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ERNIE SCOLES/21

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The Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development is the first journal devoted exclusively to issues and practices in the field of economic development and Aboriginal peoples' communities. The journal, published jointly by Captus Press and Cando (Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers), offers articles that are of interest to those who teach and those who work in the field.

Contents

The Artist

Ernie Scoles

Ernie Scoles is a member of the Barren Lands Indian Band. Born in Cumberland House, Saskatchewan, Canada, in 1962, he was raised in Northern Manitoba. There he developed a deep feeling for nature and wildlife, taking advantage of every opportunity to explore the woods, lakes, and streams. Influenced by the late Isaac Bignell, his mentor and friend, Ernie's work in woodland imagery reflects his Cree heritage and is found in collections throughout Canada, United States, Europe, and Asia. In 1992, Ernie was awarded the Governor General's Canada 125 Medal for his contributions to his community. As well, in 2002, Ernie was the recipient of the Queen Elizabeth Golden Jubilee Medal for his contributions. He makes his home in Saskatoon with his wife Doreen; he has four children, Davian, Amanda, Cassandra, and Kalen, as well as seven grandchildren.

"When I am painting, I have a great feeling of peace and harmony with nature, and I feel a powerful connection between our creator and all living things. In my work, I try to capture the spiritual interaction of all life with the earth, sun, wind, and sky. I always hope that at least one person will like the image I paint." — Ernie Scoles, Barren Lands Indian Band, Northern Manitoba

The Artist Statement — Fall Mallard

Ernie Scoles

It's an image of a childhood memory when I would be sitting by the river in Northern Manitoba. I started hunting and trapping when I was 12 years old and continued until the age of 16, when I moved to Winnipeg from Thompson, Manitoba. I am part of the Sixties Scoop and was adopted at the age of 2 after being in six foster homes.

Editor's Comments

The hard work and dedication to community wellness and economic reconciliation during challenging times are highlighted in this issue of the Journal.

For insights into stories of meeting challenges head-on, reflect on the articles in this issue. We are drawn into plans to support urban Indigenous entrepreneurs, to a young entrepreneur's vision for upholding tradition in the marketplace. Most appropriately, the topic of economic reconciliation is raised and a starting place is offered. A successful research program aimed at poverty reduction in several Indigenous communities across Canada is discussed, and it reminds us of how a nuanced approach to individual situations is critical for success and that it is an on-going process as needs change. Of course, the lessons that have emerged in the pandemic are important to understand. An important collaboration with different levels of government and Indigenous suppliers during Covid is documented to contribute to the growing body of literature in this area.

It is with gratitude that we acknowledge our contributors and all those who undertake to bring this message of resilience and reconciliation to our readership, including Captus Press, the Journal Committee members, our reviewers, and Cando staff, who are critical to JAED's success.

Please enjoy this issue as much as we enjoyed bringing it to you.

In closing, the Journal Committee is excited to report our efforts in engaging with a broader audience. We have started offering open access option to authors whose papers have been accepted. Beginning this issue, we will include a DOI (a permanent identifier) for all articles. And soon, online databases such as EBSCO and ProQuest will include and distribute our work. By expanding ways to access the Journal, we hope more people will benefit from the inspiring work of practitioners and academics in the field of Indigenous community economic development featured in our journal.

Ekosi

Wanda Wuttunee

Introduction

John Chenoweth

This issue's Lessons from Experience explores a continuation of efforts towards Truth and Reconciliation within a post-pandemic world, followed with economic development initiatives from both mainstream and grassroots perspectives. These articles present the shared responsibility we have as Indigenous people to work together towards a common balance within our communities. The authors are shining examples of how Indigenous communities never stop supporting and working towards regeneration within our communities.

Josh Regnier, in "Guide for First Nation-Municipal Collaboration on Economic Recovery and Resilience", explores the roles a First Nations government and municipality can play to address natural disasters and unnatural pathogens such as COVID 19 together during tumultuous times.

Sxwpilemaát Siyám and Lily Raphael in "Stepping into the River: Learnings from Simon Fraser University Community Economic Development's Economic Reconciliation Framework Development" present the concept of economic reconciliation from a new perspective or through a new lens to address the goals of the TRC through the creation of a new framework. The vision is to transform the current economy into one that includes an Indigenous perspective.

Julianna Albert, in "Anishinaabe Bimishimo: An Indigenous Company that Understands the Sovereignty of Jingle Cones", introduces the reader to the inherent Indigenous Knowledge found within an emerging Indigenous business centred around the cultural practice of dance. The responsibility of this company to be a true community member is evident through their localized and community-based modelling of "taking care of the people" in her community and surrounding locales.

Michele Baptiste, in "Indigenous Centre for Innovation & Entrepreneurship", shares the development of an Indigenous Centre for Innovation

and Entrepreneurship (ICIE) in Toronto, Ontario. ICIE was developed to provide a space for entrepreneurial aspirations to flourish within the Indigenous community of metro Toronto.

Van Penner, in "First Peoples Economic Growth Fund: A Case Study of a Successful Aboriginal Financial Institution", showcases a model whereby the Province of Manitoba and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs collaborate to provide resources and support to Manitoba First Nation businesses. This case study presents many examples of how an idea or concept from an individual can flourish with the support provided through an organization such as the FPEGF.

way̓ x̌ast sx̌alx̌əlt and enjoy!

Guide for First Nation–Municipal Collaboration on Economic Recovery and Resilience

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Josh Regnier

LAW STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

INTRODUCTION

Disasters have increased in both frequency and intensity in recent years (UNDRR, 2015; FPT Ministers, 2017). In Canada, natural disasters and the economic impacts of COVID-19 have thrust emergency preparedness and economic recovery onto the radars of governments. Disasters pose significant challenges for First Nations and municipalities, as these communities often lack the fiscal and human capacity for effective preparedness, response, and recovery. Within this context, there are many advantages to working together across jurisdictions, to leverage resources, reduce duplication of services, and ensure coordinated emergency preparedness and economic recovery plans. Coordinated emergency planning between First Nations and municipalities is not yet standard practice, however.

This guide is for elected officials and staff of First Nations and municipalities who want to enhance their emergency preparedness and economic resilience. It is meant to be used alongside *Stronger Together: A Toolkit for First Nations–Municipal Community Economic Development Partnerships* (hereinafter "*Stronger Together Toolkit*"), and other resources listed at the end of this guide, to support First Nations and municipalities to collaborate on emergency management: preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters of any kind.

There are many reasons for First Nations and municipalities to collaborate on emergency management and economic resilience:

- improved outcomes in regional recovery by having diverse and representative voices at the table
- cost savings, resource sharing, and more efficient service delivery

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Josh is from Treaty 8 territory in northern British Columbia and is currently pursuing a law degree in the University of Victoria's new Joint Degree in Canadian Common Law and Indigenous Legal Orders (JD/JID). Before entering law school, he worked with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, in partnership with Cando, on the First Nation-Municipal Community Economic Development Initiative (CEDI).

- greater health and wellness outcomes for all, including the most vulnerable
- increased ability to access stimulus funding from other orders of government
- increased community resilience and capacity to respond together in future emergencies

This guide is a framework for collaborative emergency management and includes an examination of similarities and differences between First Nation and municipal jurisdictions. It offers concrete recommendations and tools for building your own First Nation–municipal partnerships and enhancing shared economic resilience. It presents potential models by examining communities who have been successful in their emergency management collaboration. By following the steps in this guide and the highlighted case studies, you can enhance your economic resilience.

Definitions: Emergency Management and Economic Resilience

The overarching goal of First Nation–municipal collaboration on emergency management is increasing regional economic resilience. Resilience is defined as "the capacity of a system, community or society to adapt to disturbances resulting from hazards by persevering, recuperating or changing to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning. Resilience minimizes vulnerability, dependence, and susceptibility by creating or strengthening social and physical capacity in the human and built environment to cope with, adapt to, respond to, and recover and learn from disasters" (FPT Ministers, 2017). Economic resil-

FIGURE 1
Emergency Management Continuum

* SEMP = Strategic Emergency Management Plan

Source: Hackman-Carty, 2019.

ience increases as communities build capacity along the four stages of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

- **Mitigation** — Actions taken to prevent or reduce the consequences of an emergency. Mitigation activities consist of identifying vulnerabilities and taking proactive measures to diminish the impact of potential emergencies.
- **Preparedness** — Actions taken to prepare for effective emergency response. Preparedness activities consist of planning for response and recovery during emergencies, as well as training and exercising emergency management plans.
- **Response** — Actions taken immediately before, during, or after an emergency to manage consequences and minimize impacts. Response activities may include emergency public communication, medical assistance, and evacuations.
- **Recovery** — Actions taken after an emergency to restore a community to its pre-emergency condition. Recovery measures start during response and reduce future community vulnerabilities while improving planning for these events (FPT Ministers, 2017).

This guide will place emphasis on building regional economic resilience through collaboration on the preparedness, response, and recovery stages.

The Jurisdictional Gap in First Nation and Municipal Emergency Management

In Canada, federal, provincial, territorial, First Nation, and municipal governments all have unique emergency management responsibilities. First Nations and municipalities share commonalities and key differences in their responsibilities. They have direct accountability to their citizens, and are best equipped to understand the strengths and needs of their communities and to design effective emergency management plans (Henstra, n.d.). At the same time, First Nations and municipalities share similar fiscal, human, and technical capacity challenges in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies. A table listing similarities and differences between First Nation and municipal emergency management jurisdiction can be found in Appendix 1.

Despite common responsibilities and challenges, a jurisdictional gap remains between First Nations and municipalities because emergency management services and supports are provided to First Nations by the federal government and to municipalities by provincial and territorial governments. At times, these two levels of government are unable to effectively coordinate during emergencies, leaving communities and individuals underserved in their moments of need. To address this challenge, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) has signed agreements with Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario, and MOUs with British Columbia and Nova Scotia. ISC is negotiating with the remaining provinces and territories to conclude agreements for the delivery of on-reserve emergency management services (Collier, 2015). While federal, provincial, and territorial governments attempt to address this gap, the reality reflects significant barriers to effective emergency response and recovery.

This jurisdictional gap can create communication failures during crises. During the 2011 wildfires, Sawridge First Nation Chief Roland Twinn received the initial evacuation notice, but no further communication from the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA). He was forced to go to the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) and demand that

his community be included in the emergency response. This oversight was a result of Sawridge First Nation falling through the jurisdictional gap between federal and provincial governments. The strong relationships built at the local level between Sawridge, the Town of Slave Lake, and the MD of Lesser Slave River since the 2011 wildfires reduce the likelihood of this kind of oversight happening again. AEMA has also doubled the number of staff dedicated to supporting First Nations in emergencies since those wildfires. In Alberta, Métis settlements are also affected by the jurisdictional gap, as was seen in the Rural Municipality of Wood Buffalo's response to the 2016 wildfires (Clark, 2018), and again with more than a dozen homes in the Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement lost during the 2019 Chuckegg Creek wildfire.

The jurisdictional gap can lead to disjointed regional planning and recovery initiatives, as happened in the aftermath of severe flooding in Nuxalk territory in 2010 and wildfires in 2017. British Columbia and the Central Coast Regional District led the recovery efforts, including rebuilding critical infrastructure, such as roads. The Nuxalk Nation were not included in conversations about recovery; again, the result was a jurisdictional gap that created communication barriers between neighbouring communities. Since then, these communities have established a model for joint planning, highlighted in the case study below.

Differing standards for emergency preparedness, unclear funding criteria, and service duplication also result from the jurisdictional gap. COVID-19 funding and supports are one example, as some First Nations expressed frustration regarding unclear eligibility criteria. Many on-reserve First Nation businesses were initially unable to access the Canada Emergency Business Account, as only taxable income was counted toward payroll eligibility (Bull, 2020). The federal government later amended this eligibility requirement and provided additional funding to address this gap, but the initial impact and time lost for those businesses remained. Addressing this gap is critical for effective local emergency preparedness, which can result in significant cost savings and improved community wellness during emergencies. For municipalities to fully recover after an emergency, neighbouring First Nations must also have recovered, and vice versa.

Emergencies are often cross-jurisdictional, so responses must be as well. Promising trends are emerging. In 2019, the First Nations Leadership Council (First Nations Summit, British Columbia Assembly of First Nations, and the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs), the Government of British Columbia, and ISC signed an MOU to formalize roles and responsibilities for on-reserve emergency management support. This MOU also creates a shared table for coordinating emergency management services and supports. While the impacts of this MOU have yet to be seen, it establishes a model for agreements with and between First Nations and other provinces and territories. Examples such as the disagreement around consultation between British Columbia and several First Nations regarding Phase III of the COVID-19 re-opening strategy further highlight the importance of formal and proactive efforts to bridge the jurisdictional gap and create strong partnerships between First Nations and municipalities (Sterritt, 2020).

FIRST NATION–MUNICIPAL COLLABORATION ACROSS THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CONTINUUM

A fuller spectrum of inclusion will increase the strength of the economic response overall. The companies that are able to understand that and understand economic

development as a process having everyone at the table, will be able to construct more appropriate responses in the short term.

— Carol Anne Hilton, CEO, Indigenomics

What follows is a framework for collaborating on emergency management and enhancing economic resilience. Technical best practices in emergency management and economic recovery already exist, are consistent across disaster types (L. Hackman-Carty, personal interview, June 15, 2020), and will be referenced throughout this guide. The added value of the information below is tailoring these best practices to the context of First Nation–municipal collaboration, across the jurisdictional gap. The foundation of effective First Nation–municipal collaboration, on emergency management or anything else, is respectful and informed relationships between community members, elected officials, and staff.

Preparedness: Building Relationships and Planning Together Before an Emergency

The ideal time to begin collaborating on emergency management and enhancing economic resilience is before a disaster occurs. Preparation can positively affect community resilience, speeding up recovery, minimizing damage, and reducing the negative physical and mental health impacts on citizens. Effective joint planning requires open and respectful relationships and learning about the similarities and differences between jurisdictions. The best practices below are informed by Cando and FCM's *Stronger Together Toolkit* (Bamford, Breedon, Lindberg, Patterson & Winstanley, 2015).

■ Build Relationships and Shared Understanding

Every practitioner interviewed for this guide emphasized that strong relationships between communities, elected officials, and staff are necessary for successful joint emergency management planning. Relationships must be open, honest, and respectful; they cannot be transactional, rushed, or skipped. Reach out to your neighbours through a call or visit to begin dialogue. Establish an informal team of champions who are committed to collaboration and build support within your councils and staff for working together.

To succeed in building a long-term partnership, you must invest in learning about the history, cultures, governance structures, protocols, and emergency management jurisdiction of the neighbouring community. It is critical to understand how your communities are similar and different, and why. For an overview of the similarities and differences between First Nations and municipalities in emergency management, see Appendix 1 in this guide.

Invite councils and senior staff together and use Chapter Two and Appendix B of the *Stronger Together Toolkit* for exercises on building respectful relationships. See also Cando and FCM's *First Nation and Municipal Economic Development Organizations* guide for detailed information on how communities manage economic development (FCM & Cando, n.d. *b*). Be patient and committed to this process with an open mind and heart. Ask questions, and don't wait for permission to reach out. It takes time and effort to build trusting relationships across cultures and within the context of a challenging colonial history.

■ Establish a Shared Emergency Management Table

Formalize your partnership by creating an emergency management working group, committee, or task force made up of elected officials and senior staff from each community,

as well as other stakeholders, such as federal and provincial emergency management agencies, chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, health authorities, and non-profits as required. Your table will be the bridge between your communities, emergency managers, governments, and the business community. With a view to long-term collaboration, this table should develop and ratify through councils a terms of reference that clarifies mandate, governance, and decision-making processes. The consensus decision-making model exercised by the Lesser Slave River Tri-Council is a best practice. More details on this model can be found on page 115 of the *Stronger Together Toolkit*. See Cando and FCM's *Creating a Joint Working Group for First Nation–Municipal Partnership* for best practices in establishing and managing a shared table and for a terms of reference template.

■ Share and Develop Plans and a Vision

Sharing information, including existing emergency management plans, risk hazard analyses, and community strengths and vulnerabilities is an important first step in aligning preparedness measures and developing regional resilience. An understanding of each community's respective jurisdictions, access to funding and resources and governance structures is critical at this stage, as it will identify gaps that joint planning can fill. Use Tool #8 from the *Stronger Together Toolkit* to develop a shared vision for regional economic resilience. With a shared vision in place, a best practice, pioneered by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the United States, is to have a Disaster Resilience Framework that addresses each of the six recovery support functions, one of which is economic (FEMA, n.d.; Hackman-Carty, n.d.). Ensure that all partners' voices are heard in developing these and that vulnerable populations are considered. See the Economic Developers of Alberta's *Community Toolkit for Economic Recovery and Resiliency (CTERR)*, Chapter VIII, for detailed descriptions of these tools and processes (Hackman-Carty, 2019).

■ Increase Capacity

Capacity shortages are a primary barrier to effective emergency management, response, and recovery within both First Nations and municipalities (Samuel Schooner, personal interview, June 11, 2020). Both the Nuxalk–Central Coast Regional District and the Sawridge–Slave Lake–MD of Lesser Slave River partnerships (detailed in case studies below) have hired and co-managed a staff person to lead their joint emergency management activities. Both emphasized how instrumental the additional capacity was in actualizing their shared goals. Begin a conversation with both federal and provincial/territorial governments to explore funding options for this position. If resources are not available to hire an additional staff person, communities can follow the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission (COEDC)'s example of delegating internal staff resources from each community to lead on joint economic recovery initiatives (detailed in the case study on page 11).

Case Study on Nuxalk Nation–Central Coast Regional District (CCRD)–Emergency Management British Columbia (EMBC) Partnership

During the B.C. wildfires in 2017, the CCRD and Nuxalk Nation partnered informally on response and recovery; this experience highlighted the need to address the jurisdictional gaps impeding their ability to effectively prepare for and respond to disasters together. The

primary issue was communication barriers between EMBC and Nuxalk, which impacted Nuxalk's ability to contribute to response and recovery activities. As a first step, Nuxalk and CCRD began to address challenges in their shared past and develop honest and respectful relationships between councils and staff.

With a commitment to collaborate, they began discussions with EMBC about coordinating emergency preparedness planning. In March 2019, they signed BC's first Memorandum of Understanding to "lead and co-ordinate emergency management planning by addressing any emergency preparedness, response, recovery or mitigation gaps that have impacts beyond a single jurisdiction, providing oversight on high-level emergency management issues, and acting as a vehicle to bring other relevant stakeholders, provincial ministries, federal departments, and Indigenous communities together to collaborate on emergency management initiatives" (Thompson, 2019). Their MOU will be implemented by an emergency coordinator, who will be accountable to a joint steering committee of representatives from each of the three signatories.

These partners have also begun to advocate for policy changes regarding the federal funding gap to First Nations for emergency management, critical for addressing governance and capacity challenges. This partnership has established a model for other regions to emulate in proactively addressing the jurisdictional gap between First Nations and municipalities and increasing regional resilience to future emergencies. Samuel Schooner, Chair of the CCRD, stressed the importance of the strengthened relationships and his confidence that this partnership will evolve into collaboration in other areas of shared interest.

Response: Collaborating on Immediate Economic Relief after an Emergency

Emergencies create challenging circumstances for all communities, with capacity and resources shortages created in the moment they are needed most. In these moments, it is understandable that communities look inward and focus efforts on their citizens; however, responding to emergencies collaboratively creates benefits for both governments and citizens, with both First Nation and municipal voices around the table. These benefits include consistent and clear internal and external communications; inclusive needs assessments that respond to all, including the most vulnerable; and efficient response actions that avoid duplication or conflict. The Economic Developers of Alberta have created Canada's most comprehensive guide on best practices in economic recovery and resiliency. The information below provides a brief overview of the content of this guide, adapted to the context of First Nation–municipal collaboration.

■ Connect and Convene

In an emergency, connect with your neighbours as soon as possible. Ask how the disaster is affecting their community and what their immediate needs are, and offer support where possible. If coordinated emergency management plans exist, implement them. If no shared plans exist, convene a table with decision-makers from each community and establish how you will collaborate during the emergency. Ensure that all First Nations and municipalities in the region are included in the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), have roles within the Incident Command System (ICS), and are integrated in all lines of communications. Keep the jurisdictional gap between federal and provincial/territorial governments in mind because your communities may not be operating with the same supports or resources. If possible,

assemble a technical team of experts to guide your response and recovery actions. These experts may include third-party organizations, such as the Red Cross or the Samaritan Purse, who provide first-responder expertise.

■ Communicate

Frequent and open communication among partners was identified as essential by practitioners. If a crisis communications plan does not exist, develop one together immediately to align internal and external communications throughout the emergency. Effective intergovernmental communication is necessary to avoid duplication of services and to coordinate response actions. When developing this plan, keep in mind that elected officials have two audiences for their communications during a disaster: citizens and businesses. It is important to have a plan that speaks to both. Clear and consistent communications with the public provides stability to business and industry, which can lessen the economic impact of a disaster. Consistent communication can also lessen anxiety for citizens who may access services in multiple jurisdictions. Both First Nation and municipal voices must be involved in developing protocols, as each community will advocate for their needs and understand how best to communicate with their citizens and economic actors.

Be conscious that roles and responsibilities in First Nations and municipalities often differ significantly. In the Chuckegg Creek wildfire, the Chief of Dene Tha' First Nation was responsible for a much greater volume of communications and decision-making than the Mayor of High Level, and with less administrative support. Remote communities often have additional barriers, such as limited access to Internet and telecommunications. Factor these differences into shared crisis communications plans. See Chapter VI of the *CTERR* (Hackman-Carty, 2019) for more guidance.

■ Assess Economic Needs

Assessing the needs of businesses and industry is a foundational first step to determining an appropriate response. Economic impact assessments should be conducted with businesses, industries, and community organizations (EMBC, 2019, p. 29). Partners must coordinate these assessments and share data so the resulting action plans address each community's unique needs. Having both First Nation and municipal voices around the table will ensure these consultations are done in a culturally aware way and reach all businesses in the region. See Chapter V of the *CTERR* (Hackman-Carty, 2019) for more guidance.

■ Action Plan

Based on results from economic impact assessments, develop an immediate action plan addressing the short-term needs of businesses and industry. Possible actions include developing a business recovery centre; providing grants, loans, and other short-term financing needs; creating a hotline and web portal for businesses to access information; supporting business continuity planning; and delivering business recovery workshops.

In responding to economic or public health concerns, First Nations and municipalities have different supports that they can provide to their communities. In the case of COVID-19, municipalities could offer utility bill and property tax relief to residents and businesses. First Nations, on the other hand, were able to use bylaws to restrict access to their communities to a greater degree than municipalities, addressing their public health concerns. Though many jurisdictional needs are similar, it can be beneficial to all economic actors to coordinate response plans to leverage the unique capacities of First Nations and municipalities.

This ensures that the needs of businesses in the region are addressed, reducing economic impact and hastening recovery. See Chapters III and IV of the *CTERR* (Hackman-Carty, 2019) for more details and the list of financial resources available to communities during COVID-19.

Case Study: Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission (COEDC) COVID-19 Regional Economic Recovery Task Force & Regional Response Action Team

The COEDC has provided economic development services to regional municipalities and the Westbank First Nation for over 15 years, which has cultivated a culture of economic development collaboration. In quick response to COVID-19, the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO), Kelowna, West Kelowna, Lake Country, Peachland, and Westbank First Nation leveraged this existing partnership to coordinate their economic response and recovery.

The Regional Economic Recovery Task Force (RERTF) comprises the head elected official from each participating community and has two goals: to coordinate advocacy for recovery resources to federal and provincial governments and to coordinate the development of an economic recovery strategy. The RERTF receives institutional support from both COEDC staff and the Regional Response Action Team (RRAT), a team of senior economic

FIGURE 2
Regional Coordination in Central Okanagan

Source: Griffiths, 2020.

development staff from the communities and other key stakeholders (for more details, see their Terms of Reference (COEDC, 2020)). The RRAT's primary objective is to support business and industry in weathering the storm of COVID-19. Together, the RERTF and RRAT are able to focus on "measures for a coordinated short-term response, medium-term recovery and long-term resilience-building activities" (COEDC, 2020).

The communities have moved quickly in conducting roundtables with business and industry and are providing succinct and accessible summaries of the economic impacts and forecast by sector (COEDC, 2021). Regional coordination has allowed each partner to focus on their community's needs, share resources, avoid duplication of services, and contribute to regional recovery. According to those involved, the speed and effectiveness of the joint response would not have been possible without the existing relationships developed over the previous 15 years. These communities have been able to act quickly, leveraging existing relationships and structures to coordinate an effective response and recovery plan and prepare themselves to access future stimulus funding.

Recovery: The New Way of Doing Business — Collaborating on Medium- and Long-Term Recovery

It can be challenging for councils to prioritize emergency management in stable times while managing competing priorities. Public support for emergency preparedness and economic resilience is greatest following a disaster, so this is an ideal time to invest in joint emergency management. It is also an opportunity to strengthen your First Nation–municipal partnership for the long term. Collaborating on medium- and long-term economic recovery can result in enhanced economic outcomes for all partners, through efficient service delivery, increased access to stimulus funding, and coordinated regional planning. Formalizing your partnership can lead to collaboration in other areas, resulting in additional community benefits. Planning together should become the new way of doing business in your region. The Town of Slave Lake's Mayor Tyler Warman says, "create a box that someone else would actually have to destroy for the partnership to fail" (Mayor Tyler Warman, Town of Slave Lake, personal interview, June 11, 2020). The following best practices in preparing for long-term collaboration on emergency management and economic recovery are informed by the *Stronger Together Toolkit*.

■ Review and Strengthen Your Partnership

The recovery phase is the ideal time to review and strengthen your partnership. Conduct a joint debrief of your shared disaster response. What worked? What didn't? What could be improved? Review all aspects of your partnership, including emergency preparedness, response, recovery plans and strategies, joint communication protocols, and the structure of your shared table. Adapt and improve where necessary. Ensure your economic recovery strategy remains applicable in the post-disaster context. This is also the chance to connect recovery strategies with other stages of the emergency management continuum, such as detailing mitigation initiatives. Taking this opportunity to improve your capacity in all four stages will build greater economic resilience. See Chapter VIII of the *CTERR* (Hackman-Carty, 2019) for detailed descriptions of economic recovery strategic planning processes.

If the recent disaster was your first time collaborating, then this is your opportunity to formalize your partnership. Communities with a shared table should take care to communi-

cate clearly about how to postpone or continue managing the partnership's pre-disaster priorities. Communities may move through response and recovery stages at different speeds. If not already present, include guidance for emergency situations within the shared table's terms of reference.

■ Re-envision the Regional Economy

Long-term economic recovery creates an opportunity to reflect on how the regional economy can be built better. Create opportunities with your partners and external economic stakeholders to explore new shared priorities, inclusive procurement opportunities within adapted supply chains, inclusive and representative employment initiatives, upgrades to critical infrastructure and service agreements, and strategies for economic diversification. Align your shared approach to economic recovery: do your communities want to build back with mitigation as a priority, or is a quick recovery more important? See Chapter XI of the *CTERR* (Hackman-Carty, 2019) for a detailed description of economic diversification strategies.

■ Advocate for Resources

"Economic recovery plans and strategies are of no value to the public sector if there is no operational capacity to implement them" (Hackman-Carty, 2019, p. 7). First Nations and municipalities will have different access to federal, provincial, and territorial stimulus funds, and they should explore how to leverage all channels for maximum recovery and stimulus funding. In addition, partnerships should explore other areas of funding, such as local banks, credit unions, alternative lenders, foundations, the Canadian Red Cross, and co-operatives. A coordinated approach to advocacy will ensure all avenues for financing regional recovery are covered and the needs of each community are addressed. For resources available to support communities through COVID-19, see the resources section at the end of the guide.

■ Grow the Partnership Beyond Emergency Management

About partnerships, Reeve Murray Kerik of the MD of Lesser Slave River says, "if you ignore it long enough, it will go away, and you'll be back where you started" (personal interview, June 16, 2020). Partnerships need to be actively invested in and deepened. With a successful joint response and recovery, you may find there are other areas of interest for your communities to collaborate on. Chair of the CCRD Samuel Schooner said of the Nuxalk–CCRD–EMBC emergency management partnership: "The relationships we are building through collaborating on emergency management are important and will likely lead to many other projects and partnerships in the future." The following best practices for growing and deepening your partnership beyond emergency management are informed by the *Stronger Together Toolkit*:

- Convene a joint council-to-council meeting to discuss other shared priorities and set a vision for the partnership in areas of mutual interest. Make these joint council meetings regular to oversee your work and continue updating shared priorities.

- Work together to develop and sign a Friendship Accord or MOU, articulating the spirit of your partnership and shared vision (FCM, n.d.). These signed documents can be publicly displayed and celebrated annually. This is a great way to include new elected officials and staff in the partnership. See Tool #9 in the *Stronger Together Toolkit* for guidance on how to develop a Friendship Accord.

- Set up the partnership for long-term success by developing work plans that aim at concrete outcomes for your shared work. See pages 107–110 of the *Stronger Together Toolkit* for guidance on joint work planning.

- Make your relationship building fun, personal, and informal. Chief Roland Twinn of Sawridge First Nation, Mayor Tyler Warman of the Town of Slave Lake, and Reeve Murray Kerik of the MD of Lesser Slave River developed an annual tradition of taking a canoe trip together where they connect and address outstanding issues in their partnership. See pages 57–59 of the *Stronger Together Toolkit* for more ideas on growing and sustaining a partnership.

Two Case Studies: Sawridge First Nation–Town of Slave Lake–Municipal District of Lesser Slave River Partnership and Dene Tha' First Nation–Town of High Level Partnership

Responding to and recovering from massive wildfires in northern Alberta have created strong partnerships between First Nations and municipalities. Prior to the 2011 wildfires, Sawridge First Nation, the Town of Slave Lake, and the MD of Lesser Slave River did not have a culture of collaboration or partnership. Following the wildfires, the Government of Alberta convened the three communities and encouraged them to create the Slave Lake Regional Tri-Council to jointly manage over $60 million in recovery funds. After struggling to work effectively together, the chief, mayor, and reeve went for dinner and directly addressed the challenges they were facing. They recognized the need to build their relationships to co-manage the economic recovery effectively.

As part of their relationship-building process, the Tri-Council developed a consensus-style decision-making structure that shifted their approach from competition to collaboration (details on page 115 of the *Stronger Together Toolkit*). The elected leadership described the shift as "no longer keeping score", since not all recovery initiatives would benefit everyone equally, and decided to support one another's prosperity. They jointly funded, hired, and managed a staff person to lead the recovery efforts. Nine years after the disaster, the Tri-Council continues to meet, the communities continue to develop an ever-closer relationship, and they feel prepared to capitalize on joint opportunities when they arise. Working together is the new way of doing business, with substantial positive outcomes for each community. Further details of the Town of Slave Lake's experience in the economic recovery can be found in their Wisdom Gained report (NADC, 2013).

In the summer of 2019, the Chuckegg Creek wildfire forced the evacuation of many communities in northwestern Alberta, including the Dene Tha' First Nation and the Town of High Level. At that time, these communities had already been working together for a year through the CEDI program. With the shared experience and lessons learned from the evacuations, the partnership shifted the focus of their joint work to collaborative emergency management planning.

After identifying key areas for enhancing collaborative preparedness and resilience, this partnership prioritized three initiatives: developing an integrated regional emergency response plan to help address the jurisdictional and capacity gap in future emergencies; co-designing and building a multi-use evacuation/recreation centre that integrates feedback on the cultural needs of Dene Tha' community members and elders; and extending the water line from High Level to Dene Tha's neighbouring community of Bushe River.

Having invested in strengthening their relationship and having diverse and representative voices at the table through their formal joint working group, this partnership was well positioned to collaborate on economic recovery after the wildfires. Continuing to grow the partnership and capacity for joint planning will ensure they are prepared to respond to stimulus funding from other orders of government, and their joint initiatives will result in greater health and wellness outcomes for all.

CONCLUSION

This guide has proposed a process for First Nation-municipal collaboration on emergency management and economic resilience. It would be impossible for a single guide to address all of the nuances of governance, jurisdiction, capacity, and relationships that exist between First Nations and municipalities across Canada. However, the steps in this guide — alongside open and honest communication — can support relationships that will increase the economic resilience for all communities. This guide is only a starting point, and the hard work of collaboration is unique in every instance. For more resources to support this journey, please see below.

