Contextual impact on indigenous entrepreneurs around the world: geographic location, socio-cultural context and economic structure

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Lazaridis School of Business and Economics,
64 University Ave. W,
Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3C7, Canada
Email: ensign@wlu.ca

Abstract: The number of Aboriginal people in the world is greater than that of the USA and almost equal to that of the EU. Yet politically and economically, they are among the weakest. Entrepreneurship is viewed as a means of empowerment and wealth creation for Indigenous individuals and communities. This paper explores the impact that geographic embeddedness, indigenous cultural factors, and mainstream economic structures have to help or hinder starting and operating an Aboriginal business. A conceptual framework of these contextual factors was constructed as an analytical tool for a qualitative deductive examination of these dynamics in cases, studies, and reports of over 50 remote, rural and urban instances of Indigenous entrepreneurship in 12 countries. Findings strongly point to the interconnectedness of these contextual factors, which provide opportunities for greater leveraging of enterprise creation and development. A Western-Eurocentric perspective and focus on the dominant culture's business model cause the underutilisation of Aboriginal ways.

Keywords: indigenous entrepreneurs; Aboriginal businesses; embeddedness entrepreneurship; obstacles to indigenous business; indigenous culture; indigenous entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Biographical notes: Prescott C. Ensign is a Professor at the Lazaridis School of Business and Economics, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. His current research focuses on indigenous entrepreneurship innovation, contextualisation, and social benefit initiatives. He has published over 50 articles including in the *Thunderbird International Business Review*, *Strategic Management Journal*, *Sloan Management Review*, and *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*. His books include: *Settlements at the Edge: Remote Human Settlements in Developed Nations*; *Demography at the Edge: Remote Human Populations in Developed Nations* and Canadian editions of Timmons and Spinelli's *New Venture Creation*. He has received funding for research projects focused on ethnic and socio-economic issues of entrepreneurship in remote regions, the Canadian North, Nordic Europe and Australia. Current research funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada examines rural social enterprises and the impact of context/ecosystem on their growth and development.

1   Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore how three elements – geographic location, socio-cultural context, and economic structure – impact indigenous entrepreneurs. The crux is how these elements facilitate or impede what indigenous entrepreneurs are able to do in starting and developing a venture. Research on entrepreneurs has been preoccupied with either micro-level studies of personal traits and motivations or on macro-level studies of influence by contextual factors (Dana, 1995, 2000; Salamzadeh et al., 2014; Anderson and Gaddefors, 2016). Most early and Euro-western research centred on the characteristics and willingness of why a person became an entrepreneur or on viewing contextual factors as immaterial or static [Dana and Dana, (2005), p.81]. As Dana and Dumez (2015) note, the emerging scholarship of indigenous entrepreneurship – investigation of the ongoing activity of the indigenous entrepreneur and their enterprise – is primarily focused on the complexities of place-based socio-cultural and economic factors. This is why research on indigenous entrepreneurs and Aboriginal businesses often present evidence that differs from Euro-western theories and practices of entrepreneurship and why it is under explored (Jaim and Islam, 2018).

Indigenous, Aboriginal, first nations, Inuit, and native people comprise over 400 million strong and 5% of the world's population. Indigenous people inhabit over 40% of the world's countries and in total speak more than 4,000 languages, but also account for almost 20% of the world's financially poorest people (World Bank, 2022). Many have undergone profound hardship and destruction during centuries of colonialism. International bodies, agencies, and academics supply definitions for indigenous people but the people themselves argue against the adoption of a formal definition. They stress the need for flexibility as well as respect and the right for people to categorise themselves. Reflecting on this, Erica Daes, the former Chair of the United Nation's Working Group on Indigenous Populations, has stated: "Indigenous peoples have suffered from definitions imposed on them by others" [UN, (2013), p.6].

So then how do we assess an indigenous entrepreneur and their entrepreneurship? An entrepreneur is someone who has an idea and works to create a product or service that others will buy. Entrepreneurship refers to the ongoing business activity of an entrepreneur [Dana, (1995), pp.57–58]. Entrepreneurship has been identified as a means for self-empowerment, poverty reduction, survival, and economic development (Peredo et al., 2004; Hindle and Lansdowne, 2005; Croce, 2017). It is a mechanism for indigenous people to exercise some degree of control over their economic fate (Anderson et al., 2007). For many, entrepreneurship is the primary means of gaining income and financial freedom (Dana, 1995). An entrepreneur sees an opportunity and seizes it, taking a chance by investing personal time, energy and resources. If all goes well the entrepreneur experiences (financial) gain. As Henry et al. (2017, p.788) indicate, indigenous entrepreneurship has an 'emancipatory potential'. As it is often a team

involved in a venture, more than one person benefits from the accomplishments. As Anderson and Gaddefors (2016) indicate, indigenous entrepreneurs often give credit for success to others in their community even if they are not directly involved in the venture. The benefits of entrepreneurship can also be self-esteem and pride in one's accomplishments (Shahidullah and Islam, 2018).

2   Method

Our approach to context-specific indigenous entrepreneurship research is to explore and present findings from the viewpoint of indigenous persons themselves. Some might criticise this storytelling and testimonial approach. We feel strongly that their subjective words and perception of reality, place, and culture where they live are preferable to those of an outsider. In the social sciences the goal of gathering qualitative data on behavioural aspects of entrepreneurs, context of entrepreneurship and enterprise information is to analyse, interpret and explain phenomena in order to increase our understanding of indigenous entrepreneurship. It is critical that the research approach accurately portrays phenomena. This method is one that suggests causal relationships and has explanatory power sufficient to add to and build upon the existing body of knowledge related to indigenous entrepreneurship (Dana and Dana, 2005; Dana and Dumez, 2015; Groenland and Dana, 2020). The qualitative process used in this study is consistent with similar exploratory studies on indigenous entrepreneurship (Dana, 1995; Mason et al., 2009; Dana and Anderson, 2011; Austin and Garnett, 2018; Thakur and Ray, 2020).

The primary sources of data in this study are indigenous entrepreneurs themselves or published accounts of indigenous entrepreneurs. The present exploration views indigenous entrepreneurs as engaged in a process of ongoing activities to identify, evaluate, and exploit opportunities to create and sustain a business. Our qualitative approach includes a mix of indigenous narratives, historiographical or archival accounts, and case studies. Stratified non-random sampling was used in selecting the indigenous entrepreneurs for inclusion in this study. This provides a diverse global sample that would be lost if purely random sampling were used. Our learning journey includes over 50 examples of indigenous entrepreneurs and their Aboriginal businesses located in 12 countries and ten regions.

Based on a review of indigenous entrepreneurship literature, geographic, contextual, and structural differences are anticipated to be significant. Our conceptual framework was constructed from an interdisciplinary literature review. From the perspective of a theory building process – abstracting, generalising, relating, selecting, explaining, synthesising, and idealising – we concur with Weick (1995, p.389) that key discoveries lie in context. This is especially so when looking at Aboriginal businesses and indigenous entrepreneurs. Snow et al. (2016) refer to this methodological approach as 'alternative' data collection, analysis and presentation that is congruent with indigenous ways. While embarking on discovery, one must guard against intentionally or unintentionally allowing Eurocentric values and research methods to marginalise, disempower or simplistically conceptualise indigenous people and ways (Chilisa, 2012; Kovach, 2021).

Jaim and Islam (2018) note the preponderance of research efforts focus on western developed nations and non-Aboriginal small businesses. They view this as a decontextualisation of the phenomenon. Groenland and Dana (2020) agree that western

approaches should not shape the research when studying entrepreneurship of indigenous people. This is particularly so because there is a need to include indigenous holistic ways of knowing. Our qualitative research approach allows the capture and relay of actual experiences of these entrepreneurs. Selecting an observational approach provides the methodological flexibility to collect, analyse and present data more congruent with indigenous ways. It also helps to understand an indigenous entrepreneur's holistic interconnectedness with their physical, socio-cultural, cognitive, and spiritual world [Lavallée, (2009), p.23; Snow et al., 2016].

3 Conceptual framework

For years the concept and study of indigenous entrepreneurship was absent from the scholarly literature (Hindle et al., (2007), p.1].[1] Recently, there has been a surge in the number of empirical studies of indigenous entrepreneurs and their Aboriginal businesses (Dana et al., 2007; Foley, 2008; Mason et al., 2009; Dana and Anderson, 2011; Gallagher and Lawrence, 2012; Meis Mason et al., 2012; Khan, 2014; Shahidullah and Islam, 2018; Ensign, 2021). As the field develops, researchers suggest using conceptual approaches for understanding indigenous entrepreneurship (Peredo et al., 2004; Dana and Dumez, 2015; Croce, 2017; Tengeh et al., 2022).

Peredo et al. (2004, p.17) pose an important question in *Towards a Theory of Indigenous Entrepreneurship*:

> "Does indigenous entrepreneurship in different locations (within nations and around the world) show significantly similar and distinctive patterns of entrepreneurial features, and/or goal structures?"

Padilla-Meléndez et al. (2022) note the continued heterogeneity and fragmentation in the field of indigenous entrepreneurship. They draw attention to the need for greater specificity with regard to context, geographic area, socio-cultural issues, and economic structure when studying indigenous entrepreneurship at the micro level. There is also a need to advance theory building based on empirical results with integration of existing knowledge and praxis.

Indigenous contextual studies such as by Gallagher and Lawrence (2012), Anderson and Gaddefors (2016), Croce (2017) and Jaim and Islam (2018) provide a starting point for refining the primary elements in our framework. An entrepreneurial ecosystem is a lens to describe details in a spatial context with significant impact on entrepreneurs and their businesses (Isenberg, 2011; Mason and Brown, 2014; Malecki, 2018; Stam and van de Ven, 2021). The concept of an indigenous entrepreneurial ecosystem separate and distinct from mainstream and immigrant entrepreneurial ecosystem was introduced by Dell et al. (2017) and expanded on by Roundy et al. (2018). Mika et al. (2022, p.4) define an indigenous entrepreneurial ecosystem as:

> "A self-organized, adaptive and geographically and culturally bounded community that influence its indigenous people producing interactions resulting in indigenous enterprises forming and dissolving over time."

Mika et al. (2022, p.13) argue that the evolution from a rudimentary to a mature indigenous entrepreneurial ecosystem is driven by a community's socio-cultural context and the economic-political structure where the indigenous entrepreneur is embedded.

