

**ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN CANADA:  
Best Practices, Policies and Strategies**

*2009*

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This paper reports an in-depth review of the extant literature on the topic of Aboriginal economic development. Two key areas of analysis were identified as a means of delimiting the scope of the review because of both time and resource constraints, (1) The context for Aboriginal wealth creation and economic development, (2) Strategies, mechanisms and best practices for Aboriginal economic development.

In summary, the research objectives were; the discovery, categorization and analysis of the extant research in the field of Aboriginal economic development in Canada and the world; synthesis identifying factors that promote successful outcomes; identification of research gaps; and theoretical development.

The search for antecedents, general processes and specific best practices within existing literature on ‘successful’ Aboriginal economic development in Canada led to the examination of a large body of literature – in all, almost 200 studies. A general framework of Aboriginal issues relating to economic development emerged with a wide range of issues identified as being not specific to Canada’s Aboriginal population. Lessons learned from other countries have informative value to understanding issues specific to Aboriginal peoples in Canada and vice versa.

There are gaps in the literature. An assortment of strengths and weaknesses were discovered in current knowledge. For example, there is a lack of cohesive theoretical development – many authors do not build on previous studies – therefore cumulative effects of research are not realized. Additionally, the field of Aboriginal economic development lacks legitimacy within academic circles; the place of publication and the overall number of empirical studies supports this assertion.

The paper concludes with a summary of the overall findings and implications of the research.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians at Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) has requested a review of the literature on ‘best practices’ in Aboriginal economic development. This project has arisen from the need to discover, categorize and develop a critical analysis of the canon<sup>1</sup> of extant research knowledge that is specifically focused upon increasing Aboriginal participation in the economy. The outcomes of this project are intended to be shared with Aboriginal communities and government agencies with the goal of providing an in depth theoretical and practical framework for determining what works and what does not work within an Aboriginal context(s) in Canada. It will also serve to develop a roadmap for further research by identifying knowledge gaps, providing testable theory, and guiding further research that will be critical to the generation of future policies.

## **OBJECTIVES**

As this research project is exploratory in nature, an outline of the broad objectives is provided below in order to frame the study with respect to forming criteria for its evaluation:

- 1) Discover, categorize and analyze the extant research in the field of Indigenous economic development throughout the world.
- 2) Discover, categorize and analyze the extant research in the field of Aboriginal economic development in Canada.
- 3) Synthesize from the two literatures what is general to Indigenous economic development, proper, and what is specific to Canada with respect to factors

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<sup>1</sup> *Canon* is defined in terms of the complete and assembled works of any material that is considered to be both genuine and relevant to the field of Aboriginal economic development

- that are significant to promoting successful outcomes.
- 4) Identify the research gaps within the extant academic literature on Aboriginal economic development in Canada.
  - 5) Develop theory on Aboriginal economic development from the gathered literature framework that is both practically aimed and eminently testable (outlining critical assumptions, hypothesis, and expert analysis of how current policies match up with research findings). This will provide three models of best practices from current theory, empirical evidence, and the author's critical analysis of the previous two models.

## **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The **literature review** will include an analysis of key research (both academic peer reviewed and non-academic peer reviewed), policy, previously undertaken literature reviews and other relevant documentation over the last ten years in Canada. It will also cover any relevant publications elsewhere within the field of Aboriginal economic development, where such findings may prove helpful.

Key areas for analysis will comprise the following:

- The context for Aboriginal wealth creation and economic development
  - Land, property rights and resource management/control
  - Cultural norms (social, political and heritage issues)
  - Capacity building
  - Organizational drivers and constraints
- Strategies, mechanisms and best practices for Aboriginal economic development
  - Rural reserves
  - Urban reserves

- Strategic alliances/Joint Ventures
- Entrepreneurship
- Development Corporations
- Financing/Investment
- Casinos
- Other (innovation and technology)

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Research Problem**

First Nations people are challenged with the task of building wealth and improving well being from a position that can be described as socially excluded, disadvantaged, and historically framed within the context of western colonization. In order to become full partners within the federal democratic framework that exists in Canada, First Nations people must engage the process of economic development using strategies that are best designed for achieving success. As the nature of success is often defined within a localized context, the heterogeneity of outcomes can be diverse. Yet, there are two highly generalized goals that emerge: economic equality and social integrity. These goals are often perceived as interrelated, highly complex and potentially dichotomous. Thus the research problem entails the exploration of how the successful confluence of these two goals may inform and influence the economic development strategies of First Nations people in Canada.

### **VOICES OF ABORIGINAL CANADIANS – WHAT ARE THE CURRENT ISSUES?**

What are the outstanding issues, problems and concerns?

In 2007, a Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples released a report entitled *Sharing Canada's Prosperity – A Hand Up, Not a Handout*. This document provides a recently up to date overview of topics of interest, themes, concerns and policy matters that have direct relevance to the research questions explored in this literature review. Through a series of public hearings and meetings with Aboriginal and local leaders, the committee received policy recommendations, advice and most importantly, were able to gain insight from a diverse cross section of Aboriginal communities in Canada. The report repeatedly emphasizes the necessary requirement for self determination in the quest for economic parity and social autonomy of First Nation's peoples. Although it is agreed upon by many in government and academia that a

tripartite effort between government, industry and Aboriginal people is necessary, the emphasis on the latter's role is often the least accounted. Thus, with respect to shaping current *government* policy, 17 recommendations are offered under the headings of seven structural themes:

1. *Renewed Federal Approach to Aboriginal Economic Development* which discusses serious underfunding for economic development initiatives, a lack of a focused and centralized agency for driving this agenda and the need for a renewed policy framework.
2. *Support for Institutional Development* ranges across several capacity building recommendations that address the importance of strong and well aligned community institutions that have access to capital and competence in management.
3. *Increased Access to Lands and Resources* that includes measures to ensure access is complemented with the necessary management capacity to deal with these resources.
4. *Education and Training* recommending a two pronged approach to skills development (government and industry) and the means for companies to address their training issues.
5. *Addressing Indian Act Barriers to Development* requires continued expansion of the FNLMA, a national land registry system and further assessment of the *Indian Act* with respect to structural legislative barriers to business development, capital formation and autonomy.
6. *Infrastructure Deficits* on First Nations reserves are highlighted and a ten year plan for coinciding infrastructure development with commercial and industrial development.
7. *Partnerships with Industry* are deemed tantamount to success with economic development strategies across the board and that the federal government take a lead role in facilitating these partnerships and providing incentives to encourage this activity.

On a macro level, these recommendations are both legitimate and necessary. But what are the gaps in knowledge that must be bridged in order to strategically and tactically pursue these goals? Secondly, what types of research will benefit First Nations communities and peoples who are engaging in this type of activity? The gaps that exist are arguably massive and a very rich ground for researchers to formulate insightful questions and test a wide range of hypothesis that have direct and indirect value. As referred to above with respect to recommendations outlining the requirement for a central agency to organize, streamline and guide economic development efforts, research agendas may also benefit from a central focus and structural guidance.

In order to begin formulating a research agenda, the knowledge that already exists must be codified, validated and disseminated in order to provide researchers with a foundational base. One important area that must be part of any research agenda is to identify the barriers to economic development and any ‘best practices’ that may exist to address them. According to the Senate Committee Report, several barriers and constraints to Aboriginal economic development were identified. The barriers are:

1. Access to capital – tax incentives for investment in Aboriginal businesses, home ownership on reserve land to expand access to capital and greater support for Aboriginal Financial Institutions.
2. Legislative and Regulatory Barriers – restrictions placed on the use of property as collateral by the *Indian Act*, the complex and time consuming process for leasing land for commercial development and inefficiencies in the land tenure and registry systems dissuade external investment.
3. Limited Access to Lands and Resources – settlement of outstanding land claim and treaty land entitlements
4. Lack of Human Capital – education and skills training is tied to successful economic development readiness.

5. Infrastructure Deficits – increases the difficulty to attract investment (no direct funding for commercial infrastructure development)
6. Lack of Governance Capacity – economic growth is driven by well functioning institutions
7. Fragmented Federal Approach to Economic Development and Limited Funding – 27 federal departments and agencies deliver 27 different economic development programs with cutbacks in key areas pertaining to economic development

Antecedents to success are:

1. Leadership and Vision – strong and stable leadership are found to be significant to economic success
2. Understanding the Complementary Roles of Politics and Business – keeping politics out of the day to day business operations of the community are significant to success; this has been facilitated through the creation of organizational structures that separate them.
3. Achieving Legitimacy for Economic Development Activities – aligning activities with a community cultural match to provide buy in and support from all levels.
4. Identifying and Leveraging Strengths – strategic assessment of strengths and weaknesses
5. Establishment of a Qualified Labour Force – human capital development is a pre-requisite to successful economic development, especially for Aboriginal communities where educational indicators are below Canadian averages
6. Partnerships with Industry – provide capacity building opportunities, complimentary asset contribution and external financial and human capital that aide the economic development process.

Management of a research agenda guided by the above recommendations may potentially yield a series of questions that begins to point to where academic research efforts may cast light on important but yet not fully examined issues. For example:

- 1) determining how targeted economic development funding for communities may be equitably addressed within a framework that controls for diverse needs, populations, community cultures/structures (Métis, First Nation, non-Status Indian, etc), and that considers current levels of development and success across a wide range of levels on a community by community comparative basis,
- 2) providing a criteria based assessment of competencies and resources that must be addressed before targeted funding can be efficiently leveraged,
- 3) outlining a mandate for a central economic development authority by assessing the diverse needs in both urban and rural communities, and ensuring representative policy structures that allow these communities to work through such an agency to engender sufficient trust and buy in,
- 4) determining how the financial industry will respond to legislative changes and what are the key factors involved across a wide range of institutions, community types, sectors and governance structures,
- 5) identifying the types of incentives to be used for encouraging Aboriginal/Corporate partnerships, alliances and joint ventures across a wide range of education, capacity building and economic development trajectories; what are the potential impacts that may be achieved and of the three types of structural collaborations identified above, which are most suitable for certain pre-defined contextual situations?
- 6) what methods and data can be developed to better measure economic development activities by Aboriginals as well as the programs meant to facilitate those activities?

These are just six questions out of a larger set of issues that can be drawn from the findings and recommendations of the Senate report. Have these themes been raised in the literature, and have these questions been explored? What themes and questions not represented here have been studied? What is the knowledge benefit achieved and how has academic knowledge been applied to either help better understand the issues of Aboriginal economic development, or provide practical guidelines, solutions, and best strategies for probabilistically managing successful outcomes? The next section develops a set of overarching research questions that may help to explore the issues highlighted in the report, provide a structural understanding of the research that is not in the report but relevant to Aboriginal economic development, and identify what has so far been lacking in either, but that may be worth exploring.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The above section frames a set of current issues regarding Aboriginal economic development in Canada. In order to draw out the extant academic literature, structure it and then evaluate it, several general research questions must be developed to help guide this study. This requires a precise and comprehensive categorization of the literature field that concerns Aboriginal economic development in specific terms. Once the detailed works have been drawn out through the parameters applied by the guiding research questions, an evaluation of the canon of literature can be conducted, with both implications and limitations explicitly outlined.

With the strategy of throwing as wide a net as possible, yet limited by the application of space and time constraints, the following questions have been set as methodological guide stones for this paper:

- What are the theoretical foundations of economic development in general and how does this concept compare and contrast with the specific context of First Nations people in Canada?

- What are the antecedents, general processes and specific best practices identifiable within the extant literature that are significant to successful First Nations economic development in Canada?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the extant literature?
- How can general theory be used to fill in the gaps, strengthen best practices and focus future research?
- What are the potential pathways for future research in the field of Aboriginal economic development?

These questions will be addressed within this study using methods as outlined in the sections below. This paper will proceed as follows. First, an overview of economic growth theory and its importance to economic development is presented. Definitions of development are analyzed. Next, theoretical frameworks and concepts relevant to economic development are discussed and a general model of economic development considered. The methods used to empirically guide this study are introduced and empirical findings and emergent themes are categorized and discussed. Emergent themes distilled through the literature review process are used to frame economic development in an Aboriginal context. Analysis of the emerging canon is conducted and a model of key factors significant to and potentially underweighted in research importance to Aboriginal economic development illustrated. The model is then evaluated using general theory, with the objective of using extant research to help fill knowledge gaps. Implications for research, policy and practice are discussed, followed by a brief summary and revisiting of the research questions proposed.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: AN OVERVIEW**

The purpose of this section is to define economic development in general terms, provide an understanding of some of the competing and complimentary concepts and

categorize the various antecedents to economic growth. An interpretation of what constitutes successful economic development is presented. The relationship between economic development, the global market, government, and community is explored on a macro level. On a micro level, the role that entrepreneurship plays in economic development and its linkage with innovation is outlined. Environmental factors important to successful economic development are evidenced. Extant theory and best practice is classified into broad themes and analyzed. A general model of economic development is presented.

### **ECONOMIC GROWTH THEORY**

Most economists agree that economic growth is an important element and potentially either a positive or negative outcome of the economic development process (Blair, 1995). There are a range of theories used by academics to explain and predict economic growth. These theories can be categorized into two different approaches: the historical perspective and the contemporary perspective. As the historical perspective relies heavily upon the ‘western’ interpretation of growth and its relationship to capitalism, its perceived relevance to Aboriginal economic development may not be particularly useful to scholars in the field of Aboriginal economic development research. Yet, many of the concepts discussed are still relevant to the development of Aboriginal communities and nations. Access to capital, institutions, how markets operate, innovation and the creation of industry within an international context are all important aspects. Other concepts, such as how governments should operate within the framework of economic development practices are potentially dichotomous to the historical perspective.

Contemporary approaches may be viewed as a better “fit”, regarding both social and economic objectives as complimentary (Cornell and Kalt, 1995). These frameworks for understanding the phenomenon are often focused upon human progress, equitable distribution of wealth, participation, culture and sustainability. They are also better suited for the understanding of economic development from an Aboriginal context,

but are also not sufficient for providing a solid theoretical foundation for the successful creation of policies and practices. The following section provides a brief outline of these theories and their relevance to Aboriginal economic development policy.

