Entrepreneurship:
A Journey of Economic Self-Determination

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Acknowledgements

With pride I present this thesis, *Entrepreneurship, A Journey of Economic Self-Determination*. Here we finally arrive with the written work culminating a journey that has taken me from the curious question of understanding my ancestry to an intense study of entrepreneurship within a framework that promotes self-determination and celebrates Aboriginal heritage, culture and values.

I express appreciation to all those who influenced my development as I worked through this Masters study. To those who participated in the study, thank you for sharing your experience and wisdom; special gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Wanda Wuttunee, who patiently encouraged my work. Wanda, you kept my spirit warm and nurtured my confidence; thank you.

I am especially grateful to my daughters who like it or not, were saddled alongside me on this journey. We shared many wonderful experiences; and endured times when my mind was fully occupied with my work, my studies and my own personal journey.

I dedicate this thesis to my Mom and Dad. I am blessed for all the inspiration and wise lessons in life that they offered to me. I know I am fortunate for their dedication to family values and for the investments that they made towards my education.

Abstract

There is an exciting movement afoot in Canada with rapid growth of Aboriginal participation in the economy through business development. Motivated to recover social and economic independence, Aboriginal people across Canada are asserting their rights and pressing for self-determination, using various models of development.

In this thesis, *Entrepreneurship, A Journey of Economic Self-Determination*, economic development through the model of privately-owned enterprise is evaluated considering history, Aboriginal values and a female gender perspective. While there is a brief highlight of the history of Aboriginal participation in the economy, the analysis focuses on influences which followed the 1969 *Federal Government Statement on Indian Policy* commonly known as *The White Paper*.

The research in this thesis demonstrates that through privately-owned enterprise, Aboriginal entrepreneurs can assert Aboriginal values within a capital market system that does not easily accommodate personal held values; and through this assertion Aboriginal entrepreneurs can achieve business success, self-determination and contribute positively to social and economic well-being for Aboriginal peoples.

Note on Terminology

Over time, the terminology used to refer to the first peoples of Canada has changed. In writing this paper, the terms First Nation, Métis and Inuit are used to respect unique ancestry and experience. The term Aboriginal or first people is used in general statements with full inclusion and reference to First Nation, Métis and Inuit. Terms for Aboriginal communities include First Nation, Band, and Settlement or as is appropriate a general reference to "community".

This study of entrepreneurship within the framework of Aboriginal economic development makes reference to periods as early as the 1600's. In the case of reference, original terminology is maintained to retain the authenticity. Original terms may include "Indian" and "Native" each which are rarely used these days other than in specific naming of organizations such as the "Saskatchewan Federation of Indian Nations" or the department of "Native Studies" or in use with specific legislation rooted in history such as the *Indian Act.*

Chapter 1 Introduction

Aboriginal participation in the economy through business ownership is growing and this experience is projected to continue as Aboriginal people assert their rights and press for self-determination and economic independence. According to the *Aboriginal Entrepreneurs Survey* (Canada, 2002), Aboriginal business ownership grew nine times more than non-Aboriginal businesses over a ten year period. The rate of growth of Aboriginal business is impressive given the Canadian historical context which made it difficult, if not impossible, for Aboriginal participation in the economy through entrepreneurship. While sources depict growth in the number of Aboriginal businesses in Canada, the growth as a percentage of the experienced Aboriginal population 15 years of age and over is actually declining and remains at only half the rate of the average Canadian population (AFN, 2010). This demonstrates the need to continue focus on building Aboriginal economies through Aboriginal business development and other forms of development that lead to employment opportunities for the Aboriginal labour force.

Aboriginal participation in entrepreneurship may be viewed by some as an opportunity for Aboriginal people to participate in the modern economy, to profit from their productivity and to independently govern their activities. Others may view Aboriginal entrepreneurship as a capitalist activity that is in conflict with Aboriginal values and serves to colonize Aboriginal people. In this thesis, *Entrepreneurship, A Journey of Economic Self-Determination*, economic development through the model of privately-owned enterprise is evaluated

considering history, Aboriginal values and a female gender perspective. This research demonstrates, through case study of a sample of Aboriginal women entrepreneurs, that it is possible for privately-owned enterprise to thrive within the capital market system while respecting Aboriginal values. Aboriginal entrepreneurs can assert their values within their businesses and this assertion can result in business success, self-determination for the entrepreneur and positive contribution to social and economic well-being for Aboriginal peoples.

The specific research questions addressed in this study are:

1. How do Aboriginal entrepreneurs reconcile capital market pressures with Aboriginal culture and values that are known to discourage private-ownership and wealth accumulation in favor of a market that encourages communal ownership, reciprocation and sharing of wealth?

2. How do select Aboriginal women entrepreneurs in Winnipeg describe the relationship between entrepreneurship, self-determination and socio-economic development?

This research contributes to the limited body of knowledge regarding Aboriginal entrepreneurship and commerce. The study highlights some successful approaches to entrepreneurship and illuminates the importance of taking time to consider the relationship between entrepreneurship, self-determination and socio-economic development. While this study is limited by the small sample used for the case studies and focus groups, it is rich in data and contributes to the development of the theory that "compassionate capitalism"

(Newhouse, 2004) is possible in modern commerce and enables economic self-sufficiency and self-determination.

Research Methodology

This research is a qualitative study using a phenomenological approach. The research has been conducted through the methods of secondary analysis, case study and focus group discussion. The secondary analysis involved review of historical and contextual literature to set the foundation for the primary research.

The process used to conduct this research is respectful of the research participants. The study has been conducted in accordance with the ethical and cultural protocols of the University of Manitoba. The research is approved by the University of Manitoba Ethics Committee (Ethics Board Approval, Appendix A).

A literature review establishes the historical and conceptual analysis which is used as the foundation for review of the data collected through primary interviews and focus group sessions. The literature review includes an environmental scan of programs and services that promote and support Aboriginal entrepreneurship.

Interviews were conducted with four Aboriginal women entrepreneurs. Being an urban Métis woman, I chose to conduct this research within the urban Aboriginal context and I focused on Aboriginal women entrepreneurs with more than five years experience and a reputation for success in a business context. I took this approach to increase my success of understanding the cultural paradigm at play and increase the opportunity for me to establish on-going, collaborative relationships with the research participants.

The interview approach was semi-structured, using open-ended interview questions to elicit the entrepreneurs' words and stories (Interview Questions, Appendix B). The interviews related to the entrepreneurial experience for these Aboriginal women, searching for stories they felt provided context in relation to their journey as Aboriginal women entrepreneurs. Exploration included a personal history of the entrepreneur and invitation for story-telling to address specific topics of interest. The exploration considered topics such as: inspiration to become entrepreneurs; implications that heritage and culture may have had on the interest and approach to entrepreneurship; the business model that was used and business values; views about the capitalist system; views regarding the impact of entrepreneurship on self-determination and economic development for Aboriginal peoples; the challenges and opportunities faced as Aboriginal women entrepreneurs and the strategies considered necessary to the future success of Aboriginal women in entrepreneurship.

Qualitative methodology such as interview, case study and focus group study is particularly useful in ethnographic research in which the research is more interested in the depth of data and interpretation. Sample size is smaller and each case is seen as a unique example. Qualitative research results are indicative rather than conclusive findings because of the small sample size and interpretive influences (Oatey, 1999). Interview, case study and focus group study methodology is particularly useful in research that is focused on insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing (Merriam, 1988). As such this methodology is appropriate for use in this study of Aboriginal

entrepreneurship. While the case study methodology has been criticized by some as lacking scientific rigour, many advocate its appropriateness and value in dealing with complex, real-life activities (Noor, 2008). In this research of Aboriginal entrepreneurs, the choice of multiple case studies and a focus group discussion follows replication rather than sampling logic. This approach enables the demonstration of consistent findings and increases confidence in the thesis presented (Yin, 1993).

The interviews with Aboriginal women entrepreneurs is the core of my research work. It was critical for me to ensure that the research approach was successful in drawing out and preserving the voice of the Aboriginal women interviewed. My approach in the exploration of the past, present and future was sensitive with an open-mind to their views and values. The presentation of the results shares the voice of each entrepreneur participant independently to present their view about success, their Aboriginal heritage and their contribution to economic and social well being for Aboriginal people. A focus group session was conducted to expand the perspective about entrepreneurship, Aboriginal women in business, skills, attributes and challenges.

To ensure a respectful approach in the documentation of field work and to preserve the authenticity of the "Aboriginal" voice of those participating in the study (Smith, 1999), direct words and quotes are used extensively in this thesis. Each interview was audio-taped and the participants were offered the opportunity for a member check to ensure accuracy and data veracity. In the analysis, I think that it is important that we not confine Aboriginal transformation in the sense of

traditional past, nor that we confine thought based on our awareness of the warts of capitalism. My work with Aboriginal women entrepreneurs respects traditional and contemporary views about capitalism, about Aboriginal culture, and the influence these concepts may have on the success for the Aboriginal women participating in this research.

Overview

As backdrop to this study, chapter two presents a brief highlight of the multi-century history of Aboriginal participation in the economy, leading to a focus on the influences that followed the 1969 *Federal Government Statement on Indian Policy* commonly known as *The White Paper*. While many may question why it took so long for the government to act, considerable progress has been made to advance Aboriginal inclusion. "We should all be encouraged by the progress that has been made, while renewing the commitment to continue the struggle which may well take a full "seven generations"" (AFN, 2009, 8).

Chapter three addresses concepts of economic development and considers the relationship between entrepreneurship, economic development, culture and values. The analysis sets the foundation to consider the question of how Aboriginal entrepreneurs reconcile capital market pressures, which rarely respect personal values, with a development framework that respects Aboriginal values, leads to self-determination and positively contributes to social and economic well-being for Aboriginal peoples. This chapter sets the stage for considering the role of women in enterprise and economic development.

In chapter four, the personal experience of four Aboriginal women entrepreneurs is presented. Interviews with these women elicit views about their Aboriginal heritage, their personal values, their unique business ventures and the influences on their approach to business. Chapter five presents the results of the focus group with Aboriginal women entrepreneurs and service providers. Highlights of the discussion build on the ideas about skills, attributes, challenges faced by Aboriginal women entrepreneurs and potential programs, tools and services designed to serve Aboriginal women in business.

In chapter six, the research data is evaluated in terms of the guiding research questions and the literature review. The theories of Anderson (2002) provide insight about Aboriginal economic development from a communal approach and the theories of Newhouse (2004) contemplates the possibility of retaining Aboriginal values within a capitalist system. A diagram blending the theories of Anderson (2002) and Newhouse (2004) frames the idea that Aboriginal entrepreneurship through privately-owned business can contribute positively to self-determination and socio-economic development for Aboriginal peoples within a framework that respects Aboriginal values.

Chapter seven places this research study in the context of the literature and experience and outlines areas for further research.

Chapter 2 Aboriginal Participation in the Economy

Aboriginal entrepreneurship can be viewed from within a framework of Aboriginal participation in the economy that spans centuries. An historical review of Aboriginal participation could consider four distinct periods (Lendsay, Wuttunee, 1999):

Pre-Contact or Separate Worlds in which there was nation to nation trade, with social, cultural and political diversity across the land and water;

Contact and Cooperation, which took place over 200 years and was formally bound within *The Hudson Bay Charter* of 1670 and lead to *The Royal Proclamation* of 1763, encompassing activities of fur trade, boat building, fishing and forms of mercantilism;

Displacement and Assimilation which is a period of demise for Aboriginal participation in the economy with the 1876 *Indian Act* establishing colonial control of land, culture and the economy and policies favoring assimilation or exclusion; and,

Negotiation and Renewal began earnestly in 1969 with *The White Paper* and takes us through to current day.

Aboriginal societies prior to contact were self-reliant and engaged in trade across nations. "Tribes were fiercely self-reliant because they simply had to be – there was no alternative that did not involve starvation and demise." (Helin, 2006, p. 82). Contact and Cooperation represented a period of discovery for France and England, as they set out to explore the lands and build relationships with the first people. Aboriginal people were very much a part of this early trade system and

lent their expertise to ensuring the well-being of the visitors to the land. Aboriginal people supported the survival of the newcomers in their adaptation to the harsh conditions, they participated as allies in warfare and they served a fundamental role in trade and commerce. As the resources of fur reached scarcity, the Crown transitioned its strategy to settlement of the land for commercialization of other riches including aquatic and agriculture resources. This period of settlement was premised on policy that made way for development that was restrictive of Aboriginal participation and encouraged colonial acculturation and assimilation.

The analysis begins with understanding the period of Displacement and ends with a focus on the opportunities presented as a result of the Negotiation and Renewal period. This chapter sets the stage for the framework of analysis that is outlined in chapter three.

Frank Tough (1996) outlines the economic and social impact of public policy on the Native people of Manitoba in his book *'As Their Natural Resources Fail': The Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba: 1870 – 1930*. In his review of the activities and policies relating to the fur, fishing and shipbuilding trades Tough demonstrates that the government was in constant role conflict. The interest to develop Canada using capitalist, European models competed with the government obligation and honor to protect the well-being of Aboriginal people. This obligation was established by the Crown in *The Hudson Bay Charter* of 1670, *The Royal Proclamation* of 1763 and inevitably translated into policy beginning with the *Indian Act* of 1876 that governed the relationship

between the Government and the first people of the land. The policies restricted Aboriginal participation in development, the practice of Aboriginal languages and culture, and they encouraged assimilation and enfranchisement. These policies of restriction are the root of the social and economic challenges that Aboriginal peoples continue to face today.

Tough's work provides compelling evidence of a deliberate policy of underdevelopment and enfranchisement. He concludes that the failure of the capital system to achieve economic stability and modernity for Aboriginal people is a result of the separation of Aboriginal people from their resource base, the land. In addition he notes that the separation of the wealth garnered by the capital industrialists in their use of Aboriginal lands, from the social structure responsible for payment to Aboriginal peoples for land entitlement, led to economic disparity and oppression of Aboriginal peoples. This disparity persists today.

There is much debate about whether economic disparity is a result of land loss, cultural genocide or, as some may argue, failure at adaptation. Tough asserts that the focus on Aboriginal culture is a diversion from the reality that public policy failed to support the economic transformation and reform for Aboriginal people. This thesis, postulates that identity and culture is foundational to economic success and prosperity. Mother Earth, land, is at the heart of Aboriginal identity, culture and values. These values influence Aboriginal worldview and measures of success. I argue that the separation of Aboriginal people from their land and culture is the primary factor contributing to economic disparity.

In *The State of the First Nation Economy and The Struggle to Make Poverty History*, the AFN asserts that, "First Nations in Canada are in the process of making a historic but difficult transition from a time when they were subject of colonial-era controls, assimilative measures and removal from their traditional land and resource base" (AFN, 2009, p. 7). The residential school policy, which was one of the key elements to the assimilative measures, failed; leaving a multi-generational effect on individuals, family and communities. Continued loss of access to lands further restricted cultural and sustenance practices such as hunting, fishing or logging and migration based on inter-tribal relations, climate and food sources. The shear survival of our First Nations is in itself remarkable. "Perhaps the most important point is this concluding one, the importance of 'hanging in' for the long haul." (AFN, 2009, p. 7).

Tough demonstrates the historical resilience of Aboriginal peoples in adapting to changing economies, and he builds the case that public policy oppressed the inclusion and advancement of the First Nation peoples in the modernizing economy. By the early 1960's government policy was shifting with Northern populations encouraged to move to Winnipeg to access markets. The migration to urban centres did not result in economic and social well-being for Aboriginal peoples. Increased Aboriginal population in Winnipeg drew greater attention to the 'Indian circumstance', or 'problem', as some referred, and it stimulated research and public debate.

In her paper, *Aboriginal People in Urban Areas*, Evelyn Peters argues that the failure to address the idea of Aboriginal culture within a modernizing

framework produced an urban view of Aboriginal people as problematic and potentially disruptive to city life. "There is a strong, sometime racist, perception that being Aboriginal and being urban are mutually exclusive." (Peters, 2000, p. 233).

Review of statistics for the City of Winnipeg depicts a story of continued oppression for Aboriginal people migrating to the urban centre. "As measured by economic indicators: unemployment and labour force participation rates, average income levels, adequacy of housing, rates of mobility and incidence of poverty; Aboriginal people in Winnipeg are, on average, less well off than Winnipeg's non-Aboriginal population."(Silver, 2000, p.v1). In the report, *Aboriginal People in Canada's Labour Market: Work and Unemployment, Today and Tomorrow*, Michael Mendelson (2004) reports that "on almost every indicator Aboriginal peoples in Manitoba are among the worst off in Canada" (p.40).

Statistics on Aboriginal population for Manitoba depict population growth. As of July 1, 2005, Manitoba's Aboriginal community was 172,654, representing 14.1 percent on the Manitoba population. The 2005 statistic represented a 6.6 percent increase since 2001. The non-Aboriginal population growth was only 0.8 percent during this same period. It is expected that Aboriginal populations will continue to experience a faster rate of growth expanding in overall percentage of the population in all parts of Manitoba.

