



Social Enterprises  
Knowledgeable Economies  
and Sustainable Communities

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# Recovery of the Collective Memory and Projection into the Future: ASOPRICOR

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**A research report prepared for the Northern Ontario, Manitoba,  
and Saskatchewan Regional Node of the Social Economy Suite**

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Entreprises sociales  
économies intelligentes  
et communautés durables





# ASOPRICOR

COLOMBIA

ASSOCIATION FOR THE HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT  
OF RURAL AND URBAN COMMUNITIES  
25 YEARS OF HOPES AND STRUGGLES



## RECOVERY OF THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND PROJECTION OF THE FUTURE REPORT 2006

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN ASOPRICOR AND  
COMMUNITY ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM  
(CESD)  
ALGOMA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE- CANADA



This paper is part of a collection of research reports prepared for the project  
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the Winnipeg Inner-City Research Alliance,  
and the Community Economic and Social Development Unit  
at Algoma University College.

The project also includes more than fifty community-based organizations  
in four provinces, the United States, Colombia, and Belgium.

This particular research paper is the result of a partnership between ASOPRICOR in Colombia  
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Further acknowledgements can be found on the following page.

The opinions of the authors found herein do not necessarily reflect  
those of CESD, the Linking, Learning, Leveraging project,  
or the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

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*Minga* is an indigenous word from the peoples of Colombia and Latin American countries, which means working together with our spirituality, resources, capacities and knowledge to achieve a collective goal. We have called a *Minga* to develop this research partnership project "Recovery of the Collective Memory and Projection of the Future".

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This document summarizes the first year of development of the research project "Recovery of the Collective Memory and Projection of the Future". This is a five-year communitarian project conducted by the Association for the Holistic Development of Rural and Urban Communities (ASOPRICOR) in Colombia in partnership with the Community Economic and Social Development Program (CESD) at Algoma University College Canada. This first year's report has two objectives: a) to produce materials that will form the basis for the development of the next stages of this project; and b) to share information and knowledge with the hope that it will be a source of inspiration, reflection and questions about our daily work with communities

The project has been divided into three stages:

1. Preparation - Definition of the project, protocols, agreements, vision, training people, and development of the research tools;
2. Investigation – Systematic research including data collection, analysis, and expansion of the process within the communities;
3. Conclusion – Discussion, reflection, corrections, approval, and publication.

This report attempts to enumerate the most important moments of the first year of the project and documents the reflections that arise from this collective process. The contents reflect the work completed in the first stage of the research, i.e., the preparation stage, including: the definition of the research process and its implications, i.e., what it is about; protocols and agreements; the vision; the organization and training of people, i.e., the co-researchers and focus communities; central topics, orientation, resources, data collection tools; and visualization and planning the mechanisms of analysis and systematization.

To better understand the research process and methodology, the paper first outlines the context and the history of Asopricor. It then explores the various elements of the research activities. But the real actors are all the people and their life experiences who have been involved in this research process; they are the true repository and owners of all the richness of the process. We hope they will enjoy it and continue working together with us.

## **2.0 LOCATION OF ASOPRICOR**

Asopricor works in the geographical territory in which the Panche or Paimas first nation was once located, and which is now known as the Alto Magdalena and Tequendama regions of Colombia. The Panche nation is descended from one of the most fearsome Indigenous nations that the Spanish confronted, Los Caribes. Although today the Panche as an indigenous nation has been disappearing, originally its territory was approximately 1,500 square kilometres and had a population of more than 50,000 people. The most important commercial center was the village of Calambata. The Panche as well as other cultures in the area, believed in a superior god, possessor of light, in the pantheon of divinities Sua (the sun), Chia (the moon) Pacha-mama (the land) the rainbow, and the water were the most important. In their cosmos vision people originated from water by the materialization of people through woman. For some of the indigenous nationalities in the area like the Chibchas and Muiscas the matrilineal line prevailed for the succession of leadership; the heir of the cacique had to be the son of a sister of his/hers, and the sister(s) of the cacique was the usual beneficiary of all the cacique's goods and power.

Today this area corresponds to the center of Colombia which is in South America. Note that the names Colombia and America are new. In some ways, those names represent the level of colonization and destruction of the languages and cultures which were there before European people arrived. In fact, Colombia is the last in a series of names used by the Spanish and their descendants. New Granada was the initial name, then La grand Colombia and then Colombia. Behind all of those names, was denial - a refusal to recognize the names of the indigenous nations, eighty-two in total with their languages and particular cultures. In the same way, the name of "America" was used in 1507 for the first time to honour Americo Vespusio sailing from Italy; only a few people know that the previous names used for North America were Turtle Island and for South America was Abiyala, which means mature land. This systematic and historical denial is one explanation, among others, for the causes of our current problems in Colombia and in Latin America. There are not only economic or political causes, but also cultural; some groups have denied not only the "real" names of people and places but also the right of indigenous and local people to exist in all of their diversity and richness.

The indigenous nations of this central area of Colombia, according to some historians are the creators of the legend of "el dorado", the massive treasure of gold which drove some of the Spanish invaders crazy with greed. It was a craziness which motivated Europeans to make long expeditions through the tropical forest, to deny the humanity of indigenous peoples in order to justify slavery or extermination, which was the destiny of Panches and other indigenous nationalities in the area, leaving a heritage of ambition and violence, which still exists today.

Today, the search for "el dorado" is not only for gold; it is also for water, petroleum, uranium, biodiversity, traditional knowledge, geo-strategic position etc. The sickness of "el dorado" is not a history of the past it is the present; it is not exclusive to a region or country; it is a system of values, which affects people everywhere. All cultural, economic, social and political organizations have changed since the arrival of the conquistadores as well as the relations between women and men and humans and nature. According to Galeano (1985: 99) three conquistadors, Gonzalo Jimenez de Quezada, Nicolas de Federman, and Sebastian de Benalcazar, were together in the same place, at the same time, and they were looking for El Dorado. They took possession of the land in the name of an outsider god and king, thereby displacing the inhabitants in the imaginary and in the physical, making local people foreigners in their own land. (The Panche nations never accepted the oppression which is one of the reasons of their disappearance; they were combating the Spanish and their allies until their extermination). This situation continues today through the mega projects and foreign intervention of multinationals, a situation that continues not only in Colombia but throughout Latin America, North America, Australia and other countries in which indigenous populations exist. The consequences have been the same for Indigenous peoples, Afros, and peasants - forced displacement, slavery, extermination, sexual assault, and destruction of their beliefs. Time of the dead. Never before has the word 'dead' had such integral meaning for indigenous, Afros and other peoples.

That is one of the major reasons why a Life project like Asopricor needs to collaborate, and has been doing so with other social movements. Asopricor alone cannot resist that global logic. Since 1978 the Association for the Holistic Development of Rural and Urban Communities (ASOPRICOR) has been working in the City of Tocaima and outlying communities and villages of the Tequendama and Alto Magdalena regions in the center of Colombia. Today it works in twelve municipalities and directly involves approximately 600 families. Asopricor in some ways represents the continuation of the resistance that in the past the Panche and other indigenous nations made against the predatory globalization and capitalism model, represented in earlier times by the Spanish empire and the Roman pope. Asopricor works in four major areas: culture, politics,



economic and social relations, as well as in environmental relations.

Some of the concrete activities undertaken by Asopricor include: promotion of agro-ecological production; processing and selling through small collective stores and restaurants; housing projects; training; political participation in the local municipalities; and the formation of alliances with regional and national organizations. Its objective is to recover the equilibrium between all of these aspects. Asopricor's ultimate goal is life, joy, justice and liberty – money or economic development is only a tool in realizing that objective.