### **Perspectives of Economic Growth: Historical and Contemporary**

There are four perspectives within the historical approach relevant to understanding economic development aimed at growth: neoclassical theory, modernization theory, structuralism, and dependency theory. These theories are drawn from the historical observation of economic growth over time and seek to attribute axiomatic properties to observable economic phenomena that allow for the explanation of current phenomena and the prediction of new phenomena:

- *Neoclassical theory* states that economic development is driven by the invisible hand, with an emphasis on the market and its ability to provide a market clearing price for goods and services based on the principles of supply and demand. Outside of the provision of an environment of laws that stimulate commerce (property rights, basic infrastructure, political and legal stability) the interference by government in the market process is viewed as highly disruptive and is a root cause of inefficiency. Therefore economic development is framed in the terms of capital formation (savings and investment that is necessary for growth), with policies focused upon increasing the amount of capital accessible to entrepreneurs with little attention paid to equitable distribution as optimization is sought instead (Lucas, 1998).
- Modernization theory consists of the view that the economic development process is societal in nature and progresses through major steps, such as industrialization, urbanization and bureaucratization. As society progresses, power relations shift the control of resources from the state to the individuals who possess various forms of capital, making the prominence of social groups and institutions more pronounced with respect to organization of the

economy. Thus policies are targeted at how to best increase the cooperation of these social groups and institutions with the explicit objective of creating higher productivity (Bernstein, 1971).

- Structuralist theory is based upon the notion that structural changes within a less developed nation's socioeconomic fabric are necessary to gain benefits from trade, which is the impetus of growth. Policies are targeted at providing the proper government policy for stimulating trade, and limiting the dependence upon other nations for goods and services (Rostow, 1960).
- Dependency theory is very similar to structuralist theory in that it posits poverty in less developed countries arises from the exploitation of resources by more well developed countries, increasing disparity in wealth across nations. Thus policies developed seek to improve economic development outcomes through protecting less developed nations from those that are well developed (Weber, 1947).

In contrast to the historical perspective, contemporary theories emphasize the importance of social progress to take place alongside economic progress for economic development policies and practices to be successful. A role for government is clearly indicated. There are two main theories within the contemporary approach: regulation theory and humanistic theory.

- Regulation theory states that the accumulation of capital is influenced by both state and non-state institutions. Subsequently, value is placed upon economic aspects of the market and the relationships and interactions that take place within industrial societies and between supranational bodies and local communities. The objective of policies developed using regulation theory as an underpinning framework stress the requirement to address the significance of (local) social structures in order to maximize the efforts of economic development strategies (Anderson, Hindle, Kayseas, Camp, 2006).
- Humanistic theory goes one step further and highlights the importance of social context in understanding economic development to promote both

efficiency and equity through the expert usage of resources available and the incentives used to maximize their effectiveness. This theory emphasizes the need for strategic competition and cooperation (Lutz 1999).

The next section looks at the shift from historical perspectives on economic development to a contemporary approach that is more encompassing of the unique context of Aboriginal people. In doing so, we broaden the concept of economic development to ‘development’ in general and provide a set of best practices for integrating general economic principles across a diverse set of social realities.

## **DEFINITIONS OF DEVELOPMENT**

In the narrowest of terms, economic development involves the creation and distribution of wealth within society. While an increase in the per capita income (GDP) across countries over time is a fundamental aspect of the concept, it has been found that the increase of wealth is not a correlate to the increase in social indicators within a nation (Stiglitz, 1999). In fact, there is evidence to suggest that the process of economic development in the neoclassical sense may actually have a negative impact upon social indicators, and that the economic development strategies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were far too narrow in scope, excluding the role of the public sector. Stiglitz (1998) states that there has been a failure by those who propagate the principles of free market dynamics to recognize some of the key lessons of history:

- Successful development efforts have involved an active role by government
- Societies without an active role by government, failed to develop
- Capitalist economies were characterized by widespread social disparities (due to economic instability) before there was greater government involvement in development activities

- Neoclassical economic theories failed to explain and remedy the occurrence of the failure of certain regions within industrial countries to develop (Stiglitz, 1998).

Although Stiglitz points out that the use of the term *economic development* has not been synonymous with the concept of *social development* within academia, and to a lesser extent, policy development over the past fifty years, he argues that a comprehensive strategy for *development* in general requires both social cohesion and economic policy (Stiglitz, 1998). The World Bank defines social development as:

*...transforming societies by understanding the social context of the country as well as the needs and priorities of poor people... empowering people by creating more inclusive, cohesive and accountable institutions.* (World Bank, 2009).

To this point, Stiglitz offers his definition of *development* that encompasses both economic and social elements in the planning and implementation of development objectives:

*Development represents a transformation of society, a movement from traditional relations, traditional ways of thinking, traditional ways of dealing with health and education, traditional methods of production, to more “modern” ways.* (Stiglitz, 1998:3)

He goes on to state that this perspective of development has important implications for the role of government, public agencies and private corporations in building partnerships within local communities to ensure full participation within the global economy. Objectives must take into consideration the need for ensuring that all members of society have ample opportunity to benefit from industrial growth. To help achieve these goals, Stiglitz provides an analytical framework that is broken down into three key principles:

- 1) Development strategies – are more complex than *plans* in that they provide a vision that is implemented through strategies for capital accumulation,

resource deployment, institutional evolution or change, the creation of social capital, capacity building and the transformation of society (De Soto, 2000).

- a. Priorities – since all societies are resource constrained, there is a need to prioritize in sequence, the steps required for developing proper development strategies
  - b. Coordination – in a typical economy, market clearing activities perform most of the necessary coordination within a society, but in less developed countries, regions and communities, multilateral efforts from organizations in the public and private sector are essential for developing new industries and filling gaps with public goods when failures in the marketplace are identified
  - c. Consensus building – ensures political and social stability while leading to the proper implementation of ownership policies through respectful communication between all sectors and stakeholders.
- 2) Society wide change – strategies serve as a catalyst for successful development and thus identification and dissemination of these strategies as a public good should be the responsibility of governments. Social learning, scaling up and replication of success are all structurally intertwined (Dees, 2004).
- 3) Participation and ownership – clear implications for where development efforts must take place, who controls them and how the processes work rest unequivocally at the grass roots with those receiving assistance. Imposing change from the outside is a recipe for failure (Sirolli, 1999). Empowerment through facilitation of dialogue is necessary. A sense of ownership often follows respectful engagement and participation.

These three principles operate through and across several levels of development:

- Private sector development

- Public sector development
- Community development
- Family development
- Individual development

There are also several key ingredients or inputs that must be considered:

- A) Resources – returns to capital must include human capital and depend upon functioning institutions and a sustainable environment for economic growth to encourage savings, investment and the stewardship of natural resources
- B) Economic management – constrained societies require the effective deployment of limited capital stocks, ensuring that the social costs and distributional impact of policies transcend beyond those that concentrate on liberalization.
- C) Knowledge management – the complimentary relationship of knowledge and capital concedes the axiomatic nature of incorporating the absorptive, adaptive and exploitative into rationales for economic development strategy. This means investment in both productive and exploitative areas within institutions.
- D) Sector and sub-national strategies – strategies must be contextually aligned and targeted towards regions, cities, rural areas and communities
- E) Social and organizational capital – includes the institutions and relationships that govern and mediate transactional processes. In weaker, less developed societies, social capital is often eroded to the point where a society is left bereft of the necessary structures due to the destructive processes that often come with transformation. Thus the pace of change must reflect the capacity of a society for instituting change that keeps traditional perspectives intact while new ones are developed. Otherwise beneficial tradition and culture may never survive the iterative process of transformational development.

The failure of economics to address the human side of development issues is one of its greatest flaws. The cause and effect relationships between rapid economic growth and poverty reduction are easily confused with the transformative properties of paradigm shifts that may be best defined as modernization (Deininger and Squire 1996). Assumptions such as those derived from theoretical postulation stating greater inequalities occur in the initial stages of development failed to observe that not all individuals, communities, and regions started on a level playing field (Kuznets, 1934). The relative starting positions of individuals with respect to human capital, financial capital and social capital are found to be highly differentiated (Brenner, et al., 1991). This is of course the case with First Nations in Canada. Not only are the starting points of Aboriginal communities not at parity with non-Aboriginal communities, in most cases there is a great diversity in positions relative to other First Nations communities across Canada (cite).

Identifying the nature of these inequalities within populations, and designing policy targeted to positively affect well-being along with wealth creation is obviously highly contextual in nature. Yet the general principles and strategies covered above are well merited and evidenced as a foundational starting point for any development plan, whether it be national, regional, or intimately local. Most importantly, the illustration of economic development being a necessary but not sufficient strategy for improving social well being through wealth creation resonates as a key underlying tenet for *sustainable* success. This may be even more significant with respect to individuals, communities, and *nations* that have been disaffected by the transformative changes of modernization for myriad reasons.

## **GENERAL MODELS OF LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Economic development models come in all shapes and sizes, have differing mandates and employ a wide array of tools. They can be classified into three general types: public, public-private and private. As economic development in its most base form is the activity of organizing around a mandate, purpose or objective, it is principally a

socially driven phenomenon. It can also be narrowed to the service of special interests and well defined objectives that may be coordinated by organizations, communities or even governments.

Public models are often focused regionally, within a designated sector or industry, or in under-developed communities. Resources used for stimulating economic development are overwhelmingly drawn from governments, government agencies or in collaboration with publicly funded NGOs (Eisinger, 1988, Eberts, 1990). These models are often driven by public policy. Public-private models are hybrids composed of government and non government agencies, associations, firms, communities or individuals. They are not driven by public policy, but instead serve to help develop and forward self interest through a combination of policy and market based activities (Walzer and Jacobs, 1998). The last set consists of private models, and is often driven by self interest. Although market based principles are the main tools, influencing public policy is not outside of the range of these organizations, especially if private interest is served (Porter, 2000; Schumpeter, 1942). A list of model configurations is provided in tables 1 through 3 below.

Table 1. Public Economic Development Models

Model Type	General Focus	Degree of Public Control	Public Funding Required	Distinct Tools
Government Economic Development Department	Nation or province wide	High	High	Tax laws, regulatory, business support, project funding, sector support, labour development, technology
Redevelopment Agency	Economically depressed geographic areas	High	High	Community associations, job training, infrastructure
Regional Economic District	Regional	Low-high	Low-High	Tax incentives, cottage industry, leadership
Special Service	Targeted populations	High	High	Human development

Table 2. Public-Private Economic Development Models

Model Type	General Focus	Degree of Public Control	Public Funding Required	Distinct Tools
Local Development Corporation (LDC)	Local-regional: could focus on local or regional area, specific community commercial district, or a central business district	Low-High	Low-High (based on level of Govt participation)	Resources, leadership, organizational structure, legitimacy, partnerships, centralized approaches
Private Voluntary Association (with local govt as dues paying member)	Local-regional: could focus on local or regional area, specific community commercial district, or a central business district	Low-Medium	Low-Medium (based on representation)	Membership support, networking, lobbying, program assistance

Table 3. Private Economic Development Models

Model Type	General Focus	Degree of Public Control	Public Funding Required	Distinct Tools
Private Local Development Corporation (LDC)	Local-regional: could focus on local or regional area, specific community commercial district, or a central business district	Low-Medium (based on participation of local officials)	Low-High (based on level of Govt participation)	Resources, leadership, organizational structure, legitimacy, partnerships, clusters
Private Voluntary Association (Chamber of Commerce, etc.)	Local-regional: focus could be regional, community wide, downtown, community commercial area, shopping center,	Low	Low	Membership support, networking, lobbying, program assistance, advertising, promotions, cultural events, fairs, etc.
Entrepreneurial	New business start ups	Low	Low	Autonomy, competitiveness, technology, job creation, transformation of capital

Although this is not a comprehensive list, each of these models can play a role in an overarching economic development strategy. They may also contribute individually to targeted areas and become the main drivers of development. What should be noted is that within each category of models, the costs associated to the public purse are lowered moving from public to private. Although each of the categories in this model can function efficiently and are sometimes all necessary for successful economic development, it is only private growth of an economy, the investment of capital and the efforts of entrepreneurs that create wealth. Although, realistically, public models

may never become extinct even within a well functioning economy, it is logically assumed that over time, balance will shift from public to private models.

With respect to Aboriginal economic development, the balance is indisputably weighted towards the public models presented above, but there is a burgeoning movement towards public-private and private models. How these models interact, what are the best configurations and ultimately, and how private models can be engaged to shoulder a larger load are all interesting and important questions; which private models will be more effective to First Nations communities with diverse needs, different resource sets and complex mandates?

## **METHODS**

This paper uses literature search methods to review and categorize the canon of works belonging to the field of Indigenous economic development. Statistical analysis of empirical data that is coded for source, method, type and major themes emerging within 181 publications reviewed is presented. Further analysis of these themes is cross referenced with data collected on important concepts, variables and constructs measured or discussed within the literature, and a categorization of best practices pulled from several classification areas. Theoretical consideration of literature that is relevant to established and emerging themes is then discussed and its application to the paper's objectives is explored. Distillation of the findings in this review is then used to construct a model conceptually relevant to First Nations economic development strategies and best practices in Canada.

## **LITERATURE SEARCH**

The literature search was conducted using standard techniques. Two key databases were reviewed: ABI/Inform and Econlit. Several non-governmental and university based research websites were also searched. Key words and databases generated (in endnote files, or document files) from these searches are presented in appendix 2

below and a complete reference set of the literature surveyed (the canon) produced in appendix 1. The yield from these searches was distilled using tacit based analysis techniques employed by two doctoral researchers familiar with the field of Aboriginal economic development and entrepreneurship. Duplicate and redundant research was removed. The aggregate total of publications submitted for analysis as the canon of scholarly works contributing to the field of Indigenous economic development was 181 publications: government, NGO or university institute reports, academic book sections, and scholarly journal articles.

### **CATEGORIZATION MATRIX**

A standard categorization matrix for coding data is used to draw out a standard set of data points that are relevant to the objectives of this paper (Forbes, 1999). The matrix focuses on three key areas: 1) publication taxonomy, 2) paper objectives, concepts and variables/constructs and 3) best practices/strategies relevant to Aboriginal economic development. The publication taxonomy classifies data points such as the main unit of analysis, methods used, where the article was published, nation based relevance, and authors. This data is used to produce a statistical overview of the publishing and content patterns evolving within this area of research. Concentrations and gaps within the categorized areas of the canon of works in Aboriginal economic development are thus identifiable. The second area concerns the content of the paper, what the paper is about, conceptual or theoretical foundations (if any) and any constructs, variables or factors measured or discussed. Third, a list of best practices is distilled from the work, either through evaluation of the findings, or directly from stated recommendations.

A coding regime is also included that allows for identification of major themes emerging from each publication reviewed. Once identified, these themes are sorted, condensed and enumerated to provide a statistical illustration of the main focus points found within these studies. The distillation process involves three separate rounds of coding and condensing where like themes are classified into more general categories. The final coding process yields a statistically informed database of themes that is then used to form categories for discussion and analysis.

## **THEORETICAL APPLICATION**

Analysis of best practices through comparison and contrast with the extant literature in the general fields of economic development, entrepreneurship, social development and policy design is utilized. This allows for both a categorical and aggregate evaluation of the literature and provides the basis for the development of specific and general models applicable to the context of Aboriginal economic development.

