Entrepreneurial Action by Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan: Similarities and differences with established notions of Entrepreneurial Action

Ketan Goswami, The University of Western Ontario

Supervisor: Plummer, Lawrence A., The University of Western Ontario
Co-Supervisor: Parker, Simon C., The University of Western Ontario

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Abstract

Entrepreneurial actions, i.e., activities like hiring, marketing, financing, hustling (even bribing!), etc., requisite for building small businesses are less studied than antecedent opportunity recognition processes. The two most common form of contexts in which entrepreneurial actions are studied are opportunity-driven (Silicon-Valley type) and necessity-driven (poverty contexts). While there is a fair amount of research on community-based and band-driven Indigenous entrepreneurship, less is known about entrepreneurial actions by individual self-employed Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs in Canada/Turtle Island. Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs face a differential set of obstacles in their pursuit for economic self-determination compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts. This dissertation endeavours to understand entrepreneurial actions undertaken by individual Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs and their similarities and differences with dominant notions, more specifically the extant notions of opportunity-driven and necessity-driven entrepreneurial actions. I do so abductively by leveraging qualitative methods, in the context of Métis and First Nations self-employed entrepreneurs in the Canadian Prairies (more specifically, Saskatchewan). Findings highlight that the entrepreneurial actions of Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs differ compared to dominant notions along three dimensions, namely – motivation, liabilities, and the actions themselves. I submit that this has both theoretical and practical implications as my findings make a case for explicitly accounting for a role of self-regulatory coping and volition as foundational micro-components of entrepreneurial action, in addition to knowledge and motivation already prescribed in extant literature.
Keywords

Entrepreneurial action, Indigenous entrepreneurship, institutional inequality, coping, volition, conation
Summary for Lay Audience

How do entrepreneurs who have a lifetime of experiences with systemic discrimination stay focused and motivated? What keeps an entrepreneur going despite not only deep rooted, intergenerational historical trauma and stigma but also everyday encounters with the same? Moreover, while there is research that inequality gets reproduced through seemingly trivial everyday micro-aggressions, are there ways and means to “undo” and mitigate these inequalities? This dissertation attempts to find answers to these questions in the context of Indigenous entrepreneurs in the Canadian Prairies. We find that Indigenous entrepreneurs have survived (and indeed many have thrived) despite multi-generational and ongoing experiences with systemic institutional barriers. We find that despite the deep hurt and psychological injuries due to intergenerational trauma and stigma, they have identified ways and means to not only subvert some of the insidious effects but also use their businesses to restore cultural practices and pride. What are these actions and strategies? This dissertation endeavors to shed light on these questions.
Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother -

Bharti Madan Goswami

- who taught me to find abundance in scarcity,

to find purpose in the face of inequality,

and to seek advantage in disadvantage.
Acknowledgments

To “ac·knowl·edge” is a verb, an action word meaning to “accept or admit the existence or truth of”. In that sense, writing an acknowledgement section is an act of humility. It is a sobering acceptance that while this dissertation shall be attributed to a singular author, it owes its existence to a plurality of individual(s) and environmental factors. Please bear with me as I take you through a long-winding list of people and places to whom I owe my sincerest gratitude.

I begin, at the beginning. As someone born in Mumbai, India in the 1970s to parents who chose to defy social norms to get married, one always felt as one belonged to the “children of the revolution”. More specifically my parents broke well entrenched traditional norms vis-à-vis inter-caste and inter-language marriages despite the risk of excommunication from their respective families/communities. I owe my personal definition of an entrepreneur as someone who challenges the status quo, to my parents and their myriad “illegitimate” acts of defiance in the face of institutional norms of their time and place.

Moreover, Mumbai, a city where I grew up, is known for its hustling, bustling, entrepreneurial spirit. If you live in Mumbai (home to a whopping 20 million people!), one way or another, you learn to make do with little (especially space)! I owe my appreciation of resourcefulness to this “make-do” spirit of Mumbai. Further, I went to school not too far from Mumbai’s Dalal Street (akin to New York’s Wall Street), where the classroom was dominated by kids from the Gujarati community (to which my maternal family belongs). The Gujarati community in India is predominantly a community of merchants and traders. My maternal grandfather and uncles were typical members of this community – not highly educated, albeit had learnt the fundamentals of business and trade through lessons and skills handed down over generations. However, the lack of education and the associated inability to speak English (a marker of social status in India, courtesy colonialism!) meant that I and my cousins were constantly warned not to follow in their shoes and were instead always encouraged to pursue higher education. I owe my understanding of how education can be leveraged as “cultural capital” (a la Pierre Bourdieu) and helps gain legitimacy, especially whilst simultaneously being disruptive, to these early cautionary tales.
Growing up by the Arabian sea (Mumbai is on the West coast of India) coupled with tales of an uncle who had left Indian shores in the 1960s (he literally travelled to Europe on a passenger ship!) and who since the 1970s was settled in Chicago, served as constant beckoning whilst growing up to someday travel to “foreign” lands. This became a reality when, I was able to travel to the United States at the turn of the millennium in the year 2000 to The Ohio State University. The three years spent in the “Estados Unidos” (2000-03) were transformative in more than one way. To quote from “The Tale of Two Cities”, “it was the best of times, it was the worst of times”. On one hand I benefitted immensely from a global education in an international classroom (with classmates from Montevideo, Uruguay to Kyoto, Japan). Additionally, this education served to counterbalance my earlier training in the “objectivity” dominated world of engineering, with the “subjectivity” infused world of social sciences. On the other hand, this was a tumultuous period with the bursting of the dot-com bubble, the 9-11 attacks and the subsequent “war on terror” that the United States embarked on. The person I saw in the mirror everyday (brown, with facial hair, etc.) looked very much like the then “enemy” of the United States, and in many ways my experience as a coloured person in the United States Mid-west has left an indelible impression.

Notwithstanding my experiences of systemic inequities in my home country, I owe my appreciation of systemic and historical global inequities to these three years spent in the United States.

In 2005, a couple of years after returning from the United States, I relocated from my home-town Mumbai to Bangalore, my “karma-bhoomi” (work-place), where I continued to live and work until 2016 when I travelled to Ivey for my PhD. Bangalore, like Mumbai, is known to be an entrepreneurial city and has assiduously earned the moniker of “Silicon-Valley of India”. However, entrepreneurship in Bangalore is different. While in Mumbai entrepreneurs are not necessarily highly educated, in Bangalore entrepreneurship is predominantly driven by highly qualified, highly trained STEM professionals. Moreover, social ties and personal/ communal/ kinship ties play a much larger role in shaping the kind of entrepreneurial ventures one finds in Mumbai, versus impersonal angel and VC driven funding and support for entrepreneurship which is more common in Bangalore. I owe my appreciation of the role of a broader social milieu and ecosystem, beyond individual attributes, in shaping entrepreneurial actions to this decade long stay in Bangalore, and the
associated opportunity to compare the Bangalore ecosystem to other entrepreneurial ecosystems (including Mumbai).

Subsequently, coming to Ivey in 2016, I was lucky enough to find not just one but two extremely grounded entrepreneurship scholars in the form of Prof. Lawrence (Larry) Plummer and Prof. Simon Parker. Even before the first stats boot-camp that all PhD students at Ivey are required to mandatorily attend, I was lucky enough to have had a conversation with both these gentlemen. Thanks to them, even before the start of my PhD coursework, I had already identified the context of Indigenous entrepreneurs as my dissertation focus! I also vividly recall the first books that each one of them recommended as essential reading. While Prof Plummer recommended - *Development as Freedom* (Amartya Sen, 1999), Prof Parker recommended - *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Thorstein Veblen, 1899) – two books separated by a century. As is evident from my thesis, both these books have been highly influential in my thinking about inequality (beyond just wealth and income inequalities) and how persistent inequalities might shape everyday/mundane behaviors. I owe my deepest gratitude to these gentlemen for these and other innumerable gems that they have graciously shared with me during my PhD journey.

Additionally, I would be remiss if I don’t acknowledge my debt to the Entrepreneurship Department at Ivey. A less known fact is that I had applied to Ivey for Fall 2015, albeit to the OB Department. I was summarily rejected. I owe the Ivey Entrepreneurship Department gratitude not only for accepting me but also for providing timely and much-needed financial support in the form of the Pierre Morrissette scholarship, various summer research assistantships (to support my pilot studies in Saskatchewan) as well as their contribution to the MITAC Research Training Award. The most precious gift however has been my PhD “siblings” (while I cherish each one of my Entrepreneurship PhD “siblings”, Danny Chung and Chloe Xu are admittedly a wee bit more special because of cohort proximity)! And while our intrepid, fearless PhD coordinator Prof. Janice Byrne only joined after I was half-way through in 2018, given my interest in understanding inequality and leveraging qualitative methods to do so, her expertise and guidance have been immeasurably valuable!
Beyond the Entrepreneurship discipline, there are other PhD “siblings” that I owe
gratitude. I have benefitted variously from conversations on topics ranging from “Theory of
Planned Behavior” to “Socio-materiality” to “Theory of Affordances” with colleagues
especially in IS and OB disciplines. The insights on how “volition” might shape human
actions (for example, beyond what “The Theory of Planned Behavior” tells us) and the role
of physical/ socio-material infrastructure in creating “architectural exclusion” that I highlight
in my thesis, owe their origins to these boundary-spanning, inter-disciplinary conversations.
Also, in Prof. Lauren Cipriano I believe Ivey has found an ideal PhD Director! She not only
constantly reminds us of the need to create opportunities for inter-disciplinary exchange of
ideas (and for providing developmental support and feedback to students!), but also is
someone who walks the talk!

Outside of Western, I have benefited immensely from the Ontario Qualitative
Methods workgroup (formed under the leadership of Prof Sarah Kaplan, Prof Eileen Fischer,
and Prof Mark Zbaracki). While qualitative methods are increasingly becoming
“mainstream” there still is a degree of “risk” and “illegitimacy” associated with conducting
Qualitative research. This can be partly attributed to lack of formal courses for conducting
rigorous, high-quality qualitative research. Towards this end, I will always owe a deep
gratitude to this group, in addition to Prof Jerry White (emeritus) of the Western University
Sociology Department under whom I took a formal Qualitative Methods course in my first
year.

Further beyond Western (and Ontario!), my research would not have been possible
without my kind hosts at the University of Regina (in the form of a very nurturing Prof
Aldene Meis-Mason) and First Nations University (a very gracious and capable Prof Bettina
Schneider)! Additionally, I am indebted to the many Indigenous scholars, leaders and Elders
at both the Office of Indigenization at University of Regina as well as First Nations
University (Graduate student Moses Gordon, late Elder Noel Starblanket, Dr. Emily Grafton,
to name a few) who graciously guided this “outsider-guest” on Indigenous research methods,
protocols and practices.

Further, and most importantly, it goes without saying that this dissertation would not
have been possible without the grace and reciprocity of the various Saskatchewan based
Indigenous entrepreneurs who were willing to share their stories, trials and tribulations with someone who, again, is a rank “outsider-guest”. Jennifer Dubois (and her spouse Mike!) of Miyosiwin Hair Salon and Spa were the first Regina-based entrepreneurs I had an opportunity to get introduced to during my first summer in Saskatchewan (2017). Since then we have been Facebook friends and I have been privileged that they have allowed me a daily “virtual” view of how they are proudly building an Indigenous business as well as raising two amazing Indigenous youth of the future in the form of their two kids Eagle and Journey! Similarly, Joely Bigeagle (and her spouse Lorne) of Tatanka Boutique and Buffalo Art Institute were kind enough to invite me into their kitchen-table/ work-space/ art-space and allowed me a sneak-peak into their respective entrepreneurial (and personal/ professional) journeys. Additionally, I will be always cherish the warmth and grace with which I was received by Chris Ross of RezX, Shana Pasapa of Power Our Women (P.O.W.), John Lagimodiere of Eagle Feather News, Rodger Ross of CreeRunner Communications, David Garneau, Sherry Racette, Creeson Agecoutay, Brandon Pelletier, Shaun Soonias, Daniel Morin, Trevor Marion, Dr. Heather Exner-Pirot, Giles Dorval, Shelley Pinacie, Bradyn Parisian, Dr. Marie Battiste and many other Saskatchewan-based Indigenous entrepreneurs, scholars, leaders and Elders! A thousand thank yous for trusting me with your stories! Kinanâškomītin (Cree)! Miigwech (Ojibwe)!!

Finally, to bring it all back home, I have had the privilege of watching from close quarters two entrepreneurs since the day they were born; namely, my younger siblings, Kajal (a year younger and in many ways my “twin”) and Hitesh (aka “Bittu” and the baby of the family). While my sister Kajal exemplifies the everyday/ mundane entrepreneur who banks on creativity (she is a fashion designer by passion and training!), relationships and hustle (her lack of “college-education” has never stopped her) that one is likely to encounter in Mumbai, my brother Hitesh exemplifies the highly educated (he has a Bachelors in Neurobiology and Masters in Bio-technology) high-tech, high-growth, VC funded entrepreneur found in Bangalore. Like our parents, their willingness to challenge status quo and their everyday/ mundane struggles as they do so, continue to inspire me as a scholar, teacher, and researcher.

Last but absolutely not the least, I owe immense gratitude to my partner, my spouse, my wife – Emal! I fondly call her “little-miss-sunshine”. Anyone who has met her and encountered her broad smile and sunny disposition know exactly what I am talking about.
Despite the “liabilities of foreign-ness” associated with being a social worker in Canada, over the last three years, through her work at Cross Cultural Learner Center, she has created a niche for herself in the London refugee-focused social work community. Her optimism in the face of darkest of human experiences, inspire me. Her presence in my life, anchors me. Above all the people and places to whom this dissertation owes its gratitude, the debt to her is the highest.
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Chapter 1

1 Introduction

Indigenous participation in the economy is one of the great social and economic endeavors of our time. Action to raise incomes and living standards for First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples is central to mending our social fabric and achieving economic reconciliation…There are now an estimated 43,000 Aboriginal-owned businesses in Canada. In 2016, Aboriginal businesses contributed an estimated $12 billion to Canada’s GDP and the total combined income of Indigenous households, businesses and governments reached $32 billion. Although this is a significant improvement from the past, Aboriginal incomes lag average incomes in Canada by 25 per cent, resulting in a significant gap in their standard of living relative to the average Canadian… As we celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day, we see an opportunity for Canada’s business leaders to embrace the changing times by encouraging and delivering the decisive action needed to achieve meaningful economic reconciliation. (Archival, The Star, June 21, 2018 – J.P. Gladu, ex- president/ CEO of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business)

As is evident from the excerpt above from an opinion piece written by J.P. Gladu to commemorate National Indigenous Peoples Day (June 21st), there are significant opportunities associated with pursuit of Indigenous self-employment. While there are 9,000 Indigenous businesses in Ontario alone, there is relatively little known about Indigenous entrepreneurs in terms of “who they are, what their experiences have been, and what they need for future growth and success.” (CCAB, 2014).

Furthermore, given various geographical and historical factors the quantum and nature of Indigenous businesses in other parts of Canada, especially the Prairies, are different and there is limited research on the same. Indeed, when the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce launched its Indigenous-owned business directory in September 2020, it listed only 470 (both verified and unverified) Indigenous-owned businesses (Regina Leaderpost, Sept 02, 2020), as against the 9000 plus Indigenous-owned businesses in Ontario in the 2014 CCAB report1 cited earlier.

1 Numbers vary based on how self-employment is defined. Also, amongst various other factors, this difference in number of Indigenous businesses in Saskatchewan compared to Ontario is dependent on population differences, both overall (Saskatchewan population ~ 1.1 million vs. Ontario population ~ 14 million) as well as Indigenous population (roughly ~ 15% of Saskatchewan’s population is Indigenous vs. 2.4% of Ontario’s population is Indigenous), as per latest Statistics Canada sources.
Moreover, notwithstanding the opportunities, Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs face a differential set of challenges in their pursuit for economic self-determination as compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts, both nationally but even more so in the Prairies. Indeed, research shows that prairie-based Indigenous communities (including Indigenous entrepreneurs) fare even less well than their Indigenous counterparts in coastal communities, in terms of well-being indicators such as education, healthcare, etc. (Beavon, Spence, & White, 2007). While research in Ontario has identified “access to financing and IT infrastructure”, “finding qualified workers”, etc. as barriers to Indigenous entrepreneurship, there are opportunities to better appreciate how Indigenous entrepreneurship might be both similar and different in the Prairies.
Further, current conversations in entrepreneurship focus on opportunity-driven or “Silicon Valley Model” type of entrepreneurship (Aldrich & Ruef, 2018). This literature assumes that entrepreneurship is an equal opportunity vocation for anyone who possesses the requisite capacity to bear “uncertainty”. Indeed, scholars have lamented that most studies of entrepreneurial action assume “uncertainty” as the primary entrepreneurial hurdle (Townsend, Hunt, McMullen & Sarasvathy, 2018). This is further evident from deeply entrenched conceptualizations which define entrepreneurial action as “judgement under uncertainty” (Cantillon, 1755; Klein, 2008; Knight, 1921; McMullen & Shepherd, 2006). However, these traditional conceptualizations of entrepreneurial action as the individual capacity to bear “uncertainty” dismiss important contextual nuance and ignore the diversity of structural constraints in which entrepreneurial action occurs (Welter, Baker, Audretsch & Gartner, 2017). For example, a context of poverty can impose additional constraints in the form of limited material and cognitive wherewithal (Alvarez & Barney, 2014; Shantz, Kistruck, & Zietsma, 2018). Similarly, a context marred by institutional voids can impose barriers in the form of corruption and inadequate regulations (Mair, Marti & Ventresca, 2012).

Thus, this shifting focus from a predominant “Silicon Valley model” type of opportunity-motivated entrepreneurship entails moving beyond individual knowledge and
motivation focused perspectives of entrepreneurial action, and explicitly accounting for the social milieu and environmental context (Dimov & Pistrui, 2020; Welter, 2011). Furthermore, this entails explicitly accounting for institutional structures and identifying the underlying mechanisms which connect institutions and entrepreneurship (Zahra & Wright, 2011).

The purpose of this dissertation consequently is to explore – *How do Métis and First Nations experiences of entrepreneurial action compare to entrepreneurial action as characterized in the literature?* I explore this question abductively through a qualitative study and in the context of Indigenous entrepreneurs (those who identify as self-employed) in the Canadian Prairies (more specifically the province of Saskatchewan).

The rest of the dissertation is structured as follows.

Chapter 2 endeavors a *Literature review* of predominant notions of entrepreneurial action, more specifically opportunity-driven and necessity-driven forms.

Chapter 3 delves into *Research Context* including a review of reports by existing Métis and First Nations associations and institutions for supporting entrepreneurship and economic self-determination (for example, Canadian Council of Aboriginal Business). Further, I briefly review extant scholarly work on Indigenous entrepreneurship.

Chapter 4 describes the *Methods* deployed in detail, specifically focused on describing – [i] the research setting, [ii] data collection, and [iii] data analysis.

Chapter 5 captures *Findings* which illuminate the following research question - *How do Métis and First Nations experiences of entrepreneurial action compare to entrepreneurial action as characterized in the literature?* I present these findings in the form of analyses of four comparative case studies. This is followed by a more fulsome

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2 An important rationale for using self-employment as a measure of entrepreneurship is that self-employment entails substantive risk-taking (Parker, 2018). Moreover, bulk of “everyday entrepreneurship” entails self-employment.
discussion of consolidated findings leveraging all the myriad sources of data (observations, interviews and archival) collected for this dissertation.

Finally, Chapter 6 concludes with a *Discussion* on lessons learned from the various narratives shared by Indigenous entrepreneurs and other Saskatchewan ecosystem stakeholders for broader entrepreneurship scholars and practitioners. In Chapter 6, I also further discuss policy implications as well as future research and limitations.
Chapter 2

2 Entrepreneurial Action

Entrepreneurial action (EA) - that is, creating, leading, marketing, hiring, selling, etc. - is an enactment of one's willingness to building a business (Alvarez & Barney, 2007; McMullen & Shepherd, 2006). Two influential perspectives on Entrepreneurial Action (EA) are judgment-driven (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006) and creation-driven (Alvarez & Barney, 2007). While McMullen & Shepherd (2006) emphasize judgment, based on “feasibility” (knowledge) and “desirability” (motivation), as a pre-requisite for overcoming “doubt” (uncertainty), Alvarez & Barney (2007) emphasize creation as a way of reducing uncertainty through enactment, i.e., through seeking feedback from the environment as a response to the creative act. Consequently, the judgment-based perspective sheds light on the choices and decisions as part of opportunity identification and evaluation phases (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006), whereas the creation-based perspective emphasizes actions primarily focused on opportunity exploitation, i.e., like hiring, marketing, financing – or indeed, “any activity entrepreneurs might take to form or exploit opportunities” (Alvarez & Barney, 2007).

Figure 3: Two most dominant perspectives on Entrepreneurial Action

*"Behavior in response to a judgmental decision under uncertainty about a possible opportunity for profit" (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006)"*  
"*"Any activity to form and exploit opportunities" (Alvarez & Barney, 2007)*"
Other perspectives on Entrepreneurial Action (EA)

Perspectives on EA vary from more abstract (for example, McMullen & Shepherd’s, 2006 definition of entrepreneurial action as “judgment under uncertainty”) versus more concrete (for example, Baron, Tang, Tang & Zhang, 2018 argue for “bribing” as an entrepreneurial action under conditions of institutional corruption). I discuss below a few key perspectives of EA beyond the two most dominant perspectives, i.e., McMullen & Shepherd’s (2006) judgment-based perspective and Alvarez & Barney’s (2007) creation-based perspective, which I have already briefly described.

Action-Theory perspective. This is primarily research pioneered by Michael Frese and very much built on the Theory of Planned Behavior which primarily assumes that having goals and plans drives human action (Ajzen, 1991). Thus, the Action-Theory perspective argues for “active information search”, “active goals”, “active plans” and “active feedback” as key components for turning entrepreneurial wishes and intentions into actions. Further, this perspective argues for the key role of “personal initiative” on the part of the individual entrepreneur, which as per Frese (2020), is characterized by being self-starting, future-oriented and persistent. Additionally, this perspective argues that there are three focal dimensions of entrepreneurial action – Task, Self and Others (Gielnik, Cardon & Frese, 2020). Frese (2020) points out that the Task dimension speaks to the demands of the entrepreneurial role; Self speaks to psychological resources like self-efficacy, self-worth, etc.; Others refers to actions dependent on interactions with investors, partners, customers, suppliers, etc. There are clear overlaps between this Action-Theory perspective and McMullen & Shepherd’s perspective. Both are future-oriented and assume environmental uncertainty. Both privilege individual knowledge and expertise. Further, both privilege novelty and innovation. And while McMullen & Shepherd’s judgement-based perspective argues for individual knowledge and motivation as helping mitigate uncertainty due to future unknowns, Frese’s action-theory perspective argues for plans (“elaborate”, albeit “flexible”) as the key lever for transforming intentions into action.

Effectuation. This is research pioneered by Saras Sarasvathy and in many ways is in complete contradistinction from the action-theory perspective. While Frese’s action-
theory perspective believes that the starting point for entrepreneurial actions is “goals” or some form of clearly articulated ends or purpose, Sarasvathy’s effectuation perspective argues for the starting point to be the means. Based on Sarasvathy’s research on expert entrepreneurs (i.e., those who had been engaged in entrepreneurship for at least 15 years), the effectual perspective argues that, given that the future is unknown and uncertain (an assumption which it shares with both the action-theory perspective by Frese as well as the judgement-based perspective by McMullen & Shepherd), rather than starting with a specific, clearly articulated goal, expert entrepreneurs instead start with the resources they have at hand. Thus, as per Sarasvathy (2001), instead of starting with a clear goal, expert entrepreneurs start by asking the following questions – Who am I (identity)? What do I know (knowledge/expertise)? Who do I know (social capital)? These available “means” thus serve as a launching pad for what one is willing to invest, or more accurately willing to lose (called “affordable loss” principle) which serves as a constraint to entrepreneurial actions. This perspective too privileges individual knowledge and expertise. Additionally, unlike McMullen & Shepherd’s judgment-based perspective but like Frese’s action-theory perspective, Sarasvathy’s effectuation accounts for the role of “others” – family members, co-founders, investors, customers, community members and other ecosystem stakeholders – in shaping entrepreneurial actions.

**Bricolage.** While this perspective is usually attributed to Baker & Nelson’s work (2005), it is important to note that the term bricolage is borrowed from French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss’s research with Indigenous communities. Thus, as per Lévi-Strauss, in contradiction to the engineer’s approach of starting with goals (very much like Frese’s action-theory perspective), the Indigenous peoples Lévi-Strauss observed acted as creative bricoleurs (the French word *bricoler* means “to tinker” or to “do-it-yourself”). This was more particularly in the context of Indigenous peoples using mythological artifacts (Lévi-Strauss, 1967). Baker & Nelson (2005) have built on this work by Levi Strauss and have argued that bricolage is a form of entrepreneurial action where an entrepreneur is able to improvise and create “something out of nothing”. In that sense, bricolage and effectuation share a common focus on means/resources. However, the bricolage perspective does not necessarily assume absence of ends/goals/purpose.

_Entrepreneurial Action (EA)_ is not limited to nascent firms (Teece, 2012), and covers a gamut of organizational actions. A deeper exploration of early entrepreneurial actions has the potential to help unearth the individual level “origin story” of what goes into building a firm’s aggregated routines and capabilities (Helfat & Martin, 2015; Winter, 2012). Moreover, scholars increasingly are calling for research on underlying micro-foundations, which consolidate over time and build a firm’s routines and capabilities (Felin, Foss, Heimeriks & Madesen, 2012). In this sub-section, through a review, I endeavor to establish linkages between nascent entrepreneurial actions and organizational building blocks, namely, routines and capabilities.

Despite the increased interest in unpacking micro-foundations (Eggers & Kaplan, 2013; Felin, et al., 2012), surprisingly the linkages between early entrepreneurial processes, and their role in building organizational routines and capabilities, remain largely under-explored. Teece’s (2012) _Journal of Management Studies_ piece titled “Dynamic Capabilities: Routines versus Entrepreneurial Action” is one exception (see Bingham, Howell & Ott, 2019 for another recent exception). My review herewith builds on Teece’s (2012) insights and serves to bridge the micro-foundations of entrepreneurship and general management. I do so by conducting a comprehensive review of the EA concept over the last 15 years, i.e., since McMullen & Shepherd’s seminal paper (2006), until 2020. Through a comprehensive review of underlying themes, this study builds a framework which finds EA serving as a crucial linchpin between psychological underpinnings, institutional/social norms and organizational building blocks (namely, routines and capabilities).

Entrepreneurship Journal), for articles published since McMullen & Shepherd’s AMR piece (2006), till 2020, with the words “entrepreneurial action” (either together or separate) in either the title, keywords or abstract of the published articles. While the term Entrepreneurial Action has found mention before McMullen & Shepherd’s piece (2006), their article with 2900 + citations continues to be the most influential conceptualization of EA, and hence the decision to start with the year 2006.

I found 25 articles till date which met this search criterion above. Not surprisingly one of the top entrepreneurship journals, Journal of Business Venturing (JBV), led the number of articles published (12 in all, constituting 50% of all articles published). Additionally, I found four conceptual pieces published in JBV’s sister publication, i.e., Journal of Business Venturing Insights. On a closer look I found three of these conceptual pieces repetitive and redundant. I however found Smith, Conger, McMullen & Neubert’s (2019) perspective of “religion” as an antecedent of EA as a fresh contribution and chose to retain the same, bringing the total number of articles to 25. See Appendix A for a summary for each of these 25 articles.

Figure 4: Framework: Entrepreneurial Action in Top Journals (2006-2020)
Psychological Underpinnings

The 16 articles focused on psychological underpinnings of EA cover a gamut of conceptual and empirical works. Most of the early pieces, following McMullen & Shepherd (2006), are conceptual in nature and help establish linkages with the opportunity recognition process (Alvarez & Barney, 2007; Klein, 2008), as well as linkages between heuristics and past knowledge with EA (Holcomb, Ireland, Holmes, & Hitt, 2009). Subsequently, since 2010 there have been a range of empirical pieces trying to unpack the underlying psychological decision making processes, and how self-representation (Mitchell & Shepherd, 2010), different uncertainty types – state, effect or response (McKelvie, Haynie & Gustavsson, 2011), different information types – technical or social (Autio, Dahlander, & Frederiksen, 2013), different action regulatory factors – goal intentions, positive fantasies and action planning (Gielek, et al., 2014), different sources of capital – human, social or psychological (Hmieleski, Carr & Baron, 2015), different self-control and action-related emotions – fear, doubt and aversion (van Gelderen, Kautonen & Fink, 2015), different imprinting experiences (Mathias, Williams & Smith, 2015), past mental representations (Wood, Williams & Drover, 2017), different construal levels (Chen, Mitchell, Brigham, Howell & Steinbauer, 2018) – all impact the transition from opportunity recognition to EA. Over the last couple of years, however, we see myriad suggestions for reconceptualizing EA to include the role of impulsivity (Wiklund, Yu & Patzelt, 2018), various knowledge problems (in addition to uncertainty – ambiguity, complexity and equivocality) (Townsend, et al., 2018), various decision logics (both intendedly-rational as well as a-rational) (Lerner, Hunt, & Dimov, 2018), and most recently, religion (Smith, et al., 2019). In summary, while the role of cognition as a psychological underpinning dominates, increasingly there are calls for accounting for affect, emotion, and other non-deliberate forms of rationality. Further, there are future opportunities to explore conflicts between cognition and affect in shaping EA.

Role of Institutions/ Social Norms

The second linkage emerging from this review focused on the interaction between institutions/ social norms and EA. While Dean & McMullen (2007) explore this
interaction to develop a conceptual framework of sustainable entrepreneurship, McMullen & colleagues (2008) empirically test the impact of different levels of country-level economic freedom(s) on both opportunity-motivated entrepreneurship (OME) as well as necessity-motivated entrepreneurship (NME). Similarly, Meek, Pacheco & York (2010) empirically test the role of both centralized and decentralized institutions on firm founding rates, whilst Shepherd & Patzelt (2011) offer a research agenda to better appreciate the underlying institutional norms and entrepreneurial actions that constitute sustainable development. Most recently, Baron, Tang, Tang & Zhang (2019) empirically test how underdog entrepreneurs may be more willing to use bribes as entrepreneurial actions, in face of institutional corruption. Unlike the research on psychological underpinnings, research on better appreciating myriad institutional contexts and how different institutional configurations may lead to different kinds of entrepreneurial actions (for example, bribing as an EA to address institutional corruption) is still very limited.

**Organizational Building Blocks (Routines/ Dynamic Capabilities)**

Finally, I observe a linkage between organizational building blocks (namely routines and capabilities) and EA. Teece (2012) is the first to articulate this linkage in a commentary piece published in *Journal of Management Studies* under the title “Dynamic Capabilities: Routines versus Entrepreneurial Action”. Teece (2012) argues for a key role of individual executives (and their associated entrepreneurial actions) in helping build dynamic capabilities. And while Teece (2012) makes a conceptual argument, Brettel, Mauer, Engelen & Küpper (2012) go further and test empirically the effect of entrepreneurial actions – namely effectuation and causation – on a firm’s innovation capabilities. Last, but not the least, Kaul develops a formal model which predicts that “firms are preferred where entrepreneurial action results in the creation of combinations of assets that are rare, valuable, and difficult to imitate (i.e., the creation of strategic capabilities)” (emphasis mine) (2013: 1765).
2.2 Dominant Forms of Entrepreneurial Action

The two most widely discussed forms of EA in the entrepreneurship literature are opportunity-driven and necessity/poverty-driven EA. Below I briefly review them.3

Opportunity-driven Entrepreneurial Action

The literature on opportunity-driven entrepreneurial action has long assumed that entrepreneurs are motivated by *profit* to identify, evaluate, and pursue opportunities to produce new goods and services (cf. Foss & Klein, 2012; McMullen & Shepherd, 2006). This focus on profit as the motivator for EA is consistent with a “Silicon Valley model” type of entrepreneurship where actors recognize, pursue, and freely act on profitable opportunities (Aldrich & Ruef, 2018; Welter, et al., 2017).

The opportunity-driven EA perspective characterizes *uncertainty* as the key knowledge hurdle facing entrepreneurs (Klein, 2008). Uncertainty manifests as doubt, which actors must overcome for entrepreneurial action to occur (Autio, et al., 2013; Townsend, et al., 2018). Furthermore, because of the emphasis on an entrepreneur’s judgements and beliefs in the face of uncertainty, most opportunity-driven EA frameworks have a *future*-orientated temporal orientation (Wood, Bakker, & Fisher, 2021). As Klein notes: “Entrepreneurship is conceived as the act of putting resources at risk, with profit as the reward for anticipating *future* market conditions correctly, or at least more correctly than other entrepreneurs” (2008, p.186, emphasis added). At the same time, opportunity-driven EA emphasizes the *novelty* of opportunities and actions. Indeed, entrepreneurial opportunities are defined as “those situations in which *new* goods, services, raw materials, and organizing methods can be introduced and sold” (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000, p. 220, emphasis added). Hence, novelty and innovation are “inherent” to opportunity-driven EA (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006).

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3 The discussion herewith on opportunity-driven and necessity-driven entrepreneurial actions has been co-authored with my supervisors Prof. Larry Plummer and Prof. Simon Parker and is currently going through a first round of revise-and-resubmit with the Academy of Management Journal. I take ownership for the research design, data collection, data analysis and writing of the findings for this AMJ submission and I am the first author for the same.
Necessity-driven Entrepreneurial Action

Necessity entrepreneurship in contrast is motivated by meeting *subsistence* needs (Bruton, Ketchen, & Ireland, 2013). EA in poverty settings usually entails informal and non-scalable solo business activities (Alvarez & Barney, 2014), providing barely enough income for the entrepreneur and their family.

