knowledge Mobilization Unit have been shown to transcend individual research and learning projects and provide greater continuity of relationships for non-academic research partners (Nichols et al, 20143). The emergence of institutional structures to support community campus collaborations allows the university to create deeper roots in the community and creates opportunities to apply research and expertise to real lived experience. Such an institutional structure also provides community partners with a point of entry into the university which can appear monolithic and impenetrable to external organizations.

However, for community organizations who actively and frequently participate in the peri-academic conferences and events, the preferred starting point may be an individual contact, because of accessibility, and other dynamics of one on one communication.

But, if the community organizations intend to broaden the scope and widen the networks, then it is advised that their individual contacts ought to be transformed into institutional linkages.

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