## **EMPIRICAL FINDINGS: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CANON**

This section presents the statistical findings of the literature review and serves to form the categorical foundations of the research paper. Analysis of the empirical findings is presented in each area of investigation. The section concludes with a summation of the findings and an illustration of the key features of the canon with respect to each methodological category.

## **KEY FEATURES OF THE CANON**

The depth and breadth of a literature can be examined via the empirical units of study, the epistemologies used to observe, discover or explore phenomenon, and the specific empirical methods used to collect and analyze data. Across the entire canon of academic work considered, the prevailing unit of analysis was the community. Encompassed within this 30% are bands, tribes, reserves, and northern villages that demographically consist of Aboriginal, Metis or Inuit in the majority. This result is expected as Aboriginal economic development across the nations surveyed for this study is viewed as collective, community oriented and ecologically/geographically based. Individual level studies made up almost 20% of the papers reviewed, while studies that evaluated policy were third with 18%. National level studies, those on firms and regions made up 9%, 8% and 8% respectively. Papers that used institutions as the main unit of analysis placed at 3%, even though the importance of institutions

to the successful implementation of economic development for Aboriginal communities is stressed within the literature. The remaining categories were found to be statistically insignificant in terms of representation within the extant literature and can be viewed in table 4 below.

Note that although measurement units may not be statistically reflected in the extant literature, their importance to the field may indicate certain gaps in research. Three areas that stand out are firms, institutions and partnerships. Lack of emphasis in these three areas does not resonate with findings drawn from the main canon, as all three are indicated as important factors that contribute to the success of Aboriginal economic development strategies. There is also very little research at the theoretical level involving conceptual discovery and exploration of the phenomenon of Aboriginal economic development. This lack of theory development illustrates a weak conceptual foundation for process, practice and general understanding of the issues at hand. Lastly, the lack of development of specific, substantive areas of discovery, such as contract and negotiation strategies, urban reserves, and sector based activities both explains the lack of general theory and implies the need for greater context (where), event/structure (what) and process (how) based studies.

*Table 4. Units of analysis and empirical methods*

	Unit of Analysis			Method			Type	
	Total	%		Total	%		Total	%
<b>Community</b>	54	29.8%	<b>Qual</b>	136	75.1%	<b>HA</b>	59	32.6%
<b>Individual</b>	35	19.3%	<b>Quant</b>	28	15.5%	<b>CS</b>	56	30.9%
<b>Policy</b>	32	17.7%	<b>Theory</b>	10	5.5%	<b>SA</b>	26	14.4%
<b>Nation</b>	16	8.8%	<b>None</b>	6	3.3%	<b>SST</b>	15	8.3%
<b>Firm</b>	14	7.7%	<b>Review</b>	2	1.1%	<b>None</b>	13	7.2%
<b>Region</b>	15	8.3%				<b>Lit Rev</b>	7	3.9%
<b>Institution</b>	6	3.3%				<b>Ethno</b>	2	1.1%
<b>Product</b>	1	0.6%				<b>Eval</b>	1	0.6%
<b>Theory</b>	3	1.7%				<b>Theory</b>	1	0.6%
<b>Partnerships</b>	2	1.1%				<b>Workshop</b>	1	0.6%
<b>Environment</b>	1	0.6%				<b>Policy An</b>	1	0.6%
<b>Group</b>	1	0.6%						
<b>Contracts</b>	1	0.6%						
<b>Sector</b>	1	0.6%						

Observation of the methods used to study the phenomenon of Aboriginal economic development also points to several potential weaknesses and strengths. There is an overwhelming representation of qualitative based studies (75%) with very few quantitative studies (15%) and even fewer studies using theoretical approaches (5%). Of the qualitative studies reviewed, 33% were historical analysis, 31% were case studies and 8% were semi structured interview techniques. Quantitative studies were made up of statistical analysis (15%) of various types, including parametric and non-parametric tests. Publications that had no discernible academic method (journalistic, success stories or reports) made up 7% of the canon.

There are four implications of note: 1) one assumption that can be drawn from the overwhelming use of qualitative methods and the lack of quantitative methods is that statistical data is both hard to access, and limited in its depth, uniformity or relevance. Several causes for this may be surmised. 2) Aboriginal communities are extremely cautious and guarded when information (both cultural and financial) are being accessed; there is a lack of publicly accessible statistical data on economic, financial and development based figures; or 3) case study methods align well with the phenomenon under investigation as narratives and story telling are relevant to Aboriginal cultures; although case study methods allow for robust and richly defined datasets they also involve a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods (usually reported using non-parametric techniques); 4) due to the nature of research involving Aboriginal peoples and the increased sensitivity with respect to the collection of knowledge that belongs to the community, dealing with disadvantaged individuals, and cultural distrust of western based academic institutions, the data and methods used reflect the requirement for access, control and ease of research design necessary to obtain participation; there are only a very select few of Aboriginal researchers trained that may provide this level of research capacity and that have access.

## **PUBLICATION SOURCE AND NATIONAL FOCUS**

The academic study of Aboriginal economic development as a distinct phenomenon is still in its infancy, in Canada and around the world. Although it is nascent, the

field is burgeoning due to its critical importance to western industrial nations that are dealing with the legacy of colonization, years of welfare policies targeted at Aboriginal populations, and Aboriginal nations who are striving for dependency. Nevertheless, the field has few dedicated scholars, is highly specialized and has limited academic appeal within the mainstream journals. This is reflected in the publication output sources illustrated in table 5 below. Nearly 41% of the studies reviewed were published in C grade or lower ranked peer reviewed academic journals (Harzing, 2008). Currently, there are only two scholarly journals that publish material on or related to Aboriginal economic development: *The International Journal of Enterprising Communities*, and the *Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development*. Neither of these journals is ranked. Further to this, the second and third largest output venues were through non governmental research institutes (NGRI) (20%) or academic book publications (12%). Only 8 studies were published in A or A minus ranked journals, and of these, the focus on Aboriginal economic development was indirect, substantively related or published in sociological or political journals.

Table 5.

	Publication			Nation	
	Total	%		Total	%
<b>PRAJC</b>	74	40.9%	<b>Canada</b>	86	47.5%
<b>NGRI</b>	36	19.9%	<b>Australia</b>	32	17.7%
<b>Book</b>	22	12.2%	<b>Multiple Countries</b>	29	16.0%
<b>PRAJB</b>	21	11.6%	<b>USA</b>	19	10.5%
<b>UBRG</b>	9	5.0%	<b>New Zealand</b>	15	8.3%
<b>PRAJA</b>	8	4.4%			
<b>Thesis</b>	7	3.9%			
<b>Conf</b>	4	2.2%			
<b>Govt</b>	1	0.6%			

While the lack of exposure of scholarly research in this area to A and B ranked journals suggests a lack of academic rigor, it also reflects the nature of the academic publishing world. As scholars in the field are highly networked, these ties are strong and often work as barriers to work being produced in other scholarly fields that are

potentially tangential (Granovetter, 1994). Academic peer groups are notoriously exclusive, driven by populist research agendas and are extremely resistant to paradigm shifts (Kuhn, 1962). The over reliance on case study methods, historical analysis and other qualitative methods is not conducive to publication in quantitative method driven journals in economics and business management.

## PRINCIPAL THEMES

Each publication was reviewed and coded by researchers using themes. The criterion used to assess whether or not a certain theme was coded for a specific paper was based upon patterns in discussion and/or testing of variables, findings and recommendations (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Each paper could contain multiple themes. The coded themes emerging were then enumerated, analyzed, sorted and combined into categories using sense making techniques and SPSS based statistical analysis. The resultant data yielded 39 major themes as seen in table 6. Sub themes were aggregated into main themes and sorted using frequency testing. Those themes that made up at least 10% of the total themes coded were then drawn out for analysis of best practices. There were 17 themes that met this test. Themes that did not meet the 10% threshold, or did not appear at all within the coding, but were considered as important to the researchers as ‘emerging’ issues (issues discussed within the popular media, found in academic curriculum, or were the focus of issues that may have significance) were placed in a sub section on analysis of emerging themes and also analyzed. There were 7 themes that were considered “emergent” from this exercise. Thus a total of 24 principal and emergent themes are discussed below.

*Table 6. Coded themes emerging from the canon*

Themes	Tot	%	Themes	Tot	%	Themes	Tot	%
<b>Culture and Social Norms</b> heritage 1 worldviews 4 identity 2 language 1 indigeneity 1 values 1	102	56.4%	<b>Governance</b> accountability 5	24	13.3%	<b>Innovation</b> technology 2	8	4.4%

<b>Ec Dev growth 2</b>	87	48.1%	<b>Education</b> learning 1 human capital 3	23	12.7%	<b>Other</b> proxies 1 readiness 1 trust 1 ecotourism 1 demography 2 casinos 2	8	4.4%
<b>Entrepreneurs hip</b> opportunity 11 cognition 1	58	32.0%	<b>Devcorp</b> enterprise 3 corporate 3	20	11.0%	<b>Social entrepreneur ship</b> CSR 1 CED 2 development 2	7	3.9%
<b>Land</b>	54	29.8%	<b>Sustainability</b> environment 4 forestry 1	19	10.5%	<b>Research</b> knowledge 1 measurement 1	7	3.9%
<b>Community</b> participation 2 cooperation 1	49	27.1%	<b>Social capital</b>	16	8.8%	<b>Planning</b> strategic thinking 1	7	3.9%
<b>Capacity building</b> skills 1 mentorship 4 Consultants 2	48	26.5%	<b>Leadership</b>	14	7.7%	<b>Women</b>	7	3.9%
<b>Institutions</b>	41	22.7%	<b>Politics</b>	14	7.7%	<b>Heterogeneity</b>	6	3.3%
<b>Government</b> legislation 6 policy 2 treaties 4 negotiations 2 agreements 2 taxation 3	38	21.0%	<b>Management</b>	13	7.2%	<b>Exclusion</b> racism 1 disadvantage 1	6	3.3%
<b>Capital</b> finance 3 microfinance 1	35	19.3%	<b>Urban</b>	12	6.6%	<b>Twin Skills</b>	5	2.8%
<b>Self Determination</b> selfgovernment 5 constitution 1 autonomous 2 independence 2 control 1 shared control 2	32	17.7%	<b>Holistic</b> collectivity 1 wellbeing 2 cohesion 1 intimacy 1 empowerment 3	12	6.6%	<b>Networks</b> boundary spanning 2	5	2.8%
<b>Rights</b> property rights 11 customary rights 1	31	17.1%	<b>Global</b>	11	6.1%	<b>Geography</b> rural 1 northern 1	5	2.8%
<b>Resources</b> revenue sharing 1	30	16.6%	<b>Business</b> marketing 1 business models 1 business size 1 profit 1 market 1 incubators 1	10	5.5%	<b>Cooperatives</b>	4	2.2%
<b>Strategic alliances</b> Joint Vents 1 partnerships 14	24	13.3%	<b>Jobs</b> employment 1 labor 4	9	5.0%	<b>Housing</b>	3	1.7%

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN AN ABORIGINAL CONTEXT**

This section provides a historical overview of economic development in the context of colonized populations. The concept of Indigeneity is discussed. A broad understanding of the conditions faced by Indigenous people across the world is highlighted across three different countries: New Zealand, Australia, and the USA. A classification and categorization of the strategies and policies used to date that are general to all colonized populations is made. Strengths of international comparisons are made and implications to First Nations economic development in Canada discussed.

### **WHO ARE THE INDIGENOUS?**

Australia has two groups of Indigenous people: Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. Essentially, various United States agencies also use self-identification to determine Indigenous status for members of the 500 Indian nations. In New Zealand, the Maori consists of geographically prescribed tribal groupings but share a sense of kinship through tracing their ancestry back to Polynesian heritage. Canada has three groups of formally defined Indigenous people: Inuit, First Nations and Metis.

The most authoritative method for defining Indigenous people found within the literature is via self-identification, and is considered the most valid way of discerning who is and who is not Indigenous. Many Indigenous people see themselves as members of a “nation” within a “state”. Neitschmann defines the terms nation and state as the following:

*A nation is a cultural territory made up of communities of individuals who see themselves as “one people” on the basis of common ancestry, history, society, institutions, ideology, language, territory, and often, religion. A person is born into a specific nation. (Neitschmann 1994: 226)*

*A state is a centralized political system within international legal boundaries recognized by other states. Further, it uses a civilian-military bureaucracy to establish one government and to enforce one set of institutions and laws. It typically has one language, one economy, one claim over all resources, one currency, one flag, and sometimes one religion. (Neitschmann 1994: 226).*

Neitschmann used the term “Fourth World Theory” in an attempt to provide a structural understanding of the phenomenon of de-privileged original owners in lands now controlled by others. Within this structure, Indigenous people are categorized as a dispossessed and disadvantaged minority living under a hegemony, which has much dissimilarity to their own social, economic and cultural traditions. This is echoed by other scholars who point to several general themes shared between Indigenous people that include a severe and prolonged historical disadvantage (Peredo & Anderson, 2007). Bonds of kinship, cooperative existence, ecological coexistence with the lands they occupy and a deep rooted spirituality are also key shared features of the Indigenous (Groenfeldt, 2003; Wuttunee, 2001; Galhoffer, et al., 2000). The findings of this study also point to a shared sense of worldviews, traditions, values and heritage factors amongst all Indigenous peoples studied across several national perspectives.

Thus in answer to the question ‘who are the Indigenous’, we provide a synthesis of the various concepts found within the extant literature and present the following:

*Indigenous people are self-identified individuals, groups, communities or nations, who reside as culturally defined disadvantaged minority citizens or non-citizens of a mainstream polity, which, through the success of physical, economic and cultural invasion, has come to dominate and/or displace them in lands they once controlled through a set of highly structured means.*

Although this is not an authoritative definition, it has been distilled with the overarching questions of this research paper in mind, and thus provides a

foundational perspective from which to view the phenomenon of Indigenous economic development.

## **INTERNATIONAL CONTRAST AND COMPARISONS**

While there appears to be agreement on who constitutes the “Indigenous,” there are differences of emphasis and debate on the empirical description of many themes within an international context, such as the role of ownership and private property (Peredo & Anderson, 2007). While these differences are often contrived through the structural relationships of ‘space’, they are more often than not the product of the policy approach to Indigenous economic development by various governments around the world. The contrasts in regard to policy positions, structural differences and the reaction of Indigenous peoples to them in New Zealand, Australia and the USA are outlined in the next section of this paper. A brief analysis of their relevance to Canada is offered.

