

RECODE DIALOGUE: RECONCILIATION

# Insights & Observations at the Intersection of Higher Education, Indigenous Communities and Local Economic Development



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## Executive Summary

In November 2016, the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation convened a RECODE Dialogue, focused on Reconciliation and entrepreneurship. A Discussion Paper was developed by Junxion Strategy, and circulated to invitees of the Dialogue. The Dialogue itself was a half-day workshop hosted at the Edmonton Aboriginal Friendship Centre. The discussions were engaging and generative. This document presents a report on the Dialogue, including key insights and observations to be considered in future work.

This paper includes three parts: Part 1 is the original Discussion Paper, unedited from its original form. Part 2 presents the raw notes from four discussions that took place during the RECODE Dialogue event. And Part 3 presents insights, observations, and suggestions for next steps that emerged from the notes and subsequent, informal discussions.

Any questions about this document, the Dialogue, or the RECODE Program in general can be directed to Chad Lubelsky, RECODE Program Director at the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation.



## **DISCUSSION PAPER:**

The following Discussion Paper was circulated to attendees of the Dialogue as a preparatory 'preread'. Its contents will form a new 'living document', summarizing universities and colleges' curricula and programming focused on the intersection of Indigenous communities and local economic development. It is included here in its original form for reference, and because it gave structure to the Dialogue in Edmonton.

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PART 1: DISCUSSION PAPER

Canadian Universities  
and Colleges supporting  
entrepreneurship and  
Indigenous communities.

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PART 1: DISCUSSION PAPER

## Statement of Purpose and Context

The purpose of this discussion paper is to provide an understanding of opportunities for post-secondary institutions across Canada at the intersection of entrepreneurship and Indigenous communities.

In the broader Canadian context, this is a timely conversation. The publication of the 94 Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has shifted reconciliation more squarely into public dialogue. Mainstream media coverage continues to expand, and the many, varied, and complex aspects of reconciliation are more broadly understood.

This paper reviews current activities and opportunities for post-secondary institutions to support Indigenous entrepreneurship, as well as questions for further exploration during a meeting to be hosted by RECODE, an initiative of the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, just prior to the Indigenous Innovation Summit, on November 7, 2016.



## INTRODUCTION

**T**he [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#) (TRC) issued 94 [Calls to Action](#) to advance the process of Canadian reconciliation.<sup>1</sup> Several of these relate directly to the creation of educational opportunities for Indigenous students as well as a call to “Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects”.

The development of entrepreneurs is recognized as a key strategy for innovation and economic development, and Canadian post-secondary institutions are increasingly focusing on entrepreneurship and related skills development. However, relatively few of these activities are aimed at Indigenous students or include content that is specifically relevant to Indigenous communities.

There is a reciprocal opportunity for both the development of Indigenous entrepreneurs and also to incorporate Indigenous approaches and ways of being to mainstream economic and entrepreneurial education.

This paper provides an overview of the types of activities related to entrepreneurship development that are currently available at Canadian universities and colleges, and identifies areas for collaboration with Indigenous communities and inclusion of Indigenous approaches. Finally, we present several questions that emerged as a result of the review, and invite further inquiry and exploration of these topics.

<sup>1</sup> [http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf), #62, point ii

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PART 1: DISCUSSION PAPER

## Areas of Activity in Higher Education

### ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship skills development and programming is growing in Canadian Higher Education. The 2014 report [The State of Entrepreneurship Education in Ontario's Colleges and Universities](#) defines entrepreneurship as “the process of creating and implementing innovative ideas to address economic opportunities or social problems, whether that is through enterprise creation, improved product development or new a mode of organization”<sup>2</sup> and showed that the number of entrepreneurship courses in Canadian universities and colleges has been steadily increasing since the late 1970s. In general, entrepreneurial programming is driven by business or engineering departments, and in the latter case often focuses on technological innovation.

The following table summarizes types of entrepreneurial activity at Canadian universities and colleges.



<sup>2</sup> <http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/Entrepreneurship%20report.pdf>, Page 5