RESOURCES: FIRST NATION–MUNICIPAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY COLLABORATION

- The Government of British Columbia's *Emergency Management Planning Toolkit for Local Authorities and First Nations* is a thorough guide for developing emergency management plans for local authorities and First Nations. The B.C. Government has also produced resources specifically for First Nations in British Columbia: https://www2.gov.bc.ca

- A comprehensive toolkit for economic recovery and resiliency in the Canadian municipal context is available in the *Economic Developers of Alberta's Community Toolkit for Economic Recovery and Resiliency*: https://www.edaalberta.ca

- The First Nations' Emergency Services Society of British Columbia has detailed resources and templates for building the emergency management capacity of First Nations: https://www.fness.bc.ca

- The largest international archive of information about economic recovery, as well as templates, tools, and guidance is the International Economic Development Council's website: restoreyoureconomy.org.

- The Justice Institute of British Columbia has produced a toolkit on disaster resilience informed by *Indigenous Traditional Knowledge: Aboriginal Disaster Resilience and Traditional Knowledge*: https://cdrp.jibc.ca/resilience-knowledge-sharing-toolkit/

- For a detailed analysis of lessons learned and recommendations for economic recovery, see the report from the Rural Municipality of Wood Buffalo (KPMG, 2017). Another report about the same wildfire, *Rebuilding Resilient Indigenous Communities in the RMWB: Final Report*, highlights the experience of First Nations and Métis settlements,

providing recommendations that address the jurisdictional gap in emergency manage-
ment: http://atcfn.ca

- For an overview of on-reserve emergency management, see the Library of Parliament's *Emergency Management on First Nations Reserves* (Background Paper): https://lop.parl.ca

- Cando and FCM have compiled lists of resources available for both First Nations and municipalities in responding to COVID-19: http://www.edo.ca/cedi/financial-resources-table/financial-resources-covid-19.

- Cando (https://www.edo.ca) and FCM (https://www.fcm.ca) have many other resources on First Nation–municipal collaboration, including the *Stronger Together Toolkit*.

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APPENDIX 1
Overview of Similarities and Differences in Emergency Management for On-Reserve First Nations and Municipalities

For an overview of on-reserve emergency management, see the Library of Parliament's Emergency Management on First Nations Reserves (Background Paper). For an overview of the emergency management roles of local, provincial/territorial, and federal governments, see Chapter VII of the Community Toolkit for Economic Recovery and Resiliency.

Many nuances and complexities are created by the different jurisdictions and governance structures of local governments, as well as the unique circumstances of First Nations that are self-governing, operate under the *Indian Act*, within Treaty or on unceded territory. The table below speaks specifically about on-reserve emergency management. First Nations and municipalities who are interested in collaborating on emergency management should spend time sharing and learning about one another's unique jurisdiction and governance structures.

Emergency management jurisdiction and relationship with federal/provincial/territorial governments	
First Nations	The federal government has primary responsibility for on-reserve emergency management, since Section 91(24) of the Constitution Act, 1867 provides that the federal government has exclusive legislative authority over "Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians."[1]
	Only Indigenous Services Canada and Health Canada have mandated responsibilities to First Nations in emergencies. Indigenous Services Canada's National Emergency Management Plan states that ISC is responsible for ensuring that First Nations have access to emergency management services comparable to those available to provincial residents.[2] ISC does so by working with the relevant provincial/territorial government, as well as third-party actors, reimbursing expenses used to support First Nations during emergencies. In reality, communication and jurisdictional barriers mean that this standard is not always met.
	Health Canada supports First Nations to plan for responding to pandemics and other public health emergencies.
Municipalities	Provincial and territorial governments are responsible for emergency management within their jurisdictions. Municipal emergency management responsibilities are largely determined by provincial/territorial policy.
	Each province/territory provides mandates and guidance for municipalities to develop emergency management plans and training exercises. They also provide funding to support the development and implementation of these plans.
	Municipalities are responsible for requesting support from provincial/territorial governments during a disaster. The provincial/territorial government will then request additional support from the federal government if the response is beyond their capacity.

Governance in emergency management

First Nations The Chief of a First Nation is the primary decision-maker during an emergency. First Nations can declare a State of Emergency through a council resolution.

During COVID-19, many First Nations used Indian Act bylaws to enforce restrictions on movement to and from their reserves. This power comes from s. 81(1)(a) of the Indian Act, which empowers band councils to make bylaws "to provide for the health of residents on the reserve and to prevent the spreading of contagious and infectious diseases". These bylaws offer a greater ability to control movement than municipal counterparts have; however, there remains a challenge around enforceability of these bylaws.[3]

Self-governing First Nations or those that have opted out of the Indian Act have legislative and governance tools to also restrict movement on their land, but not through the Indian Act.

Municipalities Municipalities can declare a State of Emergency through a council resolution, which offers the mayor/reeve/warden the ability to do anything that is not contrary to law in enacting their emergency management plan. This could include:

- Mandating social distancing and face masks and closures of municipally owned spaces such as parks
- Restricting business operations
- Closures of premises

Unlike First Nations, there is a clear procedure and funding available for enforcing municipal bylaws.

Access to financial resources for emergency management and recovery

First Nations First Nations are generally lacking appropriate resources for emergency management, particularly for prevention and mitigation. Between 2009–2010 and 2012–2013, approximately 63% of funds from the Emergency Management Assistance Program[4] were spent on response and recovery, while only 1% was spent on prevention and mitigation, though that is changing.[5]

During and after a disaster, First Nations must rely on funding from the federal government (in some cases provincial/territorial governments also provide funding streams, but this is not the norm). These funds are often designated for specific purposes and do not provide much flexibility to meet the needs of post-disaster recovery. Funds often have strict reporting requirements that can be difficult for communities struggling with capacity shortages.

Additionally, there can be a lack of clarity in which funds First Nations are able to access. In the case of COVID-19, for example, First Nation businesses were unable to access the Canada Emergency Business Account, as they are fully owned by a First Nation and required income tax assessments, which on-reserve businesses do not file.[6]

First Nations are generally unable to go into debt to finance response and recovery initiatives. Since First Nations' revenues often come from owning businesses, the economic impact of business closures during disasters may have a disproportionately higher impact on First Nations than municipalities.

Municipalities Municipalities are generally lacking appropriate resources for emergency management. When response and recovery needs of a disaster exceed municipal capacity, provincial/territorial governments will assist.

Municipalities have a wider range of financial tools to respond to emergencies than do First Nations. For example, municipalities have own-source revenues from property taxes that offer greater flexibility than grant funding from provincial/territorial/federal governments.

Municipalities can also use these revenue sources to support businesses and residents during an emergency, for example, by deferring property taxes or utility bills during COVID-19.

Municipalities are also generally unable to go into debt to finance emergency management expenses.

Infrastructure and human capacity challenges during an emergency

First Nations	"For some First Nations communities living on reserves, managing and recovering from emergencies is made particularly challenging by socio-economic conditions, geographic location, and the frequency with which these events occur."[7] In general, many First Nations experience staff and fiscal capacity shortages that are accentuated during disasters. Many rural First Nations do not have basic infrastructure necessary to respond to disasters. This can range from mitigation infrastructure to prevent or reduce the impacts of flooding, to having fire hydrants to fight wildfires. Some examples of the impacts of inadequate infrastructure: • In the case of COVID-19, the lack of broadband infrastructure in many First Nation communities resulted in greater obstacles to residents and businesses than experienced in communities with consistent access to Internet. • Lack of fire hydrants and other infrastructure creates challenges for First Nations to properly access insurance for buildings and other infrastructure. • Inadequate and overcrowded housing during COVID-19 increases vulnerability. • Limited access to health and emergency services increases vulnerability. • Disrupted supply chains and restricted movement increases food insecurity.
Municipalities	In general, many municipalities experience staff and fiscal capacity shortages that are accentuated during disasters. Smaller rural municipalities struggle to properly resource emergency management, and face infrastructure challenges such as broadband connection issues, which has created additional challenges during COVID-19.[8] The direct relationship with provincial/territorial governments results in simpler and more structured supports during disasters, such as provincially run EOCs.

Responsibilities to business/industry and citizens during and emergency

First Nations	First Nations and municipalities have similar responsibilities to their business and industrial sectors. Economic development officials are the primary bridge between the private sector and governments and are responsible for supporting businesses and industry through disasters and into recovery. First Nations have additional direct responsibilities for the health and well-being of their citizens through the operation of health authorities. In many cases, First Nations are responsible for managing their on-reserve health facilities, while this is not the case for municipalities. In addition, the complex health demographics in some First Nation communities require increased attention during health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of the need to focus on health outcomes, First Nations have in many cases decided to delay the re-opening of their communities compared to the broader municipal timelines, which are based on provincial and territorial re-opening strategies.
Municipalities	Municipalities and First Nations have similar responsibilities to their business and industrial sectors. Economic development officials are the primary bridge between the private sector and governments and are responsible for supporting businesses and industry through disasters and into recovery. Municipalities are not directly responsible for the health outcomes of their citizens, which is instead managed provincially through hospitals and health authorities. Similarly, municipalities were able to follow the lead of the provincial and territorial re-opening strategies, focusing efforts on economic recovery, rather than directly on the health outcomes of their citizens.

NOTES

1. Collier, 2015, p. 2.
2. Indigenous Services Canada, Emergency management. https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1309369889599/1535119888656.
3. Nick Sowsun, "Solving the Indian Act by-law enforcement issue: Prosecution of Indian Act by-laws", *Olthuis Kleer Townshend LLP (OKT)*. https://www.oktlaw.com/solving-the-indian-act-by-law-enforcement-issue-prosecution-of-indian-act-by-laws/

4. Indigenous Services Canada, *Emergency Management Assistance Program*, https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/
    1534954090122/1535120506707
5. Collier, 2015, p. 8.
6. See Canadian Chamber of Commerce, n.d.
7. Collier, 2015, p. 1.
8. FCM, 2014.

STEPPING INTO THE RIVER
Learnings from Simon Fraser University Community Economic Development's Economic Reconciliation Framework Development

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INTRODUCTION

This reflection paper captures the learnings of Simon Fraser University's Community Economic Development (SFU CED) team. In Fall of 2019, we embarked on the process of creating a framework for economic reconciliation for British Columbia. The framework report documents a year's worth of learnings from convening with Indigenous thought leaders and practitioners in the economic sector across BC. It is both a snapshot of the current state of economic reconciliation, which includes participants' perspectives and experiences with non-Indigenous individuals and institutions, along with a vision for transforming the current economy. In order for reconciliation to be meaningful and truly transformative, it requires that non-Indigenous people see economic reconciliation as not only about changing relationships to Indigenous people alone, but rather completely reforming the economy by adopting Indigenous principles and wisdom.

As was brought up in our convenings, economic reconciliation is a journey, not an endpoint, and our actions need to start reflecting ongoing commitment to being in right relation-

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ship with one another. Rather than providing a blueprint to a "finish line", our framework invites readers to think of the economic reconciliation journey as being in a river. In a river, one is supported by the foundation of the riverbed, and yet open to the course and pace that the water is flowing. There are many stones to step on and move between, and any move we take has the capacity to create ripples of impact that surge through our communities. To be in the river is therefore to both welcome change and be part of the change.

A Note on Voice

This piece is written from multiple perspectives. Some reflections will be unique to Sxwpilemaát Siyám (Chief Leanne Joe), whereas others will be unique to Lily Raphael. Otherwise, the writers use "we" to speak of the team's collective experience in implementing this work.

WHAT WE DID

From the outset, this work has been grounded in the intention of exploring the elements of a future economy that is meaningful for reconciliation, centring the development of the framework in experiences, worldviews, and aspirations of Indigenous peoples across British Columbia. Our process consisted of a year of deep engagement to better understand and represent Indigenous views on economic reconciliation. This process consisted of generative dialogues with many Indigenous thought leaders and practitioners, as well as non-Indigenous individuals representing Indigenous-led organizations, across British Columbia. Stemming from the commitment to righting the historical wrongs of colonialism, and centring Indigenous ways of being and Indigenous economies, this work has been based on engagement with Indigenous leadership in the economic development sector.

Our dialogue sessions during 2020 included the following:

- **What Is Economic Reconciliation?**

- **The Role of Women and Matriarchs in Economic Reconciliation**
  Rematriation in relation to leadership, governance, and traditional laws and teachings, and the role of women in the new economy.

- **Traditional Governance Structures and Economies**
  Looking at how First Nations are balancing modern and traditional governance and economic development and influencing the transformation of a new economic system (GDP alternative = Local Well-Being Driven Economies).

- **Economic Reconciliation and Non-Indigenous Stakeholders**
  Identifying actions that need to be taken by non-Indigenous residents, municipalities, and regions to engage in economic reconciliation.

- **Cross-Provincial and Regional Collaboration**
  How do we make advances together for Economic Reconciliation? How do we remove the silos and work collaboratively for the collective benefits of Indigenous communities and future generations?

- **Mapping the Ecosystem of Economic Reconciliation Actors and Initiatives**

- **Investment Readiness for Indigenous Communities**

The SFU CED team also internally reflected on this work constantly. Sxwpilemaát Siyám wrote articles alongside this process, through SFU CED's blog series Transformative Stories (https://www.sfu.ca/ced/economic-reconciliation/transformative-storytelling.html).

LEARNINGS AND REFLECTIONS

There is no singular definition of economic reconciliation
While it is not necessarily surprising that there is no consensus on how to define economic reconciliation in a province that overlaps with 204 First Nations, hearing this message over and over had a significant impact in how the framework took shape.

At the same time that economic reconciliation is multi-dimensional, there is a need to distinguish between superficial or token acts of reconciliation and more meaningful or deeper forms of it. Attempting to find that definitive line is challenging because reconciliation is so contextual. A major component of this work has always been to advocate for reconciliation at the local or regional level, according to First Nations' and Indigenous peoples' cultural knowings. It is therefore impossible for the framework to affect transformation on its own, given that reconciliation is largely about the organic and emergent nature of relationship-building between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and communities.

The Role of SFU CED?
During our engagement sessions, some tension arose around the role of SFU CED in facilitating these dialogues and working towards economic reconciliation. There were questions raised about how the outward, community-facing focus of SFU CED's economic reconciliation initiative related to SFU's larger commitments to reconciliation and decolonization as a colonial institution. Though this has not always been the case, our program has become more active in internal conversations on SFU's reconciliation journey over time, and we recognize that there is more work to be done.

Change or Transformation?
An ongoing question for SFU CED is whether First Nations' goals are mostly centred around wanting to participate in the larger dominant economy, or do they want the economic system to shift? Do they want to directly influence the economic space through an Indigenous lens and from the perspective of an Indigenous worldview and knowledge framework? In asking these questions, quite directly, without some additional space for curiosity and visioning, there was a notable difference in experiences of what Indigenous stakeholders are wanting for their economies, reconciliation, development, and so on. Thus, at that time, not every convening participant had a clear answer to these questions.

At the local level, Indigenous people, leaders, and practitioners have to confront the lack of knowledge, tensions, tokenizing, and racism that happens in their day-to-day work.

Practitioners working on the ground are directly affected by current procedures and dynamics between non-Indigenous and Indigenous players regionally. Amidst that dynamic, we recognize that each First Nation community is trying to get the most out of the current economic system to meet current community needs, which are generally overwhelming, and these on-going responsibilities keep leadership and community from larger and longer-term visioning. Our convening dialogues revealed that there is a need for on-going space to ask these questions not only at a national and provincial level or in an academic context, but also at the local practitioner level, and we hope to continue to be a part of creating those spaces for visioning across these different scales and contexts.

Multiple Voices, Multiple Audiences

Writing as Women of Colour

In the written framework, we openly and honestly share the challenge of engaging in this work as women of colour. Since efforts and expressions of reconciliation, decolonization, equity, and "inclusion" have often been token acts, it was difficult to remain hopeful that this process would bring small or incremental change, let alone catalyze any significant transformation. The emotional labour of writing on these topics has not been an easy task, especially during a time when so many injustices, acts of violence and racism, and destruction have been laid bare and in need of grieving. As much as we invite the readers to welcome their own discomfort in going through this document, we also had to confront our own discomfort and challenges in the process of writing it. For the work of Reconciliation to be real, deep, and transformative, we have learned that we need spaces for grieving and discomfort as part of healing and forgiveness.

Who is the framework written to and for?

In particular, it was challenging to arrive at a decision about who this framework would be for. It was difficult to address multiple audiences, as our readers would be Indigenous individuals with different life experiences, community needs and relationship priorities, along with non-Indigenous individuals with varying levels of literacy and familiarity with settler colonialism in Canada, Indigenization, decolonization and reconciliation. This meant that we wanted to honour what our participants shared, which required commitment to truth-telling about Canadian history and what economic reconciliation currently looks like from the perspective of First Nations economic development practitioners and thought leaders. On the other hand, we needed to make the framework inviting and accessible to non-Indigenous readers who may not have much knowledge or understanding of things like reconciliation, the role and governance structure of First Nations, ongoing inequities and injustices experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada, the value in partnering with Indigenous Nations and entities, how to build trust and/or heal from mistrust, and so forth.

Having primarily only engaged with individuals from Indigenous-led organizations and initiatives during our convenings, we later realized that we did not know whether what we have shared would align with the capacities and readiness of non-Indigenous practitioners to commit to deeper economic reconciliation initiatives. However, we also did not want to write in a way that would reinforce tokenizing or box-ticking practices of non-Indigenous entities. Whereas many resources for practitioners come in the form of guidebooks or toolkits, our commitment to encouraging regionally based reconciliation grounded in unique

cultural frameworks of each First Nation meant that we wanted to move away from the tendency to provide prescriptive recommendations. Instead, it was our goal to write in a purposeful decolonized way that requires larger shifts in mindsets for practitioners, leaders and organizations, which non-Indigenous readers may not have as much comfort level in reading. But being uncomfortable is a necessary part of transformation. This was no easy task, as it is hard to write and translate the Indigenous worldview. Wisdom can easily get lost in translation when needing to be expressed in a western format such as a compartmentalized and highly structured report written in the English language.

Enacting Two-Eyed Seeing

In Elder Albert Marshall's words, Two-Eyed Seeing means: "To see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing, and to see from the other eye with the strengths of Western ways of knowing, and to use both of these eyes together" (Bartlett, Marshall & Marshall, 2012, p. 335). The Two-Eyed Seeing approach has been advocated for use in research with Indigenous people, as it creates a space for Indigenous and Western ways of knowing to come together using the best of both worldviews to support understanding and solve problems. Although its application is widely found in environmental conservation and stewardship efforts, it has been challenging to grasp what that actually looks like in practice, as it pertains to the economic sector. Similar to reconciliation efforts, it can be challenging to discern when genuine Two-Eyed Seeing is taking place, as opposed to attempting to retrofit a pre-existing Western structure or process with Indigenous knowledge or input. In thinking about Reconciliation as a process that leads to transformation, Two-Eyed Seeing seems required for the space it provides for co-creation.

Two-eyed seeing has been helpful in shaping the initial path of this initiative, one in which we are committed and accountable to Indigenous communities and worldviews while supporting a shift in non-Indigenous mindsets and actions. While it is still yet to be determined how this framework will be received and utilized, let alone to what extent it will be transformative, we look forward to capturing those insights so that our work can evolve based on greater input.

Are Frameworks Useful?

A question that remains present for us is whether or not frameworks are effective. Institution-based professions seem to draw on frameworks as a way to shape and guide their particular work, providing some parameters and constraints that are undoubtedly helpful in focusing and prioritizing organizational efforts. And yet, when shared in reports and plans, frameworks can appear clunky, dense, and like they are attempting to oversimplify the highly complex, messy, and interconnected reality of the work. Each of the writers has some additional thoughts below on the effectiveness of frameworks and their colonial nature.

■ Sxwpilemaát Siyám

The colonial nature and effectiveness of "frameworks" was always especially challenging for me, as they can be overly prescriptive and don't leave a lot of room for fluidity and space for curiosity, questioning, sharing, etc. Many times, I stated that if we were in "ceremony", you would just witness all of what I was trying to achieve in the writing of this economic reconciliation framework document. There is so much that cannot be encapsulated in just "words alone" in a document ... you have to see it, feel it, hear it, and be a part of it, to

truly "know". Only in ceremony would one grasp the depth, complexity, and interconnectedness of our culture, language, governance, worldview, teachings, etc. Another way of teaching, learning, and sharing in our cultures is through storytelling, songs, and doing things on the land together. These ways provide an open and fluid space for interpretation, based on context, the teachers and learners, and where you were.

■ Lily Raphael

The online Cambridge Dictionary offers the following definition of framework: "a system of rules, ideas, or beliefs that is used to plan or decide something". While it is in our nature as humans to come up with different ways to create meaning around our existence, and in our complex social systems we inevitably come up with frameworks that guide our way of being in the world, there is something about the way in which we use frameworks in an institutional setting that seems to flatten and diminish learning from experience and from being in relationship to one another. Perhaps it is the way in which they are visualized, which can be useful in helping to make sense of highly complex systems, but risky in attempting to reduce the act of navigating complexity to a neat and orderly step-by-step process. In this way, frameworks may risk reinforcing box-ticking behaviour, when really what is needed is more of an embrace of uncertainty, and more space to imagine other possible realities beyond what our current system provides.

Although the final product is called a Framework for Economic Reconciliation, we are open to the possibility that this is not actually a framework. If being called a framework comes with the expectation that we provide a clear and definitive blueprint for how to engage in truth-telling, healing, relationship-building, and repair, then surely this framework will not be useful. This is why we have likened commitment to economic reconciliation to being in a flowing river. To be in a river is to allow oneself to be transformed, which is what is needed for deep, meaningful reconciliation to occur.

WHAT WOULD WE DO DIFFERENTLY?

Ideal circumstances would be to be able to do this work in ceremony. SFU CED would start with an institutional ceremony, in which university leadership would grasp the richness and depth of this work, sharing wealth, knowledge, culture, and who we are. "The work" is in ceremony, and doing it with university leadership would help to lay the groundwork for institutional support.

If given the opportunity under non-pandemic circumstances, we would also spend more time in communities across the territories. We would connect with First Nations communities and practitioners to understand their experiences, aspirations, and requirements in order for economic reconciliation to support their sovereignty. Similarly, we would connect with non-Indigenous neighbours and get a feel for what level of readiness they currently have in order to engage in economic reconciliation. If appropriate, we would also consider the opportunity to host feasts in the communities with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders. Through feasting and in ceremony, partners could decide together what the journey will look like.

At the onset of the pandemic, community leadership and practitioners were in need of prioritizing response and recovery measures for their communities, and our dialogues were

understandably not a high priority at that time. With the uncertainty that came at the beginning of the pandemic with regard to travel and in-person engagements, we were slow to react and pivot our community engagement approach. If we could re-design our approach, we would have redirected resources for more interviews or focus groups, in which we could also provide more time and space for co-creation and visioning activities in order to welcome individuals into the head and heart space of transformation.

We learned quite a lot from this process, and it has given us the chance to understand what we can do differently for next steps.

WHERE TO NEXT?

As we wrap up this phase of our process, we have some questions that remain:

- How can we catalyze or accelerate the steps needed to get to relationship-building?
- How can we support smaller communities in reducing Indian Act dependency, through good governance and sovereignty building?
- What do First Nations envision for their own communities? How does this affect their ability to answer the questions posed in the framework?
- How does change happen with regard to shifting commitment levels of non-Indigenous actors? What's it going to take?
- How will non-Indigenous stakeholders be held accountable for their commitments to economic reconciliation?

As we move into the next phase of this work, we hope to move towards action co-research.

- **Educate and enable local municipalities and other entities in the economic development sector to engage in economic reconciliation.** Mayors, councils, economic development officers, property owners, and business leaders all need a higher "Reconciliation IQ" to develop the relationships necessary for healing, planning, and development with their Indigenous neighbours. To do so, they need access to Indigenous perspectives on economic reconciliation, tools for personal and community-based change, and case studies to spark ideas and innovations.

- **Test, learn about, and communicate successful approaches to community based economic reconciliation through practitioner-based research.** It is critically important that new work be done in economic reconciliation, and for the learnings to be shared across communities. For us, engagement, direct practice, and storytelling led by grassroots Indigenous leaders are the essence of "research" and can be more insightful than typically dissociated forms of academic research. So this project will seek to increase the opportunities for, and wider acceptance of, applied practitioner-based research.

- **Rematriate economic reconciliation thinking and planning.** Traditionally, women were the leaders in Indigenous societies. In economic reconciliation we are committed to recentring Indigenous women in the work of leading and communicating social change.

This means creating more opportunities for their work, increasing their economic development capacities, and amplifying their voices.

We hope to continue to identify places where connections could be strengthened. Economic reconciliation is a collective effort, and it's going to take all of us.

ANISHINAABE BIMISHIMO
An Indigenous Company that Understands the Sovereignty of Jingle Cones

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STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

Émilie McKinney
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INTRODUCTION

First Nation business organizations and entrepreneurs have existed for thousands of years. In Canada, the number of contemporary Indigenous organizations has grown exponentially over the past 10 to 20 years. In the early 1990s there were an estimated 6,000 Indigenous organizations in Canada, and the number now stands at over 30,000 (Weir, 2007). Anishinaabe Bimishimo — located in rural Manitoba — is one of 27,000 small First Nation businesses operating in Canada (Weir, 2007). Rooted in traditional values, community sup-

port and engagement, and ensuring that First Nation peoples' voices are represented, Anishinaabe Bimishimo strives to provide its jingle cone product with traditional respect. Moreover, Anishinaabe Bimishimo contributes to First Nation community development by providing inexpensive and locally produced jingle cones while offering its community members employment and training opportunities. In shifting the paradigm of jingle cones being manufactured by non-Indigenous companies, Anishinaabe Bimishimo is the only Indigenous-owned Canadian company that produces jingle cones. By understanding the context of starting a small business with no credit, no equity, and being denied by every bank across Canada, Anishinaabe Bimishimo's CEO Émilie McKinney provides a blueprint of what is necessary to overcome challenges as a First Nation woman entrepreneur in Canada. This paper explores the successes and challenges of developing the first jingle-cone manufacturing company. Anishinaabe Bimishimo's history, products, and the industry in which it operates are examined. While a personal reflection strengthens Anishinaabe Bimishimo's commitment to becoming a successful Indigenous economic enterprise, it also serves to remind that the company is based on traditional First Nation values. By examining Anishinaabe Bimishimo's process of becoming a successful small business in rural Manitoba, the company presents itself as a model to all First Nation entrepreneurs.

INDUSTRY CONTEXT

Anishinaabe Bimishimo was founded on the principle of First Nation traditional values: "the whole point of starting Anishinaabe Bimishimo was to bring the authenticity of the jingle back to North America" (personal communications, November 5, 2020). Up until Anishinaabe Bimishimo's opening in 2017, people within the powwow community received their jingle cones from distributors in Taiwan. It did not make sense to McKinney as to why a sacred dance such as the jingle dress included jingle cones that were manufactured in a foreign country by non-Indigenous producers that were making an economic profit off of Indigenous people. As a result, McKinney started Anishinaabe Bimishimo not for the monetary profit; rather, she created the business for the people (personal communications, November 5, 2020).

Although Anishinaabe Bimishimo was created to be the supplier of local jingle cones in North America, it was not long after Anishinaabe Bimishimo's inception that many jingle-cone producing companies sprang into existence. *Missouri River*, *McPherson*, and *Teton Trade Cloth* are the main competing jingle-cone producers in North America (personal communications, November 5, 2020). It is important to note that while all three companies are operated by non-Indigenous people, they claim on their websites that they are Indigenous-owned, which ultimately exacerbates harm inflicted upon not only Anishinaabe Bimishimo, but Indigenous consumers as well. McKinney (2020) argues that "buying licensed Indigenous art from non-Indigenous designers is not the same as supporting authentic Indigenous works." Unfortunately, non-Indigenous companies make profit by exploiting Indigenous cultures and ceremonies; Haida designer Dorothy Grant (2020) agrees: "[T]here is a history of abuse, of theft of everything that belongs to Indigenous people, and this is another format of that." As a result, Anishinaabe Bimishimo's competitors *Missouri River*, *McPherson*, and *Teton Trade Cloth* have appropriated the jingle cone and have made an economic profit off its Indigenous consumers in which they disregard the sacred meanings, teachings, and stories associated with the jingle cone (personal communications, November 5, 2020).

Non-Indigenous companies profiting off Indigenous forms of artwork is evidently a common occurrence that has impacted consumers' choice as to who they decide to buy jingle cones from. When presented with an array of companies that supply a product, consumers within the powwow industry buy from companies that are Indigenous owned and operated (personal communications, November 5, 2020). McKinney (2020) states, "[C]ustomers will pick the authentic Indigenous-owned jingles as opposed to knock-off jingles that have been imported and are owned by non-Indigenous businesses." She further acknowledges that non-Indigenous businesses selling jingle cones is a form of cultural appropriation. Cultural appropriation has been defined as "when a person from one culture takes culturally distinct items, aesthetics or spiritual practices from another culture and mimics it ... They adopt it as their own without consent, permission or any cultural relationship to the object or practice, in order to make money" (Brant, 2020). In effect, the cultural appropriation of jingle cones has been viewed as inflicting harm upon Indigenous people, their culture, and their communities. Competition within the context of jingle cone production is also defined by the sound of the jingle cones. Emily McKinney distinguishes the quality of jingle cones by using the reference of "the louder, the better!" (personal communications, November 5, 2020). McKinney states "customers value the sound of the jingle where the louder the cone is, the better quality it is" (personal communications, November 5, 2020). By providing the loudest jingle cones, customers choose and stand by Anishinaabe Bimishimo.

While it is important to identify the nature of jingle cone competition in the powwow industry, it is critical to understand how the supply and demand of jingle cones is impacted by the time of year and geographic location. First, the jingle cone industry is significantly contingent on pow-wows. During the spring and summer months, when many powwows are taking place across North America, the demand for jingle cones is extremely high due to artisans making regalia (personal communications, November 5, 2020). Conversely, the demand for jingle cones is low during the fall and winter, which contributes to a high supply of jingle cones during this time. Anishinaabe Bimishimo capitalizes on this reality by emphasizing their efforts at marketing their jingle cones during the spring and summer (personal communications, November 5, 2020). Second, the demand for jingle cones differs by geographic location. There is a high demand for jingle cones in Ontario, Minnesota, and Alberta, which reflects the passion dancers in these areas have towards the jingle dress dance (personal communications, November 5, 2020). Dancers in provinces and states, such as Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and New York, also express similar interest in the jingle dress dance, but the demand for jingle cones is highly dependent on Indigenous population within their region (personal communications, November 5, 2020). Anishinaabe Bimishimo meets the demand of jingle cones coast to coast by shipping via Canada Post in Canada and via the United States Postal Service in the United States.

Ultimately, the industry in which Anishinaabe Bimishimo competes is impacted by powwows, geography, and the time of year.

HISTORY, ORGANIZATIONAL CHART, AND PRODUCTS

The traditional teachings of the jingle dress have played a vital role in the creation of Anishinaabe Bimishimo. It is important to understand that without considering the significance of the jingle cone to the jingle dress, McKinney would not have started Anishinaabe Bimishimo. The jingle dress is a healing dance, and the shape and sound of the jingles is to

spread healing, whether dancing for one person or a whole nation (Johnson, 2020). The dance gets its name from the rows of metal cones called *ziibaaska'iganan*, which are attached to their dresses that make a distinctive sound as they dance (Johnson, 2020). Accordingly, once she realized jingle cones were manufactured in Taiwan, McKinney understood that such jingle cones did not have traditional meaning; therefore, she did not consider the sacred teachings of the jingle dress (personal communications, November 5, 2020). Thus, before creating Anishinaabe Bimishimo, McKinney had to first consider elders' teachings, ask for approval from elders, and also consider community members' ideas (personal communications, November 5, 2020). Consequently, the tradition in which Anishinaabe Bimishimo is built has been defined by respect not only for elders and community members but for the sacred jingle dress itself. CEO Émilie McKinney followed traditional protocol; as a result, she has proven that the history of the jingle dress is intertwined with her company's values and ensures that the jingle cone is respected, nurtured, and properly taken care of.