### **New Zealand**

Although the Maori population of New Zealand are perhaps more homogenous than any of the other countries surveyed, the traditional tribal (*whanau*) and sub tribal (*hapu*) relationships that make up their social order has created several difficulties in negotiations with the government over rights. While a strong and unified leadership eventually made way for a settlement to be made with the Crown, the tribes involved did not have the infrastructure of corporate know how in place to effectively deal with the shift of resources from Crown to Aboriginal control. Thus the establishment of property rights, that are perhaps the most comprehensive in comparison to other countries, (Papillon & Cosentino 2004; Wilkins, 2007) could not be effectively capitalized upon, especially in the absence of structures (institutions) that could identify Maori communities and meet their aspirations (O'Sullivan & Dana; Katschner, 2007). Without an effective strategy and structure for development, rights and returned resources became a drain on existing resources (Charlotte, 2007).

Unlike other Aboriginal cultures, the traditional aspects of the Maori value system are highly aligned with entrepreneurial values (Warriner, 2007; Keelan and Woods, 2006). Successful Maori have learned how to balance business commitments with traditional demands. Kinship roles have played a pivotal role in providing leadership and mentorship within successful Maori economic development strategies, allowing Maori entrepreneurs to link their future with their past (Henry, 2007; Clydesdale, 2007; Tapsell and Woods, 2008). This mentorship has acted as a bridge to help Maori acquire the skills and knowledge for competing successfully in the global economy. Those tribal communities who received treaty settlements and were found to be lacking in this capacity have had very little initial success in gaining economic traction.

Like the USA below, a policy shift from a *de facto* recognition of the inherently different nature of the Maori welfare regime to policies seeking to reshape it in a similar fashion as the overall population, are at the heart of many of the advances made within New Zealand. The result of has been a greater reliance on community and the shaping of stronger cultural bonds, values and reliance on traditional ways of doing things in Maori politics. Much like the United States, increased autonomy and self governance has not come with the necessary resources required to structurally address wealth creation from a nation building perspective, nor has it fully addressed issues of Maori well-being (Papillon & Cosentino 2004). This is reflected in the strong numbers for Maori entrepreneurship, but mostly unimpressive economic development outcomes over the past 10 years (Frederick, 2006)

### **United States of America**

Of the differences of note within the United States, the relationship of Native American treaty rights existing outside of the American Constitution is perhaps the most glaring. The result of this circumstance is that state laws have no application on Aboriginal reserves. While this has given Indian tribes in the USA a modicum of autonomy, it has also fostered a dependency upon government programs that is in

contradiction with an American system that promotes individualism and self-sufficiency.

Under the *Dawe's Act 1887*, four different land tenure classifications were structured: fee simple, individual trust (still part of tribal lands and having high transaction costs; can be mortgaged but not used as collateral with disputes settled in tribal court) tribal trust, and federal trust (Galbraith & Stiles, 2003). Native American Constitutions are thus in effect, propped up by the U.S. Federal Government, making the environment for property rights at the least, highly confusing, and at the worst, artificially contrived. This has potentially caused a high degree of failure in Aboriginal economic development, as the Native American communities are left to venture within this self sufficient system without the necessary support from government and a system of property rights that is somewhat hobbled. Government guarantee programs establishing financial structure around issues of reserve property rights to simplify land tenure rules for financial institutions have done little to expand the access to capital for these communities (Cyree. 2004).

### **Australia**

While progress in New Zealand has resulted in what has been referred to as a more humanistic approach to dealing with land claim settlements and traditional rights, the Australian experience has been regrettably more structural in nature (Wilkins, 2007). This has resulted in much slower movement toward land claims settlements. Several scholars have correlated the poor environment for negotiations with much lower socioeconomic indicators than any of the other countries studied. These indicators have also been accompanied with lower levels of Aboriginal entrepreneurship.

The Australian case for Aboriginal economic development has been shaped by a context that differs greatly from Canada and other nations. First, the Aboriginal populations are less urbanized with greater numbers of geographically remote communities. This isolation of a majority of the Aboriginal population has translated directly into higher costs associated with development and welfare programs with an

inverse relationship in social indicators. The nature of Aboriginal rights also differs from all other national cases: negotiations are not founded on past treaties or constitutions, but devolved and dispersed throughout many individual state legislative assemblies. Past relationships with the British government were not carried over into the Australian Constitution until an amendment was passed in 1967 followed by large tracts of land handed over to remote communities in the 1970's (Smith, 2006). Differences in policy can be pointed to as top down and systematically mainstream, with very few targeted programs that are aimed at specific groups, mostly in remote areas. Thus there are multiple layers of social exclusion and disempowerment that work throughout an institutional system that provides very little control to Aboriginals, leaving them in a very poor bargaining position for creating economic development policy (Venn, 2007; O'Faircheallaigh, 2008).

### **Summary**

Despite the contrast in their structural relationships with the state and society in each nation surveyed in this paper, all three countries are faced with similar circumstances. Papillon & Cosentino (2004) find that much like Canada, each has a burgeoning, young Aboriginal population that is at risk, exhibits poor social indicators, has frequent incidences of social exclusion, increasing urbanization and high degrees of dependence upon government programs. Aboriginal communities across all countries (Canada included) share problems of access to basic services and infrastructure (especially in remote areas), and have limited opportunities for income generation. Policy challenges also have common ground as approaches to Aboriginal development have been overly centralized and paternalistic in each, leading to breakdowns of trust. In each society, the issue of rights, native title, and redress of lands and resources has been the uniform push of all Indigenous nations, tribes and communities. The following section will deal with these and other themes in greater detail.

## PRINCIPAL THEMES AND RELEVANT BEST PRACTICES

What are the most frequent themes that appear in the extant literature on Aboriginal economic development and what can the identification, discussion and analysis of these themes do for creating better policy for governments, developing successful strategies for First Nations communities, and highlighting the necessary processes for bridging opportunities to all other economic actors in Canada? This section will explore the most salient features of the literature distilled from this review; analyze their significance to successful Aboriginal economic development and list best practices where possible.

A review of the top ten most frequently referenced themes in aggregate clearly illustrates that by and large, research conducted in this field has been driven by one overarching dominant agenda: the need to redress multiple aspects of disadvantage relative to the colonial societies that Indigenous people now find themselves enveloped in. In effect, the process of invasion and cultural domination has attenuated, and in some instances, truncated generations of cultural knowledge transmission that is bound within the ecological connection that Indigenous people commonly share with the lands they once inhabited, resulting in a loss of spiritual and traditional aspects of their identity (Berkes, 1999). This theme of disadvantage is underpinned by the need for securing the necessary resources and building economic capacity to regain the *political* and *social control* that is required for establishing self determination. An emphasis on moving back into the past and forward into the future at the same time thus becomes a foundational aspect of designing processes to overcome disadvantage, loss of identity and a maligning of trust. It is therefore not surprising that culture and social norms ranks paramount over top of the key term ‘economic development’.

An overview of the best practices found that relate to these top ten principal themes also indicates that academic research, to some extent, has not provided a sufficient base of empirically tested antecedents and processes for designing successful

economic development strategies, predicting outcomes over a range of diverse intermediate environmental variables, or addressing the effectiveness of policy in a practical and applied manner. Academics have thus tended to focus overwhelmingly on the *who*, *why*, *what* and *where*, without a sufficient emphasis on the discovery of 'how'. Nevertheless, a study of these themes provides an excellent overview of the knowledge paths most explored and allows for analysis of the strengths, weaknesses and relevant characteristics of the canon in some depth.

### **1. Culture and Social Norms**

The most frequently referenced theme was culture and social norms with a total of 102 references, appearing in 56% of all the works reviewed. The sub fields that were listed under this major theme consisted of worldviews, heritage, identity, language, Indigeneity and values. As this theme is so pervasive within the literature, there are difficulties in drawing out the specific elements that constitute a well defined set of best practices. The strong appearance of culture and social norms also partially explains why there is such an overwhelmingly high usage of qualitative methods within this research field, as the conceptual domain of culture is extremely difficult to build and test constructs using quantitative methods. Case studies are found to be much more effective when researching complex, interrelated variables (Yin, 2003).

As the appearance of culture and social norms in relation to all other themes is very high, this section will only concentrate on this theme from a broader perspective. There are several ways in which this theme is viewed and used within the literature. Culture and social norms may be a resource, a goal or objective, a measurement of success and or part of a process. As a process, Tapsell & Woods (2008) suggest that culture and traditional values can be used in a collective opportunity seeking process to guide the economic development and venturing plans. This is echoed by other academics who believe Indigenous values can be harmonized with business practice leading to success (Wuttunee, 2007; Warriner, 2007). Peredo and Chrisman (2006) find that although cultural goals are a key objective within any economic

development plan, that there must also be a balance struck between cultural, political, economic and environmental goals.

Several authors see culture as a resource, citing the concept of two-row wampum as a cultural based capacity that allows the balancing of worldviews to address problems that can avoid complete domination of one or the other's systems (Stevenson, 2007). Others see Aboriginal culture as a distinct strength that economic development and positive change can be founded upon and thus the varied histories can play a role in shaping the future (Schaper, 2007; Peters, 2006). Others see the facilitation of cross cultural experiences as building resources that can be used within economic development strategies (Duczynski, 2004). Hindle (2007) reports that worldviews and language must be aligned for learning to take place and thus emphasizes a cultural alignment as necessary for building other necessary resources.

Culture and social norms is most often used in terms of it being an objective or outcome, thus a focus on cultural and community well being must precede any planning initiatives (Missens et al., 2007). Loizides and Anderson (2006) posit that an ongoing commitment to Aboriginal traditions and culture in Aboriginal business should be key objectives while Evans (2007) emphasizes that business models must be culturally appropriate in order to ensure the potential for success. Finally, Salée (2006) finds that Aboriginal people must use their own ways of looking at the world and at their communities, based on their needs to help evaluate their objectives. Although Aboriginal communities may draw on capitalism as a means for achieving these goals, they must be left to do things according to their own understanding of how those should be done.

Cornell and Kalt (2004) stress that success should be measured using multi-faceted criteria, and an assessment of social, cultural, political, and economic impacts is required. Altman (2004) warns that culture should not mean rejection of technology, economic growth or profit and that cultural measures must be balanced with others to prevent inefficiency, viability, legitimacy and sustainability within economic development strategies.

## **2. Economic Development**

The theme of economic development runs through almost half (48.1%) of the papers studied as a main point of focus. As this was such a strong and evident theme, there was only one sub theme identified: growth. As with culture above, this section will reflect a general review of the literature as it is predominant within the scope and objectives of this paper.

Although no uniformly accepted definitions of Aboriginal economic development could be found, Anderson et al., (2006) provides an empirically conceptualized overview of what the Aboriginal approach to economic development consists of:

1. a predominantly collective one centered on the community or nation'. For the purposes of:
2. Ending dependency through economic self-sufficiency.
3. Controlling activities on traditional lands.
4. Improving the socioeconomic circumstances of Aboriginal people.
5. Strengthening traditional culture, values and languages (and the reflecting the same in development activities). Involving the following processes:
6. Creating and operating businesses that can compete profitably over the long run in the global economy to
  - (i) Exercise the control over activities on traditional lands
  - (ii) End dependency through economic self-sufficiency.
7. Forming alliances and joint ventures among themselves and with non-Aboriginal partners to create businesses that can compete profitably in the global economy.
8. Building capacity for economic development through:
  - (i) education, training and institution building and
  - (ii) the realization of the treaty and Aboriginal rights to land and resources.

As a general set of objectives, Aboriginal economic development has been characterized by Charlotte (2007) as the desire to 1) regain control over traditional lands 2) create, operate and invest wisely in businesses that are both global and profitable to develop an asset base and ensure ongoing financial resources for education, social and cultural development 3) develop economic self-sufficiency 4) improve socio-economic status 5) restore political equality 6) preserve and strengthen culture 7) separate tribal administration from economic development. Wuttunee and Loizides (2006) provide an overview of a general set of best practices for Aboriginal economic development in that it requires: 1) strong leadership and vision, 2) a strategic community economic development plan, 3) access to capital markets and management skills 4) good governance 5) transparency and accountability 6) positive interplay of business and politics.

There are several reasons for the lack of specific overarching economic development principles, processes and/or best practices in the literature. Perhaps the most revealing is the argument made by Shanks (2006):

*...the economic development issues facing First Nations are extremely diverse and very complex. This leads to the conclusion that any public policy or program response will have to be tailored to fit a variety of circumstances. First Nations are at various stages in terms of capacity to plan for and seek appropriate economic activity or to take advantage of economic activity that comes their way.*

Aboriginal leaders have advocated a comprehensive approach to development, or simultaneous political, economic and cultural development. Elias discusses several models: 1) Dual economy: resources poured into job creation and education for employment (Cameco-Dene); 2) Political economy: underdevelopment (part of class capitalism) and thus structural change required (self governance) 3) Mixed Economy: Lands and resources would be used to sustain both an industrial and a traditional economy, with plenty of opportunity for individuals to move freely from one to the other 4) Cultural model: the goal of development is to revitalize whole communities through renewed relationships involving lands, resources, and the individual members

of a community. Money is viewed strictly as a means to an end, but money and what must be done to get money should not dilute the importance of practices consistent with tradition 5) Comprehensive development: does not urge a particular way of achieving development, but rather a way of conceiving development that is less prescriptive and absolute than any of the four dominant models. Thus, the comprehensive model is interpreted differently in each community, bringing to the fore the special needs of each community.

As illustrated above by the general nature of the prescriptions for successful Aboriginal economic development (and the objectives they seek), there is no overarching blueprint for policy makers, planners, or communities to use that will guarantee a high probability of success. In order to develop a more specific set of lessons and best practices, further investigation of the many themes below is therefore required.

### **3. Entrepreneurship**

Although there are also stated similarities (forms, objectives, processes) with non-aboriginal and Aboriginal entrepreneurship, there are significant differences as well (Peredo, et al., 2004). The majority of authors surveyed find that the cultural values of Indigenous people are often incompatible with mainstream theories of entrepreneurship, and that there are cultural perceptions of opportunity that exist (Dana and Anderson, 2007). Thus, trying to ‘transplant’ entrepreneurship training programs developed in non-Aboriginal contexts to Aboriginal settings will most probably result in significant failure unless these differences are understood and embraced within the facilitation process (Lindsey, et al., 2006). Thus general theory in entrepreneurship must be tested in order to discern what areas are compatible with Aboriginal entrepreneurship. What is not under dispute is the fact that entrepreneurial activity is essential to Aboriginal people across the world, is the key to economic self-reliance and has been linked to self-determination (Furieux and Brown, 2007; Anderson et al., 2007).

