

**Women at the Heart of the Social Economy: What Motivates Women to Work in  
the Social Economy in Whitehorse, Yukon?**

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### Abstract

This thesis looks at the importance of women in the social economy in Whitehorse and the motivations influencing women's participation in this sector of the economy. Women's involvement in the traditional economy has been very different from that of men; historically women have been largely excluded from paid labour. Women have different life experiences, needs, and social and familial responsibilities than men, which are shaped by their respective roles in society (Canadian Women's Community Economic Development Council, 2005, pg 1). The focus of this thesis is on identifying the important and unique role of women in this northern social economy and to identify the motivations to their involvement as well as the issues women face working in this sector.

The social economy is often seen as an alternative to the traditional economy allowing a more collective and cooperative atmosphere that may be more inviting to women. Women and women's organizations have a long history working in the informal collective and cooperative structured economies (CWCEDC, 2005, pg 28). The methodology for this thesis is primarily qualitative. Semi-structured interviews were conducted; 20 women working in the social economy in Whitehorse were interviewed and asked about their individual experiences and motivations for working in this sector of the economy. The interviews were conducted over a 3 week period in November 2008, in Whitehorse, Yukon. The SERNNNoCa portraiture survey was used to draw an initial sample of potential interview participants, a snowball sampling technique was also applied. The research was analyzed by coding the data into common themes of motivation found throughout the interview information.

In examining the interview data there were five themes found to contribute to the motivations of women working in the social economy. These themes were: sense of community, the need to create change, personal beliefs and goals, feelings of responsibility, and economic influence. Sub-themes were then created to analyze the interview data of each research participant and examine the way that the themes of motivation affected women's choice to participate in the social economy in Whitehorse, Yukon.

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## **Women at the heart of the Social Economy: What Motivates Women to Work in Community Economic Development?**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the importance of women in the social economy; looking specifically at the experiences and motivations of women participating in this sector of the economy in Whitehorse, Canada. Women's involvement in the formal economy<sup>1</sup> has been very different from that of men; historically women have been largely excluded from paid labour. Women have different life experiences, needs, and responsibilities than men, which are shaped by their respective roles in society (Canadian Women's Community Economic Development Council, 2005, pg 1). The social economy is often identified as an alternative to the formal economy; an alternative that allows for a more collective and cooperative atmosphere. Therefore, due to the exclusion from the formal market this sector of the economy may be more inviting to women. Women and women's organizations have a long history working in the informal collective and cooperative structured economies (CWCEDC, 2005, pg 28).

The position of women in the social economy in Whitehorse is of particular interest due to the unique economic situation in Northern Canada. Historically the Whitehorse economy has been known to fluctuate; the economy in Whitehorse has gone through a number of economic transitions. In the early history Whitehorse was

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<sup>1</sup> The formal economy is defined as paid labour and includes anything in the cash economy (Quarter, 1992, pg. 6).

predominantly a mining dependent community, however after many shifts in the economy Whitehorse is now a modern city with an economy reliant on government jobs as well as education, health and social service sector jobs (Coates & Morrison, 2005, pg 308; Yukon Government, 2004).

The boom and bust mining industry that characterized the economy of Whitehorse in the early 1900's shaped the development of its economy. During the era of the Gold Rush (1896- 1900) the labour market was dominated by male mine workers; the mining industry employed mostly men and excluded women (Coates et al. 1985, pg 224). However, the present Whitehorse economy is quite different; there have been a number of economic changes that took place over the last decade, each affecting the position of women in the economy in a different way. Whitehorse has the fifth lowest unemployment rate in Canada and men are more likely to be unemployed than women (Yukon Bureau of Statistics, 2008). In the Yukon 86.7% of the employed population over 15 years are employed in the service-producing sector economy and the remaining 13.2% were employed in Goods producing sector. The 2006 Yukon Census data showed that the Public Administration industry employed the most people, followed by Retail Trade, Health Care and Social Assistance, and Accommodations and food.

This thesis will examine the economic transitions of the Whitehorse economy and the circumstances of a northern economy that affect women's motivations to work in the social economy of Whitehorse. I will explore the overall experiences and

motivations of women in Whitehorse working in this social economy. The purpose of this study is to better understand the unique experiences of the women who participate in the Whitehorse social economy; examining the individual motivations that influence women's choice to work in the Whitehorse social economy.

The literature review for this thesis explores a number of areas associated with women's social economy work, beginning with a brief look at the unique historical relationship between women and the paid workforce. Particular interest is paid to the position of women in northern economy, specifically in Whitehorse. The changing role of women in the paid labour force is also examined, including the role of women in the paid labour economy in the north. Northern economies have gone through numerous historical transformations and each transition had an impact on women. The definition of social economy in Canada is examined in this literature review. The origin of the social economy is explored and is further developed to understand how the social economy evolved. The development of the social economy in both Quebec and English speaking Canada is then examined, with links drawn to community economic development and volunteer work of women. Subsequently, the importance of women's work within the social economy and their historical connection to this type of work is examined. Finally, the literature review explores the position of women in the north and in northern economies. Women living and working in the north are in a unique social and economic situation; this literature review explores the unique economic position of women working in the social economy sector of the north.

One of the most crucial components of this literature review is the historical analysis of the development of the social economy. The term social economy in Canada does not have one clear-cut and fully agreed upon definition (Quarter, 1992, pg 1; Quarter, Mook & Richmond, 2003, pg 1). The term is often used to encompass a broad area of the economy that is caught in-between the private and the public or state sectors in the economy (Quarter, 1992, pg 1). A good definition of the social economy is the one used by the Canadian Community Economic Development Network:

*“The Social Economy includes: social assets (housing, childcare, etc.), social enterprises including cooperatives, equity and debt capital for community investment, social purpose businesses, community training and skills development, integrated social and economic planning, and capacity building and community empowerment. The social economy is a continuum that goes from the one end of totally voluntary organizations to the other end where the economic activity (social enterprise) blurs the line with the private sector.”*

(Community Economic Development Network National Policy Council, Social Economy Roundtable Consultation Briefing Notes, 2005).

This definition includes a wide-ranging area of social and economic organizations, enterprises and community initiatives. This broad understanding allows for a complete understanding of all areas that can be included in the definition and understanding of social economy.



In Canada the Canadian government defined social economy and social economy enterprise as:

*“A community based, entrepreneurial, not-for-profit sector, based on democratic values, that seeks to enhance the social, economic and environmental conditions of communities, often with a focus on their disadvantaged members.*

*Social economy enterprises are organizations that are run like businesses, producing goods and services for the market economy, but which manage their operations and re-direct their surpluses in pursuit of social and environmental goals. These enterprises often emerge out of community economic development strategies that involve citizens, governments, the voluntary sector, business, learning institutions, and others working together. These enterprises are diverse and operate in sectors ranging from housing to communications” (Canadian Women’s Community Economic Development Council, 2005, pg 28).*

This definition of social economy is also used by Canadian Women’s Community Economic Development Council; they believe that “women, with their caring roles in society, already tend to focus their entrepreneurial energies in ways that are immediately beneficial to local communities and more ecologically sustainable” (CWCEDC, 2005, 28). In this interpretation of the social economy the connection is made that women are an important part of the social economy. The CWCEDC goes on to note that the definition of social economy must remain broad to allow for

various models of Community Economic Development (CED) and for CED programs that are already in place for communities and women to benefit (2005, 28).

In Canada the term social economy has been used to greater and lesser degrees across the country; however, it is most widely used in Quebec (Quarter, 1992, pg 1; Southcott, pg 2). Outside of Quebec, the term social economy is often referred to as Community Economic Development (Chouinard & Fairbain, 2002). In the view of Quarter, social economy organizations are often referred to as belonging to the “third sector” of the economy, a term that he believes undermines its significance to the Canadian economy (1992, pg i). The importance of having a clear definition is essential to the way the concept is used and understood; much work has been focused on the task of defining the social economy (Southcott, 2009).

A great deal of the social economy research in Canada has been focused on the development of this sector and particular interest has been paid to the Quebec social economy. The development of the social economy in Quebec has been described as a social movement (Graefe, 2001, pg 253; Levesque, 1993). In the view of Côté and Fournier, the original definition of the social economy in Quebec can be described as an economy that is “an alternative to the social and economic inequalities with which women live; it recognized the importance of work that strengthens the social fabric” (2005, pg 60). In this interpretation of the social economy, the definition highlights the way that the social economy acts as an alternative economy; an economy that allows for the importance of women and the

needs of women to be recognized. Côté and Fournier focus their definition of the social economy on women and the role that women play within social economy; it is a women-centered understanding of the social economy.

Another important area of research covered in this literature review is the importance of the connection between community economic development and social economy. The social economy is often understood as an economy that supports a more collective and cooperative environment that may be more inviting to women. Women and women's organizations have a long history working in the informal collective and cooperative structured economies (CWCEDC, 2005, pg 28). The Canadian Women's Community Economic Development Council makes the connection between social economy and community economic development in that, "enterprise development is integral to any effective CED strategy" (2005, pg 28). The CWCEDC also notes the importance of women-centered CED and the way that it takes special consideration into the lives of women and addresses women's needs in a community setting that often results in social enterprise development (2005, pg 28).

The importance of social economy in women centered CED is also highlighted in the literature review. The existing literature on women working in CED creates an important connection between the lives of women and CED. In Ellis and McGowan's work on women in community economic development they begin with the quote; "looking at development from a women's point of view is vital. Women are concerned with the human element of development, about what it will do

to their children, their homes, and their community. Women are the ones who end up coping with the results and effects of development decisions usually made by men” (Ellis & McGowan, 1983, pg i). This quote highlights the importance of women in economic development and notes that women are an essential component to making sure that the development that takes place is working for the people and their communities. In this view, women are integral to community economic development and they need to be a part of the economic development process as it is often women who are in need of community economic development projects.

It is clearly stated in Ellis et al.’s work, that historically, women’s economic situation in Canadian society has been manifest as “excluded from business, finance, economics and politics. These areas are seen as the public world – the man’s world. The world of women has traditionally been the world of the home, the family, the community and a few restricted areas of the labor force” (1983, pg 1). In this understanding of the division of labor, women are excluded from the economy and the “public world” where the majority of the decisions are made about economic development (Ellis et al, 1983, pg 1). In this view women have been left out and ignored for too long and the reality of women’s lives and their experiences need to be taken into account when making decisions about community economic development.

The diversification of labour in Whitehorse, Yukon is significant to understanding the development of the social economy in this region. The overarching theme of women’s exclusion from the paid labour economy can be seen across

Canada. Veronica Strong-Boag's work looks at the unpaid domestic work done by women in Canada (2002, pg 313). Strong-Boag examines the lives of women doing unpaid labour in the home, for their families, and attempts to better understand the role of women's labour within the family and the community. She notes the importance of community institutions (schools, churches, auxiliaries, home and school groups, etc.) and the importance that this community work has on the lives of the suburban housewives; "work with local institutions offered more activist and sociable suburbanites the chance to combine domestic duties with a manageable level of public involvement" (2002, pg 324). For Strong-Boag the unpaid domestic labour of women is important and is inextricably linked to the way that women have attempted to find further opportunities for themselves, outside the household, to become actively engaged in helping their communities.

The volunteer activities of women have also been linked to CED and social economy work. The important position of women within CED and the connection to the social economy can also be linked to the volunteer activity of women. Due to the historical exclusion of women from the paid labour market the possibility that women have taken on a greater role in alternative areas within the economy. Alternative economies include unpaid work, community organization involvement, co-operative work and charity and volunteer work; all of which are significant to the economic stability of society. In a descriptive list of characteristics that can be used to conceptualize the social economy Quarter states "organizations within the social economy depend upon donations of service and money...volunteerism is a salient

characteristic” (1992, pg 11). The National Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating (NSGVP) identifies volunteer work as a women dominated activity, where 54% of all volunteers are women and this number is even higher depending on the sector that the volunteer work falls under (Statistics Canada, 2003). These statistics further establish the key role women play in this area of the economy.

Vaillancourt and Payette examined volunteer work in Canada; their research found that women do more volunteer work than men (1986, pg 52). They also look at various aspects of the gender division of volunteer work; looking at the relationship of volunteer work to marital status, occupation, work status, hours worked, education, age, and region. By examining these variables and looking at similarities and differences between men and women Vaillancourt et al. determine why women are more likely to participate in volunteer work. The variables that they determine as influencing the likelihood of participating in volunteer activities were: educational attainment, occupation, marital status, work status, and hours worked (1986, pg 52). For this thesis understanding the possible reasons for women’s greater participation in the voluntary sector is important in understanding women’s motivation to work in the social economy.

As this thesis is focused on the position of women in the social economy in Whitehorse the literature review explores the economic position of women in the north, specifically the situation of women working in northern economies. The exclusion of women from the formal market economy in Canada is often viewed as

being more prominent in Canadian northern economies. Women in northern resource dependant communities have been excluded from paid labour (Southcott, 2006, pg 230). In the resource dependant communities of northern Ontario women have historically been excluded from the paid workforce; this region is often labeled as “no place for women” (pg 230). Similar to other regions in Northern Canada, the Whitehorse economy has developed through periods marked by dependence on single industry resource extraction.

Exclusion from the paid labour force means that the women living in these resource dependant communities often take positions in the service sector, “in particular the health and social services and hospitality sector” (pg 7). The exclusion of women from the workforce in the north is substantial, however, they do have some opportunities and with the decline of resource industry the positions or women in the north offer more stability than those of men. This shift from single industry resource dependent economy to service sector employment is of particular interest to note in reference to Whitehorse. The modern economy in Whitehorse is dominated by service industry and women have a higher employment rate than men (Yukon Bureau of Statistics, 2008).

Today in the Canadian North there is yet another economic transformation in progress; this is due to the entrance of the post industrial economy<sup>2</sup>. Historically there have been two types of communities present in the Canadian North, resource dependant communities and traditional or indigenous communities (Southcott, 2006).

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<sup>2</sup> The Post-Industrial economy is the economy that replaced the industrial economy that was dominant in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The Post-Industrial economy relies more on technology and the knowledge of workers, rather than manual labour (Southcott, 2006, pg. 7; Bell, 1973, pg. 112).

The resource dependant communities have recently been going through a period of economic restructuring, with the increasing use of labour-saving technology, corporate restructuring and downsizing, the rise of the service sector, flexible labor relations, and a new role for women (Southcott, 2006). These changes mirror many of the characteristics of the social economy; service focused economy, flexible labour, an important role for women and restructuring with a community focus are all aspects of a strong social economy. The social economy is linked to the changing economy in the north; it appears to be taking on a greater role within this region and replacing many of the roles that were previously handled by the government or private industry.

The changing economies in the north have created a new situation for women within the economy and created new roles and responsibilities. Once characterized by single industry resource communities the north is now looking for economic stability in the service sector<sup>3</sup>. This research looks at the situation of women working within the social economy in Whitehorse and examines their roles and responsibilities, their motivations for participating in this sector, and the problems they face. As the resource based industries in the north become less stable northern economies in Canada will become even more reliant on the social economy sector and women have a key role to play within this sector.

The literature examined for this thesis helps to determine the best way to examine the thesis topic. The qualitative semi-structured interview method was

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<sup>3</sup> The service sector as defined by Southcott includes health and social assistance, accommodation and food service, and education (2006).



chosen as the most effective research method to explore the individual motivations and experiences of women currently working in the social economy in Whitehorse. In-depth semi-structured one on one interviews with 20 women working in the social economy in Whitehorse, Yukon were carried out over a 3 week period in November, 2008 in the City of Whitehorse. Each interview was recorded and then transcribed and analyzed. The analysis allowed for key themes relating to the motivations and participation of women working in the social economy of Whitehorse to be recognized. The themes and sub-themes identified in the data were then examined for inter-related themes; linking the sub-themes to one another and to the overarching themes of women, the economy and the social setting.

This thesis examines the motivating factors of women working in the social economy, looking at the key experiences and responsibilities of women who are currently working in the social economy of Whitehorse. In-depth interviews help to develop a greater understanding of the way that women perceive and understand their own involvement in the social economy. The women interviewed for this research explain their personal motivations for participating in this sector of the economy. The interviews attempt to create a feeling of a natural discussion and allow the women the opportunity to speak freely about what comes to their mind, encouraging a natural flow of their personal feelings and thoughts about their work.

The research isolated five themes impacting women's involvement in the social economy; *the need to create change, sense of community, personal values and*

*beliefs, feelings of responsibility, and economic influence.* These themes are inter-related and were found to interact within overarching themes. The *Role of Women* and the *social setting* were used to encompass the five themes impacting women's motivation to involvement in the social economy.

### **Literature Review**

Historically, the experiences of women in the economy are unique from those of men. In the past women's work has been largely overlooked; this does not mean that women have not been doing work; women have always worked and worked hard (Pierson, 1985, pg 19). The issue lies not in the work of women but in the subordinate positions that women hold and are associated with in the economic sphere. Even when the work that women are doing is crucial to the economic and social wellbeing of society it often remains unnoticed (pg 19). Exclusion from the formal economy may be one of the key factors that can explain the significant role women play in the social economy.

The social economy is often applied as a catch-all term to define a third sector of the economy, one that is found in the area between the state and the private sectors (Quarter, 1992, pg 1). Often viewed as an alternative economy; Quarter explains that all social economy organizations share certain characteristics, "they all call for a new

kind of “social accounting” which moves beyond the traditional measures such as net income and requires a greater understanding of and appreciation for social capital and social outputs, and for transactions that do not take place through the market” (2003, pg 4). In this view, the social economy is an alternative to the traditional economy and allows for a greater range of economic growth, this form of economic activity may be more appealing to women (2003, pg 4).

Women have been identified as playing a significant role in community economic development organizations and social economy initiatives; women have a long history of involvement in social economy organizations (Cote & Fournier, 2005, pg 58). Women’s involvement in this sector varies; including involvement in community groups, volunteer positions, employment in co-operatives and non-profit organizations, and general civic engagement. The Canadian Women’s Community Economic Development Council notes that a holistic view of woman-centered CED increases awareness of the unique roles that women play in the economy and in society (2005, pg4).