TYPE OF ACTIVITY	KEY FEATURES & EXAMPLES
<b>ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING</b>	<p>Many post-secondary institutions offer some courses in entrepreneurship, most likely found in business related degrees and certificates. (e.g., Business Administration, Bachelor of Commerce, MBA or graduate degree).</p> <p>In some cases entrepreneurship programs are offered under engineering departments as a way to commercialize technological innovation. Both University of Ottawa and McMaster offer Masters degrees in engineering and entrepreneurship.</p> <p>In some cases, certificate and degree programs offer specializations in entrepreneurship and are supported by opportunities for business plan development, internships, etc., to develop skills.</p>
<b>ENTREPRENEURIAL HUBS</b>	<p>Several universities (especially larger institutions) offer entrepreneurial programming that is outside of the academic structure. Examples of this include <a href="#">e@UBC</a>, the <a href="#">Entrepreneur Institute</a> at Ryerson, <a href="#">CBASE</a> at Guelph, <a href="#">Entrepreneurship Hub</a> at University of Ottawa.</p> <p>This programming is often open to students, faculty and alumni and focuses on opportunities to develop entrepreneurial skills, ideas and businesses through idea validation, lean business model approaches, resources, mentorship, funding, etc.</p>
<b>ACCELERATORS &amp; INCUBATORS</b>	<p>University and college accelerators and incubators are focused on growing start-up and early stage businesses. These are generally open to students, staff and alumni, and are often part of the entrepreneurial hubs described above.</p> <p>Accelerators often have an area of focus, such as social impact (<a href="#">RADIUS SFU</a>, <a href="#">Coast Capital Innovation Hub</a> at UBC), or technology (<a href="#">The DMZ</a> at Ryerson, <a href="#">Innovate Calgary</a> at the University of Calgary, <a href="#">The Forge</a> at McMaster).</p> <p>It should be noted that several Canadian university technology and innovation incubators were ranked very highly by the <a href="#">2015 North American UBI Global Awards</a><sup>3</sup> which evaluates top performing university business incubators in North America.</p>
<b>STUDENT LED ACTIVITIES</b>	<p>Student clubs are another area of entrepreneurial education. Generally, these focus on resources, peer support and networking and/or competitions.</p> <p>Examples include: <a href="#">Hatch</a> at Carleton, <a href="#">The Entrepreneurship Society</a> at the University of Guelph, and <a href="#">Enactus</a> Canada.</p>
<b>COMPETITIONS AND CONFERENCES.</b>	<p>Many of the hubs and accelerator programs also deliver conferences and competitions for idea development, start-ups, networking, etc. In some cases these are independent of on campus hubs and accelerators.</p> <p>These activities are generally centered on opportunities for funding, mentorship and industry networking.</p> <p>Examples include: <a href="#">Game Changer</a> an ideas competition at University of Manitoba, <a href="#">Blueprint</a> at Brock University.</p>

3 <http://ubi-global.com/global-insights-celebrating-the-future-of-academic-incubators-ubi-awards-in-north-america/>

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PART 1: DISCUSSION PAPER

## Areas of Activity in Higher Education, *cont.*,

### BUSINESS RELATED INDIGENOUS PROGRAMMING

Many of Canada's post-secondary institutions offer academic and non-academic programs for Indigenous students or academic programming in Indigenous studies. In some cases, academic programming incorporates Indigenous approaches and ways of being into the course of study; in other cases, the studies are focused on Indigenous communities. The majority of Indigenous programming is related to Indigenous studies, or areas such as public policy, education and economic development from a social perspective (e.g., social work). However, there are programs that combine Indigenous and business topics. These programs are not necessarily focused on entrepreneurship, but do address general business education and skills.

Some examples of business related academic programs that are either tailored to Indigenous students and/or offer Indigenous perspectives and focus are described below.

- SFU offers an [Executive MBA in Indigenous Business](#) that “recognizes that traditional knowledge also plays a significant role in Indigenous leadership and decision making. It is designed for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students working within this context”.
- Vancouver Island University offers a certificate in [Business Fundamentals for Indigenous Communities](#) which focuses on foundational business and leadership skills for Indigenous students.
- The University of Saskatchewan offers programming and supports for Indigenous students via the [Edwards School of Business](#) and the [Rawlinson Centre for Indigenous Business](#). This includes specializations in Indigenous business, or Entrepreneurship & Family Business, among others.
- The First Nations University of Canada's [School of Business and Public Administration \(SOBPA\)](#) “emphasizes a unique First Nations perspective in the fields of business management and public administration”.

- The Asper School of Business at the University of Manitoba offers an [Indigenous Business Studies Major](#) as part of its Bachelor of Commerce program. Courses include Indigenous perspectives and are targeted to business students who seek employment at organizations that work with Indigenous communities. The school's [Indigenous Business Education Partners \(ABEP\)](#) provides a “community for Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) business students at the University of Manitoba’s Asper School of Business”.
- The [Business Administration Specialization in Nijgaaniwin – The Art of Leading](#) at Trent University “brings together two knowledge systems—Western business practices and Indigenous ways of knowing and working—with a view to developing students’ ability to work skilfully in the 21st-century business environment”.

### PROGRAMS AT THE INTERSECTION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

While many of the offerings described above focus on more general business skills, there are a few programs that are firmly focused on entrepreneurial skills and opportunity development with an Indigenous emphasis.

- [Project Pathway](#) at Ryerson University is focused on providing business training and mentorship to Indigenous Canadians.
- [The Entrepreneurship / Small Business Major](#) at the University of Manitoba includes specialized courses in Indigenous Entrepreneurship.
- A joint [Master’s in Governance and Entrepreneurship in Northern and Indigenous Areas](#) is offered at the University of Saskatchewan via the faculties of Arts and Science.
- [S3i Sauder Centre for Social Innovation & Impact Investing](#) at UBC highlights First Nations Economic Development as a key theme.
- [First Peoples Enterprise Accelerator Program](#) was launched in May 2016 by RADIUS SFU. The program was delivered to both Indigenous and Non Indigenous participants for the Cormorant Island Entrepreneur Support Program in Alert Bay, B.C. The program is based on RADIUS’s Trampoline Incubator program.