The knowledge problem of necessity entrepreneurs is one of *scarcity*. This has several dimensions. First, scarce human capital, property rights and financial capital constrain the knowledge of necessity entrepreneurs, and hence the value of the opportunities underpinning EA in this context (Webb, Kistruck, Ireland & Ketchen, 2010; Alvarez & Barney, 2014). Second, there may be ‘institutional voids’, such as missing formal institutions and limited access to centers of education, that inhibit the knowledge transfers needed to overcome knowledge scarcity (Sutter, Kistruck & Morris, 2014). Third, and more positively, scarcity can also compel necessity entrepreneurs to identify novel market niches (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Lampel, Honig & Drori, 2014; Block, Kohn, Miller & Ullrich, 2015; Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2017). For instance, bricoleurs can overcome resource scarcity by exercising ingenuity to experiment and improvise, thereby creating unique solutions to meet customer needs (Baker & Nelson, 2005).

In terms of temporal orientation, necessity entrepreneurs predominantly focus on the *present*. As noted above, most necessity entrepreneurs pursue mundane opportunities which are easily imitated, so profits do not last long. Hence, immediate gains figure large in EA in this kind of setting (Alvarez & Barney, 2007). Also, necessity entrepreneurs tend to operate under conditions of resource scarcity which are known to be cognitively taxing and focus the attention of resource-poor individuals on the present (Shah, Mullainathan & Shafir, 2012). For example, obtaining enough food, shelter, and clothing for one’s family fully absorb one’s attention in the here and now, taking priority over future opportunities. Resource and knowledge scarcity and the need to survive reduce the ability (Alvarez & Barney, 2014) and inclination (Shah et al., 2012) of necessity entrepreneurs to develop more imaginative opportunity based EAs, a tendency that may be reinforced by fatalism (Shantz et al., 2018). This leaves simple, traditional, often low-value *replicative* business ideas as the dominant vehicle for necessity-driven EA.
Chapter 3

3 Research Context

Context matters. As discussed in Chapter 2, the context of opportunity driven (Silicon Valley type) entrepreneurship and the context of necessity driven entrepreneurship pose completely different set of challenges to the pursuit of entrepreneurial actions. Nevertheless, entrepreneurial actions tend to occur under a myriad set of contextual challenges and have been found to occur despite poverty (Bruton, Ketchen, & Ireland, 2013), disabilities – both cognitive and physical (Dimic & Orlov, 2014; Pagán, 2009) - and other economic, socio-cultural, cognitive, and physical/emotional challenges (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2017). While these entrepreneurial actions occur despite negative impacts on health, knowledge and motivation, the mechanisms whereby these stubborn barriers are negotiated remain underexplored.

At the same time, entrepreneurship scholars have begun to pay increasing attention to “everyday” entrepreneurship (Welter, et al., 2017), as practiced for example by self-employed tradespeople. This enables scholars to embrace one of the great social challenges facing both the developed and developing world: persistent disadvantages and socio-economic inequalities (Welter, et al., 2017). Indeed, researchers are yet to systematically explore the impact of persistent disadvantage on everyday, individual-level entrepreneurial actions, more specifically in contexts wherein institutional barriers significantly curtail these actions.

The context in which Indigenous entrepreneurship occurs on Turtle Island/Canada is one such context wherein institutional barriers, both historical and contemporary, significantly impact entrepreneurial actions. This dissertation endeavors to respectfully study this context to better appreciate both the path-dependent, well entrenched barriers as well as mitigating strategies deployed by Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs, more specifically those operating out of the Canadian Prairies (Saskatchewan).
Thus, in this chapter I review secondary data and reports generated by both national and provincial (more specifically Saskatchewan) institutions of importance to the broader context in which Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs operate, which includes highlighting some of the vivid historical features of this setting. Additionally, I endeavor to draw linkages to how this context might inform the core thesis question of - How do Métis and First Nations experiences of entrepreneurial action compare to entrepreneurial action as characterized in the literature?

Firstly, I start by first exploring the broader national historical context behind the formation of the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples (1996) and the release of the report and Calls of Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015). Secondly, at a provincial level I review the role of the Office of Treaty Commissioner (OTC) – Saskatchewan and their endeavors to respond to the Calls of Action and build awareness around Indigenous rights enshrined in the numbered treaties. Thirdly, I explore the role played by Indigenous business associations (for example, Canadian Council of Aboriginal Business), Indigenous financial institutions (for example, First Nations Bank, Clarence Campeau Development Fund, etc.) and Indigenous educational institutions (for example, First Nations University, Gabriel Dumont Institute, etc.) in fostering Indigenous economic self-determination. Collectively, this coverage helps appreciate the complexity of contemporary institutional environment in which Indigenous entrepreneurship occurs in Saskatchewan. Last but not the least, I conclude this chapter by briefly reviewing extant research on Indigenous entrepreneurship. I juxtapose this extant Indigenous entrepreneurship against the diverse context of myriad commissions, associations, and Indigenous institutions as relevant to current day Métis and First Nations pursuits of economic self-determination. All of this serves as a prelude to what follows in terms of research design, methodological approach, and consequent findings of this dissertation.

3.1 Broader National Context

Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP)

Thanks to collective and sustained efforts of Indigenous leaders and their allies who have pushed for special commissions over multiple decades, the Royal Commission
of Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) released its five-volume report in 1996 (Forsyth, 2020). Before reviewing the findings of the RCAP report it is important to first appreciate the historical context which led to this inquiry. While the history of Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island is expansive, I focus more on the history leading up to the formation of the Dominion of Canada (1867) and the subsequent passage of the Indian Act (1876).

Based on archaeological findings, it is well established, and a non-controversial claim, that Indigenous peoples have lived in current day Canada for more than 10,000 years (Epp, 1993; Whitcomb, 2005). Before Europeans arrived, Indigenous communities had established deep-rooted cultures and trade networks amongst themselves. After the arrival of Europeans, based on their intimate knowledge of their lands and travel routes, they became natural trade partners in the vibrant fur trade between North America and Europe (Epp, 1993). Indeed, the period between first contact with Europeans (15th century) and the founding of the Dominion of Canada (1867), was punctuated by numerous peace, friendship and trade treaties signed between various Indigenous communities and the British Crown. From an Indigenous perspective, treaties were used, like feasting, trade, and intermarriages, as a means of maintaining peaceful relationships (Borrows, 2005). Moreover, post the American War of Independence (1775-1783), British colonial interests saw Indigenous communities as allies in their endeavors to fend off American expansionism, including during the 1812 war.

The 1860s proved to be a tumultuous period for regional geo-politics. While civil war ravaged the United States during the Lincoln era, British colonial interests saw an opportunity for consolidation. This consolidation entailed, amongst other things, building a transnational railway line coast to coast (Canadian Pacific Railway or CPR). This set the context for the need for the Canadian Confederation to acquire lands West of Ontario for the purpose of nation building and settlement (Daschuk, 2013). Around the same time (1860-1870) the Canadian Prairies were experiencing a severe decline in game (bison) which was the main source of food security amongst Indigenous communities (Daschuk, 2013). Scarcity of game meant that most Indigenous communities were facing hunger and desperation when the 11 numbered treaties were subsequently signed between 1871 (Treaty 1) and 1921 (Treaty 11). The numbered treaties, from an Indigenous
perspective, were thus signed under varying conditions of duress, some due to emerging circumstances (for example, scarcity of game), and some due to institutional roadblocks that the Canadian government put in place to circumscribe the rights of Indigenous peoples in the newly formed Canadian nation (Daschuk, 2013; Krasowski, 2019). There are poignant accounts of food rations being withheld until chiefs agreed to lead their starving communities to marked reserves hundreds of kilometers from where the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks were being laid (Daschuk, 2013).

More specifically, Indigenous rights were circumscribed through the introduction of the Indian Act in 1876 (the same year Treaty 6 was signed; Treaty 6 territories include current day Saskatoon). In many ways the Indian Act (1876), still in effect today, is a defining institution governing the relationship between First Nations communities and Canadian state. While the 11 numbered treaties were nation-to-nation treaties signed between sovereign First Nations and the Crown, the Indian Act was a unilateral set of rules and conditions prescribed by the Canadian State, designed to circumscribe everyday mobility, choices, and actions. Further, while Indigenous communities have a long history of signing treaties for maintaining “peaceful relations” and co-existence amongst equals, the Indian Act was put in place to establish “dominance” over Indigenous peoples (Kovach, 2013; Krasowski, 2019). For instance, this included an extra-legal Pass & Permit system which existed from the 1890s until the 1950s, which severely restricted First Nations people's mobility and their ability to trade. Indeed, if a First Nations farmer in Saskatchewan needed to sell their produce outside their reserve, they needed a special permit (extra-legal) from the Indian Agent appointed by the then Canadian Department of Indian Affairs (see Alex Williams’ documentary The Pass System, 2015). See Figure 5.

Moreover, until 1951 the Indian Act prohibited Indigenous communities from seeking legal restitution, i.e., as per the Indian Act and by law, they could not seek legal

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4 The term Indigenous covers First Nations, Mētis (mixed European and First Nations heritage) and Inuit communities. Mētis and Inuit are not governed by the Indian Act but have their own contentious history with Canadian institutions. For an appreciation of various Indigenous sub-groups, see Chelsea Vowel’s (2016) – Indigenous writes: A guide to First Nations, Mētis and Inuit issues in Canada
help for any small or big grievances. Right to vote was not granted until 1960. Residential schools, established in the 1880s, were leveraged to use education systems as a means for further institutionalizing the extinguishment of First Nations cultural practices. See Figure 6. The last residential school was closed in 1996 and was in George Gordon First Nation, a few kilometers from Regina (capital of Saskatchewan and part of Treaty 4 territories).

Figure 5: Alex Willams’ documentary – The Pass System (Source: The Pass System – Official Facebook Page)

Figure 6: Residential School System – Canadian Government Motives (Source – Social Media)
While admittedly abridged, it is this historical background (see Table 1 for further details) and consequent Indigenous resistance and activism that led to the formation of the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples in 1996.

**Figure 7: Indigenous Dances/ Cultural Practices Banned (Source: Social Media)**
Table 1: Short history of Indigenous communities in Canada, with an emphasis on Saskatchewan (Source – Multiple Archival)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Key Event(s)/ Historical-Institutional Imprints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15th Century</td>
<td>First European Contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1613</td>
<td>Two Row Wampum Covenant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17th-18th Century</td>
<td>Vibrant fur-trade period, and a practice of treaty-signing and peaceful bargaining for harmonious political, cultural, social and economic coexistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1763</td>
<td>The Royal Proclamation (King of England recognized “native people had title to their land” and “it could only be surrendered or ceded through negotiations”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1764</td>
<td>Treaty of Niagara (built on a foundation of “Peace and Friendship” and to establish “nation-to-nation” relationship)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812</td>
<td>U.S-Canada War (British forces and Indigenous communities fought as allies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>Formation of Dominion Canada (including present day Ontario and Québec)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871-1921</td>
<td>Numbered Treaties (11 treaties between Crown and Indigenous peoples establishing terms of transfer for huge swaths/ thousands of square kms of land)/ Saskatchewan comprises of Treaty 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 10 lands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876 – till date</td>
<td>The Indian Act (legislation which institutionalized the status of Indigenous peoples as “wards”, effectively minors-children, of the Crown and granting the federal government “complete control over political, social, economic and cultural aspects” of Indigenous peoples’ lives).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>Nicholas Flood Davin “Father of residential schools” submits his report and recommendations for administration of industrial boarding schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Department of Indian Affairs established (John A. Macdonald – First Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>North-West Rebellion, Louis Riel, Métis leader trial and execution (Regina)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Federal government and churches enter into formal partnership in operation of Indian schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>Saskatchewan, earlier part of North-West Provinces, established as a separate province, with Regina as capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885-1950s</td>
<td>Pass &amp; Permit system (for example, permit to “sell your crops” to another town, pass to “visit daughter in city”, etc.)/ Potlatches banned/ Legal counsel banned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930s onwards</td>
<td>Forced/ Non-consensual sterilization of Indigenous women (as recently as 2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Federation of Saskatchewan Indians (FSI) created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Ban on legal counsel lifted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>Sixties Scoop – a period when thousands of Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families by child welfare services and placed in foster care homes in Saskatchewan, and in some cases across Canada and US</td>
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<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Right to vote granted (to Indigenous communities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Pierre Trudeau Government releases the “White Paper” to facilitate “integration” (perceived as assimilation) of Indigenous peoples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967-1982</td>
<td>Period of rise in Indigenous activism and mobilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>First Nations University (FNU), formerly Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC), federated through activism by Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN). FNU currently has three campuses – Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Métis (meaning “mixed blood” in French and which usually refers to people with mixed ancestry), recognized as “Aboriginal” through Constitution Act, 1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Prior to 1985, Status-Indian women who married non-Indian men, would lose their status. The enactment of Bill C-31 made amends and restored Indian status for those women who lost through marriage with non-Indian men.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>The Oka crisis (Mohawk people protest expansion of municipal golf course onto their sacred burial grounds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Federal government establishes Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) with a mandate to examine relationships among Aboriginal peoples, the Canadian Government and Canadian society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Last residential school closed (Gordon Indian Residential school, Saskatchewan), concluding a phase-out initiated in the 1960s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) releases comprehensive research report on Indigenous peoples in Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000s</td>
<td>Starlight tours: Accusations against Saskatoon Police Services for arresting Aboriginal men for minor offences (for example, drunkenness), driving them out of city limits during dead of winter, and abandoning them there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Canadian Govt (PM Harper) issued an apology for residential schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012–till date</td>
<td>Idle No More (Social Movement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016 (16th Aug)</td>
<td>Colten Boushie (22 year old Indigenous boy) killed by a Saskatchewan farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 (9th Feb)</td>
<td>North Battleford, SK jury (no Indigenous members on jury) finds Gerald Stanley (farmer who shot Colten Boushie) – Not Guilty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 (Feb-Sept)</td>
<td>Justice for our Children Campaign (Regina, SK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 (Jan)</td>
<td>Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe issues apology for Sixties Scoop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As mentioned earlier, the RCAP report consisted of five-volumes. Over 4000 pages it attempted to set out a 20-year agenda for implementing recommended changes. In a nutshell, the RCAP report shed light on the long-lasting consequences of policy actions that “removed Indigenous people from their traditional territories, split kinship groups and families apart, actively suppressed Indigenous cultural practices and traditions, and kept Indigenous people in a state of poverty and poor health” (Forsyth, 2020). And while the RCAP report is credited for drawing the attention of non-Indigenous Canadians to the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada, it has also been criticized, including by prominent members of the commission itself like Paul Chartrand, as not much has changed during the 20-year period since its publication (Source: CBC News, 2016). Having said that, the RCAP is recognized by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), chaired by Murray Sinclair (Former Canadian Senator), to have helped in drawing attention and redirecting conversations towards the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada. I now turn to the work of the TRC which has built on the findings and recommendations of the RCAP report.

**Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Report/ Calls to Action**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was created through a legal settlement between Residential Schools Survivors, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), Inuit representatives, and the parties responsible for creation/operation of the
residential schools, i.e., the Canadian federal government and various church bodies. The TRC’s mandate was to inform all Canadians about the uncomfortable and disturbing truths about what happened in residential schools (National Center for Truth and Reconciliation, 2021). Towards this end, the TRC documented the truth of Survivors, their families, communities, and those who were personally affected by residential schools. This included First Nations, Métis and Inuit former residential school students, their families, communities, the churches, former school employees, government officials and other Canadians.

In June 2015, the TRC released its findings along with 94 "calls to action". The National Center for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) which draws its mandate from the TRC has developed multiple educational resources, including a pocket-sized booklet, for the purpose of building awareness around these 94 calls to action. See Figure 8 below.

**Figure 8: TRC Calls for Action - Researcher’s Personal Copy**

Calls 1-42 focus on “Addressing the Legacy” of residential schools in “Child Welfare” (Calls 1-5), “Education” (Calls 6-12), “Language and Culture” (Calls 13-17), “Health” (Calls 18-24) and “Justice” (Calls 25-42). Subsequently Calls 43-94 focus on actions “Towards Reconciliation” calling the “Canadian Governments” to adopt UNDRIP (Calls 43-44) and jointly developing a “Royal Proclamation and Covenant” (Calls 45-47), calling “church parties” to establish “Settlement Agreement” (Calls 48-49), to change “Legal Systems” (Calls 50-52), to establish a “National Council” (Calls 53-56),
education for “Public Servants” (Call 57) and issuance of “Church Apologies” (Call 58-61). Additionally these Calls for Action urge changing “Education” curriculum and systems, including SSHRC grants and funding to advance understanding of reconciliation (Calls 62-65), establish “Youth programs” (Call 66), funding for “Museums and Archives” (Call 67-70), providing vital statistics on “Missing Children and Burial Information” (Calls 71-76), providing the right statistics and records to the “National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation” (Calls 77-78), amending, revising and developing a national heritage plan for Indigenous “Commemoration” (Call 79-83), increase funding for “Media”, including CBC, to properly reflect the diverse cultures, languages, and perspectives of Aboriginal peoples (Calls 84-86), celebrate and develop Indigenous “Sports” and athletes (Calls 87-91), foster economic reconciliation through changing “Business” procurement policies (Call 92) and finally, revision and development of orientation kit for “Newcomers” to Canada (Calls 93-94). Additionally, this TRC booklet lists not only 94 calls for action, but also the TRC’s 10 “principles of reconciliation” and the 46 articles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Given that the focus of this dissertation is Metis and First Nations entrepreneurship and economic self-determination, it is important to point out that call to action # 92 explicitly speaks to the role of business in reconciliation pertaining to “land, sustainability and economic development.”. See Call # 92 text, as relevant to the role of business, below. Additionally, Figure 9 depicts an exemplar “Building Economic Reconciliation” conference as a response to TRC Call for Action # 92.

We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources. This would include, but not be limited to, the following:

i. Commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships and obtaining the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.

ii. Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training and education opportunities in the corporate sector and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.
iii. Provide education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights and anti-racism.

Figure 9: Economic Reconciliation Conference – Acting on TRC #92 (Source: Researcher’s Personal Photo Archive)
Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Métis Experience (Volume 3)

The TRC report recognizes that Canadian Government policy, as reflected in the Indian Act (1876), but not limited to, “failed to take into account the development of new Aboriginal nations, and the implications of the Indian Act’s definition of who was and was not a “status Indian”. Indeed, as acknowledge in the TRC report’s Volume 3 focusing explicitly on “the Métis experience”, there was no place for the Métis Nation that proclaimed itself in the Canadian Northwest in the nineteenth century. Neither was there any place for “the large number of Aboriginal people who, for a variety of reasons, chose not to terminate their Treaty rights, or for those women, and their children, who lost their Indian Act status by marrying a person who did not have such status”. These individuals were classed or identified alternately as “non-status Indians,” “half-breeds,” or “Métis.” Given these complications, the TRC report Volume 3 uses the term Métis to describe “people of mixed descent who were not able, or chose not, to be registered as Indians under the Indian Act.”

This TRC special volume on the Métis experience further addresses the misconception about the Métis not being impacted by the residential school system. It points out as Canada’s residential school system was a collaboration between the federal government and the churches; and when it came to the Métis, these partners had differing agendas. Since the churches wished to convert as many Aboriginal children (and, indeed, as many people) as possible, they had no objection to admitting Métis children into residential schools. Métis children were thus, for example, among the first students enrolled at the school at Fort Providence in the Northwest Territories. The TRC report points that this was common across various church denominations (whether they be Catholic, Anglican, etc.).

The federal government on the other hand, as per this report, was “conflicted”. The Métis were perceived as ‘dangerous classes’ and indeed needed to be “civilize[d]” and “assimilate[d]”. However, from a jurisdictional perspective the federal government believed that “the responsibility educating and assimilating the Métis people lay with provincial and territorial governments”. On the other hand, provincial governments were
“reluctant” to provide these “services” to Métis people. This meant that the provincial governments did not see it as their responsibility to provide schools in Métis communities thus leaving Métis parents with no option but to try and get their children accepted at residential schools (NCTR, 2021; TRC, 2015).

This stance by provincial governments only changed after World War II, the report highlights. This meant that already multiple generations of the Métis experienced similar quality of education (or lack of) and a curriculum focused on training them for manual labor and trades, like the experience of First Nations children. As the report poignantly argues, “the Métis experience is an important reminder that the impact of residential schools extends beyond the formal residential school program that Indian Affairs operated” and the history of the Métis experience with residential schools “remain[s] to be written”. Indeed, Métis leader Louis Riel himself attended one such Catholic school in the 1860s, and subsequently taught in one such school for Métis boys in Montana (NCTR, 2021; TRC, 2015).

Moreover, while Métis (and the Inuit) were not covered by the Indian Act of 1876, like their First Nations relatives, they moreover have their own distinctive history whereby no numbered treaties were signed with them nor any reserve land allotted exclusively for them. Having said that, with the numbered Treaties, Canada began requiring that Aboriginal people declare themselves to be either ‘Indian’ (and covered by Treaty), or ‘Half-breed’ and eligible for scrip (a certificate that could be exchanged for land or, later, for land or money) (NCTR, 2021; TRC, 2015). Further, while First Nations people were recognized by the Indian Act, albeit as “wards” of the federal government, the Métis identity simply did not exist (until the Constitutional change in 1982). This meant, as was the experience of Maria Campbell (Métis author, most known for her seminal memoir Halfbreed, 1973), whose personal story is covered in the exclusive TRC report on the Métis experience (Volume 3), many Métis families experienced land dispossession as “[t]heir land was taken over by new settlers, and they retreated to shacks on road allowances, the thirty-foot-wide (nine-metre) strips of government-owned land on either side of a road.” (TRC, 2015). A quote from Campbell’s memoir about her year-long experience at a Beauval, Saskatchewan residential school (also cited in the TRC
report on the Métis experience), is instructive of the common residential experience of hundreds of Métis (and First Nations) children.

We prayed endlessly, but I cannot recall ever doing much reading or school-work as Momma had said I would—just the prayers and my job, which was cleaning the dorms and hallways. I do recall most vividly a punishment I once received. We weren’t allowed to speak Cree, only French and English, and for disobeying this, I was pushed into a small closet with no windows or light, and locked in for what seemed like hours. I was almost paralyzed with fright when they came to let me out.

Further, scholars like Michel Hogue (author of *Metis and the medicine line: Creating a border and dividing a people*, 2015) have pointed out difficulties with naming peoples with such “diverse origins”. For instance, he points out that even using the accented term “Métis” is problematic as it privileges and implies “French Canadian paternal ancestry” and thus excludes other forms of diverse ancestries. In *Metis and the medicine line: Creating a border and dividing a people* (2015), he chooses to address this problem by using the non-accented “Metis” while also acknowledging that “The Metis communities that coalesced in the nineteenth-century Plains borderlands had diverse origins that are perhaps not adequately captured by the term ‘Metis.’” These diverse origins are also reflected in the development of the language Michif as a distinctive marker of Metis identity. Indeed, “Michif intertwines Cree verbs with French nouns but also displays a strong Ojibwa influence that reflects the Ojibwa heritage of many Metis families” (Hogue, 2015; p.41). Hogue further points out the myriad names they called themselves, including but not limited to, “les gens libres” (the free people), “bois-brûlés” (burnt wood people), or the “New Nation” to describe themselves. Similarly, he points out that the Crees referred to the Metis as Otipemisiwak, which was translated variously as “their own boss,” the “free people,” or “the people who own themselves” (Hogue, 2015). Furthermore, given the historical role that Metis peoples played as “intermediaries” in the fur-trade, on both sides of the “medicine line”, i.e., the 49th parallel (U.S.-Canada border) and by virtue of kinship ties with multiple Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, as well as their history as “mobile peoples” serves as another distinctive cultural marker that Metis peoples find themselves identifying with (Hogue, 2015).
3.2 Saskatchewan: Context of Numbered Treaties and the Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC)

As highlighted earlier, while the Indian Act was a unilateral set of rules and conditions prescribed by the Canadian State, designed to circumscribe everyday mobility, choices, and actions, the 11 numbered treaties signed in the erstwhile North-West Territories (1871-1921), were nation-to-nation treaties signed between sovereign First Nations and the Crown. The Office of Treaty Commissioner (OTC) - Saskatchewan, which is based out of Saskatoon, endeavors to “promote respect and understanding of Treaties, and to support Treaty parties in maintaining and enhancing the Treaty relationship through dialogue, neutral support, assistance with resolving disputes, and commitment to the Treaty principles”. Building this awareness takes various forms, including collaborations with local museums. See Figure 10 – a & b below.

**Figure 10 (a & b): Royal Saskatchewan Museum – Numbered Treaties**
*(Researcher’s Personal Photo Archive)*
Additionally, among its aims and programs, OTC has a clear mandate to deliver on economic reconciliation. For example, a principal objective of OTC is “resolving outstanding issues between the Government of Canada” and Indigenous nations to “enhance governance” and achieve “economic independence.” Among its efforts to do this, OTC is helping to resolve outstanding issues between the Government of Canada and the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations around treaty-based hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering Indigenous rights, as well as issues relating to justice, education and child welfare, and health (Office of Treaty Commissioner, 2021).

A key initiative co-organized by the OTC with the City of Saskatoon to raise awareness about Indigenous culture, treaty rights, residential school system, etc., is the “Rock your Roots – Walk of Reconciliation” event celebrated every June 21st (National Aboriginal Peoples Day). This is an annual event the OTC and City of Saskatoon have been organizing since 2016 as an explicit response to the TRC 2015 report and its 94 calls to action. See Figures 11 (a, b & c), 12, 13, 14 and 15 below.
Figure 11 (a, b & c): Rock Your Roots – Walk of Reconciliation, Saskatoon - June 2019 (Source: Researcher’s Personal Photo Archive)
Figure 12: Rock Your Roots – Walk of Reconciliation, Saskatoon - June 2019
(Source: Researcher’s Personal Photo Archive)
Figure 13: Rock Your Roots – Métis Dance “Jigging”, Saskatoon - June 2019
(Source: Researcher’s Personal Photo Archive)

Figure 14: Rock Your Roots – First Nations Powwow, Saskatoon - June 2019
(Source: Researcher’s Personal Photo Archive)
3.3 National and Saskatchewan based Indigenous Associations and Institutions

Canadian Council for Aboriginal Businesses (https://www.ccab.com/)

The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Businesses (CCAB) has origins in Ontario and was founded by Murray B. Koffler (founder of Shoppers Drug Mart) in 1982 along with other prominent business and political leaders (including former Prime Minister Paul Martin) with the explicit goal to “build skills and develop capacity for young people and adults” (Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, 2021).

Since 1982, the population of self-employed Indigenous entrepreneurs has continued to grow (15.6% between 2006 and 2011), albeit at a slower rate than before (e.g., growth was 37.6% between 2001 and 2006), while the population of self-employed Canadians overall has declined (-4.4% between 2006 and 2011) (CCAB, 2016). However, barriers to
starting and growing a business continue to be substantial for Indigenous entrepreneurs as they remain less likely to be self-employed (6.3 percent) than the rest of the Canadian population (10.7 percent) (CCAB, 2016). Further, Indigenous businesses generally tend to be small, with three-quarters (73%) being unincorporated and more than six in ten (64%) have no employees. Moreover, these businesses primarily focus on local markets.

In terms of major barriers to growth, in addition to lack of access to finance there are concerns around access to basic infrastructure. This includes but is not limited to internet connectivity. Indeed, internet access is not universally available to Indigenous businesses. As per a national CCAB survey (2016), 14% Indigenous businesses had no Internet connection and 26% respondents lamented about unreliable connections. These problems are further exacerbated for businesses located on-reserve. Among firms with an Internet connection, most use some form of social media for their business, with Facebook by far the most used tool (more so than company websites) (CCAB, 2016).

In addition to lack of infrastructure, access to financing and finding qualified workers have also been identified by the CCAB as challenges to helping start and grow Indigenous businesses. Notwithstanding the challenges, CCAB continues to focus on the opportunities and continues to work towards improving economic self-reliance amongst Aboriginal communities while assisting corporate businesses.


The NIEDB has a mandate to provide advice and guidance to the federal government on issues related to Indigenous economic opportunities that enable the Indigenous peoples of Canada to have a voice in government policy. Their Board works to bring visibility to the economic disparity between Indigenous communities and other Canadians, and endeavors to support Indigenous people in increasing participation in the economy. As identified in their 2016-2019 Strategic Plan, the NIEDB is focused on the following key priorities: enhancing Indigenous community readiness for economic opportunities, enhancing access to capital, stabilizing revenues, building the economic
potential of Indigenous lands, minimizing environmental impacts and broadly supporting Indigenous businesses (NIEDB, 2021).

For instance, NIEDB research shows that “less than one per cent of Indigenous people in the country are employed in the technology fields” (Windspeaker, 2021). Chief Clarence Louie of Osoyoos First Nation in British Columbia, who stepped down from his role of the chair of the NIEDB board recently in 2021, in a recent interview with Windspeaker has argued for the need of “digital sovereignty” amongst Indigenous communities as it impacts not only economic development but a range of other issues like healthcare and education and even Indigenous language reclamation. Chief Louie further has argued “Yes, boil-water advisories are important. No Native community should be on boil water advisories. But no Native community should also be not connected.” NIEDB’s work thus focuses on researching and highlighting numerous such infrastructural barriers to Indigenous economic self-determination, while at the same time identifying benchmark practices and financial readiness of Indigenous communities.

Métis National Council (MNC - https://www2.metisnation.ca/)

The Métis have struggled for generations for recognition in the Canadian federation and it was only in 1982, they were finally recognized and affirmed through the Constitution Act, 1982. The Métis National Council (MNC) was subsequently formed to help the Métis nation have its own “voice”, in comparison to earlier Prairie Métis associations which were subsumed under a broader Native Council of Canada (Métis National Council, 2021). Thus since 1983, the MNC has represented the Métis Nation nationally and internationally. It receives its mandate and direction from the democratically elected leadership of Métis governments in the five westernmost provinces, namely - the Manitoba Métis Federation, Métis Nation-Saskatchewan, Métis Nation of Alberta, Métis Nation British Columbia and Métis Nation of Ontario. In addition to providing a unified voice and leadership to the Métis Nation, the MNC also develops informational material to focus on the following fives aspects of Métis self-determination: political development, social development, economic development, cultural development and global challenge of climate change.
Given the complications associated with Métis membership and identification (as discussed earlier in the TRC Report – Volume 3 - The Métis experience), in November 2018, the General Assembly of the Métis nation approved and released a map of the Métis homeland to help clarify Métis membership identification. As is evident from the map below (Figure 16), the Métis homeland identifies its roots in the Red River region of Manitoba (modern day Winnipeg). From there it extends westwards and broadly covers the three Prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, additionally extending into parts of northwestern Ontario, northeastern B.C. and southern North-West Territories.

**Figure 16: Métis Nation Map, Nov 2018 (Source: Social Media, Twitter)**

While there has been criticism of this map from certain quarters of Canadian society, including Indigenous peoples, Will Goodon, a delegate to the general assembly of the Métis National Council, has argued that the map was not meant to be used to lay claim to territory to the lands outlined, but rather to help Métis governments decide who their members are (Source: CBC News, Dec 1, 2018). "This is something that I think was necessary now to be put forward because of some of the external issues like what's going on in Nova Scotia, Quebec," said Goodon. Goodon was referring to groups in eastern Canada who are self-identifying as Métis. Responding to this development, other
Indigenous leaders like Chief Lynn Acoose of Sakimay First Nation (recently renamed Zagime Anishinabek First Nation), Saskatchewan have at the same time expressed worries about how these processes are used as “a divide and conquer strategy by the federal government to pit Indigenous groups against each other” (Source: CBC News, Dec 1, 2018). "We were part of a larger kinship system that didn't necessarily divide the Métis and the First Nations people," said Acoose. That kinship system is something that Goodon agrees with. "If you go and look at the Métis citizens who live in the three Prairie provinces [referring to Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba], we're all related to each other," said Goodon. Both Goodon (Métis) and Acoose (First Nations) agree that the lines of division are arbitrary (Source: CBC News, Dec 1, 2018). The Métis National Council thus continues to work towards articulation of a unified political “voice” for the Métis people by focusing on governance and citizenship, whilst being cognizant of the interconnectedness and kinship systems that exist, especially in the Prairies.

Métis Nation of Saskatchewan ([https://metisnationsk.com/](https://metisnationsk.com/))

While the Métis National Council endeavors to develop a nation-wide unified voice for all Métis people, provincial organizations like Métis Nation of Saskatchewan (there are similar organizations in other provinces all affiliated to the Métis National Council) which serve to voice the concerns and issues related of the approximately 70,000 Métis people in Saskatchewan. Their website offers insight into the question of “who are the Métis”, as below.

The Métis emerged as a distinct people/Nation in the historic Northwest during the course of the 18th & 19th centuries prior to Canada becoming a formal nation state. While the initial offspring of these unions were individuals who possessed mixed ancestry, the gradual establishment of distinct Métis communities, outside of First Nations and European cultures and settlements, as well as the subsequent inter-marriages between Métis women and Métis men, resulted in the genesis of a new Indigenous people – the Métis. The definition of Métis as adopted by Métis Nation-Saskatchewan is: “a person who self identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, and is accepted by the Métis Nation.”

The Métis Nation grounds its assertion of Aboriginal nationhood on well-recognized international principles, including a shared history, common culture (song, dance, dress, national symbols, etc.), unique language (Michif, with various regional dialects), extensive kinship connections from Ontario westward, a distinct way of life, traditional
territory, and a collective consciousness. The area known as the “historic Métis Nation Homeland” includes the 3 Prairie provinces and extends into Ontario, British Columbia, Northwest Territories and the northern United States.