The circumstances specific to the north affect the lives of the women living and working in this region. In the north there is a high economic dependency on resource exploitation, creating single industry resource based towns, which have been identified as particularly unsympathetic to the lives and the needs of women (Schmidt, 2007, pg 340). In resource based economies women are excluded from the labour market and more likely to look for alternative work, in the home or in the

service sector; women in the north are often faced with a number of unique social and economic challenges (Schmidt, 2007, pg 340). These circumstances can be applied to the Whitehorse economic structure; the economy in Whitehorse has developed from a primarily resource based single industry economy to a service centered economy. This shift has changed the position of women in the economy; previously women were excluded from the paid labour force now they are an essential component with in the economy

### **Women and the Transformation of the Economy**

In a 1967 report published by The Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada the situation of women in Canada is explored. The authors state that, “traditionally the economy has been a man’s world and practice today perpetuates the tradition” (pg7). In this view, women in Canadian society have been excluded from the economic sphere and this exclusion shapes the way they participate in the economy today.

In the book *A Sociology of Women: The intersection of Patriarchy, Capitalism and Colonization* Jane C. Ollenburger and Helen A. Moore dedicate a chapter to the important roles women have played in the capitalist society and the relationship they have with work (1998). They note the important changes that have taken place in regards to women and the labour market, including the changes that took place in the

participation rates of women in the economy after the Second World War, “significant changes in the types of jobs, amount of pay, working conditions, and social attitudes about women as workers and employers” (1998, pg 69). They also note that there have been significant changes in the push and pull factors that affect women’s participation in the paid labour force. These factors include “family responsibilities, consumption patterns, educational preparation, legal rights, and work opportunities” (Ollenburger & Moore, 1994, pg 69).

Between 1961 and 1981, the female labour market participation rate almost doubled in Canada (Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1990, pg 126). Pierson notes in her work, that the statistics on women’s labour participation are often not as dramatic as they appear to be, due to the fact that the paid labour of women has only recently been formally recognized (1985, pg 25). Understanding the bias of the statistical measure of women’s paid labour involvement helps to reinforce the notion that women have often been invisible in the paid labour market. However, the fact that women are being recognized for their labour market participation shows that there are changes taking place. The issues of power and subordination may still be underlying in some industries and economic spheres, however the increase in women’s labour participation emphasize that their economic role is expanding and the paid labour done by women is significant.

Women’s increasing entry into the paid labour force was not the only change that occurred in the Canadian economy that affected the structure of work. The

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1960's also ushered in a wave of new technology (Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1990, pg 117). Technological advancement changed the organization of work; with technological advancement an information based society was beginning to replace the industry based economy that in the past had been prevalent in Canada (CACSW, 1990, pg 117). Women were in a subordinate position in the economy, where the primary industry was industrial. As technological advancements were made there were more opportunities for women in other areas of the economy (Phillips and Philips, 1993, pg19). The transformation of the economy away from the industrial sector allowed women new opportunities and a growing field of work. Teaching, the healthcare field and the service industries were some of the professions that increasingly became part of the women's domain (Phillips et al, 1993, pg 24). Technological advancement changed the organization of work; with technological advancement an information based society was beginning to replace the industry based economy that had been prevalent in Canada previously (CACSW, 1990, pg 117). Technological change had a significant effect the economy and in particular the role of women in the market economy.

### **Women in the Northern Economies**

The transformation of the Canadian labour economy impacted the northern economies in a different way. The advancement of technology for northern resource industry meant a decrease in the labour needed (Southcott, 2006, pg 8). Therefore, the increase in post-industrial technology resulted in a decline in the industrial jobs in the

northern single industry communities. Where there had once been an abundance of well paid, blue collar jobs in the manufacturing industry there was now high rates of job loss and unemployment. In some cases however, the technological restructuring of employment allowed women new opportunities (CACSW, 1990, pg 120). The new information economy relies less on physical labour and shift work, both of which may have been exclusionary to women in the past (CACSW, 1990, pg 120). In this view, the technological changes taking place in the post-industrial society affects women in many ways; some of these changes are positive and allow women the ability to further expand their role in the economy.

Geographically the Canadian North is a large portion of the Canadian landscape and the social and economic importance of the northern region of Canada is also greatly significant to this country as a whole. However, Peter Elias notes that a common theme through out much of the research into the Canadian North often highlights the economic, social, and political inequality that is experienced through out this region (1997, pg 1243).

Glen Schmidt notes that there are a number of interpretations of the term “north” (2007, pg 338). He further states that the Europeans “have tended to see the north as something wild that should be tamed and harnessed to generate economic activity and wealth” (2007, pg 340). The indigenous people of the Canadian North have a very different view of what the north is. For First Nations and Inuit people the north is often seen as a home and a place to make a living (Schmidt, 2007, pg 338).

Therefore, the north has a number of possible definitions; the framework of isolation, remoteness and marginalization is a common theme found in most definitions of “the north” (Schmidt, 2007, pg 340).

In Northern Canada there are three types of communities: resource dependant, indigenous, and service centers (Bone, 2009). Resource dependant communities are linked to the large scale resource exploitation economy described above. The focus here is on industry; it is capital intensive and is often characterized by one dominant resource base (Southcott, 2008). In these economies there is an emphasis on labour, where energy and capital are the main focus to create profit and high production rates; this focus often results in high levels of outside bureaucratic and government dependence (Pretes & Robinson, 1989). These communities often have a male-dominated blue-collar culture and there are little opportunities for employment by women (Southcott, 2006).

In the view of Schmidt the paid labour experiences of women in the north are of significant importance; he notes that the northern single industry towns are inhospitable to women (2007, pg 340; Krepps, 1979; Gill, 1985, pg 1990). Here, it is understood that women are left out of the northern economy because the predominant type of work done in this region is “men’s work”. Schmidt states “the work performed in these isolated communities is work that has traditionally been associated with men: mining, heavy equipment operation, and construction” (2007, pg 340). Therefore, women in these northern isolated communities are excluded from this



market labour work and are often left with household labour and childcare responsibilities.

The situation in the north impacts the lives men and women differently. Wall argues that women in northern single industry resource based towns are excluded from employment and states that this exclusion can be seen in political decision making within the community as well (1993). In this view women in northern single industry towns face a number disadvantages. Schmidt adds that due to the position of women in northern economies they are often only able to find part-time employment and it is usually limited to the service industry market (2007, pg 341). Here, the exclusion of women from the paid labour force explains how it affects all areas of women's lives; the lack of power transcends from the paid labour economy to the wider community.

In his work in Northern Ontario, Southcott finds that women had few economic opportunities in resource-dependant communities in the 1970s. The lack of economic opportunity is mainly due to the underdevelopment of other industries, such as the service industry, in these communities (2006, pg 151). Southcott notes that census data shows that between 1961 and 2001 there is an increase of women in the paid work force in some areas of the region in Northern Ontario. Nevertheless, the types of positions women hold continue to be quite different from the positions of men in this region.

In Northern Ontario the economies have been characterized by single-industry resource dependant communities (Southcott, 2006, pg 150). In this type of economy there has been a history of a gender imbalance in the labour force, however, there appears to be a change occurring. Women were once excluded from the paid labour force in Northern Ontario resource dependant communities; however, there is now a convergence happening in labour force participation rates between women and men. This convergence is due to the changing economy in the region and the decrease in the labour force as a whole (Southcott, 2006, pg 168). Some provincial norths such as Northern Ontario show quite close socio-economic similarities to the territorial norths in many aspects; the changes taking place in women's paid labour force participation in Northern Ontario can be seen as being closely associated with the changing economy in the north as a whole (Bone, 2009).

In the Yukon the first non-indigenous economy was the fur trade economy. Beginning in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Europeans entered the Yukon with the purpose of trade with the Native people in the area. British, Americans and Russians entered what is now the Canadian North to trade and set up trading posts (Coates & Morrison, 2005, pg 19). While the Aboriginal people welcomed the fur trade the presence of the Europeans in the north greatly impacted their way of life. The most significant impact that Europeans had was the introduction of new diseases (Coates et al, 2005, pg 33). However, the economic system of trading that was introduced was also influential in changing the way of life for the Native people of Northern Canada.

Pierson presents the example of the role that Native women played in the early fur trade economies in Canada. She notes that the role of women in these economies was crucial; however their role is often forgotten or simply goes unrecognized (1985, pg 20). Phillips et al. note that “Canada’s fur traders found out early that women were indispensable...the skills of the Native women, learned in their own culture, were essential for survival” (1993, pg10). The Native women acted as interpreters for the traders, made moccasins, gathered the gum to make birch bark canoes, made snowshoes and pemmican, and treated the hides; their work was important in all aspects of this economic era (Phillips et al., 1993, pg 10; Pierson, 1985, pg 20). The position of Native women in the fur-trade economy was essential and still the role of women in this era is often still overlooked (Coates et al, 2005, pg 36).

The fur trade was soon replaced as the economic engine of the regional economy. The dominance of the Hudson Bay Company in the Yukon region was replaced by mining. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the Gold Rush era was beginning. As men from the south moved into the Yukon region in a quest for gold the effects on the Native population intensified; impacting their traditional way of life. The majority however, looked to maintain their way of life and did make some gains during the gold rush era; selling food (wild game) to the miners and taking on seasonal wage employment when possible. Native women carried on their lives as usual during the gold rush era; some did work as prostitutes, but as more non-Aboriginal prostitutes

entered the region the Native women continued their traditional way of life (Coates et al, 2005, pg 35).

Maureen Reed, in her book “Taking Stands: Gender and the Sustainability of Rural Communities”, analyzes the community work of women in forestry communities in Northern British Columbia. Reed looks at the community-based activities of women as connected to the traditional domestic roles that women occupy (2003, pg 119). Reed references the work of Kathleen Murray whose research focused on the conservative culture of women’s community work and how it is used to legitimate the political position of women in the community. For Murray, the women are often put into a specific context, where their “traditional, maternal, nurturing and caretaking role” is transferred to the public sphere (1995, pg 165). In this view women are confined by the traditional ideologies of what they are expected to do in terms of mothering, nurturing and caretaking and this restricts the roles that they can take on in wider society, thus affecting the types of community activities they participate in and the level of control they hold in a wider community context. Reed states “they use the skills learned in the domestic roles to participate in the public arena and use domestic spaces (e.g., kitchen) as arenas to organize socioeconomic and political change” (2003, pg 118).

Reed notes that scholars of women’s work in rural and resource towns often cite the importance of the historical theme of women’s domestic roles attributing to women’s activist roles in community based organizations and its relation to “social

mothering” (2003, pg 119). In the research done on women’s work in rural and resource towns it was found that women were more involved than men in “self-help, voluntary, community based caring activities” and this was viewed as “an extension of traditional family values and priorities” (Reed, 2003, pg 119). Therefore, in this view, the roles of women in the community and in the voluntary sector are shaped by the traditional gender roles of women in these types of communities.

Reed looks at a number of studies focused on women’s positions in Canadian rural and resource towns (2003, pg 119). She notes that “women are seen as taking a supportive (not primary) roles in working-class struggles to retain male employment, family income, and ways of life (2003, pg 119; Ali, 1986; Maggard, 1990). In this view the structure of gender relations contributes to women’s position in society and their lack of dominant decision making roles and responsibilities. Reed mentions that “the dominant local demographic structure and the lack of social infrastructure (e.g., lack of child care options, lack of employment prospects for women) continue to contain women in the home” (2003, pg 119).

Reed examines the work of Elizabeth Teather in reference to the rural context and the way that location affects women’s community work (2003, pg 121). Teather argued that women’s attachment to a physical place can be associated with women’s lives, specifically the community or volunteer work they participate in. Here, community work is seen as an arena of personal growth that allows women to express their attachment to their community in constructive ways (Reed, 2003, pg 122).

Therefore, in this view the community work of women is used, not only for social interaction, but to create positive change within the community that they feel attached to.

Teather did note that one of the common characteristics of rural women's organizations is the notion of like-minded women coming together because of "shared values" and because they "feel comfortable" together (1996, pg 1997). In this view it may be noted that community organization in the rural context is an emotional refuge for the women that live here. In Reed's research she associates the community work of women with a need to escape the feelings of social and geographical isolation that were present in many of the stories told by the women participating in her study (2003, pg 122). Here, the motivation of women to participate in community work is linked with their personal need to escape feelings of isolation (Reed, 2003, pg 123).

Alderson and Conn examine the community economic development work of the Gitksan and W'et suwe'ten women in Northern British Columbia. These women described their work as a process that is strongly linked with their past and is focused on the long term goals in their future (1994, pg 191). In this region culture and traditional knowledge is used to work with community organizations. However, this connection to culture and tradition may also include the exclusion of women.

Alderson et al. state that "the exclusion of women from conventional economic development as active participants and decision makers has been well documented" (pg 194). Therefore it is essential to note that the views of women have not been well

represented in economic programs or policies in either governments or communities. The need for the inclusion of women in the initiatives and the planning processes of community economic development is of particular importance; especially in northern communities where women have been historically excluded from decision making.

In 1996 the Women's Economic Equality (WEE) Society was created. Their initiative was "to make women's voices heard, in all their diversity and to build an inclusive, holistic, women centered CED model" (Parsons & Parker, 2005, pg 11). Parsons et al. note that the reason for the creation of WEE is that "when inclusion is not policy, women are left behind. The barriers to their participation must be addressed directly, not peripherally (2005, pg 11). Parsons et al. began their study in 1997; they called it *Counting Women In CED*. The focus was on listening. The study included talking to more than 1500 rural women about their experiences within their communities across Canada. They met in homes and community centers to talk about all aspects of their lives; including the social, economic, educational, spiritual, and cultural. These aspects of the rural women's lives were looked at in terms of the roles they play in their communities and the barriers they must overcome to be equal participants in their community economic development (2005, pg 11).

The study *Counting Women in CED* noted that the women wanted to play a greater role in local development and that the collective aspect of community development was important to them and their communities (Parsons & Parker, 2005, pg 11). Much of the focus of this research was on the barriers that women have in

CED participation; it helps to understand what women judge as important to them in terms of CED. The rural women who took part in this study mentioned that their representation on the boards and committees of CED organizations would help them develop ties to CED and allow access to further CED training and information (Parsons et al, 2005, pg 11). Also mentioned as possible barriers to women's participation in CED initiatives included "personal isolation, low self-esteem, the undervaluing for women's unpaid work and the lack of public awareness and action about the issues of racism and discrimination" (Parsons et al, 2005, pg 11). Some of the needs the women mentioned were focused on rural childcare, transportation services, education and employment opportunities. In the conclusion of this study Parsons et al. note that women in rural communities want to become more involved in community economic development and are slowly becoming more involved. However, based on their study women will need to overcome the identified barriers to participation before they can truly move forward (2005, pg 12). The barriers to women's participation need to be addressed to allow for further progress to be made by rural women in this sector of the economy and with the growing importance of this sector in northern rural communities it becomes even more crucial that women are involved.

These studies indicate the importance of social economy and community economic development in the north and the importance that it holds for the women living in this region. The need for social economy and community economic development in northern and rural communities is apparent; women living in these



communities need these projects and are willing to become involved. However, the barriers that exist for women living in northern communities need to be addressed. There are still gaps in the literature; the role of women in social economy projects in northern Canada needs further development. This thesis attempts to gain a better understanding of the factors that draw women to this area of the economy and will explore the motivational factors of women working in the social economy sector in Whitehorse, Yukon.

### **The Social Economy**

The term social economy was first used in France as a term to describe the developing social projects that were opposed to the growing capitalist economy (Côté and Fournier, 2006, pg 58). The social economy concept was thought to be similar to liberalism and have many of the same utopian ideals; however for the social economy the emphasis was placed on the collective over the individual. Economic liberalism was focused on individual monetary gains; the focus of social economy was on cooperation and collective benefit (Côté and Fournier, 2006, pg 58). In the view of Amin et al.'s there was a growing theme within social economy that leads to the idea that "a locally based social economy...could and should play a central role in future regeneration and social cohesion strategies" (1999, pg 2033).

The during the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century three sub groups of social economy organizations developed: co-operatives, mutual societies and

associations (Laville et al., 2007, pg 2). According to Laville et al., “the full range of social economy organizations, favouring the accumulation of community assets over the enumeration of capital, took root throughout Europe” (2007, pg 4). The 20<sup>th</sup> century marks the rise and the strengthening of the social economy in Europe.

In France the concept of social economy was initially recognized as an escape from individualism and the capitalist state and was seen as a type of economy based on solidarity (Laville, Levesque, & Mendell, 2007, pg 2). In the view of Côté et al. “social economy was a utopia whose role it was to influence the development of capitalism, although social economy’s point of departure lay in the collective rather than the individual” (2005, pg 58). The notion of economic solidarity was found through out Europe, wherein charity and voluntary commitment was tied to citizenship and social principle (Laville, 2004, pg 2). In this view, the European concept of social economy is based on the idea that the people living in a community have a moral objective and the responsibility and commitment to working in cooperation towards common goals, often working with the state to make significant changes in social policy.

Laville et al. also note that “the convergences between Europe and Canada are striking” (2007, pg 7). Although there are many similarities between the social economy in Europe and in Canada, there are still many differences. In Canada the Quebec social economy is the most clearly defined. The Quebec social economy was developed in parallel to the social economy in Europe; Quebec is well known for the

successful development of a strong social economy (Cabaj, 2004, pg 19). This success is often attributed to the fact that Quebec has historically had a strong commitment to community development organizations and programs.

After the Second World War, Quebec saw a significant rise in social and community development projects. It was during this time that the state began to take a particular interest in social issues and implemented a number of state sponsored programs (Cabaj, 2004, pg 19). The state sponsored initiatives implemented in Quebec after the wars were unique in that they were both state sponsored and locally controlled. Cabaj notes that starting in the 1970's there was a "retreat of the state from social issues" and this retreat of the state allowed for local initiatives to take over (2004, pg 19). The success that Quebec had in the emergence of the social economy have been prominent; Cabaj states that "in terms of organizing across communities and sectors, the proponents of CED and the social economy in other parts of Canada has much to learn from Quebec"(2004, pg 19). In this view, the social economy first developed in Canada in Quebec. The overwhelming success of the social economy in Quebec may benefit the development of this sector in the rest of Canada.