This recognises structural influences – government and legal; monetary and financial, and market and commerce – include non-indigenous influences.

Table 1 presents the working framework used in this study. It directs understanding to the primary elements – geographic location, socio-cultural context, and economic structure – impacting indigenous entrepreneurship. Elements used in this conceptual foundation are based on Spigel (2017), Croce (2017), Stam and van de Ven (2021), and Mika et al. (2022).

Table 1   Conceptual framework

Primary elements	Description	Attributes
Geographic location	Population density; proximity to others	Remote, rural, or urban
Socio-cultural context:		
Culture	Ethnic identity of group; ancestry and heritage	Unique customs and beliefs; language
Community and family	Social unit; home; membership boundaries	Similar attitudes, values and behaviour
Economic structure:		
Government and legal	System that exercises authority; system of regulations	Elected or appointed officials; courts, laws, enforcement, etc.
Monetary and financial	Structure of currency; system needed to transact business	Money; financial institutions (banks)
Market and commerce	Buying/selling goods; all activities/exchanges of goods	Opportunities; places to buy/sell
Support services	Organisations designed to provide entrepreneurship assistance	Investment capital and loans; entrepreneurial development (training, mentoring, etc.)

Questions for which answers are sought:

- How does geographic location impact an indigenous entrepreneur?

- How does socio-cultural context impact an indigenous entrepreneur?

- How does economic structure impact an indigenous entrepreneur?

- What impact do support services have on an indigenous entrepreneur?

Instances of indigenous entrepreneurship are drawn upon as we transect the globe to explore and appreciate the impact that these aforementioned elements have on the development and growth of Aboriginal businesses.

4   Geographic location

Geographic location is one of three primary elements that impact indigenous entrepreneurship. Missens et al. (2007, p.69) suggest research is needed to address to what extent population density affects outcome? We draw on Croce's (2017, p.901) classification of place-based indigenous entrepreneurship as remote, rural, and urban to

explore the impact of location. Croce's typology provides an understandable place-based metric for discussion and comparison purposes. The three different location-based manifestations of indigenous entrepreneurship suggest a continuum, from those in a *remote location*, entrepreneurs engaged in a traditional economic system, to those in a *rural location*, entrepreneurs attempting to bridge both worlds, to those in an *urban location*, indigenous entrepreneurs using hybrid models in a modern market-based economy (Gallagher and Lawrence, 2012). Viewing indigenous entrepreneurship overlain on a typology like this overcomes the notion that indigenous entrepreneurship only occurs among people in rural and remote regions (Gallagher and Lawrence, 2012). It forces us to open our eyes to indigenous entrepreneurs that reside in urban areas within nations like Canada, Australia, the USA and Nordic countries.

The following reference points provide a look at indigenous entrepreneurship in different locales. Our first example takes place in a *remote location: North Spirit Lake First Nation, Ontario, and Canada*. "To me, business is like hunting. It requires time, patience and capturing opportunities that present themselves". These words are from Darcy Kejick, entrepreneur and member of the North Spirit Lake First Nation in northern Ontario. It is a small Oji-Cree reserve 1,400 kilometres northwest from Toronto (North Spirit Lake First Nation, 2019). Darcy started a refuelling station in 2001 with his wife Susan Rae. They expanded it in 2007 to include groceries after winning a CA$15,000 business plan competition and receiving a small business loan through Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund, a non-profit Aboriginal financial institution.

In 2010, Darcy and Susan built a two-unit motel in their community. As Anderson and Gaddefors (2016) note, entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurial process are about family, team (extended family) and community. Darcy and Susan illustrate this concept especially for remote indigenous entrepreneurship where first – more often than not – entrepreneurship is a family or team effort. Second, in the broadest sense entrepreneurship is by and for the community. Finally, entrepreneurship can serve as a positive catalyst for community renewal and enhancement of indigenous values. Darcy Kejick's metaphor is noteworthy, 'to me, business is like hunting'. It not only speaks of the skills, values, and characters that Kejick sees as necessary to succeed as an indigenous entrepreneur, but it expresses an indigenous place-based view of remote life where hunting is imperative for survival. The hunter goes after prey, sometimes the hunt is successful, and at other times the prey escapes and the hunter's family and community go hungry. But an unsuccessful hunt or venture is only unsuccessful if this lesson is not transferred to the next situation (Austin and Garnett, 2018). If learning occurs, then even failure can be considered valuable experience. Perhaps, next time the hunt will be successful or venture will be made for a profit. As Kejick's words indicate and Croce's (2017) research reveals, culture, tradition, necessity, and community are vital for a remote indigenous entrepreneur.

The next example presents indigenous entrepreneurship in a *rural location: Little Grand Rapids First Nation, Manitoba, and Canada*. Oliver Owen founded Amik Aviation in 2004. He proclaims that being Aboriginal owned and operated has significant advantages. Amik Aviation is an airline with several small planes and staff of 20 providing a link to Northern communities. Owen is a leader and positive contributor to Little Grand Rapids First Nation in Manitoba. As an indigenous entrepreneur he bridges both indigenous and non-indigenous worlds. He is immersed in the world of aviation technology as well as strongly connected to the traditional land and culture of his First Nations people (Amik Airline, 2023). The triad of personal drive, community support and

spatial context enable Owen to create and sustain a thriving Aboriginal business. As suggested by Croce (2017, p.901), Owen fits the rural indigenous entrepreneur category with linkages to his indigenous social and business networks. The business model could be described as transitional. Although Owen's entrepreneurship is modern technology-based he continues to honour and integrate traditional values and culture as well as contribute to productive change. Owen views these changes as positive for himself, his enterprise and his people.

Our third example highlights an indigenous entrepreneur in *Nuuk, Greenland*. Inuk visual artist, writer and illustrator Maria Panínguak' Kjærulff lives in Nuuk, the capital of Greenland. In addition to being immensely talented, she is entrepreneurial and has chosen to make a positive contribution to her community and the planet. Kjærulff is passionate about what she does and has pursued education and training away from home. She looks for new challenges and opportunities to learn from others. She is globally aware and globally connected; her studies took her to Minnesota, Nova Scotia, and New York City. Her work is exhibited in Greenland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland, Canada, France and South Korea. Kjærulff has been featured in *First American Art Magazine* (FIRSTAMART, 2015). Since 2016 she has been a leader among a group of Inuit women artists as well as designed a stamp for Greenland's postal service. Kjærulff is an Inuk entrepreneur whose art forms express traditional concepts in new mixed media and innovative ways, some of which were reserved for Inuit males in earlier times. She is very much her own woman.

While Kjærulff has a strong sense of traditional values and community bonding, especially the sisterhood of Inuit artists, she pursues artistic opportunities and new approaches globally. She would fit Croce's (2017, p.901) category of urban indigenous entrepreneur. Her subject matter and media used are non-traditional suggesting a hybrid culture that overlay the present with the past. Part of her artistic work has an orientation toward Western markets and opportunities. The use of indigenous and mainstream venues demonstrates she is networked into both realms.

Another example centres on an indigenous entrepreneur who lives in an *urban location: Island of Maui, Hawaii, USA*. Hui Ku Maoli Ola, a nursery of plants native to Hawaii, provides evidence how geographic location, socio-culture context and economic structure are interconnected. Regarding government structure, in 1974 the US Native American Programs Act was amended to include Native Hawaiians. In 1978, Hawaii's State Constitutional Convention committed to the preservation and promotion of Native Hawaiian culture, history, and language. Regarding culture, these government actions increased the relevance of native Hawaiian issues in politics, education, the arts and environment. With respect to indigenous entrepreneurship, these developments made the culture of Kānaka Maoli (native Hawaiians) a medium of success, creating a new kind of business model (Hawaiian values and Western practices) as well as a reason for the emergence of Aboriginal businesses. While there have always been businesses owned by Kānaka Maoli, few were operated with a non-Western model. Today, a Native Hawaiian business model has become a means to support a greater mission – to preserve, promote and explain Hawaiian culture rather than just financial gain.

Native Hawaiians Matt Schirman and Rick Barboza harness an affinity for endemic Hawaiian flowers and shrubs to run a native plant nursery deep in the Haʻikū Valley. Native flora has always been a form for cultural practices. 'If you look at Hawaii's culture', co-owner Schirman says, "what makes us unique are Hawaii's plants". He points out that, for indigenous people around the world, cultural practices are remarkably

similar. Differences depend on plants locally available. 'And we have a whole range of endemic plants that are unique to Hawaii', he says. 'That's what sets us apart. Take something like nau (a native gardenia). No one else in the world has 'nau'. We use it to make a certain dye, also called 'nau'. And it is plants like this that have determined our culture over the centuries'. The fundamental model at Hui Ku Maoli Ola involves displaying to people this link between natural environment and culture. In the end, business partners Schirman and Barboza succeed because of their love and understanding of Hawaiian culture, not in spite of it. Hui Ku Maoli Ola is the supplier for the popular native plant section at Home Depot garden centres. This has been consumer's only reliable source for a variety of hard-to-find (even rare and endangered) Hawaiian plants. The big-box outlet was a critical step in the company's growth, providing the volume allowing the founders to expand from backyard hobbyists to commercial nursery (Hollier, 2009).

Notwithstanding the triumph of an enterprise such as Hui Ku Maoli Ola, there are still real and often intransigent conflicts between indigenous hybrid Western business models and traditional Hawaiian values. Even the idea of profit, the cornerstone of capitalism, runs against the grain for many Native Hawaiians. "Sometimes, the hardest thing is to charge people for what we do", says Schirman. "It just doesn't seem like something that you should charge for". This vortex of internal conflict is hardly surprising in a group whose fundamental motivation is not money. "Don't get me wrong", Schirman says, "we're trying to make a living – but to make a living so we can continue to do this, to get this stuff out as much as possible" (Hollier, 2009).

It is acknowledged that with respect to the impact of geographic location, differences persist – within country, region, community, or tribal boundaries. Location influences businesses but does not produce a uniform result. Context and structure influence the indigenous entrepreneurial ecosystem in a way specific to each geographic location (Singh and Ashraf, 2020). Indigenous people represent a wide variance in values, traditions and customs even within geographic areas [Dana, (2015), p.159]. As Croce (2017) notes, indigenous entrepreneurship also transitions over time due to internal and external contextual impact. Some changes result from forced assimilation, other changes are willingly accepted.

