The Ontario Maple Syrup Agri-Food Value Chain: Enhanced Competitiveness Through Innovation and Capacity Development

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About Us…

**Resilient Communities Research Collaborative**

– Interdisciplinary research team
  ~50 researchers, stakeholders and participants
  [www.resilientresearch.ca](http://www.resilientresearch.ca)

– Research interests include:
  • Resilience (focus on rural spaces)
  • Emergency Management
  • Climate Change
  • Maple Syrup
  • Indigenous Research (incorporated into most projects)
OMAFRA Maple Syrup Project

- **Funders:** OMAFRA & OMSPA
- **Focus:** Understand Maple Syrup Value Chain and Ideas for Innovation and Increased Profitability
- **Scope & Term:** Ontario, 2012-15 (3 yr.)
- **Project Advisory Board**
  - Convened at proposal stage
  - Met quarterly
  - Advised on all aspects of research
Key Findings

- Maple syrup (MS) contributes to the economic, social and environmental sustainability of rural localities and Aboriginal communities.
  - Income generation, value added products and services, environmental services, and Aboriginal Knowledge.

- Despite vigorous growth, a full sectoral scan was not available, nor was information about the existing challenges and the potential for innovation.
Data Collection

- Kick-Off Meeting
  - Project visioning, team build & introduce
    - Project Advisory Board

- Interviews (n=35)
  - Sectoral Scan of Ontario Maple Industry

- Focus Groups (n=78)
  - 3 events across Ontario with maple producers
Maple Syrup Value System

Governance Context: Government and Industry Rules and Regulations

Value-Added Certifications
(Stainless Steel, Organic, Forest Management)

Environmental Trends: Climate Change, & Forest Degradation

Societal Trends: Demand for Healthy & Pure Products

Core Values
Economic Social Cultural Environmental

Sustainability

Working Sugarbush
Maple Woodlands
Rural Communities & Families
Equipment & Supply Manufacturers & Distributors

Collect Sap
Process Sap
Produce Maple Syrup
Re-processing

Producers, Packers & Cooperatives

Products for Retail
Packed Bulk
Marketing

Consumers
On-Farm Sales & Services
Personal Use
Retail Outlet

Product and Services Streams
Pure Maple Products
Other Value Added Products
Value Added Services
Maple Syrup
Value Added (Butter, Candy, etc.)
Food & Non-Food Items using Maple
Restaurant, Tourism, Festivals, B&Bs

Legend
Red = Key Flows
Blue= Key Themes
Green = Supporting Functions
Dashed Lines = Possible Paths

Economic Trends: Demand for “Local” Products & International Demand

To Learn More or Get Involved, Contact Us:
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Aboriginal Perspectives of the Maple Value System

**All My Relations** (Aboriginal Values)

**Sharing Ways of Knowing** (Knowledge Transmission & Mobilization)

**Closings: Sunset** (Wrap-up)

**Openings: Sunrise** (Preparation Ceremonies)

**Harvesting Practices** (Production)

How do you value most about maple sap and maple syrup?

Examples
- Healing, pride, community, family, Mother Earth
- Market economy, commercial sale
- Sharing with family and/or community
- Ceremonial values and beliefs

How do you harvest the sap and boil your syrup?

Examples
- Technology (buckets, lines, machinery...)
- Food safety practices
- Commercial or backyard operation

What do you do in preparation for, and at the beginning of maple syrup making?

Examples
- Prepare equipment, firewood, people (help?)...
- Opening ceremony, first tap, wake up the earth...

In what ways do you share your maple syrup knowledge and who do you share it with?

Examples
- Family and community
- Outside of community
- Other producers (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal)
- Schools or other institutions
- The environment (trees, weather, and so on)

How do you do to wrap up the yearly maple cycle and prepare for the following year?

Examples
- Cleaning equipment
- Looking after the sugarbush
- Cutting firewood

Credit: Annette Chretien, Charlie Restoule, Melanie Smits and Brenca Murphy
Knowledge Mobilization

- Research Results
  - Commercial & Aboriginal Maple Practices workbooks

- Policy-Brief for OMAFRA

- Other Reports (Focus groups; Commercial & Aboriginal value chains; Indigenous maple values)

- Academic Journals, Book Chapters and MA projects
Knowledge Mobilization

- Climate Change SOS!
  - ~600 grade 9-10 students to Mountsberg sugar bush, learn about maple syrup and climate change

- Ontario Maple Video
  - Highlight Ontario’s MS industry
  - Shared with producers
  - Belleville Int’l film festival
  - Available on YouTube

- Industry Presentations
  - OMSPA ‘Summer Tour’ conferences
  - Aboriginal-style panel discussion on maple
Ontario Maple Syrup Producers’ Association

- President: Mr. Terry Hoover
  - Owner – Hoovers’ Maple Syrup (Atwood, ON)
  - 1000+ Taps; Certified Organic Maple Syrup

- OMSPA
  - Founded in 1966, all volunteer
  - Devoted to research, quality production, marketing and promotion, education, & communications
  - 500 members (all maple producers)
  - Also accept associate (non-producer) members
OMSPA

- New ‘Sweet Ontario’ brand developed to market Ontario maple syrup
  - 4 Million Litres produced in Ontario

- Contributes $53 million dollars to Ontario’s Rural Economy (2011)
  - Increased diversification of ‘value added’ maple products (e.g. butter, sap water, sugar, candy, spa products) are helping grow the industry

- Tourism (e.g. festivals & first tap ceremonies) remains important to share the story of maple syrup
Progress and Potential: Ontario’s Maple Syrup Industry

https://youtu.be/zLjyvmweL8Q
Next Steps & Conclusion

- Continued maple research [SSHRC-funded project]
  - Climate change (biogeography) and historical importance of maple syrup (Indigenous perspectives)

- Substantive engagement has been integral part of this research
  - On-going communication (e.g. quarterly project advisory board meetings) VERY important

- Including industry stakeholders VERY important
  - Focus groups, industry meetings, and interviews
Questions?