## 2.1 GENERAL VISION OF ASOPRICOR

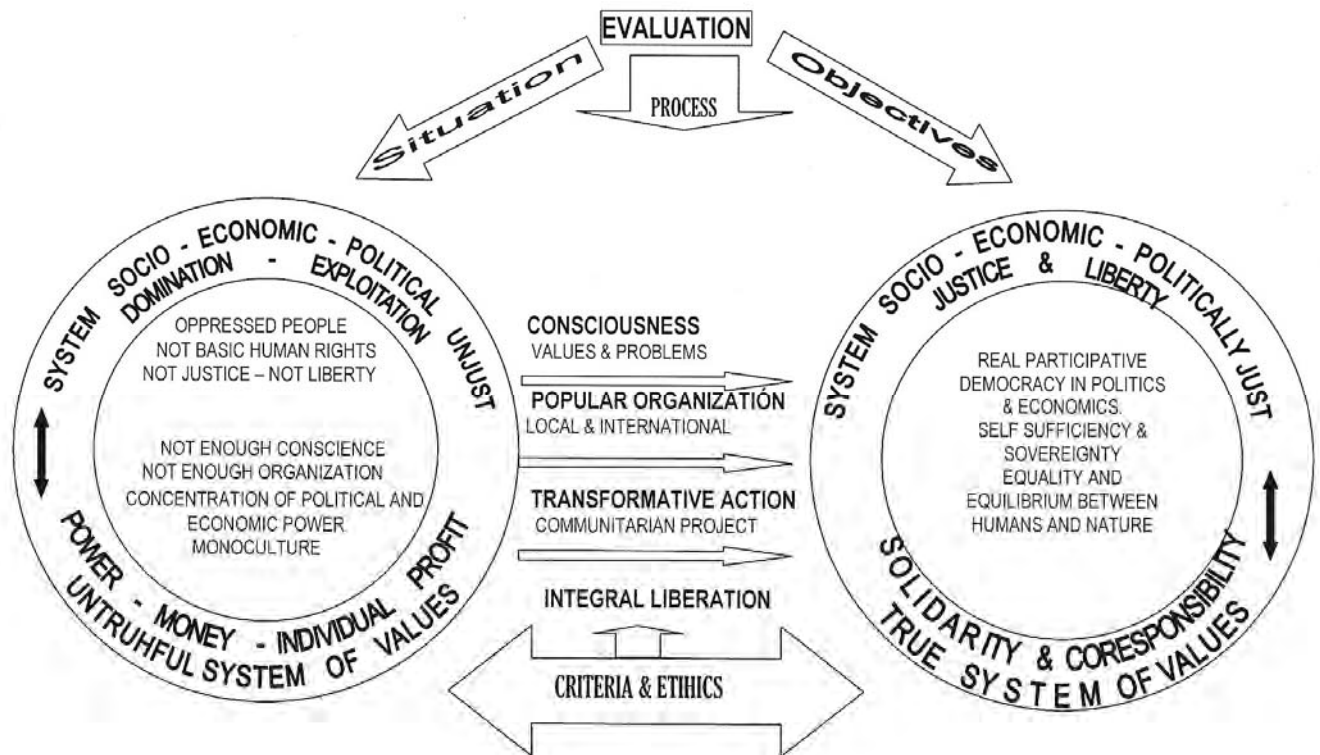


Figure 1. General vision of Asopricor

This general vision helps Asopricor members to locate in the Colombian context a clear confrontation of two separate models of development – one is a predatory model of exploiting both the natural environment and human beings for maximizing short-term profit, the second is a model promoted by popular movements (e.g., Indigenous, Afro-Colombians, women) which promotes life through a long-term sustainable community-based approach. These two models have co-existed since the time of colonization, but now the people who have been excluded have emerged as actors in creating greater consciousness, in concert with others around the world.

This general vision also helps Asopricor members to have a clear picture of the various aspects of each of the five major components in the processes:

- First, the reality – A system of socioeconomic political injustice in which the most important values are power, money and individual profit requiring exploitation and domination of people and nature. One needs to be aware both at the individual and the community level of the current status of the culture, economics, politics, and their interaction with nature (or the environment) – that is, there needs to be community consensus, achieved through common analysis, on the impact of the model on all aspects of life, beginning with the individual and community level, through the connecting links to the structural levels
- The second is a short and long term vision of the future i.e., a vision of a potentially real and material future, a holistic vision which paints the cultural, environmental and social dimensions, not only the political and economic. Full participation by all of the actors in creating this vision is essential.
- The third component is the development of the necessary process (es), resources and steps to move from where we are to where we want to go. For example, in Asopricor the processes are education-conscientization, popular organization, transformative action and evaluation (reflection), and each of these processes and steps are evaluated within the context of the awareness of the current status and the vision.
- The fourth element is clarity about the necessity of permanent evaluation and self reflection of both the present and structural context, the results of the project, and of the processes of implementation
- Fifth, clear criteria or parameters (ethics) from which people and organizations act. These criteria include:
  1. Local people are the owners of their process; i.e., they are autonomous and involved in the conception, administration, execution and evaluation of their own process.
  2. Their conception of development is intergenerational, holistic and in a long term perspective.
  3. Power and decision making is a decentralized, horizontal and consensual process.
  4. Negotiation and social participation is the key to making an end to the armed conflict.

All of these points are not a linear dynamic; rather they involve a circular and spiral process in which each member has something to teach and something to learn. It is both personal and communitarian liberation in which each participant makes his/her own process of self anthropological education.

### **3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Community-University research partnerships have, in recent years, been promoted as an ideal way to develop research that is meaningful to participants in the research, and also mobilizes the knowledge and new experiences into action for social transformation, as well as providing some of the best evidence on which to base future policy. There are however, many challenges for those engaging in the partnership and some of the most significant are:

- Negotiating a successful partnership where both the university and the community find satisfaction

in the results and in the process.

- Finding a mutually satisfactory research methodology that will create new knowledge that respects the ethical concerns of both partners, while also meeting standards of validity and reliability.
- Providing a meaningful, just and respectful community engagement process

Increasingly, Participatory Action Research (PAR) has been identified as a research methodology which can address these multiple challenges; thus Asopricor has selected this as the principal methodology to conduct the research. This part of the paper explores the beginning stages of the research process.

### **3.1 DEVELOPING THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN ASOPRICOR AND CESD**

In September 2005, Jose Agustin Reyes, a member of Asopricor, entered the CESD program as an undergraduate student at Algoma University College, in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada. He brought with him over twenty years' experience in the foundation and ongoing work of Asopricor, an organization based in the Department of Cundinamarca, Colombia. Asopricor promotes the social transformation of its membership through a process of continuous self-reflection and evaluation of its political, economic, social, cultural and environmental activities.

Fortuitously, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) announced funding of a research project entitled Linking, Learning, Leveraging: Social Enterprises, Knowledgeable Economies and Sustainable Communities, a research project designed to study the social economy in Northern Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. One of the co-applicants on the project, Gayle Broad, an Assistant Professor in the CESD program, had already visited some of the Asopricor communities, and saw an opportunity to link the work of Asopricor to the research being undertaken within the Linking, Learning, Leveraging project. Dr. Lou Hammond-Ketilson, the Principal Investigator of the project, agreed and offered her support.

The process began with a wide-ranging discussion between Reyes and Broad regarding Asopricor's life project, and the possibilities for a convergence of the goals of these programs. Reyes then initiated discussions with individual Asopricor members who began informal discussions with others.

At this juncture Asopricor was particularly interested in two areas of further investigation: one was to explore the succession within the organization by the next generation; and second, to reflect on the organization's last five years of activities and set strategic goals for the next five years. Asopricor had conducted a number of research projects in the past, and as an Asopricor member, Reyes brought some specific concerns about research methodology, both in terms of it being a truly inclusive process and in it reflective of the organization's autonomy. As a result, the first area of negotiation was to ensure that Asopricor's values were respected, and clearly articulated in the partnership agreement.

### **3.2. ESTABLISHING BASELINE CRITERIA FOR A PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT<sup>2</sup>**

Asopricor was well aware of the possibility of being a 'junior partner' in the relationship with a university, and wished to ensure that its expertise was fully respected in the knowledge production process. Its

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<sup>2</sup> See the full text of the Partnership Agreement attached as Appendix A to this report. This initial Agreement, developed specifically for the partnership outlined in this report, is now being used as a format to begin discussions by CESD with other community based research initiatives.

philosophy, in this matter as in others, is "if you do not have your own proposition you are obligated to negotiate the proposition of others". The organization, through a series of discussions and communications, established the following criteria for the partnership agreement with CESD:

- Respect for the autonomy of Asopricor
- The title of the project was selected by Asopricor and outlines its goals for the research itself thereby illustrating the respect for Asopricor's autonomy
- Use of the research as a method for extending/continuing the work of the organization itself (i.e., ongoing capacity building)
- Respect for and recognition of the collective knowledge of Asopricor derived from communitarian processes by acknowledging and credit collective authorship of papers and any others materials.
- Respect for Asopricor's willingness to share its experience, its difficulties as well as its successes, and the context within which it works, not so that it becomes an ideal model, but rather so that others may learn from its processes

The development of the Partnership Agreement has given rise to many discussions, and continues to inform the work of the project. Reyes and Broad identified that building a university/community research collaboration which also crosses North-South boundaries is challenging for all involved (Broad and Reyes, 2006) and the process of establishing ongoing, respectful relationships in these circumstances is a complex task. Some of the research questions that will be explored through this process include:

What does "partnership" really mean? How can partners design/develop egalitarian relationships? Between communities and universities? Between North and South? Between Indigenous and colonizers? How does community-based research challenge the power and control of universities? And the power behind the universities? How can collective knowledge be adequately recognized and credited in the authorship/ownership and control of publications?