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PART 1: DISCUSSION PAPER

## Areas of Activity in Higher Education, *cont.*,

- The [Certificate in Community Economic Development](#) offered by SFU Continuing Studies focuses on rural communities and incorporates an Indigenous economics perspective as part of its curriculum.

### YOUTH ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES OUTSIDE OF ACADEMIA

Despite the focus of this paper, we would be remiss not to acknowledge the range of supports that exist for prospective entrepreneurs outside of academia.

Growing entrepreneurs is a key strategy for economic development at all levels of government. In addition, there is a strong trend toward technology and social enterprise business incubators and accelerators as part of a drive to nurture innovation. A few examples of programs available to prospective entrepreneurs include:

- [Canada Business Network](#). This Government of Canada website provides a portal to a range of financial and non-financial resources for entrepreneurs and business owners. A filter for Indigenous and Youth targeted programs is available.
- [Canadian Centre for Indigenous Entrepreneurship](#). This organization provides training programs for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit who are interested in becoming self-employed or starting their own business. They run the [Indigenous Best](#) program, a free training series.
- [Futurpreneur Canada](#). This is the only national, non-profit organization that provides financing, mentoring and support tools to aspiring business owners aged 18-39. They offer tools and resources as well as mentorship and funding opportunities on an application basis.
- Provincial organizations like [Small Business BC](#) and the [Centre for Entrepreneurship Education and Development \(CEED\)](#) in Nova Scotia deliver programs and services to support and develop small business owners.

- [Startup Canada](#). This is a grassroots network of entrepreneurs working together to build an environment for entrepreneurship in Canada. They offer workshops, networking and funding opportunities for Canadian entrepreneurs.
- [Engineers Without Borders](#) supports social innovations in Canada and throughout Africa aimed at breaking the systems that perpetuate poverty. They aim to support well-positioned leaders who in turn enable others to reach their full potential.
- **Incubators and Accelerators.** There are a vast number of incubators and accelerators in Canada and the United States. Many of these are focused on technology and innovation ventures and social innovation is another prominent category. Some examples include...
  - [MaRS](#), which is focused on three main sectors: Information & Communications Technology (ICT), Cleantech, and Health with an overarching emphasis on social innovation. They're based in Ontario.
  - [The Next Big Thing](#) is a national charitable organization that empowers youth with the tools and skills they need to succeed as entrepreneurs. TNBT provides services to accelerate youth entrepreneurs aged 17 – 25, and a Youth Ambassador Program to introduce entrepreneurial thinking to youth aged 13 – 18.
  - [Highline](#) is a Canadian-based venture capital backed accelerator program that supports early stage technology companies that are working hard to bring the future to life. They're based in Toronto.
  - [Spring](#). This is a global startup school for early stage social purpose entrepreneurs. Spring offers several paid programs for entrepreneur and venture development.

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PART 1: DISCUSSION PAPER

## Areas of Opportunity and Exploration

### AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

Based on the review conducted for this paper, some areas of focus to increase the activity overlap of academia, entrepreneurship, and Indigenous communities are presented below:

- 1. Incorporate Indigenous centered curriculum into entrepreneurship programs.** Except in a few cases, there is a general lack of Indigenous perspectives included in entrepreneurial education. There may be opportunities to widen the discussion to address topics from a community economic development perspective as well as an Indigenous cultural perspective, including Indigenous knowledge and languages.
- 2. Develop opportunities for student and Indigenous community engagement through entrepreneurship.** Entrepreneurship offers a unique opportunity to engage students with the institution, the community, and each other. The nature of entrepreneurial education and activity is its ability to celebrate ideas and innovation, and to connect participants with their peers and the business community through group work, mentorship and networking. Highlighting successful ideas and ventures is extremely motivating, and a powerful way to inspire more people to take the entrepreneurial leap.
- 3. Develop a Canadian entrepreneurial ecosystem beyond the tech sector.** Innovation and technology dominate the North American incubator and accelerator conversation. To create a diverse economy, we need to grow other areas of entrepreneurial development. How can Canadian universities and colleges leverage their leadership in incubators for innovation and technology to other sectors?



## AREAS OF EXPLORATION

When imagining how Canadian universities and colleges can support and develop Indigenous entrepreneurship there are several questions that invite further exploration.

- **Exploration**

- How is entrepreneurship understood in Indigenous perspectives and values?
- Does that understanding overlap with non-Indigenous approaches to and understanding of entrepreneurship? If so, how so and in which ways?

