The Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies was established at Cape Breton University in 2010 in response to Aboriginal community leaders’ expression of the need for entrepreneurship, business investment, and corporate skills training for the purpose of creating a model of self-reliance.

Named in honour of Canadian lawyer and corporate boardroom leader, the late Mr. Purdy Crawford, the Chair aims to promote interest among Canada's Aboriginal people in the study of business at the post-secondary level.

The Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies focuses its work in four areas:

• Research on what “drives” success in Aboriginal Business
• National student recruitment in the area of post-secondary Aboriginal business education
• Enhancement of the post-secondary Aboriginal business curriculum
• Mentorship at high school and post-secondary levels

"Meaningful self-government and economic self-sufficiency provide the cornerstone of sustainable communities. My wish is to enhance First Nations post-secondary education and research to allow for the promotion and development of national Aboriginal business practices and enterprises."

Purdy Crawford, C. C.
(1931-2014)
Salmon n’ Bannock A

In summer 2014, the staff of Salmon n’ Bannock were struggling to complete kitchen preparations each day for their 11am opening. Fresh food and pantry supplies were purchased each morning, but often arrived too close to the opening time for the restaurant to be ready for customers. Co-owners Inez Cook and Remi Caudron had to decide how to address this challenge.

BACKGROUND

Inez Cook, a member of Nuxalk First Nation, had noticed that Aboriginal cuisine wasn’t available in Vancouver when she was growing up and wanted to create a space in the city that served it. Her interest was spurred on by an experience driving through Westbank, British Columbia, when she noticed a sign for Kekuli Cafe that read, “Don’t panic, we’ve got bannock!” She immediately stopped and thought, “I can’t believe that the entire world is coming to Vancouver for the Olympics and there’s nothing representing Indigenous food. It’s ridiculous.” She wondered if she could change the situation.

Inez approached her friend Remi Caudron with an idea for an Aboriginal restaurant with a menu suitable to a modern palate with local and traditional Aboriginal ingredients. He was just as enthused with the idea of bringing Aboriginal food to Vancouver as she was, but neither saw it becoming a reality in the near future. They both worked for an airline full-time, felt they didn’t have adequate finances available for the venture, and had various things going on in their personal lives that they saw as barriers to pursuing the business at that time. Instead, Inez thought it might be better as a retirement plan.

Then, one afternoon, while speaking on the phone with a friend whose daughter was in the restaurant business, Inez learned that her friend’s daughter had an unoccupied restaurant space on West Broadway. They had no use for the space any longer and were finding it difficult to sublet the property. With a restaurant space at her disposal, Inez contacted Remi once again and they decided to take the chance, becoming business partners and opening Salmon n’ Bannock in February 2010.

The Winter Olympics, held in Vancouver in February 2010, increased awareness of Aboriginal cultures and created many opportunities for Aboriginal entrepreneurs in Vancouver. For the first time, Aboriginal Peoples in Canada were recognized as official partners at the Olympic Games and were prominently represented at its opening ceremonies. It was an ideal time for Inez and Remi to open Salmon n’ Bannock as the only Aboriginal restaurant in Vancouver. They hoped to seize the opportunity to expose tourists and athletes to Aboriginal cuisine, which had been largely underrepresented.
Although the restaurant saw less traffic during the games than they expected, it has since increased.

BUYING LOCAL FOOD

Inez and Remi took a hands-on approach to running their business. Each morning, they purchased supplies from various retailers in Vancouver. While meat and fish were delivered to the restaurant, Inez and Remi shopped for the remaining supplies themselves to ensure the quality and freshness of the ingredients. This was particularly important given that their restaurant was established with a commitment to local, natural, and wild food. It also allowed them to purchase items at reasonable prices and in quantities suited to the size of their restaurant.

Although they wanted to maintain control of the food purchased for Salmon n’ Bannock, neither Inez nor Remi were drivers. Consequently, all of the morning shopping was done using public transit or taxis. Inez and Remi were still working as flight attendants, so they sometimes shopped together, sometimes divided the shopping list and split up, and sometimes took turns, depending on their availability.

Inez and Remi shopped for produce and other supplies, such as flour, at big box retailers, but these retailers did not always carry products suitable to their mandate to serve natural, free range, and local products at Salmon n’ Bannock. For example, one major warehouse club did not carry creamers derived from natural cream, but a cream alternative. Inez and Remi had to identify an alternative supplier. As a result, one-stop (or even two-stop) shopping at major retailers was not possible. Further, with most retailers not opening until 10am each morning, they found it difficult to purchase and transport fresh food, pantry staples, and other supplies to Salmon n’ Bannock in time for the chefs to begin prepping the food for 11am lunch service.

Because of the multiple stops required while shopping and Inez and Remi’s reliance on public transit, delays were inevitable. They struggled to get products to the restaurant on time. The chefs complained that they needed more time to prepare food. With customers sometimes arriving at the restaurant before the food did or was ready, Inez and Remi needed a solution to their logistical challenge.

CONCLUSION

The owners of Salmon n’ Bannock purchased fresh food and pantry ingredients for the restaurant daily, but these items often arrived too close to the restaurant’s opening time to ensure the kitchen was consistently ready for customers at 11am. In summer
2014, co-owners Inez Cook and Remi Caudron had to decide how to best to address this issue.