In 2004, approximately 33.8 per cent of Manitoba's Aboriginal community resided in Winnipeg, 38.3 per cent in Northern Manitoba, and 27.9 percent resided in other areas. The age of Aboriginal population is also of interest

in understanding demographic implications. The Manitoba Aboriginal population is, and will remain for a considerable period of time, younger than the overall Manitoba population. The median age of the total Aboriginal population was 23.6 in 2004. This means that half the Aboriginal population is less than 24 years of age. The median for the non-Aboriginal population in 2004 was 40. (Premier's Economic Advisory Committee, Manitoba, 2005)

The statistics for women reveal that in 2001 there were just under a half a million Aboriginal females in Canada. As is the case with the growth rate of the general Aboriginal population, Aboriginal women population is growing much more rapidly than the rest of the female population in Canada. Just over half of the Aboriginal female population lives in urban area, with Winnipeg ranking second to Saskatoon in highest measure of Aboriginal females to the total female population. The statistical analysis demonstrates that Aboriginal women are a relatively young and rapidly growing population. On measures of well-being such as education, income, health and social experience of employment or dependency on transfer payments, the statistics demonstrate that Aboriginal women are worse off in comparison to non-Aboriginal women (Canada, 2006).

For Manitoba, Aboriginal labour force participation is growing, as is the average employment income; however both of these statistics remain considerably lower for Aboriginal population in contrast to non-Aboriginal population. In 2001, the Aboriginal labour force participation rate was 59 percent compared to 67.3 percent for non-Aboriginal participation; the employment rate was 47.8 percent compared to 63.3 percent for non-Aboriginal; and, the

unemployment rate was 19 percent compared to 6.1 percent for non-Aboriginal. Employment is the one measure that Aboriginal women do better than Aboriginal men, although average income earned is substantially lower than men. Women for the most part are employed in retail and service sector which attributes to lower income levels. As illustration, in 2001 the average employment income for Aboriginal persons in Manitoba was $19,271 while for Manitoba as a whole the average employment income was $27,178. For Aboriginal women, average employment income was 12,300 (Canada, 2006).

With respect to self-employment, there is similar experience of growth in contrasting participation results. In 2001, 5.9 per cent of the Aboriginal workforce—representing 3,465 Aboriginal people—was self employed, compared to 12.3 percent of the entire Manitoba workforce. Aboriginal women participate in self-employment at a higher rate than Aboriginal men; however, again the income associated with the self-employment is lower. This reality of lower income for women is consistent with the experience of the non-Aboriginal population (Canada, 2006).

The growth in Aboriginal population and the relatively younger age demographic signal concern when considering the slower rate of participation in the labour force and economy. Author Calvin Helin, in his book *Dances with Dependency: Indigenous Success through Self-Reliance* (2006), cautions about a demographic tsunami that results from the aging of the non-Aboriginal baby boom population combined with a rapidly-growing Aboriginal population. If something is not done to increase the inclusion of Aboriginal people in the

economy and social dependency persists at the current rate, Helin warns that the cost to care for the elderly and the Aboriginal dependent will swamp the finances of Canada. Helin writes about the disparity in participation and the insidious nature of the dependency trap of welfare. He asserts, "If these issues are not approached proactively, mainstream society will be on the hook for costly social service programs dealing with a seemingly never ending social malaise" (Helin, 2006, p. 243). The AFN shares similar caution pointing out that the rapid growth rate of First Nation population diminishes the impact of advancing rates of inclusion (AFN, 2009). Even greater inclusion is required to avoid the tsunami.

Tough and Helin outline the history that founds the disparity that Aboriginal people experience. They point out the resilience that kept the first peoples of this land from succumbing to policies of assimilation. Ironically, it was government interest in revising public policy that led to an assertion of Aboriginal rights and made way for the possibility of social, economic inclusion that leaves room for Aboriginal culture. The June 25, 1969, *Government Statement on Indian Policy*, commonly known as '*The White Paper*', proposed the repeal of the *Indian Act*. While colonial history and government policy in its application created the circumstance, repeal of the legislation was not acceptable, as without affirmation of Aboriginal rights and sovereignty, the repeal further threatened the already marginalized first peoples. In response to *The White Paper*, there emerged a political response and surge of energy that contributed to what has become an emerging Aboriginal economy. This period from 1969 to

current may be viewed as a time of Negotiation and Renewal in which Aboriginal people fight back against public policy (Lensday, Wuttunee, 1999).

Among the responses to *The White Paper*, the Indian Tribes of Manitoba presented one of the most compelling arguments with the 1971 *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows*. The Indian Tribes of Manitoba agreed that First Nations must assume control and ownership over all aspects of their life and that the dependency on the Canadian state must not continue. They advanced the argument that education, social and economic developments are interdependent. While emphasizing the shortcomings of the *Indian Act*, *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows*, argued against the termination of all special rights, treaties, reserves and protection, in favour of affirming the rights of Indian tribes to assume nationhood.

The First Nation response to *The White Paper* stimulated a resurgence of Indian pride and an assertion of rights creating renewed resilience to the oppressive, intergenerational affects of government Indian policy. As Harold Cardinal asserted, "On the face of it, the vicious poverty that grips our people presents one of the most complex human problems that any society might face. But the very fact that the problem was man-made argues that the solution does not lie beyond man" (Tough, 2005, p. 30). Public debate continued throughout the seventies with several high profile legal cases and assertion of rights. A very notable advancement took place in 1982 in conjunction with the proclamation of *The Constitution Act* which made several amendments to the *North American Act* of 1867. Section 35 of *The Constitution Act* "recognizes and affirms" the

"existing" Aboriginal and treaty rights in Canada. This recognition of existing rights, affirmed the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples who make up the Aboriginal population. While somewhat undefined as to how this recognition would play out, the proclamation influenced attitudes and advanced the debate of how to address Indian public policy.

To advance formal discussion, the Canadian government undertook a national review that resulted in the *1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People* (RCAP) (Canada, 1996). This five-volume, 4000 page report covers a vast range of issues faced by Aboriginal peoples and makes 440 recommendations. In its report, RCAP outlines the role that history and public policy played in creating the unacceptable socio-economic conditions faced by Aboriginal people in Canada today. RCAP calls for sweeping change in the relationship between government and Aboriginal people. RCAP referenced a need for policy and program changes to support Aboriginal economic development and success for Aboriginal entrepreneurs.

In its work RCAP hosted discussions and considered Aboriginal point of view on topics such as culture, identity, education, gender, social and economic development. In its report, RCAP outlined significant differences between an Aboriginal worldview and those views imposed through colonialism. It was acknowledged that these differences in view about land, spirit, people, and relationships had a significant impact on the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. RCAP charts the interrelationship between the economic realm and other important dimensions of life and concludes that the failure to

respect or take into account the Aboriginal worldview led to abhorrent social and economic circumstances for Aboriginal people.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People considered the viewpoint of women, acknowledging that women played a key role in all aspects of life for Aboriginal people. This excerpt from the report *People to People Nation to Nation: Highlights from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People* (Canada, 2006) best summarizes:

> Voices of Women
>
> Women played a prominent part in the political and cultural life of many traditional Aboriginal societies. First and foremost, they were honoured as the givers of life. Their ability to bear, raise and nurture the new generation was seen as a special gift from the Creator, a source of awesome power and equal responsibility.
>
> Women's leadership roles varied from nation to nation. Mohawk women, for example, were active in the political life of clan, village, nation and confederacy. Inuit women deferred to male leaders in public decision making but had considerable influence in social relations and family affairs, especially as they grew older. In some Aboriginal societies, women had a more subordinate role; even then, their skills and knowledge gave them an essential role in the community.
>
> We are under no illusion that women's lives before contact were free of social problems. But Aboriginal women told us that, with the coming of colonial powers, a disturbing mind-set crept into their own societies. Policies and laws imposed by foreign governments ruptured cultural traditions and introduced discrimination against women.
>
> Today, Aboriginal women are organized in ways that allow them to press for action on issues that concern them. Largely silenced for many years, now they will be heard.
>
> Clear divisions of labour along gender lines existed, [but] women's and men's work was equally valued... Everyone in the camp worked hard and everyone had a specific role...
>
> *Martha Flaherty*
> *President, Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association*

While women's roles varied from nation to nation, they included a role in political, social, and cultural society which included participation in the economy. RCAP affirmed the understanding that women held a special place in Aboriginal society. RCAP brought forward a message that while Aboriginal women were not free from social problems prior to contact, they did communicate the concern that policies and laws imposed by foreign governments "ruptured cultural traditions and introduced discrimination against women". RCAP outlined how The *Indian Act* and other laws originating in the nineteenth century disadvantaged Aboriginal peoples. In specific consideration of Aboriginal women, RCAP summarized: "Women were doubly disadvantaged by the sexist nature of this law, rooted as it was in Victorian ideas of race and patriarchy. For much of this century, women were not allowed to vote in band elections, could not own or inherit property, and were treated as the 'property' of their husbands in many contexts." In considering Aboriginal women, RCAP addresses two key points. The first point demonstrates the implication that Victorian ideas of race and patriarchy had on the role of Aboriginal women. The second point demonstrates the implication that the *Indian Act* and related laws had on Aboriginal women's identity, outlining the impact of Bill C31: "Perhaps most offensive of all, a woman's identity as a First Nations person came to depend on the status of her husband. Even if she spoke her Aboriginal language, practised the traditions of her nation, and raised her children in the ways of her people, she ceased to be 'Indian' - in the eyes of the government - the moment she married a non-Indian. By extension, her children also ceased to be 'Indian'".

The impact of colonization eroded the role and influence that Aboriginal women had in their Indigenous society. Emma LaRocque, in her paper *Colonization of a Native Woman Scholar,* wrote: "Colonization has taken its toll on all Native peoples, but perhaps it has taken its greatest toll on women. While all Natives experience racism, Native women suffer from sexism as well. Racism and sexism found in the colonial process have served to dramatically undermine the place and value of women in Aboriginal cultures, leaving us vulnerable both within and outside of our communities" (LaRoque, 2000, p. 20). Understanding the impact that colonization had on Aboriginal women is necessary to ensuring that actions taken to eradicate and rectify the circumstances address the unique experience for Aboriginal women.

Documentation of women's participation in the early economy is difficult to find due to the dominant European idea about women and appropriate social order. Most documentation was written by men, about men. "In history we are taught about the men who have changed the structure of the world. So often the important contributions of women are ignored (Hingley, 2000, p 107). Women were dependent subjects, the property of fathers or husbands, and roles were quite domestic. Tough (1996) found that documentation about Indian women tended to include accounts of Indian work only as described within Indian societies. However, this documentation is rich in demonstrating the vital role that Native women played in Indian societies and further demonstrates a continued significance with contact. Indian women played a vital role in the emerging society and economies. Through marriage with fur traders, a new society was

forming and women provided economic advantage through their knowledge of survival on the land, kinship, trading links and language (Tough, 1996).

In its recommendations, *The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People* encourages action to resolve the unacceptable socio-economic conditions faced by Aboriginal peoples in Canada today through the restoration and development of Aboriginal community and economy. Self-governance and self-determination are key components identified as critical to rebuild Aboriginal socio-economic circumstance. Labour force participation and business development is presented as foundational to resolving the socio-economic conditions faced by Aboriginal people. One of the most important recommendations of the 1996 *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People* echoed the 1971 recommendation of the Indian Tribes of Manitoba statement, *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows*, calling for a new relationship involving nation to nation discussion based on recognition, respect, sharing and responsibility.

While many may look back to 1969 and judge progress as slow, the conversation was evolving and attitudes were changing about the relationship with the first people of Canada. A conference co-hosted by the Royal Bank of Canada and the Council for the Native Development Officers (CANDO) in October 1997, reviewed RCAP recommendations and concluded that, "By taking a direct role in the economic development of Aboriginal communities across Canada, businesses will not only ensure a better standard of living for Aboriginal Canadians, but will ensure long-term value for their own shareholders" (The Royal Bank of Canada, 1997). RCAP recommended the rebuilding of Aboriginal

economies and outlined nine steps necessary to this. One of these steps is the building of Aboriginal businesses which in turn would fuel Aboriginal economies through job creation and wealth generation. The recommendations to achieve this include improving Aboriginal peoples' access to capital, support services and new markets. It has been almost fifteen years since RCAP was released, yet matters of capital, support services and access to markets remain critical to success for the emerging Aboriginal economy.

Subsequent to the Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal People, significant attention has shifted to addressing the gap in Aboriginal social and economic participation. The paper *The State of the First Nation Economy and the Struggle to make Poverty History*, prepared by the Make First Nation Poverty History Expert Advisory Committee for the 2009 Inter-Nation Trade and Economic Summit, demonstrates statistics that celebrate great achievement over the years 1969 – 2009. However this report concludes that on all measures the significant disparity persists between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participation and that the Aboriginal economy remains extremely vulnerable.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People started a conversation that continues today. It was pride mixed with sadness that many First Nation, Inuit, Métis and Canadian people felt on January 7, 1998, as the Minister of Indian and Northern Development read a statement of reconciliation. This was the first statement by the Government of Canada accepting that it had been wrong in its treatment of the first people. "The Government of Canada today formally expresses to all Aboriginal people in Canada our profound regret for past action

of the federal government which has contributed to these difficult pages in the history of our relationship together." (Honorable Jane Stewart. 1999, p. 136)

In response to observations of *The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People*, investments were made to influence economic prosperity and inclusion. *The Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development,* a publication of the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers, issued its first copy in the Spring 1999. The inaugural publication presented a series of research papers about *The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People* with a specific focus on the Aboriginal economy. This journal serves as a key resource for the analysis of progress in Aboriginal economic development. In the first volume, David Newhouse (1999) considers what Aboriginal economies look like and evaluates the critical factors that contribute to success. In his paper, *The Development of the Aboriginal Economy of the Next 20 Years*, Newhouse proposes an analysis using a model that considers "enclave" economies as those that are somewhat closed, such as one that might exist under the governance of Aboriginal government on reserve lands; and, he considers "interwoven" economies as those that might exist without binding of region or local government. Alternative, mainstream models may consider more varied scenarios such as local, regional, north, south, urban, remote, and rural and so forth. In addition to simplifying the analytical model to one that is premised on an enclave or interwoven framework, Newhouse presents six criteria that significantly influence success. These criteria reinforce the earlier stated premise that land and culture underpin economic

development. He cites the following six criteria as foundational to the next 20 years of development:

- Sense of Identity and self-confidence;
- Education;
- Basic Public Infrastructure including banking, public works, schools;
- Rejection of Dependency Syndrome;
- Political, community engagement;
- Private Sector Collaboration; and,
- Access to land and resources.

Since *The Report of The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People* (1996) investments have continued. Of note, on December 13, 2004, the Sectoral Session on Economic Opportunities was held in Ottawa to share ideas about how the Canadian government could work together with Aboriginal peoples to improve economic opportunities. The key questions dealt with barriers in access to capital and investment funds, development of appropriate business models and approaches, development of skill and governance capacity and revision to the regulatory or legislative environment to support timely investment for Aboriginal economic development (AFN, 2004). To advise the Sectoral Session on Economic Opportunities, a specific study about Aboriginal women was undertaken by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) to review the experience of Aboriginal women participating in the economy. NWAC urged consistent application of a gender analysis that would consider the unique challenges facing Aboriginal women. The areas reviewed included women's role

in governance and capacity building, improved access to capital and investment, and improved economic opportunities for women relating to land rights and resource development. The submission, entitled *Background document for the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable Economic Opportunities Sectoral Session* (NWAC, 2004), advised that regulatory and legislative frameworks needed to be more responsive to community needs and involve Aboriginal women at all levels and stages of socio-economic initiatives.

A tremendous investment has been made into public programs and services designed to promote and support Aboriginal participation in the economy through entrepreneurship. Most of the programs are publicly funded with some having specific focus on Aboriginal entrepreneurship, such as Aboriginal Business Canada, while others take a broader focus but have Aboriginal specific programming within their purview, such as the Canada Business Services Network. RCAP reported that the existing services fail to meet the needs of Aboriginal people. The Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples (SSCAP), in their October 2003 *Report on Urban Aboriginal Youth: An Action Plan for Change*, noted that a general consensus that a 'one size fits' all approach to service delivery will not effectively reach urban Aboriginal residents, including youth. The report recommended that community based programs be developed to support socio-economic development for urban Aboriginal people (SSCAP). Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable Economic Opportunities Sectoral Session and the related work of the Native Women's Association of Canada suggests the same consideration be made for women. "The application of a gender analysis

requires that the unique challenges facing Aboriginal women be identified, along with solutions to overcome these challenges." (NWAC, 2004, p2) The suggested solutions call for women inclusion in all aspects of program and policy development as well as women-based programs that support business development and skill development. While there are women-based entrepreneurship programs, these are not specific to Aboriginal women.

In Manitoba, the demand for action to increase Aboriginal inclusion in business development and workforce builds from studies, previous call for action and numerous programs. The Manitoba Premier's Economic Advisory Council (Manitoba, 2005), a broad based 35-member council that provides continuing advice to the Premier on provincial economic priorities, hosted a Summit on Aboriginal Business Development in Winnipeg, November of 2004. This summit focused on the aspects of business development and employment opportunity, collecting input from over 200 people on how to enhance Aboriginal economic development. *The Premier's Economic Advisory Council Summit Report on Aboriginal Business Development* called for review and on-going systems of accountability reporting to ensure the effectiveness of these programs. In addition to creating much needed awareness, the development of the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce was one of the resulting actions from the summit.

The Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce is one of many community based organizations that have been established to support and promote Aboriginal entrepreneurs in Manitoba. Other organizations supporting Aboriginal entrepreneurs include Tribal Wi-chi-way-win Capital Corporation, Arctic

Cooperative Development Fund, Anishinabe Mazaska Capital Corporation, Louis Riel Capital Corporation, First Peoples Economic Growth Fund Inc., Manitoba Métis Federation and Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. In addition to these specific Aboriginal community based organizations, there are other service organizations such as Canada Manitoba Business Service Centre, Aboriginal Business Canada, Kitayan Community Futures Development Corporation and Dakota Ojibway Community Futures Development Corporation**.** These programs and services are designed to increase the Aboriginal participation in the Manitoba economy. Programs and services such as these have been developing for several decades now. Increasingly, mainstream organizations are building Aboriginal focused programs and services into their portfolios. An example of this is Myers, Norris, Penny (MNP) an accounting practice that has focused on Aboriginal services. All of the chartered banks of Canada also have developed specialized Aboriginal programs and services.

Programs and services that support economic development are critical to advancing Aboriginal inclusion. The City of Winnipeg is known for advanced models of inclusion, using community economic development as a foundation (Loxley, 2010). These models are based on collaborative action that creates financing, ownership and management options that build on worker or community cooperation. The models are particularly useful in creating community required programs, services and products, while addressing weaknesses that may present themselves in the traditional private enterprise model. These weaknesses, that may include lack of capital, skills or other forms of capacity required, are

overcome as a result of individuals and organizations collectively contributing to the enterprise requirements. This collective model has been useful to Aboriginal economic development in Winnipeg, a city which is home to over 55,000 Aboriginal people (Mendelson, 2004). However, while there are Aboriginal success stories in economic development the reality remains that Winnipeg Aboriginal people are the worst off in Canada on all measures of economic well-being (Silver, 2006). Growth in labour force participation and business development are critical to the success for Winnipeg Aboriginal people.

In his book *Aboriginal, Northern, and Community Economic Development, Papers and Retrospectives,* John Loxley (2010) examines the history of Aboriginal economic development in Manitoba and he outlines a number of possible approaches to economic development. The analysis includes important reflection on Aboriginal values, culture and perspectives about development with a focus on community economic development. In the next chapter, entrepreneurship in the context of Aboriginal economic development, values and culture is examined with a focus on the role of women and private enterprise in economic development.

Chapter 3 Concepts and Framework

This study of Aboriginal entrepreneurship is framed within the context of Aboriginal history of participation in the economy. The analysis considers the place of private enterprise in economic development and evaluates capitalism from the perspective of community and social systems. The study considers attributes and skills of entrepreneurs and takes a female gender focus.

Entrepreneurship is a process that results in the creation of enterprises, organizations and institutions that satisfy society needs and wants. The process involves recognition of unsatisfied needs or wants and the application of management principles and tools to convert this opportunity into enterprises, products, services, programs and institutions (Anderson, 2000). While there are various models for entrepreneurial engagement such as public corporations, community based cooperatives and even not for profit social enterprises, this analysis will focus on privately-owned enterprise. Reference to entrepreneur will refer to an individual business owner.

An entrepreneur requires personal attributes including self-motivation, perseverance and self-confidence as well as skills such as the capacity to analyze, communicate, market or account. While skills and attributes may be hired into the enterprise, the entrepreneur is considered the risk taker and ultimately is responsible for the success or failure of the enterprise (EduService, 1996). The act of entrepreneurship is often seen as something of self-interest, focused on the idea of making money for the entrepreneur. The balance to this idea of self-interest is the fact that success requires the entrepreneur to attract a clientele to

respond to the business proposition. The entrepreneur must bring a new or better idea, process or product to the market place and in doing so successfully, the entrepreneur must create value that leads to the possibility of income for the business. In this sense, the entrepreneur may be considered as a leader taking the risk necessary to bring something of value to the community that the business serves. Over time, this idea about social return of the entrepreneur has evolved beyond the value of products and services to greater social responsibility and accountability.

The foundational motivation of entrepreneurship within capital markets and the economy is premised on the creation of a profit and the potential for capital accumulation to build wealth for the business owner. The focus is primarily on capitalist well-being but extends to community well-being when considering the economic impact of the enterprise as it spends resources purchasing goods, services and employing people. In their analysis of economic impact, Porter and Krame describe a fundamental connection between business profitability and community, "By providing jobs, investing in capital, purchasing goods, and doing business every day, corporations have a profound and positive influence on society. The most important thing a corporation can do for society and for any community is contribute to a prosperous economy" (2006, p.91)

In addition to economic impact, an enterprise is expected to act with moral conscience. Increasingly it is being challenged to make further contributions such as those that have positive environmental and broader social impact. Models of measurement such as "triple bottom line" report on social and environmental

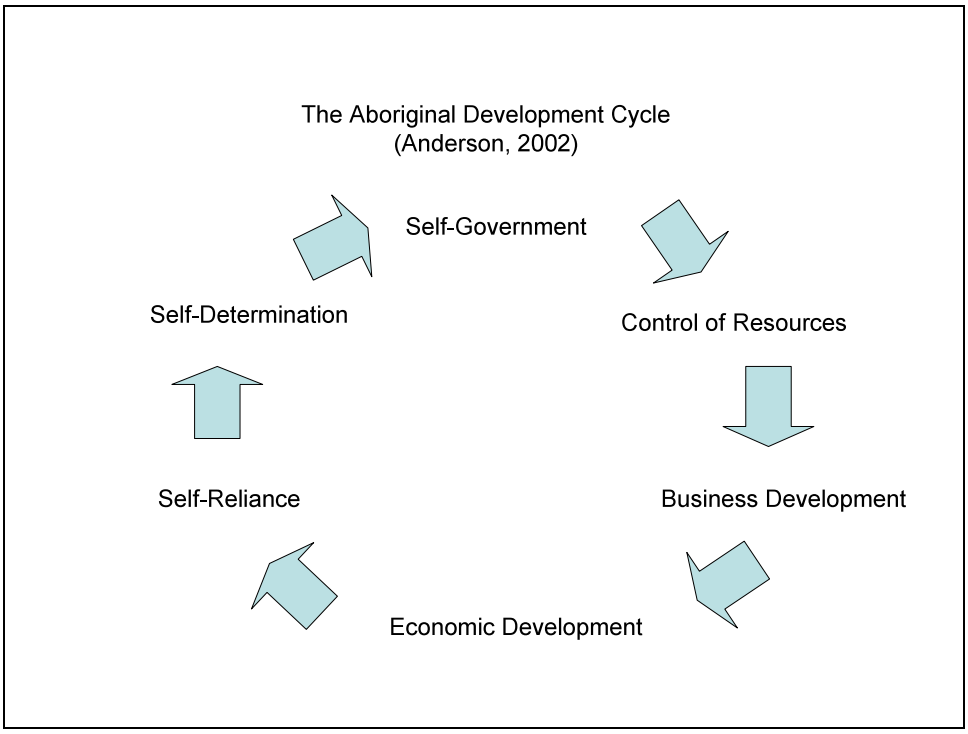
return in addition to traditional measures of economic return for owners and investors. In recent decades there has been increased attention to the corporate 'soul' or the role of business in community. The idea of a corporation or a business being socially responsible suggests that the actions of the business take into account values that may align with a community of interest. Such actions may include human resource, procurement, business development and philanthropic activities that are inclusive and respectful of the community served.

The process of entrepreneurship is fundamental to a developing economy as it can be made available for all to participate in and it is universally applicable (Anderson, 2001). While some may view entrepreneurship as a micro experience within the economic system, others would see it from a macro perspective. The micro perspective essentially considers entrepreneurship as contributing to the economy while the macro perspective would place entrepreneurship as the driver of an economy. The latter view would consider that enterprise is foundational to securing innovation, employment, wealth, competitiveness and influences a community standard of living that demands social responsiveness and sustainability (Anderson, 2001).

In an analysis of the relationship of private entrepreneurship to Aboriginal economic development, Robert Anderson (2001) draws attention to the work of management gurus Blowatt and Drucker. Each argues that entrepreneurship drives the economy and in fact that entrepreneurial behaviour holds greatest promise for advancing emerging economies. Blowatt asserts that entrepreneurship offers third world countries the opportunity become first world

countries; while Drucker postulates that entrepreneurial orientation is essential to the survival of companies, economies and the prosperity of nations (Anderson, 2001). Recent examples such as India and China surging as economic powerhouses prove the point that entrepreneurship drives the economy. The serious downfall of the North American motor vehicle industry demonstrates Drucker's point that entrepreneurial orientation and innovation is essential to survival. In this case, failure of the North American motor vehicle companies to innovate and compete in a global market resulted in substantial economic pressure. In today's market place, once third world economies are vying for first world order as a result of entrepreneurial drive.

In 2002, Anderson published *Aboriginal Entrepreneurship and Business Development,* a "how to" book that focuses on Aboriginal entrepreneurship and business development strategies. In his work, the research is focused on communal owned enterprise and presents tools to assist in business planning and management. Anderson outlines characteristics of Aboriginal economic development which includes attainment of economic self-sufficiency, self-government, control over activities on traditional lands, improvement of socio-economic circumstance and strengthening of traditional values and culture (p. 11). Anderson's framework, "The Aboriginal Development Circle" captures the essence of the relationship between self-government and the drive towards self-determination through economic independence (p. 11).



While Anderson's work focuses on entrepreneurship from a communal perspective, I argue that the development cycle towards self-determination could be applied to privately-owned Aboriginal businesses and therefore forms part of the framework in which this research study fits. Indeed, in the circumstance of an individual, self-reliance leads to self-determination, and in the case of this research it is argued that privately-owned enterprise can thrive within an entrepreneurial framework that challenges capital pressures in favour of respecting Aboriginal values, leading to self-determination for the entrepreneur and positively contributing to social and economic well-being for Aboriginal peoples.

In considering the role of entrepreneurship within the emerging Aboriginal economy, David Newhouse offers an Aboriginal view of capitalism in his paper *Modern Aboriginal Economies, Capitalism with a Red Face* (Newhouse, 2000).

In this context, Newhouse reflects upon the unique perspectives that Aboriginal belief systems can contribute to advancements in education, economy, urban life and language. He highlights the positive influence an economy has on financial well-being, jobs, and skills. Newhouse opines about the power of capitalism, but also offers that Aboriginal people can adapt to capitalism and in doing so can adapt capitalism to suit their own world view.

Interesting enough, Newhouse's idea of capitalism with a 'Red Face' aligns well with the viewpoint expressed by Thomas Friedman in *The World is Flat*: "The more your culture easily absorbs foreign ideas and global best practices and melds those with its own traditions – the greater advantage you will have in a flat world" (Friedman, 2006, p. 411). A flat world is one that soars beyond artificial boundaries to a global experience. This phenomenon is powered by modern information and communication technologies and demands increased inclusion and diversity across the nations that participate in the flat world economy. In his work, Friedman asserts that open and competitive markets are the only sustainable vehicle for growing a nation out of poverty. Open markets bring new ideas that drive innovation and productivity. It is competitive pressures that create incentive and flexibility to adopt new ideas and turn them into jobs and products that contribute to the economy and community.

Even companies operating within the rapid-paced technology sector recognize the incredible importance of a value system to ground and unify its vision. The multi-national technology company IBM celebrates its 100th year of

service in 2011. As part of the celebration the company reflected upon the words of Tom Watson in his 1962 CEO address to employees:

> "I firmly believe that any organization, in order to survive and achieve success, must have a sound set of beliefs on which it premises all its policies and actions. Next, I believe that the most important single factor in corporate success is faithful adherence to those beliefs. And finally, I believe that if an organization is to meet the challenges of a changing world, it must be prepared to change everything about itself…except those beliefs… as it moves through corporate life" (Watson, 1962).

In reflecting on the meaning of this and translating it to the 2011 CEO address to employees, Sam Palmisano asserted:

> "Tom Watson was not talking here about ethical precepts. For him, a company's beliefs were about its identity – what makes it distinct… what shapes its decisions and behaviors. If you could codify and sustain that core, it would ensure that the company remained unique and differentiated… decade after decade" (Palmisano, 2011).

How do these ideas relate to Newhouse's theory of Red Capitalism? As Newhouse outlines, capitalism is itself a world-view that is infused within political, social and economic relationships. While powerful in its impact and influence over behaviour, it is also dependent on individual and collective efforts.

Considering this, what can Aboriginal belief systems contribute to the practice of capitalism? This idea of values grounding capitalist activity must be part of the vision for economic development. Newhouse argues that Aboriginal values should be interpreted and translated into community processes, institutions and codes of behaviour which blends with Anderson (2002) and becomes the other part of the research study framework. Newhouse presents 7 primary traditional values (Newhouse, 2000, p58):

1. kindness: a capacity for caring and desire for harmony and well-being in interpersonal relationships;
2. honesty: a necessity to act with the utmost honesty and integrity in all relationships recognizing the inviolable and inherent autonomy, dignity and freedom of oneself and others;
3. sharing: a willingness to relate to one another with an ethic of sharing, generosity and collective/communal consciousness and cooperation, while recognizing the interdependence and interrelatedness of all life;
4. strength: conscious of the need for kindness and respecting the integrity of oneself and others, to exercise strength of character, fortitude and self-mastery in order to generate and maintain peace, harmony and well-being within oneself and in the total collective community;
5. bravery: the exercise of courage and bravery on the part of the individual so that the quality of life and inherent autonomy of

oneself and others can be exercised in an atmosphere of security, peace, dignity and freedom;

6. wisdom: the respect for that quality of knowing and gift of vision in others (striving for the same within oneself) that encompasses the holistic view, possesses spiritual quality, and is expressed in the experiential breadth and depth of life;
7. humility: the recognition of oneself as a sacred and equal part of the creation, and the honouring of all life which is endowed with the same inherent autonomy, dignity, freedom and quality.

It is reasonable to consider business values aligned with these seven traditional Aboriginal values: Respect, Kindness, Honesty, Sharing, Strength, Bravery, Wisdom and Humility. Perhaps the language used is different; however the essence of purpose, the interpretation does honor the values. Consider my interpretation as it relates to business values:

1. Bravery is entrepreneurial risk-taking to create the opportunity to provide for self, family, community; away from dependency towards the self-determination.
2. Honesty is a business ethic associated with accountability; acting with transparency, integrity in all relationships including those with your investors, your suppliers, your customers and your community.

3. Sharing is exemplified as profit distribution and fair pricing; it is also business social responsibility with the business taking into account the impact and interconnectedness with the community.
4. Kindness is again community consciousness through corporate social responsibility, philanthropy and it may also include relationships with partners, suppliers, staff and customers.
5. Strength is human resource capacity building, learning and development in a way that ensures integrity, longevity and sustainability of the enterprise and those interconnected.
6. Humility is often measured by public reputation and customer satisfaction; it relates to the recognition of the enterprise within the community as a part of the greater whole.
7. Wisdom is entrepreneurial leadership that evolves in response to experience with success, failure and takes on a spiritual-like quality that is often considered intuitive or good business sense.

Reconciling the values that resonate within a community with those that may be held by a business or an entrepreneur is important to understanding and ensuring value based entrepreneurship. Through dialogue and research, an entrepreneur may come to some level of understanding of values that are commonly shared between a community and related economic interests. An underlying thread of common value may be as simple as the idea of providing for oneself and others within a family and community.

In his paper *The Challenges of Aboriginal Economic Development in the Shadow of the Borg*, Newhouse (2004) encourages Aboriginal peoples to consider what they have been involved with in relation to Aboriginal economic development over the last thirty years. Newhouse notes that on the one hand it is uplifting to witness improvement in material life for Aboriginal people and support a pro-business approach; however, he expresses concern that the debates surrounding Aboriginal economic development replicate classical economic debate. He points out that debates about regulation, control and roles of government are replicated rather than debate of new views and approaches as might be expected by economic development driven by Aboriginal values. Newhouse hypothesizes, "I'm not convinced we can replace capitalism, and I'm not sure what an alternative is that we would find politically or socially acceptable given that it is now such a large part of the way in which we view the world" (p. 41). He suggests that changes need to be made to the traditional capitalist model and he suggests a model of "compassionate capitalism" that balances values of community and market. With increased Aboriginal control over resources, it is possible that Aboriginal values will influence the capitalist model in a way that evolves a new dimension of capitalism.

In his earlier paper, *Resistance is Futile: Aboriginal Peoples Meet the Borg of Capitalism*, Newhouse (2001) makes the point that moving from a model of government dependency to one that is market-driven and self-sustaining requires the creation of a new point of view that could take generations to manifest itself. He writes about his experience working with Indian and Northern

Affairs on the housing file. It is common knowledge that there is a severe shortage of housing across many First Nation communities. Newhouse notes that he was asked to advise on the approach to transition towards a housing market such that the opportunity for individual-owned housing is created within First Nations. After some research into the idea, Newhouse advised that the easy task is creating the instruments to make way for this, the challenge would be the social engineering required to adjust the First Nation view that housing is a public good (Newhouse, 2001).

Transition to a market economy for First Nation communities is dependent not only on social engineering but increased progress in land right settlements, advanced education, social services and development of economic infrastructure. As argued in 1971 by the Indian Tribes in Manitoba: education, social and economic developments are interdependent. The 1971 position paper *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows*, argued for the rights of Indian tribes to assume nationhood. This assumption of nationhood would make way for continued development of a self-sustaining Aboriginal society and economy (AFN, 2009).

The theories of Anderson (2002) and Newhouse (2004) form a foundation that is central to my analysis of Aboriginal entrepreneurship. While Anderson's research focuses on communal economic development strategies, his framework of study can be used in considering private-owned business and implications for self-determination and socio-economic development. In his work, Newhouse adds perspective to the idea that Aboriginal values can potentially be maintained within the aggressive capitalist system forming an Aboriginal "Red Capitalism".

