

## *State of the Commons Trust*

On this first anniversary of the inaugural Heritable Innovation Trust (HIT) it is fitting to take stock of where we are. There are lessons learned, experience and wisdom gained, and a clarifying impulse to deepen our engagement with this framework for a new, integral value social organization. Growing out of M•CAM's 12 year design and deployment efforts to build both economic and social charters and practices to ethically engage all humanity in equal opportunity, the HIT appears to hold promise for the manifestation of such a reality.

Our decision to launch this framework in East New Britain, Papua New Guinea was based on our assessment that this region, richly endowed with cultural, biological, and elemental wealth has served as nexus for some of the most insidious abuses characteristic of the end of the Extraction / Industrial Era. Publicly listed companies – primarily listed on the Toronto, London, and Australian Stock Exchanges – have leveraged information asymmetries here like few other places on Earth. The public markets – drunk on the conquest of metals, gas, and timber – have been given full license to abuse landowners, toxify and kill the land and its people, and intimidate local governments into acquiescence based on deceptive practices. In East New Britain and New Ireland, Provincial Governments, thus deceived, have entered into agreements which have saddled the land and people with indebtedness from which conventional models offer no escape. The tyranny of ignorance, fueled by empty promises of future benefit, has afforded the National Government no discernible alternatives in the present paradigm. And so, it is into this environment that the new model can, for the first time, open an alternative to a new destiny for this land and for humanity.

Using our Abundant Enterprise model, we have entered into the communities most impacted by resource exploitation, and have:

- ✉ Lived with the communities, sharing every aspect of their lives, to understand better the values, stewardship, and wisdom of the people;
- ✉ Shared our stories and information about what is happening with locally stewarded resources and where the benefit is flowing (and at what expense);
- ✉ Documented, when invited, custom, culture, knowledge, and technology held by the communities into the perpetual contract framework of the Heritable Innovation Trust so that any third party use occurs within the license environment created by the Trust obviating the patronization of “traditional knowledge” frameworks promoted by the WTO;
- ✉ Exchanged global information to provide a counter inflow of knowledge, technology or commercial engagement around Trust elements and discerned, within the communities, their desired mode of engagement with a broader global community; and,
- ✉ Actively advocated, when requested, on the global stage, for the interests of the communities at the national and international level.

By focusing on what the communities have in abundance and engaging around their knowledge of abundance, we have learned a number of key lessons.

- ✉ To date, none of the communities with metal deposits have a local value system based on the extraction of metals. In fact, in the highland communities, the elders have explained that the metals in the land and under the sea actually serve as the facilitators of communication. For example, in one village, a massive “speaking” stone that is used by the elders to listen to the distant sea is the source of information because of the energy conducted via minerals in the ground from the sea to the distant mountain location. Through this stone, they learn when fish are in abundance, when to collect medicine salt, and when significant weather and seismic events are impending. Accordingly, the recent activities of Nautilus Minerals – the ecologically reckless, publicly funded seabed mining operation – are known to the people by the disruption of information coming from the sea. From this village’s perspective, long before the silting of the Bismarck Sea kills the Pacific tuna and sea bass, the disruption in the mineral content of the sea bed and water will affect this communication link. It has already begun to take the “medicine” from the salt in the bay.
- ✉ The concept of “natural resources” – a legacy of the church’s view of a hierarchy of life which places humans as those with dominion over all – is not present in the community and custom. We overlook this when we see gold, not earth; when we see lumber, not trees; when we see carbon consumption, not the forest. “Organically certified”, one of the most comical and pathetic apologies for our toxic existence, is a way of life. The concept of “waste” pervades only those communities which are taught the concept of excessive consumption. When the patchouli is processed, the dried leaves are not waste – they serve as a natural herbicidal mulch which allows the new plants to grow without competition from invasive plants. Rather than “natural resource”, the communities share a deep intrinsic sense of **repurposing, replenishment** and **responsibility**. All that is taken is, in some form returned – with gratitude and customary homage.
- ✉ Value exchange may involve currency-like transactions but the breadth of acceptable “currencies” transcend traditional barter of material goods to include the exchange of: custom and culture, knowledge, technology and know-how, and well-being (ranging from medicine to shelter to education).

The Heritable Innovation Trust in Papua New Guinea has greatly expanded community access to global knowledge and engagement. It has now created community linkages between indigenous communities in PNG with communities in Nepal, Mongolia, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa and Brazil. Explicitly avoiding any imposition of “perceived need” in the communities with whom we engage, we have succeeded in creating an emerging consortium of those who have been misclassified as impoverished or otherwise marginalized. Returning knowledge to communities who choose engagement as the immediate return on their investment – long before we enter into commercial engagements – has vastly expanded the global attraction of the Trust program. Sharing custom and culture has enriched our experience and that of the communities with whom we’re working. **Providing a global window into Abundance without imposing an extractive impulse has proven to be a promising path towards integral engagement.**

It is with some irony that the Heritable Innovation Trust preceded by a few months James Cameron's *Avatar*. This film, which so richly explores indigenous community values, presents the regrettable consensus fatalism in which extraction abuse manifests conflict and its resolution comes in the form of indigenous wisdom falling into industrial barbaric violence. During the same year when hundreds of millions saw the Navi "triumphant" in the armed exile of extractors at the end of carnage, the Heritable Innovation Trust has shown actual evidence of the possibilities which come from an alternative narrative. In *Avatar II* it would be beautiful to document the real life of those from whom so much has been taken. However, rather than displaying conflict resolution in epic battles endemic to a Western dogma, highlight the means by which alternative resolutions have been manifest. And wouldn't it be interesting to show how the carelessness of conflict Western style could itself be recycled for beneficial use?

To this point, let me end with an example. During the Second World War, Rabaul, East New Britain served as a primary logistical operating center for the Japanese southern campaign. Massive quantities of weapons and resources for war still litter the forests and waters of the region. This year, we've collaborated in the design and building of essential oil distillers which can be built using repurposed steel abandoned in the war effort. Hydraulics for earth movers now serve as the basis for coconut presses. The citronella, lemon grass and patchouli essential oils which fragrance contemplation spaces world wide have been processed from the repurposed spoils of war.

From the leprosy communities in Nepal, to the Qachet of Papua New Guinea, to the medicine workers of Ecuador, to the nomadic communities of Mongolia, the first year of the HIT has evidenced manifold success. We look forward to its second year with great anticipation and trust that each of you, to whom this message flows, will join us in manifesting a new Abundant Enterprise reality.