Every small-business organization has some form of an organizational structure. Anishinaabe Bimishimo operates under an informal organizational structure and is recognized as an Aboriginal Economic Development Corporation. Showcased by the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association, the majority of the 260 Aboriginal Economic Development Corporations operating across Canada are considered to be small businesses, meaning they have less than 100 employees (White, 2016). For Anishinaabe Bimishimo, it has two employees and two business owners; the ownership is shared between Émilie McKinney and her mother Natalie Foucart: 51% and 49%, respectively (personal communications, November 5, 2020). Until McKinney turns 21, Foucart legally signs off on all paperwork. Currently, Anishinaabe Bimishimo's organizational chart appears to be small; however, as the company continues to grow, the chart will too.

In addition to understanding Anishinaabe Bimishimo's organization, it is also important to understand the products the company provides. In 2016, Anishinaabe Bimishimo only carried jingle cones as its sole product. However, events such as COVID-19 and Trump's increased tariff on steel have created challenges for Anishinaabe Bimishimo in exclusively selling jingle cones. This had led McKinney to become creative with products and "to think outside of the box in order to stand out and make sales during trying times" (personal communications, November 5, 2020). Subsequently, in addition to jingle cones, Anishinaabe Bimishimo added new products, such as apparel and Boychief blankets (Anishinaabe Bimishimo website, 2020). The apparel Anishinaabe Bimishimo provides are adult and kid sized t-shirts and hoodies. Additionally, the company also carries Boy Chief Woollen Blankets that range from $200.00–$400.00 CAD (Anishinaabe Bimishimo website, 2020). Most important, Anishinaabe Bimishimo provides consumers with many different types of jingle cones. Specifically, there are different sizes of cones and lids that are either plain or embossed and that come in either brass, copper, nickel, or ruby red. Altogether, Anishinaabe Bimishimo's overall products are jingle cones, apparel, and Boychief blankets (Anishinaabe Bimishimo website, 2020).

CHALLENGES AND SUPPORTS

The journey of operating Anishinaabe Bimishimo has been accompanied by both defeats and triumphs that have forced CEO Émilie McKinney to constantly persist with innovative ideas. From the outset, that the odds have been stacked against Anishinaabe Bimishimo was

clearly indicated when every bank across Canada denied their requests for start-up loans (personal communications, November 5, 2020). Equally important, world events have risen that have hindered the company's development and are identified as Trump's increased tariff on steel imports and the development of COVID-19. Nevertheless, CEO Émilie McKinney has persevered in the face of all challenges by utilizing supports aside from banks, lobbying efforts across provincial and federal governments, and adapting her company's products suitable to the pandemic. Above all, Anishinaabe Bimishimo has proven that despite obstacles that could have led to bankruptcy, the company has persevered.

First Nation individuals face numerous financial challenges when opening and managing their businesses. Likewise, it is widely recognized that young entrepreneurs are more likely to identify access to financing as an obstacle to business growth than older entrepreneurs (Government of Canada, 2016). Combined, the obstacles that faced Émilie McKinney when she wanted to start up Anishinaabe Bimishimo were huge. First, McKinney's initial challenges were related to her status as an underage First Nation woman who had no equity, no credit, and no savings (personal communication, November 5, 2020). Underlined in *Barriers to Aboriginal Entrepreneurship and Options to Overcome Them* (The Conference Board of Canada — Northern and Aboriginal Policy, 2017), access to financing is the top challenge identified by Indigenous women entrepreneurs. It is hindered by eligibility criteria for equity investment, collateral, proven credit history, full-time involvement in the business, and lack of availability of micro-loans (The Conference Board of Canada — Northern and Aboriginal Policy, 2017). Also highlighted by The Conference Board of Canada (2017), First Nation businesses have cited that being a new, high-risk business, having too much debt or a poor credit rating, dealing with bureaucracy, and being First Nation are some of the leading barriers inhibiting economic development. Similarly, Émilie McKinney and her mother experienced all of the same impediments in starting Anishinaabe Bimishimo. McKinney notes:

> The biggest challenge in starting Anishinaabe Bimishimo was being able to financially start the business. In the business world, you must be rich. Myself being 16 with no equity, no credit, no savings, and my mom being a single mom with 8 kids was a challenge. Every bank across Canada said no to us, even the First Nation banks. For that reason, it became a racial thing.

Indeed, the early challenges faced by Anishinaabe Bimishimo threatened its establishment. McKinney then approached organizations such as First People's Economic Growth Fund and Women's Enterprise Center in helping her start up Anishinaabe Bimishimo. Both organizations provided financing support to Anishinaabe Bimishimo as the company proved that its business plans were not only economically viable but would promote growth to Indigenous communities across Canada.

Further challenges included facing government economic policies relating to world trade among nations. Specifically, the 2018 trade war between the United States and Canada presented challenges to McKinney's business operations. In 2018, Trump imposed a 25% tariff on steel and a 10% tariff on aluminum imports, and Canada responded by placing tariffs on U.S. food products (Swan, 2018). Anishinaabe Bimishimo, whose steel supplier was located in Chicago, was gravely impacted as the tariff affected McKinney's supply chain immensely. To shed light on its effects, Anishinaabe Bimishimo had lost two-thirds of its inventory, and the prices to reorder steel went from $30,000 to $45,000 because of the tariffs (personal communications, November 5, 2020). With the loss of inventory and an increased

cost of doing business with the United States, McKinney then lobbied provincial and federal governments to lift the tariff. Recorded in the Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba (2019, p. 1449), opposition leader Wab Kinew stated that his government is committed to lobbying to try and get Émilie and Natalie an exemption. Ultimately, their efforts succeeded in lifting the surtax that had originally impeded Anishinaabe Bimishimo's access to steel. In effect, Anishinaabe Bimishimo's dilemma is one example of how a small business absorbs the blows of government economic policies, in particular relating to trade between nations.

Finally, the detrimental effects of COVID-19, which has hindered many small businesses across Canada, also affected Anishinaabe Bimishimo. COVID-19 has drastically altered the Canadian economy and has had a profound impact on the ability of businesses in Canada to operate (Statistics Canada, 2020). Powwows are the main source of marketing for Anishinaabe Bimishimo (personal communications, November 5, 2020). Without the ability to physically go to powwows and market their products, Anishinaabe Bimishimo's sales decreased dramatically. Consequently, in the absence of social gatherings, McKinney had to "maneuver our way to change our marketing to get more sales" (personal communications, November 5, 2020). The lack of sales resulted in Anishinaabe Bimishimo delivering new products, such as apparel and Boychief blankets. By offering new products in the face of COVID-19, Anishinaabe Bimishimo combatted the severe effects that the pandemic had on its business operations.

While Anishinaabe Bimishimo has faced many challenges in its operations, they also have developed many supports that are rooted in community development. Anishinaabe Bimishimo understands that small businesses and entrepreneurship strengthen the development of First Nation communities and their economies. As such, it should be noted that First Nation small businesses and entrepreneurs are supporting and promoting First Nation self-governance and economic development in important and valuable ways. Émilie McKinney recognizes this when she notes that "it is important to hire Indigenous peoples when it comes to Indigenous businesses because you are helping regenerate your community's economy which further supports not only your community's economic development, but its ability to self-govern as well" (personal communications, November 5, 2020). Therefore, when band administrators and planners discuss First Nation self-government, self-sufficiency, and community economic development, it is important that they consider how small business and entrepreneurship can add positively to the movement (Weir, 2007). Small businesses such as Anishinaabe Bimishimo ensure that their entrepreneurial activities are committed to enhancing First Nation self-governance and the economic well-being of First Nation communities that in turn support its business as well.

In addition to the enhancement of First Nation economic development and self-governance, Anishinaabe Bimishimo supports community development through its ability to give back to the people. For example, when Anishinaabe Bimishimo released its red jingle cone, it committed to giving a portion of the proceeds to support families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. McKinney understands the importance of giving back to the community, which is clearly shown in her statement during her MMIWG campaign: "[I]t is something that I wanted to do, something new to show more of a positive influence to other people and organizations and businesses that when you host an MMIWG event, a portion of the proceeds should go to the families who are affected" (personal communications, November 5, 2020). Additionally, proceeds from the sales also went to community groups within Manitoba Swan Lake First Nation Women and Men's Group, Manitoba

Keewatinowi Okimakanak and the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre (personal communications, November 5, 2020). By committing Anishinaabe Bimishimo to support Indigenous families and people, the company understands the significance of community support.

COMMUNITY GUIDANCE

First Nation entrepreneurship is the creation, management, and development of new ventures by Indigenous people for the benefit of Indigenous people (Weir, 2007). It prevents the loss of community resources and money, and provides employment and career development for community members wishing to remain in their communities or territories. Likewise, Anishinaabe Bimishimo hires First Nation employees and stays committed to only hiring First Nation people. The company hires people to assist in small labour tasks "for when people that are low on cash and need some help, I hire them for a few days of work" (personal communications, November 5, 2020). Additionally, Anishinaabe Bimishimo is in a joint venture with Swan Lake's high school that directly benefits its students by providing them with work in exchange for necessary credit hours to graduate. In this way, Anishinaabe Bimishimo is creatively providing members with needed, relevant, and accessible job and experience opportunities. Consequently, by providing necessary job and training opportunities, Anishinaabe Bimishimo provides positive outcomes for First Nation individuals and communities.

The concept of entrepreneurship has been viewed by First Nation people as overly individualistic, anti-community, and more of a Western-European government strategy than an Indigenous approach to economic and community development (Weir, 2007). For this reason, Anishinaabe Bimishimo has resisted Western-influenced commerce by fundamentally ensuring it was to be built upon traditional First Nation values. The company has done this by engaging with First Nation elders, women, and community members in all affairs that Anishinaabe Bimishimo is involved with. When creating her company's name, McKinney physically went to Ontario to consult with First Nation elders, women, and community members in Whitefish Bay, because that is where the jingle dress originated. She recalls, "prior to actually creating the company, I went to Ontario and asked elders for their traditional blessings and if it was okay with me creating Anishinaabe Bimishimo as I wanted it to be authentic as possible." McKinney has ensured that the voices of First Nation people are included in Anishinaabe Bimishimo's operations and has done so by allowing members to voice their perspectives when presented with possible product launches. For example, prior to launching different coloured jingle cones (red, turquoise, etc.), McKinney consulted with elders and women jingle dancers if it was appropriate to do so. Many of their responses embodied traditional perspectives regarding only silver cones; however, they did not overly oppose the contemporary style of coloured jingle cones. They provided guidelines in what colours were acceptable and clearly indicated that black jingle cones represented death and should not be included (personal communications, November 5, 2020). Ultimately, McKinney followed their wisdom regarding jingle cone colours and launched red jingle cones in honour of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. In effect, Anishinaabe Bimishimo has built itself on sustaining and strengthening First Nation culture, tradition, and community values by ensuring meaningful engagement with all First Nation people.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

After finishing my interview with CEO Émilie McKinney, I understood on a whole new level the sacrifices she has made for Anishinaabe Bimishimo to become what is it today. Émilie McKinney — who is also the same age as me — is somebody I have watched from a distance accomplish many great things with Anishinaabe Bimishimo. I, however, did not fully understand how much she has put into the company, and how much she has done to ensure that the company is as 'Indigenized' as possible.

With many organizations appropriating and benefiting from Indigenous culture, it is difficult to tell (seeing only a label) which company has actually taken the proper measures in ensuring that Indigenous culture has been traditionally respected. Often, one sees First Nation individuals boasting about non-Indigenous companies that sell Indigenous items. Likewise, similar to McKinney's beliefs, it is understood that Indigenous items must be traditionally respected and properly taken care of. Not only has Anishinaabe Bimishimo ensured that its products encompass traditional aspects, it has committed the company to embodying traditional aspects as well. As a result, in undertaking this assignment, I have learned that Anishinaabe Bimishimo is one of the few First Nation companies that embodies true First Nation values: it gives back to the community, makes sure all of our voices are represented, and places women and elders as the leaders of our community.

In developing this paper I also have had to consider many of the perspectives regarding Indigenous economic development. I had to consider past readings and assignments regarding capitalism in order to understand why Anishinaabe Bimishimo emphasizes the importance of the community over individualism. Likewise, in producing this paper, my beliefs have resonated with McKinney's — neither of us believes in emphasizing the individual at the expense of the collective. By considering my past readings, discussions, and assignments, I come to see alternate viewpoints. The unique context of Indigenous economic development relies on seeing all perspectives of different scenarios; as a result, it has contributed to my growth in understanding how Indigenous economics works. Overall, the business of Anishinaabe Bimishimo has shed light on not only First Nation entrepreneurship but also how Indigenous economics can effectively be intertwined with First Nation traditional values.

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Indigenous Centre for Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Michele Baptiste

PROJECT MANAGER, INDIGENOUS CENTRE FOR INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP
AT THE CITY OF TORONTO

Artist rendering of ICIE exterior — Dundas and George St. view

Source: Images provided by the Indigenous Design Studio of Brook McIlroy

Michele Baptiste is Bear Clan and a member of the Algonquin First Nation of Pikwakanagan in Golden Lake, Ontario. She is a visionary, result-driven leader with over 25 years of promoting and stimulating Indigenous community development at the local and national levels.

The Indigenous Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship ("ICIE") in Tkaronto (Toronto) will be an Indigenous-led, City-owned space designed to give Indigenous communities an opportunity to advance their entrepreneurial aspirations by providing business programming, advisory services, mentorship supports, meeting and shared co-workspace, community event space and connections to business networks. The development of the ICIE presents a significant opportunity to connect First Nations, Inuit, and Métis entrepreneurs across Toronto, Ontario, and Canada to critical business development resources and to one another.

An estimated 70,000 First Nation, Inuit, and Métis peoples call Tkaronto home. Economic success is recognized as a key plank in driving reconciliation, decolonization, and self-determination for Indigenous Peoples. Along with education, training, and the removal of systemic barriers to employment, a key component of Indigenous economic empowerment is the development of an entrepreneurship eco-system to support Indigenous-owned and operated businesses. The City of Toronto is working with the local Indigenous community to develop the ICIE to meet this need.

Indigenous perspectives, from both residents and entrepreneurs, have been central to the process of imagining, co-developing, and now building a business incubator to encourage and support Indigenous entrepreneurship in Toronto.

The idea for an Indigenous business incubator in Toronto began as a community conversation in 2012 with local Indigenous community members and the local City Councillor. A study was then commissioned by the Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto to assess the feasibility of creating an Indigenous Business and Cultural District along Dundas Street East. The Aboriginal Economic Development Project held a series of consultations and interviews with Indigenous leaders and business owners in Toronto. These consultations culminated in the Indigenous community's recommendation to create a business incubator in Toronto in order to develop and support Indigenous entrepreneurs.

In 2018, The Pontiac Group, an Indigenous consulting firm, was retained by the City of Toronto to lead additional consultations with the Indigenous community in Toronto to further develop the model for the incubator — now called the Indigenous Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (ICIE). Engagement with Indigenous entrepreneurs and residents on the ICIE's vision, business needs, and physical layout included:

- Design-Thinking Workshops — a series of design-thinking workshops were developed and launched to engage Indigenous entrepreneurs;
- Indigenous Entrepreneur Online Survey — the development and launch of an online survey to gather input from Indigenous entrepreneurs from across Canada; and
- One-on-One Consultations — a large number of one-on-one consultations were undertaken with Indigenous entrepreneurs and professionals, as well as other Indigenous community members.

By embedding Indigenous voices into these community consultations, this process provided key Indigenous design elements to inform the planning of the space, parameters for the establishment of the ICIE Leadership Advisory Circle, and broad guiding principles to inform the development of the ICIE.

The Leadership Advisory Circle (LAC) was formed in 2019. It consists of local Indigenous entrepreneurs, business professionals, community leaders, and Elders and has been providing advice to the City of Toronto on key principles to inform the project and the process to develop the ICIE.

RESPONDING TO THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION CALLS FOR ACTION

This project is a central pillar of the City of Toronto's collective reconciliation commitments and strategies and concretely addresses the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 92, which states: "Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects." The ICIE project has been endorsed by the City of Toronto's Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC) and Toronto City Council.

THE SPACE

The ICIE facility will be situated in a street-accessed commercial and community space located in a multi-storey hotel and condominium building at 200 Dundas St. E. Indigenous cultural elements are designed and embedded throughout the interior and exterior space. When construction is complete, it will comprise over 22,000 square feet of commercial space spread over three floors:

- Ground floor: Retail (4,789 sq. ft.)
- Second floor: Event space and meeting rooms (10,933 sq. ft.)
- Third floor: Office/Work spaces (7,673 sq. ft.)

Ground Floor

Reflective of the communities served, the ground floor is the primary entrance to the Centre, with its own dedicated doors, lobby areas, and elevators. There are three principal spaces on the ground floor — one of which is the main entrance and lobby. The use of these spaces will be determined by the operator of the ICIE.

Artist rendering of ICIE second floor community event space

Source: Images provided by the Indigenous Design Studio of Brook McIlroy

Second Floor

The focus of the second floor will be creating spaces of engagement and embedding Indigenous art and design from the reception area to the offices, and with a focal piece in the event space. This includes all the meeting spaces and boardroom.

Through a collaboration with Ryerson University's Design Fabrication Zone (one of the four incubator programs of the Creative Innovation Studio) and Creative Technology Lab, the ICIE project will engage Indigenous students who will work with Indigenous designers from the Indigenous Design Studio at Brook McIlroy to design, build, and install a **traditional lodge** structure in the second floor community event space.

The lodge is a free-standing, pavilion-scale gathering space; its function is to act as a flexible, mobile, and more intimate meeting space within the larger atrium. In concept it references the form of both the Anishinaabe Lodge and the Haudenosaunee Long House. Made of wood, it has an ovular domed structure with built-in perimeter seating. It can segment into three to four independent modules that can be positioned throughout the atrium, independent of each other, to form cove-like seating spaces that may be reserved for Elders, special events, and ceremonies.

Third Floor

The third floor is accessible to members and is isolated from noise by any activities on the second floor, including the event space, by a catwalk with floor to ceiling windows.

A series of permanent and day-use desks are located throughout the floor; they include daily rentable hot desks. The administration offices are also located on this floor. A training room with flexible seating for up to 20 people will also be located on this floor.

Additional information is available at the City of Toronto website: <https://www.toronto.ca/business-economy/business-start-ups/incubators/indigenous-centre-for-entrepreneurship/>

THE ICIE PROGRAM MODEL

The purpose of the ICIE is to provide culturally safe spaces, connections, supports, and resources for Indigenous entrepreneurs. The goal is to offer a suite of supports, space, and programming that will be relevant and useful for Indigenous entrepreneurs, whether they are at the pre-incubation or complete build-out stage of their business or social enterprise journey. The ICIE is meant to be an entrepreneurial resource centre by and for the Indigenous community, providing a focused set of programs, advisors and funding pathways for Indigenous ventures in an engaging, culturally supportive space.

The following are some of the key elements that consultations with Indigenous communities and business leaders have identified as desired components of the ICIE; however, in the spirit of self-determination, these elements will be reviewed, built upon, and refined by the Indigenous-led operator once it assumes responsibility for the facility and its programming:

• Support Indigenous entrepreneurs in Toronto, Ontario and beyond through coaches and mentors, and spaces for work collaboration and special events that align with Indigenous values and cultures.

- Be a leading centre of accessible online learning supporting Indigenous entrepreneurs regardless of their stage of growth or venture type (for-profit, not-for-profit, social venture, etc.).

- Provide a space that facilitates and encourages cross-community and cross-market-sector (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) engagement focusing on economic empowerment that leads to a better understanding of Indigenous culture and increased economic opportunities.

- Provide youth with an opportunity to explore their entrepreneurial aspirations through learning programs, coaching, and mentorships.

- Help navigate funding sources and build financial skills to manage a business.

- Combat feelings of isolation by creating a place that fosters a sense of community for Indigenous entrepreneurs.

GOVERNANCE

In order to ensure that the ICIE reflects the many unique values, principles, and needs of an incredibly diverse Indigenous business and entrepreneur community, it will be governed and operated by an Indigenous-led operator.

The LAC provided advice on a number of governance options, including working with an existing Indigenous organization or establishing a new Indigenous organization. The LAC recommended that the ICIE governing body should have the following attributes:

- Be an Indigenous-led entity;

- Be able to make decisions independently, using Indigenous ways of governance;

- Have skills and experience related to the operations of the ICIE, including entrepreneurship, innovation, and property management; and

- Be established through a transparent process.

It is anticipated that the governing model for the ICIE will be in place by 2022. With unexpected delays due to the pandemic, the opening date for the ICIE is estimated to be in 2023.

FIRST PEOPLES ECONOMIC GROWTH FUND
A Case Study of a Successful Aboriginal Financial Institution

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Van Penner

STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

CREATION OF THE FIRST PEOPLES ECONOMIC GROWTH FUND (FPEGF)

Historical Developments

The establishment of the FPEGF cannot be understood in isolation, but rather as a specific event in the longstanding relationship between First Nations groups in Manitoba and the Provincial Government in the pursuit of Indigenous CED. Importantly, FPEGF CEO Ian Cramer is intimately embedded in these negotiations, having begun his work in the field of First Nations economic and business development with the South East Tribal Council in 1982 (personal communication, November 6, 2020). The coterminous development of Mr. Cramer's professional career and the conditions out of which FPEGF was born began with "the First Nations of Manitoba trying to convince the Province of Manitoba who has the, and this is a contested issue, authority to license gaming in Manitoba ... to open up gaming to First Nations development and ownership" (personal communication, November 6, 2020). The contested jurisdiction in the area of gaming brought together both Indigenous communities seeking to develop casinos (and associated infrastructure) and the Province, eventually prompting "a request for proposals (RFP) for the development of up to five First Nations casinos" (Cramer, personal communication, November 6, 2020). This watershed provincial legislation resulted in only two First Nations casino developments being able to proceed, with the hugely impressive South Beach Casino development fully occupying the labour of Mr. Cramer until his eventual transition to the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (personal com-

munication, November 6, 2020). Mr. Cramer described the new role as primarily "from a political standpoint more ... than what I was used to ... from a developmental standpoint ... [A] little different, but exciting" (personal communication, November 6, 2020). In his new position at the AMC, Mr. Cramer encountered "the vision of the chiefs at that time, and the Grand Chief of that time, to think beyond just building another casino and saying well what else do we really need out there to have a different and a better impact on growing the First Nations business community in Manitoba" (personal communication, November 6, 2020). This keen attention to building durable institutions on the part of the AMC leadership led to an extensive study on challenges faced by Manitoban Indigenous entrepreneurs, "and what was identified as one of the pieces missing was a financial institution that First Nations could use to have access to capital for business development" (Cramer, personal communication, November 6, 2020). Ultimately, this process of providing First Nations with access to capital "grew out of the whole gaming discussion between the AMC and the Province of Manitoba" (Cramer, personal communication, November 6, 2020) and provided the necessary relationships and dialogue to establish the FPEGF.

Start-Up Challenges

Having identified lack of access to capital as a primary challenge, the AMC and the Province formed a group "to work on development of some sort of organization that would address that need" (Cramer, personal communication, November 6, 2020) and ultimately selected the AFI framework as the appropriate vehicle for change. In pursuing the AFI framework, this group soon discovered the tripartite challenges of maintaining respectful relationships between shareholders, establishing sustainable political governance structures, and negotiating meaningful funding arrangements as particularly relevant. This process was exhaustive and "probably took 3 years" (Cramer, personal communication, November 6, 2020). The breadth of differences within the field of AFIs is vast, yet this due diligence was an important example of combined development in Indigenous CED, and its value cannot be understated. To Mr. Cramer, the content of this study is best described as "a lot of lessons learned from other organizations that may have preceded First Peoples, and maybe mistakes that were made which we didn't repeat" (personal communication, November 6, 2020). This inquest by Mr. Cramer and others "looked across Canada to see if there were other successful organizations that we could learn some best practices from" (personal communication, November 6, 2020). While Mr. Cramer cited the Clarence Campeau Development Corporation as "the closest organization that we modelled a lot of our programs after" (personal communication, November 6, 2020), the FPEGF maintained a unique quality by synthesizing many existing and new ideas into the Manitoban context.

Beginning with the relationship between the AMC and the Province, Mr. Cramer emphasized several necessary conditions to maintaining productive dialogue, including "negotiating agreements between the AMC and the Province which respected the AMC and the First Nations in Manitoba and their history and relationship to Canada" (personal communication, November 6, 2020). Acknowledging the complicated and problematic history between Indigenous Nations and Settler-Colonial governments while pursuing contemporary relations through a Nation-to-Nation paradigm is important for effective communication. One instance of the importance of this approach was in the mission statement and guiding principles of the FPEGF. "[A] lot of negotiation went into the principles of the fund itself" (Cramer, personal communication, November 6, 2020), and the principles of geographic,

environmental, and health justice clearly reflecting this commitment. Ultimately, through their experience with the gaming negotiations and effective communication strategy, Mr. Cramer and the working group could only succeed if "the leadership on both sides was excellent and really paramount to making this work" (personal communication, November 6, 2020).

Another priority was a governance structure that would allow the organization to be run with focused, genuine commitment while mitigating the depredations and clientelism that can plague corporate and bureaucratic agencies. Mr. Cramer described the makeup of the board as "a business board and not a political board, so it's made up of people with different business skills and when you bring them all together it's a very strong business and economic development board" (personal communication, November 6, 2020). He also emphasized how the board composition is informed by, and reinforces, the communicative methods outlined earlier: "the board of directors is appointed jointly, so it has to be an agreement by the Province and the Assembly as to who sits on the board" (personal communication, November 6, 2020). The success of this method is compounded by the fact that the board is volunteer-based, which "for a board of directors of a financial organization [is] extremely rare, and also an extremely positive and strong part of our governance structure" (Cramer, personal communication, November 6, 2020). By structuring the board of directors in a way that has allowed for business skills to be shared in a creative and considerate manner, the FPEGF has been able to pursue coordinated planning, with important checks and balances embedded in the governing structure.

Lesson Learned

The challenge of addressing the inaccessibility of capital for Indigenous CED is presently beyond the scope of a single AFI; however, the story of the creation of the FPEGF reveals how smaller challenges related to organizational structure and stakeholder unity can be overcome by diligence and tenacity. By pursuing effective planning and visionary leadership, as demonstrated by both the AMC and the Province of Manitoba, organizations that are tasked with remedying profound issues can see broad success in their field. While the FPEGF has been able to build a strong foundation and a solid track record, the challenge of providing capital to First Nations communities remains a prescient issue. Mr. Cramer highlighted the fact that the FPEGF "can only lend up to fifty percent of what a business needs" and are consistently "looking at ways to increase our capital pool and do more lending, and bigger lending" (personal communication, November 6, 2020). While this case study has demonstrated how the FPEGF has overcome past barriers, the present challenges that AFIs face will require new solutions and will form the next chapter in the history of Indigenous CED with plenty of content.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- While enhancing access to capital is the primary challenge that Aboriginal Financial Institutions (AFIs) seek to address, other challenges, such as a paucity of business education and capacity, are also addressed both explicitly and tangentially. In what ways do AFIs engage with these challenges?

- What are the benefits/limitations of attracting capital from each of the following:
  - Municipal/Provincial/Federal Colonial governments.
  - Indigenous Communities/Tribal Councils/Multi-community organizations.
  - Private Financial Institutions/Commercial Banks/Venture Capital

- Are there examples of AFIs in Manitoba or Canada pursuing policies different from those of the First Peoples Economic Growth Fund (FPEGF)? If so, what lessons can the FPEGF learn from these firms?

- Where are AFIs situated within Indigenous Community Economic Development (CED) broadly? Are they more suited to certain types of development? If so, which types?

- Review the guiding principles of the FPEGF. Do you agree with them? Are there other considerations you think should be included? If so, what programs/modifications would be necessary?

- With the rapid growth of the Indigenous population in Manitoba a well-known fact, AFIs will likely see demand appreciate considerably in the coming decade. Given this situation, should the existing regulations/funding structures be altered to increase organizational responsiveness to this demand? How could this be achieved?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION / FURTHER STUDY

To properly confront the challenges outlined earlier, the FPEGF must be contextualized with a rich, though not exhaustive, account of both the historical and contemporary conditions that support/constrain the options available to AFIs broadly. This includes a description of the factors that restricted Indigenous CED's access to capital and that resulted in the geographic inequality embedded in banking provision, as well as intersections with issues such as capacity building and the role of governments in creating an environment in which AFIs can thrive. Finally, it is important to note that there is a vast deficit of scholarly literature that identifies market failures in banking provision as a barrier to economic development for marginalized communities or evaluates the emancipatory potential of public banking and finance (PB&F) initiatives. Hopefully, readers of this study will be inspired to correct this considerable academic oversight.

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

To understand AFIs and the choices of those who govern them, one must always be aware that "addressing the socio-economic gap for Indigenous peoples in the context of reconciliation" (NIEDB, 2018, p. 8) is the ultimate end. Approaching this challenge means confronting disparities at both the individual and community levels, which in combination will create "economic development based on Indigenous values and knowledge as well as principles of sustainability and conservation" (Kuokkanen, 2011, 276). By acknowledging and supporting both forms of development, individual and community, AFIs like FPEGF allow for broad and variable approaches to business and community development. However, despite this broad array of forms that Indigenous CED can pursue, many of the same barriers are likely to be faced, with access to capital being prominent among them. Numerous sources cite the

importance of this barrier, inasmuch as "access to capital is the lifeline of any business and crucial for the development of Indigenous businesses" (NIEDB, 2018, p. 11). This problem is highlighted in statistical analyses, such as the one conducted by the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, which discovered that "access to equity or debt capital remains a challenge for about one third of Aboriginal business owners across the country" (NACCA, 2017, p. 4). This disparity is not an accident; it is the product of specific historical processes related both to the development of the Canadian political economy and the inherent structure of market-based private finance.

Socio-Economic Challenges

Orthodox financial lending practices are predicated on carefully analyzed risk assessments that account for all manner of factors contributing to the success or failure of potential loan repayment. However, these measurement tools ignore critical contextual and historical conditions that tend to inflate the risk calculations of First Nations communities, who thus struggle to provide the necessary developmental assistance. This oversight of First Nations' historical marginalization is evident in metrics such as the *Community Well-Being Index* developed by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), which "measures a community's well-being, education, labour force activity, income, and housing situation" (CCEDNET, 2016, p. 8). This metric has found that "of the 100 lowest performing communities listed on Canada's Community Well-Being Index, nearly all of them (96) are located in First Nation jurisdictions," (CCEDNET, 2016, p. 8) which is a clear function of historical underdevelopment and government neglect of reserve communities. This discrepancy in well-being outcomes is a direct result of the dual deficits in infrastructural and human investments by government bodies, both of which hinder "one's ability to effectively operate a business and negotiate transactions with financial service providers and government programs" (NACCA, 2017, p. 10). As well, investment and capital attraction, particularly in rural First Nations, is frustrated by the fact that "business operations typically require amenities such as paved roads, serviced lots, fire services, healthcare facilities, and industrial-scale water and sewage systems" (CCEDNET, 2016, p. 8).

Additionally, the dearth of educational investment, particularly in business-related fields, has prompted multiple initiatives seeking to promote capacity development for First Nations individuals lacking relevant skills and experience. While it should be obvious that "business skills and expertise are fundamental building blocks for Indigenous businesses' success and economic readiness," (NIEDB, 2018, p. 12) the connection of this inadequacy to the prior concern can be keenly summarized as being "partly due to lack of access for post-secondary education opportunities within, or near, their communities" (NIEDB, 2018, p. 12). This general lack of business-relevant skills makes processes required for loan acquisition difficult and has forced many communities and entrepreneurs to hire third party consultants which "can result in a questionable return on investment" (NAEDB, 2015, p. 16) due to the transience and lack of specific familiarity involved. These capacity challenges are compounded by the immense degree of "difficulty [in] keeping updated on the details of the numerous federal, provincial, and local programs that are available" (GC, 2003), which are disjointed, isolated, and lack coordination. Ultimately, these twin infrastructural deficits are the first condition contributing to the difficulties that Indigenous entrepreneurs experience when trying to finance business development.