In Quebec the social economy emerged as a social movement (Graefe, 2002, pg 253). The social movements that helped the initial development of the social economy in Quebec are linked to the women's movement, the Québécois nationalist movement, and the ideology of a collective movement away from the individualist

capitalist economy. These social movements were prevalent in Quebec and have been viewed as directly responsible for the institutionalization of a number of social and welfare services (Graefe, 2002, pg 253).

The degree to which the concept of social economy has been implemented varies by region in Canada; even though the degree that it exists is much more extensive (Laville, Lavesque and Mendell, 2007, pg 8). In this view, the social economy may not be uniform in terms of title and definition in all areas of the country; nevertheless it is still an important economic sector in the Canadian economy.

The success of the Quebec model of social economy means that it is important to note how the model originated and the influence that it had on other areas in Canada (Graefe, 2002, pg 253). The development of the Quebec model of social economy has been linked to the favorable climate in Quebec towards the emergence of social infrastructure; this allowed for the social economy sector to develop with some ease in this region (Graefe, 2002, pg 253). What is often called the “Quebec model” was first developed when the Parti Quebecois was the governmental power and held a strong relationship with civil society (Cote and Fournier, 2005, pg 58; Belanger et al, 2001; Vaillancourt et al, 2000). This government addressed the importance of social movements in society and the importance of these movements to the pro-independence project (Cote et al, 2005, pg 58). In this view, simultaneously supporting local social movements and the sovereigntist agenda created a climate that

promoted the decentralization of government through the use of community economic development.

Côté et al. explain that the Quebec Government first defined the social organization of community economic development as a “Third Way” initiative; however, this initiative eventually became known as the “social economy” (2005, pg 58). The popularization of the term social economy took place in 1996 at the “*Sommet de l’économie et de l’emploi* (Economy and Work Summit) and the *Marche des Femmes ‘Du Pain et des Roses’* (‘Bread and Roses’ Women’s March)” (2005, pg 58). It was during these social action movements in Quebec that the notion of the social economy gained momentum. Women were at the forefront of the creation of the social economy as a social movement in Quebec. The involvement of women and the social movements that they produce had a strong and important role in creating and defining the social economy in Quebec. The importance of women in the social economy may also apply to Canada as a whole; Laville et al. explain that “Quebec’s experience recently inspired the Canadian government, which acknowledged the social economy by creating a secretariat for the social economy and adopted a social economy development policy” (2007, 8; Government of Canada, 2004, pg 2004a). Therefore the development of the social economy in Quebec influenced the way this social initiative developed in the rest of Canada.

The Marche des Femmes “Du Pain et des Rose” (“Bread and Roses” Women’s March) in Quebec, played a key role in the way that the social economy

was introduced and implemented into the ideologies surrounding economic development with social and human interest as priority (Graefe, 2002, pg 254). The Woman's March made certain demands on the state; which included a call "for 'social infrastructures' programs that would recognize women's work. Modeled on the idea of recession-battling public works programs the aim was to strengthen and consolidate women's existing socially valuable work, both paid and un-paid" (Graefe, 2002, pg 253) It was through this initiative that a new vision was sought of government social policy planning that centered on economic ideals with social goals.

The Government of Quebec responded to the Women's March and allocated funding for regional social economy projects, giving women's groups the financial support to create social infrastructure to promote the kind of social economic development that they had been hoping for. By 1999 the Quebec Government altered its approach to the social economy and the funding policies were changed. Previously, the focus had been on the social and community development that social economy enterprises promoted. In 1999 the focus shifted and became centered on the monetary value of social economy organizations (Côté and Fournier, 2005, pg 59). After this change of focus took place funding was allocated to social economy projects only if there was a clear profit making initiative, causing many women's groups and organizations to be left out (Côté and Frounier, 2005, pg 59). The women's groups lost their place within the management of the social economy boards and with it their power within the social economy framework.

In 1995 the Quebec Women's Movement played an important role in the successful implementation of the concept of social economy and the development of social economy policy in Quebec (Graefe, 2002, pg 2481; Vaillancourt et al, pg 2000). This women's movement initiated the implementation of a gender sensitive definition of social economy in the province of Quebec: "quality in human relationships rather than the over consumption of manufactured goods ...an alternative to the market exclusion of many women from the market economy" (Du Pain et des Roses, pg 2). The Government of Quebec implemented this gender sensitive definition of social economy to help recognize the importance of this sector in their social initiative policies (Côté and Fournier, 2005, pg 60). This definition was disregarded by 1999, when the Quebec Government implemented the Canadian government definition of the social economy; "Separate from the private sector and government, the social economy includes co-operatives, foundations, credit unions, non-profit organizations, the voluntary sector, charities and social economy enterprises. Social economy enterprises are a component of the social economy that are run like businesses, producing goods and services for the market economy, but manage their operations and redirect their surpluses in pursuit of social and environmental goals" (Western Economic Diversification Canada, 2007). This definition focuses more on the economics; profits and business centered side of the social economy and less emphasis is made to social initiatives (Côté and Fournier, 2005, pg 60).

The original Quebec gender sensitive definition of social economy is important to remember. It helps to better understand the political and social aspects that inspired women in development of the social economy movement. In Quebec

community economic development has had a long standing tradition of playing an important role in social, economic and political development and the roles of women have been crucial to this development process (Côté and Fournier, 2005, pg 58).

However, it is important to point out that social economy organizations existed in Canada for a long time prior to the formation of the social economy as an established concept of social development (Graefe, 2002, pg 253). For Mark Cabaj the importance of community based development and renewal in Canada does not depend on the name that it is given (“social economy”, “Community economic development” or “alternative economy”); it is about how Canadian people have come together to create tools, institutions and resources that work towards the common goal of community development (2004, pg 13). Here, it is made clear that understanding the social economy or community economic development is not reliant on one set title or definition; the most important thing within this sector of economic development is that people are working together in communities, towards common goals of community improvement.

In Canada there has been a long history of investment in social economy organizations and community economic development. Cabaj argues that community based development goes back as far as 12, 000 years ago, to the trading sites of early Aboriginal peoples, where important political and military alliances were developed (2004, pg 13).



The social economy in Canada is often associated with the emergence of the welfare state, where the end of the Second World War sparked a period of economic growth in Canada and allowed the state to take an increased interest in the social issues of the country (Cabaj, 2004, pg 15). Cabaj states that “employment insurance, income support, programs for seniors, and universal health insurance became law” and all of this contributed to a strengthening social fabric in Canada. However, after the 1960s it became clear that some regions were not developing at the same pace as other areas and these areas were looking increasingly economically disadvantaged. Therefore, the government began to focus the economic and social development projects in these areas (Cabaj, 2004, pg 16).

The Canadian government implemented a number of social development strategies, mainly in the area of physical infrastructure. This was considered “top-down” planning, where urban planners were responsible for community restoration. It was quickly learned that “distressed communities themselves must take a lead role in directing and managing any comprehensive revitalization program” (Cabaj, 2004, pg 16). Therefore, it is clear that “distressed” communities must have a direct role in the social and economic development projects that are implemented in their communities. Taking a dominant role in the social development in their own communities will ensure that the development projects that are implemented will make a significant positive impact.

In the view of Graefe, the policies that will be developed by the social economy initiative are hard to predict; he states that “it depends on the relative ability of the interested actors to embed their vision for the social economy in state policy” (2002, pg 248). In this view, there is a conflicting ideology; on the one hand the social economy is a project where people are looking to use capital accumulation to create local economic and social restoration and respond to social exclusion. On the other hand the contradicting approach is the more neo-liberal ideology of state accumulation and a low-cost welfare state (Graefe, 2002, pg 248). Furthering this idea, Graefe states that “social actors seeking to embed a progressive vision of the social economy need an approach that can generalize a more egalitarian distribution of power over local decision making and development processes” (2002, pg 284). Therefore, the role of the actors within the social economy is seen as the most important element in the development of the social economy and will play an important role in guiding the direction of social economy policy creation. If the role of social actors is a key component to the way the social economy is understood in society, it stands to reason that who these actors are will play an important role in the development of the social economy.

The question of how involved the state should be in social economy organization is a matter of debate. Graefe presents this view, “on the one hand, the social economy can meet new needs by mobilizing resources latent within communities, and by building new solidarities. On the other hand the social provision

bypasses the Taylorist<sup>4</sup> welfare state and is based on more participatory forms of organization and decision making” (2002, pg 250). According to Graefe the social economy is a “social democratic strategy” that is concerned with meeting new needs and demands of society; here the central question is one of power (Graefe, 2002, pg 250). For Graefe, if the question within the social economy is about power the issue becomes about how the power is distributed. Therefore, if the issue is about power and the ability that social economy has in empowering communities and the people who are marginalized in society, women are a key component within the social economy and its development.

### **Position of Women in the Social Economy**

A connection is often made between women’s involvement in the economy and the role that women play within social and cooperative work. Côté and Fournier examine women’s economic and cooperative contributions and state that, “we are now rediscovering women’s participation in cooperation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; that of women in community groups from 1960-1980 is known, but little has been written on the subject” (2005, pg 58).

In their research, Côté et al. focus on the way that women have been represented in the social economy in Quebec and the gender perspectives that have been used to understand the needs of women. In an explanation of their research they

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<sup>4</sup> Taylorist or Taylorism is a theory of work management, similar to Fordism; where the focus of work place systems is on efficiency (Taylor, 1911).

state, “We know that women formed the vast majority of promoters, employees, and volunteers, we analyzed the capacity of social economy support mechanisms to integrate a gender perspective and address women’s practical and strategic interests” (2005, pg 59). Therefore, the research of Côté et al. recognizes the importance of taking a gender sensitive perspective in the definition of the concept of social economy in Quebec and how this gender sensitive definition affected the way that social economy organizations in this region developed. The gender sensitive definition of social economy used in Quebec focused on the social aspects of the social economy rather taking an economic focus. This socially focused definition influenced the way that the social economy organizations and programs were developed in communities; making a significant difference in the lives of women in the region (Côté et al., 2005, pg 59).

Having a gender sensitive definition greatly affected the impact that social economy organizations had on society; specifically in regards to women’s needs. Cote et al. found that when the more social oriented and gender sensitive definition of the social economy was implemented in Quebec the positive outcomes for women were far greater than they were after the definition changed (2005, pg 60). Cote et al. state “our research has shown that a feminist concept of social economy, based on the recognition of ‘social infrastructure’ or the synthesis of social fiber by voluntary (and often women’s) labor, facilitates the achievement of objectives in job creation” (2005, pg 61). Therefore, in this view, gender is an important issue when addressing the

definition and the long term goals of the social economy and the way it is developed and put into action in society.

Cabaj explores the ideologies behind community economic development and social economy by looking at the historical importance of how communities and groups of people come together and take action against exclusion from a mainstream society that has ignored their needs (2004, pg 13). For Cabaj, “one thing is clear: the main and varied initiatives in community-based development and revitalization currently flourishing in Canada under the labels of “social economy”, “community economic development”, or “alternative economics” have deep, deep roots” (2004, pg13). In this view the history of community based development in Canada is explored as a progressive social movement that motivated people and communities who were marginalized in society to take action and create positive change. Cabaj explains the importance that progressive social movements had; “they (marginalized groups) would organize themselves politically. They would establish community-based organizations to address basic needs like housing and human services and eventually they would turn their attention to creating their own economic opportunities” (2004, pg 18).

In looking at the social economy as a social movement fostered by those people who are marginalized in society the aspect of women’s roles in the social economy is often highlighted. Women acquiring the right to vote was a significant moment for women and helped shape a changing view of women in Canada and in

the way women were recognized by the Government of Canada (2004, pg 18).

Between 1950 and 1980 the women's movement was strong and working to create positive changes for women in terms of gender roles and pay inequalities between genders (Cabaj, 2004, pg 18).

The economic situation of women and the inequalities that women were facing in the work place quickly became a social concern and the overall economic wellbeing of women was highlighted by the women's movement. Many women's groups became more concerned with strengthening their economic positions in society, many using alternative economic development ideas (Cabaj, 2004, pg18). Often these groups and organizations would focus on creating more economic opportunities for women, providing training and skills development. Many women's groups worked to establish non-profit businesses where they would provide on-the-job training, experience and income, specifically for women.

The Canadian Women's Community Economic Development Council defines community economic development as "local economic development that is focused on people, employment, self-employment inclusion and sustainability. Its goal is to provide a secure livelihood, in jobs that are environmentally, socially and economically sustainable". Social economy enterprises are run like businesses that look to foster social and environmental benefits for communities; it is these benefits that are often linked to CED strategies (CWCEDC, 2005,). Therefore, women centered CED is focused on changing the lives of women and challenging the

fundamental social and economic issues of equality. The CWCEDC was founded in 2002 and looks to advance women's positions in society and improve the lives of women and their families as well as their communities. The CWCEDC states that they accomplish these goals through "increasing awareness of the effectiveness of holistic, women-centered CED, researching and documenting issues, trends and outcomes of the diversity and spectrum of women-centered CED and strengthening women-centered CED sector and organizations".

The Canadian Women's Community Economic Development Council believes that there is a strong connection between the social economy and community economic development (2005, pg 28). CWCEDC notes that there is a need for strong social enterprise and social economy strategies in any CED project (pg 28). Therefore the development of the social economy is closely linked to CED and especially women centered CED. The goal of CED is often the development of strong social enterprise that can benefit communities and the people, often women, in them.

Therefore, women-centered CED has a number of goals; all with the main purpose of helping women overcome gender inequalities. Another main issue that the CWCEDC focuses on in terms of the needs of women is poverty and what CED can do to help women. In Canada women are more likely to live in poverty than men. Women centered CED looks to address the issues of women that will help deal with power relations in their daily lives. CWCEDC cites that "research indicates that the most important determinants of poverty in Canada are the individual's family type

(i.e. whether or not there are two incomes present in the family) and relationship to the labour market (i.e. Employment status and income level) – both of which are related to gender” (2005, 5). In this view the CWCEDC looks to understand the aspects of women’s lives that will impact the power relations in society, politically and economically.

The responsibilities of women in both family and community are often different than the responsibilities of men. The reality is that women hold the ‘reproductive role’ in society and this puts certain demands on their lives and affects their market labour participation, in terms of, flexibility of hours, opportunities for advancement and training, eligibility for government transfer payments (i.e. pensions and unemployment insurance) (CWCEDC, 2005, pg 6). This is a gender specific position that women are in and it impacts all areas of their lives. It is also important to note though, that not all women become mothers and not all gendered relationships assign the typical male/female roles. However it is clear that women are often in positions where they are attempting to balance numerous responsibilities in their life, namely work, family, and volunteer commitments. Therefore, because of these and other gender specific differences in the lives of women, it is important to address the labour market needs of women in specific and intrinsically beneficial manner.

Existing literature on women working in community economic development and in the social economy states that there are two types of “need” that must be addressed to make positive changes for gender equality within these sectors. Firstly,



“practical needs” are the needs of women in their existing circumstances, where the concern is meeting the basic requirements of health, food security, employment, housing, etc. (Cote et al., 2005, pg 58; McCracken et al. 2005, pg 10; Moser, 1989). The second type of “need” is identified “strategic needs”; where the over arching gender inequality faced by women is addressed and the goal is to create change and challenge existing gender roles in a way that will have long term benefits for women and their position in society and in market labour. Caroline Moser conceptualized the understanding of these gender needs in her work with development theory. In her view, any work in gender equality should look to understand women’s needs in terms of practical and strategic gender needs (Moser, 1989; cf McCracken et al. 2005, pg 10).

McCracken et al. studied young women (50 women ages 15-24) in inner city Winnipeg neighborhoods looking specifically at the relationship of work and community economic development and how to create an effective means of reducing poverty (2005). The study analyzed gender using the concept of gender needs, however particular importance was given to strategic need and how CED has the potential to improve the position of women in society and the economy (2005, pg 10). In this view, the importance of the long term benefits of gender equality is highlighted and the conceptualization of strategic gender needs is required to improve on CED and the economic position of women.

The study done by McCracken et al. found that CED can be beneficial to young women by helping them develop skills that will be useful in the wider economy (2005, 56). The skills women develop working with CED organizations can benefit their long term goals of economic equality and break the barriers of what is traditional gendered occupations, for example, where women enter computer technology or a trade as opposed to a childcare program (McCracken, 2005, pg 56). “Young women face formidable challenges to improving their economic status and quality of life” (McCracken et al., 2005, pg ii). In this view CED can be seen as a possible solution.

McCracken et al. also found that when asking the young women what they want to be doing, they wanted to do things that would give back to their communities (2005, pg 31). Citing things such as “teachers aid, taking care of pets, babysitting or child care, or working in the community center”, young women showed their interest in helping others and making a difference within their communities (2005, pg 31). Here, the importance of holistic programs that will foster the skills women need to build their own economic futures for themselves and their communities is important.

Women-centered CED is often described as a holistic approach where women can make positive changes to the overall unequal structures that impact their lives. McCracken et al. state “community economic development is emerging as a supportive, sustainable and empowering means to end poverty among young women” (2005, pg i). Using a holistic approach to achieve a CED program that works, starts

with understanding the practical needs of women (food, shelter, childcare, transportation) and their strategic needs (education, equality in wage and the labor force, reproductive choice). However, more has to be done in terms of strategic needs to allow women to make positive changes for themselves in their economic position and their quality of life in the long term. One important conclusion to McCracken et al.'s study is the importance of including women in the planning process of CED (2005, pg 57).

Janet Murray and Mary Ferguson work for Eko Nomos, a consulting company that works for social and economic development organizations on a community level (2005, pg 34). Working with Eko Nomos, Murray et al. began research into women's community economy development and identified the need of a practical approach for practitioners of women's CED to use in within their organizations (2005, pg 30). In identifying the need for this approach to women's CED Murray et al. state that "we have heard the profound changes wrought in the lives of the women with whom they work. But stories are no longer enough to show the power of connecting women to economic security" (2005, pg 30). In this research they are attempting to develop a model of CED that will be useful to CED organizations to apply to their work to demonstrate in an objective way the difference they are making in the lives of women. Much of the evaluation of CED organizations is focused on monetary evaluations and the economic aspects of achievement; where the actual differences that the organization is making in the lives of real women is left out (2005, pg 31).

