

Wendy Reid Fairhurst is newly embarking on an Interdisciplinary PhD that aims to uncover practical ways to make the cohousing model more affordable and more broadly adopted across Canada. The research spans **sociology** (understanding the benefits of the community-focused built environment that is embedded in cohousing, and why cohousing should become a more prominent housing type), **social geography** (mapping the cultural, political and economic contexts that create both barriers and opportunities for cohousing adoption, funding, and policy), and **social enterprise** (utilizing this new business mindset as a means to innovate the way cohousing is developed in Canada in order to make the model more affordable and allow a greater number of Canadians to access cohousing as an option). This research is an extension of Wendy's professional work to date and recent completion of Memorial University's inaugural **MBA in Social Enterprise and Entrepreneurship** (MBA-SEE).

Wendy's background is in design and architecture, having completed a **Bachelor of Environmental Design** (BDes - Environmental) at OCAD University in 2004 and partial completion of a **Masters of Environmental Design** (MEDes - Interdisciplinary) at the University of Calgary in 2006. The former was a focus on design thinking and processes around the holistic design of built environments. The latter was an interdisciplinary approach that aimed to marry architecture and international development. In 2007 Wendy took a break from academics to raise two children and obtain practical experience in architecture, interior design, carpentry, community development, and entrepreneurship. This led to the formation of a St. John's based community group that aimed to use the cohousing model that is gaining popularity in the US and Canada as a methodology for self-developing and co-designing their own community-focused neighbourhood. However, the group ran into the common barriers that face many community-led developments: lack of finance structures that suit a collective purchase of land and construction finance. While the benefits of cohousing are acknowledged by most, the support behind doing housing development differently is negligible. This is what led Wendy to research social enterprise, and the concept that business across all sectors needs to be done differently.

Wendy is a recipient of the 2020 **Alexander Fraser Laidlaw Fellowship** through the Cooperative Housing Federation of Canada, and the 2020 **Peggy Finney Pelletier Graduate Scholarship in Business Administration** through Memorial University. Her current research is supported through **Mitacs eAccelerate** funding. Meanwhile, Wendy is also co-director of the St. John's based **Affordable Housing+ Solutions Lab**, funded through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to develop an innovative business model for affordable housing that empowers residents through the mechanism of "membership" to have choice and support in moving out of the cycle of poverty while also availing of all the benefits embedded in true community.