Financial Challenges

Another barrier to accessing capital for Indigenous communities is immense inequality in the distribution of financial service branches, with large swathes of the country being isolated from financial service providers. This vacuum has allowed predatory lenders to garner disproportionate market share in many First Nations communities, resulting in exorbitant interest rates and transaction fees. This trend is represented in a recent study from the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA), which found that "the four major banks in Canada (i.e., the Royal Bank of Canada, the Bank of Montreal, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, and Scotiabank) collectively have less than 50 Aboriginal branches, banking outlets, or banking centres" (NACCA, 2017, p. 11). This startling statistic becomes all the more troubling when put in terms of physical geography, which reveals that "the chartered banks do not have branches in most communities across Canada's North" (Ketilson/Brown, 2009, pp. 1–2). While institutions such as credit unions have sought to correct this market failure by implementing "non-traditional lending programmes aimed at providing business loans for individuals, groups, or organizations that do not qualify for traditional business financing" (Ketilson/Brown, 2009, p. 20), the regional specificity credit unions occupy has maintained spatial disparities. This situation has allowed the influx of predatory financial firms into these areas, a complex that is backed up by "several recent surveys of individual financial practices [which] suggest that Aboriginal individuals disproportionately frequent fringe financial institutions" (NACCA, 2017, p. 16). While this lack of access to adequate personal financial services may only seem tangentially related to the scale required in business investment, predatory financial lenders "trap their clients with high transactional fees, thus limiting their ability to save and not contributing to building or improving the client's credit" (NACCA, 2017, pp. 15–16). In summary, lack of access to equitable personal financial services has disproportionately affected Indigenous individuals, which in many cases works to constrain the entrepreneurial opportunities available.

Legal Challenges

Finally, Canada's problematic colonial history has resulted in many embedded pieces of legislation that have either explicitly or implicitly (or both) stifled Indigenous CED and entrepreneurship. Chief among these is the *Indian Act* of 1876, specifically section 89, which "states that property located on a reserve, such as housing, 'is not subject to charge, pledge, mortgage, attachment, levy, seizure, distress or execution'" (NACCA, 2017, p. 22). The continuation of this policy "undermines First Nation borrowers' ability to offer collateral that is vital for accessing commercial loans" (CCEDNET, 2016, p. 11), inasmuch as minimum equity requirements for entrepreneurial development are generally unlikely to be filled with savings alone. The perseverance of this legislation, and others of the same ilk, is especially confounding given numerous government admissions that "First Nations told us that the Indian Act processes are burdensome" (GC, 2003).

The challenges described earlier continue to be the most obdurate and relevant to the lack of capital accessibility for First Nations business, and Indigenous CED as a whole, and are critical to contextualizing the operations of contemporary AFIs such as FPEGF. Ultimately, it is clear that solving this challenge requires action on multiple fronts, each of which includes different actors and stakeholders. Encouragingly, the identification of these problems has encouraged a broad array of solutions and prescriptions that seek to empower organizations like FPEGF in their work to eliminate these barriers.

SOLUTIONS

Aboriginal Financial Institutions (AFIs)

With the preceding conditions in mind, AFIs can be understood as a central mechanism supported by Indigenous communities and settler governments as a means of correcting the supply of capital to Indigenous entrepreneurs. AFIs are best described as lending institutions "created to provide developmental financing to Aboriginal entrepreneurs who were unable to access business financing from mainstream institutions" (Ketilson, 2014, p. 41). The process that differentiates AFIs from traditional lenders is the "approach of supporting the viability of a business, taking a flexible stance on security requirements, and managing risk by building capacity" (NACCA, 2017, p. 4). While this description of AFIs is generalizable, the specific forms they take in terms of scope, governance, and funding arrangement vary greatly within the field.

One effective mechanism for communicating the differences between AFIs is by comparing two prominent AFIs active in Manitoba — the previously profiled FPEGF and the Métis Economic Development Organization (MEDO). The first major difference reflects the population targeted by each organization, with the MEDO focusing on people of Métis background and who are thus concentrated in more urban centres. This is contrasted with FPEGF, which works with First Nations groups across the province by explicitly acknowledging the need to assist specific regions on the principle that "a portion of the Fund will be targeted for projects originating in rural and northern Manitoba" (FPEGF, 2020).

In terms of governing structures, the MEDO has "incorporated itself as a for-profit corporation" (Paradis, 2017, p. 40), which contrasts with the more atypical non-profit structure of the FPEGF. However, the for-profit nature of the MEDO must be understood through the fact that it has "made an Indigenous government — the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) — its sole shareholder" (Paradis, 2017, p. 40); thus, it has its surpluses subject to political control. This structure means that the governance of the MEDO is subject to political control via the MMF, and thus has unilaterally imposed directorship and guiding principles that can adapt to prevailing Métis political sentiments (Paradis, 2017, p. 40). This structure contrasts with the previously outlined FPEGF governance structure, which is an independent, volunteer body that must be negotiated between the Province and the AMC.

As well, both organizations have negotiated very different funding structures, with the MEDO being funded directly by the MMF, causing it to be "often described as the MMF's version of its own 'crown corporation' for economic development" (Paradis, 2017, p. 4). This allows for flexibility in the organization's budget, inasmuch as shared initiatives and projects between the two ensure that both organizations can invest as they choose, within their capital stock of course. This contrasts with the FPEGF, where, despite AMC intervention being similar in nature to that of the MMF, the provincial funding arrangement "changed to be a set amount every year as opposed to a percentage of gaming profits" (Cramer, personal communication, November 6, 2020). Importantly, Mr. Cramer applauded the efficacy of both arrangements in satisfying the imperative "not just to quickly slap together something to access capital immediately but to really do your homework to make sure it's got a long-term thought behind it" (personal communication, November 6, 2020). This emphasis on a stable, sustainable funding model is important not just for AFIs themselves but also to clients seeking to pursue the leverage principle, which will be discussed later, and to organizations generally. Finally, the funding models of both organizations deviate from the most frequent arrangement in the sense that "most of the AFIs across the coun-

try are funded federally" (Cramer, personal communication, November 6, 2020) as a result of the federal jurisdiction over Indigenous affairs, which presents a different set of challenges and opportunities.

How Can AFIs Be Supported?

The contemporary literature on AFIs not only translates their structure and challenges, but offers a wide array of policies and programs that can assist their autonomy, efficacy, and scale. These solutions include changes within AFIs themselves, third parties, and relevant government bodies; yet all serve to positively contribute to increasing the capital stock accessible to Indigenous populations.

Beginning with actions initiated within AFIs, the task of building capacity and improving financial literacy fits well with the developmental nature of AFI loans. While the FPEGF already treats relationships with entrepreneurs as "more hand in hand, to develop their idea to a degree" (Cramer, personal communication, November 6, 2020), this practice can be provided more accessibly, both through AFIs and otherwise. One example of the assistance provided by FPEGF to clients is via "[sharing] some of our due diligence and why we like this project" (Cramer, personal communication, November 6, 2020) with traditional lenders in order to leverage the FPEGF funds into the entirety of the investment needed. Systems like these have resulted in NACCA suggesting expansive, holistic policies, such as "financial literacy training[, which] could become a prerequisite to accessing financing for new entrepreneurs; or alternatively ongoing financial capability development could be required during the duration of the loan period" (NACCA, 2017, p. 39). While FPEGF also boasts Aftercare and Skills Development programs, the expansion and proliferation of these features throughout the industry would fill a pressing need and appreciate the success rates of both lenders and borrowers (FPEGF, 2020).

As well, the challenge of growing the capital base of an AFI, as communicated by Mr. Cramer earlier, will require effective communication and planning with governments and social investors. With every $1 lent by AFIs contributing to $3.60 in gross domestic product (GDP), governments should cultivate the great potential and knowledge that AFIs display; yet this will require political organization and outreach on behalf of AFIs and their allies (NACCA, 2017, p. 8). In conjunction with government outreach, AFIs should work "to capture the AFIs role in the social economy and investigate the potential to attract social impact investors" (NACCA, 2017, p. 46) as another means of resolution.

Additionally, assistance can come from the development of third party organizations and firms allied with AFIs in their pursuit of Indigenous CED. One example that would help promote AFIs and credit unions to provide individual financial services would be "by establishing a deposit insurance corporation" (Ketilson/Brown, 2009, p. 50), which would reduce the initial costs associated with creating savings accounts. By expanding and encouraging non-predatory lending at the individual level, important education in financial literacy and planning would be extended into jurisdictions where information at present is wholly lacking. Another recommendation involves the expansion of one or more Indigenous Credit Portals (ICP), which works "by increasing the presence and visibility of credit" (NACCA, 2017, p. 41). Pioneered by the Forrest Green Group, the logic of these organizations is that "by reporting transactions that aren't currently being reported individuals will have the opportunity to increase their credit records without substantial additional effort" (NACCA, 2017, p. 41). Developments like this that work towards improving measurement techniques within

Indigenous CED are critical for minimizing uncertainty and allowing for more informed decisions in relation to loans as well as success measures generally.

Third, governments maintain the ability to support the diffusion and scaling of AFIs in many key ways while expanding the efficiency and efficacy of their current programs targeted at providing Indigenous entrepreneurs with requisite capital. The role of the federal government in addressing existing legislation, such as the aforementioned *Indian Act*, should be obvious as repealing this legislation would greatly reduce the constraints faced by Indigenous communities regarding fiscal planning. In conjunction with eliminating harmful existing legislation, the federal government should organize new legislation around promoting "ways for First Nation governments to leverage on-reserve property taxation, own-source revenues, and a strong land base to gain access to capital markets and gain control over financial management as well as lands management" (NACCA, 2017, p. 43). Importantly, encouraging this development does not have to take legislative form, with the transition of existing targeted government programs into AFIs being an efficient way of administering loan programs to Indigenous communities. This process would also serve to increase the transparency and dissemination of existing programs due to the fact that AFIs "have the best understanding of the needs of Indigenous business, and are better positioned to deliver programming" (NIEDB, 2018, p. 12). Allowing AFIs and Indigenous communities to distribute these services would also reinforce the Nation–Nation relationship that was a critical success factor in the development and success of FPEGF. As well, many sources have propounded the development of a loan-loss guarantee for AFIs through the federal government as a way of encouraging the exponential growth of financial leveraging and lending that AFIs can pursue. While a project of this nature was piloted in the form of the 2008 *Loan Loss Reserve Program* established by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, AFIs were left out of the initiative, which has been slowly phased out in recent years (NACCA, 2017, p. 43). The expansion of a program of this nature towards AFIs would go a long way in engendering confidence in Indigenous business development and enticing conventional lenders to engage more thoughtfully and directly with Indigenous CED generally.

Scale and Impact

Finally, in order to contextualize the scale and magnitude of these organizations and issues, several facts about AFI operations should be provided to encourage readers to pursue further study and engagement with these enterprises. As of 2017, the 59 AFIs present in Canada facilitated $320 million in capital to small and medium sized Indigenous businesses around the country. Furthermore, the exponential growth of this sector has resulted in a cumulative $2.5 billion in direct capital supplied since 1985, comprising a total of 44000 loans. With a 95% repayment rate, these operations have proven to be an efficient, effective, and scalable driver of the national economy (NACCA, 2018, p. 7).

CONCLUSION

To conclude, AFIs such as FPEGF are addressing a challenge to Indigenous CED with deep historical, structural, and legislative roots; however, the creativity and vision embodied in the FPEGF case study reveals the dynamic mechanisms that AFIs can use to topple barriers on the way to their ultimate goal. In providing access to capital for Indigenous businesses

that face socio-economic, legal, and financial barriers, these organizations are addressing an important, and growing, portion of the Canadian economy while empowering communities who have faced disproportionate neglect. Encouragingly, the operations of AFIs can be aided by new reforms, such as promoting best practices within the organizations themselves, developing third party allies, and lobbying for a more equitable set of legislative regulations. Ultimately, the optimism and growth within the industry is best communicated in the words of Mr. Cramer, reacting to the present: "I think that bodes well for us looking forward into the future and being able to tell a good strong story here at First Peoples of overall success" (personal communication, November 6, 2020).

FURTHER READING

In addition to the sources cited in this paper, the resources listed below will help readers understand the emancipatory power of alternative financial arrangements.

Epstein, G., & Uğurlu, E.N. (2020). Are Bankers Essential Workers?. *Catalyst*, *4*(2), 33–83.

> Excellent article on mechanisms that can be used to provide marginalized communities with financial services, along with historical examples.

Brown, K., & Ketilson, L.H. (2009). *Financing Aboriginal Enterprise Development: The Potential of Using Co-operative Models*. University of Saskatchewan. online: https://usaskstudies.coop/documents/occasional-papers/financing-aboriginal-ent-dev.pdf.

> Excellent piece outlining the intersections between cooperatives and AFIs and the potential for collaboration between the two.

Purpose Capital & UBC Sauder Centre For Social Innovation and Impact Investing. (2018). *Impact Investing in the Indigenous Context*. online: https://www.sauder.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/2019-04/Impact%20Investing%20in%20the%20Indigenous%20Context%20%20Executive%20Summary%20-%20FINAL.pdf.

> Working paper outlining important connections that AFIs can make to impact investing conglomerates.

Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. (2020). *National Perspectives on Indigenous Prosperity*. online: https://www.ccab.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/CCAB-Report-1-web.pdf.

> Study on the intersections of AFIs and AEDCs, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive enterprises.

Rohan, S. (2019). *Advancing Reconciliation in Canada: A Guide For Investors*. Responsible Investment Leadership. online: https://reconciliationandinvestment.ca/2019/04/25/investorguide/.

> Paper outlining the considerations, values, and steps required to successfully and respectfully pursue reconciliation through investing.

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Introduction

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David Newhouse

In this Issue, we present two articles that highlight the importance of collaborative efforts in two situations: the first dealing with Indigenous poverty; the second dealing with COVID-19.

The first article, "Engaging the Indigenous Supply Chain during the COVID-19 Pandemic" (David Carrière-Acco), focuses on the value of Indigenous–Government collaborative action in mobilizing an Indigenous supply chain network to support Canada's COVID-19 response. The lessons learned from the Indigenous Business COVID-19 included the need to create a database of Indigenous suppliers as well as a concierge service that bridges buyers and Indigenous supplies.

The second article, "Insights into Community Development in First Nations" (Dockstator et al.), presents the results of a six-year study, the Poverty Action Research Project, involving five First Nations on reserve communities. The study reinforced the value of community-based, community-directed, and community-planned development efforts as the most significant factor in successful community economic development projects.

Engaging the Indigenous Supply Chain during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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David Carrière-Acco

PRESIDENT OF ACOSYS CONSULTING

ABSTRACT

This article relates lessons learned about Indigenous supplier engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic. It explores how the Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), and the National Indigenous Organization partnered to form a COVID-19 supplier taskforce to drive PPE and COVID-related service contracting opportunities to Indigenous suppliers to help businesses survive a prolonged economic shutdown. It was successful when both governments and organizations found a way to work together. Challenges included determining ways to support long-term working relationships and agreements, developing required tools and processes, and identifying contracting opportunities. This article describes the journey partners took under the leadership of Cando. Finally, the article concludes with actions taken by the taskforce to ensure that Indigenous suppliers have a place in Canada's economic recovery.

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Federal Government called all Canadian businesses to action to increase production of personal protective equipment (PPE), to support Canada's purchases in response to COVID-19. Since the call was made, several National Indigenous Organizations have partnered up and created a 100% Indigenous-led Taskforce to mobilize Indigenous suppliers, who then responded overwhelmingly to either manufacture supplies such as hand sanitizer, gowns, and masks, or retool their businesses to do so (Canada, n.d. *b*).

The initial release to government buyers, who purchase goods and services for their department with the support of Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) and Indige-

nous Services Canada (ISC), resulted in more than $6 million of business towards registered Indigenous suppliers for purchases of hand sanitizer, disposable masks, and sanitizing wipes to support the reopening of government offices (Canada Trade Commissioner Service, n.d.). In addition, over 427 Indigenous suppliers have registered on the database. The database is now the largest publicly available single source for anybody who wants to buy PPE and medical-related services from certified Indigenous suppliers and manufactures. As Canada moves through the third wave of COVID-19 cases, and possibly will be hit by a fourth wave because of the Delta and Lambda variants, Indigenous suppliers are ready to respond and can supply or service any private industry client, public services offices, hospitals, clinics, retail businesses, etc., as they prepare to open to the new normal or work through case spikes (Canada, n.d. *b*). However, this exposed several challenges and obstacles for both the Federal Government and the National Indigenous Organizations as they quickly mobilized to respond to the growing need for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and services, especially in Indigenous communities. As one of the taskforce members succinctly put it, "We have to build the plane as we fly it." In other words, during a crisis, Government and NIOs had to learn as they went along. Also, the pandemic has exposed government buying behaviour and Indigenous organization culture with respect to their willingness to work as a cohesive unit.

Despite the challenges, Indigenous suppliers responded overwhelmingly. They either reorganized their supply chains to acquire the PPE and sanitizing products or retooled their businesses to manufacture PPE gowns and masks, hand sanitizer, etc. For example, during the summer of 2020, both AMI Medical Supply Inc. and Dreamline Canada, B.C.-based and Alberta-based firms, respectively, seized the opportunity and were awarded contracts to supply 3-ply non-medical disposal masks to the Government of Canada. Another example of companies pivoting to producing sanitizing products was Thompson Distillery in Kahnawake. The company pivoted from making spirits for restaurants to making hand sanitizer called "Abdito", which is a 70% ethanol sanitizer approved by Health Canada for the public (Canada, n.d. *c*). Thompson Distillery was able to secure repeated small dollar transactions — i.e., contracts under $10,000 — for its products. Finally, while some service companies reoriented to meet requirements for services such as medical transportation, others were already well positioned to respond to the call to action for support services like catering and public security (e.g., guards) that were required for COVID testing and vaccination sites.

BACKGROUND

At the end of December 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) started noticing media chatter about an unknown 'viral pneumonia' originating in Wuhan, China. By early January, the WHO reported that "the Chinese authorities have determined that the outbreak is caused by a novel coronavirus." The novel coronavirus had no cure or effective treatment and had a 3.4% mortality rate (Worldometer, n.d.). This global average is not reflective of how deadly contracting novel coronavirus was for the elderly and people with pre-existing conditions. Also, survival depended on the quality and availability of health care in each country or region and/or how fast public safety protocols, like shutdowns and social distancing, were implemented. Vulnerable segments of the population had a much higher mortality rate than the global average, which is shown in Figure 1 (Lai et al., 2020).
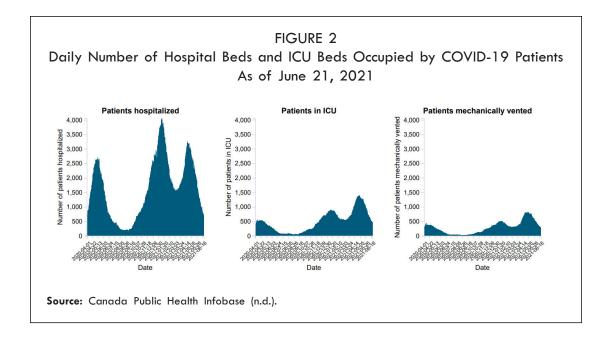
FIGURE 1
Mortality in Vulnerable Population

The chart shows daily cumulative number of cases of patients diagnosed with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in five main geographical regions and the international conveyance (Diamond Princess cruise ship) as of 29 February 2020 (Lai et al., 2020).

COVID-19 Transmission Rates

Another major global concern is the highly infectious nature of COVID-19 by either breathing infected droplets suspended in the air or touching infected surfaces. The virus was highly transmittable, and risk of exposure was dependent on whether the infected person was showing visible symptoms versus being asymptomatic — i.e., showing no signs of infection (Canada, n.d. *b*). To put this in perspective, if an unmasked infected person were in a room with 12 people, there is a high probability that 7 out of 10 people would be infected. And if the person were asymptomatic and was in the same room with the other symptomatic person, there is a high possibility that the other 3 people would become infected as well. Therefore, viral seasonal waves, especially in winter, when most people are spending time indoors in closed spaces, presented the highest risk of exposure. Communicability of the virus had a huge impact on the health sector's capacity to manage spikes in COVID-19 cases, as shown in Figure 2. This was when the demand for PPE spiked as well.

Medical Supply Shortage Impacts

COVID-19 exposed how unprepared governments were to manage a global pandemic despite decades of warnings from public health experts. In 2020, COVID outbreaks coincided with predicted fall and winter flu seasons waves; health service officials became acutely aware of the lack of hospital beds (especially in ICUs), the shortage of nurses, and

FIGURE 2
Daily Number of Hospital Beds and ICU Beds Occupied by COVID-19 Patients
As of June 21, 2021
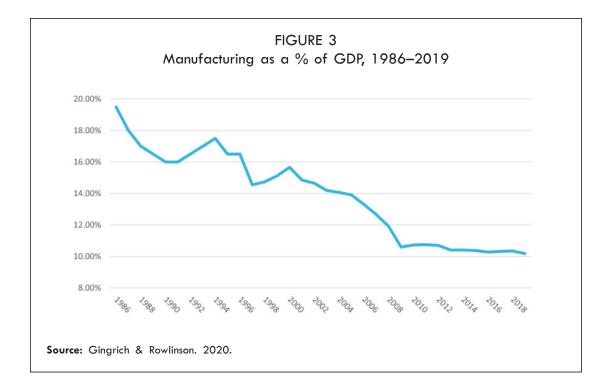

Source: Canada Public Health Infobase (n.d.).

acute care equipment, such as ventilators. There were also PPE, disinfectants, and sanitizing products shortages, as stockpiles were quickly used up by health workers and consumers. Often these products, like N95 masks, were not manufactured in Canada. These masks are the best protection against airborne biological pathogens. Thus, not only was the N95 mask required by hospital staff as critical supplies during the pandemic, it was also highly sought by the public. The shortages were exacerbated by countries who manufacture medical supplies for the global market. They either stopped or limited supplying to other countries because of their domestic demands caused by the pandemic. For example, 3M, a global manufacturer of respirators and N95 masks, was requested by the Trump Administration to cease exporting masks produced in the United States to Canada (Turnbull, 2020).

Decline in Manufacturing in Canada

Over the past 20 years, Canada has offshored manufacturing of goods to other countries, which had the net effect of a decline in manufacturing, with a percentage of GDP from nearly 20% in 1986 dropping to 10% in 2018.

Offshoring also included strategic products such as PPE and medical equipment. Although globalization has produced cheaper products for the consumer, it also exposed the risks as countries struggled to meet the demand for PPE. It was made clear that offshoring produced shortages in the strategic supply chain, especially for products making up critical stockpiles, such as those included in Canada's National Emergency Strategic Stockpile (NESS) (Public Health Agency Canada, 2019). NESS contains supplementary supplies that provinces and territories can call upon if there are shortages of medical supplies for emergencies caused by infectious disease outbreaks, natural disasters, and other public health events. In January of 2021, an independent commission reported that "Ontario faced a shortage of personal protective equipment at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in part because it did not replenish its stockpiles over the previous years" (Loriggio, 2021). This

FIGURE 3
Manufacturing as a % of GDP, 1986–2019
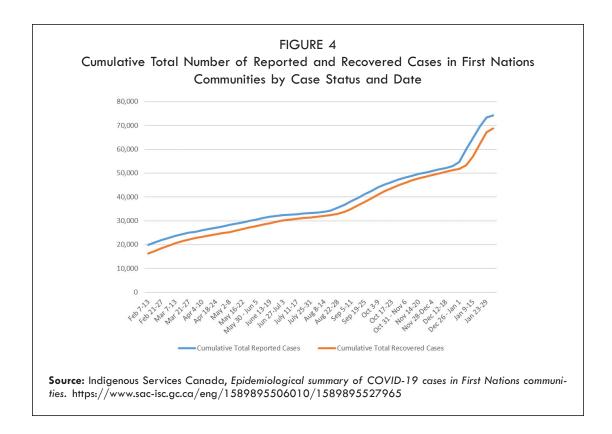

Source: Gingrich & Rowlinson. 2020.

resulted in Canada making the call for companies to pivot their production lines to make an array of PPE products and other medical equipment to meet the country's high demand (Figure 3).

COVID-19 Risk to Indigenous Communities

In a pandemic like COVID-19, Indigenous communities were often the most at risk. Ongomiizwin, part of the University of Manitoba's Rady Faculty of Health Sciences, built a risk profile for First Nations communities in Manitoba (Comeau, 2021). Using the H1N1 epidemic data and response experience as a model, their researchers assessed the potential impact of COVID-19 on Indigenous communities. Their findings confirmed that Indigenous communities were at higher risk, and they also provided the many reasons behind it, including the following:

- Movement of migrant workers to and from natural resource, oil and gas, and energy projects (These projects are close to Indigenous communities and often considered essential industries — e.g., energy and utilities were declared essential industries during the pandemic; see Public Safety Canada, n.d.)
- Food insecurity
- Inadequate infrastructure, e.g., hospitals, water treatment, roads
- Overcrowded households
- Isolation
- Etc.

FIGURE 4
Cumulative Total Number of Reported and Recovered Cases in First Nations Communities by Case Status and Date

Source: Indigenous Services Canada, *Epidemiological summary of COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities.* https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1589895506010/1589895527965

As of July 2, 2021, Indigenous Services Canada reported the following data points regarding COVID-19 Cases on reserve (Indigenous Services Canada. (n.d. *a*):

• The rate of reported active cases of COVID-19 in First Nations people living on-reserve is currently 148.9 per 100,000, or six times the rate in the general Canadian population.
• 97% of First Nations people living on a reserve who tested positive for COVID-19 have recovered.

However, Dr. Janet Smylie, a Métis physician and leader in the field of Indigenous health, commented about the data gaps with respect to Indigenous peoples (Deer, 2020). The lack of reliable health data is mainly due to the fractionalization of the health care system data because of jurisdictional divides between health organizations and provincial health care systems. She commented that the *Indian Act* is a major contributor to the disparity in data collection Indigenous segments of the population. For example, it is more difficult to get COVID case data about Indigenous people living off-reserve than for Indigenous people living on-reserve. This is indicative of a "broken system" and illustrates the need for better coordination of Indigenous peoples' health data across Canada. Without good health data about COVID cases, it is difficult for health service providers within the traditional territories to coordinate the delivery of PPE products and COVID-related services and to also provide support to high-risk communities and segments, such as the elder population, especially off reserve.

FIGURE 5
Self-employment Rates by Industry (2011)

Region	Aboriginal entrepreneurs		Canadian entrepreneurs	
	N	%	N	%
Primary	4,315	10	196,985	10
Construction	7,885	19	284,845	14
Manufacturing, transportation, warehousing	3,855	9	173,165	9
Wholesale, retail trade	3,625	9	200,850	10
Professional, scientific and technical services, education, health & social	14,155	34	829,095	41
Arts, entertainment, accommodation, food & cultural	3,930	9	174,920	9
Other	4,280	10	175,940	9
Total – Self-employed population	42,100	100	2,035,810	100

Source: Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB), *Promise and Prosperity the 2016 Aboriginal Business Survey* (September 27, 2016). https://www.ccab.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/CCAB-PP-Report-V2-SQ-Pages.pdf

Impact of Social Distancing

At the same time, social distancing, self-quarantining, and the shutdown of non-essential businesses had a dramatic effect on economic activity and employment in a very negative way. This resulted in significant financial stress for many Canadians, including many Indigenous peoples. Self-employed entrepreneurs or 1 to 5 person businesses make up 80% of the Indigenous supply chain, and these companies are contributing to the rise of the "Gig Economy" (Madell, n.d.). Most of the Indigenous businesses are found in sectors that were hardest hit by the pandemic such as construction, retail, arts and entertainment, food services, accommodations. The following chart shows a summary of the sectors where self-employed Indigenous people can be found.

Most heavily hit by the pandemic was the Indigenous Tourism Industry. In 2019, tourism was a significant employer for many communities. There were at least 1700 tourist operators that employed about 36,000 people. Before the pandemic, Indigenous tourism contributed more than $1.6 billion annually to Canada's GDP, according to the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC). In December 2020, ITAC anticipated about 1000 Indigenous businesses would be lost to the pandemic. The loss would equate to 21,000 unemployed workers in the Indigenous tourism sector (Indigenous Canada, 2020). Henry said, "*In the past, many of our businesses across this country relied heavily on international visitors from the U.S., from France, from the U.K., from Germany, China and Japan*" (Laskaris, 2020). The COVID Delta variant spreading around the world threatens a fourth wave. The net effect will be the continuation of travel restrictions for the summer months, which is the busiest season for Indigenous tourism. This would be the second summer season lost to COVID.

RESPONDING TO A PANDEMIC CRISIS

On March 15, 2020, the Federal Government issued a call to action: "Canadian manufacturers needed to help combat COVID-19" (Canada, n.d. *a*). With the exponential surge in COVID-related hospitalization, Canada's emergency and health care providers did not have enough PPE stockpiles to sustain a long-term battle with the virus. The government called on all Canadian businesses, including Indigenous ones, to increase production of PPE to support Canada's purchases in response to pressures caused by the pandemic. The call to action covered the following products and services:

1. Products
    • Disposable N95 masks
    • Disposable surgical masks
    • Nitrile gloves
    • Vinyl gloves
    • Gowns
    • Bottles of hand sanitizer
    • Other prevention products

2. Services
    • Guard/security services
    • Nursing services
    • Food services
    • Laundry services
    • Accommodation maintenance services
    • Personal services
    • IT support services
    • Other services

In addition, the government saw the need to sustain the Indigenous economy through the purchase of products and services because of the negative impacts the pandemic was causing to a business's long-term sustainability and people's livelihoods.

Activating the Indigenous Supply Chain — Indigenous Business COVID-19 Taskforce

When the call was made for PPE, the government asked for assistance from the National Indigenous Organizations (NIOs) in engaging with businesses. Both ISC and PSPC partnered with the NIOs to create a 100% Indigenous-led supplier taskforce, led by Cando, to mobilize Indigenous suppliers across Canada. Cando quickly set up the *Indigenous Business COVID-19 Taskforce* that brought together the leadership of Indigenous business organizations to provide the Government of Canada with a single, unified Indigenous voice during the crisis. This included businesses of all sizes, from large to small. The Taskforce provided the Government of Canada with strategic input and advice on two primary topics:

1. Identifying, engaging with, and mobilizing the Indigenous supply chain (particularly small businesses and entrepreneurs) so that it can participate and contribute to the "call to action" with much needed medical supplies and equipment, and

2. Analysis on how the COVID-19 crisis is impacting Indigenous businesses and communities (i.e., First Nations, Inuit, Métis) across the country to ensure the Government of Canada can provide adequate support measures equivalent to those provided to the rest of the Canadian economy.

Taskforce Deliverables

To deliver on the objectives, the Taskforce created three work streams focused on a defined set of deliverables:

1. **Establishing and Managing the Taskforce:** to quickly mobilize a representative group of Indigenous business organizations and community leaders that, taken together, provide strong representation (including distinct cultural values) of the Indigenous economy and can deliver a representative voice to the Government of Canada. Several tasks were involved:

    (a) Identify the representative membership of the Taskforce, which was made up of the following groups:
      i. National Indigenous Organizations (NIOs): Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (Cando), Canadian Council of Aboriginal Business (CCAB), National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA), Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC), and Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada. The NIOs provided the voice for Indigenous suppliers regarding financial needs, product and services capacity, and research regarding the state of the supplier's health. They also served as a conduit for funnel contracting opportunities.
      ii. Government Department: ISC and PSPC both not only acted as voices for Government but also expedited and coordinated programs and actions to support Indigenous supply chains.
      iii. Indigenous Political Organizations, such as the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), who provided voices for the community and leadership's economic needs.
      iv. Subject Matter Expertise from small businesses and from the National Indigenous Economic Development Board (NIEDB), in the form of advice and guidance to the taskforce NIOs and government participants.

    (b) Develop an initial budget for the Taskforce and the work streams necessary to respond to the changing dynamics of the pandemic.

    (c) Develop a collaborative governance framework and decision-making rules for the Taskforce so it can act quickly and decisively.

    (d) Establish agreed communication and logistics practices for the Taskforce.

    (e) Establish online collaboration tools to enable efficient communication between all Taskforce members, as well as with the stakeholders the Taskforce will need to engage to successfully achieve its objectives.

    (f) Set a meeting schedule that reflects the objectives of the Taskforce and the timelines in which it is expected to deliver results.