Murray et al. look to the Sustainable Livelihoods Model in their research and develop an understanding of how to measure the qualitative aspects that CED has in changing the lives of women (2005, pg 31). A livelihood is defined as comprising of “a package of assets that includes strong identity and motivation, social connections and support, and job and income security” (Murray et al, 2005, pg 30). This conception of a livelihood is of particular interest in understanding the importance of a holistic approach to researching women and the unique aspects of their lives that need to be considered to gain true knowledge. The Sustainable Livelihoods model uses an asset-based approach to discover what works best for women in CED and it “creates a more realistic, complete picture of the lives of women involved in their programs, and can show more clearly the range of changes that happen as a result of women’s participation in CED” (Murray et al, 2005, pg 31).

To highlight the gender variation in different aspects of CED a look at the 2003 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating (NSGVP) helps identify women dominated activities. On average, 50-75% of non-profit sector employees are women and 54% of all volunteers are women, this number is even higher depending on the sector that the volunteer work falls under (Statistics Canada, 2003). Women were found to be more prominent in canvassing, campaigning and fundraising, providing care or support, providing health care in a hospital or senior's home, and collecting, serving or delivering food or goods. Men were seen to be more involved in: teaching or coaching for an organization; helping to maintain, repair or build facilities; helping with first aid, firefighting or search and rescue; and protecting the environment or wildlife (Status of Women Canada, 2007). In looking at the

gender differences in types of volunteer activities that men and women choose the survey showed that women have a preference towards activities that fall into the “care economy”; where the central focus is on caring and helping others (Status of Women Canada, 2007). Women choose those organizations that are centered on helping, supporting, and caring for other people. In comparison, men choose volunteer activities that are more closely associated with paid work in areas that are closely related to the male dominant social norms.

Another gendered issue in terms of volunteering is the reasons people cite for participating in certain groups and organizations compared to others. Most research participants cited that they based their choice on a feeling, for example "cause in which they believe" (Status of Women in Canada, 2007). However, there were a number of volunteers who noted that they felt "personally affected" by the cause the organizations supported; more women than men felt this way about the organization they volunteered for. Therefore, women may have deeper emotional ties to the organizations that they choose to volunteer for and support; possibly creating a greater connection to that organization. This distinction is important to note for this particular thesis in that the research is focused on developing an understanding of the personal values and motivations that women in the north associate with their own participation in the social economy.

The volunteer activity of women is often understood in-terms of the “caring role” of women in society. The ideology that women are prone to the “caring role” in the home is readily transferred from the home sphere into the public sphere of

volunteer work. Doris Gold analyzes feminist volunteer work, assessing both the conscious and unconscious motivations for women's volunteer participation (1971). For Gold one important factor motivating the volunteer work of women was the ideology of women as "caretakers" or "helpmates". It is this gender role ideology that assigns women to the "mothering, nurturing, caretaking roles of society, linking female stereotypes to various tasks and family statutes" (Ollenberg & Moore, 1994, pg 94).

Volunteer motivation has been identified as being related to motivation to become involved in non-profit organization and public service organization; "a primary task for non-profit and public service organizations, then, is to motivate the participation of new and continuing volunteers. Therefore, it is important to identify the motivational mechanisms underlying volunteer work" (Harrison, 1995, pg 371). In this view the motivations of people to volunteer is an important factor to consider when studying the underlying mechanisms associated with any non-profit work.

The difference between motivations for paid labour force participation and volunteer or non-profit participation must also be addressed. Harrison notes that in most studies of volunteer motivations the focus is on the personal satisfaction one feels of their work and the reward evaluation (1995, pg 371). Volunteers often see the social and service related rewards as being more important than paid employees that are doing the same jobs. Also, motivations identified for volunteer work is often associated with intrinsic and altruistic intentions.

Volunteer work is often compared to paid employment; looking at the different motivations that can be associated with the likelihood of an individual to participate in volunteer work. Snyder, Clary and Stukas state that “volunteer motivation should be considered in terms of a potential volunteer’s need or reason for seeking out volunteering opportunities, and then their need or reason for committing to and sustaining that activity” (2002, pg. 4). In this view volunteer motivation is conceptualized and understood as an individual’s need or reason for participating in the volunteer work; which is distinct from paid employment where there is no financial compensation.

Based on the literature surrounding women working in social economy and community economic development, women are key contributors to this area of the economy. Women have been an integral part of the development and implementation of the social economy sector, both Quebec and the rest of Canada. The literature states that women have been actively involved in social economy organizations and want to be a part of the planning process and implementation of social economy organizations within their communities. A proper understanding of social economy development in the north must therefore better understand women’s involvement in these organizations. However, there are significant gaps in the literature surrounding women’s role in the social economy in the Canadian North; this thesis will attempt to fill these gaps by looking at the unique and changing role of women in the social economy in Whitehorse, Yukon.

### **Women in the Social Economy in Whitehorse**

The original economy in the Yukon was dominated by the fur trade. The North West Company dominated this trade and developed posts early in the nineteenth century to secure their interest in the area (Coates and Morrison, 2005, pg 17). The fur trade era was the first economic activity to bring non-Native peoples into the Yukon Territory. In the 1850's there had been talk about the prospect of Gold in the Yukon. Miners made their way up north to find their fortune. Some of these miners brought their wives with them; these women were the first non-Native women to enter the Yukon (Coates et al, 2005, pg 52). The first miners in the area were there to escape the factories of the industrial revolution; they were veteran miners and did not take risks. They made up a highly mobile population and did not winter in the region if possible.

The Yukon gold rush was the most influential economic era in Yukon history (Coates & Morrison, 2005, pg 77). The Gold Rush era lasted from 1896 to 1900; the miners of the gold rush were the first permanent non-Native settlers in this region. The first non-Native women of the region were "all types: miners' wives, prostitutes, and women out for change or adventure" (Coates et. al, 2005, pg 93). The first non-Native women to enter the Yukon during the Gold Rush era were thought to be prostitutes, actresses, or dance-hall girls; however, many were wives and women looking for a change. These women had to make an effort to gain a respectable



reputation and prove themselves as “decent” (2005, pg 111). Many of the women living in the Yukon during the gold rush were concerned with making a community out of the small town that had been developed.

Following the initial years of the gold rush the population of the Yukon declined again as miners moved on to other strikes in Alaska and as the mining operations in the Dawson area become rationalized under one large mining company which used more technologically advanced mining techniques. Following World War I several other mining operations developed and a transportation infrastructure based on river boats and a railroad from Skagway to Whitehorse continued to operate and provide employment to primarily non-Natives. The population of the region decreased to the point that by 1921 the region held 4,157 people, less than half of its population in 1911.

The Second World War was especially significant to the economy in the Canadian North and in particular in the Yukon. The economic changes that took place in the Yukon Territory were mainly due to location as the shared border with Alaska impacted the Territory greatly. The Yukon saw significant changes in the social and economic structure of the communities in the territory when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour and the United States of America declared war (Morrison, 1998, pg 130). Americans become even more concerned about national security; the decision was made to build a highway through the Yukon to connect Alaska with the rest of the country. The Canadian Government agreed to the construction of the highway and gave the Americans unrestricted access to Yukon land and control over the

construction of the highway. This caused considerable changes for northern communities in the Yukon. The economy, the infrastructure and the population balance were all affected by the American's entry into the territory (Morrison, 1998, pg 132).

The war and the construction of the Alaska Highway created major changes for the community of Whitehorse. Prior to the beginning of World War II Whitehorse was a small and highly mobile community; the population was predominantly seasonal with many of the workers arriving in the spring and returning south for the winter months (Cotes & Morrison, 2005, pg 208). It had been established in the early years of the gold rush as the rail head for the White Pass and Yukon Railway which was built to transport goods from the Pacific Coast inland. Goods arriving from the coast would be transferred to river boats for shipment to the gold fields. Following the decline of the gold rush the community was used periodically to transfer material to other mining operations but growth was limited. It was a company town firmly controlled by the railway company which served the needs of the regional mining industry. It had a population of less than 500 for most of the 20s and 30s. However, with the war, in 1942 the population of the city grew 12 times its original size (Morrison, 1998, pg 132).

The end of the Second World War left Whitehorse a very different community than the one that had been there prior to the war. Whitehorse had acquired all the facilities and amenities of a "small modern city, with theaters, baseball diamonds,

skating rinks, dancehalls, a radio station...new roads, dozens of new buildings, water and sewage systems, warehouse and maintenance space, and a rapidly growing commercial district” (Coates et al. 2005, pg 264). This growth allowed the community of Whitehorse to become what it is today. At the end of the war many of the community residents had been worried the town would collapse, but the year round road access allowed the city of Whitehorse to prosper in the years to come. The territorial and government offices had previously been located in Dawson City, but with the Alaska Highway now running directly through Whitehorse many of the government offices were moved to Whitehorse, creating stable well paying jobs and greater economic stability for the city (Coates et. al. 2005, pg 269).

In the north there were significant social and economic changes taking place; the rise of the welfare-state meant greater attention to the previously ignored living conditions in Northern Canada (Coates et al, 2005, pg 263). The rise of the welfare state in Canada brought a new ideology to the north, where “spending, transfer payments and social assistance of various kinds”, were bringing new hope for future development in Whitehorse (Coates et al. 2005, pg 264). The refocusing of much of the political and economic from Dawson City to Whitehorse created a new community atmosphere. The continued economic stability and population growth in Whitehorse throughout the 1970’s and 80’s brought new economic innovation to the region. In 1986 the government invited all Yukon residents to an open conference; to decide on the future of Yukon society and economy. This process did not produce many new ideas, but it did prove that there was a “strong consensus on the need for

economic diversification and measures to ensure economic equality and social stability within the territory” (Coates et al, 2005, pg 298). This political and economic change of focus in the Territory and specifically in the City of Whitehorse created the possibility for change in the economic lives of women working in this region. An expanding and diversified economic sphere would offer more workforce opportunities for women.

The economy in Whitehorse at one time was similar to the single industry resource-dependant communities like those of Northern Ontario and other provincial norths. However, after the Second World War considerable changes occurred in the economy of Whitehorse. Due to the location, road access and increased communication with the rest of Canada, Whitehorse took over much of the political and economic power within the territory (Coates et al. 2005, pg 269). In the 1970’s Yukon entered a period of economic stability, with a “solid core of well-paid federal and territorial employees, long term mining projects, and continued exploration” (pg 269). Mining continued to be the dominant economic engine in the community up to the 1970s but by the 1980s it was apparent that the service sector was the new economic base of the community.

Today in the Yukon there is a balance between resource development and environmental sensitivities (Coates et al. 2005, pg 315). The economic focus is now on sustainability and the long term possibilities; however, the non aboriginal population in the Yukon continues to be defined by transiency, “with workers

migrating north for summer jobs or for other short term territorial experiences” (pg 300). The Yukon has been through a number of economic transformations and as the economy changes so to does the role of women in the economy. Whitehorse itself has a unique economic situation, even within the region, “slowly losing its unique northern character, replacing it with popular culture, mass market commercial and entertainment environment” (pg 307). In this view the socio-economic situation in Whitehorse is undergoing a total transformation; this shift in society and the economy will greatly impact all aspects of community. The relationship women have to the socio-economic sphere in Whitehorse is being affected, as shown in rising employment rates for women and more options within the labour market (Yukon Bureau of Statistics, 2008).

Resource dependant communities across Northern Canada are seeing corporate restructuring, a rise of the service sector, changing technologies, and growing flexibility in labor relations (Southcott, 2006). The position of women in the north is also going through a period of change. The economic changes taking place in the north affect the people that live in this region: northern women are greatly affected by these changes. There are now more jobs and more opportunities available for women in these communities. Understanding the position of women in the north is important for this research. For this thesis it is important to understand the situation of women in the northern economy and the way that changes in the economy affects the lives and the situation of northern women.

Much of the existing literature that is focused on communities in Canada's north looks at the inequality that is experienced in this region (Schmidt, 2007, pg 339). The research for this thesis looks more directly at the social and economic situation of women in the north, specifically in Whitehorse. The unique economic history of the region is explored to better understand the situation of women working in the social economy in Whitehorse. There are significant gaps in the existing literature, about the impact that women's work has on the Yukon economy. It is important to understand the historical context of the Yukon economy and the impacts that it has on the motivations of Yukon women working in the social economy in the present socio-economic climate.

The exclusion of women from the paid labour force in most northern communities may be significant in motivating women to work in an alternative sector of the economy, such as, in unpaid labour, volunteer work, household labour, for non-profit organization and for community economic development projects. The historical exclusion from the resource industry is a dominant theme in many northern economies and may account for the predisposition for women to choose work in the social economy sector. Yet the role of women in the regional economy is becoming even more significant as the economies in Northern Canada go through a period of economic change; the role of the resource industry is decreasing and the service sector industry is increasing.

### **Findings of the Literature Review**

This literature review examines previous research focused on the participation of women in the social economy. The literature was focused on the areas of *social economy, women's historical relationship to the economy in northern and rural communities, women in the Canadian North and the role of women in the social economy*. Within these broad areas of literature, themes were identified that would be useful in developing an understanding of the motivations of women to work in the social economy in Whitehorse. The focus of literature and the themes developed from the literature were examined to find inter-related connections between each that would help better identify areas of interest (see Table 1.0).

The first theme looked at the impact of *women's nurturing/maternal role* in society and their tendency to work in the "caring economy". Related to this is the idea that women *need to take a supportive role* in the work that they do; women are more likely to work in positions where they can make a positive difference and support others and their community. The research also found that women have been excluded from the traditional economy, therefore making one of the key themes of this research *women's exclusion from paid labour* and the way that this exclusion impacts the choices women make in the labour market. Finally, women may feel a certain amount of isolation from the formal economy and the need to *escape their feelings of isolation* may also play a role in their decision to become involved in the social economy.

In this literature review understanding women's historical relationship to northern and rural economies was very important. The literature highlights the way that the history of women's work in the north has developed and the way that the past experiences of women in the paid labour force affects the work women choose in the present. The exclusion of women from the paid labour force in the past can be viewed as a possible motivation for women to choose work in alternative sectors of the economy, for example the social economy. In this view, women may be more likely to make the choice to work in the social economy because they feel that they are more accepted in this type of work and the environment is less threatening than the capitalist, profit focused, labour market sector of the economy.

In the theme of *women in the social economy* existing literature highlighted that women often *take a supportive role* in the work that they choose to participate in. In this view, women are often involved in work where they are able to help others and are able to be a part of something that is working to support others and the community in which they live. This research examines the motivating factors of women working in the social economy. Therefore, it may be more likely for women to work in the social economy because they are able to be a part of an organization or business that focuses on making a difference and supporting communities and people. Previous research presented the idea that women feel a *need to be in supportive roles* in their communities and in the work that they do; this research attempts to determine if this need affects women's choice to work in the social economy.



Similar to the *need for women to be in supportive roles* in the work that they do, there also appears to be a tendency for women to choose work that is based on their ability to be *nurturing and caring* in the work they do. Women are often linked to work that is in the “care economy”, work that focuses on helping others, their community and wider society. The above review of existing research suggests that women are often drawn to work that allows them to nurture others and to work with people who need to be cared for. Therefore, the fact that women are drawn to caring roles in the work they do; could explain why women appear to be drawn to work in the social economy. In a lot of social economy work there is less of a focus on the economic goals of the work being done and more of a focus on social wellbeing and community development. This allows for the focus of social economy organizations to be about caring and nurturing and making a difference as compared to the purely economic focus of many private businesses.

Another important aspect highlighted in the research that focuses on northern economies is that women in the north have had unique experiences in the market labour economy of this region. Northern Canada is a unique geographic area and the economy in these northern communities is very different from other regions. Within this theme, the feeling of isolation or exclusion from work becomes especially important for women living in the north. In this literature review it is apparent that women in small northern communities are often left out of the industrial labour market that is prevalent in this region. This exclusion from the labour market can cause women to become isolated from the economic sphere. Therefore, women in the

north are more likely to choose work in the social economy sector because they need to escape their feelings of isolation and exclusion. Therefore, women are motivated to participate in an area of the economy that accepts them and fosters feelings of inclusion and promotes community development.

Based on the information in this literature review several key ideas can be isolated that need to be examined by further research: that women in Whitehorse are motivated to participate in the social economy by, feelings of isolation, the exclusion from the paid labour force, the need to be in a supportive role, and the ability to be in a caring and nurturing position.

The purpose of this thesis is to understand if the exclusion of women from the paid labour economy in Northern Canada affects women's choice to work in the growing social economy sector in this region. As the economy in the north becomes more focused on the service sector, the role of women in the labour force may become increasingly important. Although the research has centered on the important role of women in the social economy; both the role of women in paid labour and the social economy are becoming progressively more important to the northern economy. As the economy changes so will the situation of women.

The economic situation of women in Northern Canada will be explored in this thesis; looking specifically at the role of women in the social economy in Whitehorse. The economic situation in the north is changing for everyone, both men and women. Even

so, the previous exclusion of women from the labour industry in north has given women a unique position in the new northern economy. As the economy in northern communities transforms from a predominantly resource based labour market to a more service centered economy the role of women in these economies will change as well. There are large gaps in the literature on the role of women in the social economy in Northern Canada.

*Figure 1.0 Themes from the Literature Review*

Motivations	Social Economy	Women's Historical Relationship to the Economy in Northern and Rural Communities	Women in the Canadian North	The Role of Women in the Social Economy
Nurturing/ Maternal Role		X	X	X
"Need" to take a Supportive		X		X
"Caring Economy"	X	X		X
Exclusion from the Paid Labour Force	X	X	X	X
Escape their Feelings of Isolation		X	X	X

### Methodology

Based on the literature review it was decided that the most effective means of determining why women choose to work in the social economy is to ask them; many of the research studies examined in the literature review cited the interview method as most beneficial in developing a clear understanding of the experiences of women.