- **Role**

- What kind of entrepreneurship is needed in Indigenous communities?
- This may vary widely between communities. Are there common themes?
- What is the role of community economic development in entrepreneur and new business development?
- What is the role of post-secondary institutions in entrepreneur and new business development in Indigenous communities?
- How might local economic development impact program opportunities and design in different institutions?

- **Growth**

- What is needed to grow Indigenous participation in entrepreneurship?
- Examples include: skills development, experience and internships, mentorship, access and funding, investment, culturally respectful and inclusive practices and curriculum, etc.
- How does the curriculum need to change in order to be (more) inclusive of Indigenous perspectives and approaches?

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PART 1: DISCUSSION PAPER

## Next Steps

This paper is being circulated to invitees of a RECODE Dialogue session that is being convened by RECODE, before the 2016 Indigenous Innovation Summit in Edmonton. The paper's aim is to provide some general context and understanding of the diverse efforts by post-secondary institutions to support Indigenous people and communities, with a particular focus on the development and support of entrepreneurship.

Following the dialogue, a follow-up report will be circulated to attendees and made public, in order for others to participate in this ongoing conversation, working together to develop this work.



This report was prepared by [Junxion Strategy](#)

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## Reference Bibliography

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015). [Calls to Action](#).

The following Calls to Action are addressed by this paper:

7. We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.
8. We call upon the federal government to eliminate the discrepancy in federal education funding for First Nations children being educated on reserves and those First Nations children being educated off reserves.
10. We call on the federal government to draft new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples. The new legislation would include a commitment to sufficient funding and would incorporate the following principles:
  - i. Providing sufficient funding to close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation.
  - ii. Improving education attainment levels and success rates.
  - iii. Developing culturally appropriate curricula.
  - iv. Protecting the right to Aboriginal languages, including the teaching of Aboriginal languages as credit courses.
  - v. Enabling parental and community responsibility, control, and accountability, similar to what parents enjoy in public school systems.
  - vi. Enabling parents to fully participate in the education of their children.
  - vii. Respecting and honouring Treaty relationships.
16. We call upon post-secondary institutions to create university and college degree and diploma programs in Aboriginal languages.
62. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:
  - i. Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.
  - ii. Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.

- iii. Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.
  - iv. Establish senior-level positions in government at the assistant deputy minister level or higher dedicated to Aboriginal content in education.
92. We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources. This would include, but not be limited to, the following:
- i. Commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.
  - ii. Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.
  - iii. Provide education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

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United Nations (March 2008). [United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#).

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# 2

## PART 2: Summary of Group Discussions

On November 7, 2016, the day before the 2016 Indigenous Innovation Summit, we convened some twenty-five people at the Edmonton Aboriginal Friendship Centre for a Dialogue. After an official welcome by the Centre's Executive Director Ron Moon Walker, we undertook a series of conversations, the notes from which are included here.

### DIALOGUE PARTICIPANTS

The following is a list of Dialogue participants, and the organizations they represent.

- James Stauch  
*Mount Royal University*
- Kiri Bird  
*Simon Fraser University*
- Donovan Woollard  
*Simon Fraser University*
- Pat Camp  
*University of British Columbia*
- Diane Roussin  
*The Winnipeg Boldness Project*
- Rolanda Murray  
*Vancouver Island University*
- Claire Reid  
*University of Winnipeg*
- Jeff Cyr  
*Carleton University*
- Tina Dacin  
*Queen's University*
- Jessica Bolduc  
*4Rs Youth Movement*
- Andrew MacIsaac  
*University of Alberta*
- Annelies Tjebbes  
*Engineers Without Borders*
- Jodi Stonehouse  
*University of Alberta*
- David Brook  
*Grand Challenges Canada*
- Nicole McDonald  
*The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation*
- Chad Lubelsky  
*The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation*
- Stephen Huddart  
*The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation*
- Shaun Loney  
*Aki Energy*
- Franca Brodett  
*University of Alberta*
- Darcy Wood  
*Aki Energy*
- Heather McTaggart  
*Classroom Connections*
- Rodney Contois  
*Aki Energy*
- Latasha Calf Robe  
*Mount Royal University*
- Emilea Saadeh  
*Alberta Native Friendship Centre*
- Rob Rollingson  
*Indian Business Corporation*

The Dialogue was facilitated by Shelly Vermillion of In Synch Consulting, and Mike Rowlands of Junxion Strategy.



## OPENING CONVERSATION: RESPONSES TO THE DISCUSSION PAPER & AKI ENERGY CASE STUDY

We began the Dialogue with an open discussion of participants' feedback on the Discussion Paper. While it was generally well-received and appreciated, there were two important critiques shared by the group.

First, participants felt the paper was framed in a Western, secular worldview. As such, its basic and underpinning assumptions did not include Indigenous ways of knowing. Our discussion (which is summarized below) embraced this as an opportunity for improvement. It is central to the 'Insights & Observations' in Part 3 of this document.