The Métis are recognized in the 1982 Canadian Constitution “Section 35 (1) the existing Treaty and aboriginal rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed;” (2) In this Act, “aboriginal peoples of Canada” includes Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples.

The Métis Nation of Saskatchewan website also sheds light on historical injustices faced by the Métis of Saskatchewan, like those experienced by First Nations peoples of Saskatchewan, such as “dysfunctions created by Residential Schools, foster care, the Sixties Scoop, addictions and other sources of pain in many communities” as shared by MN-S President McCallum. Notwithstanding this painful history, the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan seeks to “to concentrate on clearing a path for future generations – a path built on trust, respect, feeling, caring, tolerance, understanding, acceptance and forgiveness” and envisions building on “a long history of self-government” (for example, formal rules and laws to govern the buffalo hunt or creation of provisional governments during the nineteenth century). Further, the regional structure of MN-SK is composed of three Northern SK regions, three Western SK regions and three Eastern SK regions. In terms of affiliates and partnerships, Métis Nation of Saskatchewan is affiliated to Métis focused funding institutions (for example, Clarence Campeau Development Fund and SMEDCO, discussed later in this chapter) and educational institutions (for example, Gabriel Dumont Institute, also discussed later in this chapter).

**National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA) and Aboriginal Financial Institutions (AFIs)**

NACCA is a network of more than 50 AFIs focused on fostering economic self-determination and growth amongst Indigenous people in Canada. AFIs were created in the late 1980s and early 1990s by Aboriginal leaders, the Government of Canada, and a Native Economic Development Program initiative to address the lack of available capital to finance Aboriginal small-business development. Aboriginal Financial Institutions (AFIs) are autonomous, Indigenous-controlled, community-based financial organizations.
AFIs provide developmental lending, business financing and support services to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit businesses in all provinces and territories. Support includes business loans, non-repayable contributions, financial and management consulting, and business start-up and aftercare services (NACCA, 2021).

The purpose of NACCA and its network of AFIs is to increase and nurture Indigenous entrepreneurs through loans as they are likely unable to secure loans from highly regulated conventional lenders (NACCA, 2021). NACCA’s Board of Directors is 100% Indigenous, and all entrepreneurs supported by their AFI network are members of a First Nation, Metis, or Inuit community. Moreover, NACCA was developed as a trade association to provide support for AFIs; to provide best practices for lending to Aboriginal people; to advocate to government and potential funders; and to promote the AFI network. Since the 1980s, NACCA’s AFI network has provided nearly $3 billion to support Indigenous economic development and the unique and specific needs of 50,000 Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) loans in Indigenous communities all across Canada.

*Figure 17: Map of Aboriginal Financial Institutions, Canada (Source: NACCA)*
More recently in 2021, NACCA has been involved in the creation of the Indigenous Growth Fund (IGF) and raised $150 million to support Indigenous entrepreneurs in Canada. This fund creation is through a partnership between NACCA, the Government of Canada, BDC (“the bank for Canadian entrepreneurs” as per their website) and other government partners. IGF claims to be currently “the largest Indigenous social impact fund”. Further, IGF will be operational, and capital will begin to be deployed to AFIs later in 2021. Once fully utilized, the Fund will increase lending by $75 million annually with loans to roughly 500 Indigenous businesses (NACCA, 2021). See Appendix B for list of all 59 AFIs in Canada.

**Saskatchewan Indigenous Equity Foundation** ([http://www.sief.sk.ca/](http://www.sief.sk.ca/))

The Saskatchewan Indigenous Equity Foundation (SIEF) was established in 1986 and claims to be “one of the first Aboriginal financial institutions in Canada to offer developmental lending to First Nation businesses in Saskatchewan” (SIEF, 2021). In 1986, SIEF was a first of its kind Aboriginal Financial Institution (AFI) in Canada and since then the number has grown to 59 AFI’s (as discussed under NACCA above). SIEF offers commercial and agriculture lending and business consulting services to First Nations businesses in Saskatchewan. Further, SIEF was established as traditional
business financing was not, and continues to be not, readily available for many First Nation Bands and individuals. It is jointly owned by the 74 First Nations of Saskatchewan and is affiliated with their provincial political leadership body the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN).

**SaskMétis Economic Development Corporation (SMEDCO - [https://smedco.ca/](https://smedco.ca/))**

SMEDCO was established in 1987 and is owned by the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan Secretariat Inc. They provide financial incentives for Métis-controlled small businesses so that “they may start up, acquire, and/or expand their operations in our great province” (SMEDCO, 2021). In addition to financial packages ranging from “$30,000 to 500,000+” SMEDCO also provides educational resources like a detailed 5-Part “Small Business Owner’s Handbook” which provides detailed guidance for a broad range of start-up activities from knowing “is running a business for you?”, to business planning, to hiring to bookkeeping. It is interesting to note that some of the guidance provided in these educational resources might come across as the “non-Indigenous” way of doing business, for example, Part I of the SMEDCO Small Business Owner’s Handbook reminds it’s Métis audience that “The only reason for going into business or buying a business is to make money!”

**Clarence Campeau Development Fund ([http://www.clarencecampeau.com](http://www.clarencecampeau.com))**

The Clarence Campeau Development Fund (CCDF), established in 1997 by the Métis Society of Saskatchewan in partnership with the Provincial Government of Saskatchewan, claims to be “the first stop for Métis entrepreneurs” for their economic development and funding needs. In addition to business loans and grants they also provide support services including training and business planning. For example, during weeklong celebration of Indigenous Economic Development Day (week of May 10th, 2021) their event calendar included exclusive training workshops/ seminars focused on “Indigenous Women in Entrepreneurship”, “Financing for Métis women in Saskatchewan” and “Indigenous Business Food Stories”.
An Economic Impact Study conducted by CCDF found that the fund contributed $79.1 million to the Canadian GDP for the five-year period between 2014 and 2018 (both inclusive). The impact of the fund is also evident in the estimated 11,890 jobs – direct and indirect – claimed to be created through the Fund’s investments.

**First Nations Bank** ([http://www.fnbc.ca/](http://www.fnbc.ca/))

**Figure 19: First Nations Bank, Saskatoon (Source: Researcher’s Personal Photo Archive)**

First Nations Bank (FNB) was created as a partnership between SIEF and TD Bank. It was conceived and developed “by Indigenous People, for Indigenous People and regards itself as an important step toward Indigenous economic self-sufficiency”. While the First Nations Bank has roots in Saskatchewan and has its headquarters in Saskatoon,
since 2009 the Bank is over 80% owned and controlled by “Indigenous shareholders from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Quebec”. FNB’s very first branch was opened in Saskatoon in 1997, its most recent branch (ninth) was opened in May 2019 in Enoch Cree Nation (Alberta). Meanwhile, FNB’s total assets have grown from $ 12 million in 1997 to $ 672 million in 2019. Moreover, in addition to delivering on their vision of being “The Indigenous Bank”, FNB is also actively involved in Indigenous communities through initiatives focused on Indigenous youth, their education and health, reclamation of Indigenous languages and cultural practices, etc.

**First Nations University** ([https://www.fnuniv.ca/](https://www.fnuniv.ca/))

In May 1976, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN – provincial political leadership body representing 74 First Nations communities in Saskatchewan and also co-owner of First Nations Bank) entered into a federation agreement with the University of Regina, to establish the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC). The formation of First Nations University was based on a growing recognition amongst First Nations Leadership in Saskatchewan about education being “the new buffalo”5 (Stonechild, 2006).

On June 21, 2003, the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College officially changed its name to the First Nations University of Canada (FNU) (First Nations University of Canada, 2020). Further, since the 1970s the First Nations University has grown (now has three campuses – Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert) and continues the work of “transformative impact through education based on a foundation of Indigenous Knowledge”. Many of the Regina based Indigenous entrepreneurs, Elders, business leaders and scholars interviewed for this study fondly shared the influence of the culturally sensitive and rooted in Indigenous knowledge nature of their education as a major influence on their life as well as ways of doing business.

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5 The buffalo has cultural, social, and economic significance for Plains Cree and Plains Metis alike as buffalo hunts served as a source of food, trade, cultural ceremonies and social cohesion (Hogue, 2015; Lavallee & Silverthorne, 2014; Stonechild, 2006)
Most recently in February 2019 FNU’s main Regina campus was rechristened and became the first urban reserve (atim kâ-mihkosit or Red Dog Urban Reserve) focused exclusively on fostering education steeped in Indigenous ways of being and knowledge.

**Figure 20: First Nations University, First Education-focused Urban Reserve – Signing Ceremony (Source: Social media - Archival)**

would like to invite you to the historic signing ceremony for the creation of the atim kâ-mihkosit reserve.

Details:
Wednesday February 13, 2019
Pipe Ceremony: 8:00am
Announcement: 10:00am
Figure 21 (a & b): First Nations University – Media Artifacts (Source: Social media - Archival)

Fig. 21 (a)

Fig. 21 (b)
Gabriel Dumont Institute (https://gdins.org/)

Like the mission of the First Nations University (FNU), the mission of GDI is “to promote the renewal and development of Métis culture through research; materials development, collection, and distribution; and the design, development, and delivery of Métis-specific educational programs and services” (Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2021). Towards this end, the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research was founded in 1980 to “help meet the educational and cultural needs of Saskatchewan’s Métis community”. GDI thus claims to be “the official training and education arm of the Métis Nation” and “owned by the Métis people of Saskatchewan”. Like FNU, the educational programs offered by GDI (stand alone as well as in partnership with other educational institutions) are culturally sensitive and incorporate “a Métis cultural component”. They also offer scholarships in partnership with other Saskatchewan based government crown corporations and other private corporate stakeholders like SaskTel, SaskEnergy, Cameco, Nutrien, etc. Further in addition to fostering education and skills development, GDI also broadly focuses on building a broader appreciation of Métis culture. For instance, they have a “virtual museum” (http://www.metismuseum.ca/) which is dedicated to the “preservation and promotion of Métis history and culture” and which contains more than “11,000 texts, photos, videos, and audio files, all accessible free of charge” (Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2021).

Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (https://siit.ca/)

Again, like First Nations University (FNU) and Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI), SIIT is an Indigenous governed (more specifically First nation governed), credit granting post-secondary institution, “created in response to the need for quality post-secondary education for Indigenous people in an environment that promotes traditional ways and supports success”. It was established in 1976 and claims to be “one of only four credit-granting post-secondary institutions in the province- and the only credit granting Indigenous institution”. SIIT currently has three principal campus sites (the main campus
is in Saskatoon), nine strategically located career and trades training centres, two mobile job connection units, and over 35 community learning sites.

In conversations and observations with Indigenous entrepreneurs, Elders, business leaders and scholars it fairly evident that Indigenous youth generally feel more “represented” and hence preferred skill development and vocational training at SIIT as compared to the lack of “belonging” and historical unwelcome experiences with University campuses like University of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon) and University of Regina.

**Saskatchewan Indigenous Economic Development Network (https://siedn.ca/)**

Established in 2012, Saskatchewan First Nations Economic Development Network (SFNEDN) was created through discussions among key First Nations economic development leaders who shared common goals and a vision for First Nations economic development in Saskatchewan. The name was changed to Saskatchewan Indigenous Economic Development Network (SIEDN) in 2020 to reflect the SFNEDN represents not just First Nation peoples but “all Indigenous people”. Their four focus areas are – [i] Research & Advocacy, [ii] Capacity Development, [iii] Networking, and [iv] Communication.

To further these four goals SFNEDN (now SIEDN) regularly organizes and hosts conferences and events focusing on Indigenous economic development (for example, World Indigenous Business Forum in 2016). Their website serves as a rich source of research and resources (https://siedn.ca/research-and-resources/), including on the phenomenon of urban reserves for Indigenous economic development which I discuss in some detail below. Appendix C lists some of the Saskatchewan focused resources for facilitating economic reconciliation, including various business associations, tribal council and educational institutions. SIEDN is based out of Saskatoon.

**Urban Reserves and Saskatoon**

Roughly fifty percent of Saskatchewan’s 150,000 Indigenous population live in urban areas like Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Swift Current, Moose Jaw and other
smaller urban centres. Indeed, since the end of the pass system in the 1950s First Nations people have been relocating to cities in great numbers in search of education, employment and a better quality of life than they have access to on reserves (SFNEDN, 2016/ Soonias, Exner-Pirot, Salat & Shah, 2016).

Various First Nations signatories of the historic Treaty Land Entitlement (TLE) Framework Agreement (1992) have acquired settlement monies (worth $547 million) in lieu of land acres shortfalls and since invested these financial resources into a mix of urban and rural lands (Soonias, et al., 2016). The City of Saskatoon (aka the City of Bridges) thus has been a beneficiary of these pioneering investments in the form of urban reserves. Indeed, as Milton Tootoosis, Chair of SFNEDN (now SIEDN), writes in the introductory letter to “City of Bridges: First Nations and Métis Economic Development in Saskatoon & Region” (2016) – “The concept and value of ‘pimâčihiwin’ (making one’s own living) is slowly being realized in the twenty first century and part of that opportunity is with urban or near urban land”.

At 10.4%, Saskatoon has the second highest proportion of Indigenous peoples in a Canadian city, after Winnipeg. Further, not only is Saskatoon recognized as the site for the first urban reserve but also it boasts to be a model of Indigenous economic development for 120 such urban reserves nationwide. As of August 2014, Saskatchewan had 51 urban reserves, 39 of which were created through the TLE process, representing approximately 45% of the nation’s urban reserves. Saskatoon also hosts the First Nations Bank of Canada (discussed earlier), many other Indigenous-oriented financial and insurance service providers as well as numerous educational campuses like First Nations University and Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (again as discussed earlier). Additionally, Saskatoon neighbours the Whitecap Dakota nation, “one of the most progressive and economically astute First Nations communities in the country”; and includes Wanuskewin, one of the world’s foremost indigenous heritage parks (SFNEDN, 2016). While Regina, being the capital of Saskatchewan, continues to be the epicenter for governmental organizations, Saskatoon has emerged as an epicenter for entrepreneurship, including Indigenous entrepreneurship.
3.4 Indigenous Entrepreneurship Research – Current State and Gaps

The entrepreneurship academic conversation is dominated by a focus on opportunity-driven entrepreneurship. And while scholars have lamented this dominance and started exploring other forms of entrepreneurship, for example, necessity-driven entrepreneurship there still is a paucity of scholarly articles which explore different contexts, including Indigenous entrepreneurship. The few scholars who have focused explicitly on Indigenous entrepreneurship, have focused on the “community-focused” and nation-building aspects of Indigenous entrepreneurship as against the notion of individual pursuits for wealth and profit creation (Peredo, Anderson, Galbraith, Honig, & Dana, 2004; Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). Indeed, academics have argued that collective goals and shared ownership commonly found amongst Indigenous communities are a distinctive feature of Indigenous entrepreneurship (Peredo, et al., 2006). Moreover, extant literature on Indigenous entrepreneurship has focused on historical factors, remote geographical location, the non-availability of role models, etc., as potential deterrents to entrepreneurial activity amongst members of Indigenous communities (Pascal & Stewart, 2008).

On the other hand, the secondary literature by practitioner organizations and institutions (for example, the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, Aboriginal Financial Institutions, etc.) reviewed in detail in this chapter too emphasize community or macro-level economic development and nation-building initiatives. This further translates into a focus on addressing macro-level challenges vis-à-vis infrastructure, including funding and educational infrastructure.

However, what gets missed out are individual level socio-psychological challenges by virtue of operating under conditions of “intergenerational trauma” (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2009; Linklater, 2014; Marsh, Cote-Meek, Toulouse, Najavits, & Young, 2015). The everyday micro-psychological impacts of operating under multigenerational grief and hurt remains unexplored, more specifically in the context of Indigenous entrepreneurship as current conversations predominantly focus on nation-building and addressing basic and foundational challenges (and rightly so) associated
with the absence of funding, education, and other basic material infrastructure (roads, transportation, drinking water, internet connectivity, etc.). Further, the difficulty in studying long term psychological impacts of multigenerational grief and collective memories on individual choices and actions, including entrepreneurial choices and actions, emanates from the fact that these intergenerational effects are not “easily observed or measured factors” (Bombay, et al, 2009) as compared to visible absence of infrastructure like, say, internet connectivity.

Moreover, the unequal distribution of infrastructure and other resources has compounding effects on individual Indigenous health and well-being. As a result, this gives rise to intense feelings of futility, powerlessness and mistrust that could exacerbate depression and further impact psychological wellbeing (Marmot, 2015). Indeed, structural disadvantage is found harmful for development of self-esteem (Bakouri & Staerkle, 2015). Additionally, unequal distribution of infrastructure and other resources can lead to feelings of powerlessness and loss of individual agency in pursuing constructive actions, including entrepreneurial actions. Over the last decade a handful of entrepreneurship studies have explored how entrepreneurs engage in entrepreneurial actions despite adversity and negative impact on psychological well-being (Byrne & Shepherd, 2015; Patzelt & Shepherd, 2011; Uy, Foo & Song, 2013; Wach, Stephan, Weinberger, & Wegge, 2020). However, there is little research, if any, on how Indigenous entrepreneurs act despite persistent and chronic disadvantages and their psychological impact that lasts not only through their entire lifetimes but across multiple generations. Further, there is even limited engagement with Indigenous notions of wellness and healing, including holistically engaging with cultural ceremonies and community or interpersonal healing (Linklater, 2014).

Thus, while the focus both in scholarly literature as well as practitioner literature on Indigenous entrepreneurship has primarily been on macro level gaps of infrastructure, funding, and other resources, currently there is limited focus on appreciating individual level socio-psychological barriers to entrepreneurial action. Indeed, while current scholarly literature has focused on making a distinction between “community-focused”, band-driven Indigenous entrepreneurship as distinct from “individual-focused”, profit-
motivated Western entrepreneurship, there is currently limited exploration of *individual* Indigenous entrepreneurs (predominantly operating out of urban contexts, but also include individual Indigenous entrepreneurs who operate on reserve) who are *self-employed* and need to act entrepreneurially without any explicit band or community level support. Further, there is an assumption that the challenges of all Indigenous entrepreneurs irrespective of gender (male/female) or Indigenous identity (Metis/First Nations) are the same with limited appreciation of the nuanced and differential challenges that an individual Indigenous entrepreneur may experience by additional virtue of their gender and Indigenous identity. This dissertation endeavors to contribute to this gap in conversation with Indigenous entrepreneurs and other ecosystem stakeholders to better appreciate how Metis and First Nations entrepreneurs differentially experience their context and their unique and idiosyncratic strategies and actions to negotiate with the same.
Chapter 4

4 Methods

For this study, I leverage a combination of qualitative methods, namely comparative case study approach (Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2011; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to conduct a multi-stage study spanning two plus years starting May 2017. I submit, combining two different qualitative methods helps in triangulation of my findings (Flick, 2002; 2007). Additionally, while I do not claim to use Indigenous methodologies, a key focus vis-à-vis methods was to be mindful and respectful of Indigenous methodologies and protocols (See Appendix D & E). In this chapter, I describe the broad methodological approach for this dissertation, including details of the research setting, the various sources, and stages of data collection as well as steps undertaken for data analysis.

4.1 Research Setting

The name Saskatchewan is derived from a Cree word “Kis-is-ski-tch-wan”, meaning fast flowing (Whitcomb, 2005), a reference to the North and South Saskatchewan rivers. Saskatchewan, also popularly known as the “breadbasket of the world”, straddles atop the American states of Montana and North Dakota. It was carved out as a separate province in 1905 from the erstwhile Canadian North-West territories (including neighbouring Alberta to the West and Manitoba to the East). This was 38 years after the Dominion of Canada was established (1867), which then included current day Ontario and Québec. In fact, the accession of North-West territories to the Canadian Confederation was possible only after the Hudson Bay company sold their ownership of what was then known as Rupert’s Land to the Canadian Confederation in 1870 (earlier Rupert’s Land was purchased by the Hudson Bay company from the Montreal based North-West Company or NWC). The history of this sale continues to be contentious between the Canadian Government and Indigenous communities.

Archival data on the history of the Indian Act, Numbered Treaties, Residential School system, the Pass system, RCAP and the TRC report as described in Chapter 3
helps appreciate the historical, institutional context which has shaped the current restricted mobility (physical and social) and sub-par conditions under which Indigenous peoples operate in Canada (more specifically Indigenous entrepreneurs who identify as self-employed for the purpose of this study). While Chapter 3 (Research Context) sheds some light on the historical perspective (in addition the national and Saskatchewan based associations and institutions involved in fostering economic reconciliation), this section (Research Setting) focuses on current everyday milieu in which Indigenous entrepreneurs operate in Saskatchewan. For a detailed appreciation of this historical context, see James Daschuk’s (2013) – *Clearing the Plains*.

**Figure 22: “As long as the sun shines, the river flows and the grass grows” – The spirit of the Numbered Treaties/ MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina (Source: Researcher’s Personal Photo Archive)**

Today, given the historical roots of the Indian Act and numbered treaties, Indigenous communities in find Canada are well-recognized as both economically and socio-culturally marginalized\(^6\). Indeed, extant research highlights that while coastal communities are slightly better vis-à-vis well-being indicators (education, healthcare,  

\(^6\) It is important to point here that there is ample research on how the Indian Act and other forms of systemic barriers impact Indigenous peoples in Canada (see Forsyth, 2007, Daschuk, 2013). I return to this key point in the last chapter wherein I discuss major implications of the same for individual, self-employed Indigenous entrepreneurs, which is the focus of this study.
etc.), those in the Canadian Prairies (for example, Saskatchewan) substantially lag on the same (Beavon, Spence & White, 2007). See Figure 23, as the focus of this project is Indigenous entrepreneurship within the province of Saskatchewan. This is a map of the 70 plus Saskatchewan based First Nations.

**Figure 23: Saskatchewan First Nations Map and Treaty Boundaries (Source: Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada)**

These 70 plus First Nations broadly fall under the following linguistic categories – Cree (Plains, Woodland and Swampy), Dene, Dakota, Nakoda, Lakota and Saulteaux.
Moreover, data from Statistics Canada and other Canadian Government sources supports the claim that Indigenous entrepreneurs find themselves embedded within communities which operate under conditions of persistent disadvantage. See Table 2 for data on basic parameters like education, healthcare, housing, self-employment, etc., and how Indigenous communities compare against their non-Indigenous counterparts. Figures 24 and 25 provide further corroboration for quality-of-life comparisons shared in Table 2.

Table 2: A Different Starting Line: Indigenous vs. Non-Indigenous

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Statistics Canada Data (Year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>6.3% (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduation rate</td>
<td>39% (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate</td>
<td>11% (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children with single parent</td>
<td>34.4% (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing conditions (crowding)</td>
<td>11.2% (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Care</td>
<td>3.6% (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide rate</td>
<td>126 per 100,000**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** This is the suicide rate for First Nations male youth (age 15-24) and does not include Métis / Inuit statistics. Suicide rates for Inuit youth are among the highest in the world, at 11 times the national average (Source: Centre for Suicide Prevention - Canadian Mental Health Association)

Figure 24: Jane Philpott, inaugural Minister of Indigenous Services (August, 2017)
(Source: Online Observations - Toronto Star Twitter Page)
Figure 25: Province-wise percentage of children under 14 in foster care (Indigenous)  
(Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census, Macleans)

Caught in the system

Indigenous families make up 8 per cent of Canada’s population, but First Nations, Métis and Inuit children are disproportionately more likely to be in foster care

For instance, the few reserves that I had an opportunity to visit had one common feature – approach roads made of gravel. While the numbered treaties obligate the Canadian Government to provide an annuity (for example, 5 CAD per person per year, which continues to be still paid out every year on what are known as “Treaty Days”), and education (for perpetuity) (Carter, 1990; Daschuk, 2013), there is no such explicit Treaty obligation on the part of the federal government, under whose jurisdiction the First Nations reserves fall, for the provision of basic infrastructure in the form of roads, railways, internet connectivity, etc. And since these communities are seen to be not contributing to tax-revenues, the provinces do not see provision of basic infrastructure as their obligation either. A quote from one of my interviewees, as below, may serve as instructive here.

There’s some bands who have money, who have paved roads on the reserve, but it’s rare. The majority of reserves that I have been to, you can tell…when you hit the reserve [by the
quality of roads/ gravel roads]...[the problem] ...it’s their funding.... they [each band] gets funding to run some core programs [from the federal government] and infrastructure is usually the last.... housing, potable water [are priority]....the government.... it shows that they don’t care because they don’t put enough money. (Indigenous, First Nations, Male, Entrepreneur)

This jurisdictional ambiguity, i.e., neither the federal government nor provincial government bearing responsibility for provision of public infrastructure, means that basic infrastructure that most Canadians take for granted – clean water, quality education and healthcare, road connectivity, etc., - is conspicuously absent on reserve (see Figures 26 & 27). For instance, a gravel road translates to more wear and tear on vehicles and more maintenance costs, as was corroborated by my observations of seeing my hosts having to contend with flat tires during two of the visits on reserve. Even worse, gravel roads increase the chances of road fatalities, as corroborated by personal stories shared with me like the one of an Indigenous Elder who lost her 15-year-old granddaughter to a car accident on reserve, just a couple of weeks before my visit.

**Figure 26: A Different Starting Line – Basic Infrastructure (Roads)**

(Source: Researcher’s Personal Photo Archive)
Similarly, sub-quality education infrastructure continues to take a toll, the most insidious price being that it continues to feed the historical perception of an Indigenous entrepreneur being “less” educated.

I think for a lot of Indigenous entrepreneurs… they don’t start at the same starting line. They are way far behind from the starting line just because they haven’t observed business… and in fact they have observed the absence of business…[moreover]…cultural challenges, so…as a purchaser… when you are looking at the bids for provider, if you are seeing that one of them is First Nations or Indigenous?…. the fallback would be to think they are not dependable…that’s completely racist… but it exists…so they have a very difficult time competing against non-First Nations or non-Indigenous providers…because there is a belief that you are not going to get good quality, because they are not as good educated… (Non-Indigenous, Caucasian, Female entrepreneur)

Further, remoteness of reserves from urban centres, which too was by institutional design to serve the purpose of providing the best land to foreign settlers (i.e., land proximate to urban centres and national road and railway networks) (Daschuk, 2013), has further created an entrenched lack of access to urban markets for on reserve Indigenous entrepreneurs. Moreover, absence of logistics and communication infrastructure on reserve (for example, presence of a post office or reliable internet connectivity) precludes the feasibility of many basic business activities (see Figure 28). Additionally, given that
average population on any reserve in Saskatchewan is approximately 2,100, within-reserve consumption markets are limited. Further, given the average income of a person on a Saskatchewan First Nations reserve is roughly 16,300 CAD (significantly lesser than roughly 52,000 CAD for an average Canadian), the purchasing power within-reserve is limited. Add to this a higher-than-average household size (one of my hosts at one point had 17 people living in her house), higher probability of single parent households, higher incidences of depression and diabetes, higher rates of suicides, etc. (See Table 2), and one can get a sense of how far “behind the line” does an average Indigenous entrepreneur, embedded within this community context, find himself/herself.

**Figure 28: A Different Starting Line – Basic Infrastructure (Internet)**

(Source: Social Media Observations)
4.2 Data Collection

I have collected multiple sources of data, namely - (i) in-person observations (300+ days in Saskatchewan), [ii] online observations (1500+ social media posts) [iii] historical-archival data (2000+ pages), and [iv] semi-structured interviews of Indigenous entrepreneurs and key stakeholders (51 interviews). A primary reason for collecting data from multiple sources was to achieve triangulation (Flick, 2002, 2007) as well as to minimize limitations of any data source. See Table 3 for a detailed timeline.

Table 3: Timeline of Research (adapted from Schouten & McAlexander, 1995)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of Study</th>
<th>Pilot Study 1 (Saskatchewan In-Person Observations, Interviews and Archival Data Collection)</th>
<th>Pilot Study 2 (Saskatchewan In-Person Observations, Interviews and Archival Data Collection)</th>
<th>Online Observations</th>
<th>Main Study (Saskatchewan In-Person Observations, Interviews and Archival Data Collection)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan Cities/ First Nation reserves visited</td>
<td>- Regina (2 months) - Carry the Kettle First Nation (4 days/ Sacred Fire ceremony) - Saskatoon (1 day) - Kawacatoose First Nation (1 day - sweat lodge ceremony)</td>
<td>- Regina (4 weeks) - Saskatoon (1 week) - Prince Albert (1 week)</td>
<td>Virtual</td>
<td>- Regina (3.5 months) - Saskatoon (3.5 months) - Moose Jaw (1 day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>- 7 interviews (Indigenous entrepreneurs) - 7 interviews (Indigenous entrepreneurship scholars) - 4 interviews (Indigenous Elders)</td>
<td>- 1 interview (Indigenous Elder) - 4 interviews (Indigenous Business Leaders)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>- 15 interviews (Indigenous entrepreneurs) - 13 interviews (Indigenous Experts/ Elders/ Leaders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Archives Visits</td>
<td>Regina (5 days)</td>
<td>Regina and Saskatoon (3 days)</td>
<td>Virtual access</td>
<td>Regina and Saskatoon (11 days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly memos/ Daily observations</td>
<td>8 Weekly memos</td>
<td>3 Weekly memos</td>
<td>1500+ posts</td>
<td>20 Weekly memos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Observations (Saskatchewan In-person and Online)

My field notes, memos and photographs serve as a rich corpus of in-person observations based on my lived experience of staying for 300+ days in Saskatchewan. In addition to some 300 pages of field notes (physical and electronic), this includes some 50 plus photographs. See Figures 29, 30, 31 & 32 which serve as evidence and samples of these field notes and photographs.

Moreover, the immersive stay in Saskatchewan granted me the opportunity to seek guidance and training from the University of Regina (UofR) - Office of Indigenization (including numerous informal lunches and conversations with the main host at UofR) on how to follow the research ethics protocols and respectfully conduct research in an Indigenous context. This further included consulting meetings and conversations with Elders and Indigenous entrepreneurship scholars both at the UofR as well as First Nations University (FNU). Moreover, the on-site immersion created opportunities to attend conferences focused on Indigenous economic development and entrepreneurship.

Figure 29: In-person Field Notes (excluding electronic notes and memos)
Figure 30: Researcher as “Fire-keeper” at a Four-Day Sacred Fire Ceremony at Carry the Kettle First Nation/ Date – 11th July 2017 (6:00 am)

Figure 31: Researcher as “Toast-maker” [Sunday breakfast volunteering event at Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints - Carry the Kettle Branch/ Date – 22nd July 2017 (7:30 am)
Further, from July 2017 until December 2019, I collected daily online observations. These online observations (predominantly on Facebook and Twitter, resulting in 1500+ social media posts) enabled me to make unobtrusive digital observations (Kozinets & Nocker, 2018). Following various social media pages of Indigenous businesses, entrepreneurs, opinion leaders and media outlets (both Indigenous focused and other local/ national media) helped achieve data triangulation\(^8\) while providing a rich source of information about everyday concerns and actions of Indigenous entrepreneurs. Moreover, in addition to text, these online observations served as a rich source of visual “photo-voice” (Wang & Burris, 1997) in the form of memes and images used by the respondents themselves to describe their context and actions. To this end, the social media pages

\(^8\) By triangulation in this study I mean using a combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, and perspectives in a single study as a strategy to add rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth of inquiry (see Flick, 2002, 2007).
chosen were those of Indigenous entrepreneurs\(^9\) (e.g., the Facebook page of Miyosiwin Hair Salon and Spa), Indigenous economic development businesses and leadership (e.g., Twitter handles of File Hills Qu’Appelle Tribal Council Development Corporation and Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority), local journalists and media houses covering Indigenous issues including entrepreneurship (e.g., Twitter handles of CBC Indigenous, Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, Eagle Feather News, Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, etc.). I inspected all these addresses twice every day to garner any information relevant to either micro individual level entrepreneurial actions, or macro level events and occurrences which shed light on the overall context of Indigenous entrepreneurship in Saskatchewan. Subsequently, any relevant posts, article links, memes were recorded in a separate file with a date stamp of when the post was captured.

Both in-person and online observations related to individual level Indigenous entrepreneurial actions were aligned to Alvarez & Barney’s (2007) definition of entrepreneurial action as any action to “form and exploit opportunities”. Thus, my observations (both in-person and online) included instances of resource mobilization, hiring, marketing, selling, etc., i.e., various actions (and interactions) leveraged by Indigenous entrepreneurs for building and developing their businesses.

**Archival data**

Given that I am a non-Canadian, non-Indigenous it was imperative that I invested in building an in-depth appreciation of Indigenous history in Canada (and more specifically, the Prairies), as well as associated Indigenous research protocols. Towards this end I benefitted immensely from reading the following books – *Prison of Grass* (Adams, 1975), *Seeing Red* (Anderson & Robertson, 2011), *Halfbreed* (Campbell, 1973), *The Unjust Society* (Cardinal, 1969), *Lost Harvests* (Carter, 1990), *Clearing the Plains* (Daschuk, 2013), *Indigenous Methodologies* (Kovach, 2010), *No Surrender* (Krasowski, 2019) and *Research is Ceremony* (Wilson, 2008). Further the following documentaries were of

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\(^9\) I have online, social media observations for all 15 Indigenous entrepreneurs that I interviewed. Seven of these were “followed” for the entire duration of 2.5 years (July 2017 until December 2019), while the remaining eight were followed for at least one year (January 2019 until December 2019).
immense value in appreciating the research context – *akhâmêyimo nitânis/ Keep Going my Daughter* (Director: Candy Fox, 2019), *The Pass System* (Director: Alex Williams, 2015) and *Nîpawistamâsowin/ We will Stand Up* (Director: Tasha Hubbard, 2019).