The most prevalent form of Aboriginal entrepreneurship is community based, taking on a predominant institutional structure usually owned by a band or tribal association. Creating an environment for community directed Aboriginal enterprises may benefit from the consideration of four key frameworks: 1) the economic environment; 2) the regulatory environment; 3) the support environment and 4) the specific business environment. Each of these environments must be considered together in terms of its collective impact on the establishment and growth of small to medium enterprise (Mazzarol, 2001). Cornell (2006) suggests that an examination of the external environment should coincide with developing strategies that provide 1) Clarity around enterprise goals, 2) introduce effective management of politics/business connections 3) a purpose, power and composition of enterprise boards 4) an independent resolution of disputes 5) a plan to educate the community about enterprise goals and activities.

Through an intensive regime of case studies, Hindle et al., found that in order for Aboriginal communities to set upon a path of enterprise development, they must 1) reject industrial development imposed upon them from outside in favor of strategies originating in and controlled by community 2) engage contextual planning based on culture, geography and resources 3) understand that venture creation requires dual leadership: cultural/spiritual authority and a practical hard driver that are separated 4) learn that venture durability requires a long term governance model that does not allow for swings in electoral cultural leadership that may dismantle or tamper with successful strategies, yet allow for augmentation, redirection or cancellation of bad ones 5) ensure venture adaptability: closure or amendment of enterprises that have exceeded their "due date", for reasons based on business and economics but are continued due to their social mandate having value, although sustainability is questioned. Further discussion on this form of Aboriginal entrepreneurship will be discussed below in other themed areas under development corporations.

A less frequent form of Aboriginal entrepreneurship is individually based, and is a burgeoning area of growth in Canada. According to the Census 1996 and Census 2001 data tables, the number of Aboriginal entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan grew from

1,850 to 2,530. This represents a 36.7% increase, a rate higher than the national Aboriginal self-employment growth rate and the Canadian self-employment growth rate for that period. Individual based entrepreneurship does not necessarily imply that a communal or cultural goal is not attached. Individual Aboriginal entrepreneurship is found to have deep rooted ties to community.

With respect to the facilitation of Aboriginal entrepreneurship, Lindsay et al., (2006) suggest the following: 1) increasing the availability of entrepreneurship training programs aimed specifically at nascent indigenous entrepreneurs so that cultural issues can be addressed in those programs with the support of appropriately qualified indigenous mentors 2) providing seed capital grants/low or no interest loans depending on the apparent viability of businesses presented in participant business plans (and associated oral presentations) to appropriately structured assessment panels 3) placing participants in 'mentored' incubation environments with other like-valued individuals to provide participants with support structures.

While these recommendations for the facilitation of both forms of Aboriginal entrepreneurship are important, it must be stressed that the various issues and themes represented below must be taken into account and rationalized with any strategies for enterprise development or facilitation. It is suggested that a survey of the themes presented in this paper is necessary to understand the full contextual spectrum of variables that may be significant to designing specific strategies that help to stimulate, promote and or facilitate Aboriginal venturing in all of its forms.

#### **4. Land**

The recurring theme of land throughout the literature suggests its importance (referenced as an important theme in 30% of the articles reviewed), but also provides a contextualized understanding and linkage to other themes such as culture (identity), community, rights (native title), resources (minerals, production value, assets), sustainability (ecological/environmental) and self-determination. Wilkins (2007) finds that humanistic nation building approaches that provide resources through land claim settlements are found to be more successful than structuralist (government

applied policy) approaches. Thus establishing title to land is a pre-requisite for any development activities to happen (Kayseas, et al., 2007, Anderson et al., 2006).

As a resource, land must be assessed using economic and social criterion important to Aboriginal land management; the use of specialized knowledge (or gaining of it through outside capacity) is found to be extremely important for transforming land resources into success in the business sector, but must be coordinated with overall development issues (Krcmar & van Kooten, 2008). Understanding the ‘rules of the game’ around how land is to be developed is also extremely important, as is the establishment of mutually acceptable land use plans and shared decision making with regional stakeholders (Parfitt, 2007; Zaferatos, 2004).

As land is treated in this section mainly as a resource, a list of best practices is difficult to produce through such a general interpretation. Therefore, its relevance to Aboriginal economic development will be explored across a variety of other themes.

## **5. Community**

The theme coded as ‘community’ was cited as a key feature or concept in 27.1% of the works reviewed. It was also determined to be the top unit of analysis used in the literature. This is explained in part by it also being the top form of enterprise development. Much like the other themes, there is an underpinning interrelatedness with many of the other themes, with aspects of the concept of community reflecting identity, culture, geography, organizing unit and resource. In many cases, it serves as a foundational pre-requisite as the rebuilding a ‘sense of community’ is a necessary factor for community development, in both rural and urban settings (Smith, 2006). The requirement for community consultation on all development activities, receiving buy in and continuous communication and reporting of activities (using methods such as town hall meetings, weekly newsletters, community celebrations, etc) is also a significant success factor (Kulchyski, et al., 2006; Goodfellow-Baikie & English).

Community based enterprising (CBE) is not unique to Aboriginal people, and can be a successful tool for development, especially in cases where communities are isolated geographically, suffer from a depressed economic state or require the fabrication of

competitive advantages and these strategies have produced some creative results. Peredo (2003) outlines several advantages and key aspects of community based enterprising and development: 1) CBE can be innovative response to poverty and combat social disintegration 2) CBE community's desire to manage own resources, 3) capitalizes on natural, cultural and social resources 4) shared goals of community 5) helps develop systems to deal with global opportunities 6) diversification away from land based resources. 7) strong leadership, risk taking, personal initiative 8) requires favourable legal and financial framework. The structure of a community is also extremely important to development strategies as the historical and geographic context important to understanding social relationships, traditions and values influences the types of strategies that may or may not be successful (Levitte, 2003). As well, institutions, governance, capacity building, resources and other themes are extremely important to the structural integrity of the community.

## **6. Capacity Building**

The theme coded 'capacity building' was referenced at a frequency of 26.1% and consisted of sub themes of mentorship, consultants, and skills. It refers to the specific objective of developing competencies and employment skills that are directly related to the facilitation of economic growth (Cairns, 1996). Vinje (1996) argues that education is the cornerstone of any economic development plan and that any negative associations between increased educational attainment (in business, development competencies, or other) and decreased cultural protection is mitigated through the influence of self-government and self determination. In other words, capacity building targeted through self directed means is a necessary requirement for developing what is referred to as Hindle and Lansdowne (2005) as 'twin skills' (understanding the need for both cultural and business based perspectives). The perspective held by some Aboriginal leaders that the training and education of individuals in areas that are important to the community will lead to the exodus of these members is parochial. Instead it is a necessary step in arming Aboriginal communities with the experience that can only be gained dealing with the economic

realities and professional milieus external to the community. The theme of community members leaving and returning with enhanced competencies for dealing with development problems is repeated throughout the literature across a wide variety of cases.

Findings suggest that Aboriginal firms with outstanding technical assistance needs tend to perform poorly (Jorgensen and Taylor, 2000). One of the most effective ways to build capacity is to link community and business development with ties that build required capacities (Vishal, 2000). Sullivan and Margaritis (2000) find that development requires tribal personnel with appropriate professional qualifications to ensure the proper protection of stakeholder rights and interests and that non-tribal professionals helped to both manage commercial operations and provide mentorship and competency training. In some cases, leaders already established within communities who do have competencies have made great facilitators and mentors (Zapalska, et al., 2004). The selection of board members to institutional or corporate agencies tasked with development issues is also another proven way to import the required competencies needed and through the mandate of these appointments provide linkages to capacity building, mentorship and training (Cameron, 1998). Government, joint ventures and development corporations intersect with the theme of capacity building and provide other means for building competencies.

## **7. Institutions**

The establishment and proper functioning of institutions is one of the cornerstones of economic growth within a society (North, 1987). The importance of institution building in an Aboriginal context registers significantly within the canon as well, with over 22% of the works referring to it as a main theme. In an Aboriginal context, when cultural and social norms support institutions as legitimate, they are eminently more effective, especially with respect to assisting in the creation and management of new ventures (Cornell and Kalt, 2000; Kayseas, et al., 2007). Institutions must be representative, have proper mechanisms for communication and feedback and

generate the precise images and language that is necessary to align people, goals and community into one.

Perhaps one of the most important issues regarding institutions is their ability to change. Boettke, Coyne & Leeson (2008) find that the likely success of any proposed institutional change is a function of all that institution's status in relationship to the amount of agents remaining from the previous time period; or in other words, how can the level of stickiness in regards to path dependency be evaluated? This is an interesting concept when assessing the necessity for building new institutions over attempting to change already existent ones, as the development and creation of new institutions with greater control may have more significant outcomes than mandating policies through established institutions that may have different mind sets and institutional cultures that may act as barriers to participation (Silver et al., 2006).

DeSoto (1989, 2000) argues that economic development requires the establishment of institutions that protect property rights in order to extract full benefit from them. Instances of corporate entities being created for the express purpose of dealing with government agencies to handle the transfers of land, resources and equity is an extremely common institutional role. Innovative institutions have been successfully been created in a number of instances to deal with initiatives, capacity building, capital needs, and the development of specialized knowledge or functions.

Dodson and Smith (2003) provide a comprehensive overview of best practices for the establishment of effective Aboriginal institutions: 1) Build effective governance: a need for transparency, certainty of resources and authority, equity and fairness, flexibility and choice, internal and external accountability, procedures for appeal and redress, efficiency and effectiveness, legitimacy and mandate, participation, leadership, strategic vision and capacity, 2) must be broadly representative, 3) capable and effective (goal setting and evaluation) 4) sound corporate governance: that the authority, roles and responsibilities of leaders, boards and managers are clearly set out in public policies, and given effect to; that decision-making is responsible and fair; that governing boards are of an effective composition, size and level of experience to adequately discharge their duties; that boards and management are able to understand

their roles and responsibilities, evaluate risks, and to safeguard and facilitate the rights and interests of all their members; that these roles and responsibilities are periodically reviewed; and that remuneration for leaders, managers and boards is transparently defined in terms of actual performance against these (ASX 2003: 11; Sterritt 2001), 5) limitation and separation of powers 6) fair and reliable dispute resolution and appeal processes 7) effective financial management 8) simple and locally relevant information management systems 9) effective development policies and realistic strategy, 10) cultural match.

Aboriginal institutions are also found to be important for policy development, restructuring of governance issues, such as election matters, forming partnerships, alliances and or joint ventures and establishing structural community change. Thus their functioning is both complex and highly interrelated with many of the themes reported in this paper. A rich literature in Aboriginal management exists that has several overlap points with the literature on Aboriginal economic development (as management is one of the distilled themes in the canon). Thus best practice in regards to the management of Aboriginal institutions is much more strongly developed outside of this review (see Redpath and Nielson, 1997; Newhouse and Chapman, 1996; Tapsell, 1997).

## **8. Government**

The role of government plays both a supportive and constraining role across all four nations studied. This is in part due to the many different functions of government and its many connections with the themes presented in this paper. Sub themes consisted of legislative powers, policy development, and the management of treaties, negotiation and taxation with a referenced frequency of 21%. The theme of government is coded specifically to take into account all issues, concerns and evaluative studies on policy related to Aboriginal economic development. Other issues such as rights, land and treaty settlements, and other legislative issues are covered within other main themes.

Findlay (2007) suggests that bureaucratic practices have had a devastating impact on Aboriginal communities and recommends that government support for Aboriginal economic development must shift the emphasis of policy design to grassroots. Government also may play a role in 1) helping to establish institutional innovations like First Nations banks, 2) help pursue cooperative strategies with industry 3) use triple bottom line accounting in measuring the impacts of Aboriginal institutions and ventures 4) identify appropriate value system criteria using both government reporting and Aboriginal measures, streamline application and reporting procedures for Aboriginal programming, ensure legislative and regulatory requirements are sensitive to the broad range of community economic development outcomes, ensure long-term core funding rather than short-term project support, support network building and infrastructure sharing beyond silos such as urban-rural and cultural-economic, and amend employment insurance and welfare policies that bar training or asset building.

The most important and perhaps the most obvious observation on government policy regarding economic development issues facing First Nations is that communities are extremely diverse and very complex. Public policy or program responses need to be tailored to fit a variety of circumstances, as First Nations are at various stages in terms of capacity to plan for and seek appropriate economic activity or to take advantage of economic activity that comes their way (Shanks, 2005). Shanks posits that it is necessary and urgent to put in place the legal underpinnings for modern governance structures within First Nations in order for communities to design 'made to fit' policies wherever possible. Thus governments need to act in a more cohesive manner, both inter-governmentally and intra-governmentally to move towards an agenda beyond merely providing services or income support for individuals, but aimed towards building autonomous institutions that facilitate capacity building, and to consolidate the legitimacy and efficiency of Aboriginal governing authorities (Papillon & Cosentino). The best social policies may well have limited impact without such a broader perspective.

## 9. Capital

Access to capital is identified as another major theme across the extant literature reviewed with 19.3% of papers referencing it. Other sub themes were finance and micro-finance. Most if not all studies looking at either Aboriginal entrepreneurship or economic development find that a key barrier is access to capital (Cachon, 2000; Hindle and Landsdowne, 2005; Foley, 2006; Mazzarol, 2007; Katschner, 2007). This is especially so in remote communities and often exacerbated by cultural attitudes towards saving and investment, accumulation and acquisition (Fuller et al., 2007; Furneaux and Brown, 2007). Venn (2007) states that access to capital, and the capacity to achieve further access to capital for rapid deployment of natural resources secured from land rights settlements, can be a key bottleneck. There are two routes to financial capital access for Aboriginals: 1) Government intervention through guarantees, 2) legislative overhaul of the bureaucratic systems of property rights assignment (Cyree, 2004; De Soto, 2000). Legislatively, in Canada, the *Indian Act* stands as a barrier to progressive property rights systems that could mitigate some of the development issues with respect to capital, financing and wealth accumulation (Alcantra, 2007). Many of these issues concomitantly fall under the theme of 'rights'.

In Canada, venture capital clustering is concentrated mostly in Ontario, Quebec and B.C., focused on technology and specialized through late stage development, more critical for already established firms and not Aboriginal development projects (Subhash, 2007). Ord et al., (2007) state that capital development is part of a community, public and private sector strategy that combines skills, assets and opportunities through a critical mass to enact economic change, thus it is hard to talk about access to capital without reference to the contextual complexities of financial, market and social systems. He stresses that Aboriginal communities use a three pronged strategy to leverage their existence capital by 1) looking at strategic investments in economically and socially progressive industries 2) attempting to engage in equity participation through JV's or partnerships (transfer of skills and leveraging of assets into business opportunities) and 3) focussing on emergent

industries and start-ups through creation of incubators. Smith (2006) echoes these sentiments, suggesting that communities with less opportunity must maximize their equity returns by investing in tertiary industries outside of regions, while deferring some investment in local and regional projects until income is received from investments (where profits are highest).