(g) Define information sharing protocols that enable the success of the Taskforce while respecting participating organizations.

(h) Work with other Indigenous organizations not represented on the Taskforce to help coordinate efforts on common responses and requests to and from Government.

(i) Support the two work streams outlined below through executive support, decision making, and the allocation of internal resources as relevant and required.

(j) Other duties as required to deliver against the stated objectives and any other objectives that arise.

2. **Mobilize Indigenous Supply Chain to Respond to the "Call to Action" for Medical Supplies:** immediately work to identify Indigenous firms across the country that can readily — or with a manageable transformation — provide much need medical equipment and supplies. This involved the following tasks:

(a) Galvanize the Indigenous supply chain network across national organizations to support Canada's COVID-19 response.
(b) Analyze existing capabilities relevant to the "call to action" requirements.
(c) Develop a business directory for Indigenous suppliers who can help respond to the COVID-19 crisis.
(d) Guide relevant Indigenous businesses on how to best engage in the call to action so they can retool their shop floors and/or bring their product to market.
(e) Capture and promote success stories.
(f) Capture relevant metrics for go forward procurement policy discussions.

3. **Impact of COVID-19 on Indigenous Businesses and Communities:** rapidly reach back through our respective networks to deliver an integrated and evolving analysis of how the crisis is impacting business and communities with recommendations for government support measures:

(a) Survey Indigenous businesses and communities to quickly ascertain the impact COVID-19 is having and the effect of the federal government's COVID-19 Response Plan measures.
(b) Analyze and integrate results in a manner that the federal government can consume the data.
(c) Co-develop dashboards with the federal government to produce a common understanding of the challenges by region/community.
(d) Develop policy recommendations to alleviate challenges across effective regions/communities.
(e) Assess other potential impacts, for example including food security.

Leaders were appointed to the work streams above, and the deliverables were funded by ISC. Both the Taskforce members, ISC and PSPC, took a collaborative development approach to meet the changing economic pressures of the pandemic.

BIG TENT APPROACH LESSON LEARNED

One of the upsides of the pandemic was that it provided an opportunity for all the NIOs to work together in a coordinated approach. This was the first time all the relevant NIOs worked together in good faith and provided the necessary information and resources to make the Taskforce a success. Members agreed the focus should be to maximize the most positive impact for Indigenous businesses and communities, given the economic pressures caused by the pandemic. In essence, the NIOs and government partners were able to create a "big tent" approach. The big tent initially permitted or encouraged a broad spectrum of views from its members. It also allowed consensus building among members. The big tent also provided the unified voice that made it easier for government partners to get the approvals and drive action internally within their organizational structures.

Need for Cultural Shift

However, the big tent approach required NIOs to experience a cultural shift in their approach to doing business with each other. The effects of colonization and the *Indian Act* have deeply impacted the way Indigenous politics, institutions, and leadership are structured and how we work with each other. Most, if not all, of our interactions in a post-colonized society have been formed to serve the state rather than our own people (Alfred, 2009, p. 44). Therefore, organizational leadership is conditioned to work in a fractured and contested environment for support and funding of their ideas, programs, and projects. The ingrained culture runs opposite to the big tent approach. This manifested as cagey behaviour between organizations rather than full trust. It also adversely impacted the willingness of certain NIOs to work together as the pandemic dragged on. They opted to conduct their participation in limited ways or slow walked processes and actions when a threat was perceived to their organizational supply chain development agendas. Eventually, some NIOs decided to break away from the Taskforce, feeling that their organizational agendas were at risk of being compromised. They lost their focus on the original intent of the taskforce, which was to meet supplier needs during a prolonged economic shutdown. One NIO declared there was no longer a need for a Taskforce after the first wave and recommended disbanding it in a letter to its members. This was very disappointing for the government, the remaining taskforce members, and suppliers, who saw the benefits that unified organizations can bring to the Indigenous community on and off reserve.

Preserving Organizational Identity and Supplier Representation

To build a sustainable big tent approach, NIOs need to find a collective Indigenous identity and be committed to it. Alfred argues that members of the community who are confident and secure in their Indigenous identity — i.e., they know who and what they are — demonstrate higher levels of commitment to their land and culture, and solidarity with the larger Indigenous community (Alfred, 2009, p. 55). Therefore, Cando and the organizations branded the Indigenous Taskforce as a Medical Suppliers Co-op (Figure 6). The approach facilitated creating a supplier ecosystem that allowed both the individual organizations to support the suppliers in a coordinated way without fearing a loss of identity or culture of their organizations by being in a big tent. Within the ecosystem, suppliers were associated

FIGURE 6
Indigenous Medical Supplier Co-op — An Example of a Big Tent Approach

Indigenous Medical Supplier Co-op is an example of a 100%-Indigenous Business COVID-19 platform, which created the largest database of verified Indigenous businesses that can supply Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other medical supplies and services to help combat COVID-19 (source: https://www.taskforce-covid19.ca/).

with member organizations, which facilitated the continuation of the organization support. The buyers were able to create new connections with suppliers through the support of the organization's, when necessary, as well. Therefore, the individual organizations were able to be the crucial connection between buyers and suppliers.

The ecosystem also provided the environment for the diversity of opinions — i.e., about how organizations can manage their suppliers. It also allowed room for non-essential differences to emerge between organizations. Alfred recommends that allowing *non-essential differences that do not relate to the central premises of the community identity is an important strategic objective* when considering building a framework for reconstructing communities (Alfred, 2009, p. 55). The Taskforce members felt that maintaining organizational identity and their supplier relationships coupled with a diversity of opinions and approaches to support and drive transactions between suppliers and buyers are fundamental principles to building a supplier ecosystem that functions as a collective body.

INDIGENOUS PPE DATABASE LESSON LEARNED

The Federal Government spent $19 billion to help provinces and territories safely restart their economies and to ensure that Canada is building pandemic resiliency under the Safe Restart Agreement (SRA). The SRA fund allocation spent on PPE was $6.1 billion, according to a December 2020 CBC article (Gatehouse, 2020). The principal objective of the database was to facilitate transactions between suppliers and buyers for PPE and support services. The Taskforce decided to adopt an Apple TV business model to deliver a slick

speedy search that was familiar in an attractive interface for buyers. The idea was to make the buying experience as easy as possible by searching for PPE products or services and contacting suppliers within a short time.

Value of Data Sharing Supplier Information

Using the Apple TV model, the database also acted as an aggregator of all the suppliers and at the same time maintained the identity of the organizations who supported them. It was important to ensure that the logos and contact details of the organization appeared in the supplier profile. The contact person ensured the buyer had support from the organizations to provide information such as a supplier's capacity or confirmation of their Indigenous certification status. This database feature supports the concierge role, which is discussed further in another section of this article.

The database architecture allows organizations to upload their suppliers directly into the database or to directly connect their database through the back end. Both options required a data sharing agreement between the organizations. Each uploaded supplier was verified by Cando through their membership with the partnering organization. Cando also ensured that suppliers could accept government contracts by ensuring that the company's Indigenous status met the Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business (PSAB) program requirements. To accomplish this, Cando supported the supplier's PSAB registration and ensured that they were in ISC's Aboriginal Business Directory before they were published on the Indigenous Medical Supplier Co-op. The approach made it easier for buyers to identify Indigenous suppliers with a high degree of confidence. The ability to aggregate multiple supplier data sources made it easier for buyers to find suppliers from a single search. Alternatively, the buyer could reach back to the supplier's organization to gather more information about a group of suppliers' capabilities or capacity to deliver.

Commodity Based Approach to Finding Suppliers

The most satisfying buying experience is finding what you are looking for quickly. To achieve this, the Taskforce opted to use a commodity-based strategy that facilitated a quicker lookup of available suppliers. In other words, rather than look up a company name from a referral or go through a third party, the buyers look up a product or service as the first search on a simple web interface. The system will display all the available suppliers and their contact details and short descriptions of their offerings; as well, it will display the location with pin drops. The buyer then can narrow the search using a secondary filter — e.g., province, city, or postal code — or move a Google map display to a location of interest. They can also select a pin drop to drill down for more information about the supplier. Clicking on a pin drop opens a dialogue box that leads to a supplier's profile or website. Alternatively, the buyer can scroll results of a search on the side scroll bar. There they will find more links and pages to other supplier profiles and summaries. Figure 7 shows the search results for N95 masks. The system displays about 66 suppliers and manufacturers nationally.
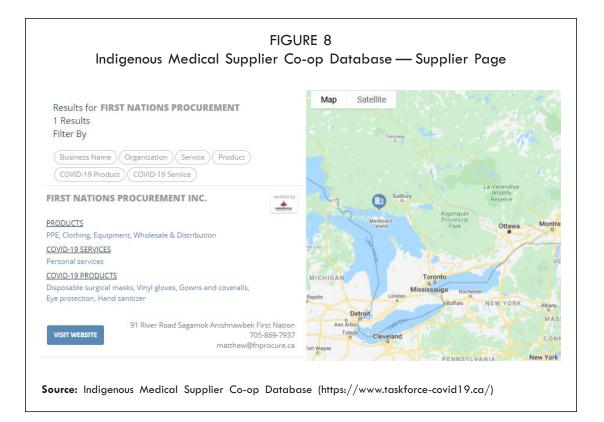
Supplier Profile Page

Besides giving information about the supplier and service offering, the profile page gives suppliers the ability to "hangout their shingle" — i.e., an online presence to the mar-

FIGURE 7
PPE Database — Supplier Search Result Page

Source: Indigenous Medical Supplier Co-op Database (https://www.taskforce-covid19.ca/)

ket. A newer upcoming release of the database will give the suppliers access to their profile. This will allow them to update their profiles and advertise their offerings as they see fit. This ability is important, since the suppliers pivoted their business to PPE and health related services during the pandemic. The Taskforce needs to consider how businesses will re-engage their original product and services for the economic recovery. The supplier profile needs to include other products and services outside of PPE and health services (e.g., translations, research analysis, transportation, travel, etc.). Being able to quickly identify other commodities will help suppliers re-instate their original offerings and capabilities as the Canadian economy re-opens. An illustration of the supplier page can be found in Figure 8.

New Product and Service Offerings

Some of the businesses are opting to continue supplying PPE or health-related services as new business lines. For example, the community of Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, Dent-X Canada, a medical mask manufacturer, and First Nations Procurement Inc. (FNPI) a supplier of building, clothing, and school and office supplies, joint ventured to create an on-reserve face shields and masks manufacturing plant (Everson, 2020). The new manufacturing plant created employment for 50 residents in and around Wiikwemkoong. The supplier profile page will allow the marketing team at FPNI to promote their new product line, their joint venture story about economic reconciliation, and job creation opportunities created by the partnership. This is an important story to tell as PSPC and the Federal departments search for opportunities to bring socio-economic benefit to acquisitions while meeting the

FIGURE 8
Indigenous Medical Supplier Co-op Database — Supplier Page

Results for **FIRST NATIONS PROCUREMENT**
1 Results
Filter By

(Business Name) (Organization) (Service) (Product)
(COVID-19 Product) (COVID-19 Service)

FIRST NATIONS PROCUREMENT INC.   verified by

PRODUCTS
PPE, Clothing, Equipment, Wholesale & Distribution

COVID-19 SERVICES
Personal services

COVID-19 PRODUCTS
Disposable surgical masks, Vinyl gloves, Gowns and coveralls,
Eye protection, Hand sanitizer

91 River Road Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation
705-869-7937
matthew@fnprocure.ca

VISIT WEBSITE

Source: Indigenous Medical Supplier Co-op Database (https://www.taskforce-covid19.ca/)

FIGURE 9
First Nation Procurement Production — DENT-X CANADA in Wiikwemkoong

Source: Supplied by Dent-X.

Government of Canada 5% contract spending targets across all government department objectives (Public Services and Procurement Canada, 2020).

Low Dollar Value Transactions

Low Dollar Value (LDV) transactions provide the greatest opportunity to create the spend velocity required for Indigenous SMEs. Federal departments can directly purchase products and services with a credit card with companies without going through a competition process. Government credit cards have a $10,000 limit, and there are about 10k credit cards in circulation within various departments. This translates into a market potential of $100 million per month, assuming that every department with a credit card purchased $10,000 of product or services a month. Therefore, the supplier page can also include links to online catalogues and support connections with e-commerce platforms sites that are either open source, SaaS (software as a service), or headless commerce such as Shopify, SuiteCRM, Kibo, etc. Having this capability makes it easier for government and corporate buyers to transact with Indigenous SMEs. It also levels the playing field for SMEs who do not have an administration and accounting infrastructure to grow their business. Using e-commerce platforms, SMEs can take advantage of not only transaction capabilities but also the accounting support some platforms offer, like interoperability with accounting software to help manage monthly account receivables, revenue reporting, tracking operating and production costs, etc.

Deciding to Go Public Facing for Buyers

As the pandemic dragged on, the NIOs, regional supplier organizations, and EDOs needed to consider expanding the market potential for suppliers for the re-opening of the economy. Although it has not been equal, some provinces opted to re-open more slowly than others. The Federal government is yet to return to the office fully, expecting to re-open sometime during the Fall of 2021. Foreseeing a fall opening of the economy, perhaps not a full opening though, employers have a duty to provide a safe and healthy workplace (Thiessen, O'Ferrall, Hamill & Hofer, 2020). Although the requirements vary from province to province, there will be an increased need for PPE and sanitizing products and services to meet the demands for a healthy work environment. Employers will need to ensure returning workers have adequate PPE and sanitizing products available to keep a clean workplace (e.g., wipes and disinfectant sprays). There will also be needs for increased cleaning services after each workday to lessen the risk of virus exposure. Therefore, the Taskforce wanted to ensure the Indigenous supply chain was ready and visible to the public ahead of the anticipated surge for PPE, sanitizing products, and cleaning services.

Participating in the Digital Economy

The pandemic has pushed more businesses to increase their e-commerce capacity. The Federal Government reported, "*since the onset of the pandemic, Canadian businesses have expanded their plans to make increased use of digital sales channels to sell their goods and services*" (Canada Trade Commissioner Service, n.d.). However, in the same report, the economist mentions that SMEs do not plan to increase their online presence at the same rate as their larger business counterparts. The behaviour can be a result of the financial pressures SMEs are facing because of the economic slowdown — i.e., day-to-day survival versus their

FIGURE 10
Online Activities in 2019 vs Online Activities Planned During the 2020 Pandemic (Share of Business) by Firm Size

■ Small businesses   ■ Medium businesses   ■ Large businesses

	Small	Medium	Large
Made sales over the Internet (2019)	22.5	33.7	38.6
Online businesses* with international customers (2019)	21.9	27.9	39.3
Expect to increase the use of own websites to serve customers (Q3 2020)	18.3	20.6	25.6
Expect to increase the use of 3rd party digital sale channels to serve customers (Q3 2020)	10.1	11.7	12.4

* only includes online businesses that know where their customers are located
Data: Statistics Canada — 2019 Survey of Digital Technology and Internet Use (SDTIU) & November 2020 Canadian Survey on Business Conditions

Source: Canada Trade Commissioner Service, *Paradigm shift: Small-businesses pivot to e-commerce to reach new customers and increase their sales.* https://www.tradecommissioner.gc.ca/canadexport/0005207.aspx?lang=eng

future online presence. But that is not to say that SMEs are not planning to increase their digital footprint. SMEs are still developing their digital marketing and sales capacity at a steady rate, and this will continue well into the future as more e-commerce capabilities become available to the marketplace.

The pandemic is also creating a new normal for consumer buying behaviour. A report from Accenture shows, after a year of lockdowns, most people have made at least one change in their lifestyle; these changes are expected to be permanent. Consumer behaviour shifts are centred around travelling patterns, desire to shop more locally, and creating a third space at home to work remotely a few days a week (Accenture, 2021).

According to Robin Sohota, Accenture's Managing Director:

> Many leading retailers handled the rush to online shopping with relative ease based on past investments in technology, while others had to quickly accelerate their journeys to cloud and digital. When we get past the pandemic, across retail sectors, companies will need to continue to meet consumer demand for online shopping but also increase the efficiency of the channel to enable profit growth. This next retail transformation will require new investments in micro-fulfilment and supply chains, stores of the future, and the future worker, who will drive new experiences.

Another driving factor was limits to the government purchasing power. At the start of the pandemic there was a rush from the Federal Government to acquire as much of available PPE and medical supplies as possible. However, when the demand was met, and pandemic

FIGURE 11
Shift in Consumer Habits

Canadian Survey Results:	Canada n=409	Toronto n=301	Montreal n=307
Percentage of Canadians who will continue to telecommute once the pandemic subsides that would like to occasionally work from a "third space" (a location other than their home or place of employment).	69%	77%	73%
Percentage of Canadians who say they would be willing to pay a fee out of their own pockets to work from a café, bar, hotel, or retailer with a dedicated space.	30%	40%	49%
Percentage of Canadians who normally travel for business and expect to reduce business travel in the future.	53%	63%	49%
Percentage growth in online purchases for products such as food, home décor, fashion, and luxury goods by previously infrequent e-commerce users in Canada since the start of the pandemic. (infrequent defined as those who used online channels for less than 25% of purchases prior to the outbreak)	316%	373%	322%

Source: Accenture Covid-19 Consumer Research, May 10, 2021.

infection rates flattened, demand slowed down. Procurement had enough PPE, sanitizing supplies, and medical equipment to meet the needs of large consumer departments like Health Canada, Public Safety Canada, and ISC's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB). Taskforce members from PSPC's Office of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (OSME) and ISC reached into the procurement network at the provincial level with the intent to build greater awareness of the Indigenous Medical Supplier Database Co-op. The Taskforce wanted to broaden the government buyer network to generate other sales beyond the federal marketplace and expand to the provinces, municipalities, and public institutions like hospitals, schools, etc.

Given the prolonging of the closures, changing consumer, and limits of the federal market, the Taskforce thought it incumbent on them to increase the scope of the supplier database to be public facing. This is critical to the strategy of increasing the opportunities not only for PPE and sanitizing products and services but also to help suppliers pivot back to their original product and services offerings. The challenge will be increasing Indigenous business capacity to participate in the digital economy. The Taskforce is already considering how to adjust the available technology, partnerships, and processes that were developed during the start of the project to support the SMEs' transition to a new normal for doing business in a post pandemic economy.

THE NEED FOR CONCIERGE SUPPORT

The next objective was to facilitate and increase the velocity of transactions between a supplier and a buyer. The buying community had limited experience working with the Indigenous community. They required some support to identify, analyze the capacity of, and connect with Indigenous suppliers. On the supplier side, there was a need to help them respond to opportunities and explain how to do business with government. Most of the suppliers had never worked with government and often resisted because of the complexity of doing business with procurement.

The idea of developing business support services was suggested by one of the government Taskforce members. He suggested that establishing a database of suppliers would not work alone. He pointed out that an important part of driving transactions would be requiring some degree of intervention on both the supplier and the buyer sides because of their limited experience of doing business with each other. But the challenge remained the types of conversations that government can have with suppliers versus the conversations that suppliers want to have with prospective clients. Procurement needs to respect the fairness, transparency, and accountability of the contract policies and rules set out by Treasury Board. And this is non-negotiable, despite the magnitude of the economic slowdown. Although it was not formal, an Indigenous engagement process needed to be created to support both sides of the conversation so that people would not become disengaged.

It was decided that the best approach was to have a concierge that was government facing through OSME and another concierge that was supplier facing through the organizations. To get the most effective outcome for the supplier and buyer, both concierges needed to work together to bridge the gaps between engagement and expectations when an opportunity arose.

Challenges Working with the Indigenous Supply Chain

The recurring theme buyers expressed was the difficulty of finding and identifying the capacity of Indigenous suppliers. Often the lack of knowledge about where suppliers can be found to deliver was a hindrance in engaging with the supply chain. Procurement officers and managers are trained to work within processes and rules that meet their organizational needs. Training to identify or build capacity is not part of the procurement officer's mandate. Also, other departments, such as the OSME and PSAB groups, are tasked to support the Indigenous engagement with suppliers. However, these departments have limited resources and capabilities to cover many suppliers — i.e., 50,000 SMEs with one to five persons — in multiple geographic regions, and they must work with multiple organizations that at times have competing agendas. Also, the level of government support can vary depending on the experience the public servant has with Indigenous organizations, communities, and suppliers.

Closing the Gap — Identifying and Building Capacity

Given the limitations, it made more practical sense to have the organizations provide the supplier side concierge. Most of the organizations' mandates are to provide opportunities to the members and build capacity. They were able to easily identify suppliers and communicate opportunities flowing out of departments to a more targeted audience, such as the $25 million non-surgical masks RFP released during the summer of 2020. They made sug-

gestions to PSPC how best they can engage the supplier base to ensure a good bid response. They recommended that PSPC not award a $25 million contract to one supplier but unbundle it to smaller contracts to allow multiple mask suppliers to respond. Over 70 mask suppliers of varying sizes were identified and received the RFP. The approach resulted in 15 companies competing for the contract and 6 suppliers winning varying contract values depending on their capacity to deliver.

The concierge offered bid support for suppliers who were preparing a government bid for the first time. It also helped suppliers understand what questions they can ask the contract authority during the bid process. In some cases, the concierge directed the supplier to OSME or PSAB regarding how to do business with government. For most suppliers, government turned out to be a new market. They required support to become a PSAB certified supplier to continue doing business with government. For example, the concierge helped suppliers obtain a Procurement Business Number (PBN) and connected them with the PSAB group to become part of the Aboriginal Business Directory. Often this meant the concierge explained the size of the market potential of government contracting and also the pros and cons of doing business with government. After the first experience of bidding on a government contract, the supplier felt confident enough to bid on other opportunities without concierge support.

The Taskforce found that the ideal resource to support Indigenous suppliers were people who worked in government, especially in procurement, and had experience with Indigenous supply chain and communities. Another excellent resource was a person who has experience as an Indigenous supplier and who has successfully won contracts with government. They had to have a good understanding of the bidding process and have experience preparing bids for government.

Working with Procurement from the Inside

The government facing concierge played a different role from the supplier side concierge. They communicated inward with buyers and understood the public servant culture and constraints with respect to procurement, policies, programs, and processes. They also identified upcoming opportunities and worked with the supplier concierge to identify capacity to respond to an RFP. This interaction often reassured departments that there would be certified Indigenous suppliers bidding and that they could meet the bid requirements. Often the supplier concierge provided a list of suppliers that could bid, and they also supported PSPC building awareness of the opportunity through a Taskforce newsletter or email. Cando's concierge also worked with the OSME concierge during the Links to Learning program (Cando, n.d.). They worked together to educate both EDOs and suppliers about how to work with government. They told both sides of the story and were the best advocates to encourage suppliers to do business with the Federal departments and procurement. Finally, the biggest benefit to a government facing concierge is tapping into the buyer network. The reach of the OSME concierge was about 1800 different government buyers and their provincial and municipal counterparts. This meant the suppliers had a market reach to as many opportunities as possible. The government facing concierge was a great partner and advocate for the Indigenous supply chain within the various department headquarters located in Ottawa and within the regional offices as well.

CONCLUSION

The next challenge will be in how the Taskforce supports the Indigenous supplier as the economy moves toward the new normal and how consumers and business will adjust to the post-pandemic market conditions. Job creation, full employment, and climate change will be the top priorities for most Canadians over the next few years. Now, balanced budgets and reducing the public debt are not as much of a concern as traditionally expected by taxpayers (Atkinson & Mou, 2021). However, the author does caution that public sentiment can change quickly if interest and inflation rates increase. This can have a big impact on socio-economic programs as government looks for ways to fill the public coffers.

Also on the horizon are the investments the Federal Government plans to make in infrastructure projects, clean energy capital renewal programs, etc. Many these projects can be found on traditional lands, and most of them include some sort of Indigenous Benefit Plan (IBP) or Indigenous Participation Component (IPC). Some of these large projects were started before the pandemic struck and have been put on hold or considerably slowed down. This offers a possible reset button for procurement to review the Indigenous engagement strategy of pre-pandemic projects. It might be possible for some projects' IPBs or IPCs requirements to be revisited for greater Indigenous supplier inclusion as part of the economic recovery and reconciliation initiatives. There is the 5% spending target that government has earmarked to help Indigenous businesses grow and improve the socio-economic outcomes of the Indigenous communities. It needs to be included as part of Canada's economic recovery for Indigenous suppliers and entrepreneurs. The Taskforce is now committed to supporting Indigenous suppliers in pivoting back to their normal business operations and helping others build up the new product and services capabilities they have acquired during the pandemic. They would be remiss not to take advantage of IPBs, IPCs and the 5% spending target to help the surviving Indigenous suppliers regain their economic positions within the post-pandemic economy. Finally, on-reserve manufacturing can play a role in creating new opportunities and employment. The Taskforce can take advantage of opportunities to create an Indigenous manufacturing base as Canada rethinks its strategic manufacturing capabilities.

The lessons learned from the pandemic aimed at achieving successful Indigenous business engagement are as follows:

1. A commodity database is the quickest path for buyers to find suppliers. However, databases need to be open to the public to provide the greatest opportunity for buyers and suppliers to connect and transact. Having a third party to match make only adds an extra layer to an already complicated procurement process.

2. The role of the concierge is critical for providing the connections and confidence to the buying community to transact, and it also increases a supplier's willingness and capacity to respond.

3. Indigenous organizations need to be networked and to work together with a single mission to support Indigenous suppliers — i.e., the big tent. Big tents need to have governance and organizational structures that ensure that partners do not lose their identity and mission.

4. Organizations need to have the latitude to work with government and corporate Canada to serve their communities and members' and partners' interest without interference by other organizations. Organizations need to respect the different

opinions and approaches. This builds fearless leadership and innovation. But it will require a cultural shift in how Indigenous organizations work collectively.

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INSIGHTS INTO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN FIRST NATIONS
A *Poverty Action Research Project*

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A CIHR-FUNDED POVERTY ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

ABSTRACT

This research adds to the understanding, planning, and implementation of community health and wellness development in First Nation communities: transformative insights revealed through the Poverty Action Research Project. The article describes key learnings that respect different worlds and languages, thereby fostering and nurturing key relationships. Additional insights, related to community direction, cultural influences, and community-level descriptions of poverty are shared. As well, the local and often unique determinants of health and well-being, the role of external supports, the benefits of "bridging social capital", and the acknowledgment of community-based politics are highlighted. Six recommendations are made for policy change in support of distinctive poverty alleviation initiatives, acknowledging differing approaches to collaborative assessment, planning, and implementation.

BEFORE ALL OTHER WORDS

We first extend our gratitude to the five First Nations that are part of the Poverty Action Research Project (PARP): Eabametoong First Nation, Misipawistik Cree First Nation, Opitciwan Atikamekw First Nation, Sipekne'katik First Nation, and T'it'q'et. The PARP research team is committed to ensuring these First Nations' collaboration and consent on the content of this chapter. Without their participation in the project, however, this knowledge learning and sharing would not even be possible. In the spirit of Indigenous research, the entire PARP research team wishes to acknowledge the participation of the five First Nations communities in the project. Breaking from the conventions of academic authorship and introducing how the practice of mutually beneficial Indigenous research extends to publications, we acknowledge the five First Nations as equal partners in the preparation and content of this chapter, and they appear as co-authors. In addition, we are acknowledging the nature of Indigenous political organizations as governments, so political terms such as Chief and Council and Band Council are capitalized throughout this chapter.[2]

INTRODUCTION

From 2011 to 2017, the Poverty Action Research Project was on a dynamic and creative journey for community development with five First Nations across Canada. The research teams, over this time, experienced first-hand and gained a deep respect for the many strengths and resilience of First Nations peoples. As well, we learned about obstacles that they continue to face as they strive to provide for and ensure the well-being of their people and build healthy, thriving communities.

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to raise awareness of these First Nations' strengths as well as to appreciate their great capacity and fortitude in light of the challenges that they continue to face. As noted by Dr. Marlene Brant Castellano and Dr. Frederic Wien, one of the "fundamental requisites of reconciliation" is "removing impediments to a healthy, empowered future for successive generations" of Indigenous peoples in Canada.[3] The 1996 report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) provides an honest account of how these impediments have arisen. The 2015 report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) builds on RCAP recommendations and calls for immediate action to restructure relationships in all sectors of society, reconciling past wrongs by investing time and energy to build truly mutually respectful relationships. Given its longitudinal nature, PARP is in a key position to contribute to this conversation, advancing the process of reconciliation by revealing insights into these "impediments" and offering perspectives grounded in trusting relationships and first-hand experiences. Some of these impediments are internal, but a significant number are external to communities, imposed on them by an outdated understanding by present-day institutions, reinforced by media, of the capacity, education, and experience of First Nations.

Toward this objective, this case study will first introduce the PARP project and the five participating communities. Summaries highlighting some of the "action research" pursued through PARP are also presented. One of the main findings of the project relates to Indigenous perspectives on *poverty*, seeing as this word sits prominently in the name of the project. So in this chapter we discuss how First Nations reject the label, preferring to frame PARP in a holistic context related to community health, cultural vitality, and other factors that contribute to well-being in First Nations. As well, we explore the value of community-driven

research in the context of crediting First Nations with a great deal of experience, capacity, and resourcefulness in the face of resource scarcity (e.g., human and capital), inequitable funding, and burdensome government bureaucracies. Finally, we discuss impediments that hinder the empowerment of First Nations toward health and well-being, and we offer observations based on PARP experiences as a contribution to the discussion about reconciliation and relationship building. Although PARP researchers worked solely with First Nations communities, much of what is shared in this chapter relates to many Indigenous peoples across Canada, even though the chapter has a focus on First Nations.

Having said that, we acknowledge the distinctness of each First Nation, the Inuit and Métis, as well as Indigenous peoples living in urban settings. PARP thus unfolded differently for each community that took part in the project. What we share here are threads that have been picked up from experiences in each First Nation, which when woven together present a tapestry. These threads, or elements, hold insights and observations that we believe are important to share as all sectors of society discern how to make transformative change for reconciliation and relationship building between Indigenous peoples in Canada and non-Indigenous Canadians.

Most of the communities described here are some distance removed from urban centres, sometimes hundreds of kilometres away and in one case accessible only by air or ice road. Commentators from the south are quick to dismiss the prospects for development of First Nations communities, jumping to the conclusion that the only rational solution is to relocate the communities (meaning to disperse individuals) to more "promising" southern locales.

In this chapter, we take a different view, one that emerges naturally from close and sustained interactions with community members. It is a point of view that emphasizes the long history of inhabitants in their regions, their deep spiritual and cultural attachments to the lands and waters, their strengths and resilience, especially because of their ties to place. It is also a point of view that does not accept the status quo as a given; rather, it emphasizes the possibilities that exist if Aboriginal and treaty rights to lands and resources are recognized and if self-determination is supported. Nevertheless, developmental challenges are significant, and it is instructive to learn how the First Nations communities themselves, with assistance from external resources, approach the task of improving community health and well-being through deliberate actions.

BACKGROUND

PARP had its roots in the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) 2006 campaign to "Make Poverty History" and was first conceptualized through a joint partnership between the AFN and university researchers from across North America. The six-year research project was funded through a grant from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, specifically the Institute of Aboriginal Peoples Health and the Institute of Population and Public Health. The overall aim of PARP was to work with First Nations communities to develop and begin implementing long-term strategies to reduce poverty, create a sustainable economic base, and provide the foundation for community health and well-being.

At the outset, sixty-one First Nations communities across Canada expressed interest in participating in the project. Five volunteer communities were selected to reflect the diversity of First Nations across the country. These five communities are Sipekne'katik in Nova Sco-

FIGURE 1
Locations of the Five Communities Participating in PARP

tia, Opitciwan in Quebec, Eabametoong in northern Ontario, Misipawistik Cree at Grand Rapids, Manitoba, and T'it'q'et at Lillooet in British Columbia.

