

Centre for the Study of Co-operatives News

Centre benefits from FCL's \$1 million commitment to co-operative business development in rural and Aboriginal communities

The University of Saskatchewan has received \$1 million from Federated Co-operatives Limited (FCL), on behalf of the Co-operative Retailing system, for a new initiative in co-operative business development in rural and Aboriginal communities in Canada. The project will be led by the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives in partnership with the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy (JS GS), the International Centre for Northern Governance and Development, the Edwards School of Business (ESB), and the Plunkett Foundation in the UK.

Working with rural and Aboriginal communities, the partners will explore ways to expand the co-operative business model in communities where co-ops have not previously been present. "This partnership provides a unique opportunity to help rural and Aboriginal communities determine whether the co-op model can be applied as a practical solution to needs identified by the communities themselves," says FCL's CEO Scott Banda. "Working together, we will inspire innovation and economic development, and create lasting changes, not just quick fixes, based on co-operative principles such as co-operation, participation, and concern for the community."

The project has a strong educational component, with the expectation that research will translate into real-world applications. It will incorporate experiential learning opportunities for students, integrate research and teaching tools into the JS GS and ESB curriculums, and develop case studies in rural and Aboriginal social



and economic development. This knowledge will be used to better inform future business leaders and policy makers about the efficacy of the co-operative model.

"We are thrilled to be part of FCL's commitment to innovative co-operative business development," said JS GS Professor Murray Fulton, who is also a Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives. "This takes collaborative work between the university and communities to a new level and will be a real test of how to combine research with practical realities."

FCL will contribute \$1 million over two years to support the initial planning and business development. Following an assessment of the program in late 2015, FCL will consider long-term funding to support identified projects.

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