From September to December 2005 Asopricor and CESD defined and signed the terms of a research partnership agreement, and ethical review concerning the research was approved. The next twelve months began the first stage of the research as outlined by Asopricor.

### **3.3 THE FIRST STAGE - DEVELOPMENTAL YEAR: 2005-2006**

The process over the first year has been a consultative, consensus-building series of discussions, meetings and interactions. Initial discussions did not result in decision-making; rather the process was one of building relations and building trust between the various actors both within Asopricor and with CESD and its partners in the Linking, Learning, Leveraging project. Formal and informal spaces were utilized to develop understandings and strengthen relationships between the partners; and within the Asopricor organization itself.

In many ways, the process resembles a spiral, where decisions were achieved by reviewing the past experience of Asopricor with researchers, visioning the current research needs, and examining how this research could be conducted in a way that would achieve the needs of the organization without compromising its autonomy over both the process and the results of the research project.

### 3.4 THE RESEARCH PROCESS IN CANADA AND IN COLOMBIA

The PAR process was carefully designed to ensure that diversity of experience within Asopricor was well represented and that the second generation of Asopricor membership was involved throughout all stages. This was achieved through selecting a diverse group of communities to participate as ‘focus communities’ as well as through the selection of community facilitators.

The Board of Directors of Asopricor conveyed the information regarding the research project to all of the twelve municipalities within which Asopricor is active. Although ten communities immediately expressed interest in participating in the project, given the resources available, only six were finally selected. Delegates from all of the Asopricor communities met and established criteria for the selection including: differing municipalities; diversity in climates; different types of experiences, i.e., some holistic, some more specific in activity areas; and generational and gender differences. Based on these diverse experiences, six of the municipalities which had expressed interest in participating in the project were selected.

The six participating communities then selected community facilitators to be trained in the research process. Each community used their own selection process to identify the community facilitators. Two individuals were selected from each community, one to act as the community facilitator and one to act as a support to the community facilitator and to ensure continuity, should the community facilitator be unable, for any reason, to continue with the research. The community facilitators and research support members from all six municipalities will be trained together, and will meet and communicate regularly throughout the research process.

*Figure 2. Detailed Research Process*

Process in Canada	Process in Colombia
1. Facilitator – José Agustín Reyes in coordination with Gayle Broad, CESD	1. The research is facilitated by José Agustín Reyes and a group of six community facilitators selected from the Asopricor membership and six members of a research support group. All 12 members of the research team will work in coordination with the Asopricor Board of Directors.
2. Communication facilitated on weekly basis by J. Reyes	2. Approximately every two months the six co-researchers will have a regular meeting and every 6 months the 12-member research team will meet. Their task is to assure the regular development of the project in all its components.
3. Analysis, translation (Spanish-English) of some data, documents, or some strategic communication between Asopricor members provided by J. Reyes	3. At the beginning of the project 2 extraordinary meetings will be held for the research team to prepare the principal questions of the research and to prepare the training session about PAR.
4. Research data collected in the communities by the co-researchers will be shared with the research facilitator through a series of meetings conducted via teleconference, and/or in-person meetings as	4. A 4-day training session will be provided to the research team and open to a maximum of 8 other delegates of Asopricor focus groups prior to the General Assembly in June (if at all possible). The

<p>well as via internet and mail</p>	<p>training will be provided by a participatory evaluator with experience in training others, and will be mutually agreeable with both Asopricor and the CESD program. J. Reyes and the Board of Directors of Asopricor will identify potential trainers.</p>
<p>5. J. Reyes and G. Broad will provide support to the co-researchers on a regular basis and as much as possible participate in communications and discussions, when co researchers hold meetings or the Asopricor Assembly occurs. They will also be available for consultation, advice and discussions on such occasions as the co-researchers may require. They and the CESD research team will also provide support in organizing activities, particularly international travel as required.</p>	<p>5. In (July 2006) a General Assembly will take place that is the opportunity to evaluate the five year strategic plan and subsequent program made in 2000 for the period 2000 to 2005 and to develop a strategic plan for the next five years. This research project will be included in the plan as an instrument to help the development of Asopricor objectives.</p>
<p>6. All communications and documents made in relation to this project will be kept in a specific file.</p>	<p>6. All communications and documents made in relation to this project will be kept in a specific file.</p>
<p>7. One of the key elements of the Linking, Learning, and Leveraging project is the social capital that will result from connecting the various research projects together. Although Asopricor's research will be linked to the regional node through CESD, the Association will have access to, and be conjoined with all the research being conducted through the project. This will be achieved through regular conference calls, a project list serve, potentially a website, and at least two in-person meetings (in Canada) throughout the five-year project. There is also a strong likelihood that Canadians will visit Asopricor during this time, and the feasibility of other types of exchanges that will promote relationships between Asopricor and other research partners will be explored.</p>	<p>7. In coordination with the Board of Directors the members of the research team will select the experiences, groups or cooperatives (example Copaltri, Group of women of Guacana, group of producers of maize Jerusalem, Construction group, or the Brisas housing group, youth group etc) to be the subjects and objects of their own research. Each group which participates in the research will examine its own experience as a clear and collective process of recuperation of their particular history and process, their economic, political and cultural context. Each group will explore this experience over time, their interaction with mother nature and their own process of consciousness raising, organization and transformative action in the context of their contribution to the construction of a local collective community (veredal), and the regional project of Asopricor (spirit), including the contribution to the overall vision of the organization.</p>
	<p>8. The research data will be collected through a series of meetings conducted by members of the research team at in-person meetings. These may be conducted over a period of months, or alternatively, for ease of meeting, over a 3-4 day period, following a period of consultation to identify the formal research questions.</p>

	<p>9. The discussions, conclusions and reports of the co-researchers will constitute the main body of research data, though individual interviews with additional cooperative members may be necessary to elicit specific information.</p>
	<p>10. For validity testing of the results, communitarian assemblies will be convened which will act as focus groups. Interviews may also be conducted, wherein alternative explanations will be explored.</p>
	<p>11. The research results will then be finalized with the co-researchers and the Asopricor membership.</p>
	<p>12. At the end of the process each Asopricor member group participating in this research will have its own documentation of its own processes</p>
	<p>13. Asopricor will collect the different experiences from the regions, make a common analysis, and will locate that analysis within the context of the values, ethics and culture of Asopricor (i.e., the analysis will examine the reality of Asopricor's achievements to date, within the context of its original goals and objectives)</p>
<p>8. The draft set of results will be analyzed by J. Reyes and Dr. Broad. These results will then be presented to the community facilitators and Asopricor board directors to ensure accuracy in the analysis.</p>	<p>14. Once the data is collected, the research facilitator will analyze it in conjunction with the directors of Asopricor and the experts that have been accompanying this process. A draft set of results will be prepared. These results will then be presented to the community facilitators to ensure accuracy in the analysis.</p>
<p>9. A final document will be published in English and Spanish. As the primary purpose of Linking, Learning, and Leveraging research project is to promote the development of the social economy, dissemination of the research results is a key component of the project. It is expected that results of the research will be disseminated through academic journals and popular media; through conferences in Canada, Colombia and other international venues; and through the sharing with other participants in the Linking, Learning, and Leveraging research project.</p>	<p>15. A final document will be published in Spanish and in English. As the primary purpose of Linking, Learning, and Leveraging research project is to promote the development of the social economy, dissemination of the research results is a key component of the project. It is expected that results of the research will be disseminated through academic journals and popular media; through conferences in Colombia and Canada, and other international venues; and through the sharing with other participants in the Linking, Learning, and Leveraging research project.</p>

#### 4.0 DEFINING THE RESEARCH PROCESS, TRAINING AND TOOLS

From January 2006 to January 2007 following the establishment of the agreement, Asopricor engaged in a

participatory process to clarify and identify some of the different elements of the project. These included: sharing the vision of the research broadly throughout the membership; organizing and training the community facilitators; definition of the central topic areas of the investigation; development of a common, collective approach to the research; resources; data collection tools; development of a matrix for the community analysis of the research findings; planning analysis and systematization; definitions and general view of the research process (i.e, what it is about, the focus communities, community facilitators, plan of activities); and development of the first year's budget. To achieve this, the following activities were undertaken:

1. Formal and informal conversations inside the Colombian team and the Canadian team
2. Ongoing communication between Colombia-Canada and vice versa
3. Nine (9) meetings of the coordination team in Colombia
4. One Assembly of the Asopricor membership
5. Three specific trainings in research methodology August, October, and January for community facilitators, Asopricor board directors and research secretary team.
6. One specific meeting of children of the Asopricor members
7. One working visit of Jose A. Reyes to Colombia in August 2006

#### **4.1 RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AND FINDINGS TO DATE**

As a result of the meetings, discussions and conversations outlined above, Asopricor has identified three major actions or stages to the research: 1) definition of the research; 2) data collection; and 3) analysis, approval and publication.

