

Leveraging Post- Secondary Talent

TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

PRESENTERS: JESSICA ADRAIN, SOPHIE LARSEN, BECKY PELKONEN, RHONDA SHERIDAN



OUR MISSION

Innovate for Impact advances social enterprise development in the Kootenays by supporting purpose-driven innovators with the **tools, training, and community** to build impactful, sustainable ventures.



WHAT WE DO

- 1** INCUBATION PROGRAMS FOR EARLY-STAGE SOCIAL ENTERPRISES AND EMERGING ENTREPRENEURS
- 2** BI-MONTHLY WORKSHOPS
- 3** QUARTERLY COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE
- 4** ANNUAL SOCIAL IMPACT SUMMITS
- 5** YOUTH PROGRAM
- 6** WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS
- 7** REGIONAL SOCIAL HACKATHON



When local people
**drive community
change**, rural
regions thrive.

JOIN OUR MOVEMENT 



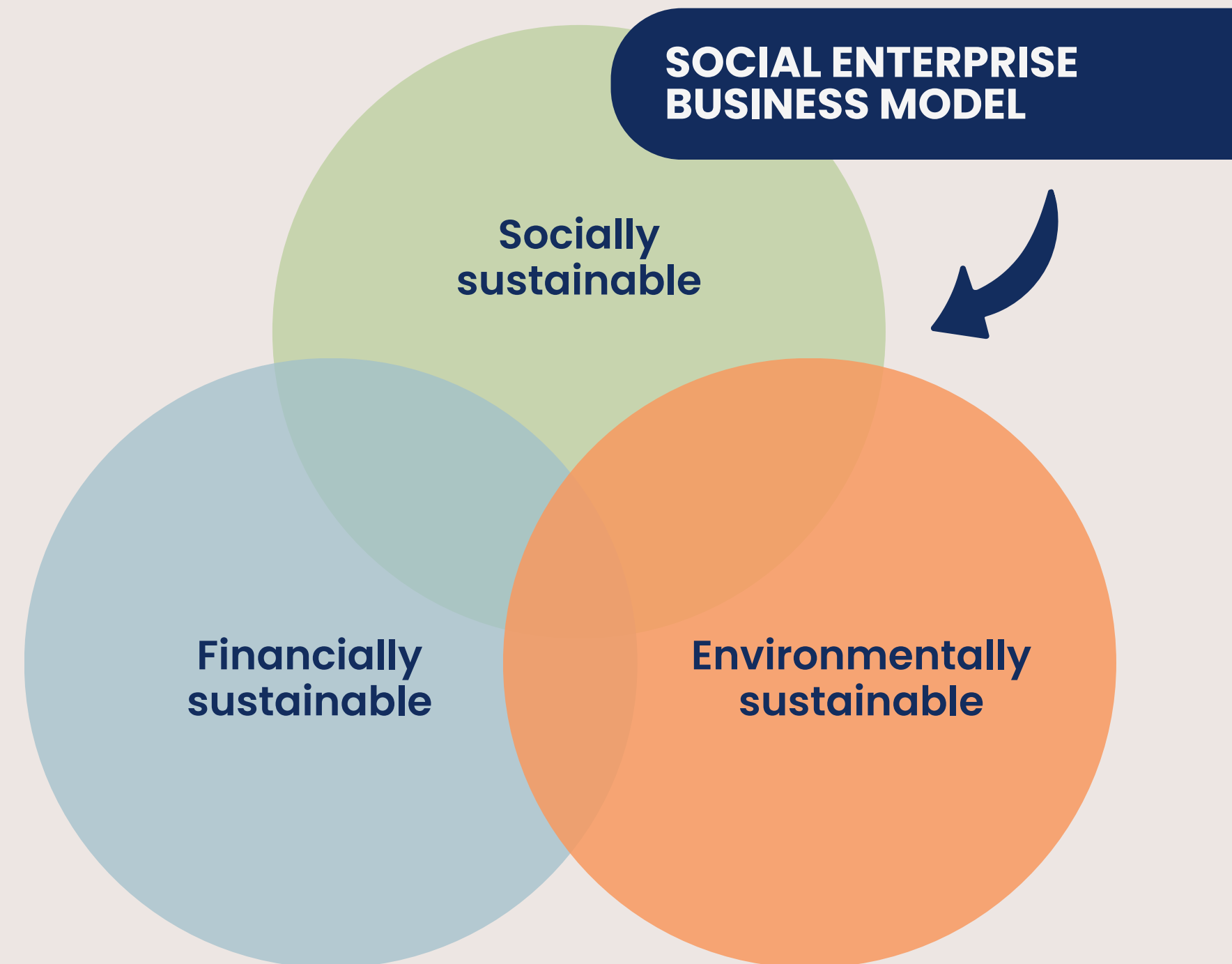
WHAT ARE SOCIAL ENTERPRISES?

