

**Entrepreneurship and Indigenous Identity:  
Three Studies on the Connections between  
Indigenous Identity and Entrepreneurial  
Practices in Canada and Australia**

by

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B.B.A., Simon Fraser University, 2008

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## Abstract

Indigenous people the world over are attempting to revive and strengthen aspects of their Indigenous identities that have been lost or eroded through colonization and are utilizing entrepreneurship as a means to make a living and as a way to give back to Indigenous communities. Existing research has signaled concern that entrepreneurship may erode Indigenous identity, but it is unclear as to how entrepreneurship influences Indigenous identities. Relatedly, research exploring how Indigenous identities will influence entrepreneurial practices as well as how experiences surrounding these influences will vary for Indigenous entrepreneurs within and between regional/country contexts is sorely lacking. This dissertation explores these under-researched questions through three papers that each employ the lenses of Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices and utilize interviews as the primary method of inquiry. The first paper focuses on the impact that entrepreneurship has on the Indigenous identities of thirty Indigenous entrepreneurs in British Columbia, Canada. Counter to existing research that has suggested that entrepreneurship likely erodes Indigenous identities, this paper found that entrepreneurship either has no impact on Indigenous identities or can act as a platform to strengthen Indigenous identities. The second paper focuses on how entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identities as well as how Indigenous identities influence entrepreneurial practices for thirty Indigenous entrepreneurs in New South Wales and Victoria, Australia. Through cluster analysis, this paper found that the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices vary for different groups of entrepreneurs based on individual and business level attributes. The diverse experiences that interviewees expressed are explained through six mechanisms that form two iterative and self-reinforcing cycles. The third paper compares the experiences and perspectives of the thirty interviewees in New South Wales and Victoria with thirty additional interviewees in British Columbia to explore how regional/country context influences the connections between Indigenous identities and entrepreneurial practices. This paper finds some significant differences across contexts. It suggests that several contextual factors, including patterns of colonialism and organizations that promote or support Indigenous entrepreneurship, may lead to these differences. Overall, in these three studies I have established data-driven and rigorously-developed novel perspectives and theories surrounding one important facet of Indigenous entrepreneurship.

**Keywords:** Indigenous entrepreneurship; Indigenous economic development; Indigenous identity; entrepreneurial practices; Canada; Australia

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# **Chapter 1.**

## **General Introduction**

Indigenous people the world over are attempting to revive and strengthen aspects of their Indigenous identities that have been lost or eroded through colonization (Borrows, 2010b; Foley & Maynard, 2001; Palmater, 2011). Concurrently, many Indigenous peoples are utilizing entrepreneurship as a way to make a living, provide value to Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients and give back to Indigenous communities (Cornell, Jorgensen, Record, & Timeche, 2007; Miller, 2012). With the concurrent interest in the resurgence of Indigenous identity and the utilization of entrepreneurship, concerns and questions emerge as to if and how entrepreneurship may influence Indigenous identity (Miller, 2012). Extant research is divided with regard to whether entrepreneurship strengthens or undermines Indigenous culture and identity. Some research suggests that entrepreneurship could erode Indigenous identity and be a pathway for assimilation (Alfred, 2005; C. J. Atleo, 2008; C. Stiles, 2004; Newhouse, 2001). Conversely, other research suggests that entrepreneurship could play a role in strengthening Indigenous identity (Foley, 2010; Gallagher & Lawrence, 2012; Miller, 2008). No consensus has been reached. Similarly, questions have been raised as to how Indigenous identity may influence entrepreneurship in ways that integrate Indigenous values, traditions and aspirations into entrepreneurial practices (Dana, 2007). Some ways that Indigenous entrepreneurs integrate their identity into their business have been identified (e.g. Loustel, 2011; Shoebridge, Buultjens, & Peterson, 2012); however, these studies lack detail around how Indigenous identity affects specific entrepreneurial practices. This dissertation will explore these important and under-researched questions in three related qualitative papers.

In the first paper of this dissertation, I explore how entrepreneurship affects the Indigenous identities of thirty Indigenous entrepreneurs in British Columbia, Canada

(BC). To explore this question, I adopted a “narrative identity work” (T. Watson, 2008, 2009a, 2009b) lens that highlighted the ways that individuals create, maintain or alter their identities through talk. For all three papers, I interviewed Indigenous entrepreneurs who lived and conducted business in urban areas because the majority of Indigenous people in Australia and Canada are urban-based (Environics Institute, 2011; Hunter, 2013) and because the majority of research on Indigenous entrepreneurship has neglected urban-based entrepreneurial activity (Cote, 2012; Foley, 2006b). I sourced interviewees based on personal connections as well as from the BC Aboriginal Business Awards’ recipients list. I asked participants a series of open-ended questions about how they see their involvement in entrepreneurship influencing their Indigenous identities. Using the qualitative analysis software NVivo, I analyzed the interviews for the social identities interviewees leveraged in order to construct coherent and meaningful self-identities as an Indigenous person and an Indigenous entrepreneur.

This first paper makes several contributions to research and policy. First, it contributes to research on Indigenous entrepreneurship by showing that scholars working in this area should not be fixated on the potential negative effects of entrepreneurship on Indigenous identity. Instead, research should be open to both positive and negative effects of entrepreneurship on Indigenous identity in order to more accurately reflect the experience of entrepreneurs. Second, this study demonstrates that urban Indigenous entrepreneurs are running businesses in ways that integrate Indigenous perspectives and traditions with modern tools and business structures. This finding shows that although entrepreneurship in urban off-reserve areas may look different than in rural on-reserve areas, urban entrepreneurs discuss their entrepreneurial activity as occurring in uniquely Indigenous community-oriented ways. Finally, this paper contributes to governments and communities involved in Indigenous economic development by highlighting a relatively neglected potential advantage of Indigenous entrepreneurship—the strengthening of Indigenous identity—which could be a useful benefit to highlight when promoting entrepreneurship.

The second paper of this dissertation explores how entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identities as well as how Indigenous identities influence entrepreneurial practices for Indigenous entrepreneurs in New South Wales and Victoria,

Australia (NSW/VIC). In this paper I adopt the concepts of Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. It works from the assumption that Indigenous identities are defined by how individuals understand themselves as Indigenous through story, as well as how others understand them as Indigenous through story. Entrepreneurial practices are the actions engaged in by entrepreneurs as well as the common understandings and norms surrounding these actions. I sourced interviewees from the Indigenous Business Chamber membership lists. I used this data to develop mechanisms and iterative cycles that explained in parsimonious terms the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices.

This second paper makes several contributions to research, policy and practice. For research, first, this paper lends credence to the perspective that entrepreneurship is not a vehicle of assimilation. Instead, it can be a way to strengthen Indigenous identity. This supports the perspective that Indigenous identity can positively influence the management of entrepreneurial ventures. Second, this paper shows that Indigenous experiences surrounding entrepreneurship are heterogeneous and are organized around several key mechanisms and iterative cycles. For policy, I call the two cycles I identified which connect Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices the ‘responsibility—pride’ and ‘opportunity, legitimacy—knowledge/confidence, status’ cycles. These could be used to design programs which take the heterogeneity of Indigenous entrepreneurs into account. For practice, this study could provide Indigenous entrepreneurs with an understanding of how they relate to other Indigenous entrepreneurs as well as ideas about how they can navigate their connections between their Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices.

In the third paper of this dissertation, I compare the experiences and perspectives of the thirty interviewees in NSW/VIC with thirty more interviewees in BC to explore how regional/country context influences the connections between Indigenous identities and entrepreneurial practices. In this paper I also adopt the lenses of narrative Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. I also consider context which, in this paper, refers to any aspect of the regional or country-level social, cultural, political or economic environment not directly within the control of individual Indigenous entrepreneurs that affects either how Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial

practices or how entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity. Interviewees were theoretically sampled and sourced in NSW/VIC primarily from Indigenous Business Chamber membership lists and in BC primarily from the BC Aboriginal Business Awards recipients' lists as well as personal contacts. Interviews lasted on average one hour and eleven minutes and created an average of twenty-eight pages of transcription. I analyzed the data in seven stages using the coding, code matrix and cluster analysis functions in NVivo in order to explore how entrepreneurs differed from one another in their experiences of context, and how they responded differently to context.

This third paper makes several contributions to research, policy and practice. For Indigenous entrepreneurship research, this paper highlights differences between interviewees across contexts and suggests numerous contextual factors that may influence the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices that have been underemphasized in existing research, such as physical location of Indigenous entrepreneurs as well as the history and development of Indigenous networks of practice. Drawing from the interviews of Indigenous entrepreneurs in both data sets, this study also shows that, despite a contention in existing literature that Indigenous identity will largely constrain entrepreneurial practices (e.g. Furneaux & Brown, 2007; Reveley & Down, 2009), Indigenous entrepreneurs overwhelmingly declare that overall their Indigenous identity positively influences their entrepreneurial practices. This opens up new lines of potential research that could explore the wide range of benefits that being Indigenous can have for entrepreneurial ventures. This paper may also prove interesting for Canadian and Australian Indigenous entrepreneurs who want to know about commonalities and differences between themselves and entrepreneurs in other contexts. It may also prove useful for entrepreneurs who are curious about strategies that their counterparts use to link their Indigenous identities to the entrepreneurial practices that they may employ in their own context.

In conclusion, in these three papers I create data-driven and rigorously-developed findings and theories around one important facet of Indigenous entrepreneurship, which can be summarized as follows. First, these three studies suggest that Indigenous entrepreneurs do not view entrepreneurship as a mechanism of assimilation. On the contrary, most interviewees suggest that entrepreneurship can

strengthen their Indigenous identity. This suggests that researchers focusing on the impacts of entrepreneurship on Indigenous identity and culture should not just focus on the negative impacts but should also explore the positive impacts that entrepreneurship can have on Indigenous individuals. Second, papers two and three have shown that Indigenous entrepreneurs report that their Indigenous identity shapes and supports particular entrepreneurial practices. This opens the door to future research on how Indigenous identity can specifically shape and transform the entrepreneurial practices of Indigenous entrepreneurs. Third, papers two and three have found that Indigenous entrepreneurs within the same regional/country context view the connections between their Indigenous identities and entrepreneurial practices differently. These differences are likely due to several personal and business attributes. The identification of these differences suggests that future research in this area should not assume that Indigenous entrepreneurs within the same regional/country have the same experiences or perspectives. Instead, the heterogeneity of Indigenous entrepreneurs should be explored in order to create more complex and nuanced theories that more closely reflect the diverse lived experiences of Indigenous entrepreneurs. Fourth, by examining differences across national/country contexts, in paper three I outlined aspects of context that appeared to lead to differences between interviewees in BC and NSW/VIC that were underrepresented in existing literature. This suggests that future comparative international Indigenous entrepreneurship research should explore the role of underemphasized aspects of context, such as recent developments surrounding Indigenous entrepreneurship and the role of organizations that support Indigenous entrepreneurs—and it should do so in addition to investigating the more popular aspects of context touched on in existing literature. Finally, the second and third papers in this dissertation utilize a novel method to analyze qualitative data in the Indigenous entrepreneur research field and beyond. Grouping interviewees into clusters, using these clusters to develop mechanisms that explain how the concepts connect, and employing these mechanisms to develop iterative cycles, emerged as a powerful method for establishing novel findings and theories which could be utilized by other scholars.