5 Socio-cultural context

Our conceptualisation includes the socio-cultural context of an indigenous entrepreneur as a primary element. This context consists of two categories: culture and community/family. The description and attributes for each is listed in the framework (Table 1). Each category is examined in detail and together with examples provides understanding of its respective impact on an indigenous entrepreneur. Two questions are asked: Are these the factors that have an outsized impact on indigenous entrepreneurs? Are these the unique factors that distinguish indigenous entrepreneurship from non-indigenous entrepreneurship?

5.1 Culture

Culture defines the unique customs, values, and worldview of a group of indigenous people living in a specific geographic location. It includes critical attributes that influence

indigenous entrepreneurship: ethnic identity; language; beliefs; social norms; attitudes toward natural resources; and world view (Tasnim et al., 2018). It is a learned way of life passed from generation to generation. In remote areas culture tends to be more traditional and static, in urban areas more modern and dynamic. Culture provides or refuses legitimation that supports or holds back an indigenous entrepreneur.

In this section the impact that culture has on indigenous people is shared. For example, Native Hawaiian businesses sometimes provoke division within the native Hawaiian community as there is real disagreement about what constitutes true Hawaiian culture. The idea of growth (relentless, insatiable), implicit in the Western capitalistic model, is a concept which aggravates many Native Hawaiians. This dissonance with and about culture is revealed by Rob Iopa, principal and founder of WCIT Architecture, who is renowned for designing culturally sensitive projects in Hawaii. Despite cultural mindfulness, he recognises inherent contradiction in what he does. "I do personally struggle with being in a profession that looks to build in Hawaii – where hospitality means oceanfront" (Hollier, 2009). The resulting friction between traditional use and off-island visitor use is often intractable. In the end, native Hawaiian business owners come to their own terms with the discord and strive for a personal and perhaps changing level of harmony. Sometimes it simply means passing up certain opportunities.

> "We've had occasions when the type of project, or its location, or the rationale behind the project just wasn't right for us. I don't say that they're bad projects or bad people; they just don't fit our values. We've made it known that cultural sensitivity is extremely important to us – and not just as window dressing. If that's not inherently important to the people that we're dealing with, we just won't take the project."

Indigenous entrepreneurs deal with criticism and culturally sensitive issues in their own way. As Matt Schirman co-owner of Hui Ku Maoli Ola' says: "everyone in life picks and chooses their battles. We get a lot of criticism because we do a lot of projects for the military and for large-scale development. I don't support development but what we're doing is we're putting native plants in the ground" (Hollier, 2009).

Following conscience and making choices guided by heritage and identity are manifest in a continual struggle for many Indigenous entrepreneurs, especially those operating businesses reflecting their culture and values. For these indigenous entrepreneurs the impact of globalisation is significant. As Osbaldo Rosas Chief of Native Community Marankiari Bajo in Peru states: "Yes we want development, but it has to be in accord with our own identity, because development has to proceed evenly along with our culture". According to Julie Kitka, President of the Alaska Federation of Natives: "You can modify the corporate structure and you can put indigenous values into the corporate structure and it isn't just rampant capitalism that strips out anything of value".

A case in point of how indigenous entrepreneurs bring change and adapt to move forward is the *Otavaleños of Ecuador*. Meisch (2002, p.1) describes this indigenous group in the Andes as notable for a variety of reasons. They are interesting 'because of their ability to participate in the market economy and selectively adopt features from outsiders that they deem useful such as technology while retaining a culturally unique dress and practices that are distinctly Otavalo'. Although they enjoy prosperity today, that was not always so. Their experience is similar to what many indigenous people have undergone – colonisation, oppression, neglect, and marginalisation – but are now thriving despite constraints or perhaps because of such obstacles. As Salomon (1973, p.464)

states: "Otavalos contradict the steamroller image of modernization, the assumption that traditional societies are vulnerable to the slightest touch of outside influence and wholly passive under its impact". The Otavaleños' entrepreneurial spirit is ingrained in their culture and it has catapulted them. Otavaleños business savvy, work ethic and commercial undertakings are an everyday way of life, culturally taught and reinforced as children learn from elders. Personal economic independence is a strongly held value and source of pride. Self-reliance contributes to their happiness. According to Meisch (2002, p.3):

> "The entrepreneurial ethic or spirit (among other values, some complementary, some competing) has helped Otavalos of both genders cope with globalization as artisans, merchants and small business owners launching commercial ventures in Otavalo and around the world."

Culture is both malleable and enduring. In essence, culture is what is in you together with what surrounds you. The same holds true for entrepreneurial opportunity (Dana and Dana, 2005). The Otavaleños in Ecuador demonstrate that indigenous people succeed as entrepreneurs despite experiencing racism and discrimination at home for being indigenous. The Otavelaños are globally identifiable and this brand offers much cachet. Being indigenous is a source of pride and an advantage for selling or being recognised as valuable. In many respects, efforts to go against the global tide are fruitless. So too would efforts to disavow one's own culture. Beyond being impossible, it would be a mistake.

The *Surma of Ethiopia* is an agrarian and pastoral indigenous people that inhabit southwestern Ethiopia that borders South Sudan. It is a physical environment of highlands and an area of instability, tension and at times violence between 12 indigenous ethnic tribes. Theirs is a nomadic culture avoiding central government rule, security police and taxation. Entrepreneurial activity centres around farming and herds of animals that graze (Abbink, 1997).

Unfortunately, the Surma are a prime example of what still exists around the world today – exploitation of marginalised indigenous people and the appropriation of their homeland and culture. In their case the area they call home is of economic interest to Ethiopian majority groups. They have been coerced into 'thumbprinting' agreements – giving up rights to land without compensation and rendering them illegal squatters subject to government removal. Another example is expropriation of Surma culture by outsiders – the very foundation on which nascent artisan crafts and Aboriginal businesses can be built.

The fashion label Choolips offered a line of clothing hand-printed by batikers in Ghana and tailored by Soko in Kenya with patterns inspired by the floral headdresses and geometric body paintings of the Surma tribe from Omo Valley. Choolips a London, UK-based womenswear label was founded by East German born Annegret Affolderbach in 2005. Soko is a business founded in 2009 by Joanna Maiden (originally from the UK). Soko facilities and Maiden are situated on the east coast of Kenya, about 1,200 km by crowfly or about 22–24 hours by vehicle from the Omo Valley. While Choolips/Soko brought Surma inspired artwork and culture to the world, it is unclear how much if any financial gain was received by the Surma. Notoriety and exposure are nice, but bypassing creativity of indigenous designers and craftspeople leaves them out of the supply chain and denies them economic benefits from the marketing of their cultural possessions.

Misappropriation of culture does not just happen in developing nations. Canada's first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation was September 30, 2021. Declared 'Orange

Shirt Day' it was a solemn occasion to honour First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people; it was a reminder of the stolen lives of indigenous children taken away from family and culture and forced into residential schools. Online retailers (Amazon, Etsy, etc.), big-box stores, and small non-indigenous retailers appropriated T-shirt artwork of indigenous designers for Orange Shirt Day. Non-aboriginal businesses mass-produced and profited from orange T-shirts that were then worn across Canada using designs taken and without attribution. Wearing an orange shirt, an act of solidarity – signifying emotions from sorrow to strength, unity, and defiance – was spoiled when it was learned that the intellectual property of many indigenous artists had been stolen and used without permission for commercial gain (Moosajee and Ensign, 2022).

Indigenous culture, ethnic identity and legacy can impact entrepreneurship for centuries even if Native people are no longer an officially certified group. Caribbean countries, especially those colonised by Spain such as Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, provide a telling example. There are physical DNA genetic traces among the people as well as an indigenous cultural legacy of symbols and patterns of human-land relationships that persist as a central part of daily life. Wilson's (1997, p.206) observations provide insight: 'On nearly every island, the modern inhabitants relate to the environment in ways they learned from the Native Caribbean Indians centuries ago'. Even on islands 'where none of the indigenous people have survived, the Indians are powerful symbols of Caribbean identity'. His perspective on culture is, 'had the archipelago been uninhabited in 1492, the modern Caribbean would be radically different in language, economy, political organisation, and social consciousness'.

> "The history of the Caribbean includes ruthless interethnic conflict, genocidal conquest, and brutal slavery. Yet cooperation within and among ethnic groups is essential. Calling upon a shared indigenous ancestry is a way of bypassing stratigraphic differences based on racial, historical, and socio-economic conditions." [Wilson, (1997), p.213]

From an economic perspective, present transactions in the Caribbean are dictated by inherited ideals, ideas and behaviour of early indigenous inhabitants and culture. Business in the Caribbean is remarkably amiable – at least by Western standards. Interpersonal relationships are paramount and economic activity takes place in a remarkably social sphere. The Caribbean subsistence economy, essentially taking what is necessary and no more, still holds in much present-day business activity. Indigenous economic practices of sustainability – focusing on resource balance – were centuries ahead of their time.

5.2   Community and family

Community is the social foundation of identity for indigenous people residing in a specific geographic location although the diaspora may extend place. It represents a common body of shared culture, attitudes, and goals.[2] The family is a social unit essential to the wellbeing of indigenous communities, their culture and survival. Family, however demarcated, has its own set of values and norms involving attitudes, boundaries and role. Traditionally, it falls on the family to teach community norms and acceptable behaviour. Taken together community and family impact much of what happens in a specific locale including the economic activities of indigenous entrepreneurs. Community and family serve as gatekeeping mechanisms for an indigenous entrepreneur starting, developing, or

expanding their enterprise business. In sports we hear the term 'home field advantage'. Do indigenous entrepreneurs experience a place-based advantage owing to relationships and ties to members of their community and family?

In a field-based study of entrepreneurs in *Iqaluit, capital of the Nunavut Territory in Arctic Canada* it was asked how they viewed their business contacts and social networks (Ensign and McCluskey, 2020). Specifically, the focus was on the persons with whom they regularly had business-related interaction. Described were two different groups of people: those who were Inuit and from their community or part of their own family; and those who were not from their community such as newcomers or immigrants even if they were also Inuit. The distinctions based primarily on community were so clear that when data were summarised, contacts were categorised as insiders and outsiders. There was a definite bias with regard to the persons they chose to work with or trust. It was reasoned that this bias was the result of: a history of colonial rule and the crown not honouring land treaty agreements; their location of living in a remote settlement with a majority population of their own Inuit people; non-Inuit newcomers and immigrants who controlled most of the commerce; and the Federal government action of dividing Nunavut from the Northwest Territories in 1999. This change gave the majority population of indigenous Inuit an opportunity to govern themselves.