##### **4.1.1 STAGE 1. (JANUARY 2006 - JANUARY 2007) DEFINITION OF THE RESEARCH**

This first stage of the research was the process of Asopricor and its research partners collectively developing an understanding and defining this project with all of its implications. This stage addresses the following:

1. What the research is about, its context, identity, and objectives
2. Asopricor's spirit of resistance, recuperation, autonomy, and development of alternatives through the past, the present, the future in consideration of the culture, politics, economy, and interaction with nature
3. What has Asopricor been doing to date, and what does it need to do? On which subject?
4. With which method?
5. The resources we have and we need
6. The necessary stages and steps
7. Definition and role of community facilitators
8. Definition and role of focus communities
9. The central topics of research and orientations
10. The tools for data collection
11. The training process
12. The evaluation process
13. The plan for the next 5 years

In summary, the objective of this first stage is to clarify and prepare for the project, identifying the vision for



the research, preparing general guidelines for the process, establishing the research tools, organizing and preparing the participants. The objective for this first stage was to have a clear perspective of Asopricor's current status, its dreams and objectives, and the process and tools required to realize its objectives. Asopricor and CESD recognize that this first stage is crucial for the realization of the subsequent stages and goals.

#### 4.1.2 STAGE 2 (FEBRUARY 2007-DECEMBER 2009): DATA COLLECTION

The next three years will comprise the second stage of the project, which will include the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. This stage will be the most intense phase, requiring full engagement of all of the resources available to the project. Because this is participative research, the role of the community facilitators and members of the focus communities are crucial. The intent is to expand the communitarian research process to engage more of the Asopricor communities (from 7 focus communities to 15 or 20). With the help of the community facilitators' team, the community members will conduct their own processes of self research in order to answer the following questions:

1. Who are they? (i.e., their identity, their history)
2. What cultural, political, economic, and environmental reality affects them?
3. What is their vision?
4. What are the challenges and opportunities?
5. What have they done, and what do they want to do to answer or respond to those realities?
6. How have they done this work?
7. What values or criteria underlie the work of the organization?
8. What mechanism of evaluation of their activities do they use?

This research is intended to not only be participative but also to be transformative action. People will become more conscious of their current situation and context and how that impacts the future and they will be able to identify more clearly the process necessary to moving forward towards their objectives.

Parallel to the research process other activities will take place in the area to reinforce the dynamic of social organization and transformation. A leadership school will be established as a tool for more education and conscientization of people who have been involved or are open to becoming part of a regional process. Special attention will be paid to ensuring that the new generation (youth movement) is involved.

#### 4.1.3 STAGE 3 (2010): ANALYSIS, APPROVAL, PUBLICATION

In this stage the research data will be organized and analyzed in depth, by all the people involved in order that all the material concepts be legitimized and approved. Each community involved will develop its own reflection, report, and research findings. These community reports will be collected into one publication which will incorporate a regional analysis based on the findings from all of the communities. This final document will be representative of all of those involved and accepted by all parties as valid and legitimate; the final document will be translated and published in Spanish and English

***NB:** To ensure organization, systematization and understanding of the process, in each stage documents will be prepared in both English and Spanish, and will be provided to communities and partners for their analysis, approval and publication. Translation will not be done of raw data.*

## 4.2. TRAINING OF COMMUNITY FACILITATORS

The research process remains a spiral in which people advance, reflect, and return to the issues and questions, as their understandings and collective appropriation of the process gradually increases. For example, in the first training in August 2006, the initial version of the project was reviewed by the membership and reorganized. In summary, several different committees worked on different aspects of the project; then in the plenary session, approximately 70 new questions about the project were identified. From these questions nine overarching questions were selected to form an axis, with the other questions organized around them.

1. What is the project about?
2. What do we want to do?
3. What are the short and long objectives for the project?
4. Why do we want to do this project (i.e., philosophy behind participation in the project)?
5. What is the timeline for the project?
6. Who will be responsible for which activities (i.e., work plan) and who is the object/subject of the research?
7. Where will the project take place (i.e., which municipalities, and which individuals, will participate)
8. What resources are required (i.e, amounts, sources)?
9. How will the project be conducted (i.e., research methodology)?

This project is embedded in Asopricor's processes but the members take advantage of other experiences. As part of their training the participants listened to experiences from two other projects - a research project conducted in Cauca with indigenous peoples, and another conducted in Cali related to violence and youth. Also a collective conjunctural and structural analysis was made about the Colombian situation.

In addition to the above, the participants also reorganized and adjusted the definition of the community facilitators. The group decided and assigned responsibility for specific tasks and functions. Since some of the participating focus communities are organizations which have been developed directly from Asopricor and others have been associate organizations working with Asopricor, this project also provides an opportunity to work more closely with one another.

There are two people in charge of facilitating the process in each focus community:

From Tocaima de Asopricor are Yesid Campos and Guillermo Valero  
From Tocaima Cordhupaz are Wilson Cantor and Luis Eduardo Yela  
From Jerusalem de Asomager are Gonzalo Castiblanco and Emiliano Pedreros  
From Jerusalén Copaltri are Freddy Emilio Muñoz and Marco Aurelio Campos  
From Viota el Progreso are Aureliano Páez and Endi Danovis Terreros  
From Agua de Dios are Francisca Báez and Sonia Cocuñame

In charge of the general coordination and control of the overall project there are four peoples:  
Jairo Lancheros, Gilma Rey, Narciso Villalobos, Eva Bergaño H.

Two people are in charge of notes and secretarial duties:  
María de los Ángeles Cristancho and Freddy Hernán Castiblanco

The second and third trainings were more focused in methodology, defining some aspects for consideration during the research process such as economic, cultural, social, political, religious, environmental. Then the participants developed a general matrix of research questions, which are still evolving and which will be used as the situation requires. Participants also identified the sources of information (people, institutions, records, etc). The participants realized that some questions will elicit information but that additional probes may be required to elicit reasons or causes for the things that have happened in the communities.

#### **4.2.1 TRAINING OF NEXT GENERATION**

Throughout the development of the research process, different generations have been involved – some who have twenty-five years of experience, and others who have only recently become involved. The children of some of the members have been lifetime ‘small associates’ of Asopricor, while others have only been involved for a short time. For example, one young woman whose parents have been involved since before she was born has recently, at age twenty-four, completed a field practicum from her university with Asopricor.

In December, 2006, training was held specifically for the second generation Asopricor members, in which the majority of participants were between the ages of 12 and 20 years of age. Twenty-eight young people were highly engaged in the training, most of whom were in either elementary or secondary school. In this way the research process is engaging the next generation from its inception.

The activities of the four days included providing information about the research process and methodology and history of Asopricor and its evaluation methods. The young people were also asked a number of questions and encouraged to reflect upon how Asopricor has effected and influenced their lives, and how they perceive Asopricor’s role in their communities.

#### **4.3 RESEARCH STRUCTURE AND TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION**

Through the training meetings, the research structure was determined by the participants. The structure of the research is organized around three elements: the past, the current situation (present), and the future goals.

##### **A. THE PAST**

The context (the reality) and how it has changed over the period of Asopricor’s existence

The various responses (the process) that people have made to the situations over the years (e.g. education- conscientization, organization, actions)

What were the options in politics, economics, social, cultural, religious, and environmental (criterion and ethics)

What was the objective of the response? What did they hope to achieve? (The dream)

What was the spirituality (survival, resistance, recovery, autonomy, alternatives)?

How have people been taking these actions (the methodology)?

What alliances have been formed?

What was the mechanism of evaluation?

##### **B. THE PRESENT**

Using the same outline as above (in A. The Past) diagnose the current situation to illuminate both

conjunctural and structural causes, and identify trends in both the short and long term.

### **C. THE FUTURE**

Taking into consideration the elements above, i.e., a) the past and b) the present, it is possible to project about the future (life plan) which is desirable for ourselves, our children and our communities. This life plan will outline all aspects – economic, political, cultural, social and environmental - for both the short and long term.

#### **4.3.1. SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

The members of each organization and their families

Rural social promoters that have been connect with the different groups

Technicians and professionals related to the area

Members of organizations and NGOs which have had a relationship with Asopricor (CCC, Mijarc, etc)

Members of institutions (Churches, SENA, Action Communal)

Institutions that have conducted other research in the area (IPROSCO, Foundation Ferguson, etc)

Publications about the area or about the organizations

People who have worked with Asopricor but no longer do so

People who live in the communities and villages in the area but are not members of any of the communitarian organizations involved in the research

Reports, pamphlets and other materials produced by the organizations.