In researching this thesis, interviews with select female Aboriginal entrepreneurs provide personal perspective about the role of entrepreneurship in Aboriginal self-determination and in socio-economic development approaches which respect Aboriginal values. Adding a female-lens to this research brings meaningful contribution to the awareness of Aboriginal women's participation in the economy. Gender analysis is essential to understanding questions from a gender specific view. 'Gendering' is one of researcher Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) Maori research projects. Smith defines gendering Indigenous debates as "whether they are related to the politics of self-determination or the politics of family" and "is concerned with issues related to the relations between Indigenous men and women." (Smith, 1999, p. 151). Smith notes that colonization is recognized as having had a destructive effect on Indigenous gender relations. According to Smith, "A key issue for indigenous women in any challenge of contemporary Indigenous politics is the restoration to women of what are seen as their traditional roles, rights and responsibilities" (Smith, 1999, p. 152).

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) calls for increased commitment to gender analysis (NWAC, 2004). In their analysis NWAC argues that Aboriginal women and men experience different conditions in life and that the spheres for development need to be strengthened to be respectful and inclusive of women. NWAC asserts that all policies, strategies and options for development must be gender sensitive, gender equitable as well as culturally sensitive. In its argument, the NWAC highlighted the fact that there are higher proportions of Aboriginal women living in urban centres and that these women have higher rates

of government transfers than Aboriginal men or the non-aboriginal population. In considering dependency this infers that Aboriginal women are more likely to be living on low income and face a greater challenge in the journey toward self-sufficiency and well-being (Whiteduck, Peebles, 2002).

With the backdrop of Aboriginal history of participation in the economy and the analysis of private enterprise and its role in emerging economies, the experience of four Aboriginal women entrepreneurs are considered through their journey and views on entrepreneurship, self-determination and Aboriginal development.

Chapter 4 Stories in the Journey

The case study of four Aboriginal women entrepreneurs is central to this analysis of private enterprise, Aboriginal values, self-determination and Aboriginal economic development. These case studies build insight about the varying approaches to entrepreneurship and the unique journey each of these women take as they work toward their vision, while respecting the past and embracing the present experience they have as Aboriginal women.

Interviews were conducted with select Aboriginal women entrepreneurs. Each of these entrepreneurs has at least five years experience in business. An open-ended interview technique was used to capture the entrepreneur's words and stories about their journey and consider their view as Aboriginal women. The interview introduced topics such as: the inspiration to become entrepreneurs; the implications of heritage and culture on their interest and approach to entrepreneurship; the business model used and the business values; views and approaches to deal with pressures that exist within a capitalist system; views regarding the impact of entrepreneurship on self-determination and economic development for Aboriginal peoples; views about the challenges and opportunities they faced as Aboriginal women entrepreneurs and the strategies they feel are necessary to the future success of Aboriginal women and the Aboriginal economy.

Patricia Turner (Personal Interview, 2006)

Patricia Turner is an Aboriginal woman who chose entrepreneurship after retiring from a career in government. Not content to simply retire, Turner contemplated her future and one day an opportunity presented itself in a conversation she initiated with a frustrated trucker passing through her northern Manitoba First Nation, Grand Rapids. This opportunity turned out to be quite the challenge for Turner as she entered into the world of trucking and construction, setting up shop in Grand Rapids. The trucking company originated some twenty one years ago with Turner convincing the local bank to help her finance the purchase of her first two trucks. E.T. Development was born and now does road building, small salvage operations and community infrastructure construction. As Turner describes, over the years she evolved from being the "kid" playing with the big boys, to a player negotiating contracts to support infrastructure development for communities in the North.

When asked about her business and her success, Turner downplays the challenges she faced as an Aboriginal woman in this competitive, male dominated field. She asserts that the company she built is just like the others in mainstream society, but that they employ 97% Aboriginal people and serve as a training ground for developing Aboriginal workers. As well, Turner notes "In our company we recognize our people. In a small community of First Nations we recognize the fact that we are so intertwined together and that we have to understand the relationships we have with our close people and our close friends."

In Turner's world, people and community come first in her value system and she considers this a key to her company's success. Turner considers herself demanding, yet fair. She asserts that the job has to be done right and she makes this her priority. In her company, there is no exception to excellence. She focuses on timelines, worker commitment, training, expertise, coordination and an accident-free environment. The goal is to make sure the client is happy. The job well done reflects on her as an entrepreneur as well as on each of her workers. As Turner notes, "Without the employees I wouldn't be where I am today. It is a combination win-win for everybody. You are providing work for your employees. They tell me that they feel good and they get paid and look after their family. At the end of the day that is what we want anyway. To provide the best for your family." Taking care of family is an important value to Turner. Her children are adults, with children of their own and Turner makes it a priority to spend time with her grandchildren.

While Turner owns the business and deals with the office, paperwork, bankers and lawyers, her husband plays a key role. He works with the staff planning the jobs and getting the work done. As Turner puts it "We have a very good working relationship". Turner's sons are also involved with the business, learning the ropes as they go along. While family support has been fantastic and has allowed Turner to focus on the 'business' end of the business and take on leadership roles in the Aboriginal community, it hasn't prevented Turner from rolling up her sleeves and getting into the field. She still dazzles a few non-believers with her knowledge about the equipment and the industry. She

personally interviews workers who come to her looking for a job. She wants to ensure they know the equipment from A to Z, "We always say, you have to make that machine dance for you." Despite her experience and reputation, she adds, "A lot of men stand and look at me with question, because it is still a man's world out there in construction. They think 'what the heck does she know'. But I want to make sure they know what they are doing. If that equipment goes down, it is down time for the company and for workers."

Turner values the staff and makes it her business to ensure that they are well-trained, that their work environment is safe and supporting. In this line of work, it is often 24/7 with long hours and often staff work in remote locations away from home and family. To compensate for this Turner ensures that the workers are comfortable with good rest and food. She makes sure that they get the breaks that they need to spend time with family and community.

Over the years Turner has worked tirelessly for the community. Not satisfied with watching things from the outside, Turner served as Band Chief. Hoping to stimulate commitment to education and create an environment that nurtured youth to careers, Turner facilitated the career fairs in their local school. She produced t-shirts with the slogan "Youth with Potential" to turn the negative idea of 'youth at risk' around. Turner could have sat back and enjoyed the successes of her business, but she has chosen the path of making success an option for others. Turner believes that her community service is what makes her company truly Aboriginal. "The difference I see in my company is the way that I have aligned myself in working relationships with Aboriginal people. I try and

promote Aboriginal communities." Following through with action, Turner was instrumental in the creation of the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce, the first of its kind in Canada, and she served at the President of the Chamber for its first two years of operation. As Turner states, "I see the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce making a big, huge impact on the economy of Manitoba and I have the feeling deep in my heart that we will go right across Canada. Let's all work together and make a better world, a better place for our people to come along." Working together is a key value that Turner lives. Her vision for the Chamber has become a reality as the Aboriginal Chamber announced a national presence in the fall of 2006. Turner notes that the Aboriginal Chamber is important to celebrating the contribution that Aboriginal businesses make to the Canadian economy. She feels that the public at large is unaware of the number of Aboriginal business and entrepreneurs. Turner states, "It is time for people like myself to step forward and say I am Aboriginal and I am an entrepreneur and I am proud of it."

Turner is proud of her business and stresses that the most important thing is the contribution it makes to the First Nation communities. Turner makes it her business to ensure that when she does work in the community she is leaving behind the skills necessary to sustain the projects she works on. She noted that over the years, infrastructure would be developed in First Nations communities but then the companies doing the work would leave, as would the workers. There was no reflection on whether the project had invested in the development of the community so that it could maintain and sustain the infrastructure. This is a number one goal of Turner's company when it works in the community. "Why

should I go back. It is going to cost an arm and a leg to move equipment back there. If I can teach somebody and leave at least two people behind, I think leaving a bit of yourself behind wherever you go, then you know you have been a success and you have contributed to the people and their own economy."

A second goal for Turner's company relates to her desire to provide meaningful work to Aboriginal people and to develop them to go on and work in other communities with mainstream organizations. Turner notes that while it is costly to train her workers, she thinks beyond the costs when a worker announces that they are leaving for another opportunity. Turner wishes them well as she shares, "When they go on somewhere and speak highly of her training and E.T. Developments it results in increased reputation and goodwill for my company and this translates into partnerships and contracts."

Partnerships and contracts are good for business. Despite embracing unique Aboriginal community values, Turner is not afraid of the challenge to compete with mainstream business, nor is she afraid of the idea that it is important for her company to be profitable. She recalls the challenges of starting her business and the lean years of making do with little to no profit. "But that was me", she recalls, "I knew I could live within that $10,000 a year because of the simple fact that I was working 7/24 and I knew that I could see there was lots of work in the infrastructure and the field of construction. As we got bigger and bigger and making money, it was good for me that I was earning at that power, but I always kept the money in my company. I would leave it behind for the company." Making a profit and investing in the company are values that Turner

has translated into a strong a successful company in a tough industry, for the benefit of her community.

Turner further demonstrates her values in the views she has about running a successful business. She notes that, "You are not at clock-in, clock-wise and you don't answer to anyone; to me anyways it is my company." However, she is quick to spell out the lessons to be learned "I have taken some of the issues I have learned from my previous jobs which is accountability for one thing. I have learned accountability, the timetable, the schedules and the commitments. I don't just mean with your bankers or creditors, I mean to yourself, to your family and to your clients and vendors. Try to be fair and honest with everyone. I think one of the biggest things is honesty." Honesty and accountability are values that contribute to reputation. Over the twenty one years in business, Turner has built a reputable Aboriginal company.

In reflecting on her success, Turner comments, "I think it is easier working with an Aboriginal company because you know with our people there is always a common understanding. I put them at ease." With business in mind, Turner talks about the value of family, community and relationships developed along the way. Patricia Turner is an inspiration to others who dream of owning their own business and making a difference in Aboriginal economic development. "Believe in yourself as a person. I am Pat Turner, I am a woman and I believe I can do this. And, if I think I can't do it, then I think about it and I go back and I think what the heck, I will tell Mary Jane and together we can do it." Patricia Turner's company is truly Aboriginal with its values going well beyond the bottom-line!

Lisa Meeches (Personal Interview, 2006)

Lisa Meeches is a modern day Aboriginal storyteller who has taken the communications industry to a new level with her dynamic approach to video production. As Executive Producer and the President of Eagle Vision Inc. and Meeches Video Productions, she has built a great reputation in the film-making community as a result of her work in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal productions. Her most recent productions include *Capote, Blue* State and *Elijah*. With partners invested in the newest company, Century Street Distributions, Meeches is taking her Aboriginal productions to the international forum, taking care to ensure that the packaging and presentation keeps sacred the spiritual base and intent of her work.

Meeches passion for film and production is not rooted in a drive for fame in this highly glamorized industry, but from her sense that it is her spiritual job to be a storykeeper. She shares that at the end of each day, "I ask myself did I accomplish things, was I kind to people, can I look at my business another way, how do I make it better and then I write it down." Her approach to business is intriguing, rooted in Aboriginal spirituality, bringing ceremony to the heart of day to day business.

As Meeches speaks about her work, the powerful linkage between values and business is apparent. "Before we start any production," Meeches affirms, "we start off with a ceremony that specifically talks about natural law and honoring the gifts of everybody no matter what nation you come from." She refers to the ceremonies and offerings as 'spiritual insurance', explaining that they

are offerings to ensure that people treat each other well and they are good and kind to one another. Meeches invests in this insurance in the same way she does other forms of insurance such as errors and omissions or liability insurance. To Meeches it is all part of the business.

Meeches perspective about the ideas that build into script and production is further demonstration of the linkage of her values in her work. "Before my writers even write the script, which is usually eight months before we start rolling, there's a ceremony just for the writers and then offerings are made. We take them all out to a sacred site because in this industry when an idea comes to an individual that idea comes from somewhere powerful. It doesn't belong to us and it is our job as storykeepers to ensure we nurture it and do not take advantage of it because it is seen as a little baby and we watch it grow and develop." In serving as a storykeeper, Meeches has become a conduit for educating her people and others about Aboriginal spirituality and values. In her day to day practices, the people she works with experience Aboriginal values in ways that can not be learned through traditional form of education. It is rather a powerful form of experiential learning that takes place in her companies.

Meeches makes it a priority to bring the Aboriginal people and community to the stage in her productions. Some of her major works such as *Copote* and *Elijah* are co-produced. As Meeches notes, the film side of things is very intricate and tricky. Co-production with companies experienced in this area allows Meeches to learn that side of film. In regard to the production of *Elijah*, Meeches asserts that it was critical for the Aboriginal community to be involved; therefore

co-production was essential to success. When working with other producers, Meeches is very careful to ensure that values are aligned. She checks out the people she works with so that she is confident that her community will be respected and treated well. For Meeches, the 'check out' doesn't mean getting reference checks or googling, it means that they go into ceremony. Before agreeing to work on Elijah, Meeches recalls, "We had a ceremony in the studio here and I had gifts for them and his co-producer and Wayne and I, my business partner, smoked the pipe and talked about natural law and respect and my role."

Meeches cautions that ceremony is not a quick fix, but needs to be maintained in appreciation for everyday good things. "You have to find a way to give back so our ancestors can be acknowledged." On production there would be daily feasts and unique perhaps in the industry there is an 'elders trailer' taking the place of a 'producers trailer'. In reflecting on the Elijah production, Meeches went on to speak about the challenges of being a woman in the industry, but being Aboriginal too. She asserted that with the Elijah production, it wasn't up to them as producers as to whether the production works, but the Creator. In her view, "The script you wrote comes from a powerful place and as long as you respect and you treat people good it will take care of itself." With this spiritual value understood, Meeches entered into partnership on the Elijah production and rallied the support of her community. Four or five thousand people came out to audition, "grandmothers came, it was quite emotional for me and I was just overwhelmed. It was quite powerful to see and people were truly honoring their past and that is all you can ask for."

As she thinks about how the community contributes to the success of her production work, Meeches reflects on the construction of a totem pole. She shares that in her company, no one is low on the totem pole and she personally helps at all levels to ensure that her crew sees that all jobs are valued and necessary to the quality of the completed production. Meeches understands the value of human gifts, "Crewing a show and crewing an office is looking at all the gifts of everybody and honoring the gifts and knowing when to step back because I don't know it all and being in this environment I am allowed to honor my gifts." She feels fortunate to be in an industry that honors her spirit and allows her to walk through life guided by her spirit.

In speaking with Meeches, it becomes clear that it is for her people that she invests her energy in her work. As a storyteller and educator she understands the need to build the capacity of her people. She describes, "There is such a huge need and a gap when it comes to Aboriginal people having the opportunities to be embraced by the industry." One of her main goals for Eagle Vision is to find strategic ways of upgrading the skills of Aboriginal people in the industry. Giving back, mentoring and celebrating with her people are values that Meeches incorporates into her work. She explains, "I learned to create strategies and tactics where everyone is included and that's through the mentorship program." In addition, Meeches uses her reputation in the industry to build bridges for others. She focuses on helping associations such as Manitoba Film and Sound and, Film Training Manitoba understand the curriculum work that needs to be done in order to strengthen Aboriginal involvement in the industry. She adds,

"Our goal is to create a centre of excellence for Aboriginal people in the industry and working with National Screen Institute to develop curriculum which is a culturally based spiritual program which would allow our people to really take the message home on what it means to be storytellers."

In addition to her work in her business and within the Industry, Meeches also contributes to her community in roles such as the one she recently took on for the Manito Ahbee, Manitoba Aboriginal Festival. As chair of the Manitoba Music Host Committee, Meeches made a major contribution to the development of the four-day festival that celebrated Aboriginal music and culture. Providing leadership to this festival was a natural fit for Meeches as the name Manito Ahbee references a sacred site located in Manitoba's Whiteshell Provincial Park, where First Nations traditionally gathered to share teachings and wisdom. Manito Ahbee means "where the Creator sits." Meeches also serves on the board of the Manitoba Film and Sound, the United Way Aboriginal Relations Committee and the Canadian Independent Film and Video Fund.

How does she keep up the energy to do all this work? For Meeches, it is pretty simple, "I pow wow so I sneak away for a few weekends and feed my spirit." It takes strength to do pow wow so on a regular basis Meeches trains and does yoga to keep her focus. In addition to this training, Meeches practices good medicine. Her family bloodline is in medicine. Her grandparents are both staunch herbalists and her late grandfather used to have a group of medicine people from across the country that he worked with. Recently, an elder reminded Meeches, "Everything you do is about making good medicine. Your camera is

your pipe and respect it like that, and your tripod and all your equipment is your ceremony offerings and respect it like that." Meeches was blown away by this elder's sharing and the reflection on her work as vehicle for 'good medicine'.

Meeches is a prodigy of her upbringing, her values and views come from her experiences as a child on the reserve. "We were all athletes, had horses, long distance runners, I ran until I went to university. You need to be fit to dance pow wow. So life on the reserve was absolutely fantastic. We didn't have church on our reserve it was all ceremony. That's all we knew. How I conduct myself now and how I redeem myself now and how I try to give back, that's what makes you a successful person." Meeches returns home regularly to maintain her spirit and participate in the medicine work of her family.