Further, my 300 + days stay in Saskatchewan also allowed frequent visits to the provincial archives both in Regina and Saskatoon and provided access to historical parliamentary sessional documents. These archival documents, including governmental sessional documents dating back to the late nineteenth century, helped validate contemporary claims made by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous respondents vis-à-vis the legacy of various laws, acts and policies which are instrumental in creating a milieu of institutional inequality. Additionally, archival data includes reports by numerous Indigenous associations, organizations and institutions discussed in detail in Chapter 3 – The Research Context.

**Semi-structured interviews**

Finally, the 51 semi-structured interviews take an ecosystem-based view of entrepreneurship, i.e., accounting for socio-economic interactions between individual entrepreneurial actions and other ecosystem stakeholders (McMullen, 2015). Thus, the interviews I conducted give voice not only to the core group of Indigenous entrepreneurs interviewed for this study (22 interviews with 15 Indigenous entrepreneurs), but also include perspectives of other key stakeholders, namely: Indigenous Elders, Indigenous business leaders, Indigenous entrepreneurship scholars, local government actors, and non-Indigenous entrepreneurs (an additional 29 interviews). Further, the interviews with Indigenous entrepreneurs delved into their life-course journeys thus helping to provide visibility into their various life and entrepreneurial stages. See Table 4 for details about our Indigenous entrepreneurs.

The interviews conducted during the earlier stages of the study, i.e., Pilot Study 1 (Summer 2017) and Pilot Study (Summer 2018) were more open-ended and unstructured to better understand life histories and journeys of Indigenous entrepreneurs as well as their challenges at various stages of their journeys. Additionally, Indigenous Elders, Leaders and other non-Indigenous entrepreneurs were interviewed to gain a more holistic perspective. Subsequently based on these pilot studies, more focused semi-structured interview guides were developed for both groups of stakeholders mentioned above, i.e.,
Indigenous entrepreneurs and other key ecosystem and institutional stakeholders. These interview guides are available in Appendix F and G respectively. Also see Table 4 below for demographic details and business focus of our Indigenous entrepreneurs. As evident from this table, I endeavored to ensure variation vis-à-vis gender and Indigenous identity (for instance, First Nations versus Métis), including linguistic identity.

**Table 4: Indigenous Entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan**

(22 interviews, 15 entrepreneurs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Riel</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Métis</td>
<td>Tradition (Artist/Author)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbell</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Métis</td>
<td>Tradition (Artist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Saulteaux</td>
<td>Trade-Tradition (Media)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Cree-Saulteaux</td>
<td>Trade-Hair Dressing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tupac</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cree</td>
<td>Trade-Tradition (Media)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cree- Métis</td>
<td>Trade-Tradition (Media)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Nakoda</td>
<td>Tradition (Artist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TechArt</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cree</td>
<td>Trade-Tradition (IT/Artist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrior</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Nakoda</td>
<td>Tradition (Martial Arts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groovy</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cree</td>
<td>Trade (Plumbing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thunder</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Dakota-Cree-Saulteaux</td>
<td>Consultant (Management)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Métis</td>
<td>Trade (Energy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trader</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cree</td>
<td>Distributor (Used Bikes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brady</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Métis</td>
<td>Trade-Tradition (Media)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddy</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cree</td>
<td>Trade-Tradition (Retail)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Data Analysis

Below I take the reader through the step-by-step chronology of unique “moves” (Charmaz, 2006, 2011; Grodal, Anteby & Holm, 2020; Suddaby, 2006) or in other words simply “what I did” during my journey of discovery. These moves/ steps are also visually depicted in Figure 33 below.
Initial speculation(s) (Sept 2016 – April 2017)

The seeds for this project were sown in early Fall 2016. Lofland and colleagues (2006) argue that very few scholars approach their research area as blank slates, and so was the case for this project as well. In a very early-stage conversation with both my supervisors (Prof. Larry Plummer and Prof. Simon Parker) it emerged that whilst all three of come from diverse national and educational backgrounds, the common thread binding us was a keen interest in understanding how resource scarcity may shape entrepreneurial behaviors. While one of my supervisors saw “economic geography” as a source of resource scarcity (namely Prof. Plummer), another was keen on understanding how “occupational choice” is shaped by resource scarcity (namely, Prof. Parker). Moreover, Prof. Parker had then recently written a case study about Kendal Netmaker, founder of Neechie Gear and an Indigenous entrepreneur, in collaboration with a University of Regina scholar (Prof. Peter Moroz). From the collective experiences I and my supervisors had with entrepreneurs operating under conditions of resource scarcity, a working hypothesis emerged vis-à-vis the simultaneity of downsides as well as unintended upsides.
of working with resource scarcity. The context of Indigenous entrepreneurs in Canada was thus perceived to be an exemplar for testing out this working hypothesis.

**Pilot Study 1 (May-July 2017)**

This was the first period of eight weeks I spent on the field, predominantly in Regina. I used this opportunity to learn from the Indigenous entrepreneurship scholars at the University of Regina (UofR) and First Nations University. It is during this period that the history and context of both the numbered Treaties and the Indian Act (1876) became apparent. Further, this served as an introduction to scholarship focused on identifying linkages between this institutional history and the impact on everyday lives of Indigenous peoples, for example, impact on health in the form of intergenerational trauma (Daschuk, 2013; Linklater, 2014).

This period also offered me an opportunity to experience my first pow-wow (7th June, 2017), a smudge walk in the predominantly Indigenous North Central Regina neighborhood (9th June, 2017), an international Indigenization conference (CONAHEC, 12th- 15th June, 2017) and the KAIROS Blanket exercise at the UofR (16th June, 2017). Each of these events helped peel the onion in terms of accessing deeper layers of the context, both historical and current. Moreover, these events led to introductions to local Indigenous entrepreneurs and an opportunity to better appreciate their aspirations, trials, and tribulations. A common theme in these conversations was the need to focus on the functional rather than the dysfunctional, and the need to identify positive role models, and their everyday strategies of neutralizing disadvantage. These insights contributed to the co-creation of the emergent research agenda in collaboration with local Indigenous entrepreneurs.

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10 Smudging is a tradition, common to many First Nations and Métis, which involves the burning of sacred medicines (usually sage, cedar or sweetgrass). This spiritual practice is meant to help with cleansing of bad thoughts and spirits and thus serve a meditative/ healing purpose. The North Central neighborhood in Regina has been holding an annual smudge walk since 2007, when Macleans Magazine Canada gave this neighborhood the dubious title of “The Worst Neighborhood in Canada”. The North Central neighborhood is predominantly Indigenous with roughly 16,000 people living there.
Further, my need to keep my supervisors apprised led to a practice of consolidating field notes into regular “weekly memo(s)”. An excerpt from one such memo written on 2\textsuperscript{nd} July 2017 is shared below.

To give you a sense of what I've encountered, for this week’s update, I am sharing a few samples/artifacts which symbolize the extent of real and perceived government repression (past and current, the current and contemporary ones being more subtler/covert - for example budget cuts and closure of STC -Saskatchewan Transport Company a couple of months ago this year - see [http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/last-riders-of-stc-say-they-are-left-without-options-1.4138467](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/last-riders-of-stc-say-they-are-left-without-options-1.4138467), which disproportionately impacts people of certain socio-economic conditions and those in remote reserves; in other words disproportionately Indigenous communities/as already shared in my last email commenting on "arrested mobility", those on reserves are least likely to have drivers licenses compared to their non-indigenous counterparts and the consequent hurt, resentment and pent-up anger members of indigenous communities (and those who feel a sense of solidarity with them), are feeling.

This excerpt serves as an indication of the shifting focus by week 5 of the pilot study from the role of resource scarcity in shaping entrepreneurial actions, to better appreciating the underlying institutional history and the consequent roadblocks vis-à-vis physical, economic, and social mobility for Indigenous peoples. Further, as is evident from the response from one of my supervisor’s (on 3\textsuperscript{rd} July 2017), this practice helped build further reflexivity into the data analysis process (De Rond & Lok, 2016) as well as served as a way to temper, and indeed triangulate emerging interpretations. Moreover, this quote serves as a reminder of the challenges associated with doing rigorous qualitative research in contexts which are likely to trigger anger and sadness on a regular basis.

Yes, the historical record is full of racism and deliberate entrenchment of disadvantage. It is difficult to come to terms with. It is also difficult (but essential) for the researcher who is studying it to remain detached enough to do good scientific work without losing their strong sense of empathy and outrage.


The period following the first pilot study in Summer 2017 was expended on appreciating institutional theory, especially the work of Douglas North (1990) focusing on the path-dependent nature of institutions. This was in response to the emergent finding of the role of institutional history in shaping current day resource scarcity and other
barriers faced by Indigenous entrepreneurs. Another theme that emerged in conversation with various Indigenous entrepreneurs were the pushes and pulls associated with pursuing entrepreneurship either the Indigenous way or the Western/ European way. This created a need to better appreciate not only the competing institutional logics literature (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008) but also literature focused on striking a balance between distinctiveness and legitimacy, i.e., optimal distinctiveness (Brewer, 1991; Zhao, Fisher, Lounsbury & Miller, 2017). Moreover, this period yielded some 500 plus online observations. For instance, one theme that emerged from the online data was how Indigenous entrepreneurs leveraged humor to deal with everyday racism and discrimination.

**Pilot Study 2 (Aug – Sept 2018)**

The purpose of this second pilot study was two-fold. Firstly, the objective was to strengthen relationships built in Regina during the first visit, and in the process validate (or invalidate) some of the emergent findings. Secondly, this visit was used to go beyond Regina and build connects with the broader Saskatchewan Indigenous entrepreneurial ecosystem (more specifically in and around Saskatoon and Prince Albert). This period further led to another emergent finding that individual Indigenous entrepreneurship is different, and distinct, from band-driven Indigenous economic development (a predominant focus of most Indigenous entrepreneurship scholars in the past). Firstly, *individual* Indigenous entrepreneurship is more of an urban phenomenon as on-reserve markets are limited. On-reserve markets are primarily served through band-driven, collective-benefit focused economic development activities (for example, a convenience store on reserve is most likely to be band-driven). On the contrary, the individual Indigenous entrepreneur (self-employed) is likely to be someone who has relocated to an urban center like Regina, Saskatoon or Prince Albert (or other urban centers in Saskatchewan) whilst continuing to have ties with their respective reserve, and who is leveraging his/ her training in a “trade” (hair-dressing, graphic design, plumbing, etc.) or tradition (art, crafts, knowledge of traditional lands, etc.) to start a business venture. Moreover, it emerged that the shaping of these trade and tradition focused preferences starts early. Indeed, most Indigenous young adults feel more represented and prefer going
to a trade school rather than university, given un-welcoming historical experiences with mainstream schools and universities. This further bolstered the argument for the role of historical institutions like residential and trade schools in shaping individual preferences, choices, and subsequent actions, including entrepreneurial actions.

Additionally, from a long conversation with then Elder-in-Residence (now deceased) at UofR-Office of Indigenization, who had played both key economic development as well as political leadership roles, emerged the imperative for Indigenous business leaders and entrepreneurs to straddle “two worlds”. Moreover, straddling “two worlds” not only meant striking a balance between the Indigenous world and the Western/European world, but also the need to balance the political/institutional world and the business world. This was further validated in follow up conversations with other Indigenous entrepreneurs, Elders, and leaders.

This visit also gave me an opportunity to first-hand experience a traditional sweat lodge. During my earlier experiences with traditional pow-wows and other ceremonies as well as conversations with Indigenous entrepreneurs, it was becoming increasingly apparent that many Indigenous entrepreneurs banked on what Professor Richard Missens of First Nations University called as “spiritual capital” in the face of limited financial and human capital.

**Theoretical Sensitivity and Online observations (Oct – Dec 2018)**

Given that my home discipline is entrepreneurship, a key rumination during this period was, knowing what I now know, how can I sharpen my research question(s) to help make a meaningful contribution to entrepreneurship theories? This led to an extensive literature review of all entrepreneurship focused articles (some 400 plus) published during the four-year period of Jan 2015 until Dec 2018 in top journals (namely *Academy of Management Journal, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, Journal of Business Venturing* and *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*). This is when it emerged that while the distinctive domain of entrepreneurship continues to focus on explaining opportunity recognition (i.e., the pre-entry attention, intention, and evaluation stages) (Shane & Venkatraman, 2000), there is limited appreciation of how entrepreneurial
actions are sustained during the post-entry exploitation stage despite multiple liabilities (Stinchcombe, 1965; Aldrich & Auster, 1986) and challenges (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2017). More specifically I realized that while entrepreneurship literature was increasingly acknowledging that not all recognized opportunities are acted upon, and that scholars need to better appreciate where the “willingness” to act comes from (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006), there was limited engagement with how historical, path-dependent, well-entrenched institutions might hinder and shape this “willingness” to act.

Moreover, emergent findings showed that both feasibility (information processing) and desirability (motivation) are negatively impacted (due to non-availability of financial and human capital, as well as due to everyday experiences with racism and discrimination), and thus do not sufficiently explain an entrepreneurs’ “willingness” to act despite numerous hindrances. Literature review of classical and contemporary psychology literature further revealed that a possible missing piece was the role of “volition”, i.e., impetus behind the “will” to act (James, 1897; Kuhl, 1985; Koole, Schlinkert, Maldei, & Baumann, 2019) in the form of self-regulatory and coping processes. Additionally, I continued to collect online observations during this period as well.

Main Study (Jan-Aug 2019)

This was the first time that I experienced the fabled Canadian Prairie winters (I vividly recall landing in Regina early Jan 2019 and being welcomed by -18 degree centigrade, “real feel” – 33 degrees centigrade, temperature). As per Indigenous traditions, winters are most appropriate for storytelling and sharing, as most social activities, including economic activities, take a natural, seasonal pause. Moreover, as seasons changed, I continued to build on the multiple sources of data. Additionally, by this time I had started writing short pieces capturing some of the emergent themes (for example, a one-page write-up on “doing names” as an act of cultural reclamation), which I carried along and shared with various stakeholders after informal interactions (or formal interviews) to validate and seek further feedback on these emergent themes. See Appendix H (Doing Humour) and I (Doing Names) as sample evidence of this “move”/
practice. This period also continued to offer opportunities to attend local conferences focused on Indigenous economic development and entrepreneurship. Further, both the dissertation supervisors made short stay visits to Saskatchewan around this period to first-hand appreciate the context and draw their own interpretations, thus facilitating additional triangulation.

**Analysis - Post Main Study**

The bulk of the data analysis entailed listening to interviews and reading field notes/memos/archival documents “several times through” (Turco, 2016). This was coupled with a more focused within-case analyses, i.e., writing detailed case study write-ups as well as cross-case comparative analyses (Eisenhardt, 1989) for a select few entrepreneurs interviewed and observed as part of the data collection.

Selection of eight case studies for a detailed within as well as cross-case comparative analyses was done from the perspective of identifying “polar types” (Eisenhardt, 1989) such that variance is “transparently observable” (Pettigrew, 1990). More specifically variance was sought along one or more of the following dimensions – [i] Diversity of Indigenous identity (Métis vs. First Nations), [ii] Racial Diversity (First Nations vs. Caucasian), [iii] Gender Diversity (Male vs. Female), and [iv] Diversity of industry sector (Trade vs. Tradition focused).

In terms of number of cases, while my data collection yielded interviews and observations for 19 Saskatchewan-based entrepreneurs (11 First Nations, 4 Métis and 4 Caucasian), I conducted a detailed within and cross-case comparative only for eight in line with Eisenhardt’s (1989) recommendation that “a number between 4 and 10 cases usually works well” as fewer than 4 is likely to be “unconvincing” and more than 10 “quickly becomes difficult to cope with the complexity”.

Additionally, I go beyond the detailed eight case studies and conduct a consolidated comparative of all 15 Indigenous entrepreneurs (11 First Nations and 4 Métis) to identify a more robust pattern of similarities and differences. This entailed banking on grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). See Appendix J for sample themes and how
these were derived from codes (in line with the abductive nature of this study, from both data and literature) and the associated representative raw data and extant literature. For identifying these themes based on grounded theory building in Appendix J, and detailed out in Section 5.5 under Consolidated Findings, I go beyond the eight case studies and account for my complete data set, i.e., (i) in-person observations (300+ days in Saskatchewan), [ii] online observations (1500+ social media posts) [iii] historical-archival data (2000+ pages), and [iv] semi-structured interviews of Indigenous entrepreneurs and key stakeholders (51 interviews). This grounded theory approach coupled with the comparative case study analyses serves as the basis for the consolidated findings.

It is important to note that this study is an abductive study, wherein data collected through multiple sources (observations, semi-structured interviews, and archival material) serve as only one part of the equation, i.e., as a source of *codes from data*. Given that this study is abductive, *codes from literature* form an equally important part of the “rendering” and theory building process (Charmaz, 2011; Locke, Feldman, & Golden-Biddle, 2020). Indeed, as Van Maanen and Mark de Rond have eloquently argued even in the context of conducting high quality ethnographic studies, “Abduction, not induction or deduction, is the name of the game” (Van Maanen & de Rond, 2017). Moreover, it aligns with “holistic” sensibilities (instead of either induction or deduction, leveraging both) of Indigenous research methodologies (Kovach, 2010).

In the next chapter, I detail out the within and cross-case comparative analyses of the selected eight case studies as well as describe the consolidated patterns of similarities and differences between Indigenous entrepreneurs from varied contexts. In the process I am able to identify and offer answers to my core research question, i.e., *How do Métis and First Nations experiences of entrepreneurial action compare to entrepreneurial action as characterized in the literature?*
Chapter 5

5 Findings

In this chapter I first present each of the four comparative case analyses for the eight “polar types” case studies (Eisenhardt, 1989) such that variance is “transparently observable” (Pettigrew, 1990). Subsequently, I present consolidated findings which bank on both comparative case study analyses (Eisenhardt, 1989) as well as grounded theory approach to identify a more robust pattern of similarities and differences.

5.1 Comparative Case Study # 1 (Riel vs. Queen)

Riel’s Story (Male, Métis, Artist-Entrepreneur)

Riel grew up in Alberta in a family “who didn’t identify Métis” and was oblivious of the fact that his last name meant “Métis royalty”. This was the 70s and the Métis were still unrecognized as peoples. It was only in 1982 that the Canadian Constitution recognized Métis as a unique and distinct identity. Riel shared early experiences of volunteering in community kitchens and being inspired by the “men of the street” and how his early art pieces were sculptures of these “men of the street” (he recalls many of these were homeless Indigenous men).

It was only when he was in his early twenties that he first heard the term “Métis” when someone recognized his last name and pointed out how the name was Métis royalty. This is when he confronted his father, a Métis businessman about his identity. Riel’s parents had divorced when he was quite young, and he lived with his mother and stepfather. When confronted, he recalls his father handing him a copy of “The one-and-a-half men: The story of Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris, Métis patriots of the twentieth century” and how this really started Riel’s life-long journey of exploring, engaging, and finally fully embracing his Métis identity.

In addition to selling his paintings and art installations (directly as well as through the distribution channel of art galleries), his earlier entrepreneurial forays entailed starting an Art magazine in the 90s. Currently, in addition to straddling different worldviews as
Métis, he also straddles multiple professional identities, i.e., that of an artist, an entrepreneur, a writer and an educator.

A constant rumination that Riel shared with being an Indigenous entrepreneur is having to contend with conflicting worldviews (Indigenous way vs. Western way) vis-à-vis conducting business on an everyday basis. He recognized that this was a constant source of conflict even for his father, which drove his father to eventually creating a website to clearly articulate and capture the different worldviews which shaped his approach to doing business.

...My Dad retired from business in the 80s... and on his website he had this manifesto about the Métis way of doing business and the British way of doing business...

(Interview, Riel)

This difference in worldview is also evident in Figure 34 (a & b) below which depicts and explains how land was distributed the Métis way back in the 1870s such that the strip-design (as against the British-Canadian “square grid” design of land distribution) - “afforded everyone access to water and provided close proximity to neighbors”.

Figure 34 (a & b): Red River 1870s (beaded map) - University of Saskatchewan Library, Saskatoon (Source: Researcher’s Personal Photo Archive)
Riel further shared how this perpetual conflict between these different worldviews, leaves Indigenous entrepreneurs like himself feeling “torn”. He further confided that in these “cultural wars” (Indigenous vs. Western), often “sit[ting] on the fence” is “not an easily available option”. This is notwithstanding observations that “passing off as white” was an option for someone like him who is not visibly Indigenous. Indeed, he candidly acknowledges that visibly and for all practical purposes he is pretty much “white, male”. Further, especially in terms of defining entrepreneurship for oneself, Riel spoke of “tension”, “anxiety” and “conflict” associated with “hold[ing] money” and “hold[ing] property”, since money and wealth are “something to be shared” according to Indigenous (including Métis) way of doing business. Also, while valuing the Indigenous ways of doing business, he also shared his ambivalence when he talked about his father’s experience as a businessman and how in many ways his modus operandi of doing business based on “handshake and no contracts” meant that when his father died there was no paper trail and thus “all the money was lost.”
Further, given the historical role of the Métis as “intermediaries”, Riel recognized that the “anxieties” the Métis feel while doing business are not the same and as strong as maybe experienced by First Nations entrepreneurs. Having said that, he also shared how there are nuances between being a Métis in the Prairies versus being Métis in say Ontario and how the differences between these identities are more blurred in the Plains.¹¹

The line between Metis and First Nations on the Plains is not always distinct. Some Metis, for example, also went to Indian Residential Schools. Recently, the Supreme Court recognized that Metis are constitutionally recognized as “Indians.” It's uncertain what this will mean. [Personal communication, including the CBC news article link, from Riel]

Riel additionally spoke of different “levels of Indigeneity” and how in his role as an entrepreneur-educator his endeavor is primarily to help Indigenous youth figure out for themselves the “compromises” involved and what kind of Indigenous entrepreneur-artist they would like to be. This speaks to the diversity and spectrum of different kinds of Indigenous entrepreneurs (including those who align with completely “Western” norms of doing business) as compared to the predominantly “community-focused” notions of Indigenous entrepreneurship described in extant literature.

Further, notwithstanding the everyday conflicts and rumination, Riel’s art and entrepreneurial pursuits itself serves as a way of engaging with his Métis heritage and identity.

... Our [Métis] leader [Louis Riel] in the 1880s before he was hung ...he goes .... ‘My people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they awake, it will be the artists who [will] give them their spirit back’ *(Interview, Riel)*

Additionally, Riel spoke of the lived experience with complicated spirituality that many Indigenous peoples experience (including entrepreneurs), especially many Métis

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¹¹ This was further corroborated in conversation with another Métis scholar, who is Indigenous Research Lead at the Office of Indigenization at the University of Regina. She shared how “the way we understand the separation of FN and Metis is actually not as absolute, especially when Treaties and scrip were underway. So, there can be more nuance than polarizing the nations.”
like himself who also identify as Catholics. As per Riel, “most Indigenous people are Christianized”.

**Figure 35: Indigenous Spirituality vs. Western Spirituality (Source: Researcher’s Personal Photo Archive)**

![Christian Indigenous Belief](image-url)

**Queen’s Story (Female, Nakoda, Artist-Entrepreneur)**

I was first introduced to Queen by one of her fellow Indigenous entrepreneurs in summer of 2017. I had the privilege to meet her at her kitchen table (which also doubles up as her art-desk) in June 2017 and since then have been in touch with her through social media. During our first meeting she also shared that her husband as well as a niece are entrepreneurs, and that she would be happy to make introductions.
During my two-and-a-half-year data collection journey (May 2017 until Dec 2019), I got to interview Queen twice as well as had an opportunity to follow her most current venture’s Facebook page (a non-profit Art Institute modeled on the Santa Fe Art Institute). As someone nearing 50, she had a rich life story of having started out a career as an engineer, an administrator at the First Nations University, an entrepreneur and owner of a for-profit Indigenous art boutique to currently running a non-profit Art Institute in collaboration with her husband.

She shared how her earliest entrepreneurship training and inspiration came from a “blind” uncle who notwithstanding his disability was entrepreneurial and involved in numerous ways of generating business (for example, setting up “pop-corn stands” during powwows). It is from this uncle that she learned that “if there’s a will, there’s a way” notwithstanding personal challenges and adversities like physical blindness. Additionally, she acknowledged the role of one of her “kukoms” (grandmother) who beaded moccasins and made star-blankets and then “raffle[d] them off during community events”.

One of the biggest barriers Queen shared impacting Indigenous entrepreneurship was lack of basic infrastructure that most Canadians take for granted (for e.g., roads, railways, public transportation, post offices, internet connectivity, etc.). In many ways, as is evident from her quote below her early motivations behind pursuing engineering and building a project management and engineering practice were towards the end of addressing infrastructure challenges that she had experienced on reserve and within her communities.

Another biggest motivator of getting my engineering degree [and starting my business] was to come back to ... my community and work in project management, especially for capital projects and infrastructure...those are some of the key areas on the reserve that need a lot of help in... it’s still like the wild west on reserve, so...even the environmental legislations are lax and are different than everywhere else, so... that was my prime motivator....and part of that was to own my own business as a consultant...and so it was always on the back of my mind because you could work for seven years of engineering before you are eligible to apply to be a consulting engineer... and to run an office on your own... that was always in the back of my mind (Interview, Queen)

This lack of infrastructure was further corroborated in a follow up interview with her husband, TechArt (pseudonym) who also is a First Nations entrepreneur who had
made earlier forays into entrepreneurship by building an IT solutions business. Indeed, his motivation behind pursuing IT solutions was also motivated by the internet connectivity gaps that he saw on reserve and amongst First Nations community.

[Quote about information technology (IT) as well as road infrastructure on reserve]

Some of them are dial-up, some of them are satellite…which is [laughs!]… comparable to dial-ups. Some of them who are closer to urban centers do have high speed… when we were in the game…Sasktel claimed 85% of the province had access to high-speed internet…. [however]….they are responsible for service up to the demarcation point…. in order to connect to the internet [on reserve] you have to buy hardware in order to connect…they run fiber lines to the point [demarcation point, i.e., periphery of reserve]

[On gravel roads] The majority of reserves that I’ve been to you can tell… there’s a point….when you hit the reserve… there is no maintenance. (Interview, TechArt – Queen’s husband, Artist-Entrepreneur)

Additionally, as a couple and family unit which presently lived off-reserve, Queen talked about how “there’s no funding for me” from my band nor does she have any “tax benefits” and how like all businesses, she is liable to “pay GST…PST¹²… workers compensation”, etc. Further the absence of post offices on reserve meant that there are logistical challenges for managing deliveries of supplies, goods, and services from and to on-reserve.

Moreover, there are competitive challenges in terms of charging a premium, and pricing authentic, hand-made Indigenous products (which are labor-intensive) in the face of cheap alternatives sourced from “China, Vietnam, Philippines”, etc. Indeed, she lamented how customers expected $25 “Walmart-prices” for highly labor intensive authentic Indigenous products like beaded moccasins.

Further, in addition to absence of material infrastructure as a key barrier, both Queen and her husband TechArt also talked about constant feelings of helplessness and futility that are pervasive within their communities, to which they themselves are not immune.

¹² GST stands for goods and services tax, introduced in Canada since 1991. PST stands for Provincial Sales Tax.
First Nations reserves don’t know how to do business. They’ve been brainwashed to have a hand… out. Not understanding when they are getting a hand…up. So, we were coming in …helping them to come up to speed with business [a proposal to improve access to internet]… we had totally reduced our cost to get the client [First Nation band as a client], and a referral. But they thought, we were just taking money from them. It was hard for them to understand that we wanna help you. Technology costs money, we are not here to, you know.

[Interview, TechArt, Artist-Entrepreneur]

These internalized perceptions of helplessness are reinforced in interaction with mainstream non-Indigenous business communities, as even attempts at buying a business or franchise (in lieu of starting from scratch) are thwarted by systemic racism, as was TechArt’s personal experience. Paradoxically, an unintended consequence of life-long barriers, as evident from Queen’s below, is that an individual learns everyday strategies to make do with less.

I remember [as a child] we would go pick bottles [to get food on the table]. And umm, back then they were glass… we would go in the ditches of the highways and pick bottles… I don't remember like from garbage.. and so… you know, we did that quite a bit…and that helped… so that actually carries still today... I am one of the people in the family that still collects bottles and there's so many people that don't, I don't really understand.....so I teach my kids … that this bottle is 10 cents... it's money...you throwing away money.....right....and whereas people still throw it away, I really don't understand that… especially who need it, who might need it more than us. (Interview, Queen, Artist-Entrepreneur)

The push and pull, however, creates an everyday dispositional conflict, i.e., a continued tussle between feelings of non-agency and helplessness versus feelings of agency and resourcefulness, as is evident from the quote below.

I have choices to make: feel hopeless and crippled with fear and do nothing OR keep on showing up and challenging myself to live my best life. I keep challenging myself to be creative and hopefully inspire others to find their passion and share their strength of resilient spirit (Archival, Queen)

Additionally, both Queen (and her husband) have shared, both with myself as well as publicly on social media, everyday experiences with systemic racism as a major barrier.

It does bother me when I’m driven out of a store or boutique because someone comes to hover and side eye glance at me. Especially when I’m the only one in the store. And it’s a she-she boutique. For fricks sake I have on my one of a kind Manitoba mukluks… But it
doesn’t matter if I have two degrees someone thinks I came to steal. So they gotta watch me. I do my best not to let it bother me, but it breaks my spirit. *(Archival, Queen)*

**Figure 36: Queen’s Hopes and Aspirations (Source: Social Media Observations)**

![Image](image1.png)

Despite the various bouts of frustration, Queen talked about how she drew motivation from helping train other Indigenous artists for “entrepreneurialism” as well as helping them identify a source of “self-esteem”. Further, the pursuit of entrepreneurship itself served as a source of “freedom” and personal self-determination for both her as well as her husband.
Additionally, both Queen (and her husband TechArt) spoke of the value of engaging in traditional ceremonies and cultural practices as a major source of their coping. Further they also spoke of the role of faith which, notwithstanding it’s complicated nature (in addition to Indigenous spirituality both Queen and TechArt continue to be associated with the Catholic church), continued to be a huge source of replenishment and healing for themselves as individuals as well as a family unit.

The biggest [source of coping]… faith and prayer. Understanding that you have no control over that part… getting stuck in the mindset that if I am not making money there is no value to what I am doing… understanding that our art…if one person out of a hundred gets it… we’ve done our job (Interview, TechArt)

**Comparative Impact on Entrepreneurial Actions (Riel vs. Queen)**

**Table 5: Comparative Variance (Riel Vs. Queen)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Liabilities (Barriers)</th>
<th>Actions (Solutions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Riel</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Métis</td>
<td>Reformation (entails driving change through education)</td>
<td>Conflicted Business Philosophies</td>
<td>Education/Routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Nakoda</td>
<td>Survivance (“active presence” as per Anishnaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor – discussed more in detail later in this chapter)</td>
<td>Infrastructure/Past-Current Trauma</td>
<td>Ceremonies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A clear distinct difference between how Riel experiences being an Indigenous entrepreneur versus Queen, is due to the fact that while Riel as a Métis male can pass off as “white” if he chooses to, Queen as a visible minority does not have that luxury. Indeed, Queen has shared on occasions the everyday indignities she experiences when “I’m driven out of a store or boutique because someone comes to hover and side eye glance at me”. This translates into everyday triggers which lead to reliving of personal as well as communal historical traumas for Queen and other First Nations entrepreneurs like
herself. Métis entrepreneurs, on the other hand, may “pass” off as white and may not necessarily experience the kind of everyday indignities that Queen experiences.

Having said that, based on my personal conversations with Riel and other Métis scholars/entrepreneurs, it is also important to appreciate that being historically unrecognized (as discussed in Chapter 3 – Research Context, the Métis were only recognized in 1982 as distinct peoples) is likely to have a differential impact. Qualitatively, the psychological and cognitive impact of this lifelong experience is different from the experience of First Nations who were recognized as distinct “nations” and with whom numbered treaties were signed. Of course, the Indian Act undermines this recognition of First Nations peoples as distinct nations and subsequently treated status Indians (Métis and Inuit not included) as “wards” of the state. However, First Nations people are most likely to have a land-base in the form of a reserve to help ground their identities and communities. Indeed, Métis peoples argue that they do not have a specific land-base (since no reserves were allotted to them) to ground themselves.

Further, while there is a difference in the primary barriers faced by Riel (more ideological and philosophical tensions between the Métis way of doing business and the Western way of doing business) and Queen (more in the form of lack of infrastructure in the form of lack of post offices, internet connectivity, IT infrastructure, etc. and the everyday psychological impact of experiencing systemic racism), there is a commonality in terms of impact on a particular entrepreneurial action, namely – pricing. How does an Indigenous Artist-Entrepreneur go about determining the worth/value of their “one-of-a-kind” authentic art/product? The answer to this question is complicated by the fact that Indigenous identities, cultural artifacts, and practices have been historically stigmatized and devalued, as detailed out in Chapter 3 – The Research Context. This is further complicated by the fact that there are additional costs that Indigenous artists need to incur in terms of transportation of these goods and services to appropriate markets due to lack of basic infrastructure, thus driving up prices.

Riel spoke about his personal pricing philosophy especially in light of alternate cycles of feast and famine that artists and entrepreneurs experience. He explicitly spoke
of his lived experience from the “crash of 1989\textsuperscript{13}”, which as per him disproportionately impacted those entrepreneurs who are the most vulnerable (for example, Indigenous entrepreneurs). He talked about how his pricing strategy as an artist-entrepreneur to negotiate with such recessionary shocks was primarily to start “low” and thus “get foot in the door” and then gradually every 3-4 years “increase price by 10-15%”. He claimed that this pricing strategy to counter uncertain exogenous shocks like recessions, which also doubles up as an entrepreneurial action, has helped him avoid the feast vs. famine roller coaster that many artists and entrepreneurs like him experience.

