

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

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OMAFRA Product Development Research Day
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About Us...

Resilient Communities Research Collaborative

– Interdisciplinary research team

~50 researchers, stakeholders and participants

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

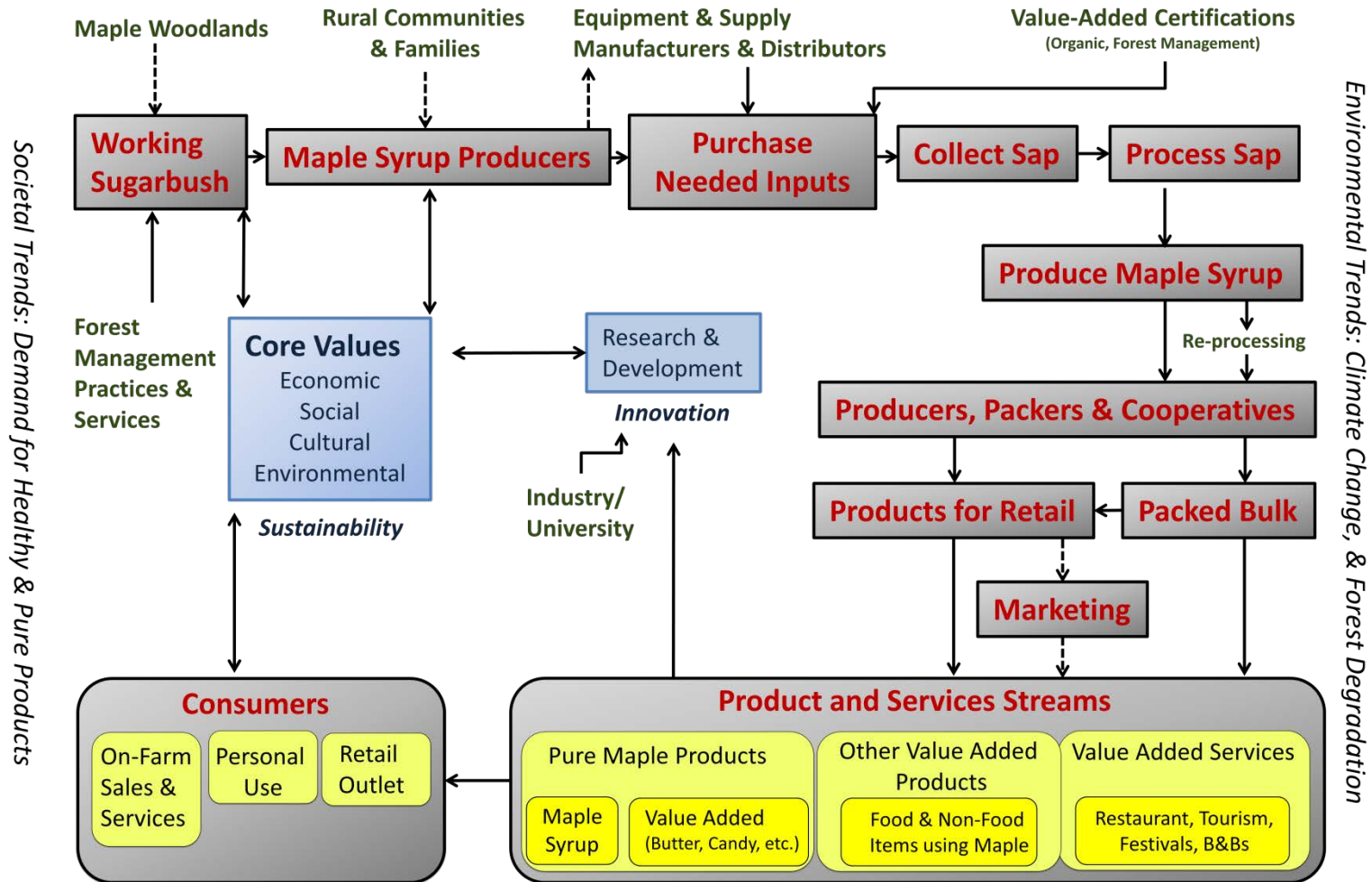
- Kick-Off Meeting
 - Project visioning, team build & introduce *Project Advisory Board*
- Interviews (n=35)
 - Sectoral Scan of Ontario Maple Industry
- Focus Groups (n=78)
 - 3 events across Ontario with maple producers



Maple Syrup Value System*

*With Input From David Chapeskie

Governance Context: Government and Industry Rules and Regulations



Legend

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

To Learn More or Get Involved, Contact Us:

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Aboriginal Perspectives of the Maple Value System

All My Relations (Aboriginal Values)

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

Examples

- Cleaning equipment
- Looking after the sugarbush
- Cutting firewood

Closings: Sunset
(Wrap-up)

All My Relations
(Aboriginal Values)

Sharing Ways of Knowing
(Knowledge Transmission
& Mobilization)

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)

Openings: Sunrise
(Preparation Ceremonies)

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...

Harvesting Practices
(Production)

How do you harvest the sap and boil your syrup?