One of her productions, *Tipi Tales* is actually modeled after her uncle's back yard. As Meeches asserts "His backyard was like an Indian Disneyland where everybody was happy everyday and the little people had the most important part in all of it because if we were hungry they fed us and if we needed a hug they hugged us, if we needed to be tickled they would tickle us." In reflecting on youth today, Meeches expresses her concern that there is not enough emphasis on spiritual value. "We send our children to career symposiums and what we deem successful is based on western society mythology. There isn't one booth at a career symposium that asks what does your spirit want?"

Indeed, Meeches is an example of a business woman who follows the lead of her spirit. Business decisions are made in consultation with the spirit world and the Creator. She reflects back to her very early days in the industry and a

decision she had to make after being asked to produce the now acclaimed show *The Sharing Circle*. She recalls "I went home to ask my grandfather if I should do it, and he said you should go out and fast. In the old days that is how we did things, we would discuss things, and fast and pray, and he says that's when we would do a sharing circle and that is what you should call it." The Sharing Circle was born and to this day provides a critical forum for Aboriginal storytelling.

Of her success in business, Meeches shares her perspective that her work has only begun. "We're going to keep telling Aboriginal stories until we are happy, and we are not all happy yet. We are not at a healthy place where we are happy." Lisa Meeches and her companies serve as modern day demonstration of the degree to which Aboriginal culture and ways of being achieve what so many companies are not able to under the tag 'corporate social responsibility'. Perhaps corporate social responsibility has to focus more on the spirit of the people. Meeches believes that people would be happier if they followed their spirit and had strong business ethics that are guided by the 'circular' teachings while working in the linear world. Meeches lives her talk "You can wear them together", she asserts, "and you don't have to compromise one another because I have advisors that remind me of the linear teachings and those that remind me of the circular teachings." This is good medicine for those of us trying to understand the balance in life and work.

Brenda LaRose (Personal Interview, 2006)

Brenda LaRose is the managing partner of Higgins International, an executive search and recruitment firm that is shepherding Aboriginal talent into top notch placements in Canada. LaRose, with over two decades of experience in executive search and recruitment, has built a company reputable for its capacity to find the right person for the job.

Originally from Winnipeg, LaRose worked in executive search firms throughout Canada before founding Higgins International. The motivation for founding her executive search and recruitment firm is two fold. LaRose was disenchanted with the lack of presence of Aboriginal talent in the recruitment and placement work she was doing in mainstream business. As she attempted to integrate Aboriginal talent into her work, she recognized that Aboriginal human resource capacity was misunderstood and undervalued in the market. With a focus on work placement for Aboriginal professionals, LaRose was developing a lucrative niche business for her employer, a reputable national search firm. However, one day the owner of the firm advised her that it wasn't good for the company image to have Native people waiting in the reception area. As LaRose concludes, "Running my own business was a necessity. I was in an organization where they were not comfortable having Aboriginal people sitting in the waiting room. At the time, I really didn't know what I was going to do. I thought I would try doing it on my own and see what I could do. I never thought about being an entrepreneur. I just didn't want to be concerned that another employer would feel the same about my work with Aboriginal people." LaRose knew that the

experience for Aboriginal talent needed to change; inspired by passion and a desire to make a positive contribution LaRose launched Higgins International in 1999.

LaRose was an early pioneer of the idea that corporations, agencies and boards would be competing for Aboriginal talent and that a key success factor for organizations would be their ability to attract and retain the best and brightest talent available. For LaRose, it was natural that the Aboriginal workforce would be one solution to the expanding demand for workforce talent within a Canada with aging demographics. The idea to develop an executive search firm that focused on Aboriginal talent was part of a strategy to change perspective about the value and potential of Aboriginal people. She set a related goal to contribute to the breaking down of barriers and misunderstanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. This goal forms not only the foundation for her work in developing Higgins International, but also serves as the guiding force in her own development and in her community service work.

LaRose serves on the Boards of the Ma Mawi Chi Itata Centre, Inc., the AnimikiiOzoson Child and Family Services and the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. LaRose also served on the Aboriginal Economic Development Committee for the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Professional Recruiters and the Canadian Management Professionals Association. LaRose is a life-long learner. She is a graduate of the University of Manitoba and holds a Certified Human Resource Professional

designation, a certificate in Corporate Governance, and is a Registered Professional Recruiter.

In 2009 Higgins International became the first Aboriginal owned company to achieve the Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) Gold certification. This certification, awarded by the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, recognizes the work that LaRose has undertaken to ensure her search company is respectful of Aboriginal relations and is contributing to Aboriginal inclusion. Achieving PAR Gold status is evidence of LaRose's vision that a search firm focused solely on Aboriginal talent could not only achieve market penetration, but could operate in a manner that truly respected Aboriginal values. Specializing in the recruitment of Aboriginal executives was a natural fit for LaRose because of her own Métis background and her extensive contacts within the Aboriginal community. It is also proving to be a lucrative area for her firm because of the growing number of businesses and organizations that want Aboriginals on their executive team and in their boardrooms. LaRose is working her way to being the best in her field and this does not mean developing an exclusive Aboriginal clientele simply because Higgins International is an Aboriginal company that is focused on search for Aboriginal talent. As LaRose advises, "It's only a myth that Aboriginal business can only do business with Aboriginal people – it doesn't work like that," she says, noting that only 20% of her clients are Aboriginal. After a decade of focusing on positioning Higgins International as an Aboriginal search firm, LaRose has completed hundreds of successful search engagements placing Aboriginal people in highly sought after executive and director positions.

LaRose serves as a bridge between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities and is highly regarded for her work and her dedication to creating understanding. Her vast network of relationships is the engine for Higgins International's success and serves as evidence of LaRose's value system. LaRose places people, family and relationships at the top of her value chain. Goals serve as an important roadmap. "I have always had a half dozen goals or so. Not all are about the business. They may be personal but it is highly intertwined because I am the business." One of these goals relates to family and business. Over the years, her business has very much become a family business with her sons taking on lead roles in the company. Building opportunity for her sons within the company was both a personal and business related goal. LaRose notes, "I achieved a personal goal as my son first came into the business and I focused on ensuring that it is a good fit for him. I encourage his education and his fit." Working with her sons not only has expanded her relationships with her sons; it has resulted in a stronger team working towards the common vision of bringing Aboriginal talent to the marketplace.

The business goals evolved as the company succeeded. LaRose states, "As I achieve goals I analyze what I have accomplished. I check how I am doing and what I have done. I think that we have done very well. My goal now isn't even a matter of time commitment. I am focused on getting more Aboriginal people on corporate boards across Canada. This could be a good bridge building opportunity for the individual and for corporate Canada. It is an all around good thing."

The vision for LaRose in developing Higgins International was to find the best talent for her client and she knew that this talent existed in the Aboriginal community. LaRose sought to open the workplace market to Aboriginal talent. As a Métis woman, LaRose always felt a strong connection to her roots. "I am Métis. If I didn't say anything, people didn't know that I was Aboriginal. It is interesting when you actually identify as Aboriginal. I remember declaring about 16 years ago. I remember the president of the company wanted me to champion the diversity for the rest of the staff. When I stood up and said I was Métis, people were shocked. I think that there are hidden things there. People were surprised at how successful I was for an Aboriginal." People accepted LaRose; they recognized her drive for excellence and over the years she has served as a role model, demonstrating the capacity of Aboriginal talent. LaRose believes her success comes from hard work; another core value that holds.

LaRose was born in Winnipeg. Her mother was Ojibwa Métis and married a Cree man. Her parents split up when she was five and LaRose was raised in Regina. She left Regina when she was 19 to work in Calgary then went back home for a bit before heading to Toronto region. She returned to Winnipeg to raise her sons and eventually established her business. In setting up her business she was clear about what goals came first, however living the balance was challenging. "I wanted to put the family first and at the same time I wanted to be a top performer. That was always important to me. I wanted to put my kids first. I wanted to do something that I felt good about that I felt would make a contribution to humanity. I wanted to be in a constant learning mode. I want to

be able to mentor other people into the work I was doing. I wanted to earn an income. I want to make a good living for what I do. The money wasn't always important, but I needed to make a good living to support my family. In doing good work, I found that the money just comes with the reputation that you are good at what you do, that you are ethical, respectful."

As a place to do business, LaRose notes that there is still a lot to do in Manitoba. Winnipeg was great for a location for this virtual recruitment business because it is in the middle of Canada and 90% of LaRose's business is outside of Manitoba. She notes "In Manitoba we are just starting to come to a point of acceptance now. The drum I was beating 10 years ago about the Aboriginal people being in demand is just starting here in Manitoba." At first, LaRose found Winnipeg to be less than a welcoming environment for starting a business. In establishing Higgins International Inc. LaRose worked closely with Aboriginal Business Canada, an initiative of Industry Canada and a participant in the federal government's Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS). The UAS responds to the critical need for confidence and a sense of community for Winnipeg's Aboriginal people. The UAS goal is to help the city's Aboriginal community achieve long-term socio-economic success.

Financial support proved to be a challenge in the early days of Higgins International. A few months after launching the company, LaRose asked her bank for a small line of credit to keep the company operating until a substantial cheque arrived from a client. Although she'd been doing business with the bank for years, the loans officer didn't like the fact she wasn't paying herself a salary and

her business had little in the way of physical assets to use as collateral for the loan. Higgins International was a virtual business with LaRose's strong network and her computer being the major assets. The bank refused to lend her money unless her husband co-signed for the loan, a condition LaRose felt was unjustified. Fortunately, she found another bank that wasn't so worried about her company's lack of assets and gave her all the money she needed. But the experience opened her eyes to some of the added challenges her venture would face because it wasn't a traditional-styled business.

LaRose was ready for the challenge. Her values positioned her for success. Truth, honesty, and treating people in a personable way are foundational for her work. As she states, "I follow traditional values. I walk the Red Road. But, I feel I can live both well." In her business, LaRose sets goals that focus on quality and continuous improvement. "It is important to me to stay leading edge in practice and remain aware of what is going on in the industry. It is like an accounting practice there are things that change like movement towards good governance, strategy and all those things. I want to be able to bring that to the table for my clients. As an example I have a contract for a large First Nation who is looking for a CFO. They would like the CFO to report to Council; however, I convinced them that the CFO should report to the CEO. I would not have known this if I had not kept up with good practice." LaRose enjoys working in the community noting that when working in the community or for an Aboriginal organization she experiences work differently. Personal interaction is important. "I find it is a nice environment to work in. I like the people. It is a nice work

situation. People seem friendlier, kinder, happier. It is a great work environment. It is caring, and productivity can be high because of this." LaRose, a high energy, driven personality often finds that she has to work at being calm and slow down in her work. Being an Aboriginal person herself, clients expect time spent on interpersonal relationship building. She notes that her clients often tell her to slow down, "I like that. In the Aboriginal community productivity is not a direct correlation to high energy."

LaRose's business has grown as a result of being focused on Aboriginal search. In early years she was concerned about over-emphasizing the focus on this noting that perhaps her business would be labeled. However, Aboriginal search is what she is good at and passionate about. A challenge for LaRose is dealing with expectations. Some Aboriginal organizations can not afford the fees associated with an executive search. While LaRose wants to help them and often directs them to appropriate resource support, LaRose is realistic about the importance of valuing the services her firm provides. She notes that while she is in the business of executive search to make a difference, she would not be in business if she gave the firm's services away. LaRose places value on building a sustainable business. She notes, "You have to look at the bottom line and the numbers. A couple of times a year is enough for a small business for me. You can tell a lot from your bank account and if you can pay your bills. It is important to build equity and adopt technology. I can tell you where I am at with my business but I don't think about the money. It doesn't come into play. Communities, clients are very much so respectful of me and the fee I must charge.

I give the best deal I can to respect the time, value required and I do a good job. It is important that they get the right person for the job. I know in my heart I have to weigh the decision to help versus the need to ensure my business is successful. I see my own success as how much I am helping people, but this is not necessarily just about my business."

LaRose is still pursuing her dream of going global. But she and her staff have set more holistic goals – to be balanced, to make their clients happy, and to remain leading edge. The worst thing about being an entrepreneur is that it can be easy to loose balance. It can be the long hours and there often isn't time for sick leave when you are sick. Doing the right thing isn't always easy either. On the notion of entrepreneurship goals, LaRose notes, "I didn't build this business to make a lot of money." She explains, "We are going to do a good job and be happy."

As a recognized Progressive Aboriginal Relations business, Higgins International is not only an Aboriginal firm; it employs Aboriginal staff and subcontracts with Aboriginal businesses. While proud of this fact, LaRose expresses her view that Aboriginal business is something that must be assessed on its merit as a business, not based only on ethnicity. LaRose notes that Aboriginal business does lead to growth in Aboriginal employment and this leads to better understanding of the workplace.

It is an approach of balance and care that she brings to her clients and staff. Yet, when challenges present, LaRose faces tough decisions. She notes, "I had a situation where I had an individual working for me, but it wasn't working

out. I encouraged her to look for another job that was better suited to her but in the meantime I kept her on and gave her a project. The job was so poor that I had to give the client the money back. I am feeling better about it now, but I should have done something sooner and I could have done it better. It is difficult to know what to do. I was happy that I gave the money back to the client. Financially that was a difficult thing to do. That I did right. I would still do that."

LaRose is sensitive to Aboriginal culture and values noting that little things can make a difference such as the approach to interpersonal relationship building. Having this appreciation LaRose asserts, "I am not in favour of a separate Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce or separate services of this nature. I believe that there needs to be a component that mentors involvement but I think it should be a natural part of the business chamber in general. We should have a natural representation in the business chamber. We don't need a separate chamber." She goes on to share her thinking that services like Aboriginal Business Canada (ABC), the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Council for Aboriginal business and strategies such as the Urban Aboriginal Strategy or various procurement set-aside programs may initially need to exist to stimulate the market, however she adds that these separate organizations should not be long term strategies. "If we can't get to a point of integration in society, we are not heading in the right direction". LaRose recalls qualifying for a grant for equipment in her early years and this made a difference for her start up. However she is quick to remember the work involved in getting the funds. "I think the hoops are too much, but maybe that is a good screening mechanism."

LaRose does not consider herself to be a pioneer as an Aboriginal woman engaged in entrepreneurship. She notes that many Aboriginal societies were matriarchal. Women made the decisions, commerce or otherwise. Trade was commerce. LaRose has met many women entrepreneurs who are very successful. She notes that often these entrepreneurs have roots in which their mothers and grandmothers worked in trade. "If you look at our great grandmothers, they were in commerce, in a way that was appropriate to those days." This is a different experience in a colonized society and LaRose knows this. She expressed that while not at the forefront as an Aboriginal woman in the workplace, she was one of the first. Like so many, LaRose was one of the first in her family to be an entrepreneur in a self-founded business endeavor.

In her executive recruitment work with Higgin's International, LaRose continues to contribute to 'firsts' for Aboriginal people pursuing career goals. On a personal note, it was the work of Brenda LaRose that resulted in my placement as the Program Executive for the IBM National Aboriginal Strategy positioning me to continue with my dream of supporting Aboriginal participation in the economy.

Elaine Cowan (Personal Interview, 2006)

Elaine Cowan is a realtor and senior negotiator with Avison Young Commercial Real Estate where she has built a practice that focuses on commercial real estate. Building on her reputation for bridging Aboriginal community interests with mainstream opportunities, Cowan only recently took the steps required to develop her real estate practice. It was her life-long dream to build a real estate practice, and one that she made a priority only after decades of skill development ranging from employment with government to small business ownership with many points of community service work in-between. Elaine Cowan defines herself as a "born entrepreneur". In speaking about her journey, she couches this passion for entrepreneurship and independence in a deeply seeded sense of purpose.

It wasn't easy for Cowan to find herself in a position to step out on the path towards her dream of business ownership. She spent nearly two decades in service with the Manitoba government, progressing from administrative service to roles in management and policy development. This government work brought her the security that she needed as a single parent and in reflection she notes that she developed skills and relationships that helped her build subsequent business interests. Even in her work with government, Cowan viewed herself as entrepreneurial and industrious with opportunities she had to make a difference in government service delivery. In her work, Cowan increased her understanding of the critical state of Aboriginal community needs. She felt that there had to be better, more creative ways to do things.

In earlier years, Cowan practiced entrepreneurship with co-ownership in a log builders company and a deli-style food service catering business. It was when she took the step from her government work to full fledged entrepreneurship with her venture as founder and president of Anokiiwin Training Institute and Anokiiwin Employment Solution that Cowan really stretched her wings and built an enterprise that she felt was making a difference in education service delivery. Cowan's words capsulate her journey:

"I was born an entrepreneur. It is in my personality. When my kids were small, I worked with government and learned the inside operations of how government worked. I fit in well. I am a people person. I always had businesses on the side and I had a passion for creative. I wanted to do something that made a difference for communities and individuals. I am not an educator but I knew something about training and I knew that education would make a difference."

Cowan's Anokiiwin focused on private education for the development of skills that would lead to employment, community development and business development. She started in this field with training targeted towards individuals and contractors wanting to work with northern economic development projects including hydro, tourism, and related service delivery. She found this work a bit frustrating as the timing between training and job opportunities seemed to be incongruent. In addition Cowan found that the traditional system did not seem to be working. She was concerned that the post-secondary system was not reaching out to adequately meet the needs of the northern communities. In response,

Cowan developed her business in liaison with the Aboriginal Partnership Training Initiative, set up for apprenticeship.

