Indigenous Entrepreneurship, a literature review

Albert James
Christopher Hartt
Julie Marcoux
Shelly Price
Our Motivation

• SSHRC Knowledge Synthesis Grant & the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
  • Does academic literature on Indigenous entrepreneurship match the aspirations of Canada’s Indigenous peoples?
The Project

• A systematic review to find relevant articles, dissertations and reports
  • Our search terms included: aborigin*, indigenous, Maori, native, Indian, tribe, ... AND entrepreneur*

• Found 2,592 texts

• Three researchers combed through each article to determine fit.
Narrowing the data

• Our working definitions
  
  • **Entrepreneurship**: new venture creation, growth, and opportunities that are usually assessed via financial measures (e.g., De Carolis & Saparito, 2006; Haugh, 2007; Lumpkin & Lichtenstein, Benyamin, 2005; Shrader & Siegel, 2007)
  
  • **Indigenous**: original inhabitants, resisting and surviving colonialism, persisting to remain distinct

• Ended up with **295** texts from around the world whose main topic involved both Indigenous people and entrepreneurship.
  
  • From which we identified **50 themes** within the literature
Indigenous Canadian Worldview

• Due to terms of the grant we turned to narratives from various Indigenous Nations in Canada
  • Our team includes academics with 10 years experience collecting and analysing narrative of Indigenous people
  • The narratives included:
    • Skywoman and the creation of Turtle Island (Mohawk, Oneida, Inuit, Huron, Ojibwa, Kiowa, etc.)
    • Caribou and a coat (Innu & Cree)
    • Coyote, Fox, and Rock (Plains peoples)
    • Cedar Basket (Mandan)
    • The Bird who made wind (Mi’kmaq)
Indigenous Canadian Worldview

The principles that guided our report

- **Place**: inclusive and respectful of all entities and things
- **Symbiosis**: all things exist in balance for each others’ benefit
- **Respect for all things as teachers, in sharing, and connection to place**
- **Multidimensionality including past, present, and future**
- **Symmetry**: all things are equal
- **Responsibility**: all things are responsible for their role in place and symbiosis
- **Reverence for the place of all things in the symbiosis**
- **Honesty to the obligations all things have in the symbiosis**
Our Five Findings

1. Many Indigenous communities have adopted entrepreneurship as a development tool
2. Indigenous Entrepreneurship is broad in scope
3. Indigenous Entrepreneurship is distinct from Western Entrepreneurship
4. There is a respect and acknowledgement of Indigenous worldviews in the literature
5. Entrepreneurship as a mode of continued ongoing colonialism
Our Five Findings

1. Many Indigenous communities have adopted entrepreneurship as a development tool
   • The most common theme in the literature
   • Entrepreneurship is mostly seen as a worthwhile activity

2. Indigenous Entrepreneurship is broad in scope
   • Goes beyond the idea of economic development and accumulation of financial capital (Calas et al. 2009)
   • Includes wide view of what entrepreneurship can do: strengthen and reinvigorate culture, build social capital, build financial capital, and strengthen self-determination.
3. Indigenous Entrepreneurship is distinct from Western Entrepreneurship
   • We found distinctions based on: Indigenous-oriented themes, social conditions, artefacts of colonialism, government activities, interactions between Indigenous and non-indigenous people and worldviews
   • The distinctness highlights the need for and value of developing Indigenous Entrepreneurship theories (not the application of Western theories on Indigenous contexts)
Our Five Findings

4. There is a respect and acknowledgement of Indigenous worldviews in the literature
   • Most of the examined texts referenced Indigenous worldviews
     • Particularly importance of place, collective responsibility, community development, and distributive economy

5. Entrepreneurship as a mode of continued ongoing colonialism
   • Shown in the reliance on theories of entrepreneurship developed from a self-interested capitalist worldview.
   • Evidenced in the lack of presence of Indigenous topics in top journals
What I learned

• Dedicated academics have been active in considering the aspirations of Indigenous peoples

• We have a long way to go