Fieldwork suggests that the identity as Inuit has a significant impact on themselves as entrepreneurs and their businesses. This was clear during the process of: capital formation (social, human, financial, etc.); building and changing social networks; and gathering and disseminating information. In Iqaluit, where members of social networks tend to be homogenous, new opportunity identification and evaluation are especially hard. It was clear from the data that this was related to the fact that their contacts often have the same or redundant information (Ensign and McCluskey, 2020).

Research in Australia corroborates the central role that community and family share in the creation and growth of what has become a large social enterprise, the *Barunga Festival*. Barunga is a small Aboriginal community of less than 400 located approximately 80 kilometres southeast of Katherine, in *Northern Territory, Australia*. For thousands of years Aboriginal people have lived in Barunga and the region. This remote indigenous community, led by Bangardi Robert Lee of the Bagala clan of the Jawoyn people, initiated an Aboriginal sport and cultural festival in 1985. This three-day, alcohol and drug free, family-friendly annual Barunga Festival attracts over 4,000 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to a large camp-out. The Barunga Festival showcases Aboriginal Australian and Torres Strait Islander cultures and talent. It features a program of workshops, dancing ceremonies, traditional bush tucker-gathering, didgeridoo-making, basket weaving, sport events and musical performances by local and popular individuals and groups (Ensign, 2021).

The festival has been more than a stage for local, regional, rising indigenous musicians. A major goal of the festival and Aboriginal community leadership is to keep this component relevant, buttressing Aboriginal culture and support for community and family year round. One of the festival's strengths is the delivery of healthy lifestyle messages to the region's indigenous population. It provides an outlet for indigenous community building and transformation. For example, the Northern Territory Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation sought to reconnect separated families over the Festival weekend. Additional organisations took the opportunity to 'communicate healthy lifestyle messages in an open, celebratory setting'. This included the Department of

Health raising awareness of alcohol and drug abuse; Jobfind, a mobile dialysis bus; and family violence legal service [Ensign, (2021), p.4].

Sports are a lynchpin of the festival, reflecting the fact that participation in sport is an important aspect of everyday life in remote Aboriginal communities. Where job opportunities are limited in the bush, the chance to be involved in a positive organised activity is a powerful means by which individuals contribute to community identity and wellbeing. The football (soccer) program brings together teams from the region and allows young players to shine in front of a large audience. Basketball is keenly contested with teams from great distances coming to compete. Softball is a favourite sport at Barunga and a truly family affair with mothers, daughters and grandmothers on the same team [Ensign, (2021), p.5].

The festival had been going strong for many years. Things change, but much remains the same: content; venue; and consistent delivery of a stellar experience. Challenges also persist. This includes: attracting non-indigenous festival goers (customers); providing fresh Aboriginal talent each year to keep attendees engaged; and leadership at multiple levels to organise the community to facilitate the festival. Funding is a mix of grants, sponsorships, booth rentals, and attendee event tickets. As Mark Grose, co-founder of Aboriginal music label Skinnyfish Music and festival director for many years, stated:

> "If this turned into a festival where everything was geared to please whitefellas, the Aboriginal people would just walk away. Barunga is about black and white saying 'let's get together, have fun, watch some footy, buy some art.' Whitefellas come to experience community life and for us it's about saying 'We're not going to change that to suit you." [Ensign, (2021), p.3]

> "It's about local community people doing their thing and saying to the rest of the world, 'come and join us, come and be part of what we're doing and sit with us and talk to us as friends, not as some political or cultural exchange.' If no whitefellas came to Barunga Festival, it would still happen." [Ensign, (2021), p.5]

It is the indigenous community and family that teaches and enforces roles and boundaries regarding gender. As Istiqomah and Adawiyah (2018) indicate, gender is a boundary that must be crossed by indigenous female entrepreneurs. There is proof that Aboriginal entrepreneurship for men and women differs by country (Brizinski and Jaine, 1994). For example, indigenous women in *Ghana*, like those in Canada, often occupy a particular position in the family hierarchy.

> "The Ghanaian traditional society like most African societies does not often perceive indigenous women as powerful and influential business leaders because of their low level of education and low-societal status compared to their male counterparts. Women are expected to be submissive, docile and supportive of males instead of taking lead roles. However, with these women entrepreneurs' strong personality traits, such as confidence, determination, and high need for achievement, coupled with hard work, they have been able to prove themselves capable… indigenous women in Africa are taking their economic future into their own hands by starting their own enterprises." [Dzisi, (2008), p.262]

Based upon fieldwork *Canadian Aboriginal women* frequently hold prominent roles in enterprises. Among the indigenous population, it is regularly observed that women adapt well; women of all ages are open to new experiences, and young females generally surpass males in education attainment. It is indigenous women who are moving forward

with distinction and excelling in law school, politics, and business (McComber and Partridge, 2012). For example, Inuk entrepreneur Elisapee Sheutiapik owns a coffee shop and catering business. She was elected mayor of Iqaluit, capital of Nunavut Territory, three times. Her successor as mayor was Madeleine Redfern Esq. who has been involved in Aboriginal businesses. She also had the distinction of being the first Inuk offered a clerkship at the Supreme Court of Canada.

6 Economic structure

The conceptual framework put forth includes the economic structure facing an indigenous entrepreneur as one of the three primary elements (see Table 1). *Economic* describes the institutions included in this element: government and legal; monetary and financial; market and commerce; and support services. *Structure* is used to describe the way in which economic activities are organised and created. Essentially, economic structure refers to the 'hard skeleton' that includes the important functions and activities that exist to support or stifle indigenous entrepreneurship. The description and attributes for each of these is found in the framework (see Table 1). Each of the four categories is examined separately. Examples in each section are used to understand the impact on an indigenous entrepreneur and their enterprise.

6.1 Government and legal

Government is the structure or system that exercises authority over a nation, region, or community where people live and conduct activity. It is designed to establish, administer, and regulate the behaviour of citizens. The primary goal of government is to insure wellbeing of its population. This can include providing infrastructure, education and health care facilities, etc. Government agencies and administrators that exercise authority to carry out the functions of government derive their power and control in various ways, from military dictatorships to direct election by the subjects of the country. In democratic societies it means that government is 'of the people, by the people and for the people'.

Part of government's function is to create and enforce the legal structure. Beyond enacting, government interprets laws. Laws and justice can range from equitable, just, and unbiased to inequitable, unjust, and biased. Government and legal structures at the national, regional and community level have bearing on indigenous entrepreneurs and their commercial ventures.

In too many parts of the world indigenous people have been greatly disadvantaged in their ability to generate and accumulate wealth. Racially discriminatory practices, corrupt officials and dictatorships make it difficult for indigenous people to own and operate a business. Lack of property rights poses a barrier for indigenous entrepreneurs and their enterprises. Wealth accumulation happens if government officials observe just and equitable laws and property rights reform takes place. In those places that make the transition much can be accomplished.

Indigenous people of Peru provide an example of how government and legal structures impact indigenous entrepreneurs. Tribes often operate collectively within the indigenous population of Peru. This organising structure is similar to that of tribes in Alaska or Canada. Beyond that government layer, individuals operate autonomously (Institute for Liberty and Democracy, 2009). The indigenous people of Peru also provide

an example of the importance of a legal structure. This includes proper title to land and recognised business rights for indigenous people. They were stigmatised and held almost no business credibility. Without title to 'their land' they were unable to secure a bank loan for their business. They were even isolated from commerce and trade with other indigenous groups and the rest of Peru. The fact that native title to land co-mingled private and communal assets often led to conflict with other native communities and non-indigenous commercial interests (e.g., mining and timber companies).

The first legal recognition of land rights for Peru's Amazonian Indigenous peoples was passed in 1974 with reform continuing to the present. Over the decades 1.2 million families have received land titles and 380,000 enterprises became legitimate. Beginning in the 1980s, the Peruvian Government passed a series of laws that promoted development, agriculture and colonisation of forested land in the Amazon. Unfortunately, resource exploitation efforts were stepped up in the 1990s and 2000s and interpretations revised unfavourably for Peru's Amazonian Indigenous people. Over the years different government agencies in charge of land titling meant that with each change the physical transfer of documents took place. Many were lost during the transitions, slowing the titling process. This was not just legal reform but an indication that the power wielded by politicians was strong even when laws existed (Institute for Liberty and Democracy, 2009).

By 2016 things looked up: 1,365 Amazonian communities obtained title to more than 12 million hectares of land; and 644 claims, totalling nearly 5.8 million hectares, were pending. As an alternative to individual community titles, indigenous organisations had won the designation of 2.8 million hectares of reserves to protect semi-nomadic groups that shun contact with the outside world and another 2.2 million hectares of 'communal reserves' in protected areas encompassing various communities (Fraser, 2017).

Africa showcases how important government and legal structures are for business endeavours. In *many parts of Africa* indigenous people must survive without the requisite infrastructures expected from government, e.g., roads, health, education and especially assurances about safety. Without such structures longstanding feuds among tribal entities across much of Africa materialise. Such disagreements are attributable to the inability for commerce and indigenous entrepreneurship to advance. It is hard for economic activity to coalesce in such regions: Uganda has 21 indigenous groups, Ethiopia has 30 indigenous groups, and Zambia has 70 indigenous groups. When so much time is devoted to political/military unrest, civil strife and survival, little economic progress can be made. In many instances perilous economic conditions persist from generation to generation. It is only through tenacity that individuals, families, and villages are able to exist and excel (Mavhunga, 2014).

Indigenous entrepreneurs with supportive government and legal structure at the national, regional and community levels see more opportunities. The *Canadian Province of British Columbia* with over 200,000 indigenous people including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit is a positive reminder. First Nations people have lived on the land now known as British Columbia for over 10,000 years. They live in 203 different communities and speak more than 30 different First Nations languages with nearly 60 different dialects. British Columbia is home to the second largest number of indigenous entrepreneurs in Canada. Over 2,000 indigenous-owned businesses are located across the province. The number of indigenous entrepreneurs has grown by more than 20% since 2011, in part due to the provincial government's indigenous small business resources program that

supports indigenous entrepreneurs in all aspects of business start-up and growth (Province of British Columbia, n.d.).