Cowan found that she immediately had contracts for education service delivery. In this work, Cowan notes, "I felt that things had to be different and in support of the student. I don't mean watering anything down." In developing the programs and services for Anokiiwan, Cowan was focused not only on student programs for success but on the success of the business. "I was a business person. Any service I gave I had to charge for this. I had to know what to charge and I had to set up a plan and go to banks. I never had difficulty with any banking institution. I was able to convince them of my plans and I had collateral. It all starts with borrowing on your own collateral. I never had problems talking with bankers."

Cowan was driven to achieve her goals. She recalls a desire to succeed. She recalls working at a very young age and she enjoyed the feeling she had when she got her first paycheck. Part of her later drive to create the business enterprise Anokiiwan was to help others feel the same sense of satisfaction. Cowan enjoyed the role of managing performance and the satisfaction of providing direction, encouragement and a salary to others.

In regard to her own development, Cowan found that when she needed help she got it. In relation to mentors, Cowan notes that mentorship and skill transfer is good. However, realistically she suggests that it is very hard to make this happen, to find the right mentor. While Cowan believes that she was born an entrepreneur, she does recall influencers in her younger years. "My dad was a

sales person all his life. My aunt on my mom's side lived in the north all her life. She had a log cabin and a restaurant. I used to room with her. I picked up experience from her."

As Cowan recalls, "My aunt was single. She was an entrepreneur. I watched her do this. I would pick flowers and sell them to the people who stopped when the train came through our community." In regard to values, Cowan expressed that she thrives on change and creates it when it isn't forthcoming. This can be a blessing and as Cowan found can also drive things to happen too quickly. Cowan recalls difficulties she had in managing growth, "Hindsight is 20/20. If I was to do it all over again, I would see my business grew too fast. It doesn't matter how many books you read and they say don't do it. We do it. It doesn't matter what people tell you what not to do. It seems to take on a life of its' own. It got crazy and it felt that I had no control over things. I had to figure a way to keep the business without going bankrupt. The government changed a contract we were working on and the First Nation relationship with the federal government became difficult."

It was teamwork and tenacity that Cowan relied on to find her way through this difficult period. "I had to go back to the core. I was on the phone for about eight months. Negotiating and looking for opportunities. I felt like I could quit. But I stayed. Just not to give up. Not to let anyone down. We were a team. I needed to think about payroll and paying people back for money I had borrowed. I just wanted the pain to stop. But, you have a good night sleep and the next morning you wake up and you keep on going."

Cowan wanted to ensure that reputation of Anokiiwin Training Institute remained intact as they worked their way through changing times. "Had we declared bankruptcy, I think it would have been such a black eye on the community. I wanted to make sure we were successful." As Cowan shares this commitment, she also recalls times when the community was not so supportive of her business in the beginning. She did not want to fail. Yet, she remembers times when people pushed her away because she was earning an income. Even her close family had difficulty with her drive and ambition.

It was important to Cowan to develop the training centre. As an Aboriginal person herself, it was a priority in business to hire Aboriginal people, to contribute to economic development through employment and to contribute to the community through education. From her experience, Cowan asserts that Aboriginal business owners hire Aboriginal people. She also opines that growth and expansion is good for the business and for employment and that this motivated her to build Anokiiwin and to not abandon it in the face of challenge.

In developing Anokiiwin, Cowan was cognizant of differences between a respectful workplace in terms of Aboriginal culture and that of mainstream business. While she notes that it depends on the individual, she found differences in communication. "It feels warmer, laughter, chatter, casual, very different from mainstream business. Many business people I know could not last in this environment." Yet, this environment can make a difference for Aboriginal success. Cowan recounted stories and experiences of working with students who were dealing with challenging circumstances in their work environment. On the

idea of workplace environment, Cowan notes "There are other personal issues that many Aboriginal employees deal with, in addition to feeling different. One student described it 'Living like a raison in a bowl full of rice.' Mainstream business says we want to hire, but they won't stay. I have seen so many examples of youth taking jobs and realizing that they are not happy. They feel disconnected. In Anokiiwin Employment Solutions the goal was to support workplace success for the graduates of Anokiiwin Training Institute.

After guiding Anokiiwin Training Institute through the challenging transition of government funding changes, Cowan sold her interest in the company. She notes that by this time she knew what she wanted to do next. It is this energy that results in Elaine Cowan standing out in a crowd. She states, "I always wanted to be in real estate. I am going to be 50. I wanted to try it. I ended up in commercial real estate." She recalls the most challenging part was the studies. She admits that scholastic endeavors were always a challenge and it took considerable drive to complete her real estate training. In reflecting on her new goals, she now places balance in the forefront. "My first priority is to make sure that I don't get caught up. A goal would be to enjoy my life, my grandchildren. Success will be working at the pace I want to work in the area I enjoy and with people I enjoy."

Honesty and trust are key values that Cowan strives for. As Cowan shares, "I wear my heart on my sleeve. This has always served me well. Be open, be honest. You feel good when you are open, honest and trust worthy." Her past and current success is also heavily rooted in her ability to build relationships. She

is a good communicator and is known to build relationships across nations and governments. In business Cowan encourages working relationships. "Working relationships are important: Clients, suppliers, competitors. Yes, even competitors. It always works in your favour to build networks for communication."

On what it was like to be an Aboriginal woman entrepreneur, Cowen recalls first the earlier years when she was a single parent. From this she then recalls the challenges faced as she was finding her way and confidence in her own successes. "In my own community I was at first ostracized. That has turned around now." She felt that it took several years to be accepted amongst her community and to build trust in the work that she was doing with government, businesses and education. As she looks back, she suggests that it was persistence that led her towards success. Eventually she was seen as an advantageous contact in her community and with mainstream business. "I had good relationships that could benefit First Nation communities and organizations. In mainstream I was immediately embraced."

On the idea of building a company and creating profits Cowan is straight-forward. "I spend it so I guess I like to make it." She goes on to talk about the problems she faced especially in the creation of a private training centre. Even though the centre was about training, it was a private enterprise and she needed to run it profitably. She recalls "I had to defend the idea about earning your own income. We were seen as successful. Agencies were concerned that governments may suggest that they deliver education without core funding as we were doing

this. Nations questioned why we should charge for education. I argued that if we had a well functioning entrepreneurial and business economy, then people would have a pay cheque and they would feel good about taking care of themselves. We had students in all different disciplines and this changed their lives around. The students returned to share the stories about having an apartment, a car and means for living."

While Cowan reflects that private training wasn't the easiest of entrepreneurial interests to take on, she speaks fondly of her years as president of Anokiiwin Training Institute. Cowan was looking to fill the void in Aboriginal access to education. During this time, she worked to build the support for Aboriginal business leaders as she felt that these organizations helped build an environment that supported entrepreneurs and increased the comfort with the idea of participating in business and working to build successful for-profit companies. Over her years of success, Cowan also worked for the benefit of various not-for-profit developments. She was a founding member of an organization know as A.B.L.E. (Aboriginal Business Leaders and Entrepreneurs of Manitoba and led in the development of the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce. Cowan continues to serve on the Premier's Economic Advisory Council and was instrumental in organizing the 2004 Summit on Aboriginal Business Development. On the topic of business development, Cowan affirms her position that building wealth is a good thing for Aboriginal communities. "Independent business, community owned business, cooperatives are all parts that make up the whole of economic

development. It is not government funded programming and coordination. It must be sustainable."

Cowan asserts that an Aboriginal business chamber is important to create a focal point and empower actions that advance Aboriginal business. She suggests "The Chamber promotes business. There are some differences in planning, relationships, culture, these are all areas that can be unique and a collective of Aboriginal businesses may better understand the difference." Cowan goes on to talk about the inclusive environment of the Manitoba Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce and the role it plays as a network of people who share business interests. Further on the topic of Aboriginal-specific programs, Cowan notes that government grants can be beneficial; however, they can be a hassle to access, making the journey to owning your own business a long one. Many grants require that all other sources of funding be exhausted and often the business advisors haven't owned their own business. As Cowan notes, this may compromise their ability to evaluate a business opportunity.

In concluding, Cowan expresses pride in who she is but recalls early days of shame and explaining to people that "We are French". In reflecting about her own success, she suggests goals were important. "Don't loose sight of your goals. Be comfortable knowing who you are and what you think. You don't have to apologize to anyone. Talk about who you are, who you want to be, write it out. Don't apologize. No more shouldn't." Elaine Cowan is accomplished, highly regarded and proud of her Aboriginal heritage. She works tireless in advancing Aboriginal interests and participating in development of stronger economies.

Chapter 5 Aboriginal Women Entrepreneurs Focus Group

The interviews with Aboriginal women entrepreneurs facilitated discussion about their experience as business women and their related views on entrepreneurship, self-determination, Aboriginal values and economic development. A focus group session expands the perspective about Aboriginal women in business, evaluating skills, attributes and unique challenges; considering programs, tools and services designed to serve Aboriginal women in business.

The results of the focus group sessions were recorded in a report to the community, *Report to the Community: Focus Group Session Aboriginal Women in Business* to the (Loustel, 2006). The following is a high level summary of the focus groups session.

The focus group was designed to review the role of Aboriginal women entrepreneurs; discuss how programs, services and tools may be designed to best meet the needs of Aboriginal women entrepreneurs; and, to elicit ideas about the further development of programs, services and tools. Ten individuals participated in this focus group discussion. These individuals included Aboriginal women entrepreneurs as well as individuals involved with development of programs and services to support Aboriginal business development.

To begin the discussion, the participants introduced themselves to one another and commented on their interest in Aboriginal business development. A brief presentation of background data and materials was provided to set the stage

for discussion of the topic, Aboriginal women and entrepreneurship. Reports about Aboriginal people and related topics of business or economic development included general research about Aboriginal women in business prepared by the Economic Development for Canadian Aboriginal Women Inc. The research, which dated back to studies completed between 1982 and 1993, noted that Aboriginal women faced greater economic and social challenges than those faced by Canadian women (Jamieson, 1993). Also included was a business plan development model authored by Mary Jamieson that highlighted unique challenges faced by Aboriginal business women and an approach to support business plan development and success (Jamieson, 2003).

> "Aboriginal women face many unique challenges. These may be the result of isolation, a legacy of hardship and abuse and a lack of access to opportunities. Whatever these challenges may be, more and more Aboriginal women are overcoming them and finding success in the world of business. Many of these entrepreneurs are providing goods and services in their own communities, throughout Canada and around the world. As a result of their success, they have made positive contributions to their families and have improved the quality of life of their communities." (Jamieson, 2003 p. 2)

The balance of the information and reports related to economic development for Aboriginal people in general, which while informative and

supportive of the needs and issues faced by Aboriginal people, did not differentiate the experience based on gender.

Following the presentation of background data, the focus group participants reviewed a self-assessment tool (EduService, 1996) that listed personal qualities and business skills commonly expected of an entrepreneur. The list of qualities and skills was based on what business advisors consider important. Each of the focus group participants reviewed and ranked the list of personal qualities and the list of business skills using the ranking of '0' for unimportant and '5' for important.

For the personal qualities assessment, the focus group analysis was very consistent with the business advisor viewpoints. Based on the discussion, the top three qualities considered important to an entrepreneur were identified as Self-Motivated, Perseverance, and Self-Confident. Resourcefulness, Organized and Determined were also very highly ranked qualities. It was noted in the written feedback that these top six qualities were considered essential to an Aboriginal woman entrepreneur so that: "They do not give up when someone says "no!"… to never give up, dust themselves off – try again". Organization, a personal quality that also may be developed as a skill, was considered important to the ability to get the job done and meet the client needs. Determination and persistence was considered to be the number one criteria for success in earlier studies of Aboriginal women in business (Jamieson, 2003). The attributes of Healthy, Patient and Flexible led to debate about relevancy. It was felt that these attributes were particularly difficult to assess in relation to Aboriginal women and

entrepreneurship. For example, should an Aboriginal woman with a disability not consider being an entrepreneur? What is meant by Healthy? One of the women entrepreneurs commented that good health was important to her success as an entrepreneur as this contributed positively to the energy that was needed to run the business. Patient and Flexible were also considered important when dealing with issues of business development or negotiation. Several of the participants agreed that an additional quality referred to as "Balance" should be added to the list and that in consideration of all the characteristics, balance is essential. For example, participants noted that while Patience and Flexible were considered important qualities for resilience in business, they also noted that these qualities should be in balance with Perseverance and Motivated.

For the business skills assessment, debate ensued about what was meant by certain skills and whether the entrepreneur needed to possess the skill or if they could 'hire' for the skill. The results of the individual ranking of the skills seem to translate consistently with the complexity of the debate that took place about skills that an entrepreneur should have. In the discussion, it was suggested that the most important skills for the entrepreneur dealt with what was coined as 'business sense' and related to the skills of Management, People, Promotion and Selling. The quantitative ranking resulted in the skills of Management and People being ranked as number one in importance. Also important, in descending rank order, were the skills of Promotion, Selling, Planning, Presentation and Accounting. The skills themselves created considerable discussion about what it took to create and sustain a successful business. Continued learning through

either formal channels of training or informal mentorship was considered very important for success in business.

After ranking the qualities and skills using a format based on the self-assessment tool, the group discussed the relevancy of the self-assessment to an Aboriginal woman considering self-employment. The participants noted that the tool was informative; however, they felt that the qualities and skills should not be used in an evaluative way as a filter or as a screen to determine entrepreneurial potential. In regard to use of a diagnostics tool such as the personal qualities and skills assessment, the focus group participants noted that tools such as this one may be informative to an individual in a self-assessment. The tool creates a "box" from which to think from and may be used by an individual to assist them in determining their personal strengths and weaknesses.

Interesting enough, while such a tool is not specifically used to screen for entry into business, many banks use similar variables to assess risk and decision-making in regard to lending. The common variables for lending risk include an assessment of entrepreneurial character, credit history, cash flow and collateral to secure the debt (EduService, 1996).

Evaluation of the diagnostic tool was effective in stimulating thought and discussion about the topic of Aboriginal women entrepreneurs. It prepared the individuals to consider the challenges of Aboriginal women in business from a variety of perspectives including personal qualities, skills and experience. During the focus group review of the diagnostic tool, there was discussion about whether gender or Aboriginality mattered in considering the suitability of programs,

services and tools. The participants, particularly the women entrepreneurs, found it difficult to separate their feelings and experiences as 'Aboriginal', as 'women' and then as 'entrepreneurs'. From this point of debate the focus group discussion moved into a review of 'challenges' faced by Aboriginal women entrepreneurs.

The participants of the focus group independently identified what they considered to be three challenges faced by Aboriginal women entrepreneurs. Participants recorded each challenge that they considered on a Post-It note. Next they posted their ideas, in what they considered to be like-groupings. This process produced three groupings of issues, identified as: Personal Issues and Role Balance, Skills and Training, and finally Financial and Credit Issues. It was observed that despite the categorization, many of the issues are closely interrelated and do not fall exclusively under on theme or another.

As a group the participants discussed these categories in relation to earlier questions about whether it was important to consider Aboriginality or gender in relation to entrepreneurship and business issues. Again, the women noted that it was difficult for them to separate their thinking from the context of 'Aboriginal', 'Woman' and 'Entrepreneur'. To explore the challenges and groupings further, the focus group participants were organized into smaller groups to review the challenges and consider potential solutions. The interesting aspect of the discussions was that they encouraged sharing of perspective, which varied amongst the participants. The smaller focus group discussions were of most value as they involved the engagement of ideas and more intimate sharing experiences.

The smaller group discussions affirmed the need to consider the Aboriginal woman's experience in the study of entrepreneurship. While issues such as childcare, family and life/business balance are shared experiences of women, the Aboriginal experience also includes issues of the *Indian Act*, property rights, much higher rates of single-women parent families, higher rates of poverty and lower rates of education. The women in the focus group raised issues such as race discrimination, trust, Aboriginal identity issues, and social dependency issues that are not normal course when dealing with mainstream matters of gender and business.

The break out group that considered Personal Issues and Role Balance advised that the topic of Personal Issues and Role Balance is a very important area for continued exploration. They suggested that it would be worthwhile to have focus groups involving just Aboriginal women entrepreneurs in order to allow them to more completely develop the challenges and solutions. The category Personal Issues and Role Balance included the following perceived challenges:

- To be taken seriously.
- Discrimination – "I know it exists but to what extent?"
- Whether or not to even admit to be Aboriginal.
- Gender.
- Self-Esteem.
- Majority of programs are geared towards mainstream society.
- History of forced dependence.
- Shyness.

- Lack of support services
- Knowledge about Aboriginal Chamber, about ABC, BDC, AB.
- Location.
- Getting the family support to open.
- Support to continue running a business – emotional, financial etc.
- Balance Business Life with Family Life.
- Finding the time for Business while raising a family.
- Role balance
- Extremism - unproductive, unhealthy, socially damaging.
- Pressure.

Potential solutions recorded by this group are as follows:

- Increase knowledge.
- Build awareness about the issues.
- Create opportunity for personal development.
- Create supports for Aboriginal women to achieve balance.

The break out group on the category of Skills and Training shared that they spent their discussion time addressing the issue of isolation and the feeling of a lack of connectedness to the larger business environment. The group emphasized the importance of creating network and training opportunities specifically designed for Aboriginal women in business. In the oral presentation, personal business experiences were shared as examples of why it is important for Aboriginal business women to feel connected with other business women. It was noted that men and women behave differently in their work environment and that

Aboriginal women in business may feel isolation from this experience. The category Skills and Training included the following seven perceived challenges:

- Training.
- Mentorship.
- Lack of Support.
- Trust – who to trust for valid advice.
- Access to helpful professional advice.
- Learning to weed through the right and the wrong
- Money and time wasters.
- Balancing time required to run a business.
- Isolation, loose the ability to connect.
- Feel like you don't belong to something larger.

