

IT WAS MY father who told me, on a trip to Atlantic Canada, that the trading post which was used to launch explorers, traders and missionaries into the heart of the country, and which would later become Quebec City, was founded by Samuel de Champlain in 1608. As a curious youngster, I immediately asked, "But what did he find?"

Cities are founded when someone finds a need for them. Likewise organizations.

Nearly four years ago, McGill MBA grads Kariann Aarup (BA-ECON '91, MBA '93) and Eric Steedman (MBA '00) found such a need and founded the Community Experience Initiative (CEI) – an organization that places students in paid summer internships with non-profit organizations and socially responsible for-profit enterprises.

Kariann, who has been teaching undergraduate courses in the Faculty of Management since 1999, said that when they started, "students were interested in these kinds of jobs, but had no avenue to pursue their interests."

"We recognized similar interests and needs among students in the MBA program as well," said Eric, joining in, "and, rather uniquely, used an entrepreneurial model to respond to those needs."

"But we have also created demand through CEI," Aarup added. "Since we began, students keep saying, 'We never knew we could ...'"

The excitement Aarup and Steedman conveyed as they spoke was engaging. Both have sacrificed a great deal over the past few years. They have remained dedicated to the program because they believe in it – not because it pays the bills.

And their commitment has been rewarded. If they found a need for the project four years ago, they have certainly seen that need expand as quickly as they can respond. In the first year, 5 students were placed; last year they had 200 applications for 10 positions. This year they had 20 internships available, received over 300 applications and have already placed 14 students, from seven schools, with 12 organizations.

It allowed them to feel a sense of community with like-valued peers and feel less alienated in their business school setting. It also allowed students from one organization to meet their peers from the other business schools in their city and start forming networks with them," Kariann explains. Building communities is an essential part of CEI's objectives.

And if this weren't enough, good news, for the first time organizations came to the event with full-time positions available, not just summer internships. Not only that, but in each city a representative of Net Impact (an international network of MBA students committed to socially responsible business practices) spoke with students, and now organizations at the graduate and undergraduate levels are being set up in schools across the country. CEI, said Aarup and Steedman, is proud to be a part of this development and is making plans of its own for further development.

CEI is currently working on a Speakers Series in conjunction with the Management Career Centre at McGill. They are hoping to invite four speakers each year to speak about issues of social and environmental responsibility and sustainability, as well as about potential careers in those areas.

CEI is also collaborating with the Community Foundations of Canada and the Federal Government's Voluntary Sector Initiative to develop a "Learning Conference." The conference, which would certainly lend credibility to the efforts of CEI participants, would allow interns to share their experiences



Recently, CEI hosted successful career events in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. During the three one-day events, they attracted more than 250 students, thirty organizations and eight business schools. In Montreal alone – at a high-energy, bilingual event – over 130 students gathered at Thomson House (McGill's graduate student house) to meet with both non-profit organizations and fellow students to discuss careers in the non-profit and voluntary sectors. "The events were unique opportunities for students to meet others who shared their concern for social issues.

with other students and help support the growth of what Aarup and Steedman called a "learning community." "There is a great deal of knowledge to be gained from the experience that the 24 CEI alumni have accumulated in the last three years. They are a unique group of people in Canada and can give valuable insights into issues related to careers in the not-for-profit sector," they explained.

This community would include students and organizations from various parts of the country (all of whom have had a CEI placement), and CEI is building on this already growing national interest.

The plan, already in full-swing, is to build nationally out of the three hubs of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, and spread out into the Prairies and Atlantic Canada, eventually making contact with business schools in every province. In doing this, CEI hopes to "act as a vehicle for social change by mobilizing business students" – the next generation of leaders.

But if CEI is to "influence systematic change," as Steedman says, they need to secure stable funding. Although they have received encouragement and generous financial support from a number of foundations (J.W. McConnell, Zeller Family, Hay, Endswell, Bealight, Maytree, The EJLB Foundation, and de Gaspé Beaubien), their continuing development requires more help.

The CEI model is one in which hosting organizations cover 50% of the summer intern's salary, ensuring their commitment to both the student and the project. Recognising the financial limitations of the voluntary sector, however, CEI fundraises to cover the balance. It is a model that has proven to be very effective.

In the past, 70% of funding has been devoted to supporting internships and it will continue to be directed there. But

what is needed now is core funding that will allow CEI to expand its reach and profile in order to meet increasing demand. Having entered its third year of existence, and under a proven model, CEI is about to embark on a major fundraising campaign that will seek out partnerships with corporate sponsors and academic institutions.

Recently, the Rotman School of Management created three scholarships for hired student interns (one of which was awarded this year), and The John Molson School of Business and the University of Victoria are both contemplating similar moves.

In addition to this, CEI has begun to work more directly with foundations to match summer placements with foundation objectives. For instance, EJLB, a foundation whose focus is environmental conservation, is funding a student working with The Canadian Nature Federation. Aarup and Steedman are presenting this model as a new way for funds to be directed towards capacity building around such issues – the medium in this case is the MBA student.

Finally, as Aarup said, CEI would like to "engage alumni who are sitting on the boards of non-profit organizations." Getting alumni involved would be an ideal way to develop an interdependent relationship between foundations, business schools, organizations and the students who want to join and, eventually, lead them.

Find, found, fund – for CEI, this trio of words marks the steps toward a more engaged and socially responsible business community. This is the community that Aarup and Steedman, CEI and its growing alumni are on the road to realizing.

For more information visit www.cei-iec.ca

"CEI is a good example of what may well constitute the next generation of leadership and innovation in the voluntary sector: fresh, smart, entrepreneurial and networked. While their professed goal is to influence the way that business schools understand and interact with the community and with voluntary and responsible business sectors, their approach is strategic, thoughtful and collaborative. Voluntary organizations should stand up and take notice."

Lynne Toupin, Project Director, Developing Human Resources in the Voluntary Sector (HRVS), Community Foundations of Canada

"The CEI's mission to make non-profit organizations and socially and environmentally responsible businesses attractive to business school graduates - and vice versa - is clearly an idea whose time has come. The Business Co-op and Career Centre at the University of Victoria has enthusiastically jumped on the CEI band-wagon, not only because we believe in the concept, but also because today's generation of business students are increasingly looking for careers within organizations that will deliver benefits to their society."

John Oldale, Placement Centre, University of Victoria

"Here at the McGill Management Career Centre, we are delighted with CEI's growth and its success with our students as well as with the business community. In recent years, our students have expressed an increased interest in career options in social responsibility and environmental sustainability, and CEI's Summer Internships provide them with the perfect opportunity to obtain hands-on experience in non-traditional businesses."

Jocelyne Younan, Director McGill Faculty of Management Career Centre