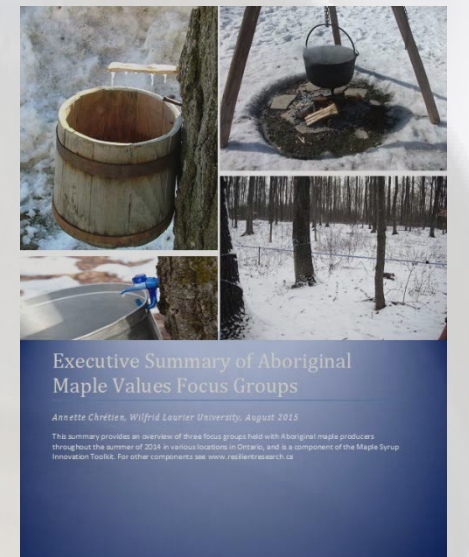
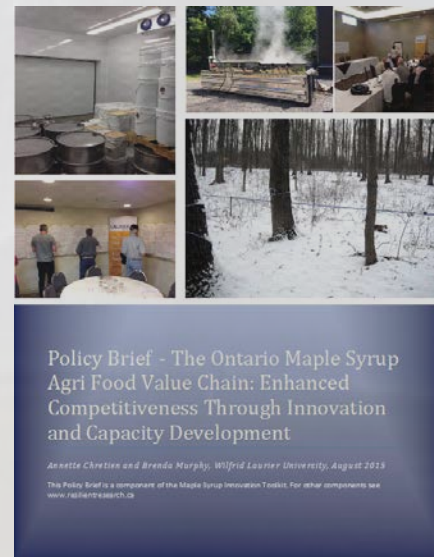
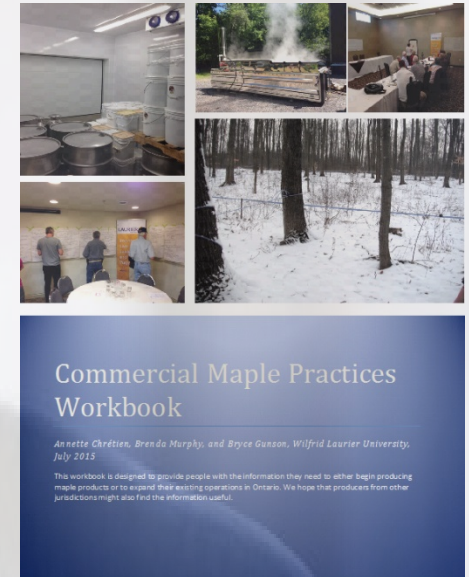
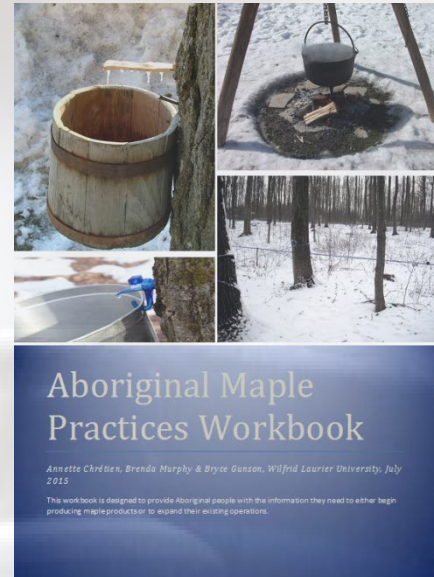
Examples

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

Credit: Annette Chretien, Charlie Restoule, Melanie Smits and Brenda Murphy

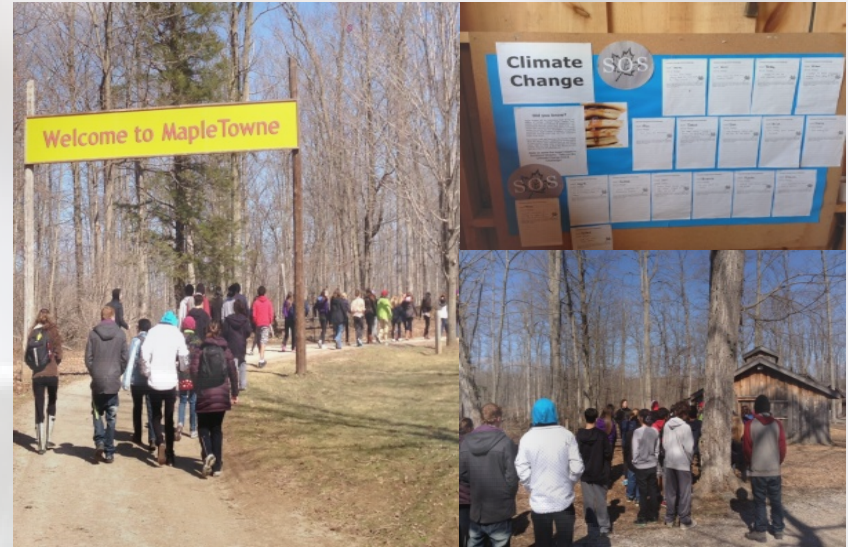
Knowledge Mobilization

- 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

Sweet Ontario

PURE MAPLE SYRUP

- 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/zLjyvmweI8Q>

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?