Second, the Discussion Paper did not adequately consider Indigenous views of entrepreneurship and business. Whereas in common parlance entrepreneurship celebrates individual effort and accomplishments, Indigenous perspectives celebrate generosity and community accomplishments. Again, this is considered in more detail in Part 3.

During the group's review of the Discussion Paper, Ashoka Fellow Shaun Loney shared insights from his new book, *An Army of Problem Solvers: Reconciliation and the Solutions Economy*, and the Aki group of companies.

# 2

## Summary of Group Discussions, *cont.*,

### FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE NOTES FROM THE DISCUSSION:

- **Academic & learning approaches**
  - Many Indigenous entrepreneurs don't finish high school, so simply engaging post-secondary institutions is insufficient.
  - Ideas of wealth and economy are predicated on ever-increasing gross domestic product (GDP) figures. This does not align with Indigenous communities' views, but learning is not framed as bi-directional.
  - "People living closest to challenge are typically best suited to define the solutions."
  - Research approaches should be reconsidered and reframed: Rather than being "on" or "about" Indigenous communities, approaches should be grounded in helping students engage through ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP) principles.
- **Entrepreneurship**
  - Business on Reserve is totally different, so approaches to understanding must consider the full social systemic context that gives rise to those differences.
  - It's generally accepted that most business students will end up working for corporations. They should also be taught social entrepreneurship.
  - Intrapreneurship should also be taught. This is the act of behaving like an entrepreneur while working within a large organization. How can individuals encourage progressive behaviour by larger corporations in their 'day jobs' without putting their employment at risk?
  - How can social enterprise be implemented within the Indigenous world view of economy? Why aren't Indigenous people leading the conversation?



- **Economic development**

- There are systemic barriers that prevent people from realizing their passions; lowering them might set the conditions for people to turn those passions into gainful work.
- Some of the group shared their perspective that micro lending may not be a useful solution in the Canadian context, given the relatively high costs of establishing a social enterprise here.
- It's ingrained in many people to see poverty, and not to see the opportunities in community. It's important to encourage a shift in perspectives.

- **Decolonizing thinking**

- The distinct treatment under Canadian law of 'Status Indians' may suppress economic development. While this was not a dominant theme across our discussion, it's clearly a significant policy issue, worthy of ongoing dialogue.
- There are fundamental blocks in social work, and they're similar in social enterprise. Public policy can influence these blocks, and policy makers should be encouraged to do so.
- Frames of reference for public policy must shift from inputs-based to outcomes-based approaches. For example, if a desired outcome is a reduction in rates of diabetes, then food transportation costs should not be the primary factor in food distribution decisions.

# 2

## Breakout Group Discussions

We broke into three sub-groups to explore some of the questions outlined in the Discussion Paper. We focused each discussion group on one of the three topics: **‘Explore’** what ‘entrepreneurship’ means and implies, from Indigenous points of view; the **‘role’** of entrepreneurship in Indigenous communities; and the potential for ‘growth’ of Indigenous participation in entrepreneurship.

### **BREAKOUT 1: EXPLORING ‘ENTREPRENEURSHIP’ FROM INDIGENOUS POINTS OF VIEW**

This wide-ranging discussion can be summarized in three major subject areas: culture, programming and concerns.

#### **Culture**

- It’s important that rather than thinking ‘outside the box’, that instead we think ‘within the circle’, being more inclusive than ‘disruptive’, which is a common frame in entrepreneurship jargon.
- It’s equally important to work collaboratively—aligning with Indigenous world views and cultural norms. This is an opportunity for entrepreneurship in Indigenous communities
- Entrepreneurship and business have not always been seen positively in Indigenous communities, so the very language can pose challenges.
- Individual success is sometimes resented by communities, and entrepreneurship, as framed in common parlance is often about individual success—or ‘heropreneurship’.
- A broader, ‘triple bottom line’ (people, planet and profit) approach to entrepreneurship resonates.
- Are there characteristics of entrepreneurship that are common across cultures?
  - The desire to build and create.
  - To realize potential value.
  - To make things better.

## Programs

- Should entrepreneurship only be taught at business schools in traditional institutions?
  - There seems to be opportunity to employ a new infrastructure or approach around teaching and practicing entrepreneurship.
  - It's challenging to build robust and common infrastructure that is inclusive of multiple perspectives and experiences.
  - RADIUS SFU's Local Economic Development Lab was cited as an example that started with community consultations and listening.
- Lessons from social enterprise models like Aki Energy's can be applied in many contexts. It's important to learn from what emerges from grassroots practice and emergent community practices, as well as broader theoretical perspectives.
- Engage entire communities, including, for example, young parents, recognizing that they're a significant part of community futures, and that they need extra support.

## Concerns

- A key challenge in Indigenous communities is referred to as the 'brain drain'—human capital that leaves communities and doesn't return.
- How is impact being defined? The way we frame success has significant influence on the approaches we consider most valuable and viable.