Additionally, Riel spoke of the role of having numerous side-hustles and a portfolio approach to building a safety-net. His portfolio of roles (artist, entrepreneur, writer, educator, etc.) ensures that he has alternative income streams available to pursue if at any given point there are challenges with a particular vocation and stream of income. He further spoke of secular entrepreneurial routines and activities (as against cultural ceremonies and rituals that Queen and her husband TechArt primarily bank on) in helping him stay on top of his multiple roles as artist, entrepreneur, writer, and educator. More specifically, he spoke of the merits of “documentation” and how the routine practice of keeping a detailed “inventory” has helped him effectively manage the rigors of being an entrepreneur as well as the pushes and pulls associated with straddling multiple roles.

Pricing, straddling a portfolio of side-hustles and inventory management are entrepreneurial action dilemmas that Queen constantly struggles with as well, especially with her erstwhile for-profit Indigenous art boutique but also continues to be challenge with her current not-for-profit Art Institute. Recollecting the time, she and her husband started her boutique, she shared how she struggled with not having a ready playbook for pricing the “one of a kind”, unique art created by the 100 plus artists across the province

\textsuperscript{13} Refers to the stock market crash in October 1989, which subsequently triggered a period of economic recession/ depression in the early 1990s and a consequent drop in demand as well as prices of contemporary art.
(many from various Saskatchewan reserves and sometimes beyond) whose work they sold through their urban boutique.

I know that looking back we were definitely not ready for opening a boutique. And, you know...even the first day we were running around... the day of opening the boutique we hadn't priced a lot of things, and so people were already coming in and we still hadn't priced some of the items because we were not sure what we should price them, so..... I was running around like crazy trying to price things, and they were like.... there’s no manual to follow....well this is a one of kind thing, what are we going price this? I've never seen this anywhere else, and there's something similar to it, but... that's too low...there is value in this art... people don't understand the value, because [First Nations] artists themselves have always undersold their art, so.... we are gonna price it at what it should be sold at!!

And so that was you know....for us I feel like we played a part in this economy of today, because we assigned prices to items, and we assigned higher prices to items and so we helped to create a [benchmark/ reference point] ....hey.... this is how much this beadwork should be charged.... and we can see it on social media......instantly... soon after we opened, within a year, people were pricing higher. Can we trace that back to us and the boutique? No, we can't. It’s just very incidental [sic] that the boutique opened and all of a sudden everybody else's price.....and before that people had prices they were giving away [selling at low, give away prices]... we were training artists to be entrepreneurs....part of it because it became a competition... cause they were still selling wherever it is that they sell [while artists sold through Queen’s boutique, they also were free to sell through other avenues like powwow kiosks and booths, etc.]...[we would tell them] here’s a price......at least do this price if you are out in the tradeshows, so... it was this fine balance that we were trying to seek, and it was very difficult.......so we did our best to set a price that hopefully gives some artist a sense of where the economy was... to give them something that they should aspire to charge. (Interview, Queen)

Further, she shared the challenge of finding the right product inventory mix between selling cheap “bread and butter” items (keychains, dreamcatchers, etc., many of which could be procured from low-cost destinations like China, Vietnam, etc., and sold for a couple of dollars, which is a regular practice in other Indigenous boutiques as shared by Queen, as well as corroborated by my personal observations) as compared to unique, hand-made, “one-of-a-kind” products (like hand beaded moccasins which would be priced upwards to $ 200, etc.).

Because one of the things they always talked was bread and butter items...because we were such an exclusive boutique and we only have First Nations and Metis artists, and we excluded anybody else, you know....we knew that, you know the 1-10 $ price-range and selling thousands of them to pay for the storefront. So, there was a couple of opportunities we could have done that, but that wasn’t the business model. And I wanted to stick to the business model [of helping Indigenous artists get a fair-premium price for their unique art and in the process help build “entrepreneurialism” and “self-esteem”].
even at the detriment to the business... and to see if it could make it a goal to be an example.....and, so we said no to those things.... either [getting things] from China, Vietnam and Phillipines, South America wherever, and I stuck to the business model and it meant Indigenously made...and it meant we needed to close the business to ensure that the model is consistent. (Interview, Queen)

Queen acknowledged that perhaps this stance may have played a role in she having to eventually shut down her boutique as it became financially unsustainable to sell “high” priced (“high” as perceived by the buyers who Queen argues historically have devalued Indigenous art – both First Nations and Metis as is evident from her quote above – albeit a “fair” price as per her given the intricate labour and creativity that is put in by the Indigenous artist). During the interview she further reflected on if she had any regrets about sticking to this stance of “getting the right value/ worth/ price for authentic Indigenous art” while she could have very well continued by selling “bread and butter” ($1-10 items sourced from China, Vietnam, etc.). She claimed that she would rather focus on the non-financial benefits of not only creating a fair “price” reference point/benchmark (which she didn’t have when she started) for Indigenous Art in the urban market space that she was operating in and in the process helped build “self-esteem” and “entrepreneurialism” amongst her roster of 100 plus Indigenous artists. Additionally, she spoke about the side-benefit of how her (and her husband’s) experience with the boutique helped both of them explore and nurture their artistic side. Both Queen and her husband, who started in engineering, and IT respectively now claim the identity of “artists” and “entrepreneurs”. Further, this experience with the for-profit boutique has helped them in now running a non-profit Art Institute (like the Santa Fe Art Institute) which they had been doing since the closure of the boutique.

As we were making art, we knew from the boutique what people wanted locally. And so we definitely incorporate [these learnings from the boutique] in Buffalo People Art Institute to facilitate workshops....and that Art Institute would be modelled after Santa Fe Indian Art Institute. The mission statement [of the Art Institute is]... to bring back the Buffalo, spiritually and emotionally through providing Indigenous type programming for community, traditional Indigenous type programming, and so... we thought if we built this Art Institute it would … create more artists in different areas that we see a need in...[for example]….mocassin making, porcupine co-work...and so that’s the focus of the Art Institute. At the end of the boutique we realized that it really should have been a social enterprise and it should have been more non-profit than profit. And so looking back you know that’s the business model I should have used and that would not have been such a drain on our financial resources… because we still think that there’s a need out there… we know that there’s a need out there! (Interview, Queen)
In summary, while pricing is always a challenge for any entrepreneur introducing a new product or service (how does one price something so novel?), in the context of Indigenous artist-entrepreneurs (both Métis and First Nations) there are additional layers which complicate the entrepreneurial action of “pricing”. More specifically, based on Riel and Queen’s stories above, this process is shaped by [i] perceived “devaluation” and stigmatization on the part of the customer who expects “Walmart prices” for authentic Indigenous art, [ii] complicated and multiple motivations, including that of helping Indigenous artists earn “self-esteem” and “self-worth”, despite the enormous struggles associated with maintaining “high” prices during challenging times and at the same time not wanting to give in to “bread and butter” products which may be cheap rip-offs, and finally [iii] notions of what might be a “fair” price for the intricate work and creativity, in addition to the additional costs due to absence of basic infrastructure, that goes into the creation, marketing and distribution of many of these Indigenous products.

While the Riel vs. Queen comparative case study sheds light on the dilemmas associated with pricing as an entrepreneurial action, the next comparative case study focuses on the similar as well as differential experiences between a First Nations woman entrepreneur versus a Caucasian woman entrepreneur.

5.2 Comparative Case Study # 2 (Warrior vs. Consult)

Warrior’s Story (Female, Nakoda, Entrepreneur)

While I knew of and had followed Warrior’s business venture both on mainstream as well as social media since the summer of 2017, I was finally introduced to her and interviewed her at her favorite coffee shop close to her home in early 2019. She spoke of growing up being inspired by her uncle who “literally” was the “strongest” person around (her father was conspicuously absent in her sharing of her story). She recalls being pushed and encouraged by this uncle to “challenge her ability”. She shared that her business in many ways honors him and his spirit. She also shared how the strength of her family served as “roots” of her business.
Further, she shared being trained in boxing and martial arts along with her younger brother, given that her stepfather was a boxer. This training and fascination with the martial arts took a backseat as she took up a government job. However, she recalled how after having her two children she felt the need to go back to martial arts training which in many ways served as a turning point in terms of her choosing entrepreneurship as her next step.

Starting up a business was challenging for her as she found herself in spaces where there were not too many people who looked like her.

Not very many places for Indigenous people [entrepreneurs] ....I don’t know even if I should be here… like you are doubting yourself. *(Interview, Warrior)*

Additionally, there were the usual challenges of “having no money” and the need to conduct market research. Further, speaking to the issue of scarcity of mentors and role models, she found herself reaching out to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous mentors, notwithstanding their “very different” styles of approaching business and in the process, she claims to have learned to “honor both” ways of doing business.

There’s so much more I had to do... research wise…finding mentors… I always found Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people… because there is a difference in the way they do business… and I honor both because both are really good...(Interview, Warrior)

Further, she shared how she negotiated with the various challenges associated with starting a business, especially given her context of having very few Indigenous mentors that she could reach out to. She found herself banking heavily on her cultural teachings and ceremonies to deal with these myriad challenges.

To ground myself and to keep it all afloat….I know that sometimes I walk around unsure, I think I will always feel that way but I always find comfort in my family and my ceremonies…because there will always be amazing teachings … really understanding what true balance is. *(Interview, Warrior)*

She further invoked the Indigenous “medicine wheel” which seeks to find balance between physical, emotional, spiritual, and economic elements of being. Especially as someone whose business revolves around martial arts, she found herself investing heavily in “body work” and physical movement to further help her find the “balance” between often conflicting and stressful priorities associated with starting and running a business,
again, especially in a context when there are few personal and communal resources to draw from.

Body-awareness [is key]…that’s a part of my culture…the medicine wheel teachings…being respectful to our families, our children, the elders, our land…. a lot of like going to hunting and stuff is really grounding for me. (Interview, Warrior)

Further, while she had already shared that her family was in many ways the “roots” of her business, she again reiterated how for any decision that she takes for her business she makes sure that her children are OK with the same. While she had a partner at that time, she was primarily a single mother running a business and, at the same time, trying to raise her two boys. For her, like many Indigenous entrepreneurs like herself, accounting for “family” was key. On occasions, this also meant taking her kids along to her workplace. Indeed, she saw her family as her “anchor” during challenging times.

Despite her early challenges, she was encouraged by the number of Indigenous entrepreneurs that she had an opportunity to meet, interact with and learn from during her entrepreneurial journey (she specifically named Devon Fiddler of SheNative, Heather Abbey of ShopIndig.ca and Kendal Netmaker of Neechie Gear).

I like that there’s more Indigenous entrepreneurs because… you know, for everybody to acknowledge that …[we are still] here. (Interview, Warrior)

Indeed, she explicitly expressed her lament of feeling erased and shared her experience with visits to local museums which spoke of Indigenous peoples and their cultures as they were a thing of the past. Her business was in many ways her way of reclaiming her space and asserting that “we are still here”, evoking “survivance” (Vizenor, 1993). Additionally, she shared her lament about how experiences with “colonization” have led to Indigenous communities moving away from many of their matrilineal principles. Again, she saw her business as an explicit conduit for “honor[ing] our matriarchs”.

I feel like [I am doing this]…we have to honor the matriarchs in our family and remember that women are powerful. Before colonization women were the decision makers and not because we are more, like ….you know…status or anything….because we had that extra love and we had that understanding, and … we thought about everyone in the community, not just…. you know….what’s good for me or I am stronger than somebody, so….umm…kind of acknowledging our matriarchs… the ones that are on
duty all the time ... the ones that gave us life...the aunties that gave us the extra love and our sisters who will always be there to listen to us and support...so I mean it’s just acknowledging the women... I really like the idea of creating space to reclaim that power (Interview, Warrior)

Given the history that Indigenous peoples in general, including Indigenous entrepreneurs, continue to reel under the legacy of colonization, she again reiterated using “body work” and physical “movements” to reclaim space. In spaces where she feels a lack of representation, she shared that she literally moves around and will “be the weirdo in the room” and start “literally shaking my arms around” and thus creates an “invisible bubble” around herself to reclaim her space. She shared how theoretically this reclamation of space through movements and thus creating an “invisible bubble” can be extended to a “whole room, whole town, whole city” as this exercise helps her create a sense of creating one’s own “boundaries” and thus being in control of “what’s coming in and out”.

While being explicitly asked about humour as an idiosyncratic Indigenous coping mechanism as shared by many of her peers that I had interviewed earlier, she recalled how powwow emcees indeed banked on laughter to ensure that people do not take “things too seriously” and acknowledged how “laughter is medicine” for Indigenous peoples. However, for her body-work and cultural ceremonies were what she predominantly banked on.

Further, in terms of mundane actions, she credited her government job for providing the requisite training on, for example, how to “manage a full contract”, writing grants, etc. She claims to have literally used one of the government templates for creating the initial business plan and “workflow” for her nascent business when she started off.

In alignment with my goal of co-creating my research questions, I would usually end my interview by asking Indigenous entrepreneurs and other ecosystem stakeholders (Elders, scholars, business leaders, etc.) if there were any questions that they suggest I explicitly ask during my subsequent interviews. When asked for the same, Warrior explicitly suggested, and subsequently answered, the following question – what is the difference between Indigenous entrepreneurs and non-Indigenous entrepreneurs? In her
response she emphasized the “relational” aspects of doing business and how Indigenous exchanges create a virtuous cycle of reciprocation and “social obligation”. On the other hand, she argued that non-Indigenous entrepreneurs do not shy away from “stealing ideas” as the focus is wanting to win and be better at all costs. And while as someone who endeavors to “honor” both ways of doing business, she shared that while “I get it” (i.e., non-Indigenous ways of doing entrepreneurship), she leans more towards the non-linear and “circular” model of doing entrepreneurship which is more in sync with Indigenous ways of being and philosophies.

**Consult’s Story (Female, Non-Indigenous/ Caucasian, Entrepreneur)**

Consult started her management consulting firm roughly twenty years ago. She had worked for KPMG earlier and was on maternity leave when she realized that entrepreneurship was her avenue for “keeping my career going”.

Recalling her earliest challenges, she reflected on the very first barrier of taking up “overhead” in the form of office space. Another significant barrier especially given her goal to scale the business was “keeping good people”. In terms of funding, capital was not an issue for Consult as her business was self-financed. Additionally, she acknowledged that having a partner/ spouse who already had a secure, stable job coupled with their joint savings helped her in terms of self-financing her nascent consulting practice.

She did however share how starting a business is “hard for women” and the difficulty of finding people “who give you time”.

They don’t believe you will be successful. *(Interview, Consult)*

Her strategy of addressing this challenge was to partner with “old white men”. She invited established white men to join her fledgling consulting practice, and further reflected on how “rightly or wrongly, they were happy to work for me” as “they didn’t have to work very hard”. However, she argued that she approached it more strategically/pragmatically and “didn’t fight it but used it”. This meant that she worked with the borrowed legitimacy of these “old white men” and in return they were “quite happy to
have me do the leg work”. She attributed the necessity of this strategy given the time (early 2000s) and place (Saskatchewan), and was now happy to see that “[currently] a lot of women who are power brokers” that other women entrepreneurs can rely and bank on.

Reflecting on current challenges, she spoke of the gaps in talent acquisition and how there was a mismatch between the skills need to succeed in the consulting industry (for example, “talk well”, “strong writers”, etc.) and the training provided by local business schools and universities. She most recently hired her first “new Canadian” and lamented how it was “so difficult” to get talent in Saskatchewan who exhibited “global thinking”.

When asked about her experiences with Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs as part of the same Saskatchewan entrepreneurial ecosystem, she candidly acknowledged the widespread “racist” prejudices that Indigenous entrepreneurs have to overcome and how in many small and big ways “they don’t start at the same starting line”.

I think for a lot of Indigenous entrepreneurs… they don’t start at the same starting line. They are way far behind from the starting line just because they haven’t observed business…

[Moreover]…as a purchaser…when you are looking at the bids for providers, if you are seeing that one of them is First Nations or Indigenous…. the fallback would be to think they are not dependable…that’s completely racist… but it exists…so they have a very difficult time competing against non-Indigenous providers…because there is a belief that you are not going to get as good a quality, because they are not as educated… (Interview, Consult)

Furthermore, speaking to the numerous opportunities that exist in Saskatchewan for buying established businesses (in lieu of starting from scratch) she further observed that even attempts by potential Indigenous entrepreneurs at buying a business or franchise are thwarted by systemic racist attitudes that exist in Saskatchewan. The challenges for Indigenous entrepreneurs, from Consult’s perspective, are further exacerbated by inability to hire the right people as she argued that hiring is difficult for Indigenous entrepreneurs as they usually hire from a talent pool “who come from social issues”. This is further exacerbated by the difficulty Indigenous entrepreneurs face in terms of attracting non-Indigenous people because “racism”, as per Consult, is so rooted and grounded in Saskatchewan society.
Additionally, she reflected on how the challenges she faced in terms of finding employees who are “strong writers”, etc., are even more so for Indigenous entrepreneurs given the education systems that Indigenous people usually have access to.

Having said that, she also shared that there were some glimpses of success and hope and specifically mentioned the work being done in the community by the File Hills Qu’Appelle Tribal Council (FHQTC) economic development and its Indigenous leaders like Thomas Benjoe (CEO of FHQTC and who most recently became the second Indigenous person to become the Chair of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce).

Further, in terms of future she spoke of the growing trend of opportunities for Indigenous entrepreneurs and artists in the tourism industry. She also complimented the Indigenous strategy of creating temporary and mobile Indigenous “clusters”, almost like farmers markets, to address the problem of “overheads” and other forms of resource and infrastructure scarcity.

**Comparative Impact on Entrepreneurial Actions (Warrior vs. Consult)**

**Table 6: Comparative Variance (Warrior vs. Consult)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Liabilities (Barriers)</th>
<th>Actions (Solutions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warrior</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Nakoda</td>
<td>Survivance (i.e., “active presence” as per Gerald Vizenor or “we are still here” as per Warrior)</td>
<td>Lack of role models/ Conflicted Business Philosophies</td>
<td>Ceremonies/ Cultural Reclamation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Legitimacy/ Resources</td>
<td>Partnerships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clearly, in a province like Saskatchewan where “racist” attitudes prevail and are predominant (as per Consult who is Caucasian), while both Warrior and Consult are women entrepreneurs and face similar challenges of being taken seriously because of their gender (both Warrior and Consult shared how they found on occasions, especially when they were starting off, people not willing to give them time as they weren’t expected to succeed), there are distinct differences in terms of advantages that Consult has over Warrior.

Firstly, Consult clearly had a family unit system which allowed her to have the luxury of having a spouse who had a stable, well-paying job which allowed her to have a safety-net for her risk-taking. Moreover, her background had helped her gain exposure and experience to workplaces like KPMG, an experience and brand-name which she could further leverage to her advantage as she started her entrepreneurial journey. Additionally, again given her background, exposure and experience she was able to build partnerships with “old white men” and leverage borrowed legitimacy and access to the old boys’ network. As is evident from the quote below from an interview with an Indigenous journalist, who amongst other stories covered stories of Indigenous entrepreneurs, there are multiple levels of disadvantages that Indigenous women entrepreneurs (many of them “single mothers”, but not all) face compared to their Caucasian women entrepreneur counterparts.

Lot of things stacked up against us… [lot of] intergenerational trauma. A lot of entrepreneurs are usually single mothers supporting their kids by themselves….so there’s the intergenerational trauma, there’s the single moms… Indigenous fathers not around….They don’t have a lot of peers, entrepreneurs to look up to or reach out to….a handful right now… It is getting better, but….yeah, with all those things…. not knowing what to do….they got to raise their kids first …. I should run a business? Or go to University and get a degree? Or I should raise these kids? (Interview, Cree, Male, Journalist)

This translates to differential choices and actions that are available to both Warrior and Consult to help neutralize their respective disadvantages as women entrepreneurs. Thus, while Warrior leverages “body-work”, movement and cultural ceremonies to find and make space for herself in spaces where she is a minority, Consult on the other hand leveraged partnerships with “old white men” to gain access to spaces and networks where she would be unable to do so on her capabilities and merit alone.
Moreover, their motivations for starting a business, while similar in some respects, were different on other dimensions. Both spoke of the exploring the entrepreneurship route after motherhood and as a means for gaining more autonomy and flexibility for themselves to be able to balance their career aspirations and their personal family values. At the same time, while Warrior clearly sees her business as a conduit for “honoring the matriarchs” and honoring her cultural roots and heritage, for Consult her business goals were more secular with little, if any, cultural underpinnings. For Consult her primary ruminations were with “overheads”, “growth” and “scale”.

Moreover, Consult did not speak of any internal conflicts that an Indigenous entrepreneur like Warrior experiences, i.e., having to negotiate between the Western way of doing business with the Indigenous way of doing business. This is one constraint that “Western”/Caucasian entrepreneurs find themselves not having to worry about but is an everyday rumination/negotiation for Indigenous entrepreneurs.

While the Warrior vs. Consult comparative case study sheds light on both the similarities and differences (primarily by virtue of being First Nations vs. Caucasian) associated with being a woman entrepreneur and how it impacts entrepreneurial actions, the next comparative case study focuses on the challenges of branding, customer acquisition and talent acquisition (i.e., hiring of employees) that Indigenous entrepreneurs experience.

5.3 Comparative Case Study # 3 (Power vs. Sun)

Power’s Story (Female, Cree-Saulteaux, Trade-Entrepreneur)

Power was the first Indigenous entrepreneur I met during my first pilot study in summer of 2017. I had the privilege to meet her, and subsequently her husband Vision (also an Indigenous entrepreneur) at her place of business in June 2017 and since then have been in touch with both through social media.

Both Power and her husband (they have known each other since high school) are graduates of the First Nations University. Power is also a professionally trained stylist and has worked for other salons and spas for years, with a dream of someday opening her
own business. She credits the culturally sensitive business classes that she took at First Nations University in helping her turn her dream into a reality.

The majority of Power’s clients are First Nations and her services recognize the “sacredness of hair” and accordingly follow appropriate cultural protocols. For example, some clients may only cut their hair on a full moon and may have a cultural preference for taking their hair with them for ceremonial purposes. Her staff is predominantly First Nations and is also trained to be equally culturally sensitive. Having said that, she candidly acknowledges that she was not always culturally aware, and it has been a journey for her to learn and reclaim her culture. And while it might seem trivial, for Power naming her hair salon using a Cree word for “beauty” is one amongst many small steps of reclaiming her language and culture. The historical context in which something as seemingly small as choosing your business’s name may be personally meaningful and powerful is better appreciated from the quotes from Indigenous cultural experts as below.

Not being in the control of the process of naming [yourself], that is defining who you are, serves as one of the most express examples of silencing – Monture-Angus (1995)

First Nations, Ojibway, Blackfoot, Indian, Aboriginal, Treaty, Half breed, Cree, Status Indian are all fairly familiar English words but none of them are the names by which we, the various Indigenous Peoples, called ourselves in our own languages. By contrast how many Canadians have heard these names: Nehiyaw, Nehiyawak, Otipemisiwak, and Apeetogosan?...My partner is Anishnaabe. Like so many Indigenous people in Canada, the name on his birth certificate and on his I.D. is in English. He has always disliked his surname “White” – not because of anything to do with the word, but because he said it has never felt like his. – Reclaiming ourselves one name at a time – Christi Belcourt, Artist [cultural entrepreneur] (2013)

Indeed, given this historical context where Indigenous identities (including names, beliefs, languages, dances, cultural ceremonies, etc., but not limited to) have been historically stigmatized, having an explicit Cree name for one’s hair salon, as against a generic name like Scissorhands or Uppercuts, presumably comes at a price in terms of attracting non-Indigenous customers, especially in a province like Saskatchewan where racial prejudices against Indigenous peoples, their culture and languages run deep. When explicitly asked to reflect on the same, Power shared the following.

I don’t regret…. I am actually more proud today to have a Cree name! It makes people feel uncomfortable…it’s good… even when they don’t know how to say it….but you
know it becomes a topic... and I love that... it’s fine to make people uncomfortable, because...this is going to be a norm [going forward]... over time [non-Indigenous] people will be comfortable to come in (Interview, Power)

Power (and Vision’s) story serves as an exemplar of how Indigenous entrepreneurs exhibit survivance, a term coined by Anishnaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor. *Survivance* entails survival as a motivation for action, together with a notion of resistance or opposition to institutional inequality (Vizenor, 1999). More specifically, in a context where institutions historically have curtailed Indigenous people’s choices, actions, and their ways of being (including their ways of conducting trade and business), survivance encompasses a form of resistance, which entails “an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories” and the “renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry” (Vizenor, 1999, p.vii). Indeed, as was shared by many of our Indigenous respondents, including Queen and Warrior earlier, one of their prime motivators for starting a business for Power was to get mainstream society to “see us”, not just as passive victims, but also as active agents in charge of their own destinies.

Reflecting on their motivations behind starting their respective entrepreneurial pursuits, both Power and Vision characterized their entrepreneurial actions as a response to their personal and community need for “survivance”. Thus, being an active and present Indigenous business owner for many of our respondents meant wearing their “indigeneity” as a badge of honor and pride, despite the “price” to be paid for putting on a proud display of an identity which has been historically marginalized by the rule of law. In fact, this sense of pride and self-worth serves as an immensely rich source of motivation as is demonstrated by Vision’s unapologetic assertion below which claims that “we are not here to appease” and “it’s a stand”:

We …we’re an Indigenous branded [business]... that’s who we are... we have never, never discussed changing our name ... we had a dream...about opening up a place where Indigenous people feel comfortable... that’s our # 1 market... that’s who walks in our door ...It will be great when we have more non-Indigenous clientele come in, umm... I love it when they celebrate with us... but... we are not here to appease... we are not here as tokenism... it’s a stand. *(Interview, Vision)*

Additionally, Power (and Vision) regularly leverage humour, which they explicitly claim to be idiosyncratic to Indigenous peoples, to cope with myriad small and
big crises, including the one emerging their personal experience with a fire accident which impacted their salon business. In the early hours of 4th April 2018, just a couple of years after having launched her business, there was a fire in a restaurant adjacent to Power's hair salon which not only gutted the restaurant, but the fire-fighting efforts also ended up damaging Power's hair salon and spa. While Power had insurance coverage (albeit not covering all costs/ damage), it still meant the establishment had to be shut down for renovations with clear repercussions for both owners and employees (eventually they re-opened after a year in April 2019).

In the aftermath of that fateful fire on 4th April, 2018, one can imagine the heartbreak and grief they must have deeply felt. Notwithstanding the emotional pain, within a few weeks of the fire, they responded by splashing an image from that fateful day on their salon’s Facebook page, of a group of fire-fighters in action in front of their salon, with a caption in their logo colors [large white letters on a purple background] proclaiming, “Voted Hottest Salon in April”! The post text further “winked” and “laughed” in the face of this misfortune (“‘Hottest” eh? eh? [get it?!]’). Similarly, another Facebook post joked about how thanks to the fire and enormous amount of smoke generated, their establishment was now “Now 100% Smudged [cleansed]”

Thus, one was able to observe how Power and her family responded to this very personal crisis and their coping/ entrepreneurial actions to deal with this adversity. While this accident was a crisis which could impact Indigenous and non-Indigenous entrepreneurs alike, Power’s responses to the same created an opportunity to observe first-hand the actions that Indigenous entrepreneur might deploy to respond to a crisis of this nature. See Figures 37 (a & b) below.

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14 Smudging is a tradition, common to many First Nations and Métis, which involves the burning of sacred medicines (usually sage, cedar or sweetgrass). This spiritual practice is meant to help with cleansing of bad thoughts and spirits and thus serve a meditative/ healing purpose.
Figure 37 (a & b): Doing Humour

Sun’s Story (Male, Métis, Trade-Entrepreneur)

Sun grew up watching his father pursue a career in construction and his early aspirations were to pursue a business degree and “finding a job”. This led him to first
pursue a BBA (Finance) and subsequently an MBA (Strategy) in the same city that he grew up in.

As he pursued a business career though, and as his small family started to grow, he felt that he could be more than just a “job-description” which led him to pursue his first entrepreneurial venture in technology hardware. Subsequently he has started business ventures in “renewable energy”, “management consulting”, and other sectors and claims to be a “serial entrepreneur”.

In terms of his identity, he has candidly acknowledged, including in media interviews with local news outlets, that he did not always appreciate what it meant to be Métis and Indigenous.

All you ever hear in the news is the negative stories about Métis and First Nations people. So, for the longest time... I wasn’t overtly proud of who I am and that’s a very, very sad thing (Archival, Sun)

With his growth as a reputed and sought out community business leader he now feels a lot more comfortable embracing his Indigenous roots and most recently has taken up the position of being Indigenous Entrepreneur-in-residence at a local University. His personal life and business experiences have taught him the value of role models and the scarcity of entrepreneurship mentors for Indigenous youth.

Whenever I teach my introductory business class, one of the first polls that I’ll conduct ... is, ‘Who among you have ever considered starting your own business?’ Not many hands come up and I would say that the number is disproportionately lower for Indigenous students (Archival, Sun)

This has meant that despite the multiple board responsibilities and businesses that he is involved in, including his own ventures, he continues to actively engage in teaching finance and business classes.

Indigenous or non-Indigenous, you need someone that you can trust, reach out to and get guidance and advice. That’s something that I was fortunate enough to have and a lot of these students don’t. (Archival, Sun)

To be a successful entrepreneur, I believe you need three key ingredients - none of which cost any money. #1 is passion. You need that ‘fire in your belly’ and 'zest for the quest'. #2 is an idea - whether it be a product, service or social improvement to better society somehow. #3 is the support and encouragement of a mentor. There is no such thing as a
self-made entrepreneur - these people have received help and advice countless times throughout their journey. If students are genuinely prepared to bring items #1 & 2 to the table, I am eager and willing to offer #3 (Archival, Sun)

Moreover, given the dearth of talent in the renewable energy sector in Saskatchewan, he sees his investments in education as reformative and restorative, which helps with the entrepreneurial action of addressing hiring and talent pipeline needs, not only in the short term but also with future capacity building. Indeed, given that one of the biggest hurdles in pursuing Indigenous entrepreneurial actions in our context is limited human capital (CCAB, 2016), Sun’s involvement and investments in education double up as an entrepreneurial action.

**Comparative Impact on Entrepreneurial Actions (Power vs. Sun)**

Table 7: Comparative Variance (Power vs. Sun)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Liabilities (Barriers)</th>
<th>Actions (Solutions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Cree-Saulteaux</td>
<td>Survivance</td>
<td>Customer Perceptions</td>
<td>Humor/ Naming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Métis</td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Resources – Talent/ Finance</td>
<td>Education/ Networking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, like Riel (Métis) and Queen (Nakoda, First Nations), the difference between Sun (Métis) and Power (Cree-Saulteaux, First Nations) is that Sun can “pass” off as “white, male” whereas Power does not have that luxury being a more visible minority. Further, in terms of naming or branding strategies for their respective businesses (“marketing” being an explicit entrepreneurial action as per Alvarez & Barney, 2007), there are clear differences between Power (openly and overtly Indigenous) and Sun (business name generic and does not communicate that this is an Indigenous business, in line with Sun’s acknowledgement that growing up he was not “overly proud” of his Métis identity). However, amongst my interviewees, Sun was a more of an exception and a minority as predominantly the Indigenous entrepreneurs I interviewed proudly
celebrated their Indigeneity as was reflected in the names they chose for their businesses. For example, RezX magazine, is a play on being from a “reserve” and being proud of it, notwithstanding the negative connotations associated with the word “reserve”. Similarly, Neechie (meaning friend in Cree) Gear, is an apparel/retail outlet. Creerunner Communications Ltd. (a communications and media company), whose website reflects cultural heritage and pride, where in their “About” section they explicitly talk about how prior to first-contact, First Nations relied on “Runners” for communication between tribes, and how they see themselves as contemporary “Runners”. Tatanka (meaning buffalo in Cree) Boutique, which served as a retail front for a hundred plus Indigenous artists from across multiple provinces. Bannock Express, specializing in Indigenous cuisine. Buffalo Art Institute (the buffalo, like the eagle, being a key, revered being in Indigenous world-view), and many such more. Each one of these ventures is a celebration of cultural pride and re-claiming Indigenous identity, despite the price that Indigenous entrepreneurs may have to pay for explicit and open embracing of their Indigenous-ness.

On the other hand, a common challenge for both these businesses was hiring and retaining talent (also explicitly listed as an entrepreneurial action as per Alvarez & Barney, 2007). For instance, Sun explicitly talked about the dearth of Indigenous talent available for the technical installations required for his trade and business. Indeed, one of the entrepreneurial actions he actively and deliberately invested in was building a pipeline both for his current as well as future needs. This entailed finding time on his busy schedule and investing some of his time in conducting training workshops both at the University of Regina as well as First Nations University towards actively building this talent pipeline. Power too on a regular basis made time beyond her own business by offering training workshops and internships to high school students/young Indigenous adults through work placements at her salon and in the process was actively involved in the entrepreneurial action of solving her talent pipeline problem by actively grooming the next generation of Indigenous hair professionals.