The best way to develop a true understanding of the motivations and personal

experiences of women working in the social economy in Whitehorse is to go to the women currently working in this sector and ask them about what motivates them in their work and about what impacts their experience in this area of work. In the literature review it became clear that women have had different life experiences than men and are impacted in a unique way by the economy and labour. For this research it is clear that the women need to be given the opportunity to express their individual thoughts, feelings and ideas about the work they do in the social economy.

In Mary Crnkovich's book "Gossip: A Spoken History of Women in the North" she examines the real lives of women in the north and relies on women's personal interpretations of everyday experiences. In the introduction Crnkovich notes that "the insights and analyses offered in Gossip are northern-based and women centered... Women are seldom afforded the opportunity to tell their story in their way" (1990, pg xvi). In this view, research that is directed toward the real lives of women and their experiences should allow the women interviewees to express themselves in their own words and in their own way. Research that is focused on women does not always express the views that were intended by the woman. Crnkovich believes that it is especially important and insightful for women to express themselves on the issues that are important in their lives (1990, pg xvi).

This study examined issues of motivation, participation, membership, and the individual experiences of women and their involvement in the social economy in Whitehorse Canada. The qualitative data that was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with women who are currently working in the social economy

in the Canadian North helps to better understand the importance of the experience of women involved in the social economy. The interview participants included women that were currently involved within social economy organizations and businesses in the north.

### **Selection of Research Participants**

Social economy organizations in the Yukon were identified using the SERNNNoCa portraiture survey (Southcott and Walker, 2009). The information gathered through this survey allowed for a more representative sample to be drawn for the interviews. The survey created a list of all the social economy organizations in the Yukon and used this list to distribute their survey. This survey looked to develop a better understanding (a portrait) of the social economy in the north. The first list created was of all possible organizations in Yukon that may be considered part of the social economy, however as organizations replied to the survey it became clear which organizations met the description of social economy organization. For this research only social economy organizations within Whitehorse were of interest. All organizations that were not social economy organizations or were not located within the city of Whitehorse were deleted from the list used to gather the sample. Any organizations which had not yet replied to the SERNNNoCa survey were also deleted. From the final list a random sampling technique was used to choose social economy organizations and businesses which would be contacted to participate in the research.

An initial list of 15 social economy organizations was compiled.

Organizations were chosen to be contacted by email and phone to request the possibility of women working in the organization to take part in this study. Fifteen social organizations were contacted and nine agreed to participate in the research study. A selective snowballing technique was also used, which allowed interview participants the opportunity to recommend other suitable research participants for the study. This technique was helpful to ensure that a representative sample of women involved in the social economy had been contacted and interviewed. Many of the recommendations the research participants made were in organizations that had already contacted. Twenty women working within the Whitehorse social economy agreed to participate in the research interviews.

The semi-structured interview format was used to explore the motivations and unique experiences of women working in the social economy sector. The interview questions focused on the research participant's motivations to work in this sector and about how their personal lives affected their choice to work in this sector. The interview questions also looked to develop a thorough understanding of the overall experiences of the women working in this sector. The study was conducted over a 3 week time period in November 2008.

A variety of women were chosen for this study based on their participation in social economy work. The research participants varied greatly in terms of their age and the background. Almost half of the participants were married with children while

the rest were unmarried and childless. There was also a great deal of differentiation in terms of the work that the research participants were involved in within the social economy (see Table 2.0). Some of the women interviewed worked in an organization that was very industrial and required physical labour. Others worked in organizations focused on children and child development. There were also a number of women working in positions focused on education. Some of the women interviewed were in supervisor positions in their organization. Most of the women participants were employees of the social economy organization they worked for; two of the women worked on a voluntary basis, while a few of the others were in paid contract positions. Two of the interview participants were Native women.

All study participants were female and were between the ages of 18 and 75. Seven were employed in the area of education, four were in the health field, two were into the area of visual arts, four worked in the trades, and two were involved in other sectors. Eleven of the study participants were parents. Many of the participants contributed to the social economy sector in a variety of ways. Therefore many of the research participants were actively involved in numerous social economy organizations and had a selection of experiences to draw upon. Table 2 summarizes each participant's area of involvement within the social economy based on the main focus of their respective social economy organization and their main role within the organization. The study participants were often more involved in one area in the social economy when they were involved in numerous activities within this sector. Therefore the table demonstrates the participants' primary area of interest in the

social economy as well as their peripheral areas of involvement. This distinction is made to better understand the depth of each study participants' involvement in the social economy and to identify the range of activities that the individual participants are concerned with. Table 2 also identifies which research participants were working full-time or part-time and which participants were being paid for their work in the social economy.

*Table 2.0 Summary of study participants' area of involvement in the social economy*

	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Primary Social Economy Activity</b>	<b>Other Social Economy Activity</b>	<b>Full-Time/ Part-Time work</b>	<b>Paid/ Un-Paid</b>
1	Alice	Health/ Education	Unknown	Part Time	Paid
2	Betty	Education	Community, sports/rec.	Full Time	Paid
3	Cindy	Childcare	None	Full Time	Paid
4	Diane	Education	None	Full Time	Paid
5	Ellen	Office-Environmental	None	Full Time	Paid
6	Fran	Labour-Environmental	Unknown	Full Time	Paid
7	Gina	Labour-Environmental	Unknown	Full Time	Paid
8	Heather	Office-Environmental	Volunteer	Full Time	Paid
9	Isabella	Office-Environmental	None	Full Time	Paid
10	Jennifer	Other	None	Full Time	Paid
11	Karen	Health	Volunteer	Full Time	Paid
12	Lisa	Other	Youth/ education	Full Time	Paid
13	Mary	Education/childcare	Volunteer	Full Time	Paid
14	Nina	Education	Volunteer, community	Full Time	Paid
15	Olivia	Education	Unknown	Full Time	Paid
16	Paula	Arts	Arts	Part Time	Un-Paid
17	Rita	Arts	Unknown	Part Time	Un-Paid
18	Suzanne	Education	Volunteer, community	Full Time	Paid
19	Tina	Health	Volunteer, community	Full Time	Paid
20	Verna	Health	Volunteer, community	Full Time	Paid



Almost all of the study participants noted that they felt intrinsically linked to the work that they were doing within the social economy. Only two of the research participants stated that they were only working in the social economy because they needed a paying job; the other participants noted that their pay was important but that their main motivation behind choosing to work in the social economy was the line of work, they wanted to make a difference in the community and society. Two of the research participants noted that although they were paid for their work their wage was less than it would be if they were to take a similar position working in the private sector of the economy. These participants stated that they felt lucky to have the option to work in this field because they were a part of a dual earner household. Six of the research participants were in their 20's and were in a single-earner household; these participants noted that they felt that because they were young it was a good time to work in a field that they chose for intrinsic reasons and not for monetary reasons. These women felt that they were doing something for themselves. The motivations for the women research participants in this study were unique to each participant; many participants felt the same motivational factors contributed to their choice to work in the social economy the rank order of these motivations were distinct.

All the women research participants in this study currently work in the social economy in Whitehorse. Women working in other sectors of the economy were not interviewed. However, 18 of the women interviewed had been employed by the private sector economy in the past. The remaining two women did not mention

employment in other areas of the economy but may have had experience working in the private sector economy. Based on this data it appears that working in the social economy is a self-selection process. All of the women interviewed for this study had chosen to work in the social economy sector; each participant was motivated to differing degrees, by various motivating factors. The factors of motivation will be further explored and analyzed.

### **Research Approach**

The primary method of analysis for this research is semi-structured interviews. The data gathered through these interviews was analyzed by looking for key themes of motivation. Data analysis began by identifying key themes that were presented in the interview records; these themes offered insight into the motivations of the women research participants involved in this study. The themes were identified as factors that motivate women's choice to participate in the social economy. Motivating factors were identified as those factors that contribute to women's choice to work in the social economy because of the unfavourable nature of the alternative (capitalist) economy. Motivational factors were also identified that make women chose the social economy because of the advantages and attraction of this type of economy.

The analysis was guided by key themes within the literature review that were able to offer insight into the possible motivations for women to be more involved in

the social economy. Within the data themes were sought out that demonstrated possible reasons that women chose social economy work over work in other sectors of the economy. The data was also looked at in terms of the over all feelings and connections that women associated with their work in the social economy; for example the way the research participant described their personal values and beliefs in relation to the type of work they did or felt was important. The research participants were often asked to describe feelings or emotions associated with their work and the importance of having these connections. To better understand how women viewed their work and how they came to be involved in the social economy required a thorough understanding of how the individual participants made decisions about the type of work they would be involved in.

The themes that are identified in the literature review allow for a more thorough understanding of possible issues of concern and give background information to guide the interview questions. The qualitative approach of this study allowed the interview data to be analyzed in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the individual experiences of the women interview participants. The motivations, issues and concerns identified by the research participants in the data were analyzed to develop a deeper understanding of how the experiences of women affect their participation in the social economy.

### **Data Gathering**

The methodology for this thesis was primarily qualitative. Semi-structured interviews were created (see Appendix 1) to examine the individual experience of women working in the social economy in Whitehorse. The interview questions were opened-ended and allowed for the interview participants to answer the questions in their own words and to elaborate on areas of interest. The focus of the interviews was on the motivations behind the participant's choice to work in the social economy, looking specifically at the thought processes and emotions that the women believed went into their decision work in the social economy organization they were currently involved with. The research participants were asked about the work they did in the social economy and their feelings about this work. Many of the questions focused on the way that the participant had come to be involved with the social economy organization they were working for and why they had chosen the position over other alternative economic possibilities.

Interview questions were based on the interview guide and were organized in a way that allowed research participants the opportunity to explore and expand on the topics of most importance and interest to them individually. Interview discussion was guided by the interview guide, however it allowed the participants the opportunity to speak freely and direct discussion to a wide variety of areas; as topics arose and as the interviews progressed, questions were added to get a better understanding of the individual participants experience in their social economy work.

The topics that were explored through the interview questions were further developed as the individual participants openly discussed their thoughts and opinions. Through this discussion a variety of topics were introduced; these topics were not preconceived categories but rather developed out of the analysis of the interview material. The analysis of the interview material allowed for the grouping and categorization of material into major areas, which include sense of community, the need to create change, wanting to make a positive difference, personal choices, values and beliefs, feelings of responsibility, being a parent, having the necessary skills, and the economic influences of money.

The interview participants were encouraged to guide the interview in any direction that they felt was of importance to them personally, in terms of their social economy experience and work. Study participants were also encouraged to answer the interview questions according to their own feelings and thoughts on the subject matter. The main goal was to ensure that the women interview participants were able to focus on the issues that they personally consider to be of importance within their experiences working in the social economy. The interview participants were women currently working in the social economy or had previous experience working in social economy organizations in the Yukon.

In addition to the semi-structured interviews, quantitative data collected by the Social Economy Research Network of Northern Canada (SERNNNoCa) Portraiture Survey was used to supplement some of the key issues and gain perspective of the

importance of social economy organizations in the Canadian North. The quantitative data collected by SERNNNoCa, Statistics Canada and Chris Southcott was used to develop the interview data collected in this research study and support the research. The quantitative data gave additional information on the relative importance of social economy organizations in the Canadian North and the statistical information on women's involvement in this sector.

The Canadian Women's Health Network did research concerning the health systems serving women in rural and remote regions of Canada was the largest qualitative study in Canada to address the importance of community health (2007). The lead author of this study, Margaret Haworth-Brockman, states the importance of this type of research: "Many women told us they had not ever had a chance to speak about what is important to them. Despite living in very different circumstances, there was a great deal of similarity in their desire to be heard, to be respected and to contribute their practical solutions to the health care debates" (CWHN, 2007). Although this research was focused on women's health, the view that women in remote and rural situations have unique experiences of their social situation is significant. Women in the north working in social economy organizations may have and need the opportunity to communicate their unique experiences.

Each participant was aware that their participation in this study was completely voluntary and they had the right to withdraw from the interview at any time. There was a written consent form for each participant; this ensured that

participants were fully aware of any implications associated with their participation in this study. There was also a clear outline presented to each research participant that explained all risks and benefits that were expected to be associated with participation in this research study. Contact information was made available to all participants in the event that they had any issues or concerns that arose after their participation in the study.

The interviews allowed for an in-depth look at the everyday experiences of the women working in the social economy organizations of Whitehorse. Stephen Cole notes the difference between in-depth interviews and survey research; “in-depth interviews, the interviewers, rather than having a specific set of questions, have a list of topics that they are interested in covering” (1980, pg77). In this view, in-depth interviews allow for a broad subject matter to be addressed with direct interest in the views of the interview participant. Cole also notes that in-depth interviews are primarily concerned with engaging the interview participant in conversation on the topic of interest; different respondents may have very different views and may be concerned with different issues within the research topic (1980, pg 77). Ideally, this method allowed for a detailed exploration of the values, norms, and culture aspects that affect the reasons and motivations for women’s participation in the social economy organization in the north.

Each interview was recorded with the full consent of all interview participants. The recording of the interview allowed for a more thorough examination

of the data. Having the interview information available for subsequent reflections made it possible to examine the data in great detail and allowed for various interpretations to be made. This approach was inductive, wherein the research begins with detailed descriptions of a social circumstance and additional evaluations of the interview data can be made to come to a more thorough understanding of what is being said (Witt, 2007, pg 33).

The interviews were focused on women participating within the social economy in the present context. The women were able to offer insight into their personal experiences working in this sector of the economy. The women were asked about their motivations for participating in the social economy; looking for specific themes and for the push factors and pull factors that can be identified as associated with the women's participation in this sector. The way women come to understand and interpret their own feelings, behaviors and thoughts on the social economy and their relationship to this sector was examined.

### **Validity of study**

Based on the literature review research it became clear that research that focuses on the real lives of women and their experiences and that allows the women the opportunity to express themselves in their own words and in their own way offers the most insight in to what they believe is truly important. In the theoretical work of Crnkovich qualitative research is highlighted as allowing women to express themselves and offer individual insight into what matters and is significant in their daily living. Research that does not allow women the opportunity to speak freely



about what is important to them may not allow for a true picture of what is going on (1990, pg xvi).

The qualitative method is the best option for this research as it allows the women to give their individual insight and elaborate on their personal motivations for participating in the social economy. However, a limiting factor associated with the qualitative approach is that there is the possibility of misunderstanding or misinterpreting the responses that the women provided. Interview questions were asked as clearly as possible and further clarification was requested if a participant's response was not fully understood. While the sample size and the structure of the sample may not be representative of all women working in the social economy, the use of the SERNNNoCa portraiture survey to identify the most appropriate social economy organizations and participants for use in this research study allowed for a relatively representative sample of women to be chosen.

In much of the research done in Canada the Eurocentric view has been predominant; here, written record is often favoured over verbal or oral communications (Crnkovich, 1990, pg xx). In the research of Crnkovich, she notes that "the bias in favour of "written records" in the history of the North has not only isolated women, but also ignored and devalued the oral tradition of native people in the north" (1990, pg xx). Cultural differences can play an important role in shaping research and what is considered important to a study. In the view of Crnkovich, northern research will be more significant if there is direct contact with the research

subjects (1990, pg xx). For this thesis, verbal communication was the dominant interview method and was done face to face with the interview participants.

Ethics approval was granted by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board in October 2008. The cover letter and consent form for participation in this research are attached (see appendix 2 and 3). There was no perceived physical or psychological harm to come from participation in this study and it was made clear to all participants that their involvement was completely voluntary and they could choose to withdraw from the research at any time.

A limitation to the interview method of collecting data is the time commitment that interviews often take (Witt, 2007, pg 37). In-depth interviews often involve a extended time commitment, where the researcher and interview participant must meet face to face and address all the issues of concern for the topic of research. The interview is very much dependant on the interviewee and their experiences and knowledge about the subject; dependant on the usefulness of their information and how much information they have on the topic will shape the research and control the length of the interview. Some interview data will be of great importance to the subject at hand while other information may be of little importance (Witt, 2007, pg37).

A concept such as social economy will be shaped the way that the history of the society that it is applied within, consequently the definition is reliant on the social development and the discontinuities within the given society (Foucault, 1972).

Therefore, there are a number of issues to consider when doing research into a concept such as the social economy, including: histories, gender, culture and society. For this research study the interview method allowed women to give their personal views and this allows the research to have a more meaningful impact on the views of the social economy in the north. The importance of the role women play within the context of the social economy must be addressed and understood in terms of their histories in their communities in the north and within the economy.

### **Setting**

This setting for this study offered unique circumstances that influenced a number of conditions within the research. The social economy in Whitehorse is unique to the north. The social service sector is the largest sector in the territory and heavily relied upon (The Yukon Bureau of Statistics, 2008). This sector often extends to include social economy work; highlighting the significance of this area of work in Whitehorse. The location and the demographics of this study impact all areas of the research.

The population of Whitehorse is relatively small; the total population is 20,465 as of June 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2006). It is the largest city in the Yukon and comprises 74.8% of the territory's total population. In the Yukon Territory a population breakdown by sex shows that the gender balance is by population is relatively equal; 50.3% of the total population is male and 49.7% are female

(Statistics Canada, 2006). In the city of Whitehorse 50.8% of the population is female compared to 49.2% male. The city of Whitehorse's two closest communities with any sizable population are roughly 500 kilometers away and have populations of less than 2,000 (Yukon Bureau of Statistics, 2008).

The employment statistics in 2006 showed that 17,315 people were employed in the Yukon labour force and 1,805 were unemployed (Yukon Bureau of Statistics, 2006). Therefore the paid employment rate for the Yukon in 2006 was 70.7%. In the Yukon, Whitehorse employs the most people (11, 920). The employment rate in Whitehorse was 73.1%. In the Yukon as a whole more men than women are employed; 8,740 to 8,575. In Whitehorse more slightly women are employed than men, 5,990 to 5,930.