# 2

## Breakout Group Discussions, *cont.*,

### BREAKOUT 2: THE ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

#### **Innovation is Indigenous.**

- As ‘innovation’ is central to the framing of entrepreneurship in mainstream discourse, it is in this way compatible with Indigenous ways of knowing and being.
- Social innovation is a more useful frame than ‘entrepreneurship’, in that in Indigenous communities, entrepreneurship is social.
- Higher education institutions should become allies with those in community that are already innovating.
- Entrepreneurship is significantly entangled with tech sectors; however, social entrepreneurship, small and family business, and cooperative models must all be elevated alongside common ‘solopreneur’ models.

#### **Flip the mindset and the model.**

- In Indigenous communities, wealth is defined by how much is gifted. In non-Indigenous communities, entrepreneurship associates closely with wealth accumulation. This is an oppositional pair of narratives. The very language or jargon of entrepreneurship, then, presents a pivotal challenge: As ‘entrepreneurship’ is framed in common parlance, is it even compatible with Indigenous ways of knowing and being? Might this challenge set up an irreconcilable distinction? Or put more positively, might this be the central conversation post-secondary institutions have an opportunity to explore?
- Higher education institutions should seek ways to bring the academy to the students. This is not an enrolment question, but one of different ways of engaging and supporting active innovators in their communities. Reciprocal partnerships with Indigenous colleges and training centres will help.
- Research must remain nimble and flexible, responding to real challenges in communities, and supporting people committed to finding the opportunities within the challenges. Post-secondary institutions’ ability to take distinct points of view—including, perhaps especially, those of Indigenous traditions—may present research opportunities and efficiencies as yet unrealized.



- Engage with a spirit of curiosity: Observe existing cultures, skills and approaches before volunteering support and skills development. This is valuable allyship.
- Rather than trying to ‘decolonize’, instead consider ‘re-Indigenizing’. This simple reframe lends a perspective that shifts the locus of control of planning toward Indigenous leadership.
- Begin by learning how to engage in culture, how to approach elders, and by embracing a holistic, systemic understanding.

### **Flexible forms of capital are essential.**

- Entrepreneurs need access to flexible, patient capital in the form of grants, low-interest loans, and patient equity. These diverse investment forms, when thoughtfully combined and presented, can present supportive opportunities for entrepreneur and enterprise development.
- Entrepreneurial risk-taking isn’t accessible to everyone; it’s heavily influenced by positions of privilege. ‘Failing forward’ isn’t an option when the needed social outcomes are so vital. Can failure be made accessible, democratizing entrepreneurship?
- Might a pro bono advisory services platform be established to support Indigenous entrepreneurs?

### **Accessibility of entrepreneurship.**

- The jargon of entrepreneurship makes it inaccessible to many. Use plain language so the jargon doesn’t present an insider/outsider dynamic. The same is true for the jargon of social innovation.
- Application processes for post-secondary institutions may also be made more accessible. Consider video-based or audio-based applications, rather than long and complex forms for applicants that may not have completed high school education.

# 2

## Breakout Group Discussions, *cont.*,

### BREAKOUT 3: THE GROWTH OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

#### **Recognize where it's already happening.**

- It would be helpful to map good work that's already happening. The examples cited in the Discussion Paper weren't recognized by many of the people in attendance, so communicating what's already happening would help in the dissemination of good, viable ideas.
- Skills of elders needs to be respected. Skills on the land need to be respected.
- Micro-business has had success in Vancouver, because systems have been carefully designed and put in place to support micro-business.

#### **Post-secondary institutions' approaches.**

- Some institutions are now making Indigenous Studies a requirement for all students. Perhaps an entry level entrepreneurship course should be required for all study areas, too.
- Reduce systemic barriers. For example, full-time programs mean people can't support their families, because they can't also have a job. Part-time weekend or evening programs will be more likely to succeed.
- The style of post-secondary learning was designed by non-Indigenous people and the Indigenous teachers or ways of teaching aren't always respected.
- Rather than requiring students to go to universities, universities could instead strengthen community outreach and engagement in programming.
- Cohort models of learning, in which students support one another academically, socially and personally may have higher chances of success.
- Ownership of traditional knowledge needs protection, which is itself a complicated conversation. Increased awareness of cultural appropriation is helpful here, but rules of 'copyright' or even Creative Commons forms of licensing may not be compatible with Indigenous ways of knowing.

### **Systemic obstacles & barriers.**

- The Indian Act prevents a lot of approaches. The legislative and regulatory landscape needs to change for growth to be possible and sustainable.
- Realities on and off reserves are different. The biggest barriers on-reserve are personal barriers, such as addiction issues or lateral violence. And rural realities are different than urban contexts.
- Henry Ford once said if he'd asked his customers what they wanted, they'd have opted for a faster horse. Similarly, Indigenous entrepreneurship may be slow to emerge simply because there are not sufficient models for entrepreneurs to mimic. Instead, ask 'What are Indigenous concepts of success?'
- Definitions of wealth vary across cultures; wealth must be viewed through an Indigenous lens.
- Practices of reciprocity vary between cultures. People may not pay back borrowed funds, because they define repayment differently. A more holistic 'pay it forward' approach in a community may be more likely to succeed than a series of individual, direct loans.
- Family members may believe loved ones will be damaged if they leave their home communities, because of their history and experience with residential schools. Those who choose to leave community for education may be admonished for doing so.
- Perceptions and prioritization of time as a measured influence on enterprise varies across cultures. Some people aren't prepared or willing to do 'nine to five' work.