One of the key solutions to capital access challenges is cited by many to be the establishment of more Aboriginal capital corporations that provide both equity and business skills/coaching (Carins, 1996; Cachon, 2000; Lindsay et al., 2006). Evidence on micro lending has found that Aboriginal welfare based systems do not mesh well with Grameen bank style financing structures (McDonnell. 1999).

## **10. Self Determination**

Economic development and economic self-sufficiency are usually seen as essential to true self-determination. Self determination is based upon the concept of “de facto sovereignty”, which is defined as *the practical power and capacity to act on their own behalf* (Graham and Edward 2003, 4). The theme is referenced in the canon at 17.7% and consists of various other sub themes such as self government, constitutions, autonomy, independence and shared control.

Sullivan (2008) argues (in the Australian case) that the root of developmental failure for Aboriginal peoples can be explained mainly by the nature of the bureaucracy charged with the administration of Aboriginal affairs. Bureaucratic culture, mainstreaming, hierarchy, authority, control of information and mechanisms for accountability have led to the treatment of Aboriginal peoples as symbolic capital with success and failures measured against policy, ultimately obscuring the effects of those policies. Sullivan continues by suggesting that the generation of policy must be devolved and its scope widened in order to induce activity amongst those who share a community of interest. The only means for reducing the gap between Aboriginal and bureaucratic cultures lies within the displacement of the current power arrangements

and a constitutionally enhanced bargaining position for Aboriginal people put in place (O'Faircheallaigh, 2008).

But the failure of government welfare policies is not the only evidence supporting a move toward Aboriginal self-determination. Agrawal has argued that the failure of neo-liberal (market) and authoritarian and bureaucratic (state) approaches to development has led to a “focus on Indigenous knowledge and production systems” (Agrawal 1995, 414). Continuing, he says that these efforts are an attempt “to reorient and reverse state policies and market forces to permit members of threatened populations to determine their own future” (Agrawal 1995, 432). For the most part, these efforts are not taking place outside the global economy, but within it. As Bebbington (1993, 275) suggests, ‘like it or not, Indigenous peoples are firmly integrated into a capricious and changing market. Their well-being and survival depends on how well they handle and negotiate this integration’. He goes on to say that the Indigenous approach to negotiating this integration is not to reject outright participation in the modern economy:

*But rather to pursue local and grassroots control... over the economic and social relationships that traditionally have contributed to the transfer of income and value from the locality to other places and social groups* (Bebbington 1993, 281).

Thus self-determination is not just a negotiation with governments over rights and land, recognition of grievances, and the ability to govern those lands as Aboriginal people see fit, but a struggle to find a place within the global economy through a restructuring of how Indigenous people view themselves as a society (Coulthard, 2007).

## **11. Rights**

The themes coded as rights encompass human rights, customary rights (native title) and property rights, reflecting the sub themes considered, and as with other themes in this paper, there is considerable overlap amongst them due to the breadth of academic interpretation. Hindle (2007) argues that cultural misunderstanding is the root of

social suppression. The interpretation and effective conflation of western property rights systems and native title is an offshoot of this misunderstanding. It is also the basis of misunderstanding for treaties, as Indigenous people involved view the land and resources as something they owned and because of this none saw treaties as a transfer of this ownership. Rather, they saw the treaties as the basis upon which the land and its resources would be shared (Anderson, et al., 2005).

Although many of these issues are reflected within the canon, the highly specialized legal evaluation of circumstances such as the Nisga'a and James Bay agreements that provide best practices, are not found within the canon specifically. With respect to native title and land claim settlements, Coates provides an excellent case study overview of the impacts of land claims settlements and finds that in general there is reason for optimism and that neither have they brought with them economic chaos, as business and industry have adapted to these changes over time. He also finds that comprehensive agreements and treaties have provided Indigenous groups with the financial and administrative means to begin charting a new economic future for their people, often in mutually beneficial alliances with non-Indigenous people (Coates, 1995).

Economic development on Canadian Indian reserves is hindered by the fact that aboriginal peoples living on these reserves lack efficient and effective property rights (Alcantra, 2007). Recommendations that follow are: 1) allow Indian bands to develop land codes to take over the administration of their reserve lands while minimizing federal interference (opt out of Indian Act) 2) specify what ownership rights an individual acquires when he/she is allotted an interest, 3) band council's consent should not be required for transactions of transfer or assignment of an interest 4) allow holder as entitled to the resources on his property and any revenues derived from their sale 5) no expropriation of land without a dispute resolution process 6) reasonable opportunity to redeem any mortgages before seizure. Flanagan and Alcantra (2002) argue that control over resources cannot be so dispersed and that government ownership is too sluggish, and too influenced by perverse political incentives, for it to be effective in a market economy.

## **12. Resources**

Resources are highly aligned with land in the canon where it was referenced 16.6% of the time and with sub themes that also include revenue sharing. A break down of resources available to Aboriginals engaged in economic development identifies those provided through treaty settlements in the form of land and cash and revenue sharing opportunities, community resources in the form of human capital, labour and cultural distinctness, and social capital in the form of Indigenous (collective) production systems and evolving twin skills in bridging western and Aboriginal societal divides. As this theme was constantly appearing in general terms, it was decided it should be left as a main theme to reflect its significance on a broader scale.

## **13. Strategic Alliances**

Joint ventures were referred to in 13.3% of the papers cited and encompassed the sub themes of partnerships and joint ventures. Strategic alliances are found to provide Aboriginal communities with outside capacity, resources, and legitimacy with respect to business venturing (Wuttunee, 2001; Thayer-Scott, 2004; Tapsell & Woods, 2008; Ord et al., 2007; Furneaux and Brown, 2007; Fuller et al., 2006). Pasco (2007) finds that the emerging theoretical perspectives of all three terms require systematic and structural consideration. His research provides an overview of the administration of strategic alliances in an Aboriginal context and makes the following statements: 1) unrealistic goal expectations may cause alliance instability 2) resource dependence causes instability through concentration of one side or the other to acquire or use resources. 3) game theory states that perception of opportunism is quickly countered, creating a breakdown in trust 4) transaction cost theory creates instability when costs are reduced at the expense of partners 5) relational exchange posits success on partner trust.

Lituchi et al., (2007) has observed and recommended the following: 1) partnerships by Aboriginals with non-Aboriginals is useful in helping to sell into non-Aboriginal markets 2) doing business within an Aboriginal community requires consistency of values with community (relationship oriented, low power distance, collectively minded), and thus companies who wish to enter into such partnerships should be

prepared for these traits to ensure effective partnerships, 3) aggressive marketing techniques, personal power and profitability goals often rejected by Aboriginal community. Jacobsen et al., (2005) warn that capitalist enterprises establish labour contracts founded on notions of individual self interest that may conflict with cultural community responsibilities and expression of identity. This is echoed by Hindle et al., (2005) who posit that the partnership or alliance model is particularly fraught with the need to blend the old with the new: heritage with innovation, and thus conflict is inevitable and must be managed using twin skills (both Aboriginal community or firm and the non-Aboriginal firm must seek to understand respective cultural underpinnings but agree to do business unadorned). Factors supporting non-Aboriginal companies pursuing Aboriginal partnerships are determined by Camp et al., as being an important emerging market, an important emerging labour force, and Aboriginal communities are controllers of key resources essential for long-term enterprise survival. They suggest that there are effects of cross cultural differences that must be overcome by 1) initial trust development and its impact on partner selection 2) organizational structures and long term success potential. Berkes & Adhikari (2006) show that even if corporate partnering cannot be obtained for cultural reasons, partnerships for training and institution building, through NGO's and local partnerships may also be important means for obtaining resources for development (Ketilson and MacPherson, 2001).

Specifically covering Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal joint ventures, Whiting (2002) contributes with a thesis of activities in the forest industry in B.C. and outlines the following: 1) In order to sustain productive joint ventures, both First Nation and Industry partners need to support and invest in capacity-building activities, which can be realized if partners are aware of the overall mutual benefits. 2) limited partnerships limit risks and provides protection of rights and responsibilities 3) Companies in JV assume management responsibilities for JV operations while FN representation on management boards ensure interests 4) fully owned equity positions are significant to success in economic development 5) First Nations awareness of ventures owned by or partnered with other companies is significant to success 6) innovation in cross cultural training and programs is necessary. Fraser (2002) develops a set of best

practices for joint ventures and suggests: 1) in order to enter into JV's, First Nations must have a strong position from which to negotiate. 2) JV's with government who have less profit maximizing motives may produce success with less risk, and 3) the ability to communicate value to potential partners will help to build equitable foundations for strong partnerships to be worked out based on mutual benefits being accrued.

For non-Aboriginal corporations looking to seek strategic alliances with Aboriginal communities or enterprises, Brooks (1994) recommends that they 1) take extra steps to know aboriginal clients and their protocols, 2) resolve past differences, 3) equip employees with new skills and attitudes through cross cultural and negotiations training 4) provide practical support for business units in the field, recognize the evolving nature of the process.

#### **14. Governance**

The development of strong governance underpins a great deal of the success attributed to Aboriginal communities who have ventured into the new economy. Although governance appears only 13.3% of the time within the canon, it is broadly disseminated as a supporting theme throughout the entire range of themes, and thus its importance should be given proper due in consideration of the ranking achieved in this study. Accountability was the only aggregated sub theme. Plumptre and Graham argue that government and governance are not the same thing and that:

*the need for governance as a concept distinct from government began to manifest itself when government became an organization apart from citizens rather than a process...Government became viewed as a discrete entity not only when it assumed an institutional form, but also when representation became necessary. Without representation, government is 'us'. Indeed, in some Aboriginal languages, the concept of government means 'our way of life' or 'our life' (Plumptre and Graham, 2).*

The authors go on to say that governance includes but is not limited to government. It includes other components such as business organizations, the media, educational institutions, institutions of justice, and the civil sector, encompassing voluntary agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). They define governance as:

*...the art of steering societies and organizations [which involves] interactions among structures, processes and traditions that determine how power is exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say (Plumptre and Graham, 3).*

If one looks at the institutions involved, the role of people and their traditions/values in the process, it is clear that the managers of Indigenous public organizations play a central role in the process by which Indigenous peoples govern their own affairs regardless of the form of government involved.

The Harvard studies in American Native Economic Development combine good governance within institutions, as good governance leads to the formation of good government institutions, public service delivery organizations, economic development institutions and businesses and a variety of institutions associated with land claims, co-management agreements and the like (Cornell and Kalt, 2000). They find that extra-constitutional agreements such as those in the form of cultural norms concerning the feasibility and legitimacy of governance provide the foundations for economic development (Cornell and Kalt, 1995). Their main arguments tend to suggest that much of the research on Aboriginal economic development has tended to concentrate on 1) historical and contemporary relations between Indian nations and external political actors (that can be undermining of tribal sovereignty) 2) reservation resource endowments: natural resources, human capital and access to financial capital. Institutions of governance are key factors in successful economic development and that institutions depend on legitimacy with constituent communities that control levers of power they may exercise. This view dovetails into other themes such as self-determination, institutions and resources.

Cornell et al., (2005) have argued that good governance provides the framework for purposive movement toward foundational change in Native societies. They suggest

six steps to action for governance bodies to pursue when attempting to instigate change: 1) people have to realize that something is wrong and identify the problem 2) people have to realize that things can be different 3) people must decide that it's up to them to change things 4) people have to believe that we can change things 5) it is important to have a compelling idea of what the solution is (what needs to be done) 6) people have to decide to act. Four other factors are important: situations (if one group thinks nothing is wrong, like the people in power, then nothing happens), culture (either: what they have done to us, or how can we fix it?), knowledge (understanding what needs to be done to create investment, economic development and wealth creation) and leadership.

Although much of the canon reflects the statements of the Harvard studies, there are some authors that provide counter opinions with respect to the validity and relevance of their findings. Mowbray (2006) warns not to follow studies from other countries too blindly; Cornell and Kalt follow the precepts of economic fundamentalism and thus concepts of state, class, race or gender are discounted. Although good governance matters, policy development should be focused more on sensible principles for local solutions. Thayer-Scott (2004) also states that although the Harvard studies have clearly demonstrated that natural resource wealth is not required for a reserve to be successful in socio-economic terms, the single real predictor of success appears to be leadership. Thayer Scott takes a more individualist view and provides evidence to support the claim that where political change has occurred and, with it, a decline in the quality of leadership vision and strength, success also has declined. Hindle (2005) echoes this with the observation that leadership (especially leadership that encompasses twin skills capacities) can be tenuous at best, and the structures of good governance and institutions cannot succeed without actors who believe in the separation of business and culture and that have the social capital to enforce these views.

## **15. Education**

Education is another overlapping theme. It consists of sub themes learning and human capital and was cited at a 12.7% frequency. Education and human capital are two key components necessary for economic growth. Furneaux and Brown (2007) find that 90% of the factors causing lower rates of Aboriginal earnings can be accounted for by lower levels of education. Multiple other studies shown the lack of financial and managerial skills is also a key detriment to success (Fuller et al., 2007; Evans, 2007; Anderson et al., 2007). Hindle (2007) argues that culturally sensitive education is the path to constructive policy for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in bridging the divide. Grant et al., (2005) argue that education programs must be Aboriginal constructed and delivered. Evidence suggests that a largely self-contained system, with carefully selected points of contact with non-indigenous institutions, would promote Aboriginal interests.

## **16. Development Corporations**

The importance of Aboriginal development corporations is illustrated in the 11% frequency of this theme. Other sub themes recorded were corporate/corporations and enterprise. This theme is regarded as a special institution tasked with the mandates such as receiving, transferring and investing government disbursements of land or cash, directing economic development activities, and providing an incorporated, limited liability enterprise arm of a band, tribal association or community. Where firewalls exist between the management of enterprises and tribal governance, those enterprises are more profitable and sustainable (Owens, 2003). The establishment of on reserve Aboriginal development corporations also may provide equity financing for Aboriginal business combined with business skills/coaching (Cachon, 2000).

Cameron (1999) posits that there are three impediments to tribal economies: 1) potential for tribal politics to interfere in enterprise operations, 2) uncertain and risky business environment for potential investors, 3) lack of sufficient Aboriginal management expertise. The establishment of a development corporation is a strategy

that helps to mitigate these challenges. With regards to the creation of these institutions, Cameron goes on to recommend the following: 1) Formulate long term development plans through community political governance (priorities, available resources, acceptable levels of costs, liabilities, resource use and inclusion, what is an acceptable form of economic development) and then leave the details to the task of the development corporation, 2) Appoint knowledgeable and competent board members (not all council) and policies that govern them, 3) approve budgets and operating plans as yearly processes and allow all other decisions to be made by development corporation, 4) allow boards to have authority to create and implement bylaws governing corporate operations, 5) hire autonomous CEO, who is mandated with hiring management (who plan and implement strategies), 6) shepherd, mentor and facilitate non-tribal enterprise training and infrastructure. Adopting ISO standards help to generate a legitimate environment for business (Thayer-Scott, 2004) Development corporations may also be put in charge of skills training and labour market development, purchasing policies, seeking out joint ventures, and sub-contracting (Hill and Sloan, 1996; Cairns, 1996).