In November 2019 the province introduced a legal structure to move this effort forward, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act). It was the first province in Canada and one of the first jurisdictions in the world to pass such a law. The Declaration Act mandates that British Columbia, in consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples, take all measures necessary to bring provincial laws into alignment with the Declaration Act. It creates a pathway for reconciliation and provides a clear, transparent process for how the Province and indigenous governments should work together for the benefit of all stakeholders. Engaging collaboratively with indigenous peoples helps to: support good conditions for de-risking investment; create certainty and clarity for projects; and advance meaningful societal outcomes for all.

The province also partners with indigenous peoples and organisations on a variety of programs and services to improve socio-economic conditions and outcomes in indigenous communities. These programs and services seek to facilitate indigenous self-determination through: preservation and promotion of indigenous languages, cultures and heritage; advancement of meaningful economic development and business opportunities; and enhancement of indigenous government fiscal capacities (Province of British Columbia, n.d.).

An example of this partnering is the 800-member Vancouver Island-based *Wei Wai Kum First Nation*. With the assistance and support of Coast Opportunity Funds the Wei Wai Kum First Nation was able to expand its community-owned tourism business, the Thunderbird RV Park and Cottage Resort at Campbell River, by adding four luxury cottages available for daily or weekly rentals plus an additional 18 fully serviced RV sites. These jobs were especially valued by Wei Wai Kum members: they enable people to work and live on the reserve, readily access extended family and all of the social supports this provides; and be part of a workplace where Wei Wai Kum culture is visibly present and celebrated (Coast Funds, 2017).

6.2 Monetary and financial

A nation's monetary system and financial institutions provide critical structural elements to conduct and transact business. The type of money a nation recognises as legal tender can consist of: commodity-based money with intrinsic value (gold, silver); representative money (bank issued notes backed by physical assets); fiat money (central bank or government issued legal tender with no intrinsic value); or crypto currency (digital currency recognised as legal tender). In a developed country the amount of money includes all physically circulating currency and coins plus demand deposits, savings deposits and money market fund deposits. Together this money held by financial institutions (including banks, brokers and cooperatives) is far greater than currency in circulation.

An adequate supply of money in circulation and held by local institutions can be problematic for indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses in remote or rural locations. The other problem entrepreneur's encounter is related to the issue of financial capital – their own funds (cash) or capital assets (land or home) that can be used as collateral to obtain a loan. In rural and sparsely populated areas like that of the *Surma of Ethiopia*, the limited amount of money in circulation encourages barter transactions which in turn hold Aboriginal commercial activities at a subsistence level. Indigenous people living in urban

ghettos and shanty towns may encounter similar challenges due to restricted access to money in circulation as well as credit and loans. From an overall perspective, availability of money decreases along the spatial location continuum from urban to rural to remote. In rural and remote areas indigenous entrepreneurs often rely on cooperatives, micro-loans, projects initiated with support from NGOs and financial assistance from government (Mika et al., 2022).

People and communities around the world embrace community-driven entrepreneurship (Chhabra et al., 2021) including cooperatives. The cooperative business model is a collective source of financing (access to capital by pooling resources) based on membership or ownership. In rural and remote indigenous communities, cooperatives were often the first locally-owned indigenous enterprise. Based on observation in the field, *cooperatives enjoy a long history of success in Canada*. The Canadian Cooperative Association identified 123 indigenous cooperatives in Canada in 2012 (White, 2018). The report estimated there were 24,000 members in these cooperatives with CA$250 million in sales. For example, today's indigenous owned Arctic Co-operatives Limited (ACL) began in 1965 as Canadian Arctic Producers a group of 12 art producer coops. In 1979, it restructured as a cooperative of coops and was renamed Canadian Arctic Producers Co-operative Limited as the art marketing arm of a number of Arctic Co-ops (ACL, 2022). ACL is owned and operated by 32-member cooperatives in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Yukon. Profit from the sale of member-produced art including stone sculptures, moccasins, wall hangings and limited-edition prints is returned to co-op members. ACL partners with clients to create exhibitions showcasing Inuit art in their communities. Strengthening relationships within the global community of Inuit art galleries, promoters, and enthusiasts, ACL is blazing a path in the worldwide recognition of Inuit art (ACL, 2022).

Positive aspects of the cooperative business model for indigenous people in Canada is perhaps best expressed by the Northern Nations Cooperative, a federally chartered Cooperative established in 2019 under the Canada Cooperatives Act (Northern Nations, 2023).

> "Northern Nations is a 100% indigenous member owned cooperative that supports the goals of Canada's indigenous leaders to achieve economic equity in Canada. The cooperative business model was chosen because it expresses our root belief that the collective is much stronger than the individual. This cooperative structure allows all members of indigenous communities to directly benefit from the programs Northern Nations is now putting in place."

> "True economic equity for Canada's indigenous people can only be realized through increased access to capital, business ownership, entrepreneurship, as well as capacity and skills development. Northern Nations' mission is therefore focused on economic prosperity for its members through profitable business ownership, participation in major resource projects and by providing multi-generational dividend distribution to its members."

The next exemplar focuses on issues that impact indigenous communities and families. In 1990 the Australian government established Indigenous Business Australia to serve, partner and invest with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to dispense home loans, small business development loans, specialised joint ventures and investment opportunities. It approved 343 business finance packages worth A$48 million in the period from July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019 (Indigenous Businesses Australia, 2019).

Although money is a great starting point it is insufficient by itself to guarantee a positive outcome for an indigenous entrepreneur and their enterprise.

This study began with the question: What major factors have impact on indigenous entrepreneurs around the world? Based on prior research the conceptual framework includes three primary elements: geographic location; socio-cultural context; and economic structure. Support services should be included in the framework alongside economic structure. As Thakur and Ray (2020) state, funding and support programs help indigenous entrepreneurs enter markets to seize opportunities. Some of the public and private organisations extending financial assistance to indigenous entrepreneurs are included here.

At the national level, the US Department of the Treasury administers the Native American Community Development Financial Institutions Fund to direct affordable financing and related services to populations that lack access to credit, capital and financial services. The aim is to help financially distressed indigenous communities. Indigenous peoples similarly have stepped forward to provide aid. For example, at the state level, California has over 100 federally recognised tribes and an Aboriginal population of 723,000. In 1969, American Indian community leaders believed many indigenous problems could be addressed through improved economic conditions. Their combined efforts started a grass roots economic development organisation originally concentrated on aiding urban American Indians in California. The organisation evolved into what is today known as the National Centre for American Indian Enterprise Development. It claims to be the largest and longest standing American Indian economic and business development organisation in the USA. Although it is not the only organisation in existence in the USA it boasts a network of 31,000 contacts and annual procurement for clients of half a billion dollars (NCAIED, n.d.).

On a regional level the Northwest Arctic Native Association (NANA) Regional Corporation is a multi-billion dollar holding company. It was born out of the largest land claim deal between the US federal government and Alaskan indigenous people. NANA is one of 13 Alaska Native Regional Corporations. These for-profit entities have a portfolio of investments and pay dividends to their indigenous shareholders. These regional corporations own subsurface land rights which turn out to be lucrative assets to control. Outside of indigenous regional development corporations, the state of Alaska controls all claims and landowners are prohibited from owning subsurface rights. NANA expanded to a global scale with operations across the USA, Middle East, South Pacific, Arctic, Europe, and Australia (NANA, n.d.).

Do such focused financial forms of assistance impact indigenous entrepreneurship? In 2016 the number of American Indian and Alaska Native owned ventures was 272,919; the number of Native Hawaiian-owned and Other Pacific Islander-owned ventures was 54,749 (United States Census Bureau, 2016). As Tom Mesenbourg, Census Bureau deputy director, commented: "It's important to look at the progress of these businesses owned by individual American Indians and Alaska Natives to ensure they have access to the same entrepreneurial opportunities as other groups" (United States Census Bureau, 2011a). Mesenbourg went on to say enterprises owned by Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders 'continue to grow both in number and in sales at rates that are faster than national rates for all businesses' (United States Census Bureau, 2011b).

Regardless of the availability and extent of public and private financial assistance, favourable results still depend on the initiative of an individual entrepreneur or team. Immersed in their own place-based indigenous entrepreneurial ecosystems, indigenous

entrepreneurs must always be ready to grab available opportunities (Gallagher and Selman, 2015). Three examples are enlisted showing monetary and financial structure can enhance or limit indigenous entrepreneurship. Money (capital) alone does not produce success for indigenous entrepreneurship in a free market economy. It must be paired with non-monetary resources – work ethic, skill, reputation and social network (Light and Dana, 2020).

The importance of a nascent entrepreneur's drive and enthusiasm over their business helps to offset a lack of financial assistance. This is shown in Obamuyi's (2017) quantitative study that examined how age and financing affect expectations for growth of entrepreneurs in *Sub-Saharan Africa* (Angola, Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia). The sample of 12,853 entrepreneurs involved in starting a business was surveyed in 2012 and 2014 for the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. From Obamuyi's (2017) study relevant to this paper are: the ten-country sample likely included indigenous entrepreneurs; and the youngest entrepreneurs (ages 18–24) had less financing but higher expectations for growth in their enterprises. On financing, Obamuyi (2017, p.448) concludes: "these findings indicate that a policy of providing more financing for the very young entrepreneurs will lead to more expansion and job-growth".

Istiqomah and Adawiyah's (2018) study of women in rural *Indonesia* confirms the importance of socio-cultural context to group entrepreneurship. Based on community and family ties, a group of women banded together to foster entrepreneurship in the village of Papringan in Banyumas District, Central Java. Collectively, female teams appeal to economic development planners, donors and financial institutions for assistance. The Bank of Indonesia and village authorities provide consultation, training, supplies, space, and marketing opportunities. Individually each woman might try to start or keep a business from dying. Together they are able to accomplish so much more. The village of Papringan women's business group created a gender-focused entrepreneurial ecosystem. As the period of external assistance and supervision came to an end, Istiqomah and Adawiyah (2018, p.330) state: "the mission of the group should be clearly defined whether it serves as a business entity or a business incubator for villagers who want to learn to be entrepreneurs".

Bawakyillenuo and Agbelie's (2017, p.448) research on gender dynamics among young entrepreneurs in *Ghana* stresses the need for assistance, especially for nascent entrepreneurs. Their findings note that: while controlling for gender roles, young female entrepreneurs relative to their male counterparts have an increasing probability of trading from home rather than from an organised market.