Organizations and external persons who have supported the organizing process in that area

Teachers and persons in charge of colleges in the area

The archives of the municipalities, parishes, dioceses and the history of each municipality

Newspapers and other mass media

Customers of the cooperatives and services developed over the past 25 years

#### **4.3.2. TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION (SEE APPENDIX B)**

The training also provided an opportunity for participants to visualize the research process and the core of the final report. They developed a flexible matrix of questions that will help the researchers follow the currents of the research process; engage the communities in the research gestation process; and deliver solid results.

## 5.0 REFLECTION ABOUT THIS FIRST YEAR (2006)

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In August 2006, J. Reyes attended several meetings in Colombia including: meetings with key members of the communities in the region concerned with this project; with some Colombian academics who are providing training and support to the community facilitators, with representatives of other activities and projects which are currently taking place in that region and which may affect the research processes; special and extensive meetings with the Board of Directors of Asopricor; with the core group in charge of the coordination, administration and facilitation of the project; with the Asopricor delegates and those in charge of the focus group research, as well as some focus groups. By phone and internet he has followed each of the activities, had participated in the preparation and evaluation of the training and ensured an ongoing reflection and discussion with Asopricor members as well as with the CESD director Gayle Broad. As a result this document develops some of the most important topics of collective interest as well as some of the questions that this process has generated.

To date, the successful and concrete results of this project include not only the construction of consensus around the project and awareness of the contextual challenges, but also the establishment of the research questions and methodology. In general, Asopricor members involved in this project are optimistic and enthusiastic as well as concerned about the context, the process and the possible results of this project. Five challenges for the research are evident:

1. The adverse and conflictive situation in Colombia, and in this area in particular, which has been the site of military presence of guerrilla forces, paramilitary and governmental army who commit abuses against the civil population
2. The Asopricor membership is assuming Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology as a tool not only for research but also as an instrument of social transformation. Such transformation includes developing an understanding of how people become more self-conscious of their cultural, economic, political and environmental reality and more inclusive of a new generation of social actors.
3. This research project challenges the Asopricor organization to work not only with its own membership but also with other organizations. Specifically it is in the process of examining how it may work more closely with other groups in its region and in the country, and build linkages internationally (with Canadians).
4. A big challenge for the research will be to develop and produce comprehensible and useful materials (pamphlets, brochures, books, CDs, videos etc). These materials shall form, in part, the results of this project but shall also be a means of conveying the processes of the research, both for Asopricor's membership and for its partners in the research
5. Identifying and obtaining the necessary financial and other resources to do all of this work. Asopricor continues to be a life project in the middle of an adverse environment. The research project, supported by CESD and Linking, Learning, Leveraging, is for Asopricor members a space for self-reflection of where they are, where they want to go, and what is necessary for the continuation of a genuine life project.

We have identified two questions related to the partnership development process.

How can this community-university partnership continue to develop and be sustained?

How can a respectful partnership such as this be replicated in other communities, organizations, institutions?

## **5.2 RESEARCH WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF CONFLICT:**

The current conflictive situation is not new in Colombia, and of course is not isolated to Colombia, but is part of an international context of the imposition of a capitalist neo-liberal agenda throughout the world. In the last five years, however, the intensity of the conflict in Colombia has increased; the presence of and abuse by armed actors has been growing and becoming increasingly oppressive. Kidnappings, extortion, killings, acts of terror by both guerrilla and paramilitary forces have been increasing - a massacre of fourteen people in Tocaima and violence in other communities such as Viota, Mesitas, Jerusalem, and throughout Cundinamarca. According to *El Tiempo*, a national newspaper, over 9000 people have been killed or disappeared in Colombia by the armed actors in the years 2001-2005. The national context is very dramatic in terms of the forced displacement of peoples and assassinations of union leaders, peace activists and social leaders.

In this context, a project like Asopricor's research is confronted with major challenges. On a daily basis, Asopricor members struggle with questions related to dealing with both the victims and perpetrators and trying to build hope and peace in the midst of this violence. Asopricor's philosophy of peaceful processes and resistance to the oppression by political and economic actors and the capitalistic model continuously challenge its membership.

For example, in Colombia, cooperatives and other non-profits are taxed at a preferential rate because their profits are expended to benefit their membership. However, in the case of Asopricor, because it wishes to develop relations with, and promote the development of other social groups with a shared vision or philosophy, it has expended some of its resources on social benefits for non-members. This policy of using some of its profits to benefit everyone in the community, rather than restrict such benefits to members, results in additional tax office control or tax costs, and is subject to additional "persecution" because to do something for the common good is viewed as suspicious behaviour.

Recently, the government has introduced a number of initiatives characterized as "peace negotiations" with the paramilitary organizations operating in Colombia. One of the consequences of those initiatives has been the legalization of financial capital that has been derived from illegal activities such as drug sales and forced displacements. As this capital has entered the legal markets, it competes with Asopricor's legal economic activities in its various cooperatives (as well as with other businesses) and other micro-economic activities. This jeopardizes Asopricor's financial viability, as it does not have the resources to compete with this influx of illegal capital. Further, the safety of many of its members is compromised, as those individuals (former paramilitaries and others) who have been engaged in illegal activities have frequently had a history of using violence to achieve their ends.

Another issue in this context is the "paranoia of security" (extreme measures that theoretically will protect the safety of the majority) which makes people victims because of their employment/businesses. For example, a taxi driver who unknowingly transports a member of the guerrillas or paramilitary may be

imprisoned for doing so as law prohibits it. The same is true for butchers, restaurants, or others who serve the public, as their livelihoods depend on the sale of their products or services.

There are several implications of this conflictive situation for the research. For example the use of the word "investigation", a commonly used term in research – and the Spanish equivalent of the word "research" (i.e., investigation), could be a very dangerous word within this context. Some members of Asopricor have suggested that if the word "investigation" is used, that it is always used in conjunction with the word "participatory" (i.e., "participatory investigation") so that it is clear it is not an investigation of someone's authenticity. Others have suggested that the title for this research be "Recovery of the Collective Memory and Projection of the Future" (Recuperación de la memoria colectiva y proyección hacia el futuro) and that this title be used consistently rather than the term "research".

Another issue in this conflictive situation is the need for total transparency and good communication so that all are aware of the purpose, goals and activities of this project. This will be key not only for the ongoing education and social transformation of Asopricor members, but also for the safety of the research project itself. Asopricor members have recommended that a necessary action will be official communication with the mayors and institutions of the area to inform them of the project and the proposed activities to both elicit their support and also to ensure that the project is well known and understood to be operating. The more awareness of the project amongst the public, the less suspicion and concern will be evoked, and the less likely that the safety of the researchers themselves will be compromised.

Another implication will be for the results and the language used in the materials produced – Asopricor members will need to ensure that the language used and the information presented accurately represents the findings, but also that others may not misinterpret it, including the armed actors.

### **5.3. PAR AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION:**

We use PAR (Participatory Action Research ) as a definition because it is close to Asopricor's processes but Asopricor members are not generally aware of academic literature, nor is it in their language, it is simply the way they do things, is the concept of using tools for social transformation is one of the founding principles of Asopricor. Concretely, the concept is to create space for people to identify what type of development people have and what they want to change, through a continuous process of self-reflection, of change, of improvement. Asopricor needs more people to be capable of thinking, envisioning, managing, executing and evaluating their process. It is a concrete practice, as well as an intellectual process, to develop the capacity for leadership renewal.

This increasing consciousness can be measured as people begin to take part in the meetings, in actions, in the communities, and when they start to ask questions about the current and structural causes of their situations, their own role, the role of the state, the role of the churches, the role of the international market etc. It becomes more evident as people begin to take action e.g. to improve their housing, to develop more equitable relations between men and women, within their families, to build relations to the land, and/or to develop projects to support themselves. To measure this kind of process requires a minimum of three years – to see whether people become social actors to think, to administer and to execute their plans.

In Colombia, as well as in other Latin American countries, people have become aware of the need to make different kinds of processes for pacific social engagement. Contrary to the past, where the emphasis for some projects was mostly oriented to political and economic activities, today, people are much more aware

of the need for a peaceful, holistic understanding. There has emerged a conscientization, which encompasses cultural, political, economic and social relations, understanding that social relations include not only relations between social classes but also between genders, intergenerational and between humans and the environment, and the need for action on all levels and aspects.