Research by the Harvard Project and the Native Nations Institute for Leadership, Management, and Policy argues strongly that when First Nations effectively address these five issues, they significantly increase their chances of building sustainable and productive enterprises: 1) Clarity about enterprise goals, 2) effective management of politics/business connection 3) Purpose, power and composition of enterprise boards 4) Independent resolution of disputes 5) educating the community about enterprise goals and activities (Cornell, 2006). Loizides and Anderson (2006) recommend considering these factors when building Aboriginal development corporations: strong leadership and vision; a strategic community economic development plan; access to capital, markets and management expertise; good governance and management; transparency and accountability; and the positive interplay of business and politics. It is essential that the whole community embrace and be committed to the CED plan, and that members be supportive of the proposed business activities and/or enterprises.

## **17. Sustainability**

The theme of sustainability was referenced in 10.5% of the articles as a key feature or factor concerning Aboriginal economic development. Sub themes were environment and forestry. Issues regarding sustainability take into account the management of resources on Aboriginal land claims as well as outside of land claims that involve traditional territories. Aboriginal people have ensured their cultural and environmental sustainability and survival as distinct peoples by entering into agreements with industry such as with uranium, diamond mining, forestry and the fisheries, establishing co-management agreements with government and through their own production methods and Indigenous knowledge when leveraging resources on their own lands (Heber, 2005; Kendrick, 2003; Larsen, 2003). Although sustainability is often defined in terms of the needs of future generations, Desbiens, (2004) calls for greater attention to past colonial and political relations in defining structures of development that ensure the renewal of resources.

The literature shows that there is an increasing trend of private sector, Aboriginal partnerships in natural resource development (Whiting, 2002). Oil and gas industry activities are having a positive impact on the regional economies of many Aboriginal communities, creating indirect as well as direct financial benefits (Dana, 2008). Meis-Mason et al (2007) have developed best practices for sustainable development from northern case studies. They find that corporations must work with communities to make informed choices – identify values, institutional mechanisms and any gaps between traditional and new economic needs, alternative development models, and incorporate value of traditional economies where possible. It is also in the best interest of development committees, whether they be Aboriginal, shared partnership, or co-management, to strive to find indicators of sustainability (what are they and what's working), produce case studies/assessments/success stories, evaluate vulnerabilities/resilience, evaluate independent business association/regimes, and develop an international perspective toward sustainable development where possible.

## **EMERGING THEMES**

There were 7 themes considered either underweighted in their importance within the ranked coding scheme, or that did not appear in the themes but were considered as significant by the researchers. An overview of these themes, rationale for their inclusion and best practices are presented where possible.

### **1. Leadership**

Although leadership was referenced in 7.7% of the papers, its ranking did not fit its assessed significance in the literature as it was a theme that blended into many of the other themes coded in this study, such as good governance, political leadership, institutions, development corporations and communities. From an overview of these themes, the single real predictor of socio-economic success appears to be where leadership has been strong and consistent (Thayer-Scott, 2004).

Hindle (2005) revealed two dominant themes in his research that extended across Aboriginal communities in North America: the need to reconcile tradition with innovation and the need to understand how Indigenous world-views and values impact upon enterprise, two seemingly dichotomous perspectives. One of the key factors that allowed for the bridging between the two was strong and competent leadership that was conceptualized as *twin skills*: the necessity of separating community leadership into a cultural or spiritual component, and a practical, hard nosed business approach, often in the semblance of two or more individuals. Through both individual leadership and the creation of structural barriers within governing institutions and enterprise, politics and development were effectively separated, yet made complimentary to each other, evidencing that business means, engaged efficiently, professionally and competently, could satisfy cultural and spiritual ends (Murthy and Vikram, 2006; Loizides and Anderson, 2006). The canon explicates these types of individual and organizational leadership themes used to achieve this separation across a wide range of themes, cases and countries. Therefore

twin skills leadership is determined as a *necessary* but not sufficient factor in predicting successful Aboriginal community development.

## **2. Urban Communities**

Perhaps one of the most under-researched themes revolves around Aboriginal communities that exist within urban settings. As almost one half of Canada's Aboriginal population currently dwells within its largest cities, it is puzzling that so very little research within the literature is directed at the challenges that exist in facilitating economic development activities (Mendelson, 2004). This can be partly explained by the fact that research on Aboriginal populations tends to be overwhelmingly social indicators based, revolves around health or justice issues and is often multi-governmental and disjointed in its focus. The diversity, lack of cohesion within some urban Aboriginal communities, the jurisdictional confusion of overlapping government, Aboriginal and private agencies NGOs that serves these populations creates a very complex and difficult policy problem. Hanselman (2004) states that although there are many promising programs, there is no one level of government has assumed primary responsibility, and programming through multi-government processes is inconsistent. He recommends: 1) coordinated and focused intergovernmental cooperation, 2) to set goals and evaluate efforts independently, 3) that governments cannot shy away from Aboriginal politics; they must observe and respect culture, foster leadership and be status blind 4) that holistic approaches to policy and programming are needed and, 5) a portion of reserve spending be redirected to urban areas.

The nature of urban settings has been found to be extremely challenging for Aboriginal entrepreneurs, leaving them outside of the fold of reserve or community based development policies (Foley, 2006). Some scholars have commented that the role of the state is not simply to provide services or income support for individuals, but aimed towards building Aboriginal institutional capacity, in communities or in urban centres (Papillon & Cosentino, 2004). Silver et al., (2007) has researched inner city development and institutional challenges and found that urban Aboriginal populations require 1) empowerment through education and training, 2) the creation

of Aboriginal organizations to provide both voice, policy development and services, 3) the rebuilding of a sense of community within depressed neighbourhoods, 4) the creation of opportunities through understanding community context, 5) Aboriginal leadership of and within other service organizations, 5) a focus on both economic and social development, and 6) the politics of mobilization through urban self governance. Holistic strategies for economic development within urban areas are viewed as more important due to increased exclusion, lack of social cohesion, limited social capital and lack of identity (that grounding in land or territory on reserve based communities may provide). Lawrence (2004) outlines three models of urban Aboriginal self government: 1) EXTRATERRITORIAL MODEL (authority extends from land base outside urban area, such as a First Nations Band) not well suited for unifying and governing, although appropriate for administering services 2) NEIGHBOURHOOD MODEL: Aboriginal jurisdiction over parts of urban area where there is demographic majority (Nunavut, etc) 3) COMMUNITY OF INTEREST: institution building based on culture does address services and development where housing projects act as another foundational piece to increasing local stake in communities.

### **3. Urban Reserves**

The theme urban reserves did not show up within the main canon, but was instead subsumed under several of the other main themes. Very few if any scholarly research is targeted at understanding the dynamics, key issues processes and outcomes of urban reserve development, even though it has grown in importance over the last 10 years with cases like Membertou and Muskeg Lake gaining prominence from the communication of their successes (City of Saskatoon, 2004).

### **4. Innovation**

Innovation was mentioned in only 4.4% of the works surveyed and of those references, 2 related innovations directly to technology or how technological change could be used to enhance Aboriginal development. Many of the innovations that have been reviewed within the canon have been in the form of institutional or service innovations. Thus the role of innovation within the field is severely downplayed

within the literature. Aboriginal new ventures are rarely based on new technologies (rapid growth enterprises). The rationale behind this low number of innovative businesses is that many Aboriginal ventures are resources based, or are businesses bought that create basic economic rents and basic employment skills training such as gas stations, retail stores and other tourism based enterprises. This lack of innovative business activity is thus identified as another key gap in the literature that requires attention.

## **5. Global**

The requirement for global profit based business strategies is of substantial importance for Aboriginal communities (Tapsell and Woods, 2008). Any and all development strategies designed within any context must take into account the forces that are shaping new markets and production systems around the world. References to “born global” business approaches were referenced only 11 times as a main theme or less than 7% of the literature. Once again, this theme is underweighted in the literature, and spread broadly throughout other themes. It appears as an ever present background variable in nearly all cases of successful Aboriginal entrepreneurship surveyed (Johnstone, 2008; Dana, 2008; Meis-Mason, 2007; Katschner, 2007; Charlotte, 2007; Anderson, et al., 2007; Peredo and Chrisman, 2006; Pasco et al., 2006; Frederick, 2006; Anderson et al., 2006; Shanks, 2005; O’Brien et al., 2007; Hindle et al., 2005; Peredo, et al., 2004; Fraser, 2002; Anderson, 1997). Further research into born global business models, global branding, international strategic alliances and global product development and branding may yield positive benefits for the field.

## **6. Heterogeneity**

Cairns, (1996) states that there are wide differences in degree of economic development among Indian bands and in the types of problems they face in different regions and localities, should be reflected in a highly flexible overall program with different priorities for different cases. People in semi-isolated bands across the Northern wooded belt face special problems of development that require special types

of programs, and should receive maximum support in moving away to obtain employment in other areas or urban centres offering adequate job opportunities.

## **7. Social Capital**

One of the last themes with frequency rankings near but fewer than 10% was social capital. Loosely defined, social capital is the social networks and the experience derived from their navigation, that allow for effective transactions to be made. Social capital is an interesting concept as there are different configurations of social capital that can be positive or negative in certain environments and contexts. What is Aboriginal social capital, how can it be measured and how it influences venturing success is thus a relevant set of questions with potential for great insight into Aboriginal entrepreneurial processes. For instance, Foley (2008) found that social capital based on racial acceptance is more significant to new venture success than social capital based on family, cultural or traditional value in urban settings and high domination societies. There were inverse outcomes when Aboriginal entrepreneurs were tested in a low domination society where cultural links and family acceptance were evidenced to create positive social capital. Salée (2006) states that a breakdown in social cohesion within communities may deteriorate enterprising vitality that is experienced through a loss of community based social capital (trust, bonds, support). Although slightly altered, Mowbry (2006) echoes this sentiment and states that a mobilized community can produce a great deal of social capital to support entrepreneurship and development. This aligns well with theories pertaining to entrepreneurial intentions within the broader literature.

A somewhat different viewpoint on Aboriginal social capital, O'Brien et al., (2005) suggest that reconciling Aboriginal bonding and bridging social capital is a difficult issue and may be extremely important in regards to addressing economic development and global issues of inequality. This take on social capital aligns somewhat with Hindle's (2005) conceptualization on twin skills positioning, where Aboriginal leaders and entrepreneurs are enabled by not just Aboriginal social capital gained from the spiritual and cultural side of the community, but also through an external bridging capital with market actors. A growing literature backs these

conceptualizations showing a positive correlation between the presence of more extensive bridging social capital, trust, civil society and economic development (Levitte, 2003; Foley, 2003; Silver, et al., 2003; Ketilson and Macpherson, 2001; Cairns, 1996). Several observations, recommendations and best practices for economic development flow from this: 1) the decisions of individuals to resist going outside of their strong bonding ties to incorporate new members or fuse other social networks (build bridging ties) is a rational act, due to lack of trust, or even their lack of understanding aspects of other domains. 2) three basic solutions to the public goods problem in large groups situations i) a coercive mechanism (institutions) ii) selective incentives iii) a federal group strategy 3) Energy put into building bonding social capital ties in the Aboriginal community may limit its ability to facilitate the development of bridging ties to the larger mainstream community.

While it is not clearly understood as to the effects of Aboriginal social capital with respect to building and maintaining external bridging and bonds, several authors associate the requirement for Aboriginal social capital as a precursor for influencing positive change in urban Aboriginal communities through social cohesion (Putnam, 1995; Lawrence, 2004). Researchers are thus encouraged to present a range of insightful questions for testing in order to help clarify how social capital may best aide Aboriginal economic development efforts.

### **COMBINING AED WITH CURRENT KNOWLEDGE, GENERAL THEORY AND PRACTICE**

The purpose of this paper has been to review the literature and assess the state of current research in the field of Aboriginal economic development throughout the world in order to distill best practices, implications for policy and focus on important areas for future study.

The introduction section of this paper addressed the state of current knowledge and policy as a general framework for mapping where we are as a research community (government, public and private). Seven major recommendations were presented from a comprehensive cross Canada study that emphasized the following: 1)

increased funding for economic development and centralization 2) institutional development 3) access to land and management 4) education and training 5) legislative barriers bridged 6) community infrastructure 7) partnerships with industry. Seven barriers and six antecedents for success were realized: Barriers: 1) access to capital 2) legislative barriers 3) restricted land use 4) lack of human capital 5) lack of infrastructure 6) governance issues 7) fragmented government policies; Antecedents to success: 1) leadership 2) separation of politics and business 3) community support 4) leverage strengths 5) creation of labor force 6) partnerships with industry. These recommendations and themes represent a good cross section of the knowledge that is currently influencing policy design and practice in First Nations, Metis, and Inuit communities across Canada.

After conducting a comprehensive review of the literature, cross tabulation of the themes generated with the current emphasis on policy issues and recommendations has produced strong correlations. Analysis of the results has also yielded evidence for arguing the position that several gaps in current policy frameworks potentially exist. Furthermore, empirical evaluation of the literature finds that it is not yet strongly developed, suffers from gaps in methodology and attention to specific substantive areas, lacks legitimacy within academia, and is highly specialized. Although the themes generated do provide some insight into best practices in certain areas, there is also a lack of focus on implementation, the development of applied and practical tools that are potentially usable by First Nations peoples and policy makers alike. In other words, a comprehensive approach to Aboriginal economic development that synthesizes themes and theory into applied tools is not patently obvious. The next section presents a potential means to focusing theory into practical ends with respect to Aboriginal economic development issues and challenges.

## APPLYING THEORY TO PRACTICE IN AED

A review of the literature illustrates that First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities across Canada are extremely diverse and heterogeneous populations. Each community is unique by definition, but in more general terms, reflect different levels of economic and social independence, variance in resource mixes, culture, geographical proximity to markets, organizational structures and so on that define their distinct natures. From a policy perspective, the challenge is to create programs that recognize these contextual features, while operating from the economies afforded by a general policy base or framework. While structural legislative and operational change may be required by governments to help develop policies that effectively facilitate economic development within these communities *generally*, what may be even more necessary is to provide the ability to have communities determine what is required to help them bridge obstacles and leverage strengths for creating positive outcomes.