6.3   *Market and commerce*

The market is the structure or system by which buyers and sellers interact to exchange goods, services, or information. While a market is not a purely physical location, proximity is important as the prices obtained in one part of the market, say for a tortilla affect the prices paid for a tortilla in another part of the market. In this scenario, the market for tortillas would be local while the market for 100 tons of ground corn would be regional or national. The price of goods and services is set based on how the market operates: competitive forces of supply and demand (free market economy); government control of supply and pricing (command economy); or a single or small number of sellers (monopolistic market). Market structure refers to the total of all buyers and sellers of a

specific commodity or service. It includes the procedures, social relations and infrastructure that enable buyers and sellers to engage in exchanges.

Commerce can be viewed as an aggregate of all the goods, services and information market-type activities. It is a metric for gauging a nation's or indigenous people's economic income and wealth. This is because commerce, in addition to satisfying the consumer needs and wants, has other benefits like the creation of jobs and increased standard of living. Commerce that occurs at a local level is important because it helps to satisfy the wants and needs of people. Commerce can also be done on a large scale. Several cases illustrate the problems that an indigenous entrepreneur faces in trying to sell a product that is new to the market.

Access to markets and opportunities is problematic for all entrepreneurs but especially so for indigenous entrepreneurs. Simon's (2004) study of Aboriginal entrepreneurs in Taiwan provides an example of the challenges of market entry for an *Austronesian Taiwanese* woman who introduced traditional Aboriginal items to an urban market. Taiwan is a densely populated island with an Aboriginal people who have experienced military conflict with colonising powers (British, Japanese, and Chinese), economic integration for survival and government policies aimed at assimilation of the people and dissipation of their culture. Indigenous mountain communities deprived of their former subsistence activities were forced to learn new forms of economic behaviour. As they came in contact with urban development and globalisation some turned to opening a business for themselves [Simon, (2004, p.95].

This Austronesian woman used a cousin who was an entrepreneur as her role model. In an effort to revive ethnic culture her cousin taught her how to make traditional-style clothing. Her market efforts ran into problems. Although the Austronesian clothing was both beautiful and useful her initial efforts failed. When she talked with her husband he asked: "How can you expect other people to accept the traditional style when you won't even wear it to work yourself?" Her response was that she was embarrassed to set up a vending stall and dress differently than the other people in the market. Another problem was that when people looked at her, they doubted that she was Aboriginal, her face was too white. They would ask, "How dare you sell these things?" When she tried to rent vending stalls to sell her clothing owners were reluctant to do business with someone Aboriginal. When they finally did they would demand more rent per day for a stall (NT$2,000) compared to what others paid (NT$1,500). She was familiar with this kind of discrimination:

> "When I was little up in the mountains we too discriminated and demand cash from someone from the outside. In the mountains the world is much smaller and people don't think about how to go out into the world and make a career. How did I learn to do that? I went out and experimented." [Simon, (2004), p.102]

Simon then postulates: Will the Austronesian Taiwanese people and their culture survive? One of the threats they face is the import of 'Aboriginal crafts' from mainland China because few of the Aboriginal's on Taiwan know or want to learn how to hand make these products. As the Austronesian woman entrepreneur sadly notes:

> "That is what frightens me the most since it strikes at my own people. If we want to survive, we can't follow our own traditions. We have to order everything from abroad. Then, without realizing it, we lose something." [Simon, (2004), p.103]

Hassan et al. (2017, p.444) has a response to issues raised in this example. Many societies have a disparaging perception of entrepreneurs engaged in handicraft items because they are normally associated with women. Asking, is this about discrimination against women in general or discrimination against them as entrepreneurs?

Accessing markets and responding to new opportunities is considered to be a path for all indigenous entrepreneurs. But not all indigenous entrepreneurs who are exposed to 21st century culture and a monetary economic system buy into or embrace capitalistic values and a free market economy. Some resist and choose to follow values and practices of their Aboriginal culture even in defiance of market expectations. These indigenous entrepreneurs would do whatever they do even in the absence of customers. Many indigenous artists refuse to conform to mainstream consumer wishes. In Nunavut, Canada, we saw examples of Inuit stone carvers (many youth) who were following their own whims in artistic creations. Young carvers transform stone into beautiful images from their own imagination. Unfortunately, the souvenir market might be only interested in purchasing stone carvings of a dancing polar bear. If financial gains are discounted or monetary profits are not a priority, the artist continues crafting what they wish. If the artist bows to the expectations of the tourist, financial gain is realised but at a cost to the indigenous artist and culture.

Ratten and Dana (2015, p.265) observe: "*indigenous people in Australia* are entrepreneurial by nature because of their ability to use their cultural heritage to create innovative solutions". Creativity and innovation become necessary attributes for a hunter-gatherer traditional subsistence lifestyle as well as for an entrepreneur. Ideas and innovation can provide competitive advantage with regard to markets and opportunities. An indigenous entrepreneur may introduce a product that is well received by customers and disrupts the product offerings of incumbent indigenous entrepreneurs. But not all innovations are well received. Ideas fail when the customer does not perceive value in what is being offered.

Hawaii's indigenous communities possess tremendous entrepreneurial energy, unique cultural assets, and talented leaders of commerce in response to markets and opportunities. Native Hawaiians are using these assets to craft new and innovative answers to the question: can culture serve as a foundation for indigenous economic development? The emergence of a robust market structure on the islands includes individualism and maximising profits which may be at odds with traditional views of communal ownership rather than private property. The Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement cites three factors converging to reposition Native culture in economic development: non-native leaders recognising the importance of Native Hawaiian culture to Hawaii's market economy; native Hawaiians becoming increasingly entrepreneurial; and Native Hawaiians pioneering models that blend culture and commerce in new ways to create new opportunities (CNHA, 2023). The convergence of indigenous and Western business models is finding support among Native Hawaiian communities and families. Based on preliminary data gathered during the COVID-19 pandemic, indigenous social entrepreneurs and cooperatives have also begun to buy into this transitional business model.

The *Nenets of Arctic Russia* are an example of place-based embeddedness, a strong socio-cultural heritage and traditional indigenous subsistence economy. They are an indigenous people of Siberia's Yamal peninsula, numbering over 35,000. Their lifestyle is rooted in nomadic reindeer herding which is at the heart of the Nenets culture and identity. In 1999 the Russian Federation's legislation recognised indigenous peoples as

those living in the territories of their traditional habitat and preserving their traditional way of life, nature management, and crafts.

Gladun et al. (2021) suggest that an indigenous subsistence economy is a keeper and transmitter of social norms and culture essential for indigenous communities. With variation, indigenous economies change over time but most still preserve the underpinning principles and characteristics of subsistence. Over the years the Russian federal government has made a paternalistic effort to preserve traditional culture of the Nenets and the sustainability of reindeer herding communities. Because the Nenets live in a remote area where the market supply of reindeer meat far exceeds household consumption, they needed refrigerated production facilities and a transportation system to move product to market. Gladun et al. (2021) found that the Nenets needed a very compartmentalised model for the production and distribution of goods and services in order to respond to external factors and groups. Gladun et al. (2021) also saw that the various subsidies, equipment and training led to the commercialisation of indigenous culture.

The *Saami people of the Arctic in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia* (Laplanders) have also relied on their heritage livelihoods. This includes coastal fishing, fur trapping, sheep herding, and semi-nomadic reindeer herding. The onslaught of oil exploration, mining, logging, hydro-electric power projects and climate change are now threatening their traditional lifestyle and cultural means of livelihood. Although commercial development and tourism offer some economic promise the Saami are being forced to respond and adapt. Some Saami are relocating to find work elsewhere with the hope of one day returning to their homeland (Dana and Remes, 2007). Saami out of economic necessity or who prefer their traditional lifestyle have stayed, doing whatever it takes to survive. Some have become entrepreneurs by starting a small business. This has included making key chains and bottle-openers out of antlers. Based on an interview with a Saami artist, Dana and Remes (2007, p.295) record this contention:

> "Prices for his products were quite high and he explained his rationale. The burl he finds in the forest was once part of a tree that may have lived in the forest for over a hundred years. If he sells his products at low prices, he most certainly would sell many. However, this would send a message that natural materials in Lapland are not valuable resources and his homeland would be ruined very quickly by (his interpretation of greed in) western culture."

As commerce increases and markets develop in proximity to indigenous peoples, benevolent and concerned non-indigenous governments and others rush to contribute. As Beach (1993, p.27) indicates: this may give an indigenous people a future and comfortable life but, in the process, deconstruct indigenous life, reshape culture and identity. Crepelle (2021, pp.245–246) suggests that the opposite, an extreme hands-off stance, is to keep indigenous people forever trapped in time. Indigenous people, individuals, clans, tribes and nations, need the sovereignty and freedom of self-determination. They need to consider if and how to meet modernity. This may include designing and selecting support services deemed important for their manner of entrepreneurship.

6.4 Support services

Indigenous entrepreneurs receive training, mentoring and encouragement from many sources. These forms of support impact the spread and efficacy of indigenous

entrepreneurship and commerce. Support comes from Aboriginal organisations and communities as well as from non-Aboriginal national, regional and local government agencies, NGOs, and private organisations.

In the cases presented, the process of starting, developing and running a business was often enhanced with access to support services. This includes helping with development from idea stage to scaling an Aboriginal business. Delivery of these skills, knowledge and relational-based resources can be as basic as a family or community member serving as a role model and coach, as in the case of the *Austronesian Taiwanese* woman. We also saw how women in rural *Indonesia* formed a business group for mutual support and encouraged other women to launch ventures. Support services can include a community engaging in capacity and Native Nation building programs like those reported by the Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group (2021). It is important that this be an ongoing intentional process of affirming the legal, political, and social structures needed to assure the realisation of indigenous core cultural values and successful pursuit of community-determined goals.

On a global scale, the Indigenous Leadership Development Institute, a non-profit organisation located in Manitoba Canada, was established in 2000 to build leadership capacity in indigenous people. In 2010 the Institute launched the World Indigenous Business Forum (WIBF) which holds an annual meeting to provide a 'learning experience and opportunity to network, develop proactive partnerships and form strategic alliances with other global indigenous leaders'. Realising that indigenous businesspeople are often isolated in their communities, limited in their potential to grow, and dependent on external providers and intermediaries, the WIBF created an online support service to connect, inspire, and mobilise organisations and entrepreneurs in the sustainable development of Aboriginal businesses through the exchange of ideas, generation of proposals, creation of partnerships and bringing investment to communities, entrepreneurs and organisations (WIBF, n.d.).