## **Chapter 2.**

# **Paper 1: Entrepreneurship and Indigenous Identity: A Study of Identity Work by Indigenous Entrepreneurs in British Columbia**

## **2.1. Introduction**

Throughout Canada, Indigenous<sup>1</sup> people are attempting to assert control over their traditional territories, revitalize their culture, break free from a dependency on government funding, strengthen their communities and provide better lives for themselves and their families. Many Indigenous communities and individuals are looking to economic development as a way to help realize their individual and community goals and are experimenting with band-owned businesses, revenue sharing agreements and entrepreneurial enterprises. With the shortcomings of band businesses recognized by community members and scholars and the number of successful entrepreneurs growing, entrepreneurial aspects of economic development are increasingly being viewed by Indigenous communities and individuals as important mechanisms to help them reach their individual and collective goals (Peredo et al., 2004). Although interest in entrepreneurship as a way to develop Indigenous economies is growing, there is disagreement among Indigenous people and academics as to the costs and benefits of entrepreneurship for Indigenous people. Some Indigenous leaders worry that entrepreneurship is counter to communalistic tendencies of Indigenous communities and that entrepreneurship will promote individualism, which will in turn lead to the erosion of

<sup>1</sup> In Canada, the term Indigenous refers to First Nation, Metis and Inuit people. Metis have both European and Indigenous ancestry. Inuit live in the northern arctic regions of Canada. First Nation people are Indigenous people who are neither Metis nor Inuit and who are often referred to as 'Natives' or 'Indians'. First Nation people can also have mixed ancestry. A synonym for Indigenous which will be used in this paper is 'Aboriginal'.

Indigenous culture and identity (Weir, 2007, p. 8). Scholars have echoed this concern and have suggested that Indigenous entrepreneurship could lead to the loss of Indigenous culture and the assimilation of Indigenous people (Foley, 2006a; Peredo et al., 2004). Others scholars, however, have argued that entrepreneurship is a useful economic mechanism for Indigenous people and that there is nothing inherent in entrepreneurship which makes it incompatible with Indigenous culture or identity (Foley, 2006a; Hindle and Landsdown, 2005; Peredo et al., 2004).

In this paper, we<sup>2</sup> aim to contribute to research on the relationship between entrepreneurship and Indigenous identity. We do so by exploring whether British Columbian Indigenous entrepreneurs describe entrepreneurship as negatively or positively impacting their Indigenous identity. We adopt a narrative identity work lens to focus on the work entrepreneurs do to maintain or alter their identities as Indigenous people and entrepreneurs. This theoretical lens rests on a constructionist perspective of identity, which conceptualizes identity as constructed through social interaction, constantly changing and often fragmentary. Because of the constructed nature of identity, people must do identity work to “create, present, and sustain personal identities” (Snow and Anderson, 1987, p.1348). This paper will explore identity work by examining the way that people talk about their identity and the way they try to persuade us of the legitimacy of the identity they perform. We focus on the social identities interviewees draw on and potentially transform to construct their self-identities.

This study is based on interviews with thirty urban British Columbian Indigenous entrepreneurs, including male and female First Nation and Metis peoples living either on- or off-reserve, running businesses in the consulting, manufacturing, natural resources and arts industries. We limited our study to British Columbia in order to explore deeply the identity work of Indigenous entrepreneurs in one region. We focused on urban entrepreneurs rather than on those in remote communities because little research has been done on urban Indigenous entrepreneurship (Foley, 2006b) despite two facts: the majority of Canadian Indigenous people live in urban areas (Environics Institute, 2011)

<sup>2</sup>This paper was written by Bryan Gallagher and Tom Lawrence and was published in the *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*.

and the majority of Indigenous entrepreneurship in British Columbia occurs in urban off-reserve areas (Aboriginal Business Services Network, 2004).

In brief, we found that Indigenous entrepreneurs describe being an entrepreneur as having either a neutral effect on their Indigenous identity or as strengthening it. No interviewees suggested their identities as Indigenous people were weakened by being involved in entrepreneurial activities. An important finding that helps explain this is that in constructing their self-identities, Indigenous entrepreneurs work to transform the social identities of the *Indigenous person* and *entrepreneur* in ways that reinforce and strengthen their identities as Indigenous people. They often did so by constructing historical Indigenous economic activity as entrepreneurial and running their sole proprietorships in a community-focused and uniquely Indigenous way.

This study makes several contributions to research and practice. First, it contributes to research on Indigenous entrepreneurship by showing that scholars working in this area should not be fixated on the potential negative effects of entrepreneurship on Indigenous identity. Instead, research should be open to both positive and negative effects of entrepreneurship on Indigenous identity in order to more accurately reflect the experience of entrepreneurs and allow for the exploration of positive synergies between entrepreneurship and Indigenous identity. Second, this study supports the idea that at least some Indigenous entrepreneurs believe that Indigenous people are inherently entrepreneurial and that the historic economic activity of Indigenous people was a form of entrepreneurship. These ideas are significant because they refute the more common framing of historical Indigenous economic activity as community-based and devoid of entrepreneurs. Third, this study suggests that urban Indigenous entrepreneurs are running businesses in ways that integrate Indigenous perspectives and traditions with modern tools and business structures. This finding contributes to research on Indigenous entrepreneurship by showing that although entrepreneurship in urban off-reserve areas may look different than in rural areas, these Indigenous entrepreneurs construct their entrepreneurial activity as occurring in a uniquely Indigenous community-oriented way. Fourth, this study contributes to scholarship on identity work by suggesting that individuals transform social identities by engaging in refuting, revising, interpreting and projecting identity talk. Finally, it

contributes to governments and communities involved in Indigenous economic development by highlighting a relatively neglected potential benefit of Indigenous entrepreneurship—the strengthening of Indigenous identity, which could be a useful benefit to explore when promoting entrepreneurship.

Our paper is structured as follows. First, we discuss relevant research on Indigenous entrepreneurship and narrative identity work. Second, we present our research methods and findings. Third, we discuss implications for Indigenous entrepreneurship research and for Indigenous communities and governments involved in Indigenous economic development.

## **2.2. Literature Review**

In this section, we review the existing research on Indigenous entrepreneurship, identity and identity work that guides our analysis. We begin by examining what is, and what is not, considered to be Indigenous entrepreneurship, and then explore the extent to which existing research adequately considers urban Indigenous entrepreneurship. We then turn to issues of identity, beginning with a summary of research that examines the relationship between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurship, and then proceeding to outline an overview of constructionist narrative perspective on identity. Finally, we summarize the literature on identity work with an emphasis on identity talk, which guides the specific analytical strategies we employ.

### **2.2.1. Indigenous Entrepreneurship Research**

Indigenous entrepreneurship research is a subset of the broader entrepreneurship literature which overlaps with ideas in mainstream entrepreneurship research but also differs in some significant ways because of the unique history, culture, and worldviews of Indigenous people (Peredo et al., 2004). A key issue in this literature is establishing the boundary conditions around what is considered Indigenous entrepreneurship. Defining these boundaries generally depends on who is considered Indigenous and what is considered to be entrepreneurship (Peredo, et al., 2004). Peredo et al. (2004, p.4) define Indigenous in terms of three key elements: “descent from

populations inhabiting a region prior to later inhabitants”; “geographical, political, and/or economic domination by later inhabitants or immigrants” and the “maintenance of some distinctive social-cultural norms and institutions”. This definition is broad enough to include contemporary urban Indigenous people, but formal definitions such as these do not reflect the messy, contested nature of the meaning of Indigenous that is shaped by both colonial legislation and practices and contemporary politics. For example, in Canada until 1985, a First Nation woman who married a non-First Nation man had to relinquish her official First Nation status—a policy that led to generations of Indigenous people with First Nation mothers being denied official recognition by the Canadian government. The contested status of definitions of Indigenous and our focus on the social-psychological identity of Indigenous entrepreneurs suggest an approach in which Indigenous identity is defined in terms of self-identification.

Research on Indigenous entrepreneurship conceptualizes entrepreneurship in a variety of ways. Most research in this area portrays Indigenous entrepreneurship as a collective activity conducted in rural areas by Indigenous communities or nations (Anderson, 2002; Peredo and Anderson, 2006). The tendency to define Indigenous entrepreneurship as occurring in rural reserve Indigenous communities has led to an incomplete understanding of urban Indigenous entrepreneurs who live or do business either on or off-reserve (Foley, 2006b). This is problematic because Indigenous people—and consequently Indigenous entrepreneurs—are increasingly urban. In Canada, the majority of Indigenous people now live in urban areas and many Indigenous people are second or third-generation urban residents (Environics Institute, 2011). To help address these demographic realities, this study focuses on urban Indigenous entrepreneurs. Although such forms of Indigenous entrepreneurship may seem to make it more difficult to articulate what is distinctively Indigenous about this form of entrepreneurship, it is important to include these forms to more fully understand the range of what constitutes Indigenous entrepreneurship. So, for the purposes of this study, we define entrepreneurship as the act of starting and running a business with two or fewer proprietors, and Indigenous entrepreneurship as occurring when self-identifying Indigenous people start and run such businesses.

### **2.2.2. Indigenous Entrepreneurship, Culture and Identity**

A significant stream of research has explored the relationship between Indigenous culture and identity and entrepreneurship (Hindle and Moroz, 2009; Peredo and Anderson, 2006). Although there is considerable debate in this stream about this relationship, many papers emphasize the negative aspects of this relationship. These papers highlight the “tension between Aboriginal and business demands” (Peredo and Anderson, 2006, p.18) and the struggle which Indigenous people must endure to maintain (Peredo e. al., 2004) their indigenous culture (Foley, 2006a). The concern for maintaining culture stems from the staggering loss of Indigenous culture and language since contact with Europeans, but by focusing only on the negative interaction between culture and identity and entrepreneurship, potential positive effects of entrepreneurship on Indigenous culture and identity are left unexplored.

Potential positive interactions have, however, been suggested by a few papers that have been open to the possibility of a positive relationship between Indigenous culture and identity and entrepreneurship. These studies suggest no inherent incompatibility between entrepreneurship and Indigenous culture and identity (Foley, 2006a; Hindle and Landsdown, 2005; Peredo and Anderson, 2006). Foley (2006a), for example, found that urban Australian Indigenous entrepreneurs do not feel any less Indigenous by being entrepreneurs and that they are maintaining aspects of traditional Indigenous values and practices in urban areas. Foley (2006a, p. 252) suggests that urban entrepreneurs modify traditional values to suit their needs and to adapt to modern mainstream business methods. He refers to these newly-emerging values as “traditional contemporary urban values”.

In order to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurship, this study takes a constructionist, narrative perspective on identity. A constructionist perspective on identity states that identity is not something that is given to us at birth, pre-determined, cohesive or continually stable (Rounds, 2006). Instead, it is a pattern of conduct (Goffman, 1959) constructed in the interactions between individuals in society (Down and Warren, 2007). A narrative perspective adds the idea that identity construction is significantly achieved by people telling narratives about themselves and others (Watson, 2009b). Used in this context,

narratives are series of events that are organized in a time sequence, whereas a story is a more complex narrative with characters who have interests, motives and emotions (Watson, 2009b).

Three distinct aspects of identity are involved in people's narratives about their identities: social identities, self-identities and self-concepts (Snow and Anderson, 1987). Social identities reflect broader discourses in society (Watson, 2008; Down and Reveley, 2009) and represent 'characters' or 'personas', such as the '*entrepreneur*' or '*environmentalist*', that people can apply to themselves or to others (Snow and Anderson, 1987). Self-identities are social identities as applied by individuals to themselves (Snow and Anderson, 1987). Although the analytical distinction between self-identities and social identities can be useful, the empirical boundary between them is less clear cut, as self-identities rely on social identities, and social identities are both maintained and shift through people's construction of their self-identities (Watson, 2009b). The third aspect of identity – self-concept – represents the synthesis of an individual's multiple self-identities that are enacted in different situations (Murnieks and Mosakowsky, 2007; Rounds, 2006; Shepherd and Haynie, 2009). Although different self-identities may be enacted in different interactions, the multiple self-identities in a self-concept may be consistent and mutually reinforcing or inconsistent and create internal contradictions in the self-concept (Snyder, 2004).