Of the 1, 805 people who were unemployed 1,075 were males and 730 females. Therefore the unemployment rate is higher for men in the Yukon than it is for women. In Whitehorse 945 people were unemployed of which 515 were men and 430 were women. The 2006 Census notes that in the Yukon the number of people not participating in the labour force was 5,365 people. The participation rate in the labour force by gender shows that more women (51.4%) are not participating in the labour force than men (45.9%). This non-participation rate differential is even higher in Whitehorse where 56.7% of the people not participating in the labour force are women.

In the Yukon 85.9% of the population over 15 years are employed in the service producing sector of the economy and the remaining 14.1% were employed in

goods producing sector<sup>5</sup>. For the territory as a whole, 95.2% of women were employed in the service sector compared to 76.9% of men. In Whitehorse 96.4% of women were employed in the service sector compared to 80.6% of men (Statistics Canada, 2006).

According to the 2006 Census data, 53.6% of the Yukon population (15 years and up) had post-secondary accreditation, the highest proportion in Canada. The proportion of males and females with post-secondary accreditation in the Yukon is almost equal; however there are more women with a University certificate, degree, or diploma and more men with apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma. In Whitehorse, of all people with a university degree and higher, 55% were women.

In all Canadian provinces women outnumber men, except the northern territories, where men outnumber women and in Alberta, where the ratio of men to women is equal. (Yukon Bureau of Statistics, 2008). The male/female ratio is affected by two interconnecting factors, the number of elderly people in a population (as women are strongly represented in elderly populations) and with the migratory workers in an area (who are often men). In the Yukon the gender ration between males and females is almost equal; there are 101 men for every 100 women. However, within the Yukon itself the ratio of men to women changes dramatically; in many areas outside of Whitehorse the men outnumber the women. In the unorganized communities of the Yukon the gender ratio is 125 men to every 100 females (Yukon

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<sup>5</sup> The goods producing sector was defined using the 10 digit industry census categories of Agriculture and other, Construction, and Manufacturing. The remaining seven categories were included in the service sector.

Bureau of Statistics, 2008). The differences found between the population characteristics of Whitehorse and the other communities of the Yukon can most likely be explained by the different labour market found in the urban center of Whitehorse.

In the 2006 Census, 25% of the total Yukon population identified themselves as Aboriginal. Of those individuals identifying as Aboriginal, 83% identified as North American Indian, 10% identified as Inuit and 3% identified as Métis (Yukon Bureau of Statistics, 2006). In Whitehorse, 18.6% of the population identified themselves as Aboriginal.

Based on the information provided in the Canadian census listed above it is clear that the socio-economic situation in Whitehorse is unique. The largest economic sector in Whitehorse is in the service producing sector. Very few communities in the Canadian North have a service sector that is so important for the local economy.<sup>6</sup> Also, Whitehorse has a low unemployment rate and men are more likely to be unemployed than women (Yukon Bureau of Statistics, 2008).

### **Analysis of Data**

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<sup>6</sup> Of all the communities in the territories with a population of more than 1,000, only Iqaluit and Rankin Inlet have economies where service sector employment is larger than that of Whitehorse.

The data in this study was analyzed and coded to find commonalities in the motivations that the women research participants had for working in the social economy in Whitehorse. The analysis found that there were 5 major themes of motivation: sense of community, the need to create change, personal beliefs and goals, feelings of responsibility, and economic influence. The data that was collected from the interviews was transcribed; allowing for subsequent readings. Reading the interview data over looking for specific areas where interview participants noted motivations, interest, feelings and thoughts about their work in the social economy allowed for a thorough understanding of the material and the development of the themes. Once the themes were apparent the data was coded to highlight these themes. In addition to the themes the data was analyzed to find inter-related connections and social processes. The themes were inter-connected and linked to the overarching theme of social setting and the individual motivations of the women research participants. The analysis was developed to identify the motivations to women's work in the social economy and to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of women.

Coding was performed on the transcribed interview data, each interview was explored as an individual document. During transcription the data was examined, taking note of the common words used by interviewees to describe thoughts and feelings about their personal motivation for participation in the social economy in Whitehorse. Each interview transcript was read over and words of motivation were identified and highlighted based on theme. Some of the words identified as theme related were: pressure, support, caring/care, social, socially conscious, need, money,

paid environment and passion. The 5 major themes of motivation that were identified were coded by corresponding colour: sense of community – red, the need to create change – green, personal beliefs and goals – purple, feelings of responsibility – yellow, and economic influence – blue. Words and sentences that were highlighted based on corresponding colour. Subsequently the words and phrases that were identified as associated with each theme were then grouped by theme and colour on a separate document. Each theme was then easily accessible and the personal motivations, thoughts and feelings of each interviewee could be evaluated by theme and compared with other interviewees for relationships within themes.

### **Analysis: The Role of Women**

The main focus for this study was to examine the role of women in the social economy in Whitehorse, Yukon; looking specifically at their experiences and motivations. The five themes highlighted above were common characteristics found in the interview discussion data. All of the themes were examined in depth in terms of the individual experiences as well as analyzed for interrelated concepts. The analysis process also took into consideration the influence that gender had on the themes of motivation.

Often study participants offered a general opinion about the work that women were doing in the social economy. In her interview Lisa made a particularly insightful comment about the way women viewed their work; “I think that women are sort of



told that you are going to be valued if you are a person who does caring sort of work, whether it's paid or unpaid" (Interview, 12). In this explanation women are more likely to do work that is caring and social because they feel that it is the way that they can be of value to society.

The women interviewed discussed their own experiences working in the social economy and offered their own thoughts on the general experiences of women in the social economy. Many of the interview participants did not have an answer or an example for every interview question and they would often offer their opinion about the subject. Many participants elaborated their view points and explained how they felt about the overall situation of women working in the social economy sector.

In some cases the interview questions led to statements about general perceptions about women's work and involvement in the social economy sector. In the interview with Isabella she responds to a question about women and if they have more of a tendency to choose socially conscious work; "they might be more conscious to do good than men" (Interview 9).

Six of the interview participants spoke of the Board members associated with their social economy organization. In most cases it was stated that the Boards for these social economy organizations were made up of mostly men. Three of the interview participants noted that the organization they worked for only had men participating at the board level. In the interview with Alice she notes that the only

men working within her social economy organization were the men that sat on the Board. When asked why she thought this might be she explained that it might be that “maybe, people that have passions about social justice, it may be an easier way for a man to be involved” (Interview, 1). In this view men are more likely to take positions of authority in a social economy organization as opposed to working at the frontline.

Similarly, some of the study participants described why they thought that there might be more women working in socially oriented or social economy type work. In trying to understand why women take on the roles in the social economy Lisa states, “like a lot of women feeling comfortable with taking, kind of, a support role and like men having less comfort with doing that initially” (Interview, 12). She believes that women are more willing to take on the types of positions that become available in socially oriented work; the need for close relationships and community involvement in many jobs associated with the social economy have a tendency to draw women in.

The women interviewed often examined their own beliefs about the gender differences in regards to their specific work environments. Because of the wide range of social economy organizations that were included in this study the women being interviewed often worked in very different settings. In the interview with Gina she explains her experiences and thoughts about the work women choose based on her position within the organization she works for; “I’ve just had the experience here. I think that maybe women are more conscious about...that might be completely

generalizing, more so than men. I think that, perhaps, yeah, women are more aware of that. However, I think a lot of women wouldn't do this job because it's kind of dirty" (Interview 7).

Almost all of the women interviewed explored their own thoughts on the broader theme of gender in employment choices. In the interview with Diane she explains her thoughts on the choices women make in terms of employment; "...I think they produce a vision for women to be primary caregivers and nurturers...you know, people would often make that assumption that women should be, you know, involved in this type of thing" (Interview, 4). Therefore Diane explains the assumptions she sees as impacting the choices women make in employment. In this view women are seen as primary caregivers and in the "caring role" and through their association to the "caregiver" role, women become tied to this area of work in the economy.

Five of the twenty study participants felt very strongly about the gender relations in the work they were doing and identified a number of possible reasons for the gender biases that they had experienced in their work. In her interview Lisa explores the notion of traditional male and female employment; "it could be so far reaching as men's attachment to traditional like, provider roles and not wanting to work for less money. It could be tied to those, like, those gender biases that we create in saying women are better care takers, more supportive" (Interview, 12).

One study participant examined her own experience in choosing to work in the social economy and also gave an in-depth explanation of her views on the socialization of women's work in general. Jennifer explains her choice to work in social economy, "I mean I don't have a totally straight forward, 'I was socialized as a woman therefore I'm going to work here', thing going on for me. It---I guess it was more typically negotiated, it's more somewhere I can have the politics that I have and---and do work that is related to those politics" (Interview, 10). For Jennifer she felt that socialization did play a role in the positions women take on in society but that it was not as straight forward as simply viewing yourself as a woman and choosing work based on that fact alone.

Eleven of the twenty study participants felt that being a woman had not affected their choice to work in the social economy sector and that in general gender was not an important element in employment choice. Betty states in her interview that the organization she works for does not have any gender expectations placed on the employees, "they have never leaned one way or the other for that; it is whoever has the qualifications to do the job" (Interview, 2). In this case, Betty was working for an organization that only employed women. However, all the women working there stated that it was not a rule to only hire women and it was just the way it happened to work out.

### **Thematic Analysis**

The theme of *personal beliefs and values* offered important insight into the emotions and motivations behind each participant's decision to work in the social economy. However, *Personal beliefs and values* are subjective and each participants values and what they believed differed greatly based on their individual lives and life experiences. Many of the women interviewed offered their own perspective and helped make clear what their personal motivations were for the work they were doing in the social economy. Some of the participants also noted what they thought might motivate women in general to want to participate in this sector of the economy. Although, it was only speculation on the personal motivations and beliefs of others it allowed for a more thorough understanding of the overarching perceptions of women's work in the social economy.

Similarly, in the sub-themes of *Feelings of Responsibility* there were a number of issues relating to personal motivations and the subjective feelings of the interviewees. Many interview participants felt that the work they were doing in the social economy was a "kind of responsibility". The notion of "giving back" to the community and to society was also mentioned as important. Some participants felt a sense of duty to work in social economy work and many felt that this responsibility reflected their own feelings and values that they placed on their work.

Therefore, it is evident that there are common characteristics present in the interview data and the sub-themes of *Personal Beliefs and Values* and *Feelings of Responsibility*. The women interviewed discussed a number of topics within these

themes that offer insight into their personal motivations and experiences in the work that they do. Many of the interview participants felt that that it was their responsibility to do the work that they were doing in the social economy because of their strong belief in the work. The values and beliefs of the women were why guided the feelings of responsibility in terms of the choices they made.

In the interviews the sub-themes under *Sense of Community* were often closely related to the sub-themes within *The Need to Create Change*. The research participants described their involvement in the social economy as a personal need to “make a difference” and often focused on how they were helping people; these notions were closely linked to community needs. The women interviewed frequently mentioned that they wanted to work somewhere that they could be involved with positive change; they were concerned with community involvement and giving back to society.

*The need to create change* was a social initiative; many of the women interviewed viewed the needs of the community as a priority. The focus on creating change was done at the social economic level and allowed the women to choose work that both created change and fulfilled a sense of community cohesiveness. There were a number of differences in the participants’ responses about what they wanted to do to *create change*. It was often based on their personal feelings of what was important to them personally. However, the way they identified with their goals were often similar in the feelings of “need” and they were often socially focused goals that were of

greatest concern. Many of the study participants stated that the work they did was important to them personally because they felt that they were making a difference in their community.

A sub-theme of *sense of community* included the issue of family and relationships. A number of the study participants believed that families and social networks were a key element in the work they were doing. Fostering relationships in the community of Whitehorse was seen as an important objective for almost all of the organizations that the study participants were involved with. The women often felt that this objective in their organization was one that they felt very strongly about and personally dedicated to. In the interview with Rita she states “myself, I’m really keen on getting people connected and to see people kind of helping each other along” (Interview, 17). In this view she is personally committed to creating connections between people and fostering that sense of community and she is able to do this to a greater extent through the organization she works for.

The theme of *economic influence* is a key area in understanding how the economic aspects of work affect women’s involvement in the social economy. The women interviewed mentioned that money and monetary benefits did influence them in their choice of employment. Many of the study participants noted that wages were not a priority for them and that they were more concerned with the work they did and the benefits they offered to society. However, half of the study participants noted that their wage was of great importance to them and that it was one of the main factors in

their decision to work in their current position. These women did note that they felt good about their job and the benefit of working in the social economy; however their wage was most important to them. Therefore, women's motivations of employment are influenced by wage as well as by social motivations. The rank order of the factors of motivation varies on an individual basis.

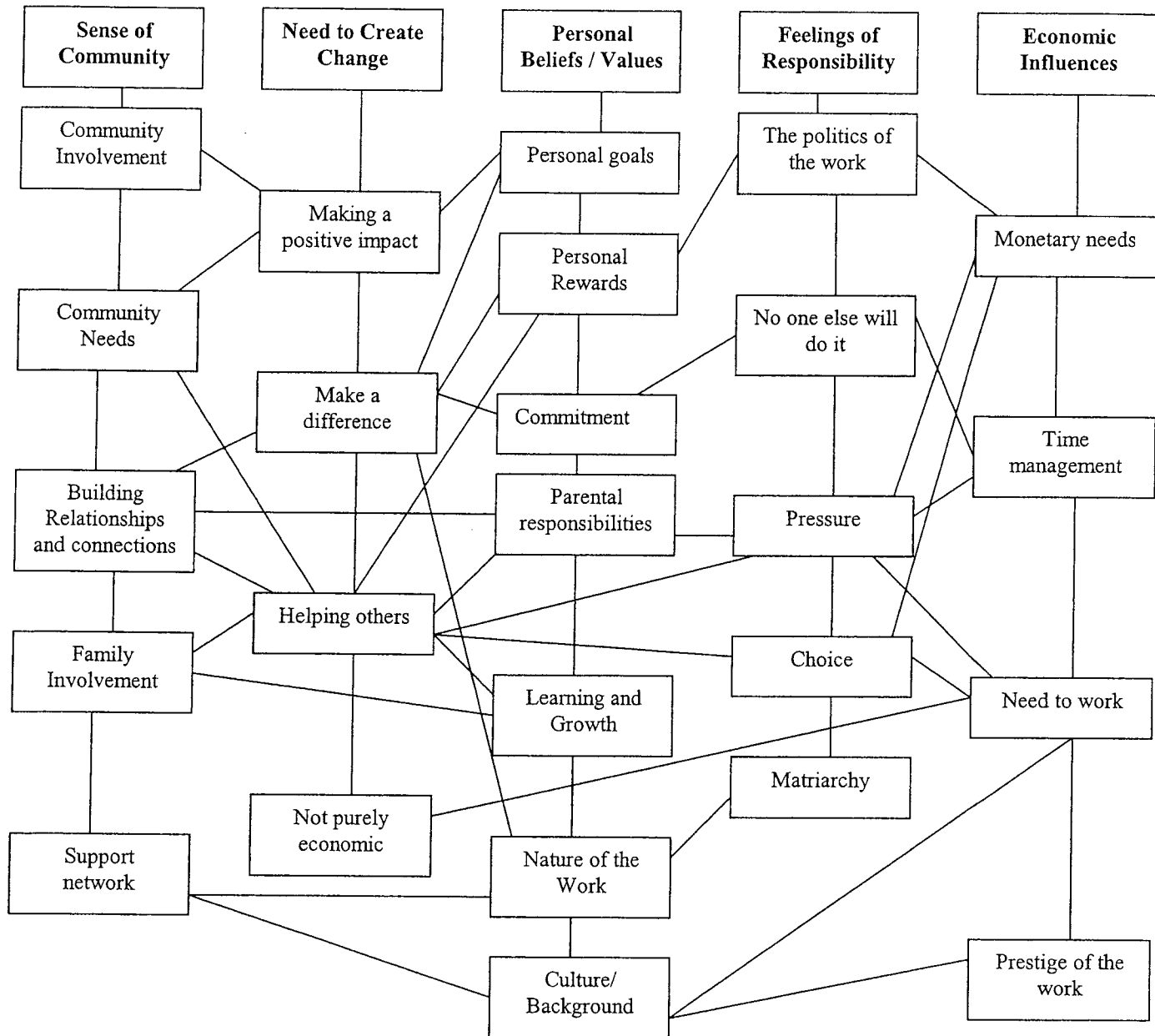
Almost all participants felt lucky to be in the position they were in within the social economy; they felt good about the work that they were doing and they were satisfied with their wages. A number of the women spoke of wage as a side note to their main motivations, but they did mention that they needed a wage. In her interview Lisa states her motivations for the work she is doing "certainly not the money at all" (Interview, 12). However she also explains that, "I recognize that I'm going to need to make some money. It's usually about money, like people, pressure you about money, there's not a lot of money in, like this organization, there's not a lot of money in social justice kind of work" (Interview, 12). Therefore, the need for a wage is taken into consideration, even when the key motivation is in the work is personal satisfaction and making a difference in society.

The findings from this study were grouped into 5 major themes: sense of community, the need to create change, personal beliefs and goals, feelings of responsibility, and economic influence. These categories are based on the data collected from the interviews and the analysis of this material into the areas that were discussed by the study participants during their interviews. The complexity of these



themes creates an inter-related network of the different aspects related to women's experiences working in the social economy. Figure 1 highlights the way that the themes and sub-themes encompass the social processes that are examined in this paper.

Figure 1.0 Themes - Women in the Social Economy



The themes will be explored in detail in the following sections; the themes are intended to allow for a comprehensive examination of the various issues that were discussed throughout the interviews.

### **The Need to Create Change**

Many of the study participants were unaware of their involvement within a social economy organization. However, one characteristic that many of the study participants noted is the importance of making significant change to community and wider society in the work they chose and the organizations they are involved in. The theme of having a *need to create change* encompasses the findings of how women involved in the social economy want to make a positive difference in their communities as well as in wider society. Through participating in social economy organizations women have the opportunity to feel that the work they do will make an impact on society; they have the chance to make significant changes to the way society works.