This holistic approach is much more explicit in Asopricor's context than it was twenty years ago – e.g. some organizations when they were initially founded, viewed the development of the social economy (cooperatives) as the solution of all, whereas today, they realize that this is only one part of the solution. For others the political conscientization was sufficient, but now people are more aware that this is insufficient. In terms of culture people are more aware of the different ethnicities and combinations of ethnicities and are more open to affirming one another's histories and working together, they see these differences as a positive and essential contributor to transforming society.

The contribution that this project is making is to create the time and space for Asopricor members to make a self-reflection about their own processes. In the midst of the pressures of doing the work, it is difficult to find the energy. It creates the space through the valuing of the self-reflection by others, and by linking, building relationships with others engaged in this kind of social transformation.

It is a form of psychological/spiritual solidarity to know that there are others in the world engaged in this kind of work, and supportive of the work that is being done within Asopricor.

#### **5.4 NEW GENERATION OF SOCIAL ACTORS**

Asopricor acts as a link for approximately fifty autonomous organizations, spread over twelve municipalities, and includes both social economy organizations such as cooperatives, as well as organizations such as youth and women's groups. While the founding members of the organization began their work over twenty years ago, and are now generally in their forties, at the same time, new people are assuming responsibilities within the various communities. Although many of the founding members were of the same generation, the different groups which comprise Asopricor are composed of different generations, differing genders. As they begin to act within the communities, the members learn by doing the actual work, as well as through the educational processes of the organization. For some it is a normal transition from childhood as they see the processes of their parents who are Asopricor members, and they become engaged. For others, particularly in urban areas where individuals join the group as opposed to growing up within the organization, the conscientization occurs both through the acting – the taking up of the responsibilities of the organization – as well as through training and educational opportunities provided by Asopricor.

Due to the influence of urbanization, educational opportunities afforded to the younger generation that were not available to Asopricor's founding members, and perhaps the activities of the first generation of Asopricor membership, the younger generation has different dreams. The founding generation began with a dream of strong, political economic and social engagement combined with economic security and social enterprise as well as a long term vision of holistic transformation. The new generation, on the other hand, wants to explore opportunities to travel and even possibly relocate; they want to attend university, college; in short, they share the aspirations of many youth – to explore the world, learn and chart their own path to fulfillment. Additionally, the imposition of the capitalistic model in rural/regional areas ensures that there are not enough jobs, not enough educational institutions, not enough resources to retain them all in the rural area.



Many of the children of Asopricor members are now in cities such as Bogotá, Cali, Medellín, thus the rural communities, where Asopricor began, loses this resource, but on the other hand, they are also acting in urban areas. Asopricor has exported people to other projects – it has influenced other regions by this exporting of people. However, it is clear in the long term that if Asopricor does not continue to expand its organization through education and organizing more people in the region, the future of the organization will be compromised. That is one of the reasons for this research.

Asopricor is developing closer ties with these urban areas as they communicate with the second generation who have relocated. There is now an opportunity for Asopricor to exchange knowledge and experience with these urban areas, and explore opportunities for closer collaboration with groups and organizations which share its values. At the same time, there is an opportunity for the next generation to make a contribution to Asopricor as professionals/intellectuals in other regions, sharing their knowledge and experience of Asopricor with others, while also sharing their newly attained knowledge and skills with Asopricor.

The questions arising from this new generation then are:

How can this second generation contribute to Asopricor with the new skills they have acquired while living outside of the region?

How can Asopricor continue to expand its organization through education and organizing in the region?

## **5.5 BUILDING LINKAGES**

Asopricor is not alone in its work and it does not want to be at the top of a pyramidal structure. Developing a centralized organization is not only contrary to the philosophy of the organization's commitment to building community capacity, but it would be a dangerous course of action because it can become easily targeted and easily destroyed. Asopricor has promoted the development of different organizations, both as a survival strategy but also as a leadership development process. Some of these organizations have developed on their own; others have been encouraged to develop by Asopricor.

The challenge now before Asopricor is a question of further development. In respecting the autonomy of each organization, it is not easy to develop a common orientation and foundation, working in a common direction. Further, the context means that creating the space to work together - finding ways of gathering, maintaining safety for participants, finding the resources and developing the tools and organizational processes – present many challenges.

Right now, each organization has its own vision, mutual collaboration has been the practice, but to forge closer ties, Asopricor needs to create the space for the development of a regional dream/vision where each organization and member can determine its own role(s) in realizing that vision. This space requires not only the creation of a holistic vision of what is desirable, but also space for acting upon and administering that vision throughout.

The questions arising from this need and desire to extend the work through building and strengthening linkages are:

How can we create the same dream/vision for our region/country, and how can we work together in the

achievement of this dream?

How can we create and develop a regional instrument for education and acting together?

## **5.6 PRODUCTION OF MATERIALS:**

Producing materials is a challenge for Asopricor members because of the lack of resources, but despite this, some have been produced. Materials which are produced by the members tend to be very different from those which others produce for them, a lesson learned a number of years ago when the organization attempt on entered into a partnership to produce its history. As a result, Asopricor has a strong commitment to developing its own materials which reflect its history, context, experience and knowledge.

This project has two major educational objectives:

- 1) The support of people in the process of their own social transformation
- 2) The production of material(s) that is representative of the research and that can be shared with others.

If Asopricor is to serve as an inspiration to others, it needs to produce materials which are not only comprehensible to its own membership but also are useful to others. To achieve the goals of this research project in terms of passing on Asopricor's work requires that these materials also respond to the needs of the next generation of Asopricor, and to other researchers. To consolidate the linkages hoped for in this research, also requires that materials be useful to local and regional governments, universities and institutions and other organizations.

Given the breadth of the target audience, the production of materials is a challenge and a piece of work that needs to be done. It is also a learning opportunity for Asopricor members. Asopricor, alone, does not have enough energy, enough resources, enough knowledge to produce all the materials yet the validity of Asopricor and the validity of its organizational processes have been found not only for its members but for other regions too. This may be an opportunity for the children of Asopricor members – those who have grown up as part of the organization and have now obtained college and university training – to collaborate in the development and production of materials.

The questions arising from this concern includes:

How do we organize the data, how do we make meaning of Asopricor's experience in a way that helps others understand what we are doing and how we are doing it?

How can we guarantee the resources, space, etc., to continue doing the educational processes for the future of the region and for the future of the country?

How can we make a permanent school of social actors? Not only for our region but also for our country?

How can we make the next generation involved in the production of materials by them and for them?

## **5.7 RESOURCES FOR THE RESEARCH:**

To conduct research of this scope requires a large number of resources of many sorts and a substantial amount of both human and financial resources. Given the limited resources available to Asopricor due to the current economic pressures and the safety issues, it is sometimes difficult to find even a concrete place to conduct the research. For Asopricor, given the socially transformative nature of its work, meeting spaces within Asopricor communities and within organizational space within those communities is much preferred to those located within capitalistic structures.

Some of these resources are already available to the project, and Asopricor has identified some potential opportunities to build its capacity further through the development of these. For example, one of the training sessions took place in Alto del Trigo, one of the Asopricor cooperatives, and the researchers and trainers were accommodated in the homes of community members.

Asopricor also has access to human resources, for example, some of the young adults of the second generation have already finished university and others are close to graduation – they too will have skills and resources that they could contribute to the project. In fact, there have been two youth who are now seventeen, who have acted as secretaries to this project – now young adults, they have skills and experience, which Asopricor did not have access to twenty years ago, and Asopricor needs to be cognizant of these skills and take advantage of this.

Others organizations in Colombia have also been doing research and Asopricor has a good relation with them, for example “the Cathedra Unesco” was a project in an indigenous area, which was about the rights of Indigenous people. An educator who worked with Asopricor for about three years when it first began and has been working with Indigenous peoples for more than fifteen years has been facilitating the training. There are also a number of educational institutions and organizations within the region as well as nationally that members are accessing/have accessed and that may be able to provide resources to the research project. For example, the secondary schools in Jerusalem, the national training service (SENA) financed by business and government which provides training in agriculture, accounting, etc, and colleges and universities. Thus, there are resources available in other regions of Colombia, which could be accessed by Asopricor and used within this project.

Algoma University College and the Community Economic and Social Development program is also providing resources to the project. Through the Linking, Learning, Leveraging project, it provides the space for Asopricor to develop this research project, as well as contributing library, financial and human resources to the project. One of the Asopricor members, through his enrolment in this program, has the opportunity to reflect on the work of Asopricor and act as a catalyst for the research project.

