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)
In January 2015, Inez Cook, co-owner of Salmon n’ Bannock, faced a decision regarding the meats that would be served in her restaurant. Venison was a popular dish; however, there was no locally-sourced option available for purchase on the market. Inez wondered whether she should act on a suggestion from her retail game meat supplier to purchase venison from New Zealand.

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.

**LOCAL ABORIGINAL CUISINE**

Salmon n’ Bannock opened with a commitment to serving local, fresh, and wild food, while showcasing Aboriginal cuisine. Their promotional materials highlight that they proudly serve “wild local fish, organic and free range meats, bannock and other culinary delights inspired by a variety of First Nations traditions.”

Wild fish, vegetables and fruit, and game (such as bison, venison, and elk) appeared on the menu at Salmon n’ Bannock. The restaurant’s chefs were creative in their preparation of various game meats and pleased customers time and time again. The owners also ensured that their products were derived from natural ingredients. Consequently, Salmon n’ Bannock provided natural alternatives to common products. For example, they offered a stevia-sweetened cola in place of conventional soda products. Inez and her business partner went out of their way to purchase the right products for their business, remaining dedicated and committed to sourcing fresh, wild, and local food, and avoiding international products.

**RETAIL GAME**

With their slogan, “We Got Game,” game meat has become a significant feature of Salmon n’ Bannock’s menu and reputation. As a business, Salmon n’ Bannock had to comply with the regulations of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. This meant that Inez and her business partner were required to purchase all of their game meats from retail suppliers and were not permitted to accept game meat or purchase such meats from local hunters or First Nation community members.

Given these restrictions, the amount and types of game they were able to purchase was limited. For example, they once waited three years for caribou to become available on the local market. Inez and Remi decided to purchase some for Salmon n’ Bannock’s menu, even though they weren’t sure it would be a popular dish. It was, and they sold out of all the available caribou on the market in three months; however, due to the regulation that such meat can only be purchased from a retail meat supplier and given their dedication to purchasing only local game, they have not had an opportunity to purchase caribou locally since.
BUYING LOCAL

Venison was always a popular menu item at Salmon n’ Bannock; however, recently, there had been little local venison available from the retail game supplier that Inez and Remi used. Unable to source venison directly from local hunters, they were in a difficult situation. They wanted to maintain their commitment to locally-sourced food, but also wanted to cater to the tastes of their customers. They had been able to purchase other game meats, such as bison and elk, locally, but their game supplier also suggested that they source venison internationally from New Zealand.

CONCLUSION

Venison was always a popular dish at Salmon n’ Bannock, but early in 2015, Inez Cook, co-owner of the Aboriginal restaurant, began having difficulty finding a local source from which to purchase the meat. Inez had to decide whether to act on the suggestion of the restaurant’s retail game meat supplier to purchase venison from New Zealand.