At the national level, the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) was founded in 1984 by business and community leaders to build bridges between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, business and communities. It is a membership driven organisation (CA$ 350/year for indigenous business owners with 20 or fewer employees and CA$ 1,000 for those with over 20 employees). CCAB offers diverse programming, training, network building and research-based policy initiatives. Its current focus is on increasing indigenous entrepreneurship participation in supply chain procurement. This area received renewed focus in 2018 when the federal government announced a 5% procurement target for indigenous businesses and greater participation in the national supply chain. In 2021, a team from CCAB's Research and Public Policy Department produced an extensive report that looked at how the Government of Canada might increase its secondary procurement from indigenous businesses (CCAB, 2021). The government's decisions related to procurement were designed to promote better economic reconciliation. Another organisation, the Native American Contractors Association, also promotes the benefits of using Native-owned firms offering high quality products and services to the US federal government.

At the state level, the California Indian Manpower Consortium was created as a non-profit corporation in 1978. Its purpose is to assist in the social welfare, education and economic advancement of its member who are from federally-recognised American Indian tribes, groups, and organisations as well as other Native Americans living in its service area. Principle funding for the various support services to Native communities is

from the federal government. The consortium offers training in entrepreneurial planning and development for unemployed, underemployed or low-income Native Americans. It is designed to help them develop a business plan to start a venture or expand an existing enterprise. Graduates of the program are eligible to obtain loans from the California Native Entrepreneurs Opportunity Fund for up to US$25,000 for a new business or US$50,000 for existing business expansion (CIMC, n.d.).

An example of state-level support from a private corporation is the Oregon Native Business and Enterprise Network (ONABEN). It was created in 1991 by four tribes in Oregon to increase the success of private Native American enterprises. It provides fee-based training and organisational capacity building focused on developing entrepreneurship in indigenous communities across the USA and beyond. Its 'Indianpreneurship' curriculum offers a culturally-adapted indigenous training program for small business development. To date, it has assisted over 10,000 people evaluate their suitability for business, launch enterprises, and sustain their efforts (ONABEN, n.d.).

This section on support services concludes by reviewing research conducted by Dr. Heather Douglas, Royal Society of Queensland and Ensign (2022). The focus was to study the approach and services provided by a 'social benefit initiative'. The goal of such an initiative is to assist Aboriginal social purpose organisations bring positive changes and benefits to their community. Examined are four *remote Aboriginal communities in Australia*. The study explores four concepts – entrepreneurship, hybridity, remoteness, and indigeneity – seldom considered together. Verduyn et al. (2017, p.38) state that each of these concepts has 'contradictions, paradoxes, ambiguities and tensions'.

From these remote indigenous communities it is concluded that the approach used in providing the social benefit initiative (SBI) matters a great deal. The process has to be led by local knowledge holders, typically elders that empower the people for change to occur and endure although outsiders as respectful partners can be involved. A few conclusions about the approach needed to support new ways of living and achieve the development of suitable commerce in remote Indigenous communities arise:

> "We acknowledge that these complex, multi-layered environments require taking a long-term whole of life approach rather than attempting to quickly fix 'problems'. We suggest it is more appropriate to implement SBIs with a gradual and *unhurried* approach over at least one generation."

> "Implementing *unhurried* change is a purposeful and unforced process of gradual and measured engagement. This respectful approach offers an opportunity for Aboriginal people to conceptualise a new philosophy (outlook) and way of living."

> "An *unhurried* approach allows Aboriginal people to contemplate, understand, and decide over time whether to accept and apply some form of change in a way that suits their community."

> "We argue that unhurried SBI implementations are more likely to enable change in small remote communities in a way that suits them. An *unhurried* approach then might facilitate improvements in education, health, economic or other initiatives that Aboriginal people want. A gradual, unhurried and respectful approach involves not just a new way of conceptualising and practicing socioeconomic or other change: it also requires a different attitude from the dynamic entrepreneurial method that is conventionally expected during socio-economic innovation." (Douglas and Ensign, 2022)

Our discussion on support and the examples provided indicate that there are many and varied approaches and services that support indigenous entrepreneurship and community economic development. Indigenous people in urban areas in Canada are more likely to benefit from a formal structured course approach; those in remote areas of Arctic Canada may need one-on-one tailored guidance. Each influenced to differing degrees by socio-cultural core values and tradition. To succeed both need the support of their indigenous community and family.

7   Discussion

This paper contributes to demonstrating how context impacts indigenous entrepreneurship around the world. Over 50 field studies, cases and reports on indigenous entrepreneurs and their businesses are included. Examples from over 12 countries support comprehension of how geographic location, socio-cultural context, and economic structure impact the development and growth of an indigenous enterprise. The conceptual framework was based on our own research on indigenous entrepreneurs coupled with that of other scholars (Carson et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2016). A summary discussion on each element and its interconnectedness is provided here.

7.1   Impact of geographic location

The spatial element of geographic location defines *where* an indigenous entrepreneur and ethnic community exist. Croce's (2017) typology of rural, remote, and urban forms the specific place-based context of an entrepreneur. Data presented indicate indigenous entrepreneurs are directly impacted by location in three ways. First, culture. The more undeveloped and remote the location the stronger the impact of cultural values and lifestyle are on the indigenous entrepreneur and their endeavours. As isolation increases diversity decreases. Indigenous families and communities strengthen group attitudes and belief. Second, identity. The identity of indigenous entrepreneurs is closely tied to their geographic location. The Inuk stone carver, Austronesian clothing maker and Native Hawaiian horticulturist are indigenous entrepreneurs with Aboriginal businesses because of their identification with a specific location and culture. To move them to a different physical location would significantly change their identity. From an indigenous perspective, identity can be used to leverage positive impact to create and grow an Aboriginal business. Third, opportunity. The more developed and urban the location the greater the availability of financial assistance, infrastructure for commerce, developed markets and formal training/mentoring programs. It is not surprising that these would contribute to indigenous entrepreneurship and economic development. The more urban the location the more likely it is that the business model is less Aboriginal. The implication for indigenous entrepreneurs, leaders and policymakers is that geographic location is a crucial contextual element.

7.2   Impact of socio-cultural context

This primary element is consequential for indigenous entrepreneurs throughout the world. The components of culture, community and family have a strong, deep, and abiding influence on indigenous people. Their customs, beliefs, values, and worldview identify

them as indigenous. For an indigenous person, the sacredness of place is tied closely to and shaped by culture. Indigenous entrepreneurs selectively hold certain indigenous socio-cultural attributes while embracing certain non-indigenous ways. Examples point to the locus of socio-cultural tension with regard to change and development, especially between indigenous people and non-indigenous policymakers and government officials. Does taking away or restricting the use of indigenous land change culture? Does reshaping (devaluing) traditional indigenous occupations (hunting, gathering, herding, crafts) alter culture? Truthfully, the answer to both questions is yes. Further research is needed to adequately address these predicaments.

Examples were presented where an indigenous entrepreneur's ethnic group criticised their entrepreneurial activities as counter to tradition. Family, social pressure from peers, or being cut off from community could compel an entrepreneur to give up their activities. However, in examples presented, indigenous entrepreneurs were up to the challenge and continued with their businesses. Many serve as a role model for aspiring followers. The implication is that some indigenous entrepreneurs will be confronted with strong countervailing forces from their own family unit or ethnic community. In some situations, they may need to incorporate their indigenous culture, values, practices, and worldview in their business as well as return benefits to the community.

A question at the macro-level relates to sovereignty and the right to self-govern. This creates cross-cultural tension. Do indigenous people have the right to develop their own indigenous culture and community within the broader context of a dominant community and society in which they live? We approach the development of a business or community as one that has an indigenous *cultural identity* based on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples [UN, (2013), p.34]. This recognises that indigenous peoples may consider the well-being of their own communities and the appropriateness of development in a manner that is distinct from non-indigenous communities. In many past situations their strategies and priorities have been discounted or challenged because culture and identity are seen as obstacles to progress. The goal is to protect their natural resources as well as their own indigenous governance, economic, social, education, cultural, health, spiritual and knowledge systems. Development based on culture and identity is characterised with a holistic approach, one that seeks to build on collective rights, security and greater control and self-governance of lands, territories, and resources [UN, (2013), p.34].

7.3 Impact of economic structure

Economic structure includes three pertinent functions impacting indigenous entrepreneurs: government and legal; monetary and financial; and market and commerce. We respect that some scholars and policymakers may be critical of our conceptual framework because it includes the element of economic structure. They would prefer a *closed system* that does not include non-indigenous elements – government, legal system, financial institutions, etc. because they are 'outside' indigenous culture, values, logic, and control. We argue that everything included in economic structure has direct or indirect impact on indigenous entrepreneurs. Indigenous entrepreneurs and their enterprises are embedded in a time and place that has these structures. In some scenarios, economic structure will be quite developed; in other cases such structures may be rudimentary or almost non-existent.

Based on observations in the field and the accounts of others presented here, we concur with Mika et al. (2022, pp.4–5) that an indigenous entrepreneur is not contextually embedded in a *closed* system but rather one that is *open* to non-indigenous actors, structures and forces. The local place-specific context is nested within a municipal, regional, national and global context. Recognition of a local ecosystem as open should not be taken to mean that these structures and agencies are necessarily helpful (allowing, supporting, and actively assisting indigenous entrepreneurship). Incidents presented show that some structures are detrimental to indigenous entrepreneurship. A case in point is Iqaluit, Nunavut where outsiders have had strong control of local businesses and commerce.

Economic structure – government and legal; monetary and financial; and market and commerce – may also deter indigenous communities and entrepreneurs. A history of distrust, questionable motives and broken promises cause indigenous leaders and their communities to reject entrepreneurship and economic development. This is often seen in geographically remote and culturally isolated indigenous peoples. We saw the positive impact that introducing a modern market system and commerce had on the nomadic people of Sub-Saharan Africa, Arctic reindeer herders, and indigenous peoples in Australia's outback. Traversing from barter and trade to buyers and sellers. As the development of commerce continued, monetary and financial activities sprang forth. Next was the need for legal structure and government authority beyond just family and tribe. Commerce and market opportunities led to consumption and innovation. There was also a need to learn new languages for trade and communication – things based on technology such as satellite phones and the Internet. In such dramatic shifts it takes a resilient culture and tight-knit social unit to keep a cascade of changes in check and help people retain respect for their culture and traditional ways. There may not always be such a direct impact of economic structure. An indirect impact that occurs over time also has significant effect on indigenous people and entrepreneurs.