# 3

## PART THREE:

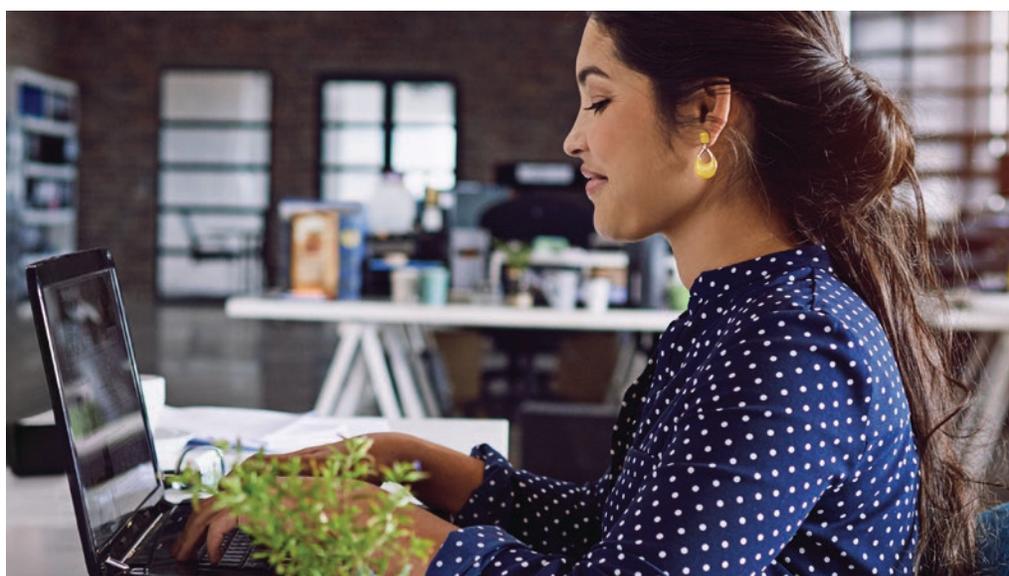
### Insights, Observations & Next Steps

We distilled the notes from our Dialogue sessions, identifying five themes that were common across responses to the original Discussion Paper and each of the breakout discussions. Each of these themes is framed here as an imperative or ‘call to action’, along with associated observations and possible next steps.

One key insight from the Dialogue was the absence in the Discussion Paper of any mention of **social procurement**. Increased encouragement and acceptance of ‘buy social’ programs in government and corporate sector purchasing departments is proving valuable for social entrepreneurs, and post-secondary institutions should consider including social criteria in their purchasing policies.

Another essential insight is the importance of choosing our jargon more carefully. In mainstream use, ‘entrepreneurship’ is deeply entangled with individualism, a ‘pioneering spirit’, ‘disruption’, and wealth accumulation, none of which is compatible with an Indigenous world view. Indeed, in some ways, **the jargon around entrepreneurship is colonial** and is therefore inherently antithetical to Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Instead, this work should be considered from an Indigenous perspective, and at the very least reframed as community or local economic development.

It's imperative we give careful consideration to the language we use. Entrepreneurship is rife with colonial aspirations and metaphors. Might 'economic development' offer a better framework? Or is a new vocabulary essential in an era of Reconciliation?



How can 'social entrepreneurship' be considered within an Indigenous world view? Ideas of 'wealth' and 'economy' must be redefined.

## Embrace Differing Realities

Indigenous ideas about business are very different. Definitions of 'entrepreneurship' and 'innovation' are sufficiently loaded with colonial metaphors and impenetrable jargon that simply may not be useful. While 'social innovation' is a marked improvement, a recurring pattern in academic writing and discourse is to overuse jargon. This is anchored in colonial culture, and is therefore inherently framed in a non-Indigenous reality. Language is important if engagement is a priority. Indigenous concepts of success must be central to post-secondary institutions' considerations.

Realities are also distinct on and off reserves. On reserve, the biggest barriers can often result from social malaise, addiction issues, and lateral violence. Each of these will affect how business are run, and so defining what is a 'good' enterprise or venture requires a different approach depending on rural or urban setting, and on- or off-reserve location.

A significant challenge for further study is how social entrepreneurship can be considered within an Indigenous world view. Ideas of 'wealth' and 'economy' must be redefined, as the current societal use of these words is grounded in individualistic and GDP-centric terms, respectively. These do not align with Indigenous perspectives. It's essential that post-secondary institutions engage curiously and generously, exploring the benefits of an Indigenous community-centric view that manifests through shared support and collaboration. The learning model is often held upside-down.