The project requires the expertise of people with economic, political, social, and cultural analyses, yet it is also necessary that Asopricor be in charge of the project in order for the goals of the research to be achieved (ie. social transformation). Asopricor has had previous experience with lawyers, accountants, etc, necessary to the businesses of its organizations, as well as with academics, and is well aware of the challenges inherent in dealing with professionals who do not necessarily share the vision and values of the organization. This previous experience is also an asset to the project.

The vision for the research goes well beyond the human and financial resources available. To extend the

research beyond a regional activity that works with more than representative focus communities from a handful of Asopricor's member organizations will require substantial resources to accomplish such a task, resources not only from Canada, but also from the region need to be accessed. One of the activities of the project will be the development of a provisional budget and the assurance of adequate financial resources.

Questions related to accessing appropriate and necessary resources include:

How can education and training about Asopricor be provided to the required consultants/experts?

How can equality between Asopricor and 'experts' be achieved? How can this level of awareness of power differential be maintained throughout the project? How can this type of power sharing occur?

How can adequate resources be accessed?

## **5. 8 CONCLUSIONS:**

This community-university research project has been made possible because of the common interests of Asopricor and CESD, and the partnership which has evolved between the two groups through the Linking, Learning, Leveraging research project. Hopefully, this research will reveal the processes of building such partnerships/projects between communities and universities where respect for community processes and community knowledge is extended by the university, while the university is enriched by the community's experience and knowledge, and vice versa. This kind of project can serve as both a role model and inspiration to other university-community partnerships, yet as the research questions reveal, developing respectful relations across cultures – Canadian-Colombian, as well as community-university is a challenge.

The research itself is a crucial piece of work for the Asopricor membership and others currently living in Colombia where so many of the social actors have been disappeared and/or killed. If the reflection and documentation of the socially transformative processes which have been employed so effectively by Asopricor are not passed on to others, they may be irrevocably lost. For example, in one community, 160 people have been disappeared, and every one of those has been active in some way within the community, applying the processes. It is truly a life and death struggle.

Asopricor's advanced awareness of research methodologies and its well-developed philosophies, values and processes, positions it well for working with a university. It has clearly identified its research questions, including process questions related to retaining its autonomy and participating as an equal partner in the research. The knowledge generated by this research will be invaluable to many sectors – the community, educators, practitioners, researchers and policy-makers.

## APPENDIX A

### RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN ASOPRICOR & ALGOMA

**Research Partnership agreement between Asopricor Association for Holistic Development, Colombia & Community Economic and Social Development Program, Algoma University College (November 1, 2005)**

#### **Background:**

Dr. Gayle Broad of the Community Economic and Social Development Program (CESD) of Algoma University College was a co-applicant on a May 2005 research grant application with Dr. Lou Hammond-Ketilson of the Centre for Cooperative Studies at the U. of Saskatchewan. Funding for the research project was obtained from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for a five-year project entitled: Linking, Learning, Leveraging: Social Enterprises, Knowledgeable Economies and Sustainable Communities.

The research project is designed to explore the social economy, sometimes referred to as the “third sector” as distinct from government and private enterprise. The specific goal of the project is to develop “comprehensive profiles of social –economy organizations, highlighting innovative organizational structures, internal and external processes for community and member engagement, effective financing strategies and comprehensive measures of organizational and community outcomes”. The research project is particularly interested in exploring whether practices in the development, evolution and evaluation of social economy initiatives require cultural adaptation to meet the needs of diverse groups.

Asopricor Association of Holistic Development which includes different types of projects and organizations in twelve municipalities in Colombia is immensely successful with a history of over 20 years of expansion and member development. The Association includes several different types of organizations such as cooperatives, women’s and youth groups, with a broad diversity of people including Afro-Colombians, Indigenous and Métis. Its experience will add significantly to the research expected to be based primarily in Northern Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Canada, serving both as a model of successful innovation and design, as well as incorporation of diversity.

#### **Partnership Benefits:**

CESD and Asopricor have much to gain from building a research partnership. For CESD, Asopricor can provide an example of a highly-successful community-based social enterprise which has developed in adverse and conflictive circumstances. Six hundred families participate in the Asopricor Association which includes a broad range of cooperatives such as producer cooperatives, marketing cooperatives, women-only coops, and co-op stores. Research which demonstrates the development of the co-operative relations between the diverse members of this group will make a significant contribution to the Canadian understanding of the social economy in the international context.

For Asopricor, CESD can make a valuable contribution in at least two areas, both through building the organization’s capacity to conduct its own research, and through the research results. Using a participatory action research (PAR) model, Asopricor members will develop their own research questions, centering on

the strengths of the Association that have evolved and been maintained over two generations. Such a partnership would also support Asopricor's core values of forging alliances with other social sectors – in this case the education sector in an international context; and assisting with the development of local social economies through the creation and sharing of knowledge of its own successful processes.

The research results are expected to assist Asopricor in further development of itself as a social enterprise. It is understood that Asopricor currently wishes to explore some research questions related to the following issues:

The relationship of Asopricor's processes (consciousness raising, organization, transformative action, evaluation and celebration) to the development of a second-generation of Asopricor members  
Future opportunities for growth and development based on the evolution of Asopricor's processes and the impact of such processes on the second generation of members

The results of this research will be of interest to other social economy enterprises as they deal with issues of succession and evolution, governance and membership education. Many social economy enterprises in Canada are faced with an aging and retiring membership; understanding the processes of developing a second or new generation of social economy actors will be key to the continued development and evolution of this sector of the economy.

Asopricor and CESD have already developed some initial linkages. Currently, one of the founding members of Asopricor, Jose Agustin Reyes, is enrolled in the CESD program at Algoma University College. Additionally, the faculty member responsible for the Linking, Learning, Leveraging project in Northern Ontario, Dr. Gayle Broad, is the senior researcher in the CESD program and has visited Asopricor Cooperatives, and is familiar with the work of the Association. This initial sharing of information has convinced CESD that the research which would result from such a partnership would add value to the Linking, Learning, Leveraging project.

### **Methodology:**

Over the next five years, Linking, Learning, Leveraging will CESD proposes to work closely with social economy organizations to support them in research of their choosing. This proposal suggests four key components to the research:

- 1) That Participatory Action Research (PAR) is the methodology employed by Asopricor in conducting the research;
- 2) That the research be facilitated by Jose Agustin Reyes, in coordination with the Directors of the Asopricor Association and the coordinator of the CESD Program Dr. Gayle Broad;
- 3) That the Asopricor research be linked to the Linking, Learning, Leveraging project through conference calls, email, and at least two meetings (in Canada) over the period of the research; and
- 4) That the results of the research be shared first, within and among the Asopricor membership, and then through the Linking, Learning, Leveraging project with an international audience.

PAR As the research methodology.

CESD proposes the use of PAR as the research methodology for the following reasons:

PAR follows the same iterative process currently used by ASOPRICOR in its development processes: examine (or observe) – analyse (or plan) – act – evaluate (or reflect)

PAR is consistent with Asopricor's values of actively engaging in its own processes (conceptual, administrative and implementation), and the inclusion of marginalized viewpoints

PAR is a methodology well-suited to the study of complex phenomena. The study of cooperatives lends itself to a cross-disciplinary approach combining and drawing on the intersection of social and economic issues, thus resulting in many complexities of study

Association members will be partners, or community facilitators, in the exploration and study of the phenomenon, providing an opportunity for them to participate in knowledge creation

The "action" component of PAR provides an opportunity to combine activism with knowledge creation (learning by doing, doing by learning) though supporting the work of those engaged in social organizations and cooperatives, thus encouraging the continuation of their work

The research may provide an opportunity to use and perhaps even further develop a research methodology designed by and for community activists, feminists, and Indigenous peoples

### **Research Facilitation:**

The CESD proposes that the research be facilitated by Jose Agustin Reyes with a group of six community facilitators selected from the Asopricor membership. Reyes is currently enrolled in the CESD program and thus has easy access to the research support required for such an undertaking. His knowledge of the socio-political context within which the Asopricor Association functions as well as of the organization itself, developed through twenty years of membership in the Association, provides him with strong background knowledge of the organization and its processes. At the same time, his absence from the cooperative in recent years provides him with some distance which will assist in the analysis of the data collected.

CESD proposes that a group of six community facilitators drawn from the current membership act as community facilitators in the PAR methodology. Ideally, these individuals will be selected with a view to providing as much diversity within a small group as possible. Attention should be paid to age, gender, type of cooperative experience, and regional representation. Not every perspective will be represented nor expected; however, the community facilitators should be individuals who will willingly share the perspectives of others with whom they may disagree. This propensity will provide an opportunity to question conclusions that may be drawn.