### **2.2.3. Indigenous Entrepreneurship and Identity Work**

From a narrative constructionist perspective on identity, people have to grapple with and make choices about who they are and what type of person they want to be (Watson, 2009b). The "range of activities that individuals engage in to create, present, and sustain personal identities" is referred to as identity work (Snow and Anderson, 1987, p.1348). Identity work is both the on-going struggle individuals engage in to construct an identity that can give them a sense of belonging or significance (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) and individuals' efforts to persuade others to accept that identity (Rounds, 2006). Referring to this process as "work" highlights the effort and purposeful strategies people use when constructing identities (Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock, 1996). Identity work can involve the maintenance or alteration of physical

settings, appearance, selective association with people or groups and talk (Snow and Anderson, 1987). Of these, talk has been an especially important form of identity work in organization studies (Clark, Brown and Hailey, 2009; Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2011; Down and Reveley, 2009; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Tietza and Musson, 2010; Watson, 2008; Watson, 2008b) and entrepreneurship research (Down and Warren, 2008; Essers and Benschop, 2009; Johansson, 2004; Jones, Latham and Betta, 2008; Nadin, 2007; Watson, 2009a). Talk can be identity work when it involves effortful, purposeful action to fashion narratives and statements that convince an audience of the identity being performed (Shwalbe and Mason-Schrock, 1996).

Snow and Anderson (1987) describe three types of identity talk: distancing, embracement and fictive storytelling. Distancing involves dis-associating oneself from social identities that are inconsistent with one's current or desired self-concept, whereas embracing involves confirming attachment to a social identity consistent with one's current or desired self-concept (Snow and Anderson, 1987). Fictive storytelling involves embellished or fictitious identity talk about one's past, present or future (Snow and Anderson, 1987). Watson (2008) extends these ideas by shifting the focus toward people's attempts to use and to shift social identities. In our study, we draw on both these sets of ideas, examining how Indigenous entrepreneurs engage in identity work through talk that both uses existing social identities (by distancing or embracing) and transforms social identities, sometimes in combination.

In summary, the research questions for this study, which have emerged out of the literature review, are: (1) Does entrepreneurship strengthen or weaken Indigenous identity? and (2) How do Indigenous entrepreneurs draw on the social identities of the *Indigenous person* and *entrepreneur* to construct their self-identities?

### **2.3. Methods**

This study will use qualitative methods because they are well suited to exploratory research (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011, p.10). The primary data collection strategy was interviews with Indigenous entrepreneurs. We chose this method because it allowed us to gather the stories of a larger number of entrepreneurs than would be

possible with more intensive qualitative approaches, such as life history or ethnography. Also, interviews are appropriate for exploring people’s outward-facing performance of identity work (Snyder, 2004) and revealing some aspects of their internal-facing identity work (Watson, 2009b).

We interviewed thirty Indigenous entrepreneurs, sampling theoretically on identity, gender, industry and geography in order to reflect the diversity of British Columbia Indigenous peoples (see Table 2.1 for a summary of interviewee attributes). Interviewees ran businesses in diverse urban areas ranging from cities with over two million people, such as Vancouver, to smaller cities of twenty thousand people, such as Port Alberni. We sourced interviewees from the BC Achievement Foundations’ BC Aboriginal Business Awards, the Industry Canada Aboriginal Business Directory and through personal contacts.

**Table 2.1. Summary of Interviewee Attributes**

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Gender</b>                | 14 women and 16 men  |
| <b>Identity</b>              | 25 First Nation and 5 Metis  |
| <b>Heritages</b>             | Diverse, including: Squamish, Stó:lō, Haida, Nuu-chah-nulth and Cree   |
| <b>Geography</b>             | Greater Vancouver area, Vancouver Island and the Interior of British Columbia  |
| <b>Experience on Reserve</b> | 13 people have spent a considerable amount of time of their life on a reserve (e.g. growing up on a reserve or living or running a business on a reserve). 17 people have not spent a significant amount of time on a reserve. |
| <b>Industry</b>              | 9 in consulting, 8 in retail, 10 in services and 3 in manufacturing  |
| <b>Success</b>               | All had self-identified successful businesses  |

All interviews were conducted by the first author. Interviews lasted approximately one and a half hours and were conducted at the interviewee’s place of business, except for three interviews, which were conducted at the first author’s university. Interviews followed a semi-structured approach that ensured a consistent overall protocol while allowing interviewees the opportunity to mould the conversation (interview questions are listed in the Appendix A). Notes were taken during the interviews and reflective memos were written up immediately after the interviews. All interviews were recorded and professionally transcribed, resulting in 150 pages of text, which were brought into NVivo for systematic analysis.

The data was coded and analyzed with the aim to explore how entrepreneurship affects the way in which interviewees construct themselves as Indigenous people and to determine whether there are particular types of identity talk interviewees engaged in to transform social identities. The data was first coded line-by-line in order to assess whether interviewees described entrepreneurship as having a negative, neutral or positive effect on their Indigenous identity. Salient social identities that interviewees appeared to be attempting to alter were also coded. Next, types of transformative identity work in which interviewees seemed to be engaged were coded. Finally, types of transformative identity work were synthesized into higher order categories.

## **2.4. Findings**

The research questions that guided this study are: (1) Does entrepreneurship strengthen or weaken Indigenous identity? and (2) How do Indigenous entrepreneurs draw on the social identities of *Indigenous person* and *entrepreneur* to construct their self-identities? In brief, concerning our first research question, we found that none of the interviewees felt that being an entrepreneur weakened their Indigenous identity and that the majority of interviewees suggested that being an entrepreneur has helped to strengthen their Indigenous identity. Concerning our second research question, we found that interviewees use the social identities of *Indigenous person* and *entrepreneur* to construct four self-identities: *not a stereotypical Indigenous person*, an *entrepreneurial Indigenous person*, an *Indigenous entrepreneur* and a *modern traditional Indigenous entrepreneur*.

### **2.4.1. Research Question 1: Entrepreneurship and the Strength of Indigenous Identity**

An important finding in our study was that none of the interviewees suggested being an entrepreneur weakened their Indigenous identity (see Table 2.2 for a summary of interviewees' responses regarding the impact of entrepreneurship on their identity as Indigenous people). Instead, twelve interviewees said that being an entrepreneur had a neutral effect on their Indigenous identity and eighteen interviewees suggested it had strengthened their Indigenous identity.

**Table 2.2. Summary of Interviewee Responses on the Impact of Entrepreneurship on their Indigenous Identity**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Neutral Impact on Indigenous Identity</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong and resilient Indigenous identity; Indigenous culture and identity have and always will be important regardless of entrepreneurial activities</li> <li>• Indigenous identity is not tightly linked to entrepreneurial identity either because Indigenous identity does not play a prominent role in interviewees' self-concepts or because interviewees choose not to emphasize their Indigenous identity in their entrepreneurial activities. A common reason why people chose not to emphasize their Indigenous identity is to signal that they do not exclusively serve Indigenous clients</li> <li>• Significant time commitments can offset some of the strengthening impacts which entrepreneurship can have on Indigenous Identity. For instance, time commitments when being an entrepreneur can limit the ability to be involved in Indigenous cultural activities</li> <li>• Because of the legacy of colonial policies including residential schools, some entrepreneurs suggested that they have little knowledge of Indigenous culture to lose or Indigenous identity to weaken</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Strengthened Indigenous Identity</b></p>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In more contact with Indigenous people, including family members, through entrepreneurial activities that enable people to learn about their ancestry and cultural practices</li> <li>• Learned more about their Indigenous culture and identity in order to effectively work with other Indigenous people</li> <li>• Flexible schedule can allow participation in cultural activities and learning about culture</li> <li>• Through entrepreneurial activities, took on a leadership role in Indigenous communities, which makes people feel more connected to Indigenous communities</li> <li>• Received praise and awards for their entrepreneurial ventures, which makes people feel proud to be Indigenous</li> <li>• Able to use merchandise and profits to give back to Indigenous communities</li> <li>• Financial security enabled by being a successful entrepreneur helped people to construct a more positive Indigenous self-identity, which does not include poverty as a key characteristic</li> </ul>  |

One of the most frequent explanations of why being an entrepreneur either did not weaken or had a neutral effect on their Indigenous identity was that, as Indigenous people, they are strong, resilient and adaptive. As one interviewee put it:

As much as ...[non-Indigenous people]... try to integrate us into the white society system, they can't. They couldn't, right? They can't take it from our heart, and it's always going to be there. They might try to brainwash you – your mind – but not your heart. They try to beat it

out of us, but no, it's still there in our heart. So, no, I don't think Aboriginal entrepreneurship [weakens my Indigenous identity]. (I16<sup>3</sup>)

Similarly: "My values and desires are still the same [since becoming an entrepreneur]. Aboriginal cultures are important to anything I do; I haven't changed that part of me" (I3). Likewise, "I've always been proud of my roots. I get that from my grandparents. I am proud of where I'm from; it's always been with me" (I10).

A less common but interesting theme that emerged was that some interviewees suggested they did not have significant amounts of Indigenous identity or culture to weaken:

I don't think [entrepreneurship has had a huge effect on my Indigenous identity] because I look at myself as quite a modern-day Indian... [I'm] trying to integrate into society. I'm still a First Nations person, but my grandfather always said, "Get off the reserve. Go build your life somewhere. These reserves aren't a place to build your life". And my wife and I tried it. We built a house on our reserve, and it didn't work. Once we had kids, we moved to town. So I'm a modern-day Indian, someone who is just a regular guy amongst the crowd that happens to have ethnicity behind him, not necessarily in a spiritual "we'll dance at the powwows" and stuff like that, but just part of the crowd. (I21)

This perspective highlights the reality that many Indigenous people are not significantly knowledgeable or involved in traditional Indigenous culture and that many people want to have distinctive Indigenous beliefs and practices but may also want to blend in with other facets of society.

Of the interviewees who suggested that being an entrepreneur strengthened how they viewed themselves as an Indigenous person, several explanations for that strengthening emerged. Some described how being an entrepreneur led to them learning more about their culture. For example:

To be successful in any of the work that I've done I have had to research deeper into my own culture because there's nothing worse than going into someone's community and acknowledging their custom or tradition and they ask you how your custom, your tradition relates

<sup>3</sup> Supplementary interview data can be found in Appendix A.

to theirs [and you do not know your customs or traditions] ... So it [my business] actually helped me create a better and greater understanding of my own culture. (19)

Others said that their businesses allowed them to generate more income and create a flexible schedule, which enabled them to engage more in cultural practices. One stated:

I can be an entrepreneur and maintain the culture. I think entrepreneurship enhances who you are as a person as you don't have to worry about your family's starving or your family not being able to live properly. I think if you have enough money, it enhances the spiritual side of you, the creative side of you. And it gives you more time to sit with your grandparents and talk about the language and the culture. (119)

Others described how entrepreneurship gave them the opportunity to network and surround themselves in their work life with Indigenous people. One explained, "In my old job I worked with Aboriginal communities and stuff like that but most of my co-workers were non-Aboriginal ... So from a practical standpoint, I'm now surrounded by Aboriginals ... everybody here is constantly practising the culture. It's constantly about art and about constantly about recapturing our culture" (115).

In summary, not one interviewee suggested that entrepreneurship weakens their Indigenous identity. Instead, all interviewees felt that entrepreneurship had a neutral or strengthening effect on their Indigenous identity, with the majority of the interviewees suggesting that it strengthens their Indigenous identity. The following section will discuss in greater detail how interviewees draw on and transform the social identities of the *Indigenous person* and *entrepreneur* to construct self-identities.

#### **2.4.2. Research Question 2: Self-Identities of Indigenous Entrepreneurs**

Our findings with respect to our second research question help explain how entrepreneurship is not experienced as weakening our interviewees' identities as Indigenous people. We found that our participants drew on the social identities of *entrepreneur* and *Indigenous person* to construct four positive self-identities: *not a*

*stereotypical Indigenous person, an entrepreneurial Indigenous person, an Indigenous entrepreneur and a modern traditional Indigenous entrepreneur.* For each, we provide a quote from an interviewee that typifies each self-identity, describe the self-identity, and discuss a kind of identity talk – refuting, revising, interpreting and projecting – that we argue is associated with it.