RESEARCH PROCESS

As in any research undertaking, the work plan outlined a general process for all research teams to follow. In addition to researchers travelling to and building positive working relationships with the communities (if they did not already exist), a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was to be established to guide and approve the researchers' activities, with regular reports to Chief and Council. When the project got underway, however, research teams deferred to the direction of each community. In Opitciwan, Quebec, for example, the Nikaniw Committee was established (in Atikamekw, *nikaniw* can be translated as "go forward") and included representation from all interest groups in the community, including Band Council, health and social services, education, employment, youth association,

women's association, and Elders. In Manitoba, the Misipawistik Cree Advisory Committee was called E'Opinitowak, which means "giving a hand up," and was composed of several community members and two external representatives (from Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government), both of whom were trusted by the community. Although other First Nations also formed CACs, Chiefs and Councils for some communities preferred to serve as the coordinating bodies, and no CAC existed. Both approaches were effective to varying degrees, and both raised challenges. An article in the *Engaged Scholar Journal*[4] explores these and other issues related to the process that each PARP team followed and the lessons learned, not only for researchers to consider when engaging with First Nations in community-driven participatory research, but also for government and industry personnel when developing policies and programs or building relationships for development ventures.

A community coordinator was also hired by PARP to assist the research team with various tasks. These tasks included, but were not limited to, undertaking a community assessment to identify salient characteristics, strengths, challenges, and opportunities; collaboratively preparing an economic development strategic plan; working with the community on its implementation; and eventually undertaking research to measure project outcomes. Every community hired at least one coordinator. In at least one instance, however, the First Nation and project team opted to work together in a different way (e.g., dealing directly with the Band Council and Administration or with the CAC).

The project unfolded differently for each community. PARP collaborated with the five First Nations to pursue numerous undertakings, ranging from research and strategic plan development and implementation to capacity building, policy development, and governance initiatives within the Band Administration. Initiatives also included cultural and economic development programs to engage youth and people of all ages interested in seeking employment or setting up a local business. What follows is a brief summary from each of the research teams and communities highlighting some of the major research and action initiatives pursued through PARP.

RESEARCH IN ACTION

Sipekne'Katik First Nation in Nova Scotia

Sipekne'katik First Nation is the second largest Mi'kmaq band in Nova Scotia and includes the communities of Indian Brook Indian Reserve 14, New Ross, Pennal, Dodd's Lot, Wallace Hills, and Grand Lake. Sipekne'katik First Nation has 2,588 band members, with approximately 1,244 members residing in the community and 1,344 members residing outside of it. The land area of Sipekne'katik First Nation spans just over twelve square kilometres and is located sixty-eight kilometres from Kijipuktuk (Halifax) and twenty-nine kilometres southwest of Truro.[5]

The PARP project in Sipekne'katik had a large Advisory Committee composed of persons from both within and outside the community. It included the Chief and several Band Council members as well as an Elder, agency heads, and others. External members included academics, senior federal and provincial government personnel, and representatives of First Nations governments and organizations.

An initial activity was the development of a strategic plan, ultimately called "Building Our Community Together: The Poverty Action Plan of the Shubenacadie First Nation." It

FIGURE 2
Sipekne'katik Communities

Source: http://povertyaction.ca/community/indian-brook-ns

was grounded in historical research, in a large number of key informant interviews, secondary data analysis, input from Advisory Committee members, and meetings with agency and department heads. Several open community meetings were also held.
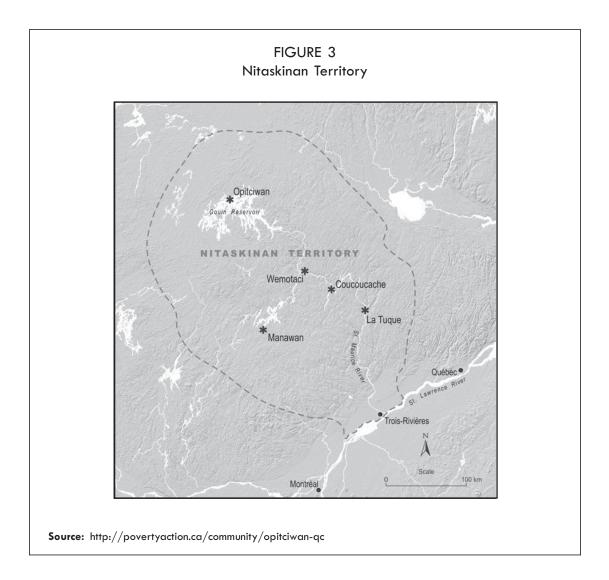
Once developed, the strategic plan was approved in principle by Chief and Council, but further input from community members was mandated. Thus, a household survey of community members was conducted.

Of particular concern to the community's leaders was a more integrated approach to providing services to community members in need, in a bid to get away from a pattern of isolated and uncoordinated service provision. In response to this need, PARP developed and implemented a project in which community members, especially social assistance recipients, were invited to take part in a pilot in which each volunteer met with a group of relevant service providers who pooled their knowledge and services in support of the individual and his or her particular needs. The hope was that this holistic approach would be more successful in helping individuals to make the transition from dependence to self-reliance.

Opitciwan First Nation in Quebec

Opitciwan is an Atikamekw nation composed of three communities: Manawan, Wemotaci, and Obedjiwan-Opitciwan. Atikamekw means "whitefish" and refers to the species of fish that the people have eaten for ages. Opitciwan was formerly located at the tip of Mékiskan, a site that is accessible by water and is one hour by canoe from the spot that the community occupies today. In 1920, the Gouin Dam flooded the community, causing the families to move closer to the bay. The people settled slowly in the territory where the rising rivers meet, hence the name Opitciwan, which means "the meeting place of the rising rivers."

Opitciwan is located in the heart of Quebec north of the Gouin Reservoir in the region of La Mauricie. It is accessible by a logging road 166 kilometres long, linking the reserve to Highway 167 in Lac-Saint-Jean. Opitciwan is also accessible by La Tuque (Logging Road 10) and by Chibougamau (Logging Road Barrette-Chapais). Based on the 2011 census, the community has a population of 2,031 people.[6]

FIGURE 3
Nitaskinan Territory

Source: http://povertyaction.ca/community/opitciwan-qc

Early in its existence, Opitciwan's Nikaniw Committee decided to rally the largest possible number of people and organizations in the community in activities relevant to the fight against poverty. The committee directed its actions toward the well-being of children, family support, and the transmission of traditional knowledge. Toward this goal, it pursued activities, not without difficulty, by mobilizing human, material, and financial resources. Two activities are highlighted here.

The Family House had been under the supervision of the Women's Association of Opitciwan. However, it was not operational since the facility did not meet building standards, and no activities had been organized. The Women's Association and the Nikaniw Committee worked together on the project. With the collaboration of the Opitciwan Atikamekw Council, the building was brought up to code and the status cleared. Thanks to a financial arrangement involving the PARP project and a program called Child Future, a coordinator was hired to prepare and implement a program. The activities of the Family House have included, to date, a community kitchen that brings parents together, a room equipped with children's toys, conference luncheons, breakfasts for children, and a day nursery. The luncheons, held monthly, have been particularly popular. Up to fifty parents gather at a time and determine the topics for discussion. The program contributes to the well-being of children and supports families.

The Nikaniw Committee also established the Ocki Magadan program. Based on the active teaching of traditional knowledge, the program was initially intended for young adults who had dropped out of school; it has since been redirected toward youth in high school. In its different phases, Ocki Magadan has been made possible thanks to the resources of PARP, the Youth House, the Québec en forme program, the Quebec Social Initiatives Fund, and the education sector of the Opitciwan Atikamekw Council. The program holds activities in which young people learn traditional skills such as making tents or other utilitarian objects (e.g., canoes, baskets, etc.), beginning with the harvesting and processing of the base materials (e.g., moose hide, birch bark, etc.) and ending with the sales of products. The program contributes to the retention of students in Mikisiw High School, the transmission of traditional knowledge, and family support through generational bridging.

Eabametoong First Nation in Ontario

The community of Eabametoong First Nation (EFN, also known as Fort Hope) is located on the north shore of Eabamet Lake, 360 kilometres north of Thunder Bay. EFN is a member of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation and the Matawa Tribal Council and a signatory to Treaty 9.[7]

Eabametoong is a traditional name, which in Anishinaabemowin (the Ojibway language) means "the reversing of the water place." Each year, because of runoff, the flow of water from Eabamet Lake into the Albany River temporarily reverses. The name Fort Hope comes from the Hudson's Bay Company fur-trading post built by the lake in 1890. Nothing remains of the old trading post; however, two churches at the old bay site still stand, and the cemetery remains in use today. The site, referred to as Old Bay or Old Fort Hope, is six kilometres southwest of the community's current location across Eabamet Lake.

Today EFN has approximately 2,400 band members, about 1,300 of whom live on reserve, with the balance living in Thunder Bay, Geraldton, and other surrounding communities. EFN is accessible year round only by air with flights operated by two airlines. In recent years, the "winter ice road season" has been shortening because of climate change. Residents

maintain these roads, which enable them to travel to Thunder Bay (sixteen hours), Pickle Lake (nine hours), and other surrounding First Nations.

The PARP research team took its direction from EFN's Chief and Council. When community input was required, individuals formed ad hoc committees to provide and coordinate public input. Several initiatives were undertaken and received PARP support, two of which are summarized here.

Previous attempts by EFN to establish an economic development corporation ended unsuccessfully. Since one PARP team member had corporate experience, Chief and Council sought PARP's assistance in establishing a new development corporation to separate Band politics from business yet remain consistent with the First Nation's vision and strategic goals. After a number of Band-wide meetings and surveys to gather community input on the proposal, Chief and Council passed Band Council Resolutions (BCRs) authorizing the start-up and affirming the corporation's overall direction to establish external sources of revenue for the Band. Board directors were selected, the first board meetings were held, and a strategic planning retreat was scheduled to set the direction for the corporation.

In February 2015, Chief and Council asked PARP to pursue a local economic development project with and for Eabametoong. After consultation with external resource people, the PARP research team proposed a Cultural Tourism Showcase Capacity Building Project to the Chief and Council, the economic development officer, and then the community in an October 2015 Band-wide meeting. Receiving EFN's approval for the concept, the PARP researcher began applying for grants from funding agencies. By August 2016, 100 percent funding was secured from the Ontario Aboriginal Economic Development Fund, the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation, the Ontario Tourism Development Fund, Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment and Training Services, and EFN, raising over $110,000 for the project.

The Cultural Tourism Showcase Project was a community-wide project with three phases:

1. *Training:* augmented previous training of the EFN tourism group; neighbouring communities were invited to participate in the training sessions.
2. *Learning through doing:* provided on-the-job experience to the tourism group in planning, advertising, and hosting a pilot Cultural Tourism Showcase Project in Eabametoong in the summer of 2017.
3. *Post-event review and analysis:* assessed the undertaking and determined its feasibility and the next steps for a variety of tourism ventures in EFN territory and northern Ontario.

Misipawistik Cree Nation, Manitoba

The Misipawistik Cree Nation (MCN) is located on the northwestern shore of Lake Winnipeg where the mouth of the North Saskatchewan River enters the lake. Traditionally, people from the Misipawistik Cree Nation have considered their community the geographic centre of Manitoba. Misipawistik Cree Nation is approximately 400 kilometres north of Winnipeg and is accessible by Provincial Highway 6, by air, and by water. As of 2012, the total membership was 1,753, with 34 percent under the age of fifteen, of whom 20 percent were under the age of five.

PARP's team of two research co-leaders worked with a CAC throughout the project. This advisory group set the name and vision for the group. E'Opinitowak, "giving a hand up," was chosen instead of a reference to poverty, which the advisory group strongly objected to since they did not think that it would be an accurate depiction of the state in which they live. The advisory group determined that youth should be the focus of their collaborative efforts with PARP to help the community increase employment and improve living standards. The youth in MCN, as in other First Nations, include teenagers as well as those in their twenties and sometimes in their early thirties. As a result of the group's vision, the PARP research co-leaders secured donations of computers for the adult education computer lab as well as hockey equipment for use by youth so that they could enjoy their refurbished arena. Both were secured from provincial programs that, until then, were unknown to the community.

Other initiatives that E'Opinitowak pursued in collaboration with PARP included projects oriented toward youth that were locally designed and delivered. Although small in scale and low in cost, these projects were cost-shared and reached large numbers of community members. Deepening the revival of culture was important, as was a focus on employment and strengthening the resource economy of the community. Examples of projects include a life skills/canoe adventure course, the Lake Keepers program, and an initiative to help community members obtain a driver's licence.

T'it'q'et, British Columbia

The community of T'it'q'et (formerly Lillooet Indian Band), situated adjacent to the town of Lillooet, is approximately 254 kilometres northeast of Vancouver on Highway 99. T'it'q'et is one of eleven communities within the St'át'imc Nation that share a common language, culture, history, and territory. T'it'q'et currently has 394 registered members. The Band has seven reserves, including the main reserve, Lillooet Indian Reserve 1, and a shared reserve with the Bridge River Indian Band.

Through PARP, T'it'q'et undertook a number of projects, one of which was the preparation of a community health survey report to understand further the health and well-being of the community, to acquire information and data relevant to the development of the community's profile, and to improve health and well-being while concurrently reducing poverty by contributing to the development of an economic strategic plan for the community.

The research assistant designed questionnaires for adults (eighteen and older), youths (from twelve to seventeen), and children (up to eleven), and they were the primary tool for data collection. The development of these questionnaires was based on the national First Nations Regional Health Survey (conducted from 2008 to 2010) and a list of priority health indicators (identified by the T'it'q'et Regional Advisory Community). Using the questionnaires, two data collectors administered the house-to-house health survey in the community in November 2014.

The baseline data collected from the health surveys, once analyzed, will be an important tool for the community to use as a basis for comparison after future initiatives are implemented (in economic development and other pursuits) to determine the impacts of activities on various health indicators and, by extension, the health and well-being of the community.

A second project undertaken through PARP was a synthesis of the impacts of climate change and an introduction to management strategies used by First Nations communities in

response to climate change. People across Canada, including First Nations communities, have noticed changes in their local environments and have been learning to adapt in order to survive. First Nations are strongly connected to natural environments for subsistence and for the preservation of their cultures. However, because of the frequency of fluctuations in weather patterns and the intensity of natural disasters (as consequences of climate change), communities are unable to make predictions using traditional knowledge with previous degrees of confidence; as a result, they have become vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. People in the Upper St'át'imc Territory, in particular T'it'q'et, have expressed concerns about the effects of climate change on their lifestyle, specifically on agriculture (or farming) and food security, fishing, hunting, logging, food gathering, and community traditions and culture.

HIGHLIGHTING FIRST NATIONS STRENGTHS

One of the many benefits that PARP team members enjoyed during the project was the meaningful relationships forged and strengthened. PARP's long-term nature fostered trust in new and ongoing friendships across the country. Team members saw first-hand the inherent strengths of communities as a whole and among band members of all ages — from political as well as non-elected leaders to Elders to youth. Many First Nations across Canada have rebounded from the impacts of colonialism-capitalism and residential schools, building on their connections with the land, their resilience, and their unremitting pursuit of their visions under strong leadership. Many are still struggling. The five communities that participated in PARP are at different points along this spectrum of health and well-being, and, in their own ways, they are working hard to achieve a healthy balance in community life. In this section, we shine a spotlight on the strengths underlying their tenacity in this quest in spite of ongoing adversities.

The six years during which PARP worked with the five First Nations across Canada showed us, as researchers, a perspective that few in Canadian society are aware of or few researchers attain, as nowhere in the literature have we come across what is highlighted here. That is, the picture that emerges from PARP's experiences and relationships shows the incredible capacity of leaders, the expertise in the community, and the exceptional education of workers in the community. Mainstream media and many non-Indigenous Canadians often assume that these attributes are deficient in many First Nations communities. For example, assumptions exist that the leaders and communities lack capacity, that few possess expertise, and that the majority lack the formal education required to address issues and/or solve problems.

With these assumptions firmly in place, generally speaking, the predominantly accepted approach to solving community problems has been to adhere to a prevailing system in which a First Nation is given little freedom or flexibility and is subjected to rigid controls. From the perceived lack of internal education, expertise, and thus capacity of the community to address effectively its issues, deferring to outsiders (i.e., outside the First Nation or non-Indigenous expertise) has been the default strategy of federal and provincial governments. First Nations have been given insufficient independence or power either to make their own decisions or to implement them.

From the experience of PARP, however, we learned that the leaders are able to deal with a multitude of incredibly complex, interconnected, and personally challenging issues

simultaneously. They illustrate a high degree of capacity to move issues forward in a difficult, bureaucratic environment. With resilience and perseverance, despite the innumerable challenges that they face on a regular basis, First Nations communities demonstrate their expertise, responding to often simultaneous and interconnected challenges in pursuing a brighter, more positive future. Additionally, in spite of the need for more practical professional training and the requirement to learn on the job, the workers in the communities show a high degree of education and effectively integrate a number of disparate job functions with demanding and excessive funding and reporting requirements all within a challenging work environment.

The point that we want to emphasize, from the insider perspective offered by PARP, is that Western-based conceptions of capacity, expertise, and education take on a whole different meaning in and among First Nations. From the perspective of the PARP team, there are leaders in every First Nation community with which we worked (elected officials, staff workers, and members of the community) who have the education, expertise, and capacity to work together to solve their problems. The workers and community members have the ability, desire, and motivation to move issues forward and seek a better future. What will enable them to do so is the provision of ample and equitable resources and the acknowledgement of their independence so that they can make and implement their own decisions.

The perspective offered by PARP researchers is that First Nations communities are not given the credit that they deserve. They consistently demonstrate that they are able to succeed despite incredibly difficult circumstances (take, for example, the list below of interconnected and complex issues with which many First Nations have to cope). We even speculate that few highly educated and experienced people from the rest of Canada, if thrown into the situations in which many First Nations find themselves (especially in remote communities), would be able to succeed as First Nations have been able to do.

To illustrate, PARP researchers can verify the challenges imposed on First Nations that seek funding and a green light to proceed with any given project. Granted, good planning is essential. However, a few issues have arisen in these approval processes that present unique challenges for First Nations. These issues include any one of the following or a combination of them: (1) when government forms, procedures, and deadlines shift midstream, requiring the completion of even more forms and steps before a file is considered ready; (2) when an agency fails to receive a report from one project, affecting the approval of another project seeking funding from the same agency; or (3) when one project requires multiple funders in order to proceed and, in turn, each funder requires separate expense reimbursement procedures and different templates for reporting. Workers in any agency can become stressed and frustrated with these fluid and complex circumstances. Keeping all of the forms, deadlines, and reporting requirements straight for several projects simultaneously places a significant burden on Band staff, especially when core funding is inadequate to support sufficient staffing levels and the few staff members carrying the load are stretched to the maximum.

We can throw into the mix additional complexities that First Nations face, not to mention emergencies and crises that occur all too frequently. Consider the following (some of which are recounted in the media, whereas others are less publicized but still present significant challenges):

- population explosion among youth (up to the age of twenty-nine) with a high percentage of teenage parenthood;
- underfunding of schools, educational programs, and social programs;

- understaffed medical facilities;
- inadequate housing and infrastructure (water, sewer, electricity, fire protection);
- food insecurity and lack of affordable, healthy food options;
- environmental contamination;
- high expense of everyday living complicated by high unemployment rates;
- health issues (diabetes, etc.);
- high rates of violent death, suicide, prescription drug and other substance abuse;
- multigenerational echoes of residential school experiences;
- stitching together from twenty to thirty different funding programs every year;
- two-year election cycle mandated under the obsolete Indian Act (unless a First Nation has held a referendum to increase election terms), suspending Band activity during the campaign and causing delays or stoppages when new Chiefs and Councillors take office.

If thrown into these conditions, would many other Canadians be able to handle the demands and pressures? First Nations have proven to be resourceful in the face of historical and ongoing hardships and restrictions. They have developed the knowledge and skills to adapt to their changing environments and survive. Whereas most non-Indigenous Canadians have lived in very different conditions, developing knowledge and skills that might be good fits for "mainstream" society, such advantages might not help them to survive under conditions found on reserve that Indigenous peoples must endure, cannot escape, and rightly choose not to because of their strong connection to place. So it is inappropriate for outsiders to believe that they can turn up like saviours with the answers. Given this reality, this is why research projects such as PARP must be community driven and why Indigenous peoples deserve more credit for their knowledge, expertise, and capacity.

Indigenous perspectives, PARP also found, embrace a different understanding of success. Through PARP, we came to understand that a First Nations view of success includes a broader view compared with that of mainstream society.[8] First Nations success operates, in part, in an administrative environment that few others experience. It is where First Nations leaders, workers, and community members continue to move issues forward given on-the-ground realities arising from a long-endured bureaucratic regime under the Indian Act that has perpetuated repressive federal, provincial, and corporate mindsets and actions. Despite these circumstances, the resilience and adaptability of First Nations have prevailed, and they are still here.

One might question the plausibility of this stance given the tragedy of youth suicide; high unemployment rates; gaps in education, health, and housing; and ongoing addictions, among other news stories that make media headlines on a regular basis. But these headlines only scratch the surface. To accept the veracity of our point of view in this chapter, one must appreciate First Nations from a perspective of strength as opposed to that of deficit. And, in order to appreciate First Nations strengths, long-term respectful relationship building is a prerequisite — one that the TRC mandated in its calls to action for all sectors of society. One must take the time to learn to see beyond the headlines. The members of PARP had the privilege of gaining this insight over six years.

With this new perspective, as realized through the PARP research project, a totally different paradigmatic approach to solving the problems in a First Nations community is possible. From this point of view, the community is capable of solving its own problems. If given

the resources to mitigate the overall challenges of the operating environment, the community has the experience, expertise, and capacity to succeed on its own terms. All that it requires is the independence to make its own decisions, and equitable resources will help to support and implement those decisions.

RESPECT FOR FIRST NATIONS CHALLENGES

This is not to dismiss each people's distinct cultural lens (recognizing that common ground exists between peoples) or to minimize the real challenges that First Nations continue to face (as noted above). What was reported in 2016 in the media about Attawapiskat, Ontario; Lac La Ronge, Saskatchewan; and other communities is not happening in isolation. First Nations across Canada are experiencing, to varying degrees, hardship and crisis. Their challenges are compounded by a number of issues that PARP explored in detail in an article published in the *Engaged Scholars Journal*.[9] The article also discusses several distinctive cultural protocols, perspectives, and other considerations especially relevant to academic and other external groups wishing to work or partner with a First Nation or in some way contribute to a community's development (on its terms). The article's main points follow.

Respect for Different WORLDS

An overarching theme from PARP is the acknowledgement that core differences exist between mainstream Canadian society and all five communities involved in the project (and by extension other First Nations, Inuit, and Métis across the country). Our differences are not to be seen as negative, for our combined strength lies in the diverse nature of all our peoples. To ignore our differences and engage with First Nations insensitive to the histories and cultural traditions that make Indigenous peoples distinct is unacceptable in this new era of reconciliation.

Respect for Different Languages

This has already been discussed in relation to Western and Indigenous understandings of words such as *poverty, success, capacity, education*, and *expertise*. Where English or French is not the original language of the people, and where different worldviews exist, special consideration must be given to word choice and communication strategies.

Spending Time Taking Care of Relationships

The building of a positive relationship serves as the central foundation for working with First Nations. When working with First Nations communities and organizations, taking time at the outset to establish respectful, trusted relationships is crucial, and taking care of these relationships over time is vital. People who wish to conduct research or business with First Nations must take into consideration and budget for the increased amount of time required in such undertakings. Those who seek to work with a community must realize that trust is not given overnight but earned.

Respecting First Nations' Priorities with Time

Part and parcel with the above distinctions are the implications for time management. Many factors affect the pace of work:

- Weather: for fly-in and remote communities, bad weather will undoubtedly cause flight cancellations or poor driving conditions (if road accessible), causing project delays.
- Process: many, if not all, communities wish to ensure community-wide support for a particular "action" being contemplated. Chief and Council might call for Band meetings to seek broad endorsement of an initiative.
- Respect: many Chiefs and Councils and Band Administrations, unfortunately, are simply too busy at times with the demands of their positions. In addition, seasonal hunts require people to be absent for a few weeks each spring and fall. Unforeseen circumstances or planned absences can cause meeting deferrals and delays in the overall process.
- Emergencies: throughout PARP's tenure, all First Nations had to cope with deaths because of illness as well as suicide, with losses of the old as well as the young. In many if not all communities, when a death occurs, the Band observes the tradition of closing the Band office; all work halts so that everyone can pay respects to the family and honour the individual who has passed.

Respect for Different Pressures and Social Forces

In addition to frequent requests to listen to proposals or participate in socio-environmental assessments, First Nations have had numerous obligations to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) (now known as Indigenous Services Canada) and other federal departments and ministries. As already highlighted, extensive reporting and disclosure requirements, along with application deadlines and forms that sometimes change midstream, create a dynamic and demanding environment in which Band staff have to navigate.

As well, First Nations rely on federal transfer payments for their core funding, and until recently they have been operating in a budgetary reality in which federal funding increases had been restricted to 2 percent per year since 1996, despite higher rates of inflation and population growth.[10] With efforts by the current Liberal government to lift the funding cap, the creation of Indigenous Services Canada, and the dissolution of INAC, it is hoped that shortfalls will be eliminated and that cumulative impacts because of inequitable funding will be redressed.[11]

The short electoral cycle of two years as mandated by the Indian Act has caused its own set of pressures. Some communities are pursuing the change to three- or four-year terms, but this takes time.[12] With a two-year term, after acclimatizing to the job, before they know it, Chief and Council realize that only one year remains before the next election, so time is short to get anything accomplished before thoughts turn to the next campaign.

Human Resources

Depending on the community, grade eight might be the average level of formal, Western-based education attained by Band members. Fewer high school diplomas are offset by all of the learning on the job and life experiences of the Chief and Council and senior staff.

Although formal postsecondary education might be limited, especially in more remote settings, as already discussed, First Nations have a great deal of experience and have adapted their skills and knowledge to navigate the complex bureaucracies of provincial and federal governments:

- Professional development programs for staff and management in Band Administrations are constantly needed. Additional training in various fields is sought, but this depends on the availability of funds, time, and coverage for those away on training. Distance learning might be a possibility, but in remote communities, such as Eabametoong First Nation, slow internet connectivity can be a limiting factor.

- Staff turnover is another issue. Job vacancies are common, and some First Nations struggle to retain people in key positions. Although not only an issue for remote communities, being a fly-in community exacerbates the challenge, for the population is isolated and might be comparatively smaller. The remoteness might not entice qualified people to apply and, once there, stay long term. Housing shortages also affect people's ability to commit to a position.

Information Technology (IT)

It may be likely that for some communities, such as those closer to urban areas, bandwidth speed is fast, and technology is available, facilitating effective communications via email and videoconferencing. Also, distance learning and online professional development courses may be readily available (but these assumptions may still be unfounded for some First Nations, even if they are closer to urban areas). For more remote First Nations, however, IT problems persist. In bad weather, often the internet and telephone lines disconnect. In Eabametoong First Nation, for example, limitations on bandwidth have restricted internet speeds and access to online instruction. Also, capabilities that others take for granted, such as sending email attachments, using programs such as DropBox to transfer larger files, and sharing calendars, fail. Downloading monthly bank statements and exploring websites for resources and information take too much time. Troubleshooting problems remotely is not possible given the limited bandwidth speed. For remote communities such as Eabametoong, these problems have significant impacts on staff productivity and impede information sharing and timely communication.

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS INTO A FIRST NATIONS
HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

In this section, we describe a number of additional insights gleaned from PARP's long-term association with the five First Nations. As in other sections of this chapter, our intention is not to be prescriptive, for each community's distinctness necessitates an individualized process. We offer these insights in the spirit of sharing what PARP research teams learned during the six years of the project, contributing to the discussion on reconciliation and relationship building between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Accepting Communities Where They Are and Where They Want to Go

An important task for us in the first year of the project was to select the five volunteer communities with which we would work. Two considerations influenced the selection process. First, we did not want to be accused of cherry-picking — that is, choosing communities that had the best prospects for development and leaving aside those in more challenging circumstances. Second, consistent with the first consideration, we wanted to include communities from across the country, a French-language community as well as an English-speaking community, at different stages in the process of development, and in a range of geographic locations, from urban or close to urban to rural and to northern fly-in. With these criteria in mind, we took direction from the AFN to ensure that all 633 communities had an equal opportunity to be considered. Sixty-three First Nations replied to the initial invitation, of which half provided additional information related to location, size, on- and off-reserve populations, and development challenges and opportunities. The final selection was made based on the aforementioned criteria.

During the decision-making process, we were advised by knowledgeable individuals that we should avoid including the community that had the most challenging development prospects on the ground, as it would be difficult to work under crisis conditions. The First Nation had recently declared a state of emergency because of prescription drug abuse. We ignored that advice partly because the need for assistance was so clear. We also had the idea that we should take the communities where they were at and where they wanted to go and try to provide assistance to move the yardstick along on each chosen journey.

The process of selection that we followed reinforced the community-driven nature of PARP as we worked to ensure that the First Nations chosen were representative of different environmental/geographic regions of the country as well as a range of socio-economic circumstances and stages of community development. With respect to the most challenged community, our experience was that it took longer to establish a proper relationship and to determine where we could be most helpful, but in the end the collaboration between the community and PARP yielded a strong relationship and significant project outcomes, which included establishing an economic development corporation and hosting a cultural tourism showcase, among other projects.

Significant projects were also undertaken in the other communities based on their priorities and directions. For example, the E'Opinitowak Committee in MCN noted that many youth did not have a driver's licence, a qualification for the majority of employment opportunities. PARP facilitated a process for youth to obtain their licences. T'it'q'et community members chose to do a health survey to understand better baseline pictures and health needs. They also pursued a study on food security and anticipated impacts of climate change. These were only a few of the many projects undertaken with PARP, illustrating the diversity in directions that the five First Nations chose to take with their respective PARP teams.

Culture Is Everywhere

In earlier decades, writing about the economic development of disadvantaged communities or nations tended to emphasize the importance of having certain narrowly defined technical requirements for success. They included factors such as location in relation to mar-

kets, availability of natural resources, human capital, transportation networks, technology, and funds for capital investment.

Culture tended not to be an important part of these development models unless it was argued that the culture of the community or nation was all wrong — too tied to tradition, too present oriented, too much emphasis on extended families, and so on. In more recent times, culture has come into the picture in another way — as a product or experience that can be marketed, such as handicrafts or cultural tourism. Indeed, with PARP, one of the more isolated communities in the project, Eabametoong, developed a cultural tourism experience that brought southern visitors to the North, exposing them to a rich cultural experience in the broadest sense.

It was one of the major contributions of the Harvard Project on American Economic Development to bring forward another way in which culture plays a role, the concept of cultural congruence. This refers to American Indian Tribes or Canadian First Nations that have had a particular institutional structure imposed on them by colonial authorities in a one-size-fits-all manner (e.g., an elected Chief and Council system). Rarely have such structures matched the culture and traditions of the community, leading to a situation in which decisions made by the imposed institutions lack legitimacy and contribute to internal conflict. First Nations going back to their own traditions and reshaping their institutions accordingly as part of a nation-building process are addressing this lack of fit. T'it'q'et, for example, and the St'át'mic Nation of which it is a part, have written their own constitution, delineating relationships and responsibilities for present and future generations with respect to the lands and resources, people, language, and culture. The constitution is grounded in St'át'mic beliefs and values and reflects a holistic view of community self-governance, outlining principles related to St'át'mic title and rights, the economy, trade relations, justice, and spirituality. T'it'q'et's governance structure includes individual mandates for a Traditional Council and an Elders Council that collaborate with each other as well as with the Band Council. In fact, the Band Chief and Council report and answer to both the Traditional Council and the Elders' Council, the latter of which holds veto power over decisions, based on community direction.

What became evident over the six years that PARP worked with all five First Nations, and what we have tried to emphasize through this chapter both directly and indirectly, is that culture is central to how the communities prioritize their daily responsibilities and how they operate. For example, the First Nations involved in PARP taught the research teams how their cultures inform their processes of development in the conception of what constitutes a good life or in the culturally based protocols by which relationships are established between the communities and outside groups. In addition to the foundational principles that we followed, culture informed many of the project choices undertaken with PARP, such as Lake Keepers (already mentioned) and *Awakening the Spirit* (a video project for self-esteem among youth) in MCN, a birch bark course that can be taken for credit in the Opitciwan school, and a Cultural Tourism Showcase Project in Eabametoong, to name just a few. The conclusion that we have drawn is that culture is everywhere in First Nations, not only to be acknowledged but also to be respected in all aspects of the work at hand.