Potential solutions recorded by this group are as follows:

- Label the feelings.
- Develop support services.
- Encourage reflection.
- Networking events – human connection at the right place.

In regard to skill development, it was noted that there are a number of opportunities available for training. However, despite these opportunities, there remain a number of barriers including the life balance issues as well as the need for encouragement, mentorship and support. This group encouraged further discussion on the topic Skills and Training and cautioned that the work done by this focus group today offers valuable but limited perspective and solutions.

More work is encouraged to identify challenges and opportunities for Aboriginal women entrepreneurs.

The break out group that reviewed Financial and Credit issues advised that they focused their discussion on identifying potential ways to increase Aboriginal women's access to capital and their ability to manage money. The group emphasized the importance of creating opportunity for Aboriginal women to repair their credit through programs that offer high risk micro-credit. Examples of community programs such as SEED Winnipeg were highlighted as good programs that promote financial skill development and assist women in building their savings and credit position. This group suggested that programs such as these are necessary to increase support to Aboriginal women in starting their own businesses. This group promoted the concept of mainstream lending institutions getting more involved with programs and services to support Aboriginal women in business. The category Financial and Credit Issues included the following six perceived challenges:

- Bad or no Credit History.
- Large portion of Aboriginal women are low income.
- Lack of property rights.
- Lack of access to capital (noted three times).
- Lack of equity to start or grow a business. (noted twice).
- Lack of skill or access to skill development.

Potential solutions recorded by this group are as follows:

- Need resources to repair credit history.

- Need Money management training to avoid re-occurrence.
- Need to learn how to save.
- Ideally a non profit support service.
- Need more alternative lending institutions.
- Work on changing the bank's thinking.
- Need more banks with a social conscience.
- Need micro credit loans to establish credit history or repair it.
- Need more access to savings programs like SEED Winnipeg.
- Financial counseling and advice around budgets and cash flow.
- Need more education about business, before starting business.
- Need more lenders like Assiniboine Credit Union.

The Focus Group session was scheduled for two and a half hours. The dialogue was rich and in the end, it was felt that more time could have been spent on the last topical area: discussing the challenges that had been identified and evaluating potential solutions. Through dialogue, the focus group participants moved from an originating discussion about whether issues of Aboriginality, Gender and Business were relevant topics for exploration - to rich discussion about concrete challenges faced by Aboriginal women and potential solutions to support Aboriginal women entrepreneurs. In concluding the session, it was agreed that while this group was too small of a group to be considered a 'research sample', it was diverse and large enough to create fruitful discussion and contribute to thought for further work and evaluation. Participants expressed

appreciation for being involved in the session and encouraged continued development of the work.

A key message left behind was to increase the opportunity for Aboriginal women in business to be involved in discussions about the challenges they face and the potential solutions. The Aboriginal women entrepreneurs involved in this study encouraged a focus group be conducted in the near future to create this opportunity for dialogue and to promote the idea of Aboriginal business women working collaboratively addressing common business issues.

The focus group session facilitated discussion about challenges faced by Aboriginal women entrepreneurs and potential programs, services and tools that may be useful to support these women in business. The focus group itself is an integral component of this larger research project focused on entrepreneurship, values and the experiences of Aboriginal women.

Chapter 6 Analysis

This thesis gathers data from the case studies of four Aboriginal women entrepreneurs and a focus group discussion to demonstrate the research thesis: "Through privately-owned enterprise, Aboriginal entrepreneurs can assert Aboriginal values within a capital market system that does not easily accommodate personal held values; and through this assertion Aboriginal entrepreneurs can achieve business success, self-determination and contribute positively to social and economic well-being for Aboriginal peoples." The analysis uses a small sample size. This is a limitation. The process offers richness in insight and views that respond to the research questions:

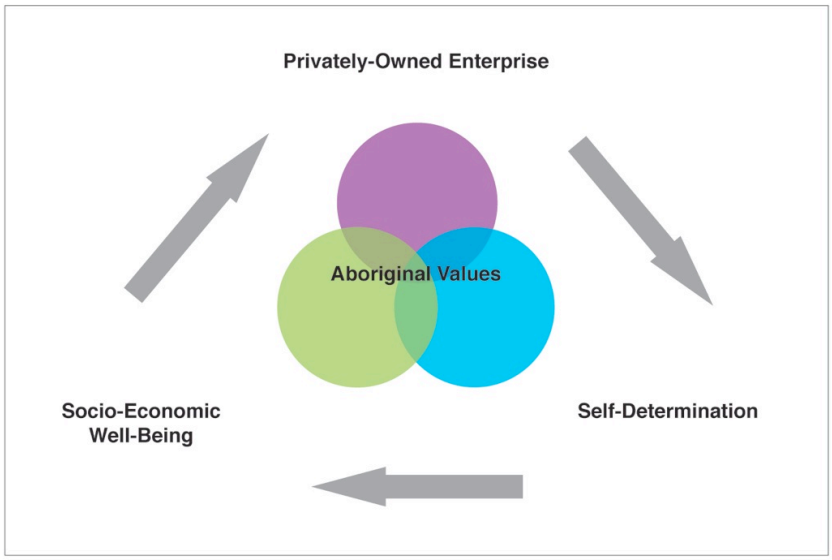
1. How do Aboriginal entrepreneurs reconcile capital market pressures with Aboriginal culture and values that are known to discourage private-ownership and wealth accumulation in favor of a market that encourages communal ownership, reciprocation and sharing of wealth?
2. How do select Aboriginal women entrepreneurs in Winnipeg describe the relationship between entrepreneurship, self-determination and socio-economic development?

Reconciling Market Pressure with Aboriginal Culture and Values

The theories of Anderson (2002) provide insight about Aboriginal economic development from a communal approach and the theories of Newhouse (2004) suggest the possibility of retaining Aboriginal values within a capitalist system. Considering these theories, I developed the following diagram to frame

the idea that entrepreneurship through privately-owned business can contribute positively to self-determination and socio-economic development for Aboriginal peoples within a framework that respects Aboriginal values.

Aboriginal Values in Business
(Loustel, 2011)



In Anderson's Aboriginal Development Circle (Diagram 2.1, 2002), Self-Government and Control of Resources create the circumstance necessary for Business Development. From a communal perspective, this leads to Economic Development for the community, Self-Reliance, and Self-Determination which in turn contributes positively to the community and the capacity for Self-Government. Anderson presents these ideas from a communal rather than individual ownership perspective, within a framework that positions Aboriginal values within the decision making model.

From a private-owned business perspective, I argue that the influences are similar and can operate within a framework that positions Aboriginal values within the decision-making model. In the diagram above, the circular positions demonstrate the inter-connectedness of all aspects to the framework. Aboriginal values such as those addressed by Newhouse (2004) in his proposition of "Red Capitalism", are central to the framework. Within the private-enterprise framework, an entrepreneur through his or her capacity to make decisions and control resources develops a business within a framework that is governed by his or her values. Entrepreneurship leads to self-determination for the entrepreneur and the capacity to makes decisions that contribute positively to social and economic circumstance for his or her self, family and community while holding high the entrepreneur's sense of values. From this perspective, I argue that Aboriginal participation in the economy through entrepreneurship need not be contrary to Aboriginal values. In fact, success in business is very much influenced by the entrepreneur, their life experiences, their beliefs and their values. As such, an Aboriginal entrepreneur has great opportunity to assert their values in the practice of business.

In this research, the experience of four Aboriginal women entrepreneurs demonstrates that for these women, the type of business and the approach they take to running their business is integral to who they are as individuals. The discussion amongst entrepreneurs and business service providers postulates that one can not separate the entrepreneur from the individual. The entrepreneur possesses certain attributes and skills that lead to the success of the business, but

at the end of the day, the entrepreneur is influenced by heritage, culture and personal values.

For many who follow the path of entrepreneurship, a key motivating factor is the ability to make decisions, to be "the boss" in charting their course in business. Each of the women interviewed in this research expressed the desire to have greater influence and in building their business, they achieved greater levels of self-determination. The desire for control within an emerging economy or amongst people who have been oppressed within an existing economy is not unusual. "To people who have been denied access to economic opportunity, ownership of a business is a symbol of personal emancipation" (Loxley, 2010, p. 31; Heatherington, 1972). In the case of the entrepreneurs interviewed in my research, each entrepreneur chose to develop a business in order to fill a void that they saw or experienced. These women each wanted to make a difference and in their pursuit of enterprise, they took control of the market. While a limited sample size, I argue that the case studies demonstrate the capacity for entrepreneurs to self-determine based on intrinsic and personally held values.

The stories the women entrepreneurs share in the case study demonstrate that they possess the personal qualities that are considered foundational to success as an entrepreneur: Self-Motivated, Determined, Organized women with healthy doses of Perseverance and Resourcefulness (EduService, 1996). In the focus group discussion about skills, there was rich debate about skills required for success in business. While the group recognized the value of skills such as Management, People, Promotion, Selling, Planning, Accounting and Presenting

(EduService, 1996), they felt that 'business sense' was foundational to success as an entrepreneur. This idea of 'sense' employs the innate perspective and values of the individual. This observation, that 'business sense' is a key determinant of success may explain why some businesses are a success and others fail. It takes more than a good business plan to create a successful business. The entrepreneur, as an individual, is the key element and their values and sense for business are important. I argue that it is the entrepreneur that keeps the balance between the goals of profitability in a capitalist system and values that lead to community well-being. I argue that within private-owned enterprise "compassionate capitalism" (Newhouse, 2004) can exist. Being an urban Métis woman myself, I chose to focus on Aboriginal women with a reputation for success in a business context. It is not that I wanted to evaluate a male versus female gender perspective; rather I wanted to consider exclusively the experience of Aboriginal women. I think that a gender perspective adds interest to the study, while not necessarily causing a feminist analysis. It would not at all be unusual for a study in business to be exclusively focused on male business owners without any dialogue at all about relevance to a female experience. I took this approach to increase my success of understanding the cultural paradigm at play and increase the opportunity for me to establish on-going, collaborative relationships with the research participants. But one still might ask what role does gender play?

There is a growing body of research that examines gender-differences in business; however this research does not consider elements of ethnicity in the analysis. Barbara Orser, University of Ottawa Telfer School of Management has

lead many such studies which report that the differences between male and female owned business is narrowing. However, Orser's work identifies that work/life balance, nature and size of business operation is one factor that varies when considering gender (Orser, 2007).

Research, including *The Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs* (2003), demonstrates that female entrepreneurs engage in different sectors of business than do men. Women tend to be more highly engaged in retail, services and social sectors. Social enterprise, while often but not-necessarily not-for-profit, may also include for profit organizations where a 'social entrepreneur' identifies a social need that is not adequately provided for and fills that gap. By choice of enterprise focus, the women in this research may be considered social entrepreneurs working to transform society.

The ideas that the women communicate in the case studies of my research lend insight to this. First off, the choices of business are very focused on social well-being. Consider the business lines: executive recruitment, focusing on Aboriginal talent; multi-media production, bringing the stories and voices of Aboriginal people into public conscience; private-education, delivering knowledge that is sensitive to the Aboriginal experience and leads individual learners to careers; and finally, construction and trucking, bringing opportunity for Aboriginal inclusion in economic development projects across the north. One could argue that it is the female nature to nurture that inspired these women to develop businesses that have powerful impact on Aboriginal inclusion and success.

The number of female owned business is growing at a rate faster than male owned business. Women owned businesses tend to be smaller with average incomes lower than those of men. Yet, women's contribution to social and economic results is substantial especially when one considers measures other than size and profitability (Findlay, Wuttunee, 2007). Women choose to be self-employed for different reasons than men. Profit isn't always the major motivator for women. Quality of life is often a measure that Aboriginal women use as the primary guide for investment and success (Findlay, Wuttunee, 2007). Considerations such as home-life balance, self-determination and bringing a solution to the market are among the major drivers (Orser, 2007).

The data collected in my research through the interviews with Aboriginal women and the focus group discussion is congruent with research on male-female gender differences (Findlay, Wuttunee, 2007; and Orser, 2007). The following points of view about motivation for entering business demonstrate an influencing factor of social contribution:

"Running my own business was a necessity. I was in an organization where they were not comfortable having Aboriginal people sitting in the waiting room. At the time I really didn't know what I was going to do. I thought I would try doing it on my own and see what I could do" (LaRose, 2006);

"I wanted to do something that made a difference for communities and individuals. I am not an educator but I knew something about training and I knew that education would make a difference" (Cowan, 2006);

"There is such a huge need and a gap when it comes to Aboriginal people having the opportunities to be embraced by the industry" (Meeches, 2006).

"I think it is easier working with an Aboriginal company because you know with our people there is always a common understanding. I put them at ease" (Turner, 2006).

The case studies in my research elicit points of view that show subtle influences of gender affecting the choice of business endeavor and the approach to running the business. As an example, consider this statement about money "I didn't build this business to make a lot of money. We are going to do a good job and be happy" (LaRose, 2006). This statement is consistent with the theory presented by Findlay, Wuttunee (2007) that women are not primarily motivated by profit. Yet the statement made by this entrepreneur is not without balance that is necessary for business success. On the topic of setting a fair price, LaRose points out, "I know in my heart I have to weigh the decision to help versus the need to ensure my business is successful (LaRose, 2006). I argue that the stories and even the selection of words used by the women I interviewed are gender-influenced. Consider these statements as an example of gender-uniqueness:

"A lot of men stand and look at me with question, because it is still a man's world out there in construction. They think 'what the heck does she know' (Turner, 2006);

"If you look at our great grandmothers, they were in commerce, in a way that was appropriate to those days. Many women entrepreneurs who are

successful have their roots in their mothers and grandmothers working in trade" LaRose, 2006);

"My aunt was single. She was an entrepreneur. I watched her do this. I would pick flowers and sell them to the people who stopped when the train came through our community" (Cowan, 2006).

I suggest that the intersecting diversities of 'Aboriginal' and 'Woman' and 'Entrepreneur' create certain uniqueness; however, my research focuses primarily on entrepreneurship and Aboriginal value systems. As such, the data collected in this research is limited from a comparative gender-perspective. In the focus group discussions, the women entrepreneurs noted that it was difficult for them to separate their thinking from the context of 'Aboriginal', 'Woman' and 'Entrepreneur'. This phenomenon is supported by feminist evaluation of Aboriginal women:

> "While women around the world speak about "feminism" or the "women's struggle," many aboriginal women find it next to impossible to separate their experience as women from their experience as aboriginal. While aboriginal women may have difficulty separating their gender from their race, many have just as much difficulty advocating the equality of women and men. From an aboriginal women's perspective, the woman's role in aboriginal culture was more than equal" (Schoolnet, 2011).

In the focus group, the discussion about being a woman included views about conflict in role relating to child-rearing and family responsibilities, while

the discussion about being Aboriginal included experience with the *Indian Act*, property rights, poverty, identity, discrimination, and lower rates of educational attainment. Common to 'Aboriginal' and 'Woman' is the gender-specific experience with the *Indian Act.* From policy to social relations, colonial views about the place of women in society significantly altered the lives of Aboriginal women, reducing their status even within their own communities. In 1985 critical changes were made to the *Indian Act* to rectify gender discrimination that led to enfranchisement of Indian women based on European views about marriage and rights. The Bill C-31 amendment permitted reinstatement to those aboriginal women and their children who had lost their status.

The impact of the policies and social norms of colonial days on Aboriginal women is not so easily reversed. The attempts to 're-instate' Aboriginal women who lost their status due to the enfranchisement policy which permitted status only to be passed through the male-line created conflict as women attempted to return to their communities and access rights such as housing, education and social services. In fact, "Band councils…opposed the amendments to the *Indian Act* because they feared the influx of 'new' band members would increase demand for resources which were already scarce" (Schoolnet, 2011). The marginalization of Aboriginal men, combined with the Eurocentric views about women, created a circumstance of social degradation of Aboriginal women by their own men. Aboriginal women are more likely to live off-reserve and "the status of aboriginal women in cities is disturbing. One study in Winnipeg concluded that 43% of aboriginal families are headed by single women, compared

to 10% of non-aboriginal families" (Schoolnet, 2011). Hence, 'Aboriginal' and 'Woman' bring unique experience and influence to this study of entrepreneurship and values from a gender perspective.

The interviews with the Aboriginal women entrepreneurs were conducted using an open-ended interview technique that was designed to focus on the entrepreneur's view about the relationship between business and their values. The dialogue approach was open to capture the words and stories that the women felt demonstrated their view as an entrepreneur. Each of the case studies resulted in dialogue that was rich in demonstrating the linkage between the business enterprise and the personal views and values of the entrepreneur. Each of the women spoke consistently about the connection between their business and their desire to positively influence the social, cultural and economic experience for Aboriginal people.

Indigenous women generally approach development from a further step of difference as a result of their experience with family and community (Findlay, Wuttunee, 2007). The way in which the women participating in my research managed their businesses demonstrated their Aboriginal values. Of the four cases, one entrepreneur demonstrated use of traditional ceremony and spiritual practices in guiding the work of her business, while the other three demonstrated a strong value model that one described as 'Walking the Red Road' (LaRose, 2006).