### ***Not A Stereotypical Indigenous Person***

I had a guy at my house who was the head geologist of a mine who said to me, “Anytime we’ve had to deal with First Nations they’re usually lazy or drunks”. He said that to me in my own house. And I said, “You know what? If you weren’t such a good friend, I’d slap you in the face right now”. And that’s the stereotype [of First Nations]... The stereotype is lazy. The stereotype is doesn’t care, given everything while not paying tax, soak the government for everything, don’t have to pay for your house. The stereotypes go on and on. So as a Native guy and a Native company you’re always trying to impress people or prove them wrong, more than anything proving them wrong. And now when I meet people and talk to people I’m confident enough to say, “Once you’re done working with my company, you’ll look back and say it was a great experience”. (I21)

Many interviews started out this way – the entrepreneurs sharing narratives about racism and stereotypes of Indigenous people they have encountered while running their businesses, and the identity work in which they engage to deal with it. Interviewees like I21 relate their narratives explicitly and implicitly to the social identity of the *Indigenous person*. Indigenous entrepreneurs suggest that the social identity of the *Indigenous person* in Canadian society is constructed from stereotypes which include being lazy, uneducated, a criminal, a substance abuser and dependent on the government both in one’s personal and business life. Dealing with this social identity influences how Indigenous individuals run their business. It also affects the experience of running their business. This social identity is not connected to local Indigenous Nations – such as the Haisla or Musqueam – but to an image of a more generic Indigenous person. What is particularly interesting about I21’s identity work is that the interaction did not prompt identity conflicts or compromise the entrepreneur’s feelings of Indigenousness. Instead, the incident cited above is framed by the interviewee as an opportunity to prove the geologist wrong, through both the interaction itself and through doing business with the geologist.

We argue that the construction of the self-identity *not a stereotypical Indigenous person* depends on ‘refuting’ identity talk, which involves undermining the dominant social-identity of the *Indigenous person*. This refuting identity work differs from the distancing identity work described by Snow and Anderson (1987) in that refutation challenges the legitimacy of the dominant social identity of *Indigenous person*, rather than simply separating that social identity from the person speaking. Distancing could, for instance, involve a claim such as “I’m not like some other First Nations people who are lazy”. In contrast, refuting narrative identity talk involves claiming that dominant conceptions of a particular social identity, or aspects of it, are untrue.

### ***An Entrepreneurial Indigenous Person***

I think Aboriginal entrepreneurship was always there. It's just that the word wasn't recognized as such back in the day. Because of a lot of our people did trade, you know. The interior Salish with the Coast Salish and you know from Vancouver to Haida Gwaii. The trade was always there, right? ... It's just that it wasn't labeled, but now...white society is actually recognizing that First Nations can be entrepreneurs. Where they have always been before, right? But this time, it's with money, whereas back in the day it was with food or clothing. (I16)

This interviewee echoes a common theme among the majority of interviewees – that there is a legacy of entrepreneurship in Indigenous communities that was “always there”. For these interviewees, historical trading was entrepreneurial. This narrative of historical Indigenous entrepreneurship is constructed by framing trading as being risky in terms of negotiating with other people, as well as in terms of the distance and time needed to complete trades. The story I16 tells about trading between Coast Salish and Haida peoples depicts these expeditions as an epic journey involving over a thousand-kilometre voyages through treacherous ocean passages. Interviewees claimed that this dangerous trading required particular community members to act entrepreneurially by taking control, providing direction and executing plans. This entrepreneurial framing of historical Indigenous economic activity is in contrast with dominant constructions of historical trading and other economic activity in that it is largely communalistic and devoid of agentic entrepreneurs (Galbraith, Rodriguez and Stiles, 2006). For interviewees such as I16, the shift from economic activity occurring through trading to activity based on money does not change its fundamentally entrepreneurial nature.

Because Indigenous people are constructed by several interviewees as having a long entrepreneurial history, entrepreneurs like I16 believe that they are partaking in a vital aspect of an Indigenous way of life. Being an entrepreneur is thus not only a way to make a living, it is also a way of returning to historical forms of economic activity that were fundamental to an Indigenous way of life. In this way, interviewees such as I16 appear to be constructing the self-identity of the *entrepreneurial Indigenous person*.

This self-identity relies on what we refer to as 'revising' identity talk, which describes actors' attempts to transform the stereotype of an *Indigenous person* by incorporating into it a different understanding of its history and consequently challenging what might be considered within its normal bounds. By revising historical economic activity of Indigenous people and integrating historical Indigenous trade as an aspect of entrepreneurship, I16 argues that Indigenous people have a long history of being entrepreneurial. As such, I16 contends that this aspect of identity is now and has always been a part of being an Indigenous person. Thus, entrepreneurship is constructed as not a foreign concept appropriated after contact with Europeans but rather an aspect of economic activity with a long pre-contact history within Indigenous communities. Revising identity talk expands the social identity of *Indigenous person* by incorporating entrepreneurship as a normal part of what it means to be Indigenous.

### ***An Indigenous Entrepreneur***

If there is a [fellow] artist that wants a [Native bentwood] box because one of their relatives died then I definitely say yes. And so what they do at the funeral for the people that help the funeral is they throw a hat around and they'll say, "We're throwing the hat around for the cooks, artists and drivers" right? I usually end up getting paid more for my box from that money than what I would normally charge. It's almost like a duty to help when I can. (I10)

The third common self-identity constructed by interviewees was as an entrepreneur who engages in business in a way that is consistent with and strengthens their Indigenous identity. In the quote above, for instance, I10 describes how they use the products of their entrepreneurial venture to donate to an Indigenous community, which in this case is a community of Indigenous artists. What is particularly interesting about this narrative is I10 believes they get more money for their product by giving than

by selling their product. I10 appears to be suggesting that, being an entrepreneur does not necessitate individualism. Entrepreneurs do not have to think solely in profit-driven terms. Instead, running a business in an Indigenous way can give the entrepreneur the opportunity to give back to local Indigenous people and use alternative methods of selling products that can be good for business. Thus, it appears that interviewees such as I10 are constructing the self-identity of the *Indigenous entrepreneur*.

This self-identity relies on what we refer to as 'interpreting' identity talk, which describes actors' attempts to transform the social identity of *entrepreneur* by focusing on current activities. By interpreting current actions of donating products as being good for business and helping out Indigenous people, interviewees' identities as entrepreneurs are transformed in a way that makes entrepreneurship more compatible with their Indigenous identity. Although interpreting may involve historical, future and refuting aspects of identity talk, we distinguish it from other forms of identity talk because it is focused primarily on current actions or beliefs.

### ***A Modern Traditional Indigenous Entrepreneur***

We're not going to rely on government funding forever. Like we have to kind of get off of our funding dependence and there's no other way to do it [than entrepreneurship and economic development]... I think that we can create systems that reflect our values and our culture and our cultural sensitivity... [and] we're closer than we think. [For instance in my work as a consultant] there's this notion of communications and storytelling which really embraces or really lends itself to a traditional [Indigenous] ways of communicating, especially with technology. Like technology and oral history and all of those interesting things are kind of coming together ... And so now I can do a voice recording [of a meeting] for instance and set it up as a podcast for the participants of that meeting or for the larger community who wants to know what happened. (I25)

I25 gives the impression of being strongly influenced by narratives on the dangers of dependency on government and the need for Indigenous people to reduce their dependency in the future. Narratives of dependency explained by interviewees focus on both the financial dependency Indigenous people have had on governments and the psychological repercussions of being colonized (Fanon, 1967), which has in turn created a dependency on various levels of government to improve the situation of

Indigenous people (Helin, 2008). I25 also suggests that in the future, entrepreneurship and other forms of economic development can increasingly be done in an Indigenous way that incorporates Indigenous values and culture. They provide evidence for this by discussing their consulting entrepreneurial activities, such as facilitating a meeting, where modern technology can be combined with Indigenous approaches to communicating. In this way, I25 does not suggest that being traditional and being modern are mutually exclusive concepts; rather, the participant suggests that both can be incorporated to create value for business and for the resurgence of Indigenous culture. In this way I25 appears to be creating the self-identity of the *traditional and modern Indigenous entrepreneur*.

This self-identity relies on what we refer to as ‘projecting’ identity talk, which involves making inferences on the future in order to alter the self-identity of the Indigenous person and the entrepreneur. By projecting about the future, interviewees such as I25 provide a rationale for why entrepreneurship is needed within Indigenous populations and why neither the entrepreneur nor Indigenous identity are in conflict with one another. This projecting identity talk also serves to suggest that in the future, especially with new technologies, traditional and modern ways of doing things can be incorporated together into ways that work for Indigenous entrepreneurs and Indigenous communities.

## **2.5. Implications**

In this study, Indigenous entrepreneurs described being an entrepreneur as in no way weakening how they view themselves as Indigenous people. Instead, being an entrepreneur was viewed by most interviewees as strengthening their Indigenous identity. This study also found that interviewees attempt to transform the salient social-identities of the *Indigenous person* and the *entrepreneur* in order establish the following self-identities: *not a stereotypical Indigenous person*, an *entrepreneurial Indigenous person*, an *Indigenous entrepreneur* and a *modern traditional Indigenous entrepreneur*. This transformational identity work is attempted by engaging in refuting, revising, interpreting and projecting identity talk. Although these four types of transformational identity talk are not mutually exclusive, they do suggest that certain types of

transformative identity work are more oriented to the past, present or future, or to the refuting of social-identities.

These findings have several implications for Indigenous entrepreneurship research and for governments and Indigenous communities involved in Indigenous economic development. Before discussing the implications of this study for research and policy, it is important to note its limitations. First, our understanding of the relationship between being Indigenous and being an entrepreneur is based solely on the self-reports of interviewees. Unexamined are what interviewees do in practice and how other Indigenous people view the relationship between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurship. This research could be advanced by conducting ethnographies with Indigenous entrepreneurs to observe their identity work and by conducting interviews with Indigenous community members to gain a non-entrepreneur perspective. Second, the results of this study regarding the impact of entrepreneurship on Indigenous identity may be more positive than would be found in the wider Indigenous population because the interviewees all had self-identified successful businesses; interviewing failed entrepreneurs might significantly affect the results of this study. Third, our results and interpretations may not be generalizable to all Indigenous people. The Indigenous and entrepreneurial experience in British Columbia may be very different than in other Canadian provinces and in other countries.

Despite these limitations, this study has several important implications for research on Indigenous entrepreneurship, on identity work research, and for communities and governments involved in Indigenous economic development. For scholars engaged in research on Indigenous entrepreneurship, a key finding was that the Indigenous entrepreneurs interviewed consistently conveyed that entrepreneurship did not weaken their perceptions of themselves as Indigenous people. These findings contrast sharply with the focus in the Indigenous entrepreneurship literature regarding the potential conflict and tensions between Indigenous culture and identity and entrepreneurship. Rather than describing these kinds of concerns, interviewees told us how they use identity talk that changes the social identity of the *Indigenous person* and *entrepreneur* in ways that allow them to construct positive self-identities. Our findings suggest research on Indigenous entrepreneurship should include the potential for

positive effects of entrepreneurship on Indigenous culture and identity in addition to investigating aspects of entrepreneurship that might lead to a loss in these areas. Based on our findings, examining both positive and negative aspects of the relationship between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurship would better reflect the lived experiences of Indigenous entrepreneurs.

A second implication for Indigenous entrepreneurship research stems from interviewees' suggesting that even while being located in urban non-reserve areas, they run their businesses in community-oriented ways which are sensitive to and respectful of Indigenous culture and practice. These urban entrepreneurs described how their entrepreneurial ventures allowed them to give back to Indigenous communities through avenues such as gift giving. The communities they associated with and gave back to included particular First Nations and communities of Indigenous entrepreneurs in the same industry. This finding enlarges the meaning of community in the context of Indigenous entrepreneurship research, moving the definition from a relatively narrow conception of people in the same physical remote reserve community to a much broader set of social networks.