The need to create change within the community was a common finding through out the discussions with the research participants. For example, Jennifer explained her motivation for involvement in the social economy work she was doing: “I think, my primary motivation would be, the possibility of making change” (Interview, 10). This notion being motivated to create change was a common topic of discussion through out the interviews. Many of the women in this study stated that the

work they were doing in the social economy was primarily motivated by their need to do something that would make an impact.

Almost all of the study participants linked their choice to be involved with the social economy as something that they did because of their personal desire to do work that contributed to society. Several of the study participants mentioned that they had gone out of the country to fulfill their ambitions of making change in the world, but on returning to Canada had still felt that they needed to make difference in their own country. For example Nina stated that; “take the log out of your own eye before you try to take the stick out of others, so I wanted do something for the social issues, I don’t want to say problems, facing the Canadian society before I tried to go abroad” (Interview, 14). She had been working overseas and upon returning to Canada felt that she should be more involved in helping Canadian society.

One woman who was working as a nurse within a social economy organization noted the differences between working in her current position and her previous position as a nurse in a government funded hospital. She commented “nurses like to feel that they make a difference. You like to feel like you are making some kind of a difference in someone else’s life” (Interview, 1). In this view nurses working in any field are working to make a positive difference in peoples lives and in wider society; however this participant did note that in her position within her current job in a social economy organization she was able to feel like she was doing more and

that she had more freedom to make the more of an impact than she had previously had working at the hospital.

Fourteen of the twenty interview participants noted that they felt that they were working in their position in the social economy organization because of their skills and training and not solely because of what the organization stood for. However, they also felt that with the work they were doing was impacting peoples lives and that because of their training they were able to work in an organization that offered something to the community. One study participant made reference to her skill set and involvement with the organization by saying; "...and feel I have a lot to offer them and, you know, contribute to their lives" (Interview, 4).

The study participants often described in detail their personal motivations for choosing to work in the social economy. One participant was asked what her primary motivation for involvement in the social economy was she stated; "my primary motivation is, is to get paid for the difference I can make not the profit I can take" (Interview, 14). This was a reoccurring theme throughout most of the interviews, almost all of the study participants focused to some degree on the positive changes they were making to the community. This was true even of the participants that had noted that wage was their primary motivation for working in their current position. Therefore, the overall factors of motivation were common among study participants, it was the ranking of these factors that varied by individual participant.

During the interviews there was often a distinction made between the role of economic factors and the role of social goals as motivating factors. The issues that many of the study participants noted involved combining economic ideals with the social goals that their organization promoted. Many of the participants were working for social economy organizations that had strong social principles that guided the way the organization was run; however there were always economic issues of the work that needed to be addressed. Seven of the twenty study participants noted that they had to make the choice to work for less money and less benefits, so that they could pursue their social goals within their work. Alice noted in her interview that “I almost felt like I was treating myself to come and work in an environment with not as much monetary reimbursement” (Interview, 1).

The social economy organizations that the study participants were involved in varied a great deal and even where more than one woman from the organization participated in the interview there could be a great deal of discrepancy between the work they were doing. Although there was this aspect of interviewees having very different interactions within their work in the social economy, there was a great deal of similarity in the way they wanted to create positive change in the world. Some of the women were committed to the environment, while others were working to better the lives of children and youth. While the interview participants in this study were all involved in fairly dissimilar positions in the social economy in Whitehorse there was one thing that almost all of the women mentioned as a key motivation in their choice

to work in the social economy and that was that they wanted to feel like the work they did would “make a difference” (Interview, 9).

### **Personal Beliefs and Values**

The theme of *personal beliefs and values* involves the comments that were made by research participants about how they felt about the work they were doing within the social economy. All of the study participants noted their own personal goals and values as being major contributing factors of motivation to the work they were doing. In the interviews interviewees were asked if they believed in the work they were doing and almost all participants said that they strongly believed in their work and the contribution they were making to the organization.

Study participants often described the work they were doing as being directly related to their own beliefs. During her interview Ellen noted that, “I believe in it and I think they are doing great things and I enjoy working here” (Interview, 5). Other research participants mentioned the role that their own beliefs played in their decision to work for the organization they were currently with. Many felt that they were working within an organization that allowed them to express their own values and goals.

Similarly, many of the participants mentioned the “rewarding” aspect to their work. When asked if they were satisfied with the work they were doing, all participants said they were satisfied. However there were some who felt that they

could be happy working in any sector of the economy that allowed them to use the same skills they were using in their current position. Six of the twenty research participants noted that they were working in their current position because of the connection they felt to the organization that they were working for. These participants felt strongly that they were working in their current positions because they felt a strong connection to the social economy organization they were working for. The remaining 14 research participants felt connected to their social organization, yet felt they were more linked to the organization because they were drawn to this area of work. Therefore, the degree of connection to the social economy organization that each research participant felt, varied by the individuals' personal feelings towards either the organization or the line of work they were drawn to.

However all the participants felt personally connected to the work they were doing in some way. One participant felt that due to the strong social nature of the work they were doing there would be no way someone could do the work and not have strong personal connections to what they were doing; "I don't think you could do this unless you had a strong belief system that you're making a difference; you're doing something".

Although personal beliefs and values were important to most of the study participant, some did mention that there were aspects to their work that were far from ideal. As with any position there are downsides and that point was made in a number of the interviews. For many of the participants there was both good and bad qualities

to the work that they were doing, but for most, the personal satisfaction that their work brought them, far out weighed the bad.

Five of the twenty research participants were working within an environmentally focused recycling organization. In this setting almost all of the women participants identified themselves as environmentalists and linked their connection to this work as being directly related to beliefs; “well, my own kind of personal reasons---like my own personal environmental beliefs are definitely a big factor” (Interview, 6). Another participant highlighted her environmentalist associations and stated “I’m quite an environmentalist, so I really believe in what (the organization) is doing. So, I like the idea of being here” (Interview 6).

Most of the women research participants drew upon their respective organization mandates or objectives. Of the social economy organizations that the study participants worked for many had agreed upon objectives or a list of goals that the organization was working to meet. Almost all of the women (19 of the 20 research participants) in this study mentioned that they strongly agreed with the organizations goals and ambitions and that they felt their personal goals were directly linked with those of the organization. Ellen noted in her interview that she chose to work for this organization over other possibilities, “I liked the dynamic and I liked what it stood for” (Interview, 5).



Similarly, in discussing how personal values played a role in the decision to be involved in social economy work the issue of parenting responsibilities was highlighted by many of the participants. Five of the women interviewed noted that being a parent and a mother did play a part in the work and the roles that they chose in society. One study participant stated the importance of involvement being a family initiated trait, "I guess because it was modeled for me when I grew up too. Even though my mom was a stay at home, she wasn't a working mom, but we did so many things in the community" (Interview, 2). Others believed that many of their choices in life were made because of their role as mothers and that included the kind of work they chose.

In the interviews, the aspect of parenting roles was discussed and many women acknowledged that their values were often closely related to their parenting responsibilities. The women felt that a lot of what they did in their work reflected the kind of values and beliefs that they wanted to pass on to their children. They felt that the work they did reflected a way of life and that this was a choice they made because of their hope for their children. Many participants said that they wanted to do something that would provide a better environment and community for their children or future generations.

All of the interview participants linked their personal values to the specifics of the job they were doing. In one case the participant was working with women in high risk situations and she stated that "...that I would have an opportunity to work with

women at risk and actually do some concrete things that would make a difference” (Interview, 1). Therefore, there was a great deal of importance placed on her personal values and the way that the work she was doing connected and supported these values. This interview participant had been working in the public sector in the past and had felt that despite the notion that she was doing something she believed in, she felt that there was less tangible reward to that work. The work within the social economy organization allowed for a more personal connection to what she was doing and what she believed in.

Eleven of the twenty study participants noted that the idea of working in an environment that supported their personal beliefs and values meant that they would be doing something that made them happy. In almost all of the interviews the aspect of personal satisfaction was discussed and was often linked to the individuals’ beliefs. During her interview Heather expressed her desire to be in a job where she was doing something important to her and that she enjoyed, “I’m at a point in my life where I don’t want to be in a job that I don’t enjoy” (Interview, 8).

### **Sense of Community**

The theme *sense of community* involves the way study participants perceived the community of Whitehorse, Yukon. Almost all of the participants discussed the positive impact that their work had on the community. They described how their work affected the community and that this aspect, of bringing something good to their

community, was a motivating factor in their choice to work in the social economy. Many study participants noted that the overall sense of community and meeting community needs was important to them and the organization they chose to work for.

In “Women and Economic Development” Ellis et al, state that “Canadian women are starting to organize to give themselves control in a process of economic development” (1983, pg 1). For their research the authors looked at a number of CED projects in communities across the country that had been initiated and run by women and focused on the issues of women. The communities that were focused on in this research were primarily single industry resource towns where the situation of women was clearly illustrated: women were under represented in terms of participation and the provision of economic development planning. However, the findings of Ellis et al.’s research also presented the notion that “women want to participate in those decisions about economic development that affect their lives” (1983, pg 1). In this view, women have been excluded from development planning despite their interest in and their need of CED.

For this thesis, 12 of the 20 research participants mentioned that there was a unique role that families played in communities in the Yukon. They described the Yukon as being a region where many of the residents came from other areas of Canada and they believe that this aspect impacts the characteristics of the communities. In her interview Paula states her ideas about communities in the Yukon, “I think that’s kind of a Yukon thing too, because until recently most people didn’t

have any family here, now young adults are coming back here, recently you couldn't rely on your family and it was so hard to get anywhere that you really relied on your friends" (Interview 16). Here Paula describes the impact that the Yukon's strong sense of community has been especially important due to the diverse population that live there.

The subject of family involvement was a dominant sub-theme within the theme of community. Many of the interview participants felt that the strong sense of community in Whitehorse was because many of the families that lived there lacked extended family relations. One interview participant explained that she had moved from another province and had left a very close knit extended family. Upon her arrival to the Yukon she soon realized the importance of having strong community; "without having the advantage or having extended family because so many of us come from somewhere else, with the exception of the First Nations people in the Yukon, everyone has come from somewhere else" (Interview, 18). Therefore, many families in the Yukon may lack the extended family networks of support making it especially important to have a strong community network of support.

The women interviewed in this study were drawn from a wide variety of organizations within the social economy; however there were many reoccurring issues. One organization that two of the participants were involved in was an artist co-operative. In the case of the artist co-operative there was less of a social mandate to the work than many of the other social economy organizations that were used in

this study. However, in terms of the women's motivations and principles behind their work there were many similarities to the other study participants. Rita mentions in her interview that, "we're kind of going through a little bit of a shake up now, because people are asking those questions, why are you a member, what is most important to you, and I think the sense of community comes up a lot" (Interview, 17). In this case there is a common theme of community that goes far beyond the organization itself and is inherent in the members themselves.

For some participants their social economy work allowed for their active participation in the community. Four of the women interviewed for this research had moved to Whitehorse in the last year. These women described their work as a good way for them to become active in the community through their work. In her interview Heather said that, "It's an excellent opportunity to become involved with the community that I wouldn't have otherwise and I do feel good about being a part of the greater aims of the organization" (Interview, 8). In this example, social economy work is seen as a point of access to become involved with a community.

Many study participants mentioned the sub-theme of community need. For a number of the participants the focus of their work was meeting community needs. One participant had recently moved to Whitehorse from Old Crow, a small First Nations community in the north of the Yukon. She mentioned the different aspects of community that were found in her community, she noted that "the women were front and centre in making sure that the community was healthy at all times and that there

was food and that ---healthy children in all of our families, in my community and then things have changed now it's more---before it used to be men that had to take care of everything that was on the outside and provide for the entire community and the women would be the ones that were taking care of everything inside our families inside the communities" (Interview, 20). She felt that this was an aspect of community that impacted her choices and affected her own sense of community involvement.

One organization that was particularly focused on creating a sense of community was a program directed towards fostering involvement of children and their parents in community and school activities. The social economy organization that ran this program focused on families and families building relationships within the community. One participant in this program explained the objective; "so yeah there is support there, we as parents---of the whole school are encouraged to be apart of that for a benefit of the whole community" (Interview, 2). In this organization the focus was on creating community connections to benefit the individuals and the community as a whole.

For all of the study participants the connections that they made through work were noted, one participant stated "I just like the interaction and the staff" (Interview, 3). Networking and creating strong social relationships within the organization and throughout the community also contributed to the theme, *sense of community* in social economy involvement. Many of the study participants noted the relationships that

they had made in through their work in the social economy and they saw this as a significant positive aspect to their involvement.

### **Feelings of Responsibility**

For many of the study participants their work was viewed as a simple choice, many of the women stated that their involvement in the social economy was just a choice they had made with no underlying social or economic influence. In the interview with Cindy she stated “I think it’s just a choice” (Interview, 3). This was in response to a question about pressure and if she felt any pressure to be involved in the social economy organization she worked with. Although there were many women who believed that their work was a simple choice it became apparent that there were many contributing factors that led to their role in the social economy.

The theme of *responsibility* became closely related to the aspect of “pressure” for many of the participants. However, when asked about pressure many of the study participants felt that their involvement in this sector was not about pressure, but that it was their individual feelings of responsibility. In the interview with Jennifer she explained, “I don’t think that it’s an explicit sort of pressure thing, more a negotiation of my principles and responsibilities of what I can do in the world” (Interview, 10). In this case she believes that it is not outside pressure to contribute in the work that she does but it is about her personal feelings of responsibly to the make a difference in the world.

The concept of perceived pressure was explored further through out the interviews. Many participants denied that outsider pressures contributed to their decision to work in the social economy organization they were involved with. Yet, there appeared to be a fine line between what was perceived as outside pressure and what they considered internal pressures or responsibilities. Jennifer also noted in her interview that there was no pressure for her personally to be involved in the social economy but she understood how the perception that women are supposed to be involved in this kind of work because they are altruistic and caring by nature. In reference to women's socialization she states "that's part of what we are told what to be and to do is---is to do this work as caring for other people" (Interview, 10).

Many of the women linked the responsibility they felt to the roles they took on in the community and society. One major role that many of the women mentioned was being a parent or a mother. Many of the study participants believed that their roles as mothers influenced what they considered to be their responsibility in society. Despite not being a parent herself Lisa stated in her interview that, "I would say women feel more pressure to contribute to these kinds of organizations and some of that being related to, also, just like women...mothers communicating with other women; talking about different youth services available" (Interview, 12). In this illustration a direct link is made between pressure to be involved in social economy work and the role women take on as mothers.



One research participant did not want to use the term responsibility nor the term pressure, to describe her feelings about women's motivations for working in the social economy sector. In her interview Olivia stated that women were working in social economy organizations because, "they do not feel so much a pressure, they feel the need. Especially when they have children, to create a space, they have to create for them" (Interview 15). She describes the feeling of responsibility as a personal need that women feel. In this view, women feel the "need" to do work that is important to them personally and will have a positive impact on their children and their families.

Two of the women interviewed discussed how their cultural background was a major influence in their decision to become involved in social economy work. Karen expresses her feelings of responsibility; "the land...it gives us life and it's my responsibility, I feel, to be a voice for that; for the land and for the animals that give us life and provide us for with a beautiful home" (Interview, 11). She explains that in her culture health and working for social benefit is especially important; caring for the people and the environment is viewed as the personal responsibility of everyone.

In the interview with Verna she explains that in her culture the work that one does is often influenced by tradition and history. She discusses women's roles in the cultural division of labour in her community; "well, in my culture we're the caregivers of our domain, we give birth we are the central caretaker of our home, we take care of what's going on inside the house with our families" (Interview 20). In her

example, she is identifying the role that tradition and history have played in the way women have been viewed and the work that they have been assigned in society.

Although some of the study participants felt pressure was the right word to describe their work in the social economy others were hesitant. In her interview Tina explains, “well, I don’t know if pressure is the word that I would use, I think women have, tend to have more social responsibility about seeing where there needs to be work done and actually just doing it...But I don’t see it as being related to pressure I see it as being more related to commitment” (Interview, 19). Here, the term social responsibility is used to express a difference between responsibility and pressure; the difference being that women take on responsibilities in society because they are more aware of these responsibilities not because they are pressured to do so.

All of the women interviewed believed that they were working in the social economy because of their own personal choices and that these choices were shaped by their values. One woman explained, “I think that it was just my own choice. I don’t feel that I was pushed in any direction” (Interview, 7). For this interviewee the decision to participate in the social economy was a choice that they had made and they felt there was no pressure put on their decision. However, the underlying feeling of responsibility to work in a social oriented organization was still mentioned.

Some study participants did feel that women’s social economy work could be seen as a pressure, though they did not experience this pressure personally. In some

cases an explanation was offered to why women might feel pressure to be involved in social economy work. One woman explained; “I think that it comes from the stereotypes that women should give and be volunteers and run their kids around and that” (Interview, 5). In this view she offers the explanation of stereotyped roles and how that impacts perceived pressures and responsibilities.

One study participant explained how her decision to work in the social economy was not pressured but she did get a lot of positive feedback for her choice. In her interview Isabella explained the influence of pressure in her choice of employment; “not in my decision to work here. But you do get a lot of, sort of, strokes from people” (Interview, 9). In this case there was no perceived pressure to be involved in the social economy, but the way the work was regarded by society made an impact. Although the initial decision to work in the social economy was not made due to pressures from society there were still aspects of the work that had the potential to be shaped by the views of society.

In one social economy organization the research participants interviewed believe that there were no underlying pressures or feelings of responsibility to be involved. They felt that all their members wanted to be a part of their organization and that pressure and responsibility had no role; “I think people want to be members” (Interview, 17). However, only two participants felt this way and they were members of the same organization; an organization that was focused less on social goals and more on personal interest.

## **Economic Influence**

The theme of *Economic Influence*, examines the way that money and economic goals affect women that are working in the social economy sector of the economy. Many of the study participants mentioned money in relation to their work in the social economy. Most of the women noted that money was a major influence in the work that they chose to be involved with. However, the way that money influenced their choices varied.