5.4 Comparative Case Study # 4 (Campbell vs. Tupac)

Campbell’s Story (Female, Métis, Artist-Entrepreneur)
Campbell was born in Manitoba but pursued her education between Saskatchewan and Manitoba. As a Prairie-based Métis/Indigenous artist and entrepreneur her primary lament was that, in comparison to say Indigenous artists based out of British Columbia, Prairie based Indigenous artists are not perceived as “exotic”. In fact, she shared that “we are perceived as a negative”. Indeed, she argued that as Indigenous people are “devalued”, their products and services are “devalued” as well, leading to customers expecting these products “cheap” and a chronic “lowballing” of Prairie-based Indigenous products and services.

This devaluation by external, primary non-Indigenous customers, she argued translates to an Indigenous entrepreneur/artist being confined to limited markets “within [their] communities” as it is only these community members who are able to appreciate the real worth of these products and services. This means that markets are limited to community events and powwow booths, in line with historical practices where Indigenous peoples have gone “door to door… selling berries… selling fish”.

Further, this also means that there is a pressure for Indigenous entrepreneurs and stores to keep “cheap” fast moving inventory (she shared examples like “t-shirts”, “key-chains”, “dream-catchers”, art supplies, etc.) as against premium, authentic Indigenous art and crafts.

Additionally, she lamented the systemic funding practices that provide funding for businesses which are failing. From her perspective, in theory government funding is available to help Indigenous entrepreneurs but in practice it ends up being used “to bail out [failing] white entrepreneurs”. Moreover, she shared challenges associated with basic infrastructure available for running Indigenous businesses, for example, internet connectivity. Further, she also pointed out how “rates of poverty” were higher amongst Indigenous peoples (as compared to say, Indigenous peoples in British Columbia) in Prairie provinces like Saskatchewan and Manitoba, thus not only limiting resources available for starting businesses but also in terms of having fewer customers within Indigenous communities with the kind of disposable income required for customer acquisition.
Given these constraints, she highlighted how these conditions led to most Indigenous businesses operating in informal “red markets”, at “powwow circuits” and “still very much out of the back of a car” or “out of their home”. Further these are sustained through kinship ties and family labour, as is evident from the quote by Campbell below.

We get a lot of that….people pitching in to make your life easier… kids, mums, aunties, siblings…… you see that a lot in the corner stores….families working…(Interview, Campbell)

Further, she reiterated and reinforced what I had heard from several other respondents, that there are additional challenges for women Indigenous entrepreneurs, many of them single mothers and moreover because, as per Campbell, “women carry a social load”. She recalled an earlier stint with the Gabriel Dumont Institute where between 12 women they had 45 kids and how these women “were highly motivated” given their familial responsibilities. She also clarified that while generally it is believed that Indigenous women are at a disadvantage compared to Indigenous men, in certain contexts “men are more at risk” (for example, interactions with law enforcement) and Indigenous men may be at a disadvantage (for example, Indigenous women are more likely to have college education and higher average incomes than Indigenous men).

Speaking specifically to the difference between First Nations and Métis artists-entrepreneurs, she shared that the “biggest difference” was that “we [Métis] don’t have access to [government] grants and funding”. Further she shared, “we [Métis] have no land… no urban [or rural] reserves… no treaty… no land title entitlements”. Having said that, she pointed out that “Métis people are historically good entrepreneurs” given their historical role as intermediaries and ability to straddle multiple cultures and speak multiple languages. In terms of industry sectors, she shared that “we [Métis] do restaurants…. gas-stations… corner-stores”. The banking on social and kinship ties and running businesses from “kitchen-tables” and leveraging family labour, however she shared, is common to both Métis and First Nations people.
Tupac’s Story (Male, Cree, Entrepreneur)

Tupac’s journey as an entrepreneur started in his early twenties. As someone who runs multiple media businesses, he self-defines himself as an Indigenous “storyteller”. He asserted that “sharing stories of other people” entails knowledge of Indigenous protocols and a sensitivity that goes beyond the Western notions of privacy and confidentiality as “the story belongs to someone else”. Indeed, as an entrepreneur who runs an Indigenous themed magazine and TV show, he sees his work as a huge responsibility, which is occasionally “overwhelming” as he needs to always ensure that he is “doing justice to someone’s words”.

Additionally, he sees his venture as a conduit for addressing the lack of positive role models amongst Indigenous peoples. His magazine and TV show explicitly focus on what he calls “real” people. This meant that he actively stays away from the stories of “the judges, doctors, lawyers” and endeavors to cover stories of “real” role models, i.e., those with whom Indigenous youth can realistically relate with.

Moreover, he sees “storytelling” as a natural cultural strength of Indigenous people like himself given their strong “oral tradition”. In many ways he sees his media business, including his magazine and TV show as avenues for “practising my oral tradition”. While he recognized how trauma is passed down from one generation to another, he also appreciated how cultural strengths like oral storytelling is passed down over generations and thus is “in our DNA”. He recalled how this cultural strength which he truly believes is in his DNA, helped him work with minimal recording equipment and resources during the early years of his entrepreneurship journey.

When I was young, I used to have this talent of… being able to memorize… doing interviews like this… not having to record anything [referring to not being able to afford recording equipment]… memorize certain quotes that they said… and I would write them down [later from memory]… for my story [media industry] (Interview, Tupac)

Further, even though now he can afford appropriate recording equipment he pointed out how Indigenous protocols on occasions do not allow recording, say “when you talk to Elders”. Indeed, he sees practicing his oral traditions and storytelling as a “very sacred thing”.

Covering Indigenous stories, however, also meant being in constant touch with some of the most painful and hurtful stories of Indigenous experiences as well. It meant constantly grappling with the conflict of showcasing “real” stories of Indigenous success with “real” stories of Indigenous experiences with injustice and racism. In the aftermath of Gerald Stanley’s (Saskatchewan farmer) acquittal as not guilty for the murder of an Indigenous young man Colten Boushie, Tupac’s “conflicted” emotional state is made evident from his social media post below.

Just angry and sad today. I’m also conflicted because I’m an entrepreneur who doesn’t have the financial freedom to say whatever I want. Because if I do, I could lose out. But if I don’t, they might reward me for being a good little Indian. They might include me in their circles and put me on a pedestal for being quiet…. #Justice4ColtenBoushie. *(Archival, Tupac)*

Further, like any journalist or investigative reporter, Tupac’s work usually gives him access to the inner workings of local institutions, including their dark under-belly. Again, knowing the nuts and bolts of how institutional systems of injustice work is occasionally spirit-breaking and emotional demanding work, as is evident from the quotes below.

[Social media post] You just can’t compete sometimes when FN [First-Nations band driven businesses] hire [contract/ partner with] non-FN for a job or project that FN can do just as good.

[Follow-up social media post] ReconSiliation [sic]: Part of what I do as an entrepreneur is study the market place, find out who is getting the contracts and who needs work?... What I usually find in my industry of media production is that its mostly never Indigenous businesses getting the work, especially when it comes to these projects for reconciliation for example. Upon further review, I found these non-Indigenous companies rarely or sometimes never hire our own people either. Yet this has been going on long before reconciliation, and I’ve found that our people’s stories and needs are a commodity on its own. Mostly because when the government responds to those needs, money usually follows, and many times Indigenous businesses aren’t first in line. It is mostly non-Indigenous businesses, who have either been there because of [reference to path-dependence] long standing business relationships (which is fine to some degree) or only exist because of these new ‘partnerships for reconciliation’ (which only continues this cycle)... [If this continues]…I am afraid we will continue to keep mostly non Indigenous people and their businesses and institutions thriving in this booming Indigenous industry, while our own people watch from the sidelines – like me *(Archival, Tupac)*

In terms of future plans, while having run an Indigenous themed magazine and TV show over more than a decade has been a fulfilling journey for Tupac, he shared that
Most recently he had been involved in filmmaking and going forward saw himself continuing his “storytelling” and practicing of his “oral traditions” through filmmaking. Further, as someone who banks heavily on the uniquely Indigenous form of humour found in the Prairies to cope with all the “heavy” and painful stuff, he plans of combining his inclination for storytelling with humour as below.

The Gravel Road [a film project] is all fictional… younger guys in their 20s… it has a Superbad vibe to it… all the characters are kinda like one-dimensional stereotypes… but it’s comedy… it’s a fun way…. to make fun of our people…. and I think that’s what we need…. there’s so much drama, so much heavy hitting issues that are currently being played out in film-making right now….. MMIWG [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls], residential schools, 60s scoop, Colten Boushie… those are, you know, so many important stories being told right now…. You know, me being an entrepreneur… I was like OK… you always gotta do something different… something that people can laugh at… (Interview, Tupac)

**Comparative Impact on Entrepreneurial Actions (Campbell vs. Tupac)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Liabilities (Barriers)</th>
<th>Actions (Solutions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campbell</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Métis</td>
<td>Reformation (entails driving change through education)</td>
<td>Customer Perceptions</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tupac</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cree</td>
<td>Survivance (“active presence” through stories as per Vizenor, 1993)</td>
<td>Conflicting Protocols/ Conflicting Business Philosophies</td>
<td>Storytelling/ Humor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While Campbell’s ruminations as an artist are outward and customer-focused, Tupac’s dilemmas as a someone who tells stories of “real” Indigenous peoples are more internal and community-protocol focused. Campbell laments that compared to say Indigenous artists based out of British Columbia, Prairie-based Indigenous artists are not considered “exotic” enough and thus there is a perceived devaluation of art and products by Indigenous artists-entrepreneurs. This limits their ability to scale by limiting their
markets to internal, niche “red economy” of the seasonal and mobile powwow circuit. On the other hand, Tupac struggles with striking a balance between following “sacred” internal protocols and still generate interesting content for his magazine, TV shows and films, without resorting to sensationalizing his stories to gain more eyeballs and sales. Indeed, “doing justice to someone’s words” and their stories is a responsibility that he considers “sacred”.

Their responses to their respective challenges differ as well. Given the negative customer perceptions that Campbell and other Indigenous artists-entrepreneurs like herself have to deal with, her primary solution/entrepreneurial action to address this problem is to educate others and build awareness around the worth/value of Indigenous Art, and in the process drive “reformation”. On the other hand, for Tupac the way to ensure that he does not violate any internal community protocols and his practicing of his “oral traditions” of storytelling remains respectful is to educate himself of the various community protocols which are not always same for every First Nation community. Moreover, for Tupac given the journalistic nature of his work means having to counter the “heavy” and negative stories of injustice that he regularly encounters. Tupac, in person as well as on his social media clearly exhibited how he used humour as way of dealing the negative effects of his life as a First Nations person and entrepreneur. See a social media post by Tupac in Figure 38 below.

Figure 38: #HealingThroughHumour  (Source: Online Observations)
5.5 Consolidated Findings

As already mentioned earlier, I extend the within and cross-case analyses beyond the eight selected case studies to all 15 Indigenous entrepreneurs (11 First Nations and 4 Métis) interviewed for this dissertation. See Table 9 below.

Table 9: Consolidated Comparative Variance in Motivation, Liabilities and Actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Liabilities (Barriers)</th>
<th>Actions (Solutions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Riel</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Métis</td>
<td>Reformation</td>
<td>Conflicted Business Philosophies</td>
<td>Education/Routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbell</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Métis</td>
<td>Reformation</td>
<td>Customer Perceptions</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Saulteaux</td>
<td>Survivance</td>
<td>Customer Perceptions</td>
<td>Humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Cree-Saulteaux</td>
<td>Survivance</td>
<td>Customer Perceptions</td>
<td>Humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tupac</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cree</td>
<td>Survivance</td>
<td>Conflicting Protocols</td>
<td>Humor/Storytelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cree-Métis</td>
<td>Reformation</td>
<td>Past Trauma</td>
<td>Storytelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Nakoda</td>
<td>Survivance</td>
<td>Past Trauma/Infrastructure</td>
<td>Ceremonies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TechArt</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cree</td>
<td>Survivance</td>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>Ceremonies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrior</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Nakoda</td>
<td>Survivance</td>
<td>Lack of role models/Conflicted Business Philosophies</td>
<td>Ceremonies/Cultural Reclamation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groovy</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cree</td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Infrastructure/Customer Perceptions</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thunder</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Dakota-Cree-Saulteaux</td>
<td>Survivance</td>
<td>Past Trauma/Resources</td>
<td>Ceremonies/Learned Resourcefulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Métis</td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Resources – Talent/Finance</td>
<td>Education/Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trader</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cree</td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Resources – Networks</td>
<td>Partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brady</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Métis</td>
<td>Reformation</td>
<td>Resources - Talent</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddy</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cree</td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Learned Resourcefulness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, I also bring in data analysis from the grounded theory approach as a source of triangulation. See Appendix J for sample themes and how these were derived from codes. Herein, I go beyond the eight case studies and account for my complete data set, i.e., (i) in-person observations (300+ days in Saskatchewan), [ii] online observations (1500+ social media posts) [iii] historical-archival data (2000+ pages), and [iv] semi-structured interviews (51 interviews). Findings shed light on differential patterns along three dimensions on which entrepreneurial actions amongst Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs differ compared to extant literature, namely – motivation, liabilities (or barriers) and the actions themselves. I discuss these in detail below.

Motivation: Survivance (and Reformation)

In the conventional EA literature, motivation speaks to the desirability of pursuing a particular entrepreneurial action. Indeed, the key motivation behind opportunity driven entrepreneurial action is profits (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006; Klein, 2008) while the key motivation behind necessity driven entrepreneurial action is subsistence (Bruton, et al., 2013). My data in contrast reveal that entrepreneurial action by Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs is predominantly motivated by survivance and reformation. See Figure 39 which depicts the range of motivations as shared by our Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs. To be clear, indeed there are Indigenous entrepreneurs (Métis and First Nations) who are focused on goals like “growth”, “scaling” and “profits”. However, they are a minority in my sample, and interestingly, all male. This includes Sun who runs a renewable energy business as well as Groovy, Trader and Buddy - owners of a plumbing business, a motorcycle dealership, and a retail apparel company, respectively.
As already shared earlier, *survivance* entails survival as a motivation for action, together with a notion of resistance through “active presence” as well as “storytelling” (Vizenor, 1999). Indeed, as was shared by many of the Indigenous entrepreneurs, one of their prime motivators for starting a business was to get mainstream society to “see us”, either through physical presence or in the form of stories of survivance, not just as passive victims, but also as active agents in charge of their own destinies. This is further evident in the following social media post by Tupac, whose story as an Indigenous “storyteller” has been discussed in detail earlier:

…working very hard on both my businesses [media business #1] and [media business #2]. I’m not just trying to change the world, I’m trying to change [how] the world sees us. #IndigenousMarketing #IndigenousMainstream #IndigenousAdvertising #IndigenousStorytelling (*Online observations, Tupac*)

Reflecting survivance as a motivation, several respondents characterized their entrepreneurial actions as a response to their personal needs and to the needs of their families and Indigenous communities. Thus, being an active and present Indigenous business owner for many of our respondents meant wearing their “indigeneity” as a badge of honor and pride, despite the “price” to be paid for putting on a proud display of an identity which has been historically marginalized. In fact, this sense of pride and self-worth serves as an immensely rich source of motivation as is demonstrated by this unapologetic assertion of “we are not here to appease” and “it’s a stand” by Vision (Power’s husband, whose story has been discussed in detail earlier):

We’re an Indigenous branded [business]… that’s who we are… we have never, never discussed changing our name …not only in branding and culture… we had a dream…of opening up a place where First Nations people feel comfortable…and that’s our # 1 market… that’s who walks in our door …It will be great when we have more non-Indigenous clientele come in, umm… I love it when they celebrate with us… but….it’s a price that we pay, but… we are not here to appease… we are not here as tokenism… it’s just who we are… it’s a stand….maybe it’s not a price….it’s a statement…you never wanna change who you are to appease….This is us (*Interview, Vision*)

Embedded within this sense of survival and resistance was a focus on taking charge of one’s destiny, which came through in various other interviews as well. When explicitly asked to share their motivations for starting a business, many of the respondents shared that rather than waiting for governments to solve their communities’
problems, their mission as Indigenous entrepreneurs was to do something themselves. Indeed, as exemplified by this quote by Queen (shared earlier too), it was not uncommon to hear respondents cite systemic lack of basic infrastructure as a motivator.

Another biggest motivator of getting my engineering degree [and starting my business] was to come back to ... my community and work in project management, especially for capital projects and infrastructure...those are some of the key areas on the reserve that need a lot of help in... it’s still like the wild west on reserve, so...even the environmental legislations are lax and are different than everywhere else, so... that was my prime motivator....and part of that was to own my own business as a consultant...and so it was always on the back of my mind because you could work for seven years of engineering before you are eligible to apply to be a consulting engineer... and to run an office on your own... that was always in the back of my mind (Interview, Queen)

And while there are Indigenous entrepreneurs motivated by and working towards explicitly addressing the lack of physical infrastructure, there were other Indigenous entrepreneurs who were motivated by addressing the underlying systemic racism and working towards reformation, i.e., driving change through education and awareness.

I want to create awareness and reduce racism. Ignorance leads to racism. My newspaper [and cultural seminars/ workshops] can help by educating people. (Interview, Brady, Métis, Male, Entrepreneur)

Thus, in line with Vizenor’s conceptualization of survivance, rather than being a “victim”, my data indicates that Indigenous entrepreneurs enact agency through the active presence of their various businesses, to show that “we are still here” and as deliberate conduits for continuance of their stories and ways of being, including ways of acting entrepreneurially. Further, over and above “survivance” (i.e., “active presence”), a few engaged in reformation, i.e., active education. Interestingly, in my sample, most of those leading the “reformation” charge were Métis.

Moreover, many Indigenous entrepreneurs, that I interviewed and observed (in person as well as online) see their active presence as a form of role modeling for future generations and a vehicle for building source of pride and self-esteem for other Indigenous entrepreneurs to look up to.

I think we have to build that entrepreneurialism, so...their esteem, self-esteem.... [also] to teach my kids entrepreneurship....to give it a go, to make an example (Interview, Queen)
Liabilities: Institutional Ambiguity (Regulatory, Normative and Cognitive)

As discussed in detail in Chapter 2, the key liability (or problem) in entrepreneurial action concerns the information entrepreneurs need to assess the feasibility and desirability of acting on a given opportunity (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006). Indeed, the key liability to be overcome under opportunity driven entrepreneurial action is uncertainty (Townsend, et al, 2018), while the key liability in necessity driven entrepreneurial action is scarcity (Webb, et al, 2010). My data in contrast reveal that the key liability for Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs is primarily institutional ambiguity – on all three institutional dimensions covered in extant institutional theory literature – regulatory, normative as well as cognitive (Scott, 1995). Additionally, if we look at the range of liabilities as shared by our Indigenous entrepreneurs, we also find a material/physical institutional ambiguity dimension in the form of infrastructural or “architectural exclusion”, i.e., exclusion through physical design of built environment which tends to deny access to the disadvantaged and less powerful, usually to those with disabilities, poor people, or people of color (Schindler, 2014). See Figure 40.

Figure 40: Range of Liabilities (Barriers)

Further, unlike uncertainty, which refers to the quantity and availability of information needed to assess the probability of possible outcomes, institutional ambiguity refers to the quality of information needed to determine which formal as well as informal “rules of the game” to adhere to when acting entrepreneurially (Townsend, et al, 2018). Additionally, institutional ambiguity makes it difficult to determine which cognitive schemas and scripts to leverage for acting entrepreneurially. Thus, institutional ambiguity
can cause inaction because the “rules” to be followed are conflicted or confusing (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). Correspondingly, my research yields evidence that for Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs there are limits to entrepreneurial action due to jurisdictional and regulatory ambiguity. This is manifested in both formal (regulatory) and informal (normative) rules, which I now discuss in turn.

First, federal and provincial legislation often conflicts and contradicts each other. For instance, most recently this has been evident with legalization of marijuana in Canada. While federal laws allow for opening cannabis clinics on reserve land, provincial laws make it “illegal” to start a cannabis business. In my observations, it was common for First Nations respondents, especially those operating on-reserve, to allege that such rules have been created to curb competition from First Nations entrepreneurs. This jurisdictional ambiguity—specifically, contradictory federal and provincial rules—has triggered frustration in the Indigenous business community, hampering entrepreneurial action in this domain. This frustration is evident in the quote below, where this respondent laments the conflict between the provincial and federal legislation vis-à-vis whether cannabis stores are permitted on reserve or not.

Tweet by Indigenous Business Leader (response to CBC News piece with headline “Province urges Sask. First Nation to shut down unpermitted cannabis store on reserve”): This is rather strange and uninformed response from the provincial government. In spite of the constraints of Indian Act legislation, First Nation laws – by virtue of their place within federal jurisdiction – still nonetheless supersede provincial legislation. According to their own Western case law, this is a legal fact. I imagine the province is reacting this way simply for the purpose of maximizing public support (i.e. votes) and to protect the interests of their marijuana monopoly

This is further corroborated by other online observations (see Figure 41).
Second, I find evidence of institutional ambiguity in the form of informal social norms, particularly in how both Indigenous and Western norms vie with each other and further complicate feasibility and desirability assessments of entrepreneurial actions. Again, such ambiguity is evident in the case of cannabis businesses. My observations included some First Nation communities (e.g., Carry the Kettle First Nation in Saskatchewan) where, irrespective of federal and provincial laws, community Elders themselves have banned cannabis on the grounds that such businesses are incompatible
with the band’s norms and heritage (see Figure 42). Further, as already shared earlier, especially through Riel’s story, there are also other ambiguous norms that Indigenous entrepreneurs wrestle with, reflecting tensions between the social rules for trade and engagement in Indigenous culture and those of doing business in “Western” culture:

There’s a pretty strong divide in Indigenous people between those who are entrepreneurial and those who believe in a shared economy\(^{15}\) …and I still feel that tension [despite doing this since the 90s] …lot of people they don’t wanna hold money … a lot of people don’t wanna keep the wealth to themselves…there’s great anxiety and conflict around money and sharing and what the proper use of these things are. (Interview, Riel)

As discussed in detail in Riel’s story (Métis, male entrepreneur) and as evident from the quote above, there is a perpetual conflict between these different normative worldviews, resulting in Indigenous entrepreneurs feeling “torn”. Indeed, as Riel’s story exemplifies, there is “tension”, “anxiety” and “conflict” associated with “hold[ing] money” and “hold[ing] property”, since money and wealth are “something to be shared” according to Indigenous way of doing business. This can lead to indecision and inaction, thereby hampering entrepreneurial action.

And while institutional ambiguity due to conflict between both formal (regulatory) and informal (normative) rules are discussed above, there is conflict on the cognitive and dispositional dimensions as well. Unlike rules and regulations which are external to the individual, cognitive schemas and dispositions are learned behaviors built over a life-course and shaped by an individual’s social and physical landscape. While the predominant cognitive disposition identified under opportunity driven entrepreneurial action is *optimism* (Hmieleski, et al., 2015) and under necessity driven/ poverty context entrepreneurial action is *fatalism* (Shantz, et al., 2018), in my research setting I find that Indigenous entrepreneurs regularly grapple with conflicted cognitive (and embodied) dispositions, i.e., two or more dispositions that create conflicting action orientations.

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\(^{15}\) The phrase “shared economy” refers to a widespread Indigenous tradition perhaps exemplified by the *potlatch*, a gift-giving ceremony embodying the importance of sharing and giving as a form of wealth distribution (Kuokkanen, 2008). Both before and after Canadian confederation, government officials saw potlatching as inconsistent to the functioning of a ‘modern’ economy and banned the ceremony until the 1950’s.
Particularly prevalent were numerous examples of conflict my respondents experienced between dispositions of ‘learned helplessness’ (i.e., a deep sense of agentic futility, fatalism, and powerlessness in the face of persistent disadvantages) (Seligman, 1972) and ‘learned resourcefulness’ (i.e., a sense of agency that despite the stubborn constraints one has the wherewithal to surmount the f) (Rosenbaum, 1990). It is well acknowledged in psychological literature that persistent encounters with adverse conditions foster a sense of futility, i.e., learned helplessness (Seligman, 1972). This is further corroborated in entrepreneurship literature focusing on necessity entrepreneurship wherein “fatalism” is a commonly found disposition. My fieldwork uncovered similar narratives of conditioned “fatalism”, i.e., “learned helplessness”

I believe that we grew up in a system that conditioned us into depending on the government/First Nations Communities to help us get ahead in life, because we had laws that secluded us and that didn’t allow us to create our own income and opportunities... *(Archival, Buddy, Cree, Male, Entrepreneur)*

These internalized perceptions are further fueled and reinforced by interactions with mainstream non-Indigenous business communities, as even attempts at buying a business or franchise (in lieu of starting from scratch) can encounter systematic resistance. As shared earlier, one of our interviewees (Consult, Caucasian, Female entrepreneur) pointed out how Indigenous entrepreneurs “have a very difficult time competing against non-First Nations or non-Indigenous providers” because of prevalent “racist” attitudes around the dependability of Indigenous entrepreneurs. This is further corroborated by Indigenous entrepreneurs, including Tupac whose story was shared earlier:

*[Social media post]* You just can’t compete sometimes when FN [First-Nations band driven businesses] hire [contract/ partner with] non-FN for a job or project that FN can do just as good.

*[Follow-up social media post]* Recon$iliation [sic]: Part of what I do as an entrepreneur is study the market place, find out who is getting the contracts and who needs work?... What I usually find in my industry of media production is that its mostly never Indigenous businesses getting the work, especially when it comes to these projects for reconciliation for example. Upon further review, I found these non-Indigenous companies rarely or sometimes never hire our own people either. Yet this has been going on long before reconciliation, and I’ve found that our people’s stories and needs are a commodity on its own. Mostly because when the government responds to those needs, money usually follows, and many times Indigenous businesses aren’t first in line. It is mostly non-
Indigenous businesses, who have either been there because of [reference to path-dependence] long standing business relationships (which is fine to some degree) or only exist because of these new ‘partnerships for reconciliation’ (which only continues this cycle)… [If this continues]…I am afraid we will continue to keep mostly non Indigenous people and their businesses and institutions thriving in this booming Indigenous industry, while our own people watch from the sidelines – like me (Online Observations, Tupac)

Poignantly, as shared by Tupac above, it is not only non-Indigenous people who hold these negative perceptions of Indigenous entrepreneurs “not being good enough”, “not being dependable”, etc., but unfortunately even Indigenous people may have internalized some of these perceptions. Thus, Indigenous entrepreneurs frequently not only miss out on getting business from non-Indigenous peoples but also often from their own people. Indeed, this was corroborated when I would visit various Indigenous economic development and entrepreneurship conferences organized by First Nation bands. I observed that most of the consultants, contractors, and suppliers in attendance, and most likely benefitting from the networking opportunities, were non-Indigenous (predominantly Caucasian) owned businesses.

Interestingly though, an unintended consequence of battling limited choices and resources over a lifetime is that individuals tend to develop everyday strategies to make do with less, i.e., by developing a habit of ‘learned resourcefulness’ (Rosenbaum, 1990). This was amply evident in the narratives of many of the Indigenous entrepreneurs, who shared how a lifetime of making do with few resources had served as a bootcamp and a training ground for their current entrepreneurial pursuits.

We can feed four kids in 50 dollars, in a week, in this economy… we can do it...[drawing a parallel with managing her current business with few resources] …Going without is nothing new to me, because I’ve gone without all my life. (Interview, Thunder, Dakota-Cree-Saulteaux, Female, Entrepreneur)

When I was young, I used to have this talent of… being able to memorize…doing interviews like this…not having to record anything [referring to not being able to afford recording equipment]...memorize certain quotes that they said…and I would write them down [later from memory]…for my story [media industry].(Interview, Tupac)

I remember [as a child] we would go pick bottles [to get food on the table]. And umm, back then they were glass… we would go in the ditches of the highways and pick bottles… I don't remember like from garbage.. and so… you know, we did that quite a bit...and that helped... so that actually carries still today... I am one of the people in the family that still collects bottles and there's so many people that don't, I don't really
understand…..so I teach my kids … that this bottle is 10 cents... it's money...you throwing away money…. (Interview, Queen)

Thus, I find that while on one hand life-long experiences with limited choices and countering negative perceptions shape a cognitive (and embodied) disposition towards sense of helplessness and at the same time these experiences also shape cognitive (and embodied) disposition towards resourceful behaviors. I argue that these conflicted cognitive dispositions that create opposite action orientations, simultaneously both for and against (for e.g., learned helplessness vs. learned resourcefulness) are another form of institutional ambiguity, beyond the external regulatory (formal rules) and normative (informal rules) institutional dimensions. On one hand the cognitive (and embodied) dimension of institutional ambiguity serves as a barrier which is perceived as insurmountable (leading to a sense of futility and hence a disposition of learned helplessness); yet on the other hand there is an unintended consequence of a lifetime of making do with little, i.e., learned resourcefulness. Indigenous entrepreneurs thus find themselves regularly oscillating between the conflicting cognitive dispositions of learned helplessness versus learned resourcefulness.

Based on extant psychological literature, I submit that a predominant effect of conflicted dispositions is on the self-psychological level, leading to Indigenous entrepreneurs experiencing self-doubt thus inhibiting entrepreneurial actions. This was corroborated in my data.

All you ever hear in the news is the negative stories about Métis and First Nations people. So, for the longest time… I wasn’t overtly proud of who I am and that’s a very, very sad thing (Archival, Métis, Male, Entrepreneur)

They don’t have a lot of peers, entrepreneurs to look up to or reach out to….a handful right now… It is getting better, but….yeah, with all those things…. not knowing what to do…I should run a business? Or go to University and get a degree? (Interview, Cree, Male, Journalist)

Thus, conflicted cognitive dispositions, in addition to the regulatory and normative components of institutional ambiguity, impact cognitive and affective resources requisite for effective entrepreneurial action (Gielnik, Cardon, & Frese, 2020; Wiklund, et al., 2019).
Actions: Coping and Entrepreneurial Actions

As revealed by data, one of the most observable by-products, due to the range of liabilities that Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs experience, is a substantial amount of daily, chronic stress and conflict. This is exemplified by the following statements:

It does bother me when I’m driven out of a store or boutique because someone comes to hover and side eye glance at me. Especially when I’m the only one in the store. And it’s a she-she boutique. For fricks sake I have on my one of a kind Manitoba mukluks… But it doesn’t matter if I have two degrees someone thinks I came to steal. So they gotta watch me. I do my best not to let it bother me, but it breaks my spirit. *(Online observation, Queen)*

Lot of things stacked up against us… [lot of] intergenerational trauma. A lot of entrepreneurs are usually single mothers supporting their kids by themselves….They don’t have a lot of peers, entrepreneurs to look up to or reach out to. *(Interview, Cree, Male, Journalist)*

Not very many places for Indigenous people [entrepreneurs] ….I don’t know even if I should be here… like you are doubting yourself. *(Interview, Warrior)*

Thus, when we look at the consolidated range of actions that Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs deploy to address their various liabilities (i.e., barriers whilst pursuing entrepreneurship), we find various coping actions taking up a dominant space.

**Figure 43: Range of Actions (Solutions)**

Negotiating with these everyday stressors necessitates development of a repertoire of coping strategies *(Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004)* and expending resources for mental well-being, a topic which is unfortunately not commonly discussed when discussing
resources, infrastructure, and capital requirements for entrepreneurial action. This lament and the need for explicitly accounting for historical, intergenerational trauma as well as everyday ongoing stress is evident in the Twitter post shared below by Warrior.

**Figure 44: Intergenerational Trauma (Source: Online Observations)**

It is important to acknowledge that each one of the Indigenous entrepreneurs in my sample has his/her own idiosyncratic coping strategies. While some like Warrior banked on “body-movement”, others like Tupac banked on “humour”. Again, while some like Queen banked on cultural ceremonies for self-restoration and replenishment, others like Sun banked on educating future generations. While there is immense diversity in Indigenous coping strategies, based on my data, I share below some emergent themes.
As exemplified by both Power and Tupac’s stories, *doing humour* is a common subversive coping strategy that Indigenous entrepreneurs leverage. I recall my very first experience of an Indigenous pow-wow, as part of First Nations University’s (Regina campus) annual high school graduation ceremony (June 2017). The Indigenous emcee for the celebration played his expected role of instilling enthusiasm and pride into the proceedings, and at one juncture proudly proclaimed, “Indigenous is *in* these days!!” (emphasis mine). “You know why?”, he further prodded. “Because we are *ingenious*!!” (emphasis mine), he proffered using a bit of wordplay. On other occasions I found similar proud calls for “using our *injun-uity*”. This celebratory/ congratulatory humour is poignant given the context that high-school graduation rates for Indigenous peoples in the Canadian Prairies are on an average one-half that of non-Indigenous groups. Having said that, a senior Indigenous entrepreneurship scholar pointed out how there is much cause for celebration since high school graduation rates for Indigenous peoples in the 1970s were in single digits. I find that humour is leveraged to neutralize some of the ongoing “heavy stuff” as experienced by Indigenous entrepreneurs.

We just really like to have fun. There’s a lot of… heavy stuff that we have to deal with day to day, and the way we do that is through humour (*Online observations, Tupac*)

Similar Indigenous reliance on *doing humour* was corroborated through my online observations including numerous posts claiming #MemesAreMedicine. Indeed, scholars argue that humour serves as a healing function (Taylor & Bain, 2003; Linklater, 2014).

**Figure 45: Subversion – Doing Humour (Source: Online observations)**
Additionally, as an antidote to the liability of resource scarcity, I found numerous instances in my data of Indigenous entrepreneurs exhibiting doing non-wastefulness, i.e., maximum resource utilization, in alignment with Indigenous values which perceive waste as a norm violation. I submit that while doing non-wastefulness might come across as doing resourcefulness or bricolage, there is subtle difference. While bricolage is about improvisation in the face of a resource constrained environment and finding alternative uses for the same means and resources (Baker & Nelson, 2005), doing non-wastefulness is deeply entrenched Indigenous cultural norm and more akin to a worldview/belief as it sees any form of waste as “unacceptable”.