This research also adds to research on identity work. Building on Snow and Anderson (1987) and Watson (2008), our study suggests additional kinds of identity talk that Indigenous entrepreneurs use to transform social identities and build positive self-identities. They do this by employing refuting, revising, interpreting or projecting identity talk strategies. This typology highlights the temporal aspect of transformational identity talk; some transformational identity talk is oriented more in the past, current or future. It also highlights the refuting of a social identity which is an attempt to undermine the identity or aspects of the identity.

For governments and communities working to foster Indigenous economic development, the key implication of our study is rooted in the positive link between entrepreneurship and Indigenous identity. This link suggests that entrepreneurship can be an important, positive facet of Indigenous economic development alongside other ways of organizing economic activity such as band-owned businesses. When promoting entrepreneurship to Indigenous people, governments and Indigenous communities

should not limit their description of potential benefits to individualistic outcomes, such as income and a flexible schedule. In addition they should highlight the cultural benefits – that entrepreneurship can be a way for Indigenous people to strengthen their Indigenous identities and that contemporary entrepreneurship can be an expression and continuation of traditional Indigenous economic practices.

## **2.6. Conclusion**

Indigenous entrepreneurship is a contested aspect of Indigenous economic development. Some Indigenous people and Indigenous entrepreneurship scholars worry that entrepreneurship might weaken Indigenous identity. In contrast to these concerns, none of the thirty urban British Columbian Indigenous entrepreneurs interviewed for this study described entrepreneurship as weakening their Indigenous identity, and most described entrepreneurship as helping to strengthen their Indigenous identity. We also found that Indigenous entrepreneurs actively work to transform the social-identities of the *Indigenous person* and *entrepreneur* in order to construct self-identities which help to bridge being an Indigenous person and being an entrepreneur. The findings of this study are promising for the future of Indigenous people and are important for the field of Indigenous entrepreneurship research, as we would argue that a vital aspect of Indigenous people achieving their individual and collective dreams and maintaining Indigenous culture and identity is that people *feel* Indigenous. Surely if people don't feel Indigenous, or if they feel their Indigenous identity is being weakened by entrepreneurship, then there is not much hope for people feeling good about themselves and keeping Indigenous culture alive. But if people feel the same or more Indigenous while being an entrepreneur, then there is hope for Indigenous people to feel good about their Indigenous identity and to maintain and strengthen Indigenous culture while using economic mechanisms such as entrepreneurship to make a good living, give back to their communities and work toward the self-sufficiency of Indigenous peoples.

## **Chapter 3.**

### **Paper 2: Urban Entrepreneurship and Indigenous Identity: An Interview Study on the Connections between Indigenous Identities and Entrepreneurial Practices in Australia**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

Entrepreneurship is gaining prominence within Indigenous Australia (Hunter, 2013). As a pathway toward employment and self-sufficiency, entrepreneurship has been hailed as an important factor in closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (Australian Government, n.d.). Concurrently, many Indigenous Australians are attempting to revitalize fundamental aspects of their identities that have been damaged by colonialism, including their Indigenous identity (Foley & Maynard, 2001). With the concurrent interest in the resurgence of Indigenous identity and entrepreneurship both in communities and in research, questions emerge as to if and how entrepreneurship may impact Indigenous identity as well as if and how Indigenous identity may impact entrepreneurship.

Scholars have weighed in on these questions. In terms of the effects that entrepreneurial practices may have on Indigenous identity, scholars have presented several arguments for entrepreneurship's capacity to play a vital and positive role in the construction of Indigenous identities. First, despite the current economic marginality of many Indigenous peoples (Peredo, Anderson, Galbraith, Honig, & Dana, 2004), these groups have a strong tradition of entrepreneurial behaviour (Foley, 2010; Galbraith, Rodriguez, & Stiles, 2006; Malkin et al., 2004; Miller, 2008, 2012; Shoebridge et al., 2012). This suggests that engaging in entrepreneurship could be continuing or resurfacing one important aspect of a historical Indigenous identity. Second, running a

business can bring greater autonomy, self-sufficiency and freedom – all fundamental aspects of Indigenous identity (Borrows, 2010b) – than other employment options (Rindova, Barry, & Ketchen, 2009). Third, some Indigenous entrepreneurs run their businesses in order to strengthen an aspect of Indigenous culture and identity. In other words, the actual act of entrepreneurship enables them to strengthen their own identity as an Indigenous person.

Several concerns, however, have been raised about the effects entrepreneurial practices may have on Indigenous identities. First, entrepreneurship in its current form is a part of the capitalist system. As a component of this system, entrepreneurship could be seen as promoting individualism and a hunger for profit, both of which could lead to the erosion of Indigenous identity (Alfred, 2005; C. J. Atleo, 2008; C. Stiles, 2004; Newhouse, 2001). Second, involvement in entrepreneurial ventures may exacerbate attacks by critics of economic development or entrepreneurship, which could create confusion and unease for Indigenous entrepreneurs around their Indigenous identity (Shoebridge et al., 2012). Criticisms launched by other Indigenous people have included alleging that Indigenous entrepreneurs use communal resources for their own personal gain or act as if they are better or more deserving than others (Cornell et al., 2007; Foley, 2004). This may damage relationships and leave Indigenous people feeling shunned by Indigenous communities and networks. It is clear there is still no consensus on the effects of entrepreneurial practices on Indigenous identity. This paper will attempt to contribute to this discussion by asking, along with other questions introduced below, how do entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identities?

Scholars have also weighed in on how Indigenous identities influence entrepreneurial practices. Entrepreneurial practices engaged in by Indigenous people will likely overlap in several ways with the entrepreneurial practices of non-Indigenous people (Loustel, 2011; Malkin et al., 2004; Newhouse, 2000; Rola-Rubzen, 2011). Practices engaged in by Indigenous people may also, however, differ in several important ways (Loustel, 2011; Malkin et al., 2004; Newhouse, 2000; Rola-Rubzen, 2011). For example, their responses to “lateral violence” (Griffin, 2004, p. 1), their balancing family and work commitments (Shoebridge et al., 2012) and their integrating cultural principles into entrepreneurial practices (Foley, 2005) may differ. Identifying

these differences is important for understanding how being Indigenous affects the diversity of entrepreneurial practices engaged in by Indigenous entrepreneurs. Thus, the second research question for this paper will be: How do Indigenous identities influence entrepreneurial practices?

In exploring both how Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices and how entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity, it could be that patterns develop in terms of how Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices connect. These patterns could manifest themselves in terms of iterative cycles. For instance, the strengthening of an Indigenous identity through engagement in cultural practices could mean that an Indigenous entrepreneur incorporates Indigenous imagery into their company logo. This could attract more Indigenous clients, which could positively affect their Indigenous identity by making them feel as though they provide an important product or service to other Indigenous people. This could in turn influence their marketing practices to further target Indigenous clients, and so on. Cycles could be virtuous, as in the case of this hypothetical example, or vicious, if Indigenous identity and entrepreneurship negatively influence one another. Thus, the third research question for this paper will be: Are there connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices that form iterative virtuous or vicious cycles?

The two primary concepts in this paper are Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. Identity refers to “the set of meanings that define who one is” (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 1). Although this meaning is created through several processes, including conscious inward-facing reflection (Clark, Brown, & Hailey, 2009), and is partially generated by choices about individuals and groups with whom one associates (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010), appearance and physical surroundings (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Weaver, 2001), this study will focus on the way that individuals construct meaning around who they are through narratives. Narratives surrounding Indigenous identity may touch on multiple elements including lineage, colour of skin and hair and knowledge about or involvement in Indigenous culture and communities.

Entrepreneurial practices are the actions engaged in by entrepreneurs as well as the common understandings and norms surrounding these actions. Entrepreneurial

practices, like all practices, are made possible by shared know-how and understandings of communities or networks of practice (Tagliaventi & Mattarelli, 2006; Wenger, 2010) that take the form of formal and informal rules, guidelines and norms. These formal and informal rules, guidelines and norms shape and guide the actions of practitioners in myriad ways (Fenton & Langley, 2011; Reckwitz, 2002; Warde, 2005). The actions that entrepreneurs take either reproduce or alter these norms and understandings, which in turn influence the actions entrepreneurs may take in the future.

To explore the research questions of this paper, thirty Indigenous entrepreneurs across New South Wales and Victoria on the east coast of Australia were interviewed. Interviews are an appropriate method because they enabled me to understand the meaning which Indigenous entrepreneurs give to their life and work (McCracken, 1988) and are consistent with an Indigenous oral approach of inquiry (Kovach, 2010). Interviewees were theoretically sampled and sourced primarily from the Mandurah Hunter Indigenous Business Chamber and the Kinaway Indigenous Business Chamber membership lists. Interviews followed the McCracken (1988) style of the long interview, which provides a systemic way of developing, conducting and analyzing semi-structured in-person interviews that investigate the meaning interviewees' attribute to their lives. Interviews lasted on average one and a half hours. Approximately two pages of memos were written after each interview and interviews were professionally transcribed. I analyzed the data by first coding line by line. Following this, I combined codes into higher level theoretical categories. After that, in order to find how interviewees may be similar and different in their coding, I used the NVivo cluster analysis function to group interviewees in six clusters based on similarity of codes attributed to them. Next, I used the NVivo coding matrix function to create figures on codes and attributes for each cluster. Using these graphs, I identified codes and attributes which interviewees in each cluster held in common, created a summary table of the commonalities and used this table in order to explore similarities and differences between interviewees in each cluster. Finally, I grouped clusters into two cluster groups and explored attributes which each cluster group had in common.

To summarize my findings, I found several ways that entrepreneurial practices both enabled and constrained Indigenous identity, as well as ways Indigenous identity

both enabled and constrained entrepreneurial practices. Entrepreneurial practices enabled the construction and development of Indigenous identity through various mechanisms such as putting people in contact with more Indigenous people. They constrained the development of Indigenous identity through various mechanisms such as the sparking of concerns around legitimacy, prompted by criticisms from other Indigenous people. Indigenous identity enabled entrepreneurial practices through various mechanisms, such as access to Indigenous customers, but also constrained entrepreneurial practices through various mechanisms, such as the need to create explicit policies and procedures in order to do business with non-Indigenous clients wanting to 'buy Indigenous'. Overall, through narratives, interviewees discussed more frequently how entrepreneurial practices enabled Indigenous identity than how entrepreneurial practices constrained it. This suggests that, overall, entrepreneurship is a beneficial resource for entrepreneurs to develop Indigenous identities. Likewise, narratives focused much more frequently on how Indigenous identities enabled entrepreneurial practices than on how Indigenous identities constrained them. This suggests that Indigenous identity can play a positive role in the start-up and management of entrepreneurial ventures. How Indigenous identity and entrepreneurship connect, though, varies among Indigenous entrepreneurs. There do appear, however, to be two overall cycles that Indigenous entrepreneurs are engaged in that connect their Indigenous identities and entrepreneurial practices and that create different experiences around and benefits arising from entrepreneurship.

This paper makes several contributions to research, policy and practice. For research, first, this paper lends credence to both the perspective that entrepreneurship is not a vehicle of assimilation but can instead be a way to strengthen Indigenous identity and the perspective that Indigenous identity can positively influence the starting and management of entrepreneurial ventures. Second, this paper shows that Indigenous experiences surrounding entrepreneurship are heterogeneous and are organized around several key concepts and cycles. For policy, the two cycles identified which connect Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices could be used to design programs which take the heterogeneity of Indigenous entrepreneurs into account. For practice, this study could provide Indigenous entrepreneurs with an understanding of how they relate to other Indigenous entrepreneurs. It could also supply them with ideas about how they

can navigate their connections between their Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices.