As the review of the literature has pointed out, the most common unit of analysis used by researchers was the community. Previous research has determined that process is very much influenced by context (Van de ven, 2004). Hindle (2009) suggests that the notion of community can readily be used to conceptualize contexts in order to better understand the complexities and interrelated domains that either support or constrain human behaviour enacted by specific processes. He defines community as:

*...any context where a self-defined group of people see their mutual belonging to the community as distinguishing them (but not excluding them) from all other members of society at large and where continued membership of the community is valued highly enough to impose some constraints on behaviour. (Hindle, 2009)*

Thus, the operational purview of the conceptual nature of community can be very wide. A community can range from small in size and narrow of focus (for example, an urban group of people related in some way) to vast in size and broad of focus (for

example, the United States of America). Communities in this definition are also not limited to being defined by geographic parameters, and may exist as a dispersed set of people who have common, self identified linkages and objectives. Using the concept of community as a base and a robust set of grounded theory data collected within various Aboriginal communities across North America, Hindle has developed a systematic and dispassionate regime for the diagnosis of the interrelated elements specific to how community context affects entrepreneurial processes. As the essence of diagnosis as a formal activity is that it employs *standard* procedures to define a *unique* situation, the application of the tool must be able to provide, for any community in which it is used:

*(1) a general assessment of the entrepreneurial potential of the whole community in its current state;*

*(2) a specific assessment of the technical and contextual viability of any proposed entrepreneurial initiative by any set of community actors given the current status of community development;*

*(3) the ability to articulate the foundations for design and execution of entrepreneurial projects (physical, institutional and educational) that are both feasible and desirable for a range of entities who are community members (this importantly implies the opposite: the ability to recognize and reject inappropriate entrepreneurial initiatives before resources are wasted in pursuing them);*

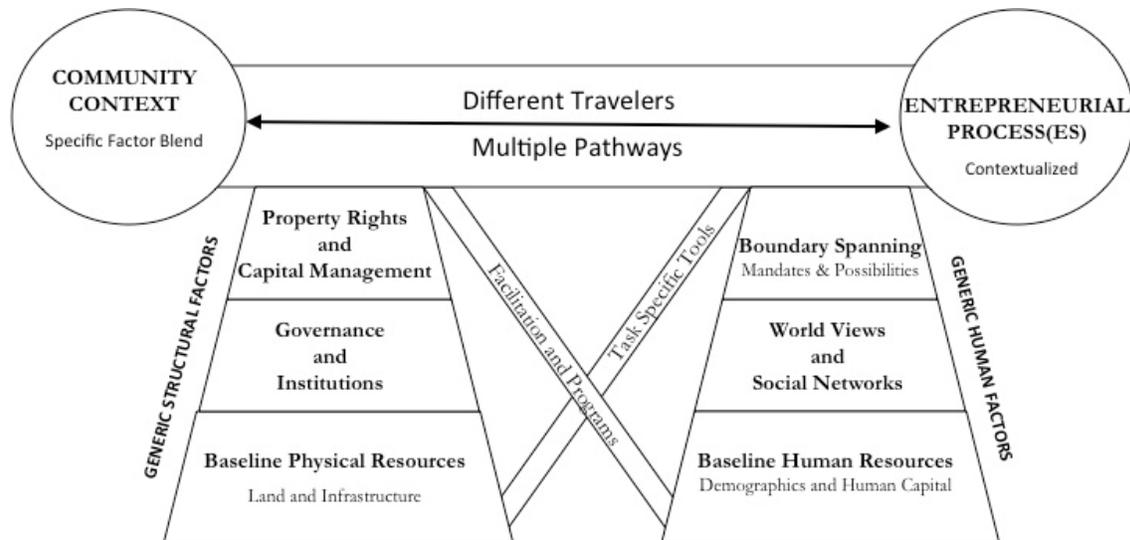
*(4) the ability to identify the focal areas where facilitations and programs of varying kinds might be created to enhance the existing resources and skills of various community members and institutions so that desired initiatives, which are not feasible at present, may become feasible in future. (Hindle, 2009).*

Using the database from Hindle and Landsdowne (2005), the following seven related categories emerged when a new emphasis on listening to hear the respondents views linking all aspects of community to the possibility of any form of entrepreneurial process was provided:

*Emergent category (1): understand the basics of the land.* Stripped to its essence this category focuses on the fundamental importance of taking detailed, realistic stock of the *physical* assets of a community. *Emergent category (2): understand who the people are and what they can do.* Stripped to its essence this category focuses on the fundamental importance of taking detailed, realistic stock of the *human* assets of a community and their skills. *Emergent category (3): understand how different individuals within the community think about the world and how different groups within the community form close ties, largely based on common ways of viewing the world.* Stripped to its essence this category focuses on the fundamental importance taking detailed, realistic stock of the world-views and networks within a community. *Emergent category (4): understand the role of governance and institutions.* *Emergent category (5): understand the relationship between owning land and using it to benefit people and the enterprises they want to create.* Stripped to its essence this category focuses on the fundamental importance of the management and assertion of property rights as a component of entrepreneurial possibility. *Emergent category (6): find a way to overcome the obstacles within the community itself.* Stripped to its essence this category articulates respondents' pervasive beliefs that there has to be some kind of 'binding agent' if any entrepreneurial process is to be possible in communities that are challenged. *Emergent category (7): assistance demands empathy.* (Hindle, 2009).

The resulting framework developed is illustrated below in figure 1 and a complete diagnostic regime for evaluating a community's potential for facilitating any proposed new venture plan is presented in Hindle (2009).

**Figure 1. How community context affects entrepreneurial process: a diagnostic framework.**



It is posited that the continued development and testing of this framework may be of great benefit to Aboriginal communities seeking to find and facilitate new venture ideas with the objective of increasing their socio-economic well being. It stands as a near comprehensive synthesis of many of the coded themes and theoretical domains that are found to be significant to stimulating development activities as determined by this study.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

This study has set out to answer a structural set of questions that inform upon the subject of Aboriginal economic development. The first question explored how general theory on economic growth fit with the specific context of First Nations people in Canada. The notion of *development* as outlined in this study, was determined to be a good fit as it emphasized both social and economic dimensions and was easily amenable to application to First Nations circumstances. Other general theoretical issues pertaining to economic development environment and models of economic development were found to have many tangencies with an Aboriginal

context, suggesting that general theory did have some value in helping to explain and explore issues related to Aboriginal economic development.

The second question looked at the antecedents, general processes and specific best practices identifiable within the extant literature that are significant to successful First Nations economic development in Canada. Although international contextual differences were discovered across three other nations, a general framework of Aboriginal issues relating to economic development emerged. Lessons learned from other countries thus have informative value to understanding issues specific to Aboriginal peoples in Canada and vice versa.

Question three required a probing of the literature to identify its strengths and weaknesses, analyze and compare it against current knowledge and determine how general theory could be applied to strengthen research. Principal and emerging themes were discovered to align well with current policy issues but several gaps were also identified: a lack of cohesive theoretical development, an under-emphasis of some themes in terms of potential significance to theory and practice, a specialized and highly focused research field that lacked legitimacy within academic circles and a dearth of diversity in empirical methods and conceptual platforms for testing hypothesis. The strengths and weaknesses of themes were discussed, and an attempt to synthesize this research into a framework that had practical application to the question at hand was presented and discussed.

Having made an attempt to answer these questions, our findings suggest several implications. First, as culture and social norms was such a powerful theme within the extant literature, the necessity to reconcile past policy approaches through an understanding and respectful approach to the handling of Aboriginal culture is perhaps first and foremost the most challenging issue to government (and society). Almost every other theme was intersected in some way by this very influential variable. Obviously, Aboriginal communities must also address these issues and work towards bridging differences, yet the forces of social exclusion, historical economic and social domination, and mistrust can be managed through the development process. Leadership from within these communities will be a key factor

for success, and government, Aboriginal communities and society in general must encourage and incentivize this new wave of leadership. Institutions and governance structures must be available for new leadership to leverage the resources required to aid development efforts.

Secondly, the literature heavily emphasized the need to develop a better understanding of Aboriginal entrepreneurship, regardless of the form. Aboriginal entrepreneurs will be the leaders referred to above that will be required to bridge cultural differences and transform the resources available into wealth and well-being through the application of twin skills. Third, and related to the above, how may we determine which communities are ready to support entrepreneurs and which are not. Through a synthesis of many of the themes presented in this study, we argue that the most important aspect of both policy and Aboriginal development is the ability to evaluate a community's context to determine what elements are in place and what elements must be developed, in order for communities to be more entrepreneurial and innovative across a wide range of activities, including the creation and growth of profitable new ventures. This is a dual process that involves both community and government and an understanding that intermediate environments (local context), must be understood, and a basic human and physical infrastructure be in place, before any targeted investment in development will have big payoffs.

Lastly, there are several areas that intersect across the theme of capacity building, whether it is individual (basic skills that lead to employability, specialized knowledge that builds upon continuous learning and professional competency, or innovative and entrepreneurial capacity for exploiting opportunities) or institutional (knowledge of management or governance). The need for Aboriginally owned, directed and innovative institutions, organizations, associations and corporations is a well evidenced prerequisite for the successful economic and social independence of distinct Aboriginal communities and nations.

## **Implications for Future Research**

The last question asked in the introduction section revolved around suggesting potential pathways for future research in the field of Aboriginal economic development. First, researchers in the field of Aboriginal economic development must seek to consult communities first (and policy makers second) in order to find out what is important and may be helpful to them. This does not suggest that basic curiosity focused research be scrapped for that which has external linkages to value creation within the communities at large only, but to consider both theory and practice whenever possible. This is often a difficult proposition to make, since research in Aboriginal communities is often very challenging and requires community buy in, protection of rights and a fair modicum of control afforded to the communities studied.

Second, researchers must seek to find new ways to evaluate policies in such a way to make findings comparable and contrastable to other knowledge fields to allow for greater cross fertilization and development of general theory. This may and should involve both innovative (yet culturally respectful) methods, and methods that are more aligned with current scientific trends, which are more quantitative and structurally rigid in terms of methodological structure. Third, researchers must strive to publish work in mainstream journals in order to test the nature of the academic rigor applied, and introduce Aboriginal contexts to researchers in other fields as a potential substantive area in which to test outside theories.

Lastly, this paper provides throughout its content several annotations, suggestions and recommendations for research in areas identified as gaps, that are too narrow or too broad, and that may provide insightful new hypothesis that could be beneficial to academics, practitioners and policy makers. As well, the diagnostic framework provided by Hindle may be exceedingly beneficial when applied to the field of Aboriginal economic development research. Due to its nascence as a conceptual tool, empirical testing of the framework within Aboriginal communities will help to proceed in achieving a level of reliability and validity that may in turn be useful to

other areas and fields of study where communities are highly influential in the facilitation of new ventures.<sup>2</sup>

### **Limitations of this Review**

There are two key limitations to this research: the first involves the nature of the canon of works surveyed, and the level of comprehensiveness that it may legitimately offer. Naturally, not all publications, articles and works developed in this field, or that are intersecting with this field will be represented within the canon. A complete listing of the search processes used by the research team is thus offered in the appendix, so that a full disclosure of the research parameters will be able to structurally inform upon the study's inherent content limitations. Secondly, although both researchers are well versed within the field of Aboriginal entrepreneurship and economic development, there is a level of bias introduced to the coding process that may provide error to the research. Although triangulation between the researchers and that data may eliminate some error, coding and pattern matching involving external researchers was not possible due to time and resource constraints.

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<sup>2</sup> Both authors have been involved with parts of the conceptual design of the model and are currently testing the model in their respective fields that involve Aboriginal communities, university communities and not for profit institutional communities.

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## APPENDIX 2: Literature Search Records

Table X. Literature search

Search Engine	Key Words	Results
Econlit	Aboriginal and economic development (ALL TEXT)	AEDC1
Econlit	Indigenous AND economic development	AEDC2
Econlit	Native AND economic development	AEDC3
Econlit	First Nations AND economic development	AEDC4
Econlit	First Nations AND entrepreneurship	AEDC5
Econlit	Indigenous AND entrepreneurship	AEDC6
Econlit	Aboriginal AND entrepreneurship	none
ABI/Inform	Aboriginal AND economic development	AEDC7
ABI/Inform	First Nations AND economic development	none
Harvard Project	Site search	File Harvard
ANU	Site search	File ANU
Policy.ca	Site search	AEDC complete
Network sources	Expert advice and personal network related material on Aboriginal economic Development (Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development, Dalhousie Community Development Guidebook, etc)	AEDC complete

## **APPENDIX 3: An Overview of Economic Development Theories**

### **The Classical Theory of Economic Stagnation, David Ricardo**

Ricardo's major principle was the law of diminishing returns which states that when increased quantities of a variable factor are added to a fixed factor then each additional output becomes continually lower.

**Marx's Historical Materialism, Karl Marx** Marx believed in the ongoing process of change. He shows the transition of the working class society from capitalism, where emergence of monopolies brings about control over the workplace and eventually causing a revolt. This then leads to socialism and then to communism

**Walter W. Rostow's** economic stages are:

- The traditional society
- The preconditions for takeoff
- The takeoff
- The drive to maturity

### **Balanced vs. Unbalanced Growth Balanced: Ragnar Nurske**

The synchronized application of capital to a wide range of different industries is called balanced growth.

**Unbalanced: Albert O. Hishman** Deliberately unbalancing the economic, in line with a predesigned strategy, is the best path for economic growth.

### **Baran's Neo-Marxist Thesis Paul A.O. Baran**

A homegrown variety of a capitalist revolution in LCD's is unlikely because of western economic and political domination. He theorizes that the only way to make a change for capital accumulation would be a worker and peasant revolution.

### **Dependency Theo. Celso Furtado**

According to Furtado, since the 18th century the world as divided in a new international division of labor were the LCD's specialized in primary products depending on the DC's for any technological progress. His basic thesis is that underdevelopment does not mean traditional or non- modern economic, political and social institutions, but subjection to the colonial rule and imperial domination of foreign powers.

**Neoclassical Growth Theory Robert Socon** The neoclassical model predicts that income per capita between rich and poor countries will converge. The theory stressed the importance of savings and capital formation for economic development.

**The New Growth Theory Paul Romer** If technology is endogenous new growth economists can elucidate growth were the neoclassical model fails. Variable technology means that the speed of convergence between DC's and LCD's is determined primarily by the rate of diffusion of knowledge.

### **Vicious Circle Theory**

Shows the circle of demand and supply as it relates to poverty. When income is low then there is low productivity per person and we see then in this case that the country is too poor to save. On the demand side when incomes are low there is also low investment.

### **The Lewis-Fei-Ranis Model**

When there is a limitless supply of labor available to the industrial sector this allows for the accumulation of capital and then will lead to economic growth.

*(Source: Kooros and Badeaux, 2007)*