7.4   *Impact of support services*

Many national, regional and local government agencies, private organisations and indigenous groups provide support services. This includes financial assistance (grants or loans) and programs that focus on entrepreneurial development (training, advising, and mentoring). Services that provide financial assistance were discussed earlier when monetary and financial structure was examined. This section therefore addresses those services that focus on developing entrepreneurs and their ventures – private commercial, community-focused, social enterprises and cooperatives. Most educators pay more attention to the need for such development and to bolstering entrepreneurial skills, attitudes, and culture [Salamzadeh et al., (2013), p.18].

The examples presented both public and private organisations delivering these services – indigenous, non-indigenous, and mixed groups. Some services are subsidised and provided free; others are fee-based. The basis for most is entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. Whose knowledge and skills is the important question. How this question is approached influences the business model selected by an indigenous entrepreneur. This does not imply that a hybrid or transitional business model cannot be considered. Rather, do these support services concede the perspective being presented? What is the business

model and entrepreneurial process used? It is worth noting that training and educational support services for indigenous entrepreneurs often only focuses on starting a commercial, for-profit entity.

Building entrepreneurial capability and fortitude while adhering to an indigenous holistic perspective is not necessarily incompatible but requires awareness and care to balance. Is the training geared to who is or wants to be an indigenous entrepreneur with an Aboriginal business? As noted in discussion of geographic location, socio-culture context, and economic structure, everything is connected. Each element should relate back to underlying values, beliefs and worldview aligned with culture and identity. For many indigenous entrepreneurs the goal is to develop a business that is community focused or a social enterprise.

Few support services present a purely indigenous approach to creating and nurturing an Aboriginal business. Indigenous activism may be the lever to draw attention so that support programs for entrepreneurship are truly indigenous in character. Based on this we submit the first step, from a practitioner's standpoint, is to identify 'best practices' of indigenous entrepreneurs. Such achievements are found in the case studies presented. A second step is to curate practices that are not necessarily indigenous but that contextually fit with socio-cultural and locational indigenous factors. Cooperatives (Canada) and social entrepreneurship (Australia and New Zealand) are examples of non-indigenous business concepts that may have positive applications.

7.5   Conceptual framework as interconnected and open system

The conceptual framework is viewed as an interconnected system. Although interconnectedness of contextual elements is not a new revelation, it was observed that when these elements are strategically leveraged it advantages indigenous entrepreneurs and Aboriginal businesses. For example, an indigenous person in an urban location may have more opportunities (ideas and markets) and support (financial and other assistance) but lack an indigenous social network with knowledge-keepers that deliver one-on-one guidance and mentoring. An indigenous person in a rural or remote location may have an idea but does not know how to bring their product/service to fruition. Regional First Nations public libraries in Ontario before COVID-19 were testing the viability of micro incubators and 'makerspaces' to provide tools and assistance to launch a small business. Based on research, it is clear there are mechanisms to help those in remote locations develop an idea or innovation into a viable enterprise (Ensign and Leupold, 2018).

Implications are revisited, viewing the framework as a total system of interconnected elements. Geographic location acts as a skeleton on which socio-cultural and economic elements build. This combination of contextual elements was recognised and studied explicitly. It is compelling that an indigenous entrepreneur embedded in a specific place-based environment is impacted by physical surroundings, socio-cultural context, and economic structure. These intertwined elements form an open system. Based on the case studies examined, Table 2 summarises the impact of the elements on indigenous entrepreneurs. Location – remote, rural, and urban – is an independent variable. Socio-economic context and economic structure are treated as dependent variables impacted by an entrepreneur's location. These can spatially and contextually identify an entrepreneur as First Nations, Inuit, Métis, etc. as well as their role, occupation, and opportunities. The elements of location, context, and structure have direct impact on the

business model and entrepreneurial process of an indigenous entrepreneur. Findings show that forces generated by the three primary elements exert impact (enabling or hindering) on an indigenous entrepreneur.

We conclude that indigenous entrepreneurship and community development change over time. The dynamics are driven by the total system where indigenous entrepreneurs are embedded. Most indigenous entrepreneurs are strongly rooted in their locale at an early stage. Their indigenous socio-cultural context is relied on as a resource, even a munificent entity. Relatively few variations in business models are employed. As indigenous entrepreneurship and community development evolve, entrepreneurs become less contextually embedded in their indigenous socio-cultural heritage. They have greater awareness of and exposure to varied business model choices and opportunities independent of the region or indigenous culture. Although belonging to an advancing indigenous community and commercial system offers advantages to indigenous entrepreneurs it does not necessarily result in a stronger or better indigenous culture. Future research, perhaps carried about by cultural anthropologists, might explore countercultures and subcultures.

Table 2   Application of conceptual framework: geographic location (independent variable) and socio-culture context and economic structure (dependent variables)

Dependent variables	Independent variable geographic location		
	Remote	*Rural*	*Urban*
	Isolated	*Small settlements*	*Developed*
	Sparse population	*Cluster population*	*Dense population*
	No infrastructure	*Some infrastructure*	*Good infrastructure*
Socio-cultural context:			
Culture	Traditional	Evolving	Contemporary
	Strongly indigenous	Transitioning	Mainstream society
Community and family	Strong ties	Selective ties	Few ties
	Community focused	Group focused	Self-focused
Economic structure:			
Government and legal	Limited	Limited	Overarching
	Focus enforcement	Focus compliance	Focus enabling
Monetary and financial	Cash or barter	Cash/trade credit	National and global
	Family and micro loans	Government loans and assistance	Banks, loans, credit, crowd funding
Market and commerce	Few opportunities	Some opportunities	Many opportunities
	Little	Limited	Abundant
Support services	Little	Limited	Training, mentoring, coaching
	Assistance	Assistance	

8 Conclusions

This exploratory research contributes to understanding the impact that context has on indigenous entrepreneurs around the world. A framework was designed that includes three primary elements: geographic location; socio-cultural context; and economic structure. Almost 50 case studies and reports from 12 countries and ten regions tested the validity of this framework. Study findings substantiate the conceptualisation put forth. Findings also provide evidence that indigenous entrepreneurship is growing and prevails in many forms around the world. This is positive considering current and past actions of oppression, neglect, marginalisation, and constraints that target indigenous people. Indigenous entrepreneurs are overcoming these and moving ahead.

Although indigenous entrepreneurs may live in a developed nation and adopt some mainstream business practices, most continue to adhere to ethnic identity and values. This suggests that indigenous culture is both malleable and permanent. For the entrepreneur, much still depends on 'what is in you' and 'what surrounds you'. The same remains true for economic opportunity (Dana and Dana, 2005). In many ways, efforts to go against growing commercialisation and globalisation are futile for these entrepreneurs. So too would efforts be to disavow one's own culture and heritage. The question then is how do indigenous people around the world succeed in business? To answer this question, we encourage the reader to do what we have done. Visit them and find out. Go to Greenland or Hawaii or Australia or the Arctic or Sub-Sahara or Peru to see their Aboriginal enterprises and talk to the entrepreneurs.

8.1 Limitations

As Dana and Dumez (2015) caution, comprehensive research to addresses conceptual issues must be careful in using new labels; enhancing explanatory power; and over-building the analytical framework. This exploratory study was designed to be comprehensive, though admittedly not exhaustive. The aim was to test the efficacy of our conceptual framework, seeking to explore and understand the impact that location, context, and structure have on indigenous entrepreneurship. Regarding cautions from Dana and Dumez (2015), those were addressed in the present work. The conceptual framework uses nomenclature and concepts that exist in the extant literature. It is a framework that is bounded by spatial, contextual, and structural factors. It parallels how an entrepreneurial ecosystem unfolds, as a place-bound or embedded system where indigenous entrepreneurs and their Aboriginal businesses coexist. Our framework is parsimonious given the complexity of seeking an analytical tool to understand contextual influence on indigenous entrepreneurship in many locations in the world.

One limitation with this type of deductive qualitative approach is the risk of circularity [Dana and Dumez, (2015), pp.159–160]. This describes the situation when a researcher restricts their view of the collected data to pre-defined concepts that fit a framework. The risk of circularity was reduced by using an open system approach with only three primary elements. Each element was examined independently to reduce the risk of circularity. Explanatory power thus increases with this approach. Our approach also provided flexibility to field-adjust, allowing exploration of support services as a

separate category under economic structure as well as activities under other categories within economic structure. Since examples provide narrative in the words of the indigenous people involved, this tests the validity and accuracy of the framework from the vantage of indigenous entrepreneurs.

8.2   Further research

As with all research, limitations, methods, and unanswered (or unasked) questions point to the need to dive back in and conduct additional thoughtful, pointed research. The need for additional research is even greater with an exploratory study like this one. First, it is hoped that others studying contextual impact on indigenous entrepreneurs and Aboriginal businesses will consider this framework, adding their own modifications and adjustments to enhance its usefulness. It will be valuable to investigate historical evidence or longitudinally study indigenous entrepreneurship. Although such an undertaking will be arduous, it would provide great insight about the dynamic aspects of interconnected contextual elements over time.

Second, the comprehensive framework is a robust means to design studies to understand primary contextual factors that impact indigenous entrepreneurship. One question remaining to be decided by colleagues who focus on indigenous entrepreneurship: can this framework be described as an indigenous entrepreneurial ecosystem? Does the sum total of these elements form a location specific entrepreneurial ecosystem for each indigenous entrepreneur? Based on the research presented it is probable that it can be aptly used in multiple locations that range from Arctic remoteness to an urban core.

As the application of artificial intelligence to literature reviews moves forward, it will be possible to access the large and rapidly growing volumes of case studies, government documents and field reports that relate to entrepreneurship across disciplines and nations. More than a directed meta-analysis, future technological advances will enable an exploratory study like this to be truly all-encompassing and worldwide.

This study is but one step in advancing the discussion on the need to understand entrepreneurship and community development from an indigenous perspective. It is anticipated that subsequent steps will enable indigenous people to give voice and understanding to 'their' entrepreneurship and community development. These are the voices that indigenous and non-indigenous people can learn from, ones ignored for too long.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1   An exception was the work of Jeffry A. Timmons in the 1970s.
2   Though this does not necessitate agreement or universal conformity; as previously shared, contested beliefs and behaviour are a sign of both change to and vibrancy of culture.