Social enterprises are **innovative businesses** that **drive social change**.

They take the principles of **entrepreneurship** and for-profit management practices to find sustainable solutions to **social, cultural** or **environmental** issues.



What sets them apart is their **purpose**, and **leveraging their profit** to scale **social impact**.



BENEFITS OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

- Meet community needs. Creating opportunities in social, environmental and economic challenges.
- Empowers communities to address their needs from within.
- Uses its assets and profits for community benefit and is accountable to the wider community

Work Integrated Learning

Where classroom meets workplace.

What is WIL?

WIL connects students with real workplaces so they can apply their education while employers gain skilled, supported talent.

What makes WIL different?

- It is embedded in academic courses/programs
- It includes a partnership between the student, employer, and Institution
- Defined learning outcomes are defined and supported
- Employers and students receive guidance and ongoing support

Types of WIL

Project Based

- Community and Industry Research & Projects

Work-Based

- Co-op Education
- Internships
- Work-Experience
- Field Placement

Profession Specific and Structured

- Apprenticeship
- Practicum/Clinical Placement

Community and Innovation Focus

- Entrepreneurship
- Service Learning



Working with Students

Have an Idea?

You don't need to choose, we can help!

Our teams work with employers to identify the WIL model that best fits your organization.

We can help you:

- Clarify your capacity, timelines, and goals
- Select the appropriate WIL model
- Define scope, duration, and expectations
- Access support and funding where available
- Get matched with the right students





**Selkirk
College**

www.selkirk.ca/about-selkirk/work-integrated-learning

Jessica Adrain

CoopEducation@selkirk.ca



**COLLEGE OF
THE ROCKIES**

www.cotr.bc.ca/about-us/work-integrated-learning/

Jenn Smith and Rhonda Sheridan

wil@cotr.bc.ca



CHAMPIONING

Work-Integrated Learning

X

Social Enterprise Culture-Building

Becky Pelkonen, Program Coordinator
bpelkonen@cotr.bc.ca



COLLEGE OF THE ROCKIES

Why WIL Matters!



WIL is proven to:

- Increase graduate employability by up to 30% (CEWIL)
- Increase employer retention of student talent by 40–50% (CEWIL Employer Research)
- Strengthen local innovation capacity, particularly in rural regions (Rural Institute of Canada)

Why WIL Matters ESPECIALLY for Rural Social Enterprise Ecosystems



1. WIL Builds Local Capacity Where It's Most Needed

78% of B.C. social enterprises operate with fewer than five paid staff *(BC Social Enterprise Sector Survey)*.

→ Students directly fill capacity gaps.

Why WIL Matters ESPECIALLY for Rural Social Enterprise Ecosystems



2. WIL Retains Talent in Rural Areas

Graduates who complete a WIL experience are **2x more likely** to remain in-region for employment

(CEWIL)

→ Rural communities keep their talent instead of exporting it.

Why WIL Matters ESPECIALLY for Rural Social Enterprise Ecosystems



3. WIL Strengthens the Social Innovation Pipeline

Social enterprises generate **\$3.6B in annual revenues** in Canada (Social Enterprise Canada)

Rural social enterprises disproportionately rely on partnerships and community innovation.

→ Students bring research skills, digital literacy, and new energy.

Why WIL Matters ESPECIALLY for Rural Social Enterprise Ecosystems



4. WIL Drives Real Community Impact

Organizations report a **25–40% increase in productivity** when hosting WIL students (CEWIL National Impact Survey)

→ This is transformative in small, capacity-strapped communities.