The research data will be drawn through a series of meetings conducted via teleconference, and/or in-person meetings. This may be conducted over a period of months, or alternatively, for ease of meeting, over a 3-4 day period, following a period of consultation to identify the formal research questions. Funding will be provided to cover all out-of-pocket expenses of the community facilitators including any loss of wages.

The discussions, conclusions and reports of the community facilitators will constitute the main body of research data, though individual interviews with additional cooperative members may be necessary to elicit specific information. Once the data is collected, the research facilitator will analyse it in conjunction with the Directors of Asopricor and the coordinator of the CESD program, Dr. Broad, and a draft set of results will be prepared. These results will then be presented to the community facilitators to ensure accuracy in the analysis.

For validity testing of the results, focus groups and interviews with key informants will be conducted, wherein alternative explanations will be explored. The research results will then be finalized with the community facilitators and the Asopricor membership.

### **Connecting with Linking, Learning, Leveraging:**

One of the key elements of the Linking, Learning, Leveraging project is the social capital that will result from connecting the various research projects together. Although Asopricor's research will be linked to the regional node through CESD, the Association will have access to, and be conjoined with all the research being conducted through the project. This will be achieved through regular conference calls, a project list serve, potentially a website, and at least two in-person meetings (in Canada) throughout the five-year project. There is also a strong likelihood that Canadians will visit Asopricor during this time, and the feasibility of other types of exchanges that will promote relationships between Asopricor and other research partners will be explored.

This will provide the Asopricor membership with a network of social economy partners across a large region in Canada, who will share their leanings on their activities and processes, the Canadian social economy context, and their research methodologies. Likewise Asopricor members will have an opportunity to share their knowledge with Canadians, an exercise which will result in additional reflection on differences in processes between the two countries and cultures.

### **Dissemination of Results:**

As the primary purpose of Linking, Learning, Leveraging research project is to promote the development of the social economy, dissemination of the research results is a key component of the project. It is expected that results of the research will be disseminated through academic journals and popular media; through conferences in Canada, Colombia and other international venues; and through the sharing with other participants in the Linking, Learning, Leveraging research project.

Since a major goal of the project is knowledge-sharing, the CESD program will require interim reports on at least an annual basis, or as required by the funder, and final reports, as well as reports on the research methodology and results. CESD recognizes that ethical requirements of community owned research requires that prior to the release of research results; a thorough review of the research by the community is required. Accordingly, CESD recognizes that the knowledge generated through this project is community-owned knowledge, and that the Asopricor Association has the final say on publication of any and all results. Acknowledgement of funders and intellectual guidance provided through the Linking, Learning, Leveraging project will be contained in all publications and presentations.

CESD is aware that methodologies such as Participatory Action Research (PAR) may lead a community group to surprising and unexpected results in the research. This is an acknowledged part of the process. CESD expects that Asopricor and the research facilitator will advise CESD as soon as possible in the case of such an event, so that the project can be appropriately adapted to the changing circumstances.

### **Resources for Community-Based Research:**

Although the resources for the projects are not exhaustive, once the partnership is established a budget will be prepared which will include the following elements:



Training of research facilitators and community facilitators in the research methodology

Teleconference calls – so that community researchers can communicate with members of other research initiatives and learn from their experience

Materials required conducting the research (training manuals, tape recorders, laptops, etc)

Local meeting costs for community facilitators, and for focus groups to verify the research findings

Travel and related costs (both to participate in research itself and to present the research at international conference(s))

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**APPENDIX B**

**"MATRIX" OF QUESTIONS FOR EACH FOCUS COMMUNITY**

(Each topic and question has to be adapted to the time period referred to in the column)

General information and introduction

Place and date: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization name: \_\_\_\_\_ community name \_\_\_\_\_ Municipality \_\_\_\_\_

Who are you as an organization?		How does your organization identify itself?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Average Age of the members	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cultural
<input type="checkbox"/>	No. of Males	<input type="checkbox"/>	Religious
<input type="checkbox"/>	No. of Females	<input type="checkbox"/>	Economic
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural	<input type="checkbox"/>	Political
<input type="checkbox"/>	Urban	<input type="checkbox"/>	Educational
<input type="checkbox"/>	Population of your Community	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gender
<input type="checkbox"/>	No. of years group has been working together	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	

What are the 3 most important activities in your organization? Or in you organization's plan?)

1.

2

3

Subject	Questions	Sources of Information	The Past or History	The Present or Diagnosis	The Future or Projection	Method How
CONTEXT	1. What facts or situations have affected or influenced the life of the organization?					
	2. How have they affected the organization?					

Subject	Questions	Sources of information	The Past or History	The Present or Diagnosis	The Future or Projection	Method How
POLITICS	1 Does your organization have a political project? If so, what it is?					
	2. What political and ideological principles have prevailed in your organization?					
	3. How is your group organized internally?					
	4. What criteria are considered [or used?] to make decisions in your organization?					
	5. What is the relationship of your organization with governmental institutions? [Which governmental institutions?]					
	6. What political actions has your organization developed throughout its process? (How do you define political?)					

Subject	Questions	Sources of information	The Past or History	The Present or Diagnosis	The Future or Projection	Method How
ECONOMIC:	1. What type of economic activity does your organization handle?					
	a). How does your organization obtain its resources? (self-financing, dependency)					
	b) How are the resources handled? (pursuit of plans, control)					
	c). How are the resources distributed? (assigned resources, saving)					
	2. a) How does the dominant economic model impact or effect your organization? d) Is there resistance to this model?					
	b) In the economic activities of your organization is there competition or cooperation in labour?					

Subject	Questions	Sources of information	The Past or History	The Present or Diagnosis	The Future or Projection	Method How
SOCIAL:	1. a) What impact has the organization had on the families? b) On your community?					
	c). What is the process of formation and qualification in the organization (skills, conscientization, etc)?					
	d). How are conflicts handled inside the organization? e) How are they handled outside the organization?					
	2. What answers and mechanisms are generated as far as a) education, b) housing and c) Health for the families and the community?					
	3. How has the organization related to the different spaces: a) locally, b) regionally, d) department and e) Nation? [Do any of them have international relationships?]					
	4. How does the mass media influence your organization?					

Subject	Questions	Sources of information	The Past or History	The Present or Diagnosis	The Future or Projection	Method How
CULTURAL	1. What importance have traditions and customs in the work of your organization?					
	2. a) How has your organization adapted to and/or been transformed by the technological changes? b) How has your organization adapted to and/or been transformed by the cultural changes?					
	3. What has been the lifestyle of your organization? How has it agreed or disagreed with cultural and technological changes?					
	4. What cultural roots does the new generation preserve?					
	5. From culture, what have been the forces for autonomy or resistance?					

Subject	Questions	Sources of information	The Past or History	The Present or Diagnosis	The Future or Projection	Method How
RELIGIOUS:	1. a) Has religion some type of influence in your organization? b) If yes, what?					
	2. b) Has religion influenced the relationship between your organization and the community?					
	b) Does some relationship exist between your organization and religious institutions?					
	c) What faith or belief characterizes your organization?					
	d) How has the religious or spiritual practice been developed?					
	e) Have these practices changed? If so, how?					
	f) What is the relationship between other beliefs in your organization?					



Subject	Questions	Sources of information	The Past or History	The Present or Diagnosis	The Future or Projection	Method How
ENVIRONMENT	1 What does the environment mean for your organization?					
	2. What environmental situation faces your organization?					
	3. With what actions does your organization contribute to the well-being of environment?					

Subject	Questions	Sources of information	The Past or History	The Present or Diagnosis	The Future or Projection	Method How
SPIRIT OR VALUES:	1. Which are the forces/values/principles that unite you as an organization?					
	2). What facts or moments illustrate the forces/values/principles that unite your organization? a) How?					

Subject	Questions	Sources of information	The Past or History	The Present or Diagnosis	The Future or Projection	Method How
METHOD HOW	1. What process and steps your organization considered before taking actions?					
	2) At what moments or in what situations have those steps served to your organization?					

Subject	Questions	Sources of information	The Past or History	The Present or Diagnosis	The Future or Projection	Method How
ALLIANCES:	1. With whom has your organization established alliances?					
	2) How much or in what ways have those alliances benefited your organization?					
	3). What elements does your organization take into consideration in making alliances?					



## Regional Partner Organizations



UNIVERSITY OF  
SASKATCHEWAN

Centre for the Study  
of Co-operatives

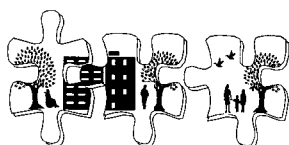


Community-University Institute  
for Social Research



[www.auc.ca](http://www.auc.ca)

Community Economic and Social Development Unit  
Algoma University College



Winnipeg Inner-City Research Alliance

## Project Funding



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