This paper is organized as follows. First, I outline the concepts of Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices as well as the connections between these concepts. Next, I discuss my methodology, focusing on my insider-outsider status as a researcher as well as my methods of conducting and analyzing interviews. Following that, I present my research findings, focusing on concepts and connections between those concepts. Penultimately, I move beyond the findings to discuss the possibility of two cycles that connect Indigenous identity to entrepreneurial practices. Finally, I conclude by discussing implications for research, policy and practice.

## **3.2. Literature Review**

### **3.2.1. Indigenous Identity**

Identity refers to “the set of meanings that define who one is” (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 1). These meanings are created through several processes including: conscious inward-facing reflection (Clark et al., 2009) focusing on the questions ‘who am I’ and ‘how should I act’ (Alvesson, Ashcraft, & Thomas, 2008) as well as ‘who am I not’ and ‘how should I not act?’ (Burke & Stets, 2009; Jones, Latham, & Betta, 2008); interactions with others, which can either directly touch on these questions or which do not directly touch on these questions but which have implications for how individuals understand themselves or are seen by others; individuals and groups one associates with (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010); appearance such as hair and clothing style and physical surroundings such as office décor (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Weaver, 2001). Each of these processes, or combinations of these and other processes, can affect the development, maintenance or alteration of identities (T. Watson, 2009b).

Of the several dominant theories of identity employed in organizational and entrepreneurship research, such as social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; R. Brown, 2000, 2000; Burke & Stets, 2009; Deaux, 1993; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995), identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2009; Hogg et al.,

1995) and relational identity (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007), this paper adopts a narrative perspective on identity for several reasons. First, for many Indigenous peoples, stories comprise an important aspect of how individual and collective identities are constructed or maintained. For instance, the book *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview* by Richard Atleo eloquently shows the fundamental role that origin stories, such as how Raven brought light to his people, play in shaping Nuu-chah-nulth identity and community life (2005). In addition, when introducing oneself, many Indigenous people will recount a narrative of their lineage, family connections and crests as well as offering other stories focusing on colonization or time on the land. These shape their identities for themselves and others. Focusing on narratives in this study will help to ensure that these critical elements to both the development of an Indigenous identity and the communication of that identity are included at its core. Second, a narrative approach to identity meshes well with the narrative data which interviews create. Third, thinking of identities as being constructed through narratives can help to avoid framing individuals as members of fixed and rigid identity categories, which does not do justice to the fragmented, overlapping and evolving nature of identities<sup>4</sup> (Browne & Misra, 2003; Somers, 1994; Weaver, 2001; Williams, 1991).

From a narrative identity perspective, identities are brought into being through narratives<sup>5</sup> and are often context-dependent and include evolving understandings of oneself or others created through interaction (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004). This perspective highlights the importance of “the internalized and evolving story [or stories] that results from a person’s selective appropriation of past, present and future” events that significantly shape how people view themselves as well as how others view them (McAdams, 1999, p. 486). For some, “identities exist only as narratives (Currie 1998,

<sup>4</sup> This line of thinking has been developed recently in research termed ‘intersectionality’, which posits that people should not be reduced in research to only one identity, such as a gender or race, and that combinations of identities create social meanings that are different than the sum of each separate identity (Areheart, 2006; Browne & Misra, 2003). For instance, being Indigenous and being a woman goes beyond being the sum of a woman and being Indigenous and comes with its own particular stereotypes, such as being a victim, at least in some contexts.

<sup>5</sup> To be clear, narratives are sequences of events, often with beginnings, middles and endings (Alvesson, 2010), that leverage culturally available discursive resources (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004) in order to create meaning for a particular audience (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004).

17), and life is an enacted narrative (MacIntyre 1981) which is plotted over time (Chappell et al. 2003). Narratives that touch on identity can be relatively static and enduring or can be context-dependent and fleeting (Alvesson et al., 2008; Somers, 1994; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003).

The idea of there being an Indigenous identity is a relatively recent development shaped by colonialism.<sup>6</sup> Before contact with Europeans, Indigenous peoples understood themselves primarily as members of a Nation, community or family (Palmater, 2011; Weaver, 2001). Identities formed around Nation, community and family ties, teachings and practices created specific and visceral understandings of who one is and is not as well as how they should act and not act in the world according to their Nation or community norms (R. Atleo, 2005, 2011; Borrows, 2010b). These identities were disrupted as colonial entities waged war on the identities, cultures and ways of life of Indigenous peoples by stripping them of their land and rights and outlawing important Indigenous practices (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; C. G. Atleo, 2010). At the same time, a new, broader and more ambiguous category, 'Indigenous', was being created by colonizers for purposes of identifying those who were colonized (Alfred, 2005; Peroff, 1997). Settlers were also applying other terms to Indigenous peoples such as Aboriginal, Native American, Indian and Aborigine (Weaver, 2001). Each term has different meanings that change over time (Weaver, 2001).

The specific local and general global aspects of Indigenous identity will interact in complex ways. For many Indigenous people, their more locally-rooted aspect of Indigenous identity based on their Nation or community often have more importance and influence in their life than the abstract and global-level identity of being Indigenous. This is because these local affiliations comprise the core values, beliefs, norms and institutions critical to living in an Indigenous way (Alfred, 2005). At the same time, many people do not have local connections to local affiliations based on colonial governments. For instance, because of the Stolen Generations where Indigenous peoples' children were forcibly removed from their families, many Indigenous Australians either do not

<sup>6</sup> Here colonialism refers to the way that dominant groups set themselves up as the core reference point, which limits the possibility of other ways of being and which enables the dominant group to force their perspectives onto other peoples (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005).

know their lineage or family connections at all or know about aspects but are not connected to them in any meaningful way (Read, 2009). This means that for many Indigenous people, a rootless pan-Indigenous identity which does not refer to any specific Nation, community or land base remains their only option for identification. People with strong ties to their lineage and ancestral communities will also identify with more regional or global terms such as Indigenous or Aboriginal either in order to unite themselves with the cause of other Indigenous peoples (Weaver, 2001) or because non-Indigenous peoples with whom they interact would not be able to understand more local aspects of identity, such as what being Wonnarua means.

For many Indigenous people, resurrecting or developing aspects of their Indigenous identity is a priority (Foley & Maynard, 2001). To have a well-developed Indigenous identity is to be whole and complete (Alfred, 2005). To not have a well-developed Indigenous identity signals not having the opportunity to fully be who one is (Alfred, 2005). Although many aspects of Indigenous identity and contact were lost during colonialism, many aspects of culture and identity still remain due to the resistance of Indigenous peoples (Borrows, 2010b). Indigenous peoples all over the world are attempting to build on the aspects of their culture and identities that survive and to revive those aspects that have been lost. This does not mean, however, that Indigenous identities will not change over time (Borrows, 2010b). Indigenous identities have and do change to resist or mesh with contemporary times and circumstances as people navigate the interplay between understandings they and others have about themselves.

In narratives about their identities, Indigenous people may touch on several important factors. Listed in no particular order, these important factors include the following: ancestry, which includes ancestors as well as hereditary community involvement and associations; current involvement in ancestral or non-ancestral communities and culture (Palmater, 2011; Weaver, 2001); experiences of past and current forms of colonialism (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; LeRat & Ungar, 2005) including the Stolen Generation policies (Read, 2009); physical features such as colour of skin, eyes and hair (Krouse, 1999); concentration of Indigenous blood (Krouse, 1999; Peroff, 1997); specific lands and places (Basso, 1996; Borrows, 2010b); connections to spiritual beings or energy (R. Atleo, 2005; Borrows, 2010b; Clutesi, 1969); contentious identity

confrontations with other Indigenous peoples (Weaver, 2001); being urban or modern (Gallagher & Lawrence, 2012); being poor or of a lower social class, being a survivor, working hard, striving to be self-sufficient and taking advantage of opportunities (LeRat & Ungar, 2005) and being proud to be Indigenous (Alfred, 2005). In addition, Indigenous people may place great emphasis on important relationships in developing their identities, as many Indigenous people believe both that “relationships do not merely shape reality, they are reality” and that “nothing could be without being in relationship” (Wilson, 2008, pp. 7, 77).

### **3.2.2. Entrepreneurial Practices**

Practices are the structure of human interaction (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). From a practice perspective, virtually everything we do is structured within one or more sets of practices, including linguistic practices or practices surrounding a profession (Schatzki, 2001). Practices are composed of shared rules and understandings as well as actions (Schatzki, 2001). Shared rules and understandings make it possible for us to think and share ideas as they provide commonalities around meaning of actions, language and events. They also stipulate what is acceptable or deviant behaviour within that practice. Actions are the mediums through which practices are enacted which give substance to shared norms and understandings. In this way, practices both enable and constrain practitioners (Barnes, 2001). On the one hand, “patterns of bodily behaviour...[and] certain routinized ways of understanding, knowing and desiring” (Reckwitz, 2002, pp. 249–250) provide the possibility of ordered social life (Handley, Sturdy, Fincham, & Clark, 2006). On the other hand, these institutionalized patterns constrain practitioners by creating boundaries around what are acceptable or credible ways of thinking, talking and acting. These boundaries could coincide with sanctions on deviant behaviour. Having said all of this, the rules and standards of practices are open for different interpretations and in certain circumstances individuals can choose whether to adhere to, challenge or transform an aspect of a practice (Barnes, 2001).

Practices are a product of communities or networks (Tagliaventi & Mattarelli, 2006). In order for shared meanings to be developed there need to be groups of people with “ways of doing and approaching things that are shared to some significant extent

among members” through avenues such as “tools, documents, routines, vocabulary and symbols that in some way carry the accumulated knowledge of the community” (M. K. Smith, 2009). Interaction is also needed in order to govern the standards of a practice through rewards or sanctions. Practices can develop on different scales, for instance at an international level such as a language group, or within a more localized and regional network (J. S. Brown & Duguid, 2001). The level discussed in the literature which best fits with the Australian Indigenous entrepreneur community is networks of practice. In networks of practice, practitioners are typically not located close to one another and do not interact on a regular basis. However, they do share common actions as well as understandings and rules (J. S. Brown & Duguid, 2001; Wasko & Faraj, 2005). This fits well with the east-coast Australian entrepreneur network where members are geographically dispersed yet have some understandings and actions which are common to them, such as that an Indigenous entrepreneur may have to deal with “lateral violence”<sup>7</sup> (Foley, 2005). The commonalities are expressed and shared through different mediums and venues such as Indigenous chambers of commerce, awards ceremonies, conferences and magazines. Participation in networks of practice may involve engagement for a long period of time as an “insider” or “regular” or engagement for a short period of time as a “tourist” (Warde, 2005, p. 138). Of course, each individual will be a “stranger” to many communities and networks of practice (Warde, 2005, p. 138).

Entrepreneurial practices are shared understandings and actions that constitute what it means to be an entrepreneur. There are two overall perspectives in the literature on what the practice of entrepreneurship entails. The first is that entrepreneurship involves shared understandings and actions around the search, identification and exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). The second is an effectual approach where entrepreneurs leverage who they are, what they know and who they know in order to create entrepreneurial opportunities into existence (Sarasvathy, 2001). Both perspectives are valid ways of understanding entrepreneurs (Alvarez & Barney, 2007). Some entrepreneurs seek specific entrepreneurial opportunities through search and exploit through secrecy and competition. In contrast,

<sup>7</sup> Lateral violence is fighting within oppressed groups, which can involve criticisms about those who have reached some level of success (Griffin, 2004).

others create opportunities using what is at hand to collaboratively develop opportunities. Entrepreneurs may use a blend of perspectives or shift their perspective based on circumstances unique to their lives or to a specific opportunity. Also, entrepreneurs will often shift away from an effectual approach to a more systematic way of conducting business as their companies grow and demand more rules and processes (Sarasvathy, 2001). Likely, there are practices that are shared between these different perspectives, revolving around creating a product or service, sales and marketing or bookkeeping and financial analysis and planning.