The verb wisakihiw refers to acts of wasting animal meat and other products; it refers also to wasting other kinds of commodities. Every opportunity is taken to make use of every animal part; if there are parts left over, they are made into foods that are preserved to be eaten later. Sport hunting is considered wasteful, and unacceptable to nehiyaw [Cree] people. (McAdam, 2019: 46)

Indigenous entrepreneurs, for example like Queen as discussed earlier, thus frequently leverage this traditional belief of waste as a sin, coupled with the disposition of learned resourcefulness, and deploy doing non-wastefulness or maximum resource utilization as a coping strategy against persistent lack of resources:

Living on the rez [sic] was very quiet and we didn’t have a vehicle to take us on adventures. So I was forced to use my…creativity. I would take old toys that didn’t work and play with the motors until I eventually began to build gadgets out of nothing (Archival, Buddy, Cree, Male, Entrepreneur)

[Posting a new design on Instagram; this entrepreneur already has another established business and used her designs as a side hustle.]…This bullet case breast plate was created in memory of my uncle. Some of the [empty bullet] shells were from our successful hunts together. Tapping into my [resourceful] artistic side has always saved me in the worst stages of my life and I am grateful …(Online observations, Warrior)

[In another follow-up social media post]…I am also humbly asking for [bullet] shell casings, any size. Each case has a process before it is put together. So even if they’re rusty, we can still use them. (Online observations, Warrior)

In addition to subversive coping strategies like doing humour and doing non-wastefulness which are served to neutralize the ill-effects of the various liabilities that Indigenous entrepreneurs experience, I also found a few coping strategies to be more restorative in nature. Restorative coping strategies, like nascent conversations on
restorative entreprenueiring\textsuperscript{16}, entail focusing on strength-based goals versus deficiency-based goals (Wainwright & Muñoz, 2020). Indeed, extant perspectives on coping, both “Western” (see Stroebe & Schut, 2010) and Indigenous (see Linklater, 2014), emphasize the need to simultaneously leverage not only “loss”-negating strategies but also “restorative”-affirmative, strength-based strategies. Thus, in addition to subversive coping strategies like \textit{doing humour} and \textit{doing non-wastefulness}, which help neutralize the negative “losses” and action-impeding emotions due to numerous liabilities, I found that Indigenous entrepreneurs like Warrior, Queen and TechArt also leverage a set of additional strength-based restorative coping strategies to foster action-aiding emotions/attitudes (for example, self-esteem, self-belief).

First, \textit{doing ceremonies}, rooted in traditional Indigenous cultural beliefs and ideologies, is one such restorative strategy that emerged from my data.

To ground myself and to keep it all afloat….I know that sometimes I walk around unsure [source of discomfort/discomfort], I think I will always feel that way but I always find comfort in my family and my ceremonies [source of comfort/self-confidence/grounding as elaborated below] (Interview, Warrior)

Body-awareness [is key]….that’s a part of my culture…the medicine wheel teachings…being respectful to our families, our children, the elders, our land….a lot of like going to hunting and stuff is really grounding for me. (Interview, Warrior)

The biggest…faith and prayer. Understanding that you have no control over that part…getting stuck in the mindset that if I am not making money there is no value to what I am doing…understanding that our art…if one person out of a hundred gets it…we’ve done our job (Interview, TechArt)

There is a growing appreciation in literature, both Western and Indigenous, that volitional participation in spiritual and faith-based ceremonies positively influences mental and physical health and consequently entrepreneurial actions (Linklater, 2014; Smith, Conger, McMullen, & Neubert, 2019). Participating in ceremonies helps not only to restore physical and emotional resources to endure hardships but also helps restore

\textsuperscript{16} Wainwright & Muñoz (2020; p 5) define restorative entreprenueiring as a set of entrepreneurial practices and a system of support that enable individual at-risk to reconstruct their identity, sense of ownership and self-worth and engage in a progressively autonomous rehabilitative life project, away from deviant behavior and out of detrimental and stigmatizing circumstances.
purpose and meaning. Moreover, participation in these ceremonies helps build resilience which serves multiple purposes, i.e., helps with personal stress as well as is leveraged in entrepreneurial pursuits. As Warrior has also shared with a local newspaper, she banks on Indigenous ceremonies to find personal “balance” (as well as for creating distinctive products for her venture). Further, in addition to her martial-arts/ self-defense focused business, she also has a design business which serves as a side-hustle which serves as a vehicle for personal expression. Again, coverage by local news media of how Warrior uses her cultural and spiritual resources for personal restoration, as shared below, is instructive.

The importance of balancing physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects became very apparent to [name of entrepreneur] after 2017, a year in which she lost three close family members, including her uncle. The medicine wheel teachings have been crucial in going through the grieving process, she says. Dealing with the losses of 2017, [she] has also reached out to her traditions in a different way, using beading and leatherwork as an outlet to express what she’s been going through. She has produced pieces in honour of her uncle and beaded ties that were a hit at a fashion week in Calgary. (Archival, Warrior)

This is corroborated by literature on religious coping (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004) as well as literature on building entrepreneurial resilience (Shepherd & Williams, 2020). As Shepherd & Williams (2020) argue, similar resilience building coping strategies can lead to entrepreneurial actions, and moreover, entrepreneurial actions reinforce coping. For example, in the above scenario “beaded ties” were designed by Warrior to cope with personal loss (death of family members) but doubled up as an entrepreneurial action of designing a distinctive product. Moreover, the product being a hit at “fashion week in Calgary” reinforced coping.

Second, doing cultural reclamation is another restorative coping strategy Indigenous entrepreneurs often leverage effectively. This strategy takes various forms, the simplest of which was “naming” of one’s business. While seemingly trivial, the value of being able to name, label and in the process reclaim cultural pride, cannot be overemphasized (Linklater, 2014). Indeed, not being able to control the process of “naming” [yourself] is found to serve as “one of the most express examples of silencing” (Monture-Angus, 1995). As discussed earlier, whilst discussing Power’s choice of using the Cree work for “beauty” for her business, given a context where Indigenous identities
(including names, beliefs, languages, dances, cultural ceremonies, etc., but not limited to) have been stigmatized, an important aspect of being an Indigenous entrepreneur is to regain and re-claim pride in one’s distinct Indigenous identity. As also shared earlier, this is further reflected in names chosen by many of the Saskatchewan-based Indigenous entrepreneurs for their entrepreneurial ventures. Creerunner, Tatanka Boutique, SheNative, Bannock Express, Eagle Feather News, and many such more – all serve as exemplars of Indigenous business owners leveraging “naming” as a form of cultural reclamation.

Moreover, doing cultural reclamation, entails finding distinctiveness, meaning and purpose in one’s identity. Indeed, in a separate interview TechArt (Queen’s husband) poignantly shared, re-connecting with his traditional practices served as a source of “finding oneself” as his earlier self-perceptions led him to seeing himself as “tainted” and “slanted”. Similarly, an Indigenous tattoo artist shared her “emotional journey” of “practicing and learning how to [her traditional] tattoo[s]” and how they hold “so much meaning”, given “our practices were suppressed for so long”. Further, this restorative coping strategy frequently entails unapologetically embracing one’s distinctiveness and uniqueness, as is evident from the conversation with Power and her husband Vision below.

[Vision]: We …we’re an Indigenous branded [business]… that’s who we are… we have never, never discussed changing our name … we had a dream…about opening up a place where Indigenous people feel comfortable… that’s our # 1 market… that’s who walks in our door …It will be great when we have more non-Indigenous clientele come in, umm… I love it when they celebrate with us… but…. we are not here to appease… we are not here as tokenism… it’s a stand.

[Power]: I don’t regret…. I am actually more proud today to have a Cree name! It makes people feel uncomfortable…it’s good… even when they don’t know how to say it….but you know it becomes a topic… and I love that… it’s fine to make people uncomfortable, because…this is going to be a norm [going forward]… over time [non-Indigenous] people will be comfortable to come in

Finally, doing education proves to be restorative by being an entrepreneurial action itself and helps with future capacity building. Indeed, many Indigenous entrepreneurs in my study sample (for example Sun) volunteered as “educators” at a local school or university. Given that one of the biggest hurdles in pursuing entrepreneurial
actions in our context is limited human capital, I found Indigenous entrepreneurs (see Power and Sun’s stories) leverage doing education as an entrepreneurial action towards building future talent pipeline. Given the dearth of trained personnel, this restorative coping strategy of doing education doubles up as an entrepreneurial action in line with Alvarez and Barney’s (2007) definition of EA as any action that helps “form and exploit opportunities”. Further, as shared earlier in Sun’s story, he laments how many Indigenous students do not even consider entrepreneurship because they do not think it is achievable for them. “They just don’t see others like them that are doing it,” he said. Doing education thus also serves as a restorative strategy by addressing the issue of scarce role models.

While some of these coping strategies have an indirect effect on entrepreneurial actions by reducing stress/ conflict (for example, the subversive coping strategy of doing humour) or helping bolster self-esteem and self-efficacy (for example, the restorative coping strategy of doing ceremonies), many of these coping strategies double up as micro-entrepreneurial actions themselves as they directly contribute to entrepreneurial actions like hiring (for example, the restorative coping strategy of doing education so as to help build current and future talent pipeline). My findings thus help identify coping actions as a form of micro-agency and as micro-foundations of entrepreneurial actions as well as downstream organizational routines and dynamic capabilities. Indeed, I also found Indigenous entrepreneurs like Riel who had over the years transformed early practices and actions of dealing with his context of straddling multiple streams of income into established routines of “documentation” and inventory management.

In the next chapter, I discuss in detail the implications of these findings for theories of entrepreneurial action as well as for future research directions.
Chapter 6

6 Discussion and Conclusion

The focus of this dissertation was to understand - How do Métis and First Nations experiences of entrepreneurial action compare to entrepreneurial action as characterized in the literature? I find that, notwithstanding the range of motivations driving Métis and First Nations entrepreneurial actions, these are predominantly motivated by “survivance” – i.e., survival as a motivation for action, together with a notion of resistance against systemic barriers, and reformation, i.e., driving change through education – which goes beyond subsistence or profits. Whereas “necessity entrepreneurs are thought to be ‘pushed’ into self-employment by a lack of employment possibilities as opposed to [opportunity entrepreneurs] being ‘pulled’ towards exploiting a new business idea” (Shantz et al., 2018, pg. 433), Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs seem to fall outside this continuum. Thus, while respondents did describe what might be labeled a “pull” to entrepreneurship, it was not profits per se that was the lure. And while my respondents hinted at a “push-like” motivation, they did not cite a lack of employment alternatives.17

Thus, while at a superficial level it might be thought that the EA in my study resembles necessity-EA, since the role of scarcity appears in our Indigenous setting, this coupling lacks nuance. For example, my pool of Indigenous entrepreneur respondents predominantly comprised people with various access to resources and opportunities, thus removing them from a poverty setting central to necessity-driven EA. Furthermore, my Indigenous (both Métis and First Nations) entrepreneur respondents appear to have been positively galvanized by survivance, which is not typically present in basic poverty settings where a subsistence imperative predominates. Thus, a broad finding is that entrepreneurial action (EA) amongst Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs distinctively

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17 The discussion herewith on comparison with opportunity-driven and necessity-driven entrepreneurial actions has been co-authored with my supervisors Prof. Larry Plummer and Prof. Simon Parker and is currently going through a first round of revise-and-resubmit with the Academy of Management Journal. I take ownership for the research design, data collection, data analysis and writing of the findings of this AMJ submission and I am the first author for the same.
differs from not only opportunity-driven EA, but also necessity-driven EA. In the next few paragraphs, I draw out the various dimensions along which entrepreneurial actions by Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs is different from dominant notions of EA.

Firstly, at an antecedent level, as already noted the motivations that drive entrepreneurial actions are different for Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs. I find that entrepreneurial actions for First Nations entrepreneurs are motivated by “survivance” – i.e., survival as a motivation for action, together with a notion of resistance – which goes beyond subsistence (primary motivation in necessity-driven entrepreneurship) or profits (primary motivation in opportunity-driven entrepreneurship). While there is substantial overlap between the motivations of First Nations and Métis, there is also a nuanced difference given the very real choice that most Métis people have to “pass” as “white”. Thus, I find that Métis entrepreneurs are less burdened by everyday slights and inequities that First Nations entrepreneurs face by virtue of being visible minorities. This grants contemporary Métis entrepreneurs the potential to focus more on leveraging their entrepreneurial actions for the purpose of “reformation”, i.e., driving change through education. Again, despite overlaps there is a nuanced difference between the motivations of “survivance” (commonly found amongst my sample of First Nations entrepreneurs) and “reformation” (commonly found amongst my sample of Métis entrepreneurs). And collectively the motivations of “survivance” and “reformation” which drive Indigenous entrepreneurs, are distinctively different from those covered by predominant opportunity-driven as well as necessity-driven notions of entrepreneurial action.

Secondly, the liabilities (or barriers or problems) encountered by Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs are different from what is argued in dominant notions of entrepreneurial action. The primary hurdle to be addressed in dominant theories of entrepreneurial action is that of uncertainty (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006; Klein, 2008). Another key liability that entrepreneurs deal with is resource scarcity (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Stevenson & Jarillo, 1991). Additionally, scholars have talked about liabilities of newness (Stinchcombe, 1965) and liabilities of smallness (Aldrich & Auster, 2006). Amongst Indigenous entrepreneurs, and especially for First Nations entrepreneurs operating out of remote reserves, the primary hurdle is architectural/infrastructural.
Moreover, for both Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs there is institutional ambiguity and conflict between federal laws, provincial laws, and their respective community level self-governance laws. This ambiguity and conflict are not limited just to formal laws (regulatory) but also extends to informal social and cultural mores (normative). Further, as shared by many of my Indigenous interviewees, a lifetime of being repeatedly told that you are “uncivilized” (First Nations experience) or that “you don’t exist” (Métis experience) differentially shapes one’s cognitive landscape and thus shapes individual perceptions of self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-worth and thus the everyday choices and actions, including entrepreneurial actions, of Indigenous peoples. The systemic discrimination that Métis and First Nations face, what I call as the liability of institutional inequality thus has multiple facets – infrastructural, regulatory, normative, cognitive, and dispositional, unlike current definitions of institutional inequality which are defined in terms of only formal regulations (Albiston, 2009).

Thirdly, given that the motivations as well as the liabilities that shape Indigenous entrepreneurial actions are different, I find that the everyday micro-entrepreneurial actions (including numerous coping strategies) of Indigenous entrepreneurs are distinctively different from what is currently known under dominant perspectives of entrepreneurial action. For example, hustling is one specific adaptive entrepreneurial action as identified by extant literature (Fisher, Stevenson, Neubert, Burnell, & Kuratko, 2020). However, hustling is primarily argued to be an entrepreneurial action which can help with “navigating uncertainty” (Fisher, et al, 2020). Similarly, bricolage is another entrepreneurial action identified in extant literature, albeit for the purposes of solving the problem of resource scarcity (Baker & Nelson, 2005). Likewise, bribing too has been most recently argued as a concrete entrepreneurial action to help negotiate with institutional corruption (Baron, et al., 2018). I find that given the myriad architectural-

18 It is important to point here that there is ample prior research on how the Indian Act and other forms of systemic, institutional inequalities impact Indigenous peoples in Canada (see Forsyth, 2007; Daschuk, 2013). Further, there are Indigenous entrepreneurship scholars who have focused on how various systemic barriers impact community, band-level Indigenous entrepreneurship (see Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). This study however focuses on individual level impacts of institutional inequality on entrepreneurial actions of individual Indigenous entrepreneurs (against band-driven, community driven businesses).
infrastructural, regulatory, normative, cognitive, and dispositional liabilities that both Métis and First Nations experience on an everyday basis, leading to substantial aggravated everyday stress and conflict (both intrapersonal and interpersonal), coping too is an entrepreneurial action which helps navigate and negotiate everyday experiences of systemic discrimination and inequality which are the primary source of these liabilities.

This dissertation’s findings consequently contribute to theories of entrepreneurial action by surfacing differential motivations, liabilities as well as coping actions as entrepreneurial actions for resolving these liabilities, which carries novel implications about how entrepreneurs assess the desirability and feasibility of entrepreneurial actions. I discuss these implications and directions for future research, consider solutions to contemporary challenges, and reflect on limitations of my work further below.

6.1 Implications for Entrepreneurial Action Theory

Liabilities-Based View (LBV) of entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship scholars have long been aware of the liabilities that entrepreneurs face. Indeed, liabilities of newness (Stinchcombe, 1965) and liabilities of smallness (Aldrich & Auster, 1986) are foundational to the entrepreneurship literature and speak to hindrances by virtue of age and size encountered by entrepreneurs. Despite acknowledgement of these known liabilities, there remains an implicit assumption that, while social, ethnic and gender-based biases and stigmas are obstacles, entrepreneurship is an “equal opportunity” vocation under modern institutional arrangements. Only comparatively recently have scholars begun to lament that the mainstream entrepreneurship literature often renders issues of inequality invisible (Baker & Powell, 2016).

To date, scant attention has been paid to liabilities in the form of persistent, path-dependent, historical systemic discrimination, arising from both formal legal arrangements and informal social norms. This form of systemic discrimination is already known and defined as institutional inequality in the legal literature. Indeed, as defined by Albiston (2009), institutional inequality entails differential treatment of certain sections
of society based on existing laws and regulations, wherein institutions engender inequality by “reproducing the social patterns and belief systems that existed at the time they emerged” (Albiston, 2009, p. 1093).

As is evident from this study, the liabilities that Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs face go beyond the formal regulatory aspect of institutional inequality and further include variously architectural/infrastructural, normative, cognitive, and dispositional aspects. This helps us expand the definition of institutional inequality beyond the formal, legal aspects as defined by Albiston, and further incorporate the informal normative, cognitive, dispositional as well as the physical architectural/infrastructural aspects of this form of systemic inequality.

Moreover, given these myriad structural liabilities (regulatory, normative, cognitive, dispositional as well as architectural) due to institutional inequality, a primary task for entrepreneurs operating under these conditions is not primarily building assets and creating entry barriers but rather undertaking herculean efforts to dismantle existing structures which perpetuate various forms of inequalities and thus limit access to markets and capital. This study thus responds to recent calls for taking inequalities seriously in entrepreneurship studies and contributes to better appreciating the underlying infrastructural, regulatory, normative as well as psychological barriers that entrepreneurs must surmount just to survive. Thus, in addition to already known liabilities of newness, smallness, and foreignness, I join the voices that call for entrepreneurship theories to take the liability of institutional inequality seriously.

I submit, that there is potential in further exploring the role of persistent, chronic institutional inequality as findings of this research would contribute to entrepreneurial theories of coping under conditions of disadvantage. The entrepreneurship literature has recently embraced the notions of resilience (Shepherd & Williams, 2020) and coping (Nikolaev, Lerman & Mueller, 2020) when dealing with challenging events. It is a plausible argument that entrepreneurs cope with everyday scarcity and subsistence conditions (for example, through bricolage) very differently from how they cope with conditions of “intergenerational trauma”, or indeed the “soul wound” of colonialism as
argued by some Indigenous health scholars (Linklater, 2014). For example, coping with a psychologically scarring legacy of discrimination may call for a completely different set of strategies (for example, reclaiming cultural practices and languages, collective agency and building of solidarity networks). Further, this would entail engaging with Indigenous notions of wellness and wholistic health as against purely Western notions of “coping”, including ceremonies and community healing (Linklater, 2014). I suspect that studying coping under institutional inequality from the perspective of Indigenous notions of wellness and healing may open new aspects of this form of behavior which can further enrich the burgeoning entrepreneurship literature on this topic.

**Beyond Profits**

While Adam Smith’s assertions on the role of “self-interest” in shaping individual and economic action are well-known and widely embraced, perhaps less appreciated are his assertions on the role of “moral sentiments” in shaping human (and thus entrepreneurial) action (Smith, 1759). The findings of this dissertation highlight that rather than profits or subsistence, the dominant motive for entrepreneurial action under the various liabilities of institutional inequality is survivance, i.e., using entrepreneurship as a vehicle to resist or correct historical ills. Indeed, I find that a history of institutional inequality serves as a clarion call for Indigenous entrepreneurs to take up the moral and ethical work of building “active presence” (Vizenor, 1993) and establishing “restorative justice” (Linklater, 2014), in a context where erasure and extinguishment of Indigenous ways (including Indigenous products and services) has been official policy. In contrast, the powerful motivation of the “moral sentiments” of fairness, justice and equity are often less appreciated in narratives which focus on defining entrepreneurship primarily as the pursuit of profit.

Consequently, this study makes the case for bringing to the fore motivations of resistance and correcting historical disparities when discussing entrepreneurial actions under institutional inequality. I recognize that this idea reflects similar arguments for broadening the definition of ‘profit’ beyond mere pecuniary returns (e.g., financial profits) to include non-pecuniary returns (e.g., ‘psychic income’) that accrue to more
generalized forms of personal satisfaction (e.g., Gimeno, Folta, Cooper & Woo, 1997). My findings suggest, however, that rather than invoking an increasingly abstract notion of ‘profits’ or ‘returns’, EA theories would benefit from developing a more robust conceptualization of myriad motivations as well as liabilities as antecedents and constraints respectively for entrepreneurial action. While my findings suggest that profits and survival may play a role in entrepreneurial action among our respondents, more important is the need to demonstrate the abilities and resolve of their people to ensure survivance of their collective heritage. This may suggest the need for a meso-level construct whereby the needs of one’s kin and community are internalized as personal aims.

**Beyond Uncertainty**

Uncertainty as an environmental constraint has been used to explain a myriad of organizational behaviors and actions, ranging from “opportunism” as per transaction cost theory (Mahoney, 2004) to “isomorphism” as per neo-institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In contrast, my findings illuminate the confusion and inertia that ensues because of institutional ambiguity, i.e., the unclear and conflicting formal and informal rules as well as the conflicting cognitive schemas and dispositions for guiding entrepreneurial action. This makes it imperative for entrepreneurial theories to look beyond uncertainty and better appreciate the diversity of liabilities, knowledge problems and contextual constraints that shape entrepreneurial actions. Indeed, while the importance of “context” has been implicit in entrepreneurial theories, increasingly entrepreneurship scholars are urging the need to explicitly account for myriad contextual constraints (Welter, et al., 2017; Kistruck & Shulist, 2020).

Thus, I submit that institutional ambiguity, and the broader idea of liability of institutional inequality, has theoretical implications for both pre- and post-entry entrepreneurial actions. On one hand, institutional ambiguity as a contextual constraint hampers EA by blurring pre-entry desirability and feasibility assessments of some opportunities (Dimov, 2007). As discussed, pursuing a cannabis business for an Indigenous entrepreneur is at best an ambiguous opportunity, despite the legalization of
marijuana at the federal level, given conflicting provincial regulations as well as informal Indigenous norms. On the other hand, such ambiguity continues to affect post-entry actions as the “appropriateness” of a course of action remains contested. Thus, while the assumption of uncertainty is mainly concerned with unknowns, the everyday confusion caused by institutional ambiguity highlighted in this study underscore the knowledge problem of reconciling multiple contradictory versions of knowns (truths and beliefs) that influence everyday entrepreneurial actions.

**Infinitive/ Multi-generational Temporality and Entrepreneurial Action**

The numbered treaties were signed by Indigenous ancestors of our entrepreneurs to explicitly last “as long as the sun shines, the river flows and the grass grows” (Krasowski, 2019). Indeed, Indigenous temporality is found to be “intimately, subjectively, morally, and ethically related to human action with respect to seven generations to come; compared with formally and objectively decontextualized from normative prescriptions of human action” (Aikenhead & Ogawa, 2007, emphasis mine). Similarly, the past is found to be extremely salient in Indigenous decision-making and actions and is reflected in respect for ancestors and traditional ceremonies.

In numerous conversations and observations this “seven generations before and seven generations after” philosophy which shapes Indigenous decision-making and actions was made evident. This temporality spanning multiple generations (before and after, focusing simultaneously on the past as well as the future) is instructive from the perspective of re-visiting assumptions of extant entrepreneurial action theory. As mentioned earlier, most entrepreneurial action theories privilege pursuit of the novel under conditions of “uncertainty” (i.e., an unknown future). This future-temporality assumption in entrepreneurial action theories has been challenged by scholars who have studied entrepreneurial actions under conditions of poverty alleviation. They have argued that under conditions of poverty the focus on entrepreneurial actions is on subsistence in the here-and-now, i.e., the present (Kistruck & Shulist, 2020). A lesson to be learned from Indigenous temporality which substantially influences Indigenous entrepreneurs (as is amply evident from my data) is that entrepreneurial actions are likely shaped, not just
by ruminations of the future or the present, but by a multi-generational temporality. This thus challenges future-focused theories of entrepreneurial action, as a core rumination for Indigenous entrepreneurs is not only to build a “novel” future but also to restore the ancient and reclaim the past.

6.2 Implications for Future Research

The Role of Coping and Volition

Entrepreneurship scholarship has long recognized that intentions may not translate into actions (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006). This has shaped efforts to better understand the origins of entrepreneurial “will to act”. While individual knowledge, motivation, judgment, creativity, or even impulsivity have been proposed as explanations of entrepreneurial action, ironically volition itself, which is commonly defined as “will to act” (Kuhl, 1985; Koole, et al., 2019), remains theoretically underdeveloped. Indeed, current dominant models argue that knowing (feasibility) and wanting (desirability) suffice to explain entrepreneurial actions (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006). In contrast, I argue that these factors alone do not suffice to explain entrepreneurial action under conditions of institutional inequality which hampers information processing (knowledge) and motivation. My dissertation thus helps us extend McMullen & Shepherd’s (2006) seminal model, i.e., beyond knowing and wanting, by explicitly accounting for the role of “willing” or volition in shaping entrepreneurial actions – see Figure 46 (a & b).

Figure 46 (a & b): Beyond knowing (feasibility) and wanting (motivation):
Extended model of Entrepreneurial Action
Moreover, volition is simultaneously hindered (and occasions stimulated) based on idiosyncratic contextual constraints (for example, institutional inequality). Further, to establish a direct connection of my findings to this extended model, it is important to note that everyday self-regulatory coping strategies are an integral component of the volition concept (Van Gelderen, et al., 2015).

Further, while recently scholars have highlighted the role of resilience in entrepreneurship in the face of persistent adversity (Shepherd & Williams, 2020), what remains unexplored is – where does resilience come from? I submit that everyday self-regulatory coping strategies serve as building blocks for molding resilience. Indeed, scholars have found that military veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) often realize that their everyday coping mechanisms help build competences required for entrepreneurial actions (Haynie & Shepherd, 2011). My findings help identify a repertoire of subversive and restorative coping strategies that serve a similar function, i.e., as everyday micro-actions which help Indigenous entrepreneurs negate the effects of institutional inequality. I thus identify coping as a form of micro-agency and shed light on the self-regulatory role of coping processes as an antidote to institutional inequality. Indeed, as Scott (1990) argues, everyday individual forms of opposition should not be underestimated, as the power of thousands of “petty” acts of resistance “rather like snowflakes on a steep mountainside” can “set off an avalanche” (Mumby, Thomas, Martí, & Seidl, 2017). Moreover, coping as a form of micro-agency is more accessible (for example, humour) as it is more embodied and visceral than abstract agency components like reflexivity (see Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). I submit that this has implications not only for Indigenous entrepreneurs but also for other disadvantaged groups, for example, LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs, immigrant entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurs with disabilities, to name a few.

Additionally, while some research focuses on adverse events (for example, a crisis like COVID-19) or disasters (for example, the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, etc.), little research analyzes coping with “chronic” conditions like institutional inequality. Indeed, scholars have reviewed coping literature going back to the 1960s and have identified a research gap relating to coping with “chronic” stress (Folkman & Moskowitz,
2004). This study of Indigenous entrepreneurial actions and coping in the face of lifelong institutional inequality addresses this gap in the coping and resilience literature.

Notwithstanding the repertoire of coping strategies that I do identify, a question that I leave unanswered is – *when do entrepreneurs find themselves overwhelmed and unable to cope with the action-impeding emotions due to institutional inequality?* While many of our Indigenous entrepreneurs shared ongoing bouts with past demons and despair (indeed, I have emphasized the constant “oscillating” between conflicting dispositions as is evident in my findings), there exist opportunities to identify factors which may tilt the balance in favor of maladaptive coping strategies (for example, addictions) over adaptive strategies - and vice versa. For example, how might the availability of a critical mass of role models shape adaptive versus maladaptive coping (DiMaggio & Garip, 2012)? Future research could fruitfully explore this and similar questions.

**The Role of Conation**

Conation, a term of key eminence in psychology classics (Aveling, 1926; McDougall, 1927; Wild, 1928), is defined as “purposive strivings” (Kurczewska, 2016; Kurczewska, Kyrö, Lagus, Kohonen, & Lindh-Knuutila, 2018; Ruohotie & Koiranen, 2000). While the classical conceptualization of conation entailed the dual components of – *motivation* and *volition* – what has been left behind in contemporary psychology literature is solely the concept of *motivation* (Corno, 1993).

A “purpose” is a key antecedent to explaining “purposive striving”, i.e. conation. However, whilst a purpose or wish or desire is a necessary condition for “purposive action”, it is not sufficient. Thus, whilst on one hand conation is argued to be shaped by an individual’s wishes, desires, and basic needs (i.e., motivation), on the other hand it is argued to be shaped by action control and self-regulatory capacities (i.e., volition) (Corno, 1993, Kurczewska, et al, 2018). Indeed, conative processes are found to be a composite of pre-decisional processes (shaped by motivation) and post-decisional processes (shaped by volition) (Corno, 1993). Factors that may lead to interference in
using conative potential are monetary limitations, dependency, and stereotypes (Huitt & Cain, 2005).

Action theory scholars argue that human choice making, and subsequent action, is driven by three information processing mechanisms - cognitive (thinking), affective (feeling) and conative (doing) (Corno, 1993; Kyrö, Seikkula-Leino, & Mylläri, 2008; Snow, Corno & Jackson, 1996), wherein conative processes play an intermediary bridge role between cognitive and affective processes. Conative processes, especially those leveraging volitional control, help individuals to direct and control their cognition, motivation, and emotion when faced with competing goals and other information processing intrusions (see also Deci & Ryan, 1985). Moreover, the volitional component of conation supports important aspects of cognition, such as depth of processing, when needed, and it reflects strategies for self-motivation and control over inappropriate emotions like ineffectivity or helplessness (Norman & Shallice, 1985; Weiner, 1990). Again, this becomes crucial under conditions of persistent and chronic disadvantage, like institutional inequality, which is likely to foster learned helplessness. Further, in addition to attention control, motivational control and emotional control, volitional control entails strategies to cope with failure (Kuhl & Kraska, 1989). On the other hand, the motivational component of conation helps with the pre-decisional thinking and evaluation processes (Corno & Kanfer, 1993). Additionally, conation drives “willingness and interest to learn” and thus shapes individual and organizational learning (Kyrö, et al., 2008).

While a focus on cognition has clearly dominated psychology literature in general, and management and entrepreneurship literature in particular (see Shepherd & Patzelt, 2018 for a review), scholars have already begun calling for an inclusion of affect and emotions in organizational, entrepreneurial and institutional action (Baron, 2008; Cardon, Foo, Shepherd, & Wiklund, 2012, Elfenbein, 2007; Huy & Zott, 2019; Loewenstein, Weber, Hsee, & Welch, 2001; Toubiana & Zietsma, 2017; Voronov & Weber, 2016). However, research on conation has been lost in obscurity. This was primarily due to the ascent of American psychology scholarship post World War II which privileged research on motivational theories over volitional theories.
Given that conative processes, especially in the form of self-regulatory and coping processes help traverse the psychological freeway from wishes to wants to will to action to interaction (Bugental, 1980; Heckhausen & Kuhl, 1985), there exists an opportunity to better appreciate how entrepreneurial actions occur despite distractions and roadblocks at various key junctions whilst traversing the journey from entrepreneurial intentions to entrepreneurial actions, especially when these distractions and roadblocks are further amplified due to conditions of institutional inequality. Indeed, if conditions of persistent disadvantage like institutional inequality is likely to impose additional constraints on entrepreneurial actions in the form of learned dispositions of helplessness (Barzilay, 2019) and a sense of futility (Neville, Forrester, O’Toole, & Riding, 2018), there is an opportunity to better understand how conative processes in the form of self-regulatory, volition-building coping strategies might help negotiate the associated roadblocks.

**Origins of Organizational Routines and Dynamic Capabilities**

Finally, from a future research perspective, I would like to emphasize that entrepreneurial actions are not limited to nascent ventures (Teece, 2012), and covers a gamut of organizational actions. A deeper exploration of early entrepreneurial actions has the potential to help unearth the individual-level “origin story” of what goes into building a firm’s aggregated routines and capabilities (Winter, 2012). Moreover, it would be interesting to explore the imprinting influence of early coping strategies, some of which may constitute entrepreneurial actions (for example, hustling, non-wastefulness/resourcefulness, etc.), on subsequent firm level routines and dynamic capabilities. Indeed, scholars have identified how early actions, prior career and life experiences of entrepreneurs can impact future actions as well as the cultural norms associated with entrepreneurs’ ventures (Mathias, et al., 2015). Similarly, early founder level coping strategies may leave a lasting imprinting effect on future organizational routines and dynamic capabilities – a worthy topic for further enquiry.