Community-Level Determinants of Health and Well-Being

In our proposal to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) for funding, our initial thinking was to undertake research and action, in conjunction with the chosen com-

munities, to address poverty as a social determinant of health. As noted above, in relation to community perspectives, we were too focused on the economic dimension. Our causal argument was that improvements in areas such as jobs, incomes, and business development would have direct, positive impacts on the health and well-being of individuals and families, though we were worried that the impacts might not be visible during the life of the project.

Our thinking changed as the project evolved and for reasons already discussed in this chapter. We began to see ourselves as contributing in a modest way to a process of nation building by undertaking a variety of initiatives following from community strategic plans — activities such as creating an economic development corporation (EFN), improving communication capacity and training for Band staff (EFN), undertaking surveys so that leaders can be better informed to guide decision making (T'it'q'et), developing a food preservation and food security project (T'it'q'et and MCN), piloting an integrated services model to support persons seeking to exit social assistance (Sipek'nekatik), and, in MCN, engaging youth and Elders in learning traditional life skills, learning how to drive, and applying traditional knowledge as Lake Keepers. The idea was that, by supporting communities in projects of their choosing that reflect a holistic approach to "living well" (one of the terms that communities preferred to "poverty"), we would make a contribution to strengthening those communities. That in itself would have positive benefits for the health and well-being of community members.

The Role of External Supports

In the introductory sections of this chapter, we noted that all First Nations communities involved in PARP shared the common aspiration that the project contribute to improving community health and well-being. They sought to travel farther along the roads that they defined. Could they do it on their own? Our experience suggests that government supports are essential in the early stages even if communities are later able to generate significant own-source revenues. The driver's licence initiative that the E'Opinitowak Committee launched in MCN is a case in point; PARP team members coordinated with the government of Manitoba to facilitate the program so that community members could get their licences, which in turn increased their eligibility for employment.

Also, grants for training, infrastructure, communication, travel, and of course salaries are critical. The other requirement for government programs is that they be flexible and supportive, that they not seek to implement a centrally determined agenda but be available to support the strategic plans that the communities have set out. There would be little point in undertaking the development of strategic plans if support for their implementation were unavailable.

A related question is whether the academic sector can make a contribution, and here we are at risk of being self-serving. Suffice it to say that we were able to support relevant research (e.g., undertaking key informant interviews in MCN, T'it'q'et, and Sipek'nekatik or surveying the population to measure health status in T'it'q'et). We contributed our knowledge of the literature as well as specific academic expertise (e.g., in legal matters, in economics/business, or in the social determinants of health). Additionally, we helped to connect First Nations to other academics or to governments when requested. Importantly, in both Sipek'nekatik and Eabametoong, we provided a respite for the leaders to break away from crisis management and created opportunities to consider longer-range plans for the community. At the end of PARP, all five communities indicated a desire for the project to continue.

The Benefits of Bridging Social Capital

Related to the above discussion is the usefulness of "bridging social capital," the social ties that connect people across divides such as race or class[13] to foster economic development and community well-being in geographically remote First Nations communities. As noted above, Indigenous peoples have many creative ideas, abilities, and talents, but as a result of colonization they do not always have access to the material resources necessary to implement them. A key role that PARP played was to connect First Nations to individuals, organizations, and municipalities that have abundant resources and are committed to reconciliation and social justice but do not themselves have the knowledge or connections to make good on their intentions. For example, PARP researchers working with Eabametoong First Nation helped to facilitate a unique partnership between EFN and Markham, Ontario.[14] As per this agreement, Eabametoong students now have access to Markham's online library system, the Band Administration can seek professional advice from Markham's municipal management on various issues, and the city and Markham citizens donated sports and fitness equipment to the First Nation.[15] Meanwhile, Markham's mayor and two city and regional councillors visited EFN to meet in person with the Band Council as well as community members at a PARP-sponsored dinner and community-wide breakfast. Finally, several Markham citizens travelled to EFN to participate in a Cultural Showcase in which they learned about EFN history, culture, and living conditions. This inaugural trip was part of a larger project that PARP fundraised for to build economic development capacity in tourism and related businesses. The point here is that such mutually beneficial connections do not necessarily emerge spontaneously; they often require deliberate bridging by a trusted third party. Investing in social infrastructure, and not just individually targeted policies and programs, is therefore critical to reducing poverty and enhancing well-being in First Nations and beyond.

Political and Administrative Leadership and Stability

Although there is considerable debate in the literature about the importance of leadership in the process of development, our observations in the five communities were that it is of considerable significance. The challenges of development facing the communities are considerable, and both strong and visionary leadership is required for everything from dealing with crises to managing internal divisions, developing a vision for the community and related strategic planning, and dealing with external governments and private interests. Indeed, a strong case can be made that the leadership displayed is not fully recognized and appreciated by outsiders, governments, and businesses, and supports for leaders and leadership development are inadequate.

In addition to the quality of leadership is its stability. Most of the five First Nations involved in PARP are still bound by the two-year election cycle mandated by the Indian Act, which interferes significantly with longer-range planning. Over the life of our project, we experienced three elections in those communities with the two-year time frame, not to mention resulting changes in leadership.

To increase leadership stability, it appears that communities have two main options. The first option is to elect the same people repeatedly, a pattern that depends on many variables but works best when given leaders have outstanding abilities and community support.[16] The second option is to break away from the two-year cycle and choose a longer term between

elections (e.g., four years) under the authority of the recently enacted First Nations Elections Act.

We found that leaders in these communities were well aware of the advantages of a longer period in office, and indeed one of the five communities does have elections every four years. It is difficult, however, to build community consensus for a longer term because of concerns about the ability to change leadership in short order if the people elected turn out not to be the best as viewed by a significant proportion of the community. This uncertainty is especially likely to arise if there are strong divisions within a First Nation.

Re-establishing a traditional system of governance, as in T'it'q'et and the other St'át'mic Nations (described above), is an approach that some communities are beginning to explore to address shortcomings of the election provisions in the Indian Act. The annual PARP gatherings, at which representatives from all five First Nations were present, were opportunities for them to learn from each other and gather ideas that they could take back to their respective communities for further discussion. Having been introduced to what the St'át'mic Nations were doing, other communities became curious about its potential for them.

Politics and Business

One often hears in "Indian country" the refrain that politics and business need to be separated in order for development efforts to succeed. This point of view is often attributed to the Harvard Project, but in fact it represents a misreading and an oversimplification of what the project has to say.[17]

We found in the five communities that in fact the elected leaders play a crucial and necessary role in the development process. Although patterns vary from one community to the next, political leaders play a central role in defining community visions, developing strategic plans, putting in place a qualified civil service, enacting bylaws (BCRs), policies, and regulations, and dealing with external governments and private sector interests such as resource development or hydro companies. It is a very demanding role, placing considerable stress on both leaders and Council agendas.

Not everything can or should come to the table, however, and a strong case can be made for the formation of a separate but accountable structure such as a community economic development corporation. It can assemble the staff expertise required to deal with economic development initiatives, including the management of community-owned ventures, as well as provide a degree of separation from political considerations in decision making. Indeed, in Eabametoong, that is what we were asked to help establish, with a key project team member assisting in laying the legal and organizational groundwork. He was also asked to serve as a board member for the corporation. The Chief and Council represent all the shareholders of the corporation (the whole community) and play a key role, ensuring that the corporation complies with the strategic vision and plan for the community.

Academic Tensions

The kind of action research that we undertook in this project is a long way from mainstream practices and leads to significant tensions as a consequence. Even the language of mainstream research is problematic. For example, we responded to an opportunity for funding billed as "intervention research," a term that we abandoned quickly because the concept of (external) intervention does not have a happy history in the First Nations context.

Since the competition for grants from national funding agencies has become more competitive,[18] the expectation is high for proposals to be incredibly detailed about the research and how it will be implemented. This is at odds with the expectations of community-based research in the First Nations context, in which community engagement throughout the research process is a highly valued expectation. We have already noted the community-driven nature of PARP and how its original focus was substantially altered for a number of the communities. In our original proposal, we handled this tension to some extent by specifying only the common *process* that would be followed in each community (e.g., an Advisory Committee, research to develop a community profile, etc.). We avoided setting out a specific model of the development process or articulating required elements of a strategic plan.

Given the expectations of peer review committees, we might not have been successful in obtaining a grant were it not for the fact that CIHR had in place a mechanism whereby proposals in Indigenous health research could be reviewed by a special committee composed of persons who had knowledge of and experience in Indigenous health research and who inherently knew, as a result of their experience, that room for community influence had to be part of the research design.[19]

A similar tension exists with ethics reviews in which the mainstream practice is to require at the outset detailed specifications concerning how the work will be implemented before the research process begins. Requirements include having appendices with the actual questions to be used in the interview during the selection process and details on how participants (in this case, entire First Nations) will be recruited. In a related project submitted by one member of our research team, the ethics submission came to some 120 pages, and this was all before the research could actually begin. Our only recourse was to be specific but also not to hesitate in adapting research instruments as we went along, a process that required going back to the relevant ethics boards for amendments to the original application.

Other tensions arise with financial administrators in university settings who are reluctant to approve expenditures outside the norm, such as providing funds for feasts in the communities, paying for child care so that parents can participate in meetings, honorariums for Elders, or door prizes at community events. Their reluctance is rooted in a fear of being audited by the national granting councils, which suggests that a resolution of these tensions lies in changing practices and expectations at the national level.[20]

The granting councils and university-based ethics boards are far more comfortable and practiced when it comes to the *research* component of a project and much less geared to handle the *action* or *intervention* component. Ethics applications, for example, relate to matters such as research design, informed consent, and the risks/benefits of the research; nowhere do they ask for information assessing ethical practices and potential risks from the action part of the project. Yet it is more likely to be the action components that represent risks to participants than being asked a few questions by an interviewer or participating in a small group discussion.

A final point regards conventional approaches to knowledge arising from the research, most often deemed the property of an academic institution, and knowledge transfer, which typically has included requirements for publication and presentations at conferences. Recognizing that the knowledge shared by First Nations is *their* knowledge, the academy needs to adjust its policies on knowledge ownership and knowledge transfer to honour the principles of ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP).[21] At the beginning of the project,

PARP developed a written policy in partnership with AFN to ensure that permissions from the five First Nations were obtained before any article was published and that the principles embodied in OCAP were followed. One of PARP's practices, as a result, was to include all of the First Nations as authors of this chapter.

As this discussion shows, there is a lack of fit between the institutionalized requirements of mainstream research and the demands of community-based research in a First Nations context. Academic research ethics boards (REBs) and their ethics approval requirements are not set up for the type of action research that PARP pursued, a project that needed to be community driven: that is, based on what the communities wanted, not on what the researchers or academic institutions wanted. In response to the TRC Calls to Action and in this era of reconciliation, REBs have the potential to become increasingly responsive both to First Nations' expectations for any proposed research project and to community-driven action research protocols for developing good relations and working with First Nations partners.

Respecting Traditional Knowledges

The mainstream model of knowledge transfer typically shows that knowledge is generated by a research-oriented organization such as a university, hospital, or government laboratory and then transferred or applied to grateful recipients at the community level. Although this is a simplistic description even within the bounds of the mainstream model, historically it has been the prevailing orientation, with knowledge defined in Western scientific terms and collected accordingly.

Working with First Nations, a different perspective emerges. Since such research ideally involves the full engagement of the community in all phases, there is more of a sense that the community itself provides much of the knowledge, assembled and to some extent interpreted by the research partner. Furthermore, Indigenous knowledge is part of the picture in both conscious and subconscious ways, though it struggles to be recognized on par with Western science.[22]

For example, many of the projects that PARP researchers engaged in with their First Nations partners involved sharing traditional knowledge, seen by community members as integrally linked with improving health and well-being. Two projects illustrate this point. The first project was a culture-based credit course in the Opitciwan high school that involved harvesting birch bark and making baskets and canoes and that counted toward earning a high school or graduate-equivalent diploma (GED). The second project was a culture camp held around the summer solstice in MCN involving a fish fry (starting with setting the nets and catching the fish), learning food preparation, cooking, and preservation, sharing traditional teachings, and more. In these and other projects, PARP researchers observed and listened to both instructors and participants, reflecting on their experiences with increased senses of self-esteem, wellness, and connection to their roots and the land.

A further insight is that many First Nations in British Columbia have the traditional knowledge and applied skills to keep suicide levels low, so First Nations have much to learn from each other on how to tackle this important issue.[23]

Nation-to-Nation Learning

PARP attempted to incorporate opportunities for nation-to-nation learning into the project design, with mixed results. The formal mechanism used was an Advisory Committee for

the work in each community, leaving the details of its composition to be worked out in each case but providing some general guidance. In one community, for example, the Advisory Committee included community members such as the Chief, several councillors, an Elder, and others. It also included senior provincial and federal government representatives, on the ground that the design and implementation of a strategy to address poverty would benefit from government perspectives and funding. There were two academic members from the national project team and leaders from two First Nations in the same province who were widely recognized as having made great strides in achieving economic self-reliance and reduced government dependence.

The idea of having such an advisory body was outstanding in principle but less successful in practice. In this particular case, for example, though the Advisory Committee met several times and provided some useful guidance, there was resistance from some Councillors in recognizing that neighbouring communities, having made great progress in achieving self-reliance, had much to offer the First Nation involved in PARP. An element of intercommunity competitiveness came into play and impeded collaboration and opportunities to learn from each other's experiences. In other locations, either an Advisory Committee was not formed or, if it was, it contained key members from the community itself, such as the directors of various programs employed by the Band.

More informal mechanisms for intercommunity learning seemed to work better. There was great interest among community representatives to attend our annual national meetings, for example, and they showed considerable interest in hearing about the range of challenges that the communities faced and how they set out to address them. For instance, the other four First Nations were interested in learning more about the traditional governance structure in T'it'q'et and the children-centred approach to family and child services in MCN, among other issues. Another mechanism for intercommunity learning involved the sharing and collaboration within Tribal Councils that brought together communities in the same geographic area that shared the same history and culture. Outside our project, learning also takes place at the annual meetings of organizations such as CANDO (Council for the Advancement of Economic Development Officers), which gives annual awards for excellence and offers multiple workshops on specific issues that delegates are free to attend if they so choose.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATION-TO-NATION POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

As Canada moves to interpret and act on the TRC Calls to Action, building upon RCAP and defining nation-to-nation relationships, a number of recommendations for policy and institutional change can be drawn from the preceding discussion. First, First Nations, and by extension Indigenous peoples across Canada, have a strong sense of their policy priorities and needs, requiring little outside help, if any, to know what is best for their communities. Allowing First Nations to direct processes promises to yield positive results, as it did for the communities that participated in PARP. In MCN, for example, setting the priority to increase opportunities for youth led to successful initiatives for this largest demographic of the community, providing training (e.g., to get a driver's licence) and employment (e.g., establishing a local seafood processing plant) as well as programs in life skills, culture, and recreation (e.g., the Lake Keepers program). Carrying out these programs in a comprehensive and

holistic way, again taking direction from the community, was the key to success. In a number of instances, low-cost investments with minimal reporting requirements yielded significant, positive results; the driver's licence program is a case in point. So community-driven action research projects that build on community strengths and incorporate First Nations expertise, capacity, and knowledge are strongly recommended.

The same can be said when federal and provincial governments set their priorities. Rather than governments establishing Indigenous-focused initiatives for their various departments, a nation-to-nation relationship means that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, respecting that they know their needs best, are consulted and have a say in setting directions and deciding funding levels. In other words, federal and provincial governments ought to take their cues from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit governments rather than imposing one-sided decisions.

Second, strengthening ties to land and water is important for community well-being on economic, cultural, spiritual, mental, and emotional levels. A holistic approach to research for community health and well-being is therefore essential. This needs to translate into government funding that applies to all aspects of this holistic approach to health in support of physical wellness, mental strength, emotional balance, and spiritual freedom. Current funding envelopes, for example, tend to focus on the treatment of physical addiction, economic development, or infrastructure, with little or no funding for the mental, spiritual, and emotional dimensions of community wellness (aside from temporary supports given after specific emergencies and crises). For lasting improvements to health and well-being (on both individual and community levels), a holistic approach to funding that addresses all four dimensions is needed.

Third, important projects need not be large and costly. PARP funding, in various amounts, contributed to several successful community initiatives. Collaborating with the community and leveraging the external connections of PARP team members kept costs down in a number of initiatives, and the First Nations appreciated these lower costs. This project, however, though both timely and important, came to an end. Although all five communities expressed interest in continuing the association with the PARP teams, funding for such long-term collaborations does not exist. How can this approach to partnering in community-driven action research be supported in the future?

Fourth, the demand for project funding exceeds the supply, even with outside leveraging. Communities have developed sharp skill sets for prioritizing projects and reworking budgets, but ultimately there is a shortage of funds for small but effective projects as well as larger ones. Having to secure external funding on a project-by-project basis is onerous and time consuming, often with stringent limitations and reporting requirements. Equitable funding is essential, as is changing the bureaucratic maze and streamlining government funding processes to be in accordance with priorities set by First Nations. Although this will be challenging, it nevertheless needs to be done.

Fifth, hand in hand with ensuring equitable funding is the need to give First Nations autonomy and decision-making control over the use of the funds. One way to translate this recommendation into practice involves releasing First Nations from onerous reporting requirements on a per project basis in favour of one annual audit and report to be made available to all funding sources at the same time each year (rather than having one or more reports per project per funding agency throughout the year).

Finally, for granting agencies and academic REBs, policies need to reflect Indigenous priorities, protocols, and customs. What are First Nations ethics, and how can they be hon-

oured in academic research application and approval processes? Rather than adhering to strictly Western conventions, adaptations are needed to reflect the distinctness of collaborative research with First Nations. For example, terminology and customs need to be contemplated from Indigenous viewpoints and changed accordingly (e.g., the inappropriateness of intervention research, restrictions on honorariums, expectations to acknowledge the collaboration at a project's end with a gift exchange, etc.). REBs and granting agencies have an opportunity to learn from Indigenous peoples and, in the spirit of reconciliation, make their mandates flexible enough for the diversity that exists among Indigenous peoples and their protocols and customs.[24]

CONCLUSION

From 2011 to 2017, the Poverty Action Research Project was on a dynamic and creative journey for community development with five First Nations. The purpose of this chapter has been to raise awareness about the many strengths of First Nations peoples and to understand better a number of impediments that present challenges to them as they work for their communities' health and well-being.

Toward these objectives, this case study has

- described the Poverty Action Research Project;
- raised awareness about our different worlds and explored how poverty is perceived by First Nations, preferring instead to frame issues in holistic terms of health and well-being;
- highlighted First Nations strengths and acknowledged the credit due for their resilience and creativity in the face of significant and ongoing challenges;
- outlined distinctive cultural and other characteristics of First Nations especially relevant to academic and other external groups that wish to contribute to a holistic, collaborative, and community-driven process of development;
- discussed additional observations and insights based on PARP experiences; and
- suggested recommendations for policy and institutional change in light of the experiences of the PARP research team with the five First Nations that participated in the project.

Acknowledging the distinctness of each First Nation, how PARP unfolded differently for each community, and that this account is by no means exhaustive and all-encompassing given the diversity among Indigenous peoples across Canada, our intentions here have been to inform work in all sectors of society as together we discern how to progress toward reconciliation and strengthen relationship building between Indigenous peoples of Canada and non-Indigenous Canadians.

NOTES

1. As with any group effort in writing, it is extremely difficult to arrange the order of authorship since everyone's experiences and contributions to the research and writing processes are invaluable. Jennifer Dockstator and Frederic Wien co-wrote the "Introduction," "Background," and "Research in Process" sections. The various authors contributed to their respec-

tive sections in "Research in Action," describing PARP activities in the communities with which they worked. Jennifer and Mark Dockstator co-wrote the section "Highlighting First Nations Strengths." Jennifer summarized some of the challenges that each community faced in the section "Respecting First Nations Challenges." Frederic authored the section on "Additional Insights." Jennifer and Wanda Wuttunee contributed to the "Policy and Institutional Recommendations" section. Jennifer wrote the "Conclusion." And Jennifer and Frederic co-edited the chapter based on input from the research team.

2. The precedent for the practice of listing First Nations as authors can be found in Lonczak et al., "Navigating the Tide Together," and Smylie et al., "Indigenous Knowledge Translation."
3. Brant Castellano and Wien, "Sharing the Land, Sharing a Future."
4. Dockstator et al., "Pursuing Mutually Beneficial Research."
5. See http://sipeknekatik.ca/community-profile/.
6. See http://povertyaction.ca/community/opitciwan-qc.
7. For information presented in the first part of this community profile, see http:/eabametoong.firstnation.ca/.
8. See, for example, Cornell, "American Indians, American Dreams."
9. Dockstator et al., "Pursuing Mutually Beneficial Research."
10. See http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/how-does-native-funding-work-1.1301120.
11. See http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/first-nations-funding-cap-lifted-1.3359137.
12. Lengthening terms is now possible after the First Nations Elections Act came into effect April 2015, requiring the development of a community election code, adoption by a majority vote of the membership, and passage of a BCR. See http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1407356680075/1407356710099.
13. Baron, Field, and Schuller, *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives*; Halpern, *Social Capital*; Lin, Cook, and Burt, *Social Capital Theory and Research*.
14. See http://www.yorkregion.com/news-story/7095569-markham-signs-partnershipaccord-with-eabametoong-first-nation/.
15. See http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/first-nations-girls-0hockey-1.4091247.
16. Wien, "Profile of the Membertou First Nation, Nova Scotia."
17. For more information on the Harvard Project, see http://hpaied.org/.
18. Our grant came from CIHR.
19. Subsequently, CIHR did away with the special peer review committee and moved to a format in which reviewers would no longer meet face to face for much of the peer review process and with no guarantee that a given panel was composed of people with experience in the field. In response to protests, CIHR is moving back to the original model.
20. Moore, "Implementing Chapter 9"; Stiegman and Castleden, "Leashes and Lies."
21. Schnarch and First Nations Centre, "Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession."
22. Bartlett, Marshall, and Marshall, "Two-Eyed Seeing."
23. Chandler and Lalonde, "Transferring Whose Knowledge?"
24. Fortunately, significant progress in adapting ethics requirements to meet the needs of research with Indigenous populations has been made; see Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, "Tri-Council Policy Statement," Chapter 9.

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Introduction

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Robert Oppenheimer

The State of the Aboriginal Economy as well as the Canadian economy in 2020 was severely negatively impacted by the coronavirus. However, it should be noted that the value of education was confirmed. As levels of education increase, wage rates and employment measures continued to show improvements. This is the case for both Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals.

National economies are often measured in terms of their gross domestic product (GDP). The Canadian GDP in 2020 was down 5.4%. This was the steepest decline in Canadian GDP since 1961, when the data was first recorded. To measure the Aboriginal economy, unemployment, employment, and participation rates may be used. All three of these measures were very negative in 2020. In the following article these three rates are examined for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. Rates are also examined for Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals by gender, age, province, and educational level.

Education Remains Critical with Unemployment, Employment, and Participation Rates in 2020 Being the Worst in Many Years for Aboriginals and Non-Aboriginals

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ABSTRACT

The higher the level of education completed the higher the wage rates, the lower the rate of unemployment, and the higher the employment rates. Unemployment rates were significantly higher and participation and employment rates were significantly lower for Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals in Canada in 2020. This may be attributed to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. The rate of unemployment increased more for non-Aboriginals than for Aboriginals in 2020. However, participation and employment rates decreased more for Aboriginals than for non-Aboriginals. Employment, unemployment, and participation rates are and historically have been more favourable for non-Aboriginals than for Aboriginals. As educational levels increase, employment measures and wage rates improve. Employment measures are examined by gender, age, province, and education, and for Métis, Inuit, and First Nations.

INTRODUCTION

Employment data for Aboriginals 15 years and older living off Reserves and for non-Aboriginals is presented for 2007 through 2020 to enable the reader to assess the changes over time. The focus provided is on the changes between 2020 from 2019.

EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT, AND PARTICIPATION RATES

The employment rate is the percent of those working in the total population who are over the age of 15. The participation rate is the percent of those employed and those seeking to be employed over the same total population of those over 15 years old. The higher these rates, in general, the better the economy is thought to be doing. In contrast, the lower the unemployment rate, the better the economy is considered to be doing. The unemployment rate is the percentage of those seeking employment divided by those employed and those seeking employment. The combination of those employed and those unemployed (that is, those seeking employment) is considered the labour force. Therefore, another way of defining the unemployment rate is the percentage unemployed in the labour force. It may be helpful to note that the employment and unemployment rates are not directly related, as they are measured in different ways.

The unemployment rate for Aboriginals in 2020 was 14.2 versus 10.2 in 2019, which was an increase of 39.2%. The non-Aboriginal unemployment rate of 9.4 increased from 5.6, which was an increase of 67.9% for the same time period. These were the highest rates of unemployment since the reporting here of this data since 2007. The percentage increase in the unemployment rate for non-Aboriginals was larger than for Aboriginals.

The participation rate declined for Aboriginals by 4.3% and by 2.3% for non-Aboriginals in 2020. The Aboriginal employment rate in 2020 was 52.0, a decrease of 8.5% from 56.8 in 2019, while for non-Aboriginals it decreased by 6.3% from 62 in 2019 to 58.1 in 2020.

In summary, participation and employment rates decreased (worsened) more for Aboriginals while unemployment rates increased (worsened) more for non-Aboriginals in 2020. All three rates in 2020, for both Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals, were the worst they have been since 2007, which is when the data was first reported. These three rates have also been worse for Aboriginals than for non-Aboriginals in every year since at least 2007. See Table 1.

COMPARING RATES FOR FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS, AND INUIT

In 2020, the unemployment rate for First Nations was 15.1, and it was 11.9 in 2019. The 3.2 increase in the rate of unemployment was a 26.9% over the 2019 rate. The Métis unemployment rate was 13.3 in 2020, compared to 8.4 in 2019, which was an increase of 58.3% from the 2019 rate. First Nations have consistently had higher unemployment rates than Métis.

Participation rates and employment rates decreased for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit in 2020. The Métis employment and participation rates have consistently been higher than for First Nations and for Inuit, except for 2007, 2013, and 2019, when these rates were higher for Inuit.

In 2020, the participation rate was 62.6 for Métis and 58.9 for First Nations; for Inuit it was 48.1. Thus, the participation rates were 5.9% lower for First Nations and 23.2% lower for Inuit, then for Métis. The employment rate for Métis was 54.3, for First Nations it was 50.0, and for Inuit it was 40.3 in 2020. This is 7.9% lower for First Nations and 25.8% lower for Inuit than for Métis.

TABLE 1
Employment, Participation, and Unemployment Rates
Aboriginals Living Off of the Reserves in Canada, 15 years and older and non-Aboriginal

Aboriginals

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% Change 2020/2019
Unemployment rate	10.7	10.2	13.7	14.1	13.1	12.9	11.7	11.2	12.4	12.4	11.3	10.1	10.2	14.2	**39.2**
Participation rate	65.0	66.3	65.7	62.2	63.4	64.7	64.1	64.2	63.0	64.4	64.4	64.1	63.3	60.6	**−4.3**
Employment rate	58.1	59.6	56.7	53.5	55.1	56.4	56.6	57.0	55.2	56.5	57.1	57.6	56.8	52.0	**−8.5**

Non-Aboriginals

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% Change 2020/2019
Unemployment rate	5.9	6.0	8.2	7.9	7.4	7.2	6.9	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.2	5.7	5.6	9.4	**67.9**
Participation rate	67.5	67.6	67.1	67.0	66.8	66.5	66.5	66.0	65.9	65.7	65.8	65.4	65.6	64.1	**−2.3**
Employment rate	63.5	63.5	61.6	61.7	61.8	61.8	61.9	61.5	61.4	61.2	61.7	61.7	62.0	58.1	**−6.3**

Aboriginal vs. non-Aboriginal

	% 2020/2019
Unemployment rate	**51.1**
Participation rate	**−5.5**
Employment rate	**−10.5**

Employment Rate: % working of total population over age 15

Participation Rate: % working and seeking employment of total population over 15

Unemployment Rate: % seeking employment divided by those employed and seeking employment (also defined as the % seeking employment divided by the Labour Force)

Labour Force: those employed and seeking employment

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour force survey, custom tabulation 4ctl_abo_wage_AN.ivt

The employment and participation rates in 2020 for Métis and Inuit were the lowest they have been since the data has been available from 2007, and the unemployment rate was the highest in 2020 for the Métis for the same time period. For First Nations their unemployment rate, participation rate, and employment rate were the worst they have been since 2012, 2010, and 2011, respectively. Please see Table 2.

EMPLOYMENT RATES BY AGE AND GENDER

In 2020 employment rates declined for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men and women in each of the three age groups of 15–24, 24–54, and 55 and over, except for Aboriginal men over 55. Their employment rate increased by 1.7% from a low level of 36.2 in 2019 to 36.8 in 2020. The largest percentage decreases for Aboriginals were for men 15–24 years and for women 55 and over, which were declines of 15.0% and 18.3% respectively. The largest decreases for non-Aboriginals were for men 15–24 years and women 15–24 years at 12.9% and 16.3% respectively.

For Aboriginal men and women in the 15–24 and the 25–54 age categories, their employment rates have been consistently lower than non-Aboriginal men and women. The employment rate for Aboriginal women 55 and over has been higher than for non-Aboriginals since 2013, except in 2020. For Aboriginal men 55 and over it has been the opposite. Their employment rate has been lower than for non-Aboriginal men since 2013. Please see Table 3.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY AGE AND GENDER

Unemployment rates increased significantly for men and women in all three age categories for both Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals in 2020. The largest increase was the more than doubling for Aboriginal women 55 years and older, increasing 110.3% to an unemployment rate of 12.2. The highest unemployment rate was 24.3 for Aboriginal men 15–24, an increase of 38.9% over 2019. In a similar manner non-Aboriginal men's unemployment rate was the highest for those 15–24 at 20.6, an increase of 71.7%. The unemployment rate more than doubled for non-Aboriginal women 15–24, increasing by 106.4% to a rate of 19.4.

The unemployment rate for Aboriginals was 51.1% higher than for non-Aboriginals in 2020. For Aboriginal men the unemployment rate was 64.2% higher and for Aboriginal women it was 35.1% higher than for non-Aboriginals in 2020. Significantly higher rates of unemployment for Aboriginal men and women in each of the three age groups have persisted since 2007, which is the time period for which the data is available. Please see Table 4.

EMPLOYMENT RATES AND POPULATION BY
PROVINCE OR REGION

The province with the highest Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations is Ontario. In Ontario, the employment rate for Aboriginals decreased to 52.1 in 2020, from 56.2 in 2019, and the lowest for Ontario since 2007 (except for 2010). The provinces with the highest

TABLE 2
Employment, Participation, and Unemployment Rates, Canada
First Nations, Métis, and Inuits
In thousands, except for rates

First Nations

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% Change 2020/2019	% Compared to Métis
Population	303.8	324.2	344.5	364.8	383.2	394.3	405.5	417.3	428.9	449.6	472.0	486.1	535.4	554.7		
Unemployment rate	12.5	12.5	15.9	17.1	16.8	15.7	13.5	12.1	14.7	15.0	13.5	11.2	11.9	15.1	26.9	13.5
Participation rate	62.4	63.5	62.5	58.3	59.7	62.5	60.9	61.2	59.5	61.7	62.0	61.8	60.5	58.9	-2.6	-5.9
Employment rate	54.6	55.5	52.5	48.3	49.6	52.7	52.6	53.8	50.7	52.4	53.6	54.9	53.3	50.0	-6.2	-7.9

Métis

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% Change 2020/2019
Population	320.7	334.7	349.8	361.6	373.2	387.3	402.3	417.5	428.8	442.7	457.6	468.8	550.4	566.9	
Unemployment rate	9.2	8.0	11.6	11.4	9.8	10.5	10.1	10.2	10.2	10.0	9.1	8.7	8.4	13.3	58.3
Participation rate	67.3	69.0	68.9	66.2	67.4	67.1	67.3	67.5	66.4	67.4	67.1	66.7	65.8	62.6	-4.9
Employment rate	61.2	63.5	60.9	58.7	60.8	60.0	60.5	60.6	59.7	60.7	61.0	60.9	60.3	54.3	-10.0

Inuits

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% Change 2020/2019	% Compared to Métis
Population	12.0	10.5	10.4	12.1	14.0	13.7	13.9	11.7	16.3	16.5	15.1	16.3	21.4	20.6		
Unemployment rate	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	19.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.7	0.0	N/A	N/A
Participation rate	71.0	69.5	67.6	64.6	61.0	64.5	69.6	56.7	62.8	61.0	60.5	61.1	69.0	48.1	-30.3	-23.2
Employment rate	65.1	62.3	56.7	54.9	55.6	59.3	64.0	48.6	50.8	54.3	51.5	52.6	58.2	40.3	-30.8	-25.8

Note: Table cells showing 0.0 refer to estimates that are suppressed (cannot be published) because they are below the confidentiality threshold. The LFS estimates are based on a sample and are therefore subject to sampling variability. As a result, monthly estimates will show more variability than trends observed over longer time periods. Estimates for smaller geographic areas or industries also have more variability. For an explanation of sampling variability of estimates and how to use standard errors to assess this variability, consult the "Estimates quality" section of the publication Labour Force Information (Catalogue number71-001-X).