Both perspectives also value divergence away from particular norms and understandings of an industry in order to create innovative products, services and business models. However, these and other practices will likely be vague with significant variation between entrepreneurs. More specific entrepreneurial practices may develop around industries, professions or geographies, such as being a green-tech entrepreneur in downtown Melbourne.

### **3.2.3. Connections between Practices and Identity**

In the previous sections I have utilized existing literature to explain and examine the two primary concepts in this paper: Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. In this and the two subsequent sections I will examine how Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices may converge. To do so systematically, I will examine the connections between practices and identity in this section. I will also investigate the connections between entrepreneurial practices and identity. In the following section, I will explore the connections between entrepreneurial practices and indigenous identity. Finally, I will examine the connections between entrepreneurial practices and Indigenous identity.

Participation in practices can enable or constrain the way individuals understand themselves as well as how others understand them. Practices lead to the creation of identity (J. S. Brown & Duguid, 2001). When individuals start to participate in a practice, they learn new information, develop new relationships and subscribe to new routines (Handley et al., 2006). This socialization process affects how individuals understand

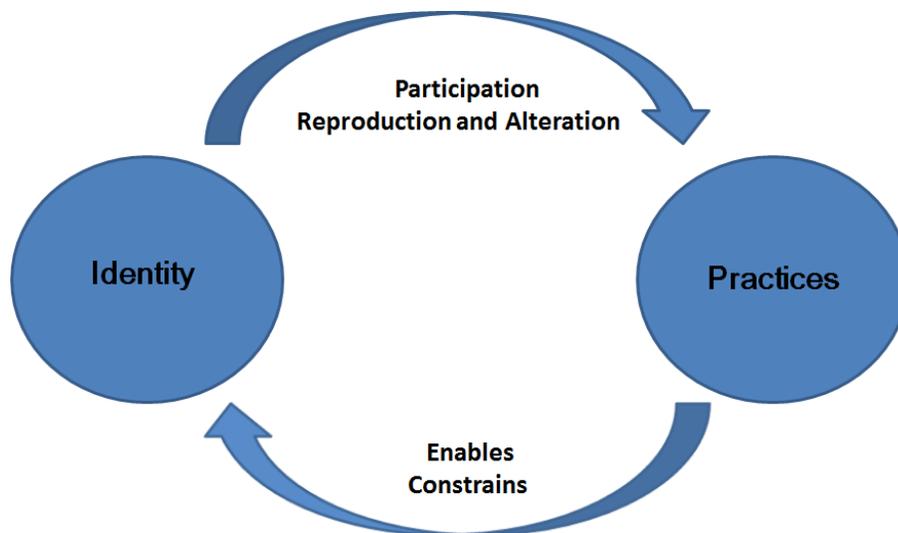
themselves (Wenger, 2000) since “learning is not simply about developing one’s knowledge...it also involves a process of understanding who we are and in which communities of practice we belong and are accepted” (Handley et al., 2006, p. 644). In addition, participation in a practice can also provide new discursive material upon which to create or maintain narratives that touch on identity. The information, skills and relationships developed by participating in a practice also constrain identity construction and maintenance. Associated with many practices are requirements for an individual to claim participation, including familiarity and compliance with the norms of a practice (Nielsen & Lassen, 2012; Wenger, 2010). Individuals are constrained to conforming to, or at the very least reacting to, these requirements in order to have an identity they construct accepted by other participants of a practice (J. S. Brown & Duguid, 2001).

Identity influences participation within practices. There are some practices in which individuals’ choices for participation are non-existent – for example, if one gets sent to prison. However, there are many practices that require choice for participation. Often, individuals choose to engage in practices that develop or fit with their existing identities, as many people strive to have existing identities confirmed and supported by others around them (Burke & Stets, 2009; Stets & Burke, 2000). Of course, some individuals will engage in new practices that do not fit their existing identities, but instances such as these are likely rare. Individuals will also “embrace or reject opportunities to participate more fully in their community of practice, depending on the ‘fit’ or resonance of those opportunities with their current senses of self” (Handley et al., 2006). For some individuals, a practice may support one or more existing identities, which may lead individuals may to become more engaged and committed to a practice (Warde, 2005). For other individuals, a practice may not support existing identities, which may lead them to stay on the periphery of, or disengage entirely from, a practice (Warde, 2005).

Identity affects the reproduction and alteration of practices. Actions individuals take partially constitute practices (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Sarason, Dean, & Dillard, 2006) and most actions individuals take generally reproduce practices (Bowman, 2007; Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Sarason et al., 2006), as practices involve taken-for-granted ways of thinking, feeling and acting that become unconsciously reproduced

through routines and other processes (Reckwitz, 2002). This being said, individuals can also alter practices (Wenger, 2000). As Handley (2006, p. 645) recounts, “Ibarra (1999) for example, has shown how individuals develop practices by observing others, imitating them, and then adapting and developing their own particular practices in ways which match not only the wider community’s norms, but also their own individual sense of integrity and self”. Identity can thus lead to alteration of a practice to fit with individuals’ identities. In this way the “work of identity constantly reshapes boundaries and reweaves the social fabric” of practices (Wenger, 2000, p. 242).

**Figure 3.1. Key Connections between Identity and Practice**



As evidenced in *Figure 3.1*, there may be some circular iterative connections between identity and practices. For instance, an identity could lead to the participation in a practice that could provide resources to construct or maintain this identity. This identity could be further developed and strengthened, which could both motivate a deeper connection in the practice and provide even more resources for developing that identity. This could create a virtuous iterative cycle. Alternatively, engagement in a practice could constrain how an individual constructs, maintains or alters an identity, which could lead to less participation in a practice or negative connections between practices. This could create a vicious cycle with identity in which engagement in practices is reduced and identity is eroded.

### **3.2.4. Connections between Entrepreneurial Practices and Identity**

Identity is an increasingly researched aspect of entrepreneurship (Phillips, Tracey, & Karra, 2013). Traditionally, the study of entrepreneurship has been dominated by economic and performance-based approaches. However, non-economic approaches, such as sociologically-based conceptions of identity, are rising as important ways to explore both the experience and the non-economic outcomes of entrepreneurship (Nielsen & Lassen, 2012). In recent years identity has been gaining popularity as more credence has been given to two facts: entrepreneurship requires the development of an entrepreneurial identity and entrepreneurship affects non-entrepreneurial identities, which can in turn have profound impacts on entrepreneurs' lives (Bruni, Gherardi, & Poggio, 2004). Of studies targeting identity and entrepreneurship, most research has focused on how involvement in entrepreneurship impacts the construction and maintenance of identities such as ethnic, gender, sexual and religious identities (Phillips et al., 2013). A smaller subset of research has investigated how non-entrepreneurial identities impact entrepreneurial practices (Phillips et al., 2013).

The most common identity category examined in the entrepreneurship literature is ethnic identity. In the context of entrepreneurship, ethnic identity refers to peoples who are of a minority population, who may or may not be immigrants, who share common socio-cultural traditions and experiences and who interact with each other on a regular basis (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Chaganti & Greene, 2002; Greene, Carter, & Reynolds, 2003). Typically, scholars focusing on ethnic identity do not consider Indigenous people within this broad category. Literature on ethnicity and entrepreneurship typically focuses on the effects that ethnicities have on entrepreneurial practices. These effects include the motivation to become an entrepreneur, aspects of ethnic identity that enable entrepreneurial practices and aspects of ethnic identity that constrain entrepreneurial practices. I will now discuss each of these effects in turn.

**Table 3.1. Motivation to Become an Entrepreneur**

| Relevant Finding  | Sources  |
|---|--|
| Making a living: few employment opportunities due to racism within organizations or a lack of knowledge, skills or language proficiency | Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Bogan & Darity Jr., 2008; Chan, 1997; Harvey, 2005; Pécoud, 2004; Phillips et al., 2013; Volery, 2007 |
| Upholding culture: traditional values and practices supporting entrepreneurship   | Volery, 2007   |
| Giving back: Contributing to ethnic community   | Chaganti & Greene, 2002; Volery, 2007; Zhou, 2004  |

Research has identified several ways in which ethnic identity may affect an individual's decision to become an entrepreneur. These are summarized in *Table 3.1*. First, an ethnic identity may lead to limited opportunities in the labour market, which may drive individuals to open a business in order to make a living (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Bogan & Darity Jr., 2008; Chaganti & Greene, 2002; Essers & Benschop, 2009; Pécoud, 2004; Volery, 2007; Zhou, 2004). Employment opportunities may be limited because of racism toward ethnic peoples (Bogan & Darity Jr., 2008; Chan, 1997; Harvey, 2005; Pécoud, 2004; Phillips et al., 2013) and the aspiring applicant's lack of knowledge, experience, skills (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Pécoud, 2004; Volery, 2007; Zhou, 2004) and language proficiency (Chan, 1997; Volery, 2007). Second, ethnic cultural values and traditions associated with an ethnic identity may promote or inhibit an individual from being an entrepreneur (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Volery, 2007). For instance, typically Chinese and Korean cultures are viewed by researchers as being supportive of entrepreneurship, whereas African American cultures are conventionally viewed as being unsupportive of entrepreneurship (Bogan & Darity Jr., 2008). Third, an ethnic identity may lead an individual to become an entrepreneur in order to assist with the economic mobility of their ethnic community or to give back to their ethnic community through employment creation, mentorship or role modeling (Chaganti & Greene, 2002; Volery, 2007; Zhou, 2004).

**Table 3.2. Effects of Ethnic Identities on Entrepreneurial Practices**

| Relevant Finding  | Sources  |
|---|--|
| Opportunities: provide appropriate goods and services to ethnic customers                           | Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Chaganti & Greene, 2002; Essers & Benschop, 2009; Harvey, 2005; Volery, 2007  |
| Authenticity: deemed appropriate to provide ethnic goods and services by co-ethnics and non-ethnics | Chan, 1997; Harvey, 2005   |
| Customers: build relations based on a shared identity   | Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Bogan & Darity Jr., 2008; Essers & Benschop, 2009; Phillips et al., 2013      |
| Social networks: help fill a wide range of institutional voids, most notably financing.             | Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Chan, 1997; Harvey, 2005; Heberer, 2005b; Phillips et al., 2013; Volery, 2007 |
| Hiring practices: family and co-ethnics, sometimes at low cost                                      | Pécoud, 2004; Phillips et al., 2013  |
| Location: enables access to ethnic customers and close proximity to ethnic resources                | Chan, 1997; Pécoud, 2004   |
| Store aesthetic: display ethnic identity that is perceived as authentic by customers                | Harvey, 2005; Pécoud, 2004; Zhou, 2004   |
| Industry: low barriers to entry, service and restaurant industry and low profits                    | Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Bates, Jackson, & Johnson, 2007; Volery, 2007                                 |
| Customers: solely ethnic market focus limits growth   | Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Chaganti & Greene, 2002   |
| Capital: less than non-ethnics and harder to obtain from traditional institutions                   | Bogan & Darity Jr., 2008; Harvey, 2005; Volery, 2007   |
| Location: in ethnic, usually poor areas, less access to non-ethnic and wealthy customers            | Pécoud, 2004   |
| Store aesthetics: dissuades non-ethnic customers  | Pécoud, 2004; Zhou, 2004   |
| Social networks: provide few ties to other non-financial resources such as information              | Chaganti & Greene, 2002; Harvey, 2005; Volery, 2007  |

Research on ethnic identity and entrepreneurship highlights several entrepreneurial practices for individuals who have decided to become entrepreneurs that may be enabled by ethnic identity. These are summarized in *Table 3.2*. First, ethnic identity may enable the discovery of entrepreneurial opportunities associated with ethnic customers based on intimate knowledge of ethnic customers' needs and wants (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Chaganti & Greene, 2002; Essers & Benschop, 2009; Harvey, 2005; Volery, 2007). Second, ethnic identity can enable entrepreneurs to provide an ethnic product or service in a way deemed 'authentic' by co-ethnics, based on their ethnic

status (Chan, 1997; Harvey, 2005). Third, ethnic identity enables relations to be built with ethnic customers, based on a shared identity that can facilitate business interactions. Fourth, ethnic social networks can help to fill institutional voids with which entrepreneurs may have to deal (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Chan, 1997; Phillips et al., 2013; Volery, 2007). Most notably, ethnic social networks help entrepreneurs to gain financing from co-ethnics when financing cannot be accrued from banking and finance institutions (Harvey, 2005; Heberer, 2005a; Pécoud, 2004; Volery, 2007). Fifth, ethnic identity can enable entrepreneurs to use their family members as low cost or free staff in their business (Pécoud, 2004; Phillips et al., 2013). Sixth, ethnic identity can influence entrepreneurs to locate their business in a certain neighbourhood, which enables access to ethnic customers and close proximity to ethnic resources (Chan, 1997; Pécoud, 2004). Finally, ethnic identity can enable entrepreneurs to create an appealing store front and interior that matches the ethnic nature of the business (Harvey, 2005; Pécoud, 2004; Zhou, 2004).