WIL as Rural Economic Development

WIL → Talent → Innovation → Jobs → Local GDP Growth

- Every **\$1 invested** in WIL placements generates between **\$1.50–\$4.00** in local economic value (*CEWIL ROI Study*).
- Rural businesses with student placements are **50% more likely** to adopt new technology or new business models (*Business Development Bank of Canada*).
- Social enterprises create **significantly more jobs for equity-seeking groups** (*Imagine Canada*), which aligns with rural demographic needs.



WIL as Rural Economic Development

Social Enterprises run LEAN.

WIL can be essential for social enterprises:

- **78%** have fewer than **5 paid staff** (BC SE Survey)
- High dependence on **volunteers**
- Limited capacity for **research, marketing, and innovation**



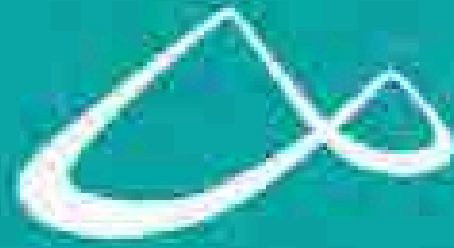
WIL as Rural Economic Development

WIL fills the exact gaps the limit rural impact.

- Impact measurement + SROI (top national capacity gap)
- Digital marketing + storytelling (identified by 65% of rural SEs)
- Financial modelling + accounting support
- Community engagement + governance research
- Feasibility studies + pilot project development

WIL gives rural social enterprises the **people-power, skills, and innovation capacity** they cannot sustainably hire which can accelerate real community impact.





WHAT COLLEGE OF THE ROCKIES STUDENTS ARE DOING

(REAL. LIFE. EXAMPLES)

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

- Nutrition comparison and campaign design
- Cross-campus marketing initiatives
- Student experience design



A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a grey sweatshirt, is seated at a desk in a collaborative office or workshop setting. She is looking down at a small white object on the desk, possibly a prototype or a small model. In the background, other people are working at similar desks, creating a busy, productive atmosphere. The desks are cluttered with papers, laptops, and various small objects.

WILDSIGHT & ENVIRONMENTAL ORG SUPPORT

- Contributing to food security strategies
- Program Evaluations
- Impact Communications



KORE

- Market Research – ReHUB
- Prototype Testing



COLLEGE ON-CAMPUS SUSTAINABILITY

- Zero waste pilot projects
- Commercial composter feasibility
- Student club planning and engagement
- Community events



Salad Outreach Program
Work Integrated Learning Experience -2025



Good Food Programs

a Community Connections Initiative



Growing leafy greens for our community



A PROJECT BY
Community Connections

WITH THANKS TO





Cranbrook Urban Farm



Vertical Farming

Growing areas are stacked on top of each other, allowing more food to be produced in a small space



Controlled Environment

Light, temperature and humidity are automated, monitored and optimized for plant growth



Hydroponic Growing

Plant float on rafts and roots are submerged in a nutrient-rich solution

Salad Outreach Program

Work Integrated Learning Experience -2025

- Goal: Develop and pilot outreach tool increase Social Reach
- May/June 2024
- \$24/hr





- Distributed 30/salads per outreach
- increased nutrition (fiber and protein) vs. shelf stable regular options
- increased partnership and support to Cranbrook's most vulnerable

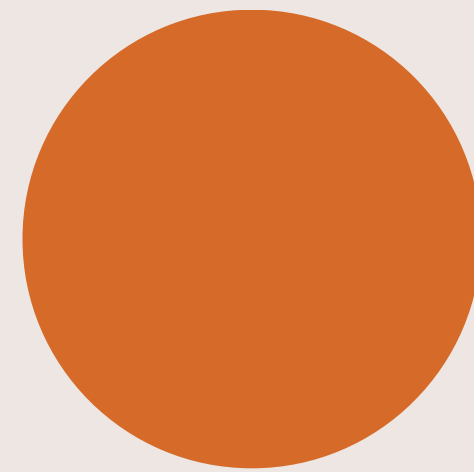




The pilot and introduction to WIL exceeded expectations

and we can't wait to do it again

BUILD A MOVEMENT WITH US



INNOVATE FOR IMPACT

IGNITE IDEAS, SPARK CHANGE, **TRANSFORM THE KOOTENAYS.**





Stay updated!

THANK YOU