**6.3 Policy Implications and Solutions**

Notwithstanding, the contributions this dissertation makes to individual-level constructs and the micro-foundations of coping and entrepreneurial actions, this study at
the same time recognizes the limits of individual resilience in the face of deeply entrenched structural barriers. Firstly, this study contributes to conversations of how institutional inequality creates subpar physical infrastructure in the form of bad roads, inaccessible railways, remoteness, etc., serve to create conditions of “architectural exclusion” (Schindler, 2014). While the railway network in Canada was built in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and while Indigenous reserve allocations were made around the same time, this existing infrastructure continues to impact current day entrepreneurial choices and actions. In the absence of substantial investments in infrastructural change, other policy interventions in the Canadian Prairies like start-up grants or entrepreneurship training programs for pursuing Indigenous entrepreneurship are likely to face limits on their effectiveness.

Second, notwithstanding the positive unintended consequences of persistent disadvantage (for example, learned resourcefulness), this study adds to the evidence on life-long negative impacts due to intergenerational trauma (see Linklater, 2014). Findings sound a cautionary note and emphasize the need to acknowledge the limits of individual resilience and agency in the face of overwhelming macro barriers like physical infrastructure and the debilitating burden of intergenerational psychological trauma (Linklater, 2014). This makes it imperative for policy makers to invest in providing wellbeing resources, especially those steeped in Indigenous cultural practices. For instance, while my in-person observations revealed that Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) resources are available in urban centers like Regina and Saskatoon, I also observed an absence of similar resources in smaller centers, and especially on reserves.

Third, in the face of “racist” attitudes from potential customers, investors and institutional stakeholders, from a policy making perspective there may be further merit in emphasizing “bridging” and networking support to facilitate more face-to-face interactions (Amezcua, Ratinho, Plummer, & Jayamohan, 2020) and thus help dispel negative stereotypes between the various ecosystem stakeholders. I found encouraging examples of such multi-racial, multi-stakeholder organizational sponsorship initiatives in my data in the form of the “Matchstick” program by Women Entrepreneurs
Saskatchewan (WESK) focused exclusively on supporting Indigenous women entrepreneurs and similar networking programs organized by the Saskatchewan Indigenous Economic Development Network (SIEDN). Such existing initiatives can be further encouraged, while at the same time making additional investments in “bridging” resources available to remote regions by leveraging some of the recent developments which have led to higher degree of comfort with using digital networking platforms like Zoom.

Finally, while setting up infrastructure like road and transportation access is likely to be a long-term plan, building basic internet and communication infrastructure may be a higher priority. Indeed, in 2016 Canada’s telecom and broadcast regulator declared broadband internet to be a “basic service”. However, for many Indigenous communities, investments in high-speed infrastructure lose out to more pressing and even more basic needs like potable water. The Canadian government at all levels, along with Indigenous self-governance leadership, could learn from success stories across the world (for example, Estonia, Indonesia and Kenya) where high-speed Internet technologies have been used to leap-frog economic development despite continued absence of more basic infrastructure like roads and railways.

6.4 Limitations

This dissertation’s research context is that of Indigenous entrepreneurs based out of the Canadian Prairies. While I submit that there is an opportunity for all entrepreneurs who work under broad conditions of persistent disadvantage to learn from the micro-subversive and micro-restorative coping strategies leveraged by Indigenous entrepreneurs in our context, I would caution against over-generalization. It is important for me to acknowledge that theories and models simplify and abstract but tend to dilute the richness and diversity of individual contexts. Indeed, Indigenous communities both within Canada (600 + communities in Canada) and outside Canada in places like Australia, New Zealand, Latin America, etc., are diverse; and my findings focused on Indigenous entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan may not even be representative of the myriad Indigenous experiences across time and space. My focal argument is to appreciate contextual diversity associated with pursuing entrepreneurship in different times and geographies.
This helps expand entrepreneurship theories beyond the dominant Silicon Valley, opportunity entrepreneurship focused models. I submit that a nuanced in-depth, historical exploration of a particular regional context (i.e., Indigenous entrepreneurs based out of Saskatchewan), paradoxically serves as both a strength and limitation.

Further, while methodologically I have taken pains to triangulate and draw from multiple sources of data (observations, interviews, and archival data) to mitigate against both respondent and researcher biases, I do recognize that I admittedly am limited by my theoretical lenses. Additionally, unlike experimental studies I am unable to make any claims vis-à-vis causality; nor am I able to leverage statistical tools to calculate effect sizes. I acknowledge these as limitations while asserting that the strength of this study lies in nuanced appreciation of underlying mechanisms and identification of both positive and negative impacts of the same contextual factors on entrepreneurial actions.

6.5 Conclusion

In summary, I believe that there is an opportunity for entrepreneurship scholars to better appreciate the rich heterogeneity of liabilities and contextual constraints—specifically in the form of institutional inequality - under which everyday entrepreneurial actions happen. The path-dependent, cumulative nature of most institutional structures, both in the form of physical infrastructure and socio-normative structures, is likely to constitute a structural “certainty” under which everyday entrepreneurial actions happen. An explicit inclusion of these “known” liabilities and constraints in our theory building would only further enrich our understanding of entrepreneurship. Moreover, this inclusion facilitates better understanding of deeply entrenched barriers as well as possible resolutions which simultaneously hinder, enable, and sustain such actions, more specifically those focused on economic self-determination and emancipation through entrepreneurship.
References


James, W. (1897). The will to believe and other essays in popular psychology.


# Appendices


<table>
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<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Type of Study</th>
<th>Stage/ Phase/ Process</th>
<th>Summary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>McMullen &amp; Shepherd (2006)</td>
<td>AMR</td>
<td>Conceptual</td>
<td>Opportunity Recognition (Attention) and Opportunity Evaluation</td>
<td>Conceptual model of entrepreneurial action proposed; Distinction made between third-person opportunity (attention to opportunity) and first-person opportunity (willingness to act); Role of desirability (motivation) and feasibility (uncertainty) assessments discussed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dean &amp; McMullen (2007)</td>
<td>JBV</td>
<td>Conceptual</td>
<td>Sustainable Entrepreneurship/ Reduction of environmental</td>
<td>Theoretical framework for sustainable entrepreneurship</td>
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<td>Klein (2008)</td>
<td>SEJ</td>
<td>Conceptual</td>
<td>Opportunity Discovery</td>
<td>The article reviews and critiques the opportunity discovery approach and proposes an alternative (judgement approach) on the foundation of Austrian capital theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holcomb, et al (2009)</td>
<td>ETP</td>
<td>Conceptual</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial Learning</td>
<td>Linkages between heuristics, knowledge and action are theorized to establish a model architecture of entrepreneurial learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meek, et al (2010)</td>
<td>JBV</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
<td>Firm Creation</td>
<td>Leveraging institutional theory and sociology, this paper focuses on the role of both decentralized and centralized institutions on firm founding rates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mitchell &amp; Shepherd (2010)</td>
<td>JBV</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
<td>Opportunity Recognition</td>
<td>This study draws on self-representation and decision-making literature, and explores how different images of self, shape opportunity recognition</td>
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<td>Shepherd &amp; Patzelt</td>
<td>ETP</td>
<td>Conceptual</td>
<td>Sustainable Development</td>
<td>Research agenda for answering “what is to be sustained” and “what is to be developed” proposed based on economic,</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>McKelvie, et al.</td>
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<td>Empirical</td>
<td>Decision/Williness to exploit (an opportunity)</td>
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<td>2013</td>
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<td>et al (2015)</td>
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<td>Psychological Capital in Discovery (Risk-driven) vs. Creation (Uncertainty-driven) contexts</td>
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<td>i.e., Opportunity Recognition (Discovery Vs. Creation) to Post-entry phase, i.e., Opportunity Exploitation</td>
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<td>van Gelderen, et al (2015)</td>
<td>JBV</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
<td>Intention to Action transition</td>
<td>This longitudinal study explores the roles of self-control and action-related emotions (namely fear, doubt and aversion) in explaining the intention-action gap</td>
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<td>Mathias, et al (2015)</td>
<td>JBV</td>
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<td>Entrepreneurial Decision making</td>
<td>This study explores how different imprinting experiences shape subsequent entrepreneurial decisions and choices</td>
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<td>Wood, et al (2017)</td>
<td>JBV</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial inaction decisions</td>
<td>This study explores the role of the entrepreneur’s past mental representations as influencing future assessments of opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiklund, et al (2018)</td>
<td>AMP</td>
<td>Conceptual</td>
<td>Impulsivity</td>
<td>This paper outlines a conceptual framework and develops detailed propositions for the multifaceted influence of impulsivity on entrepreneurial action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townsend, et al (2018)</td>
<td>AoM Annals</td>
<td>Conceptual</td>
<td>Decision Logics: Uncertainty</td>
<td>This paper challenges one of the most enduring assumptions defines the “distinctive domain” of entrepreneurship, i.e., the assumption of uncertainty and proposes a broader research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>Approach</td>
<td>Title</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>This study builds on construal level theory (CLT) to argue that abstractness of entrepreneurial action may be a function of psychological distance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This study focuses on the use of bribes by underdog entrepreneurs to overcome adversity</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>This paper argues that we need to look beyond deliberate-reasoning and rational logics, and include a-rationality and impulsivity as potential drivers of entrepreneurial action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Insights</td>
<td></td>
<td>The role of religion in entrepreneurial action</td>
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## Appendix B: List of all 59 Aboriginal Financial Institutions (AFIs) (Source: NACCA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALBERTA (5)</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alberta Indian Investment Corporation (AIIC)</td>
<td>Enoch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apeetogosan (Métis) Development Inc. (AMDI)</td>
<td>Edmonton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Futures Treaty Seven (CFT7)</td>
<td>Calgary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Business Corporation (IBC)</td>
<td>Calgary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement Investment Corporation (SIC)</td>
<td>Edmonton</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BRITISH COLUMBIA (11)</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Business and Community Development Centre</td>
<td>Prince George</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Nations Trust Company (ANTCO)</td>
<td>Kamloops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burns Lake Native Development Corporation (BLNDC)</td>
<td>Burns Lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFDC of Central Interior First Nations</td>
<td>Kamloops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haida Gwaii Community Futures</td>
<td>Massett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Métis Financial Corporation of BC (MFCBC)</td>
<td>Surrey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Fishing Association (NFA)</td>
<td>West Vancouver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Name</td>
<td>Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuu-chah-nulth Economic Development Corporation (NEDC)</td>
<td>Port Alberni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stó:lō Community Futures Corporation (SCF)</td>
<td>Chilliwack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tale’Awtxw Aboriginal Capital Corporation (TACC)</td>
<td>West Vancouver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribal Resources Investment Corporation (TRICORP)</td>
<td>Prince Rupert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANITOBA (11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arctic Co-operative Development Fund (ACDF)</td>
<td>Winnipeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedar Lake Community Futures Development Corporation</td>
<td>The Pas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Futures North Central Development (CFNCD)</td>
<td>Thompson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dakota Ojibway Community Futures Development Corporation (DOCFDC)</td>
<td>Headingley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Peoples Economic Growth Fund Inc. (FPEGF)</td>
<td>Winnipeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitayan Community Futures Development Corporation</td>
<td>Winnipeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metis Economic Development Fund (MEDF)</td>
<td>Winnipeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis Riel Capital Corporation (LRCC)</td>
<td>Winnipeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Community Futures Development Corporation</td>
<td>Lynn Lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Community Futures Development Corporation</td>
<td>Winnipeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribal Wi-Chi-Way-Win Capital Corporation (TWCC)</td>
<td>Winnipeg</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
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**NORTHWEST TERRITORIES (6)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Akaitcho Business Development Corporation (ABDC)</th>
<th>Yellowknife</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Deh Cho Business Development Centre (DCBDC)</th>
<th>Fort Simpson</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dogrib Area Community Futures (1-800-464-2923)</td>
<td>Wha Ti</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>NWT Métis-Dene Development Fund (MDDF)</th>
<th>Yellowknife</th>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sahtu Business Development Centre (1-800-464-2923)</th>
<th>Norman Wells</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Thebacha Business Development Services (TBDS)</th>
<th>Fort Smith</th>
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**NOVA SCOTIA (1)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ulnooweg Development Group Inc. (serving all Atlantic provinces with multiple offices)</th>
<th>Truro, Stephenville, Eel River Bar First Nation</th>
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**NUNAVUT (5)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Atuqtuarvik Corporation</th>
<th>Rankin Inlet</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baffin Business Development Corporation (BBDC)</th>
<th>Iqaluit</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Kakivak Association</th>
<th>Iqaluit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kitikmeot Community Futures Inc. (KCFI)</th>
<th>Cambridge Bay</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Location</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kivalliq Business Development Centre</td>
<td>Rankin Inlet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ONTARIO (8)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Agricultural Program of Ontario (IAPO)</td>
<td>Stirling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Métis Voyageur Development Fund Inc. (MVDF)</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund (NADF)</td>
<td>Fort William First Nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainy Lake Tribal Area Business &amp; Financial Services Corporation</td>
<td>Fort Frances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tecumseh Community Development Corporation (TCDC)</td>
<td>Sarnia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Rivers Community Development Centre</td>
<td>Ohsweken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wakenagun Community Futures Development Corporation</td>
<td>Moose Factory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waubetek Business Development Corporation</td>
<td>Birch Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>QUEBEC (5)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporation de développement économique montagnaise (CDEM)</td>
<td>Sept-îles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eeyou Economic Group / CFDC Inc. (EEG)</td>
<td>Waswanipi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunavik Investment Corporation (1-819-964-0227)</td>
<td>Kuujjuaq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Société de crédit commercial autochtone (SOCCA)</td>
<td>Wendake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Loan Fund</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tewatohnhi’ saktha Business Loan Fund</td>
<td>Kahnawake</td>
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<tr>
<td>SASKATCHEWAN (6)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaver River Community Futures Development</td>
<td>Meadow Lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporation (BRCFDC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarence Campeau Development Fund (CCDF)</td>
<td>Saskatoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Enterprise Fund Inc. (NEFI)</td>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation Inc. (SIEF)</td>
<td>Asimakaniseekan Askiy Reserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SaskMétis Economic Development Corporation (SMEDCO)</td>
<td>Saskatoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visions North CFDC</td>
<td>LaRonge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YUKON (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dāna Näye Ventures</td>
<td>Whitehorse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C – SIEDN’s list of Saskatchewan-based resources for Indigenous economic development

**Aboriginal Business Match**
Description: Business Matching | Partnerships | Procurement | Event Management
Web: [https://advancedbusinessmatch.com/](https://advancedbusinessmatch.com/)

**Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan**
Description: Cultural Awareness | Event Planning | Aboriginal Service Delivery Infrastructure
Web: [https://www.afcs.ca/pages/friendship_centres.html](https://www.afcs.ca/pages/friendship_centres.html)

**Ally Toolkit** - Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network (MUACSN)
Description: How to be an Ally? | Indigenous People’s Needs Resource
Web: [http://reseaumtlnetwork.com/](http://reseaumtlnetwork.com/)

**Battleford’s Agency Tribal Chiefs**
Description: Community Engagement | Recruitment | Job Promotion
Web: [https://www.facebook.com/BattlefordsAgencyTribalChiefs/](https://www.facebook.com/BattlefordsAgencyTribalChiefs/)

**First Nations University of Canada (Campuses – Prince Albert/ Regina/ Saskatoon)**
Description: Education | Cultural Awareness | Talent Engagement | Recruitment
Web: [http://fnuniv.ca/](http://fnuniv.ca/)

**File Hills Qu’Appelle Tribal Council (FHQTC)**
Description: Community Engagement | Technical and Advisory Services
Web: [http://fhqtc.com/](http://fhqtc.com/)
Gabriel Dumont Institute (Head Office – Saskatoon)
Description: Education | Cultural Awareness | Talent Engagement | Recruitment
Web: https://gdins.org/

Indspire
Description: Education | Talent Engagement | Recruitment
Web: http://indspire.ca/

KAIROS (Blanket Exercise)
Description: Reconciliation | Cultural Awareness | Facilitation
Web: https://www.kairosblanketexercise.org/

KITASKINAW (“Our land”) – Saskatoon Aboriginal Program and Inventory (2013-14)
Description: Resources – Spiritual | Cultural | Economic

Meadow Lake Tribal Council
Description: Community Engagement | Economic Development | Recruitment | Procurement
Web: https://www.mltc.ca/

Northwest Professional Services Corp
Description: Aboriginal Business Directory | Procurement
Web: http://northwest-professional-services-corp.sk.xsask.com/
Quint
Description: Community Engagement | Economic Development | Recruitment | Procurement
Web: http://quintsaskatoon.ca/

Prince Albert Grand Council
Description: Community Engagement | Cultural Awareness | Recruitment
Web: https://www.page.sk.ca/

Radius Community Centre
Description: Employee Training | Workplace Skills
Web: https://radiuscentre.com/

Representative Workforce – Saskatoon Health Region
Description: Cultural Awareness | Employee Training | Recruitment
Web: https://www.saskatoonhealthregion.ca/locations_services/Services/fnmh/representative-workforce

Saskatchewan Abilities Council
Description: Employee-Vocational Training | Recruitment
Web: https://www.saskabilities.ca/

Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission
Description: Apprentice Training | Trade Certification | Recruitment
Web: https://saskapprenticeship.ca/workers/aboriginal-apprenticeship/
Saskatchewan First Nations Economic Development Network (SFNEDN)
Description: Research | Advocacy | Networking | Communication | Capacity Building
Web: http://sfnedn.com/

Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (Campuses – Prince Albert/ Regina/ Saskatoon)
Description: Education | Talent Engagement | Recruitment
Web: http://siit.ca/

Saskatchewan Polytechnic (Campuses – Moose Jaw/ Prince Albert/ Regina/ Saskatoon)
Description: Education | Talent Engagement | Recruitment
Web: https://saskpolytech.ca/

Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre
Description: Community Kitchen | Community Engagement
Web: http://www.saskatoonfoodbank.org/

Saskatoon Indian and Metis Friendship Centre
Description: Public Gathering | Community Engagement | Referral Service
Web: http://www.simfc.ca/

Saskatoon Industry Education Council
Description: Career Opportunities | Talent Engagement | Recruitment
Web: https://www.saskatooniec.ca/
Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority
Description: Economic Development | Economic Intelligence | Entrepreneurship
Web: https://sreda.com/

Saskatoon Trades and Skills
Description: Trade Skills Training | Recruitment
Web: https://www.saskatoontradesandskills.ca/

Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC)
Description: Community Engagement | Employment Skills Training
Web: https://www.sktc.sk.ca/

Touchwood Agency Tribal Council
Description: Community Engagement | Economic Development | Advisory Services
Web: http://www.touchwoodagency.ca/

United Way (Saskatoon & Area)
Description: Inclusion | Community Wellbeing | Education | Youth Engagement
Web: https://www.unitedwaysaskatoon.ca/

University of Regina – Aboriginal Students Centre
Description: Cultural Awareness | Health & Wellness | Aboriginal Career Centre
Web: https://www.uregina.ca/student/asc/

University of Regina – Student Employment Services
Description: Placement Services | Talent Engagement | Recruitment
Web: [https://www.uregina.ca/careercentre/ses/employers/index.html](https://www.uregina.ca/careercentre/ses/employers/index.html)

University of Saskatchewan – Aboriginal Students Centre
Description: Cultural Awareness | Health & Wellness | Aboriginal Career Centre | Recruitment
Web: [https://students.usask.ca/aboriginal/asc.php](https://students.usask.ca/aboriginal/asc.php)

University of Saskatchewan – Student Employment and Career Centre
Description: Placement Services | Talent Engagement | Recruitment
Web: [https://secc.usask.ca/](https://secc.usask.ca/)

Wanuskewin Heritage Park
Description: Cultural Awareness | Historical Awareness | Cultural Heritage | Gifts
Web: [https://wanuskewin.com/](https://wanuskewin.com/)

Yellow Quill First Nation – Urban Services Office
Description: Community Engagement | Economic Development | Recruitment

Yorkton Tribal Council
Description: Community Engagement | Economic Development | Recruitment
Web: [https://www.facebook.com/yorktontribalcouncil/](https://www.facebook.com/yorktontribalcouncil/)

YWCA Saskatoon – Employment and Learning Centre
Description: Skills Training | Trade Training | Employment Workshops
Appendix D: Indigenous Research Methods and Protocols – Building Appreciation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event/ Workshop/ Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 2017</td>
<td>Indigenous Research Methods (University of Regina)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;-14&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; June 2017</td>
<td>Indigenous-Internationalization CONAHEC Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July-Oct 2017</td>
<td>Indigenous Canada - University of Alberta MOOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; August 2018</td>
<td>Consultation meeting with Elder Noel Starblanket (Office of Indigenization – University of Regina)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter 2019</td>
<td>Enhancing Academic Indigenization Certificate (Course offered by Office of Indigenization – University of Regina)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter 2019</td>
<td>Project of Heart participation (Creating awareness about Residential Indian Industrial School - RIIS - Cemetery)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;-20&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Feb 2019</td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; Annual Elder’s Gathering (First Nations University, Regina)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; March 2019</td>
<td>Indigenous methods focused session by Margaret Kovach (Indigenous methods expert and educator at University of Saskatchewan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; June 2019</td>
<td>Meeting/ In-person conversation with Marie Battiste (Indigenous author and educator at University of Saskatchewan)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: Researcher at 3rd Annual Elder’s Gathering (First Nations University)
Appendix F: Semi-structured Interview Guide (Indigenous Entrepreneurs)

- How and when did you start your venture? Tell us the story of your venture.
- What were some of your typical challenges during the early stage of the venture?
  - Resource challenges?
  - Institutional challenges?
  - Other challenges?
- How did you deal/cope with these challenges? What strategies worked for you? What strategies didn’t work for you?
- Where did you learn these strategies from? What source? Who were your role models as you started out?
- How long has been your venture in operation?
- Were the challenges in later stages of the venture different from the early stage? How so?
- What would you do differently, if anything?
- What would your recommendation be for other Indigenous entrepreneurs who are starting of?
- What role do different individuals and organizations (for example, Indigenous entrepreneurs, mentors, family members, band leadership, Elders, government, universities, etc.) play in facilitating or hindering entrepreneurship in your town/community?
- What relationships do you have with government and other organizations in your town/community (for example, Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, Crown Corporations, Economic Development Centers, Federal Govt programs, etc.)?
Appendix G: Semi-structured Interview Guide (Indigenous Experts/ Elders/ Leaders)

- Broadly, what as per you are the key challenges that Indigenous entrepreneurs face?
  - Resource challenges?
  - Institutional challenges?
  - Other challenges?
- From your perspective, how have you seen INDIGENOUS entrepreneurs deal/cope with these challenges? What strategies work? What strategies don’t work?
- From your perspective, what is the source of these strategies?
- Are you aware of any role model stories? Would you be willing to share the same?
- Are the challenges different during early stages as compared to later stages? How so?
- As an expert/ leader/ ELDER, what would your recommendations be for other Indigenous entrepreneurs who are starting of?
- What role do different individuals and organizations (for example, Indigenous entrepreneurs, mentors, family members, band leadership, elders, government, universities, etc.) play in facilitating or hindering entrepreneurship in your town/ city/ community?
Appendix H: Doing Humour (Sample one-pager for stakeholder validation)

My first visit to an Indigenous pow-wow, was in July 2017, as part of an annual First Nations University (Regina campus) celebration of high school graduates that particular year. The emcee for the celebration, as expected, played his role of instilling energy, enthusiasm and pride into the proceedings, and at one juncture proudly proclaimed, “Indigenous is IN these days!!” (emphasis mine). “You know why?”, he further prodded. “Because we are INGENIOUS!!” (emphasis mine), he proudly proffered. This celebratory/congratulatory humour is further poignant given the context that high-school graduation rates for Indigenous peoples is on an average half of non-Indigenous groups (Indigenous - 39% vs. Non-Indigenous – 87%). Having said that, a senior Indigenous entrepreneurship scholar pointed out how there is much cause for celebration since in the 70s, when she started her career at the University of Regina, the high school graduation rates for Indigenous peoples were in single digits. This is further corroborated by a study conducted in 1973 by Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, which found that “only 5% of Indian students completed Grade 12, and less than 1% of Indians had completed post-secondary education” (Stonechild, 2006)

Indeed, I have been told repeatedly, and through multiple sources, that a defining and unique attribute of Indigenous people is their sense of humour. I have also been told that if you find an Indigenous person teasing you, then that is a sign that they are “comfortable” with you. In fact, there have been instances when I introduce myself as someone from India and have found Indigenous Elders joke about “We stole your name, eh?! [Laughter]!!”. On another occasion, an Indigenous Elder was tickled by meeting a “real” Indian and went about introducing me to her guests saying, “Have you ever met a real Indian?! Here’s one [pointing to me]! [Laughter]!!”

Scholars have identified how humour serves as a self-regulatory [conative] function and helps deal with feelings of alienation and helplessness (Taylor and Bain, 2003) and as a finer, granular mechanism of “doing emotional regulation” (Huy and Zott, 2019). Laughter has also been found to help “keep [people] going” (Taylor and Bain, 2003) and an avenue for resistance and regaining control of a narrative (notwithstanding the role that humour also plays in reproducing the status quo, for example, sexist jokes, etc.). This mechanism of doing humour to neutralize negative feelings and emotions emanating from a context of powerlessness and disadvantage has been validated not only through my field/in-person observations but also through my online observations.

In the early hours of 4th April, 2018, there was a fire in a downtown Regina restaurant which not only gutted the establishment [non-Indigenous], but the fire-fighting efforts, also ended up damaging an adjacent Indigenous establishment - Miyosiwin hair salon and spa. While Miyosiwin had insurance coverage (albeit not covering all costs/damage), it still meant the establishment would need to shut-down for renovations for some time, with clear repercussions for both owners and employees (mostly Indigenous) alike (as of Jan 2019, Miyosiwin was still undergoing renovations and hadn’t opened for business yet). In the aftermath of that fateful fire on 4th April, 2018, one can imagine the heartbreak and grief the owners must have deeply felt.
Notwithstanding the emotional pain, within a few weeks of the fire, Miyosiwin responded by splashing an image from that fateful day on Facebook, of a group of fire-fighters in action in front of their salon, with a caption in Miyosiwin’s logo colors [large white letters on a purple background] proclaiming, “Voted Hottest Salon in April”! The post text further “winked” and “laughed” in the face of this misfortune (“Hottest” eh? eh? [get it?!]”).
Appendix I: Doing Names (Sample one-pager for stakeholder validation)

We call upon all levels of government to enable residential school Survivors and their families to reclaim names changed by the residential school system by waiving administrative costs for a period of five years for the name-change process and the revision of official identity documents, such as birth certificates, passports, driver’s licenses, health cards, status cards, and social insurance numbers. - Calls for Action # 17 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015)

Not being in the control of the process of naming [yourself], that is defining who you are, serves as one of the most express examples of silencing – Monture-Angus (1995)

First Nations, Ojibway, Blackfoot, Indian, Aboriginal, Treaty, Half breed, Cree, Status Indian are all fairly familiar English words but none of them are the names by which we, the various Indigenous Peoples, called ourselves in our own languages. By contrast how many Canadians have heard these names: Nehiyaw, Nehiyawak, Otipemisiwak, and Apeetogosan?....My partner is Anishnaabe. Like so many Indigenous people in Canada, the name on his birth certificate and on his I.D. is in English. He has always disliked his surname “White” – not because of anything to do with the word, but because he said it has never felt like his. – Reclaiming ourselves one name at a time – Christi Belcourt, Artist [cultural entrepreneur] (2013)

Given a context where Indigenous identities (including names, beliefs, languages, dances, cultural ceremonies, etc., but not limited to) have been historically stigmatized, while not being the sole purpose of entrepreneurial pursuits, a huge aspect of being an Indigenous entrepreneur is to re-gain and re-claim pride in one’s distinct Indigenous identity. This is reflected in the names chosen for their entrepreneurial ventures by many of the Saskatchewan-based Indigenous entrepreneurs that I have had an opportunity to speak with and learn about. Miyosiwin (meaning beauty in Cree) hair salon and spa. RezX magazine, a play on being from a “reserve” and being proud of it, notwithstanding the negative connotations associated with the word “reserve”. Neechie (meaning friend in Cree) Gear, an apparel/ retail outlet. Creerunner Communications Ltd. (a communications and media company), whose website reflects cultural heritage and pride, where in their “About” section they explicitly talk about how prior to first-contact, First Nations relied on “Runners” for communication between tribes, and how they see themselves as contemporary “Runners”. Tatanka (meaning buffalo in Cree) Boutique, which served as a retail front for a hundred plus Indigenous artists from across multiple provinces. Bannock Express, specializing in Indigenous cuisine. Buffalo Art Institute (the buffalo, like the eagle, being a key, revered being in Indigenous world-view), and many such more. Each one of these ventures is a celebration of cultural pride and re-claiming Indigenous identity, despite the price that Indigenous entrepreneurs may have to pay for explicit and open embracing of their Indigenous-ness.
Appendix J: Sample Emergent Themes and Source Codes (data and literature)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Key Source Codes (Data-Literature Juxtaposition)</th>
<th>Representative Quotes/ Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Motivation:** Survivance | Codes by engaging with data:  
create awareness, reduce racism, be creative, inspire others, people pitching in, pot-latching, social obligation, trade, still here  
Codes by engaging with literature:  
desirability, profits, subsistence, survivance, reciprocity | Representative Quotes:  
I want to create awareness and reduce racism. Ignorance leads to racism. My newspaper [and cultural seminars/ workshops] can help by educating people. *(Interview, Métis, Male, Artist/ Entrepreneur)*  
I keep challenging myself to be creative and hopefully inspire others to find their passion and share their strength of resilient spirit *(Online Observations, Nakoda, Female, Artist)*  
We get a lot of that... people pitching in to make your life easier... kids, mums, aunties, siblings... you see that a lot in the corner stores... families working... *(Interview, Métis, Female, Entrepreneur)*  
It’s almost like setting up... like a social obligation. I have something to offer, and if that person has something to offer... maybe that person is not good at hunting [or] not good at making beadwork, but this person is, so... we are going to make sure that they are looked after with their beadwork and food... but they can make something else, so it’s like kinda a trade. *(Interview, Nakoda, Female, Entrepreneur)*  
I like that there’s more Indigenous entrepreneurs because... you know, for everybody to acknowledge that...[we are still] here. *(Interview, Nakoda, Female, Entrepreneur)*  
Representative Literature:  
- McMullen & Shepherd, 2006  
- Alvarez & Barney, 2014  
- Vizenor, 1993 |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Liability:</th>
<th></th>
<th>Representative Quotes:</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Ambiguity | Codes by engaging with data: *jurisdictional chaos, Indian Act legislation, First Nation laws, federal jurisdiction, provincial legislation, Indigenous ways, way of doing business* | Tweet (response to CBC News piece with headline “Province urges Sask. First Nation to shut down unpermitted cannabis store on reserve”): This is rather strange and uninformed response from the provincial government. In spite of the constraints of Indian Act legislation, First Nation laws – by virtue of their place within federal jurisdiction – still nonetheless supersede provincial legislation. According to their own Western case law, this is a legal fact. I imagine the province is reacting this way simply for the purpose of maximizing public support (i.e. votes) [predominantly non-Indigenous] and to protect the interests of their marijuana monopoly (*Online observations, Indigenous Business Leader*)

….my Dad retired from business in the 80s... and on his website he had this manifesto about the Metis way of doing business and the British way of doing business...that was very inspirational to me... he didn't talk to me about that stuff... about what Metisness meant to him except for the history but it affected business methodology. (*Interview, Métis, Male, Artist/Entrepreneur*)

There’s so much more I had to do... research wise…finding mentors… I always found Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people… because there is a difference in the way they do business… and I honor both because both are really good...(*Interview, Nakoda, Female, Entrepreneur*)

Chief Poundmaker [taught us]: “Don’t imitate the White Man”.[We] can’t have laws that go against natural/spirit laws. Chief Whitebear/ Elders [taught us]: “Keep our knowledge alive” (*Interview, Dakota/Nakoda/Cree/Saulteaux, Female, Entrepreneur*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Representative Literature:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Townsend, Hunt, McMullen &amp; Sarasvathy, 2018</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Ramoglu, 2021</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Action:

**Cultural Reclamation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes by engaging with data:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>forming, re-forming, correct</em>, <em>reclaim, create awareness, reduce racism, educating</em></td>
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<tr>
<th>Codes by engaging with literature:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>novel, innovation, replication</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Representative Quotes:

I am interested in how we are *forming* our selves, or *re-forming* our selves as Canadians and I feel that the Indigenous, uh.....have something to offer to make us better humans... [for example] …environmental crisis, these are all things about which indigenous peoples have something to say.... *(Interview, Métis, Male, Artist/Entrepreneur)*

I want to *create awareness* and *reduce racism*. Ignorance leads to racism. My newspaper [and cultural seminars/workshops] can help by *educating* people. *(Interview, Métis, Male, Artist/Entrepreneur)*

For Vermette, writing about Métis characters and history is an important part of her work. "Especially when I research into this history, it's not always told from a Métis perspective. And I think that is wrong and I think that is something many Métis historians are correcting now. And I think it's exciting to tell these stories and *reclaim* these stories as our own. They belong to us." *(Archival, CBC Radio, Métis Artist/Author, Jan 2018)*

### Representative Literature:

- Alvarez & Barney, 2007
- Alvarez & Barney, 2014
# Curriculum Vitae

**Name:** Ketan Goswami

**Post-secondary Education and Degrees:**
- University of Mumbai
  - Mumbai, Maharashtra, India
- The Ohio State University
  - Columbus, Ohio, United States
  - 2000-2002 M.L.H.R.
- The University of Western Ontario
  - London, Ontario, Canada
  - 2016-2021 Ph.D.

**Honours and Awards:**
- Best Reviewer Award (AoM, ENT Division, Chicago)
  - 2018
- Above and Beyond Call of Duty (AoM, OMT Division, Boston)
  - 2019

**Related Work Experience:**
- Instructor
  - King’s College
  - 2019-2021

**Publications:**