Entrepreneurship, Self-Determination and Socio-Economic Development

In support of my thesis that privately-owned enterprise creates opportunity for self-determination and positively contributes to social and economic well-being for Aboriginal peoples, I argue that people make sense of the world and act within it, using their personal perception about self within the world. This idea is derived from the concept of "Egocentrism" which is the tendency to perceive, understand and interpret the world in terms of the self. I argue that in acting egocentrically, entrepreneurs will intrinsically impose their personal held views and values in their analysis and actions. The case studies in my research demonstrate this idea. The argument that Aboriginal values will be central to the values of the entrepreneur is related to the concept of egocentrism, that is: one's perception of the world is often developed in relation to one's ethical or cultural experience. "Ethnocentrism" is the influence of one's culture on point of view. Essentially, the ethnocentric individual will judge relative to his or her own particular culture especially with concern to language, behavior and values. Again, the case studies of my research demonstrate this concept.

The case studies demonstrate common values shared amongst all four women. The traditional values of Respect, Kindness, Honesty, Bravery, Sharing, Strength and Humility resonate through the stories these women tell about their journey as entrepreneurs. They speak of value for family, community, knowledge, respect, fairness, accountability and sharing. The entrepreneurs demonstrate bravery, strength, and wisdom through the stories that they tell about their businesses and their work. While these women express pride in their

achievements, they are also humble attributing their success to hard work of their employees and serving as role models for others. These women demonstrate that self-determination through entrepreneurship is essential preserving Aboriginal values.

While entrepreneurship creates space for self-determination, Aboriginal women entrepreneurs do not chart a course easily traveled. The focus group discussion identified serious challenges that are faced in the journey. In addition to the gender-specific discussion about sexism in business, there was concern about racism and uncertainty about its impact. The participants saw a need for Aboriginal specific programs and services, however expressed concern about whether they should even identify as an Aboriginal owned-business. This issue about identity and concern about racism is why entrepreneurs such as Patricia Turner feel the need to assert: "It is time for people like myself to step forward and say I am Aboriginal and I am an entrepreneur and I am proud of it" (Turner, 2006). Aboriginal entrepreneurs speaking out and lending leadership towards initiatives such as the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce or the Premier's Task Force on Aboriginal Economic Development is essential to creating awareness about the challenges and taking steps towards finding solutions. The focus group participants recommended increased attention to the challenges and needs of Aboriginal entrepreneurs. They concluded that issues of Aboriginality, Gender and Business need to be discussed further so that the vision of Aboriginal inclusion in the economy is achieved and that gender-specific challenges and solutions are considered. A key message of the focus group participants was to

encourage increased opportunity for Aboriginal women in business to be involved in discussions such as those hosted in the focus group. This direction is consistent with the recommendation of the Native Women's Association of Canada in the *Background Document for the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable on Economic Opportunities Sectoral Session* (2004).

Aboriginal men and women experience different conditions in life, as such Aboriginal women should be involved in all levels of discussion and analysis, from policy development to grass-root programs and services. Status of Women Canada defines gender analysis, not as equal treatment but as an analysis that is sensitive and equitable to gender differences and takes into account cultural implications (Whiteduck, Peebles, 2002). Successful development for Aboriginal economies requires policy direction in key areas such as: capital investment, scale, ownership control, infrastructure, technology, and must consider gender roles (Loxley, 2010). In the main:

> "the full potential of Aboriginal women's enterprise will be realized only if policy and program decision making can be redesigned to recognize, learn from and leverage the investments of Aboriginal women's labour, leadership and creativity; respect the cultural values at the heart of their enterprises: and understand the importance of collective as well as individual well-being" (Findlay, Wuttunee, 2007, p. 4).

I argue that for the women participating in this research, success is influenced by their Aboriginal heritage, values, and their personal journey

towards self-determination. The entrepreneurs contribute positively to social, cultural and economic development for Aboriginal peoples. These women are leaders and by definition, are true entrepreneurs as they create enterprise to satisfy societal needs and in turn drive opportunity for Aboriginal inclusion in business and the labour market. The case study and focus group discussion demonstrates that Aboriginal enterprise contributes to economic and social well-being for Aboriginal peoples and that it is possible for this to take place in a model which respects Aboriginal values.

I believe that Aboriginal entrepreneurship is essential to ensure that Aboriginal people have control over their resources as well as their social and economic destiny. Through entrepreneurship, I think that individuals and community stand to benefit directly from the inevitable economic development of modern society and would be in control of this development. The idea of micro development through entrepreneurship is one that is advanced by the World Bank (2003). Micro-lending is a relatively new concept that enables the building of marginalized economies such as those we see within Indigenous societies across throughout the world. Creating "micro" pockets of development, creates meaningful participation for individuals and builds the skills necessary for advancing inclusion in larger economies. In this analysis, I argue that private-enterprise, that is individual rather than communal ownership, can make meaningful contribution to social and economic development. Private-enterprise contributes to the building of skills and creates diversity while sharing risks within the economic framework.

Chapter 7 Concluding Remarks

History depicts multi-century Aboriginal participation in the economy that unfortunately for Canada includes a very dark period that followed the introduction of the *Indian Act* in 1876. This government policy seriously restricted Aboriginal participation in the emerging society and economy. The legislation was written from a Eurocentric view of cultural appropriateness and set out to assimilate the Indian. Policies and programs that followed were designed to eliminate Aboriginal culture, language and heritage. The policies seriously damaged the identity of First Nation, Métis and Inuit people and created a model of economic dependency that remains today. While the shear survival of language and cultural identity is a testament to the strength of Aboriginal people, social recovery and economic development are essential to full prosperity for Aboriginal people.

In this thesis, *Entrepreneurship, A Journey of Economic Self-Determination,* economic development through the model of privately-owned business is evaluated considering history and Aboriginal values. The analysis is conducted from a female gender perspective, not to be comparative of the female to male gender experience, but to illuminate the female gender perspective. The historical review of Aboriginal women's role in their society depicts women as equal contributors. Women's experience changed dramatically with the imposition of the *Indian Act* which left men in position of power and created a system for which status as Indian would be passed through the male lineage. When combined with assimilation policy, this unique history created a situation of

double jeopardy for Aboriginal women who faced racism and sexism; seriously inhibiting their capacity to participate in society and the economy. By focusing on Aboriginal women in my research, I contribute to the possibility of drawing attention to the positive role women play in advancing social and economic development for their communities. This thesis draws attention to proud and powerful stories of Aboriginal women achieving self-determination and contributing to their communities through entrepreneurship.

The primary research within my thesis includes interviews with four Aboriginal women entrepreneurs and a focus group discussion about Aboriginal women in business. The data resulting from the interviews and focus group discussion supports the argument that entrepreneurship creates a vehicle for women to self-determine and recover their position as meaningful contributors to Aboriginal society and economies. The results of the primary research demonstrate that economic participation through privately-owned business creates the opportunity for Aboriginal women to assert their values and to make meaningful contribution to society.

I argue that with changing policies and perspectives, Aboriginal world-view is finally assuming its rightful place in Canadian society. The Aboriginal perspective affords greater care of the universe with central themes of harmony, balance and reciprocity. This perspective, care of the universe, is a good thing for business and society. As people demand greater moral and social responsibility from the capital system, ideas of environmental, community and human sustainability continue to evolve. At a time when the moral character of the

capital system is under scrutiny, I argue that a model that takes into account Aboriginal worldview lends insight to better approaches in business. David Newhouse calls this "Red Capitalism" (Newhouse, 2000). Newhouse describes the capital system as extremely adaptive, effective, efficient and seductive. While he argues that participation in the capital system changes an individual, he leans towards the idea that Aboriginal people can 'mediate' the worst effects of capitalism through the continued use of values and the transformation of these into business actions towards "compassionate capitalism" (Newhouse, 2004). The idea "Red Capitalism" hones in on economic development that is born with respect for the building of business within a framework of Aboriginal values. My research contributes to the argument that "Red Capitalism" is possible. Although limited by the fact that my research is a qualitative analysis involving only four case studies and a focus groups, the data is rich and supportive of the idea that Aboriginal values can be held within a capitalist enterprise.

In my research, the stories shared by the Aboriginal women entrepreneurs demonstrate that economic participation through business ownership provides great potential for self-determination within the capital system. Entrepreneur Meeches suggests that people would be happier if they followed their spirit and had strong business ethics that are guided by the circular teachings while working in a linear world. She asserts, "You can wear them together and you don't have to compromise one another because I have advisors that remind me of the linear teachings and those that remind me of the circular teachings" (Meeches, 2006). The women entrepreneurs who participated in this research share a common point

of view that business is influenced by values. In selecting the nature of business and in their approach to running their business, these women demonstrate that entrepreneurship enables them to sustain their personal values while advancing Aboriginal society and success in the economy. For these women, success is influenced by their Aboriginal heritage, contributes to their journey in self-determination and results in positive social, cultural and economic development for Aboriginal peoples.

While my research contributes to the study of Aboriginal economic development from the perspective of entrepreneurship, more research needs to be done. Does an emerging economy require both communal and privately-held enterprises to advance stable socio-economic growth? If so, what balance should there be? What policies and governance structures need to exist for communal and privately held enterprise? While my research introduced the idea of entrepreneurship, self-determination and values with a focus on Aboriginal women entrepreneurs; a similar study should be undertaken that considers male and female experience. This male and female experience could also be contrasted with the gender examinations of mainstream business.

The focus group participants in my research recommended that continued attention be placed on Aboriginal women entrepreneurs and the development of networks, services and programs that meet the unique needs of Aboriginal women. I support this recommendation and hope that my thesis contributes to advancing the development of such networks, services and programs.

Aboriginal women play an important role in the advancement of socio-economic development and Aboriginal privately-owned enterprise can thrive within a framework that respects Aboriginal values, leads to self-determination and positively contributes to social and economic well-being for Aboriginal peoples.

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ABORIGINAL EDUCATION PROGRAM
CONSENT FORM

Entrepreneurship: Journey in Self Determination
Researcher: Mary Jane Loustel

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Purpose of Research:

This research will explore the experience of Aboriginal women entrepreneurs to highlight models in Aboriginal entrepreneurship and understand the relationship between these women's entrepreneurial experiences and their perspectives about Aboriginal values, self determination and Aboriginal socio-economic development. The results of this research will contribute to the limited body of knowledge regarding Aboriginal women, entrepreneurship and commerce.

Procedures:

Interview questions will be used to stimulate discussion with four women entrepreneurs on topics related to their heritage, values, entrepreneurial experiences and their views about the relationship between self determination and socio-economic development for Aboriginal Peoples. It is anticipated that these interviews will take place over two separate visits of two hours each and will include a tour of the entrepreneur's business operations. One follow up interview, expected to also last two hours, will be conducted to review the summary of responses, validate transcripts and to clarify understanding.

Interview questions will be used to stimulate discussion with service providers supporting entrepreneurship for Aboriginal Peoples on topics related to the services provided including the approach to service, the target client, the views about the services provided and about unique characteristics of Aboriginal women in entrepreneurship. It is anticipated that these interviews will include a tour of the service provider's operations and will last approximately two hours. One follow up interview, expected to last one hour will be conducted to review the summary of responses, validate transcripts and to clarify understanding.

With permission, a small hand held recording device with separate microphone will be used to record all interviews. The use of this recording device does not change or remove any of the participants' rights related to the research process. If participants choose, the device will be turned off for some or all of the interview. Tapes will be secured on research-person or at the premises of the researcher; however any and all use of this data outside of this research project will involved continued informed consent.

The interview approach is intended to be open and responsive to the experiences and circumstances presented by the interviewee. Any questions or dialogue stimulated in the interviews beyond that anticipated in the original survey questionnaire tool and impacting the finding section of the report will be recorded as exceptional data in the final report.

See attached for the interview questions.

Feedback:

Participants will be provided an opportunity to review their transcripts and make any additions, deletions, and corrections they wish. The researcher will retain the final document.

Associated Risks and Benefits:

The risks of harm associated with participation are not anticipated to be greater or more likely than those ordinarily encountered in life.

The benefits of this project are multifaceted. There will be a celebration of success of the women entrepreneurs highlighted in this study. There will be increased knowledge of models in entrepreneurship and management style practiced by Aboriginal women entrepreneurs. Expansion of thinking about the potential relationship between entrepreneurship, self determination and socio-economic development for Aboriginal Peoples will also result.

Confidentiality:

Research participants will, upon signing this consent, have their words acknowledged and will be cited and referenced appropriately.

Research participants will consent to have their identification disclosed in this research study or they will not be directly referenced in any subsequent report associated with this study. They will have control over all data and disclosure explicitly related to their interview or their business through their approval of the interview transcripts and subsequent agreement to the inclusion of

this data in any reports generated using the data. Any and all data that may be interpreted by either the researcher or the participant as sensitive data will be identified for data-specific consent or withdrawal from reference in this research study.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and that you agree to participate. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The researcher, Mary Jane Loustel, can be contacted at xxx-xxxx, her supervisor Dr. Wanda Wuttunee, at 474-6405. This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba's Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122, or e-mail margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

☐ Check here if you wish to remain anonymous

☐ Check here if you wish to receive a copy of the final research findings

☐ Check here if you agree to be videotaped

☐ Check here if you agree to be audiotaped

_____

_____

Participant's Signature Date

Researcher's Signature Date

Entrepreneurship: A Journey in Self Determination
Research Interview Questions- The Entrepreneur

How did you become an entrepreneur?

1.1. What inspired you?

1.1.1. Describe an experience you had that might help me understand this.

1.2. Did you have mentors and/or role models? Who were they and why do you view them as mentors and/or role models?

1.2.1. Describe an experience you had that might help me understand this.

1.3. What experiences, if any, did you have that challenged you to the point that you almost gave up on your business interests?

1.3.1. Describe experiences relating to education, human interactions, shaming, cumulative dimensions.

1.4. Why this choice for a business interest?

1.4.1. Describe to me how you went about getting into this business.

2. How does it feel to own your own business?

2.1. What is the best thing about it?

2.1.1. Describe an experience that might help me understand this.

2.2. What is the worst thing about it?

2.2.1. Describe an experience that might help me understand this.

3. What are your business goals?

3.1. What is important for you to achieve these business goals?

3.2. What does 'success' mean to you?

3.3. How important is success, as you describe it, to you.

3.4. Why?

3.4.1. Describe an experience that might help me understand this.

4. What values do you hold as an Aboriginal person?

4.1. How do these influence you in your business?

4.1.1. Describe an experience that may demonstrate these values.

4.2. Do you feel these values are part of your business?

4.2.1. Describe a situation that helps you know this.

5. How has being Aboriginal affected you in your role as an entrepreneur?

5.1. What are some good things that have affected your business positively?

5.2. What might be some things that you feel create a challenge for you as an Aboriginal businessperson?

6. How has being an Aboriginal woman affected you in your role as an entrepreneur?

6.1. What are some good things that have affected your business positively?

6.2. What might be some things that you feel create a challenge for you as an Aboriginal woman and a businessperson?

7. Capitalism is one way in which a society engages in trade or commerce through approaches such as entrepreneurship. Other ways in which a society engages in trade or commerce may be more community based such as through cooperatives. History has shown that capitalism can result in brutal inequalities in wealth and consumption.

7.1. Some may view commerce as contrary to Aboriginal way of life and values. As an Aboriginal entrepreneur how do you view the idea of business and its relationship with values?

7.2. Some may view entrepreneurship as a role not suited for Aboriginal women. How do you view Aboriginal women and their role in commerce?

8. Do you employ Aboriginal people in your business? What level of representation?

    8.1. How do you view Aboriginal business & Aboriginal employment opportunities?

    8.2. Do you feel that there is anything unique about being employed with your business?

9. Do you conduct business dealings with other Aboriginal organizations? What level?

    9.1. What is your perspective about Aboriginal to Aboriginal business relationships?

        9.1.1. Is this a priority for you?

        9.1.2. Do you fee l that there is anything unique about Aboriginal to Aboriginal business?

10. Are you familiar with organizations such as the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce?

        10.1.1. Is an Aboriginal based chamber important to you?

            10.1.1.1. If yes, what role do you think the Aboriginal Chamber plays or can play in Aboriginal commerce?

            10.1.1.2. If no, why not? What is important in developing Aboriginal commerce?

11. Have you used any of the government or community based programs as a resource to support you in developing your business?

    11.1. If yes, which ones?

        11.1.1. What was your experience?

        11.1.2. Do you have suggestions as to how these programs might be improved?

    11.2. If not, why not?

Entrepreneurship: A Journey in Self Determination
Research Interview Questions- The Service Organizations

1. Please describe your organization and the programs offered.

2. Do you offer programs specific to Aboriginal entrepreneurship?

2.1. If yes, why is this a focused segment of your services?

2.1.1. Please describe these programs.

2.1.2. Do these Aboriginal focused programs target any specific demographic segment?

2.1.2.1. Do you have program specific statistics of use by Aboriginal peoples?

2.1.2.2. Do you have gender-specific statistics?

2.2. If no, why not?

2.2.1. How do you feel your organization's existing programs serve the Aboriginal community?

2.2.2. Please describe these programs.

2.2.2.1. Do you have program specific statistics relating to use by Aboriginal peoples? Do you have gender-specific statistics?

3. How do you view Aboriginal entrepreneurship?

3.1. What do you view as unique about Aboriginal business?

3.1.1. Does your view differ when thinking from a gender-perspective, considering business owned by Aboriginal men versus Aboriginal women?

3.2. What challenges would you say Aboriginal entrepreneurs face?

3.2.1. Does your view differ when thinking from a gender-perspective, considering business owned by Aboriginal men versus Aboriginal women?

4. What impact do you believe Aboriginal entrepreneurship has on Aboriginal peoples?