# 3

## **Remove Obstacles and Barriers**

The landscape of laws, rules and regulations must be changed, as fundamental blocks exist in social work and similarly in social enterprise. Public policy must embrace new approaches that re-Indigenize communities.

Post-secondary institutions can play a key role in this nation-building and nation-supporting work by engaging in community consultations, listening, turning relationships into partnerships, and engaging those partners through plain language. Definitions of ‘impact’ and success must be defined from Indigenous communities’ points of view.

## **Design for Distinct Learning Priorities**

Getting Indigenous youth to post-secondary education remains difficult. On reserve, as few as 40% of young adults have completed high school; this compares to 70% off-reserve, and closer to 80% among Métis communities.<sup>4</sup> And it’s a massive challenge to move from primary to secondary and then to post-secondary modes of learning. Moreover, the design of educational institutions is utterly non-Indigenous, and Indigenous teachers and ways of learning may not be respected.

Full time programs mean many people must choose between education or supporting their families. Learning hubs do exist, which allow people to learn in their evenings or on weekends. Elders’ skills and knowledge must be respected; so, too, must skills on the land. Yet, with rare exceptions, most post-secondary institutions do not yet offer land-based programming.

New models of education programming should be explored: take higher education to the students, rather than asking students to come to post-secondary institutions. Flip the mindset, building programming in partnership with Indigenous community leaders, rather than viewing them as a ‘market’ to be ‘targeted’—itself jargon that is rife with colonial metaphors and implications.

Begin by understanding that in communities, entrepreneurship is social. The challenge is to build robust and common infrastructure that is inclusive of multiple perspectives and experiences. Community (i.e. cohort) driven approaches to learning will accelerate chances of success, and the use of OCAP Principles in research will shift the learning perspective of the educators.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/low-graduation-rates-at-reserve-schools-put-aboriginals-in-jeopardy-report/article28427544/>

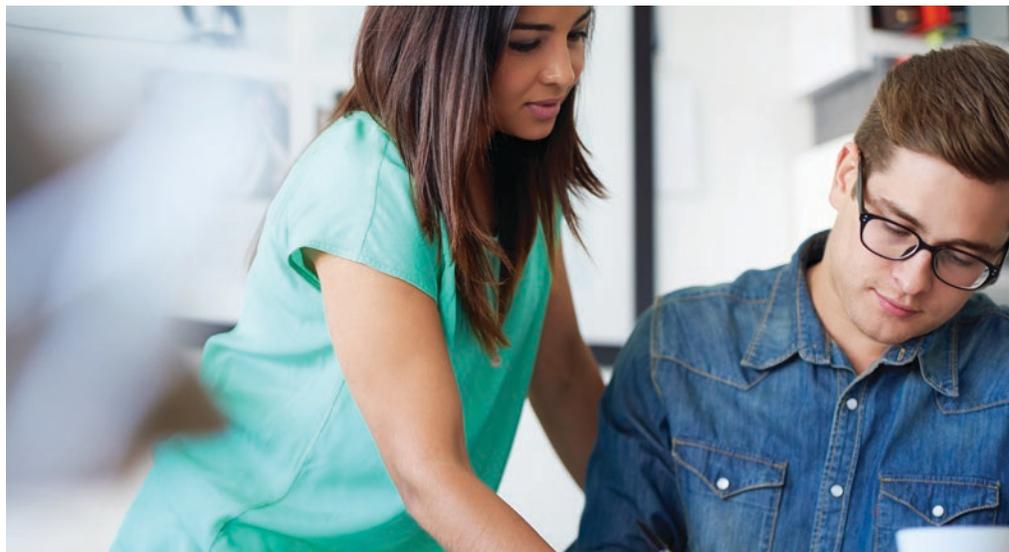
### **Distribute Stories of Success**

Successful social innovation projects and social enterprises are happening in many places, led by many different entrepreneurs and organizations. Mapping or at least identifying and sharing case studies about these success stories would be helpful in building communities' confidence in new approaches, and inspiring entrepreneurs to attempt new models.

The original intent of the Indigenous Innovation Summit—this Dialogue event was held the day before the 2016 Summit—was to highlight models that work and connect individuals and communities through shared learning and practices. Alliances between those who are already innovating, and those who see their solutions as viable for their own communities is essential for productive endeavours to disseminate and thrive.

While recognizing cultural differences is essential, it's also true that shared desires across cultures exist: the design to build and create, to realize potential value, and to make things better are common threads across all communities. Lowering barriers to success is equally about building new narratives of success, inspiring confidence and capacity to turn ideas into jobs.

In Indigenous communities, 'entrepreneurship' is social: community-driven approaches to learning will accelerate shared success.



For more information about this report, the [RECODE program](#), or the [J.W. McConnell Family Foundation](#), please contact Chad Lubelsky via [clubelsky@mccconnellfoundation.ca](mailto:clubelsky@mccconnellfoundation.ca).

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