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 4ctl_abo_main_AN.ivt

TABLE 3

Employment Rates by Age and Gender, Canada

Aboriginals Living Off of the Reserves and Non-Aboriginals

Aboriginals Living Off of the Reserves

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% Change 2020/2019	2020 % vs Non-Aboriginal
Both Sexes																
15 years and over	58.1	59.6	56.7	53.5	55.1	56.4	56.6	57.0	55.2	56.5	56.5	57.6	56.8	52.0	−8.5	−10.5
15–24 years	49.8	52.8	46.4	45.2	47.1	45.7	49.2	50.4	49.8	49.2	49.9	48.9	51.0	44.6	−12.5	−10.3
25–54 years	69.9	70.8	68.8	65.8	67.3	69.3	69.2	69.3	67.5	69.1	69.1	71.3	72.2	68.3	−5.4	−14.4
55 years and over	32.5	33.4	34.3	29.8	32.4	34.5	33.2	34.8	34.4	35.4	35.4	37.3	34.4	31.7	−7.8	−6.5
Men																
15 years and over	62.9	65.4	59.7	55.4	58.0	60.5	59.2	59.7	58.3	58.5	58.7	59.7	59.0	54.7	−7.3	−12.1
15–24 years	50.9	55.3	47.8	44.6	47.1	47.5	49.5	51.8	51.5	48.4	50.1	48.6	52.8	44.9	−15.0	−9.3
25–54 years	75.5	77.0	72.8	69.5	70.9	73.8	72.8	72.9	72.1	71.8	73.0	74.4	74.9	70.7	−5.6	−15.2
55 years and over	38.7	38.5	36.9	29.7	37.0	41.2	34.8	37.0	35.3	39.7	36.4	40.1	36.2	36.8	1.7	−6.8
Women																
15 years and over	53.7	54.3	54.0	51.7	52.4	52.6	54.3	54.6	52.3	54.5	55.6	55.7	54.7	49.5	−9.5	−8.3
15–24 years	48.7	50.8	45.1	45.8	47.1	43.9	49.0	49.1	48.2	50.0	49.7	49.3	49.1	44.4	−9.6	−11.0
25–54 years	64.6	64.7	65.2	62.4	64.1	65.2	65.8	66.1	63.2	66.7	67.8	68.5	69.8	66.1	−5.3	−13.1
55 years and over	27.3	29.4	31.8	29.9	28.3	28.6	31.7	32.8	33.7	31.3	34.4	34.6	32.8	26.8	−18.3	−6.6

Non-Aboriginals

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% Change 2020/2019	
Both Sexes																
15 years and over	63.5	63.5	61.6	61.7	61.8	61.8	61.9	61.5	61.4	61.2	61.7	61.7	62.0	58.1	−6.3	
15–24 years	59.8	59.9	55.6	55.2	55.6	54.7	55.3	55.8	56.0	55.6	56.8	56.6	58.1	49.7	−14.5	
25–54 years	82.5	82.6	80.6	80.9	81.3	81.7	82.0	81.6	81.8	81.7	82.7	83.1	83.5	79.8	−4.4	
55 years and over	31.7	32.4	32.7	33.6	33.9	34.4	35.0	35.1	35.1	35.4	35.7	35.8	35.9	33.9	−5.6	
Men																
15 years and over	68.0	68.0	65.1	65.5	65.9	65.6	65.7	65.5	65.5	65.0	65.6	65.5	65.9	62.2	−5.6	
15–24 years	59.4	59.1	53.6	53.4	54.4	53.4	54.3	54.3	54.5	54.3	55.6	55.7	56.8	49.5	−12.9	
25–54 years	86.5	86.8	83.7	84.2	85.1	85.4	85.5	85.4	85.6	85.4	86.3	86.7	86.9	83.4	−4.0	
55 years and over	38.1	38.5	38.3	39.4	39.6	39.9	40.4	40.6	40.8	40.6	40.9	40.8	41.6	39.5	−5.0	
Women																
15 years and over	59.1	59.1	58.1	58.0	57.9	58.0	58.2	57.7	57.5	57.5	57.9	58.0	58.1	54.0	−7.1	
15–24 years	60.2	60.4	57.7	57.1	56.9	56.1	56.4	57.3	57.6	57.1	58.0	57.6	59.6	49.9	−16.3	
25–54 years	78.5	78.3	77.4	77.5	77.6	78.1	78.5	77.8	78.0	78.1	79.0	79.5	80.0	76.1	−4.9	
55 years and over	26.0	27.1	27.7	28.4	28.8	29.5	30.1	30.1	29.9	30.7	31.0	31.3	30.7	28.7	−6.5	

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 4ctl_abo_main_AN.ivt

TABLE 4
Unemployment Rates by Age and Gender, Canada
Aboriginals Living Off of the Reserves and Non-Aboriginals

Aboriginals Living Off of the Reserves

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% Change 2020/2019	2020 % vs. Non-Aboriginal
Both Sexes																
15 years and over	10.7	10.2	13.7	14.1	13.1	12.9	11.7	11.2	12.4	12.4	11.3	10.1	10.2	14.2	39.2	51.1
15–24 years	16.9	15.1	22.5	21.1	19.7	21.3	17.8	16.7	18.8	19.0	17.4	17.2	16.6	22.2	33.7	11.0
25–54 years	8.9	9.1	11.5	12.1	11.1	10.8	10.1	9.8	11.0	10.8	9.6	8.4	8.5	11.7	37.6	51.9
55 years and over	8.4	6.3	10.4	11.7	11.3	9.3	9.3	8.3	8.6	9.6	10.3	7.7	8.7	13.8	58.6	76.9
Men																
15 years and over	11.2	10.3	15.2	15.7	14.9	13.2	12.8	11.9	13.1	13.9	13.2	11.5	12.0	15.6	30.0	64.2
15–24 years	18.5	16.5	24.3	24.5	23.1	21.0	19.3	17.6	19.5	21.5	20.2	19.4	17.5	24.3	38.9	18.0
25–54 years	9.1	9.1	12.6	13.0	12.5	11.1	11.1	10.3	11.2	12.2	10.8	9.8	10.0	13.0	30.0	68.8
55 years and over	9.6	0.0	13.3	14.5	12.5	10.5	11.0	9.6	11.5	10.7	13.7	8.7	11.6	15.0	29.3	89.9
Women																
15 years and over	10.1	10.0	12.1	12.4	11.1	12.6	10.6	10.4	11.7	10.8	9.4	8.6	8.4	12.7	51.2	35.1
15–24 years	15.3	13.9	20.6	17.8	16.1	21.7	16.4	15.7	18.0	16.6	14.5	14.8	15.5	20.0	29.0	3.1
25–54 years	8.7	9.2	10.3	11.1	9.6	10.5	9.1	9.4	10.9	9.3	8.5	7.1	6.9	10.5	52.2	34.6
55 years and over	0.0	0.0	7.0	9.2	9.8	7.7	7.6	6.8	5.6	8.3	6.7	6.6	5.8	12.2	110.3	58.4

Non-Aboriginals

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% Change 2020/2019
Both Sexes															
15 years and over	5.9	6.0	8.2	7.9	7.4	7.2	6.9	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.2	5.7	5.6	9.4	67.9
15–24 years	11.0	11.5	15.1	14.7	14.1	14.2	13.6	13.4	13.0	12.9	11.4	10.8	10.7	20.0	86.9
25–54 years	5.0	5.0	7.0	6.8	6.2	5.9	5.8	5.7	5.7	5.8	5.3	4.8	4.7	7.7	63.8
55 years and over	4.8	5.0	6.5	6.2	6.2	5.9	5.9	5.7	5.7	6.0	5.6	5.1	5.0	7.8	56.0
Men															
15 years and over	6.3	6.5	9.4	8.7	7.8	7.6	7.4	7.3	7.3	7.5	6.6	6.0	5.9	9.5	61.0
15–24 years	12.1	12.9	18.2	17.1	15.8	15.9	15.0	14.9	14.9	14.6	13.0	12.2	12.0	20.6	71.7
25–54 years	5.3	5.3	8.0	7.3	6.3	6.2	6.0	5.9	6.1	6.3	5.5	4.8	4.8	7.7	60.4
55 years and over	4.9	5.2	7.4	6.9	6.7	6.2	6.3	6.3	6.1	6.6	5.9	5.5	5.3	7.9	49.1
Women															
15 years and over	5.6	5.6	6.9	7.1	6.9	6.7	6.5	6.3	6.1	6.1	5.7	5.4	5.2	9.4	80.8
15–24 years	9.9	10.0	12.0	12.4	12.2	12.4	12.0	11.8	11.0	11.1	9.7	9.4	9.4	19.4	106.4
25–54 years	4.7	4.7	6.0	6.3	5.9	5.6	5.5	5.4	5.3	5.3	5.1	4.8	4.5	7.8	73.3
55 years and over	4.7	4.6	5.4	5.4	5.7	5.5	5.4	5.0	5.2	5.2	5.1	4.5	4.7	7.7	63.8

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

Aboriginal employment rates were British Columbia, with a rate of 53.8, a decrease of 12.8%; and Manitoba, with a rate of 53.5, a decrease of 4.8%. Quebec was the province with the lowest Aboriginal employment rate in 2020, at 46.7, a decline of 11.0 percent. Employment rates for Aboriginals in 2020 for the four western provinces were also the lowest since reporting started in 2007. In Quebec their employment rates were lower in 2015, 2010 and 2007, while in the Atlantic region they were lower in five previous years.

The provinces with the highest employment rates for non-Aboriginals were Saskatchewan, with 61.9; Alberta, with a rate of 61.0; and Manitoba, with a rate of 60.7. The lowest were the Atlantic Region at 53.1 and Ontario at 57.5. See Table 5.

EMPLOYMENT RATES BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Employment rates decreased for Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals in 2020 regardless of educational level.

The employment rate is lower for Aboriginals; however, when examined by the level of education the rates are somewhat similar. In fact, the rate has been higher for Aboriginal high school graduates than for non-Aboriginal high school graduates every year since 2007, with the one exception of 2010. In 2020 it was 2.3% higher than for non-Aboriginals. For Aboriginals the employment rate ranged from 0.3% lower for those with less than high school to 4.4% lower for those with some post-secondary education.

The similarity of employment rates for Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals when examined by educational level is consistent for the fourteen years for which the data is available. This is highly significant. It means that education is an important aspect in determining employment rates for both Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals. Further, the higher the level of "completed" education, the higher the employment rate. The reason "completed" is in quotes is that Aboriginals who attended some post-secondary but didn't complete it have had lower employment rates than those who graduated from high school since 2007. This had been the case for non-Aboriginals from 2007 through 2014, but not since 2015. See Table 6.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

The unemployment rates increased for Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals in 2020 and did so for every educational level examined. The highest rates of unemployment are for those with less than a high school graduation. For Aboriginals with less than a high school graduation, their unemployment rate was 22.0 in 2020, while for non-Aboriginals it was 16.0. The lowest rates of unemployment in 2020 were for university graduates, with Aboriginals having a rate of 8.4 and non-Aboriginals 6.7. In 2020 Aboriginals with some post-secondary education had a lower rate of unemployment than non-Aboriginals with the same level of education. This was the only educational level at which Aboriginals had a lower rate of unemployment in 2020, and it was the only year from 2007 that the Aboriginal unemployment rate was lower for those with some post-secondary education. Aboriginals with less than high school, those who graduated high school, and those with post-secondary certificates or diplomas consistently had higher unemployment rates than similarly educated non-Aboriginals. Aboriginals with university degrees had lower unemployment rates in 2018, 2013, 2011, and 2009 than non-Aboriginals with university degrees. The equalizing effect of

TABLE 5
Employment Rates and Population 15 years and over by Province and Atlantic Region
Aboriginals Living Off of the Reserves and Non-Aboriginals
In thousands, except for rates

Aboriginals Living Off of the Reserves

		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Rank by Employment Rate	% Change
Canada	Population	639.1	673.3	707.3	741.3	777.1	819.6	862.7	905.6	948.5	991.7	1033.5	1073.8	1114.3	1153.8		
	Employment rate	57.9	59.4	56.6	53.3	55.0	56.0	56.2	56.4	54.5	55.7	56.4	56.8	56.8	52.0		-8.5
Atlantic Region	Population	40.1	44.6	49.0	53.5	58.2	64.1	70.0	75.9	81.8	87.5	91.9	95.8	99.4	103.0		
	Employment rate	51.3	53.8	52.9	50.0	53.8	53.6	53.7	51.9	55.2	49.1	51.2	54.5	52.3	52.1	5	-0.4
Quebec	Population	62.8	67.6	72.5	77.3	82.5	89.0	95.6	102.2	108.7	115.2	120.5	125.4	130.3	135.0		
	Employment rate	45.9	54.0	55.5	44.6	47.4	47.9	52.4	51.3	45.4	48.3	50.9	56.0	52.5	46.7	7	-11.0
Ontario	Population	159.8	169.3	178.8	188.2	198.0	209.1	220.3	231.5	242.7	253.9	264.6	274.9	285.4	295.8		
	Employment rate	57.5	57.4	54.8	49.4	54.0	55.8	51.9	55.4	52.9	54.7	54.5	56.2	56.2	52.1	5	-7.3
Manitoba	Population	87.0	89.7	92.4	95.1	98.1	102.3	106.5	110.7	114.9	119.2	123.9	128.1	132.4	136.4		
	Employment rate	59.4	61.5	61.6	58.6	59.1	57.7	57.5	56.1	56.3	55.8	56.4	57.6	56.2	53.5	2	-4.8
Saskatchewan	Population	65.4	67.4	69.4	71.3	73.5	76.1	78.8	81.4	84.1	86.9	89.9	93.0	96.0	99.0		
	Employment rate	56.2	56.3	54.4	53.7	55.6	55.5	58.1	55.5	55.5	55.0	53.6	53.2	52.9	52.5	3	-0.8
Alberta	Population	111.8	116.3	120.8	125.3	130.0	135.5	141.1	146.7	152.2	158.1	164.7	171.7	178.9	185.9		
	Employment rate	66.9	65.4	60.1	61.2	60.0	62.7	65.2	66.0	62.1	60.1	60.3	58.9	60.5	52.5	3	-13.2
British Columbia	Population	112.2	118.4	124.4	130.5	136.8	143.6	150.4	157.2	164.1	171.0	178.0	185.0	191.9	198.8		
	Employment rate	58.6	61.6	55.6	53.8	53.5	55.2	55.5	54.9	53.9	61.8	63.4	58.8	61.7	53.8	1	-12.8

Non-Aboriginals

		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Rank by Employment Rate	% Change
Canada	Population	25829.9	26157.9	26501.8	26835.5	27128.1	27412.0	27683.9	27938.3	28127.9	28394.4	28730.7	29146.7	29580.5	29898.8		
	Employment rate	63.3	63.3	61.4	61.5	61.7	61.6	61.7	61.4	61.3	61.1	61.5	61.5	62.0	58.1		-6.3
Atlantic Region	Population	1870.5	1874.8	1883.4	1893.9	1901.1	1901.5	1896.9	1892.6	1888.1	1893.3	1901.1	1910.4	1925.4	1936.0		
	Employment rate	57.0	57.4	56.5	56.6	56.7	57.0	57.0	56.4	55.9	55.5	55.1	55.3	55.8	53.1	7	-4.8
Quebec	Population	6240.0	6314.8	6394.6	6476.9	6544.1	6584.8	6612.7	6631.9	6641.3	6669.1	6722.5	6795.6	6870.3	6918.5		
	Employment rate	60.8	60.7	59.4	59.9	59.9	59.7	60.1	59.5	59.9	59.9	60.9	61.0	61.6	58.2	4	-5.5
Ontario	Population	10165.6	10280.9	10396.7	10526.2	10647.1	10760.8	10865.2	10956	11035.0	11168.0	11342.0	11552.8	11765.3	11921.9		
	Employment rate	63.3	63.1	60.8	61.0	61.3	60.8	61.2	60.9	60.8	60.7	60.9	60.7	61.3	57.5	6	-6.2
Manitoba	Population	812.1	817.4	824.7	833.3	841.3	849.5	855.7	862.1	867.9	878.9	890.2	899.6	907.8	911.4		
	Employment rate	66.1	66.4	65.8	66.1	65.8	65.8	65.6	65	65.3	64.1	64.1	63.7	63.6	60.7	3	-4.6
Saskatchewan	Population	693.9	705.0	717.3	729.3	739.1	749.2	757.9	764.6	767.4	773.0	779.1	783.6	787.8	789.1		
	Employment rate	67.1	67.5	67.4	67.2	66.7	67.1	67.8	67.6	67.0	65.8	65.2	65.0	65.8	61.9	1	-5.9
Alberta	Population	2666.7	2734.7	2800.4	2842.4	2884.6	2943.1	3017.4	3090.6	3132.2	3158.2	3185.7	3226.7	3275.5	3321.1		
	Employment rate	71.5	72.1	69.7	68.4	69.8	70.3	69.8	69.2	68.6	66.4	66.5	66.9	66.2	61.0	2	-7.9
British Columbia	Population	3381.1	3430.3	3484.6	3533.5	3570.7	3623.2	3678.1	3740.5	3796.1	3853.8	3910.0	3978.1	4048.6	4100.8		
	Employment rate	63.2	63.1	60.7	60.7	60.1	60.5	60.0	60.0	60.1	60.9	62.4	62.3	62.9	58.0	5	-7.8

Note: Table cells showing 0.0 refer to estimates that are suppressed (cannot be published) because they are below the confidentiality threshold. The LFS estimates are based on a sample and are therefore subject to sampling variability. As a result, monthly estimates will show more variability than trends observed over longer time periods. Estimates for smaller geographic areas or industries also have more variability. For an explanation of sampling variability of estimates and how to use standard errors to assess this variability, consult the "Estimates quality" section of the publication Labour Force Information (Catalogue number71-001-X).

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 4ctl_abo_educ_AN.ivt

TABLE 6
Employment Rates by Highest Level of Educational Attainment, Canada
Aboriginals Living Off of the Reserves and Non-Aboriginals

Aboriginals Living Off of the Reserves

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% Change 2020/2019	2020 % vs. Non-Aboriginal
Total, all education levels	58.1	59.6	56.7	53.5	55.1	56.4	56.6	57.0	55.2	56.5	57.1	57.6	56.8	52.0	-8.5	-10.5
Less than high school	37.5	39.8	34.7	31.8	32.6	35.4	34.6	32.4	32.3	33.6	32.4	32.4	30.6	29.5	-3.6	-0.3
High school graduate	69.1	67.2	62.5	59.9	62.3	61.1	62.2	62.6	58.5	58.1	61.2	59.7	59.9	53.3	-11.0	2.3
Some post-secondary	58.7	62.3	58.0	58.3	54.3	55.9	59.3	57.3	56.2	56.9	57.5	54.7	57.7	51.7	-10.4	-1.3
Post-secondary certificate or diploma*	72.4	72.9	70.3	66.1	68.7	69.8	66.7	69.0	67.3	69.0	68.0	69.0	68.5	61.3	-10.5	-4.4
University degree	79.6	79.7	82.6	77.6	80.0	77.3	80.6	78.2	75.2	78.1	79.1	80.4	76.1	70.2	-7.8	-1.1

Non-Aboriginals

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% Change 2020/2019	
Total, all education levels	63.5	63.5	61.6	61.7	61.8	61.8	61.9	61.5	61.4	61.2	61.7	61.7	62.0	58.1	-6.3	
Less than high school	36.9	37.1	34.2	33.7	33.6	33.3	33.2	32.8	32.3	32.0	32.8	32.8	33.1	29.6	-10.6	
High school graduate	65.3	64.6	61.7	61.7	61.6	61.0	60.6	59.9	58.3	58.0	58.2	57.1	56.9	52.1	-8.4	
Some post-secondary	64.3	64.5	60.9	60.9	60.6	60.6	59.9	58.9	58.7	58.2	58.9	58.3	59.0	52.4	-11.2	
Post-secondary certificate or diploma*	72.8	72.7	71.1	70.9	70.9	70.5	70.7	70.2	70.0	69.2	68.8	68.9	69.1	64.1	-7.2	
University degree	76.7	76.2	75.6	75.2	74.6	74.7	74.5	73.9	74.3	73.8	74.4	73.9	73.7	71.0	-3.7	

* Trade certificate or diploma from a vocational school or apprenticeship training, a non-university certificate or diploma from a community college, CEGEP or school of nursing, etc., or a university certificate below bachelor's level.

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 4ctl_abo_educ_AN.ivt

education that applied for employment rates does not apply for unemployment rates. See Table 7.

AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Average wages increased by 6.1% for Aboriginals and by 6.8% for non-Aboriginals in 2020. This is an unusually high level for wages to increase. The average annual increase from 2008–2020 was 3.2% for Aboriginals and 2.9% for non-Aboriginals. A possible explanation for these large increases is that if during the pandemic a greater number of lower wage earners were laid off, then the average wage rate of those still employed would be higher.

Wage rates on average have been consistently lower for Aboriginals than for non-Aboriginals. Overall wages for Aboriginals were 8.3% lower than for non-Aboriginals in 2020, which is a greater difference than the 7.7% gap in 2019. When wage rates are examined by educational level, we obtain further information. As completed levels of education increase, wages increase. This is the case for both Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals, with one exception. That exception is Aboriginals without high school completion but with a post-secondary certificate or diploma earning more than similarly educated Aboriginals who graduated from high school, as shown in 2013, 2015, 2019 and 2020.

Aboriginals with less than high school graduation had an 8.0% higher wage rate than non-Aboriginals, while wage rates for high school graduates were the same. Aboriginals with a post-secondary certificate or diploma without completing high school had wage rates 11.0% higher, while wage rates were 0.6% higher for Aboriginals that had a post-secondary certificate or diploma and had completed high school. With regard to wage rates in 2020 for people with a Bachelor's degree and with advanced degrees, non-Aboriginals were 1.4% and 7.1%, respectively, higher than for Aboriginals. See Table 8.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The employment, participation, and unemployment rates for Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals all significantly worsened in 2020. The unemployment rate was the highest and the participation and employment rates were the lowest since the reporting of these rates in 2007. All three rates have been consistently worse for Aboriginals.

Métis unemployment rates have been consistently lower, and their employment and participation rates have been consistently higher than for First Nations. In most years Métis' participation rates were higher than those of Inuit.

In 2020 the unemployment rates increased for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men and women in all three age groups. The employment rate decreased for all of them as well, except for Aboriginal men 55 years and over, which had a small increase.

The provinces with the highest Aboriginal employment rates were Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba. The Atlantic Region had the lowest Aboriginal employment rate, followed by Ontario.

Employment rates for Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals are similar when examined by educational level. This is the case for the fourteen years for which the data is available. This is highly significant. It means that education is an important aspect in determining employment rates for both Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals. Nonetheless, unemployment rates for

TABLE 7
Unemployment Rates by Highest Level of Educational Attainment, Canada
Aboriginals Living Off of the Reserves and Non-Aboriginals

Aboriginals Living Off of the Reserves

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% Change 2020/2019	2020 % vs. Non-Aboriginal
Total, all education levels	10.7	10.2	13.7	14.1	13.1	12.9	11.7	11.2	12.4	12.4	11.3	10.1	10.2	14.2	39.2	51.1
Less than high school	17.0	16.2	23.2	24.0	22.7	21.7	19.6	20.7	22.8	22.4	19.7	18.9	19.1	22.0	15.2	37.5
High school graduate	9.0	8.8	13.3	14.1	13.0	13.3	11.4	11.2	12.4	13.1	11.5	10.8	11.3	16.7	47.8	40.3
Some post-secondary	10.6	10.8	14.2	12.7	14.7	14.1	12.2	12.1	13.0	12.3	13.9	13.1	11.7	14.2	21.4	−7.8
Post-secondary certificate or diploma*	8.5	7.5	10.5	10.6	9.2	9.0	9.8	8.1	9.0	9.0	8.8	7.7	7.4	11.8	59.5	43.9
University degree	5.0	5.9	3.6	5.3	4.7	6.2	3.9	5.2	5.7	5.8	5.6	3.5	5.5	8.4	52.7	25.4

Non-Aboriginals

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% Change 2020/2019
Total, all education levels	5.9	6.0	8.2	7.9	7.4	7.2	6.9	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.2	5.7	5.6	9.4	67.9
Less than high school	11.9	11.8	15.6	15.6	15.0	14.5	14.3	13.6	13.4	13.4	12.2	11.3	10.9	16.0	46.8
High school graduate	6.0	6.3	9.1	8.6	7.8	7.7	7.7	7.5	7.8	7.7	6.9	6.5	6.8	11.9	75.0
Some post-secondary	7.0	6.9	9.8	9.9	9.6	9.2	9.2	9.5	9.4	9.3	8.3	7.7	7.7	15.4	100.0
Post-secondary certificate or diploma*	4.8	4.8	6.8	6.4	5.9	5.7	5.5	5.4	5.6	5.8	5.4	4.8	4.6	8.2	78.3
University degree	3.7	4.1	5.1	5.3	4.9	5.0	4.7	4.9	4.7	4.9	4.4	4.3	4.1	6.7	63.4

* Trade certificate or diploma from a vocational school or apprenticeship training, a non-university certificate or diploma from a community college, CEGEP or school of nursing, etc. or a University certificate below bachelor's level.

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 4ctl_abo_educ_AN.ivt

TABLE 8

Average weekly earnings (current dollars) by highest level of educational attainment, Canada Aboriginals Living Off of the Reserves and Non-Aboriginals

Aboriginals Living Off of the Reserves

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% Change 2020/2019	2020 % vs. Non-Aboriginal
Total, all education levels	665	715	726	743	760	796	816	832	861	855	881	907	937	994	6.1	−8.3
Less than high school	522	553	550	571	575	606	609	615	634	622	661	711	698	733	5.0	8.0
High school graduate	623	651	664	672	672	717	737	721	775	772	769	787	824	871	5.7	0.0
Post-secondary certificate or diploma without high school completion	705	747	770	802	850	827	915	892	979	847	946	882	1026	1113	8.4	11.0
Post-secondary certificate or diploma with high school completion	769	834	808	825	852	891	908	941	962	942	983	991	1022	1081	5.7	0.6
Bachelor's degree	874	917	941	1033	1023	1053	1060	1063	1108	1135	1109	1195	1201	1267	5.5	−1.4
Above bachelor's degree	1178	1176	1201	1219	1208	1208	1195	1353	1319	1299	1285	1304	1416	1407	−0.7	−7.1

Non-Aboriginals

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% Change 2020/2019
Total, all education levels	753	783	804	819	838	865	883	899	924	943	958	986	1015	1084	6.8
Less than high school	488	504	514	532	543	570	577	587	596	599	604	620	633	679	7.3
High school graduate	645	673	683	695	707	728	734	746	765	766	778	813	819	871	6.4
Post-secondary certificate or diploma without high school completion*	747	765	767	787	799	834	866	869	884	885	888	935	973	1002	3.0
Post-secondary certificate or diploma with high school completion*	786	814	835	848	867	885	905	924	945	953	970	996	1023	1074	5.0
Bachelor's degree	959	997	1020	1024	1045	1067	1084	1102	1121	1144	1164	1185	1214	1285	5.9
Above bachelor's degree	1145	1192	1203	1208	1230	1270	1295	1292	1314	1371	1373	1388	1435	1514	5.5

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Average Annual % Increase 2008–2020
Percent average weekly earnings increase for Aboriginals	7.5	1.5	2.4	2.2	4.8	2.6	1.9	3.5	−0.7	3.0	3.0	3.3	6.1	3.2
Percent average weekly earnings increase for non-Aboriginals	4.0	2.7	1.8	2.4	3.2	2.1	1.8	2.8	2.0	1.6	2.9	2.9	6.8	2.9

* Trade certificate or diploma from a vocational school or apprenticeship training, a non-university certificate or diploma from a community college, CEGEP or school of nursing, etc. or a University certificate below bachelor's level.

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 4ctl_abo_wage_AN.ivt

Aboriginals are substantially higher than for non-Aboriginals, regardless of educational level, with only a few exceptions since 2007.

Wage rates on average have been consistently lower for Aboriginals than for non-Aboriginals. Aboriginals' wages were 8.3% lower for non-Aboriginals in 2020, which compares to a 7.7% difference in 2019. Examining wage rates by the educational level obtained shows less of a difference in wages between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals except for those with a post-secondary certificate or diploma without high school completion. In that case wage rates were 11.0% higher for Aboriginals. Overall, those with lower levels of education have lower wage rates.

Education is critical — the higher the level of education completed, the higher the wage rates, the lower the rate of unemployment, and the higher the employment rates. This is the case for both Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals. Education appears to be a key determinant of employment and higher wage rates.

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Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development
Call for Papers
Volume 13, Issue 1

Published jointly by the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (Cando) and Captus Press, the *Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* (JAED) is published annually and is a unique resource for anyone interested in Indigenous community economic development. Its intent is to explore ideas and build knowledge in the field of Indigenous economic development theory and practice. The journal prefers a broad interpretation of research and knowledge and encourages a wide variety of contributions in this area. We want to know what people are doing, what is working, what is not working, and why.

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➢ Community Wellness and Making Poverty History

The Journal features academic articles, examples from economic practitioners, book reviews and the state of the Indigenous economy.

Lessons from Experience from post-secondary students, practitioners, academics, consultants and executives include interpreted case studies, evaluation and commentary on popular and current approaches as well as tools of Indigenous economic development, advocacy of particular approaches and solutions, successful or failed efforts, and the identification of important economic development problems that are in need of solutions. Submissions to this section should be 2000–3000 words.

Lessons from Research from academics features scholarly inquiry, debate and commentary on how we frame, perceive, interpret, research and contribute to the field of Indigenous economic development. Submissions to this section should be 15–20 pages or 4,000–6,000 words, include 5 key search words and follow APA citation guidelines.

The State of the Indigenous Economy features current views on the evolving state of the Indigenous economy and responses to changes in the global economy, corporate activity, and government policy — for example, the Federal Framework on Aboriginal Economic Development, or the social economy. Submissions should be 1,000 to 4,000 words, include 5 key search words and follow APA citation guidelines.

Reviews of Current Books and Literature features recent literature exploring aspects of economic development relevant to Indigenous peoples and community development.

The deadline for receipt of submissions for Volume 13, Issue 1, is October 30, 2022.

Manuscripts should be single spaced, with 1.5 inch margins all around, and page numbers at the bottom middle. The title page should indicate the journal section for which you are submitting. All identifying information should be restricted to this one page.

Submission of a manuscript implies commitment to publish in the Journal. Submission to JAED also implies that the manuscript has not been published elsewhere, nor is it under consideration by another journal. Authors who are in doubt about what constitutes prior publication should consult the editor. Review for publication will take approximately 8–12 weeks from the time of receipt. Academic papers will be subject to the usual double-blind peer-review process.

Authors of accepted submissions will also be offered the opportunity to have their submissions posted on Captus Press's JAED open access site within stipulated guidelines. We are increasing the visibility of JAED by including a DOI (a permanent identifier) for all articles; and soon, two worldwide online databases — ProQuest and EBSCO — will include and distribute the journal's articles. Past articles may be accessed on the University of Saskatchewan's Aboriginal portal at Search: Aboriginal portal (usask.ca).

Submissions may be forwarded as attachments by email to Svitlana Konoval at skonoval@edo.ca. Inquiries may be made by email, or by phone at (780) 990-0303 x 2317 to Svitlana.

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