Eight of the twenty women interviewed referenced their wages. Five of these 8 women noted the fact that they were being paid less working in the social economy than they would be paid if they worked in either the public or private sector. In her interview Alice explains that for her the choice to work in the social economy was a decision that came with a significant decrease in pay. The work that she was doing in both sectors was relatively similar and required that she used her formal training in the same way, however her social economy sector work was not as economically valued. In her explanation of her decision to take the social economy position and the reduced wage she states “I almost felt like I was treating myself to come and work in an environment with not as much monetary reimbursement” (Interview, 1). Therefore, money is an influencing factor on the participants’ decision to work in the social economy, her motivations to work in a field where she feels good about the work she is doing is stronger than her need for economic compensation.

Similarly, some participants felt that the lower wages that were often characteristic of social economy work was not a significant negative influence to the work. The women often noted that they enjoyed the work that they were doing and that was enough for them. In the interview with Lisa she states her opinions about women's jobs and the influence of money; "like women are willing to settle for less, I don't think that this is settling for less, like myself personally...in terms of women being used to lower - - - lower incomes than men" (Interview, 12). Here, Lisa explains how it may seem that the employment choices that women make could be "settling" for less in terms of wage; however she does not feel that she has settled and it is hard to say if many women feel that they have settled for less. For Lisa the work she does is more important to her than the income that she makes; in this view it could be understood that many women feel that their happiness at work and the positive difference they make is more influential than monetary rewards they receive.

Four of the twenty study participants commented on the idea that there may be a misunderstood perception of women being more willing to "settle" for less economically in their work than men. This was often viewed as a misconception though. Most of the study participants believed that they were not settling in their work and that they had made their decision to work in the social economy based on factors that were unrelated to economic reward. Therefore, the notion that women were "settling" for a low wage was inaccurate understanding of the careful consideration that women take in their employment decisions.

However, there were study participants who felt that women were more willing to do work that had less economic reward. One interview participant suggested that, “women might not be so wage oriented” (Interview, 9). In this view, women put more weight on the significance of the work they are doing than they do on the wage that they receive. They are less likely to see a lower wage as a deterring factor if they are doing work that is important and meaningful to them.

Although most of the study participants believed that the issue of money was not a significant factor in their decision to work in the social economy, it was still important characteristic to consider. Almost all the women mentioned economic influence in some way. A number of the women noted how the wage they received did have an impact on their decision, including being a deciding factor in their choice to work where they did. In her interview Heather states her motivations, “I think a financial motivation. It’s a source of employment, a source of income” (Interview, 8).

Six of the research participants noted that they were satisfied with their wage. For some interviewees their wage was high enough to be a significant positive motivation for them. In one interview the woman research participant noted that she was looking for a certain wage, “it was a good way to match my husbands’ work, which, he is also a teacher, and so he works in the education system” (Interview, 2). In this case, she wanted to be in her field, in education, and maintain a salary that would be equivalent to that of her husband. Therefore, she was taking wage into

consideration while still considering the importance of working in an area that had something significant to offer within the traditional socio-economic system.

All the interview participants listed their personal, social and environmental motivations for their work in the social economy; they also all noted at some point the issue of economic motivation. For 10 of the women interview participants the social aspect of the social economy work appeared to be the fundamental motivation and the economic aspects were viewed as important but more of an afterthought. For the other half of the study participants, the economic motivation was more visible. Therefore the economic factor of motivation was dependant on the individual research participant. In the interview with Fran she explains all of her social and environmental goals and motivations to her work and then concludes her statement, “I make pretty decent wages. So I like that too” (Interview, 6). She has highlighted what is most important to her but still feels that the importance of wage should be mentioned.

## **Conclusion**

This study identifies the key themes associated with women’s motivation for working in the social economy in Whitehorse, Yukon in November 2007. The findings for this study examine the motivational factors and experiences of women who are working in the social economy in Whitehorse. The five themes found to impact women’s involvement in the social economy were; *the need to create change*,

*sense of community, personal values and beliefs, feelings of responsibility, and economic influence.* The five themes were then examined further to create a number of inter-related sub-themes that were used to better interpret the interview data.

The sub-themes that developed under the themes of *feelings of responsibility* and *personal values and beliefs* were especially useful in examining the motivations of women working in the social economy. These areas highlighted the way the women viewed their own social economy work as well as the motivations of other women working in this sector. Aspects of these areas were often inter-related and developed in similar patterns through out the data.

Many of the interview participants elaborated on their own personal beliefs about their choice to work in the social economy. Through out the interviews, participants were asked to examine the role that they felt their beliefs and values played on the choices they made. Almost all of the study participants mentioned that having a “strong belief” in the purpose of the organization was a motivating factor for them in their work. Also, the goals of the organization being close to their own personal values was often noted by study participants as impacting their positive feelings about the work they were doing.

The interviews conducted for this study offered insight into the real motivations and experiences of women working in the social economy. Their answers highlighted areas that were important to them in their decisions to work in this area



and the feelings and emotions that they attached to this work. From the data gathered in these interviews the five major themes that were identified allowed for a through analysis of the common areas of importance identified by the women participants.

In the literature review a number of hypotheses were made about women's participation in the social economy. The literature review offered a number of possible variables to account for women's tendency to choose work in the social economy sector. These variables were viewed as possible motivating factors for women working in the social economy. The variables discussed were; *women's nurturing/maternal role, women's need to take a supportive role, women's exclusion from paid labour, and women's need to escape feelings of isolation*. These variables were offered as possible causal factors for women's participation in the social economy sector.

The literature review findings are interrelated to the main themes that were found in the interview data results of this research. In the findings of this research the women interview participants *need to create change* can be closely linked to the *need to be in a supportive role* hypothesis. In both cases it is women's need to care for and make a difference is highlighted as motivational to the work women choose. Also closely linked with the need to create change is the variable of *women's nurturing/maternal role*; the findings from this research suggest women choose work where they are able to offer nurturing and maternal care to others. In the interviews many of the women noted that they enjoyed the work they did in the social economy

because of the kind of work it was, which was often nurturing work and involved children or people in need. There was often a strong sense of being able to offer something to the community and make a difference in people's lives.

In the literature review findings the hypothesis that, women are more likely to work in the social economy due to their *exclusion from paid labour*, was made. However, in the interview data there was no mention of feelings of exclusion from any of the interview participants. Almost all the women noted that they had chosen the work that they did based on their own personal feelings and motivations and not because they felt that they were being excluded from any other area of the economy. Many of the women interviewees felt that they could work in any field that they chose and that being in the north actually allowed greater opportunities for them in terms of employment.

Finally, the literature review findings were used to create the hypothesis that women work in the social economy to *escape feelings of isolation*. In the literature review it appeared that women often felt isolated from the traditional economy and the notion was also made that these feelings of isolation would be more prevalent for women in the north due to geographic circumstances. In the interview data many women research participants noted that they worked in the social economy to make a difference in community and to be involved, however there were very few links made to feelings of personal isolation. A number of the research participants did note that there was a need to make connections and form relationships in the community due to

the geographic location. Many of the research participants acknowledged that most of the people living in Whitehorse had moved there from another area of Canada and no extended family or strong support networks, therefore, creating a need to build relationships in the community. The need to work in the social economy was then linked to creating a *sense of community*; many of the research participants felt that their choice of work did have something to do with the ability to work with community members and help create stronger social ties in the community.

The five themes impacting women's involvement in the social economy; *the need to create change, sense of community, personal values and beliefs, feelings of responsibility, and economic influence* were inter-related and were found to interact with the additional issues of *gender* and the *social setting* of Whitehorse. Because the focus of this study was on women the aspect of gender and gender relations within the social economy was affected by the themes. Also, the setting of Whitehorse added additional issues to the role of women and the role of the social economy making this link especially important to the understanding of women's social economy involvement in the north. The socio-economic situation in the Yukon is unique; with the fifth highest employment rate in Canada and an economic sector dominated by the service producing sector. Also unique is the low unemployment rate gender ratios; men are more likely to be unemployed than women (Yukon Bureau of Statistics, 2008). Due to these interesting economic and demographic statistics and the climate and relative isolation of the Canadian North, Whitehorse is of particular interest when looking at the importance of the social economy.

The main focus of this research was to look at women's unique experiences in this area of the economy by exploring the themes and examining the role of gender in the motivations and experiences of women working in the social economy. The interview data gave insight into the way the thoughts and behaviors of the women shape their roles in the social economy and community economic development.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Further research into this area is needed to fully develop an understanding of why women choose to participate in the social economy. This study examines the individual experiences and personal motivations of women working in the social economy on a small scale. Although 20 interviews allow for an in-depth understanding of each participant's experience it is a limited scope and further research would be beneficial to gain a greater overall picture of women working in the social economy.

A quantitative analysis of women participating in the social economy and their roles would offer further information on the extent to which women are involved in social economy organizations and the specific roles that women play within these organizations. Taking a quantitative approach to understanding how women are involved in the social economy in Whitehorse, Yukon would further explore the impact that women make in this sector. A statistical analysis of the participation rates

of women in the social economy would allow for a comprehensive understanding of the significance of women working in this sector.

Additional quantitative data that highlights the positions of women within social economy organizations would also be beneficial in understanding the diversity in the roles women play in this sector. Identifying the positions that women take on in the work they do within the social economy will give additional information to the kind of work that women are doing in the social economy. However, further qualitative data will also be necessary to gain additional insight into the choices that women make to work in this sector and the positions they choose.

To gain a more complex understanding of the motivations of women and the work they do within the social economy, further quantitative and qualitative research is needed. For example, in this research the focus was qualitative and much of the data gave specific insights to the individual study participants' feelings and thoughts about their own experiences of working in the social economy. Many of the women interviewees stated that they felt personally connected to their work and were motivated by their personal values and beliefs; the values and beliefs of the interview participants are valuable in gaining a deeper understanding of each woman's perspective but they will also vary greatly. Quantitative data giving statistical evidence of the importance of women in this area of the economy and the valuable roles that they play would complement this research greatly.

### **Significance of Research**

This thesis attempts to better understand the position of women in the social economy and the reasons and motivations behind their significant participation in this area of the economy. Throughout the research it became clear that the concept of social economy in Canada still needs to be developed; as it does not have one straightforward and agreed upon definition. To gain a deeper understanding of this area of the economy a clear and focused definition is essential. To reaffirm the importance of a clear definition of social economy the definition used for this thesis is restated:

*“The Social Economy includes: social assets (housing, childcare, etc.), social enterprises including cooperatives, equity and debt capital for community investment, social purpose businesses, community training and skills development, integrated social and economic planning, and capacity building and community empowerment. The social economy is a continuum that goes from the one end of totally voluntary organizations to the other end where the economic activity (social enterprise) blurs the line with the private sector.”*

(Community Economic Development Network National Policy Council, Social Economy Roundtable Consultation Briefing Notes, 2005).

This definition is important to review as it is a base for the way that this research is conducted and understood. This particular definition was best suited for this study as it encompasses a number of issues and has a wide-ranging focus of social economy.

This thesis examines the key motivating factors to women's participation in the social economy in Whitehorse. The history of the Whitehorse economy was of particular interest to understanding the affects that economic change had on the way the women research participants perceived their work and the motivations they had for working in the social economy sector. The economy in Whitehorse has gone through numerous transformations, in the gold rush era (1896- 1900) primarily an industrial economy all the way to the present where government jobs and the health and social service industry is predominant (Yukon Government, 2004). This thesis attempts to understand how women in Whitehorse working in the social economy are impacted by the unique economic situation in Whitehorse; while also taking into consideration the lives of the women and their unique and individual motivations to their economic participation in the social economy. Understanding the way women have dealt with exclusion from the paid work force allows a better understanding of their choice to work in social economy work.

For this research the women research participants did not reference historical exclusion from the paid work force as impacting their choice to work in the social economy. The research data found that the women chose to work in the social economy due more to personal reasons. The primary motivations for women to chose to work in the social economy was found to be based on personal feelings, beliefs; *the need to create change, sense of community, personal values and beliefs, feelings of responsibility*, and finally *economic influence*. The present economy in Whitehorse allows for numerous employment opportunities and allows women to choose

employment based on personal motivating factors. Therefore, women choose to work in social economy due to their own personal beliefs about wanting to make a difference with the work that they are involved in and this is important to understand, as the social economy is becoming an important economic area, especially in the north.

Understanding that women motivated to work within the social economy sector in Whitehorse, Yukon is not sufficient; this study looks to gain insight into the personal experiences of women that affect their motivation to participate in the social economy. The research data collected for this thesis allows for a deeper knowledge of the crucial role that women play in the social economy. This thesis research took an in-depth approach to understanding of the role of women and their personal motivation to work in this important sector of the economy. Understanding the motivational factors affecting women's choice to participate in the social economy is essential to understanding the over all social and economic experiences of women in the economy and for this research, the social economy.



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### Women in the Social Economy - Interview Guide

1. What is your position within this social economy organization?  
-volunteer, employee, member, manager, board member, director.
2. What type of work is it?  
-part-time, full-time, occasional, seasonal, temporary, availability
3. Do you receive monetary payment for your work?
4. How many hours per week do you spend working within this organization?
5. Are you involved in more than one social economy organization in your community?
6. How did you become involved in this organization?
7. Why did you become involved with this organization?
  - Further employment opportunities/to develop skills
  - Social benefits
  - Social/community pressures
  - Required (School, work, other)
  - Friends/family involved
  - Believe in/support the goals of this organization
  - Personal interest
8. Do you feel that you receive any other kinds of benefits (social or otherwise) for the work you do within this organization?
  - Social benefits
  - Employment benefits
  - Tax subsidies
9. Of the people you work with within this organization; what would you say is the ratio of women to men?
  - Why do you think that is?
  - If there are more men than women, do you see a distinction in the relationships between men and women involved in the organization? or the roles that each play?
10. In general, do you think women chose to work in social economy?
  - Why do you think that?
    - Exclusion from the traditional sector
    - Want to make a positive impact on community
    - Social or economic pressures



11. Do you feel women have more of a social pressure put on them to be involved in social economy organizations?
12. Do you feel that there is a greater importance put on social economic involvement due to parenting responsibilities?
  - If you are a parent did this affect your decision to become involved in this area of work?
13. Do you feel a sense of altruism/personal satisfaction in working for this organization/business?
  - Is that an important aspect for you?
  - Do you feel you are making a positive difference in the community?
14. What do you feel are primary goals of this organization?
  - Are they social goals or economic goals?
  - How do you feel about these goals?
  - Do you feel that your main goal (personally) is to help people with the work you do in this organization?
15. What do you consider your primary motivation for your involvement with this organization/business?
  - Financial reasons (if you get paid)
  - Making a positive difference in society/community (social benefit/ social capital)
  - Connecting with other people
  - Family reasons (children, spouse, parents, etc.)
16. Can you identify some other personal motivations to the work you do with this organization?
  - Community benefits
  - Personal growth
17. Is this social economy organization a large part of your life?
  - Something you strongly believe in?
  - Do you feel connected to the organization? the goals?
  - Do you feel connected to the other employees/volunteers? to the members? to the customers?
  - Do you think that this kind of connection to your work is important to you?
18. Have you ever been involved in a social economy organization because friends or family members were involved?
  - Did you feel pressured to join in?
  - Did you want to join to spend time with friends or family?
  - Did you begin work with this organization to meet new people and form new friendships?

19. Do you feel that you have gained close personal ties/relationships due to your participation within this social economy organization?

-Is this an important aspect for you?

-meeting people, networking, social aspects

-influence of money, status...

20. Do you feel that there may have been social or community influences in your decision to work for this organization?

-pressures from the community to be active in this type of work

## Women in the Social Economy: Cover Letter

Dear Potential Research Participant:

This research is focused on understanding the involvement of women in social economy organizations of the Canadian North. I am interested in the reasons and the motivations that women choose to participate in this sector of the economy. I would like to interview you about your own personal experiences working in social economy organizations and your motivations behind this type of work; as well as any other aspects of this subject that you may want to include.

This research will be focused on the unique circumstances of women in the Canadian North and the issues that surround their positions in their communities, at home and within the economies of the North. I will be focusing on women that are working in the social economy and how they have come to be involved in this type of work and what aspects of their lives that may have played a part in their choice to work within this sector.

The information that I collect for this research will all be stored securely at Lakehead University for five years. The information provided by the participants will be confidential and any identifying characteristics will not be used or printed within the research, unless permission has been granted by the participant directly.

This research will look to benefit women working in the social economy in the Canadian North and understand their important roles in this sector. The knowledge gained from this study will hopefully increase the positive benefits of the social economy and the unique roles that women play within the sector. This research has been funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and works in partnership with the Social Economy Research Network of Canada.

There is no expected risk to participating in this study. Participation as an interviewee is completely voluntary and you can make the choice to withdraw from the interview at any time.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research at any point in time, please contact myself, my supervisor Dr. Chris Southcott, or the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board

Thank you for your time,

Tomiko Hoshizaki  
(807) 345-0602 / [thoshiza@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:thoshiza@lakeheadu.ca)  
Dr. Chris Southcott  
(807) 343-8349 / [csouthco@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:csouthco@lakeheadu.ca)  
Lakehead University Research Ethics Board

(807) 345-8283

**Women in the Social Economy: Consent Form**

You are invited to participate in this study of women working within the social economy of the Canadian North. You have been asked to participate in this study due to your own involvement in this sector of the economy.

If you decide to participate you will be interviewed about your own experiences working in the social economy. You will be asked a series of questions relating to your work within this sector of the economy, however, you may choose to not answer or discontinue the interview completely at any point in time.

There is no reasonable reason to expect any physical or psychological risk in participating in this study. However, the potential benefits of understanding the importance of women in the social economy may be large.

The data collected from these interviews will be kept confidential and will only be shared among researchers involved in this study. The information provided will be released only in collective form and will not be identifiable to participants. Any data used in the research project will be published anonymously. All data and records will be stored securely for five years at Lakehead University.

Request of summary of this study once complete, will be available upon request.

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You are making a decision to participate in this study; signing below will indicate that you have read and understand the information above and have chosen to participate in these interviews. Also, you may withdraw from this study at any point in time subsequent to signing this consent.

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

\_\_\_\_\_