Research also highlights several entrepreneurial practices that may be constrained by ethnic identity. First, ethnic identity can constrain industry choice that may limit ethnic entrepreneurs to industries that have low barriers to entry and low profits, such as the corner store and restaurant industries (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Bates et al., 2007; Volery, 2007). Second, ethnic identity may constrain customers to only those with ethnic identities, which can limit business growth (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Chaganti & Greene, 2002). Third, ethnic identity can constrain capital due to lack of family wealth as well as an inability to secure from traditional sources such as banks controlled by non-ethnics (Bogan & Darity Jr., 2008; Harvey, 2005; Volery, 2007). Fourth, ethnic identity may constrain the location that entrepreneurs choose or have access to, which often results in setting up a business in an ethnic and usually socio-economically disadvantaged area. This in turn restricts access to non-ethnic and wealthy customers (Pécoud, 2004). Fifth, ethnic identity may lead to an ethnic-oriented store aesthetic, which can dissuade non-ethnic customers (Pécoud, 2004; Zhou, 2004). Finally, ethnic social networks provide few ties to non-ethnic resources such as information and capital (Chaganti & Greene, 2002; Harvey, 2005; Volery, 2007). These constraining factors typically lead ethnic businesses to lower profits, employment and growth than non-ethnic businesses (Bates et al., 2007; Volery, 2007).

**Table 3.3. Effects of Entrepreneurial Practices on Ethnic Identities**

| Relevant Finding   | Sources   |
|--|---|
| Culture: survival and development  | Essers & Benschop, 2009;<br>Heberer, 2005a              |
| Culture: erosion due to increased consumerist lifestyle  | Heberer, 2005a  |
| Income: economic advancement, which can have positive identity implications  | Bogan & Darity Jr., 2008;<br>Heberer, 2005a; Zhou, 2004 |
| Time: spend time with ethnic family members or balance work and family responsibilities  | Harvey, 2005; Volery, 2007                              |
| Social capital: build communities by providing benefits for co-ethnic individuals including role models, employment, economic independence, training and empowerment | Heberer, 2005a; Phillips et al.,<br>2013; Zhou, 2004    |

Substantially less research examines how entrepreneurial practices affect ethnic identities. Of the research which does focus on this side of the equation, several themes come to the forefront, which are summarized in *Table 3.3*. First, entrepreneurship enables cultural survival and development through an individual having the autonomy to display and develop an ethnic identity in business (Essers & Benschop, 2009; Heberer, 2005a). Second, entrepreneurship can lead to economic advancement, which can have positive identity implications (Bogan & Darity Jr., 2008; Heberer, 2005a; Zhou, 2004). Third, entrepreneurial practices can enable spending time with ethnic family members and balancing work and ethnic family responsibilities (Harvey, 2005; Volery, 2007). Finally, entrepreneurial practices can generate ethnic social capital by providing benefits for co-ethnic individuals including employment, economic independence, training and role modeling (Heberer, 2005a; Phillips et al., 2013; Zhou, 2004). Although entrepreneurial practices can have these and other benefits, entrepreneurial practices can also lead to the erosion of ethnic identity and culture due to the increased adoption of a consumerist lifestyle (Heberer, 2005a).

Across the study of several different kinds of identity in entrepreneurship research, including ethnic identity, identity work is the most frequent theoretical lens employed by researchers. Identity work involves the on-going struggles that individuals encounter and that affect their creation of a coherent and meaningful conception of who they are (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Identity work can involve maintenance or alterations to inward-facing reflection, talk, appearance, dress and physical

surroundings. The most popular aspect of identity work in entrepreneurship literature is talk. Of entrepreneurship studies that focus on talk, most focus on narratives (see Down & Reveley, 2009; Gallagher & Lawrence, 2012; Harmeling, 2011; Jones et al., 2008; Larson & Pearson, 2012; Phillips et al., 2013; Snyder, 2004; T. Watson, 2009a). A narrative identity work perspective highlights how new identities are constructed and how existing identities are maintained or transformed through crafting and sharing narratives (Down & Reveley, 2009; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; T. Watson, 2008, 2009b).

Narrative identity work strategies used by entrepreneurs include the following: boundary work (Bruni et al., 2004; Essers & Benschop, 2009); dividing, undividing and suppressing (Jones et al., 2008); refuting, revising, interpreting and projecting (Gallagher & Lawrence, 2012); and integrating or compartmentalizing identities (Shepherd & Haynie, 2009). Although diverse terms are used in different studies, I summarize these disparate strategies into several core strategies: adopting part of or an entire identity (embracing); rejecting part of or an entire identity (distancing); altering or transforming an identity (revising); creating boundaries between two or more identities (compartmentalization) or creating overlap between two or more identities (integration).

### **3.2.5. Connections between Entrepreneurial Practices and Indigenous Identity**

Scholars have expressed several concerns about the impact engaging in entrepreneurial practices may have on Indigenous identities. First, entrepreneurship is a capitalist activity which could promote individualism and a hunger for profit and which will lead to the erosion of collectivist-oriented Indigenous identities (Alfred, 2005; C. J. Atleo, 2008; C. Stiles, 2004; Newhouse, 2001). This could occur through specific avenues such as not engaging in Indigenous-oriented practices or the redistribution of wealth, both of which can erode relationships between Indigenous entrepreneurs and other Indigenous people and damage Indigenous entrepreneurs' Indigenous identities (Foley, 2004; Gibson, 2010; Shoebridge et al., 2012). Second, involvement in entrepreneurial ventures may exacerbate Indigenous people feeling "stuck in the middle", unable to fully participate in Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. This could create confusion and unease around their Indigenous identity (Shoebridge et al., 2012). This experience

of fitting in nowhere may occur because Indigenous entrepreneurs may not be accepted by conventional business communities on account of racism; at the same time, they may not be fully accepted into Indigenous communities because their modern economic activity may be viewed as antithetical to Indigenous identity and culture. This can lead people to feel as though they are caught between two cultures.

These two concerns are likely based on researchers viewing entrepreneurship through a discovery and exploitation lens in which entrepreneurship depends on secrecy, competition and a firm focus on profits. If, however, entrepreneurship is viewed as an iterative test conducted with customers and community involvement (Blank, 2013), entrepreneurship might not seem as alien to Indigenous cultures and identity. Nevertheless, the fear is that involvement in the entrepreneurial practice could erode Indigenous identity. If entrepreneurial practices constrained Indigenous identity, this could create a vicious cycle where entrepreneurial practices erode Indigenous identity, which creates decreased participation in entrepreneurial practices and so on.

Other scholars, however, argue for several reasons that entrepreneurship can play a vital and positive role in the construction of Indigenous identities. First, entrepreneurship may not be a foreign concept to Indigenous peoples. Some Indigenous people have always acted entrepreneurially (Foley, 2010; Galbraith et al., 2006; Malkin et al., 2004; Miller, 2008, 2012; Shoebridge et al., 2012), which means that engaging in entrepreneurship could be continuing or resurfacing one important aspect of a historical Indigenous identity. Second, running a business can also bring greater autonomy, self-sufficiency and freedom than other employment options (Gallagher & Selman, 2015; Rindova et al., 2009). Due to colonization, many Indigenous peoples have had their rights to land and resources restricted and their autonomy limited (LeRat & Ungar, 2005). Entrepreneurship may provide a way for Indigenous people to regain agency over their lives, which are fundamental aspects of Indigenous identity (Borrows, 2010b). Third, some Indigenous entrepreneurs run their business in order to strengthen an aspect of Indigenous culture and identity, such as an artist or an Indigenous governance consultant. Being engaged in work to bolster Indigenous culture and identity could help to strengthen how Indigenous entrepreneurs understand themselves as an Indigenous person. Relatedly, profits generated from entrepreneurial ventures could be donated to

Indigenous cultural events or ceremonies (Helin, 2006; Miller, 2012), which could have similar positive impacts on Indigenous identities. If entrepreneurial practices enabled Indigenous identity, this might create a virtuous cycle where engagement in entrepreneurial practices enhances Indigenous identity, which may in turn create further participation in entrepreneurial practices.

This literature review has highlighted the positive and negative influences which entrepreneurial practices have on Indigenous identity. Does entrepreneurship influence Indigenous identity and if so in what ways? This question will stand as the first research question for this study (RQ1).

Indigenous identity may influence entrepreneurial practices in several ways. First, Indigenous identity may shape motivations to be entrepreneurs including (Shoebridge et al., 2012, p. 5):

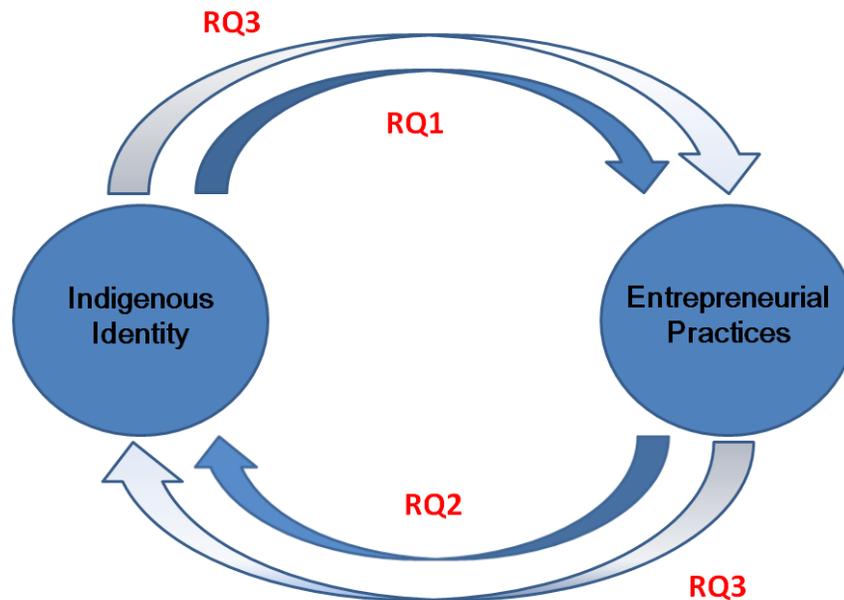
the desire to provide employment opportunities for other indigenous Australians and improved livelihoods and future prospects for family (Dana, 1996; Foley, 2004). Aiding community through providing an otherwise unavailable product or service (Fuller et al., 2005); being a source of pride or role model for youth (Foley, 2004); increasing pride in aboriginal culture (Flamsteed and Golding, 2005); dispelling myths and stereotypes (Foley, 2004; Dana, 1996; Mapunda, 2001) and the empowerment and self-determination of indigenous people (Dana, 1996; Mapunda, 2001; Byrnes, 1988) are also key motivators.

Conditions associated with being Indigenous may provide several constraints to starting and running a business, including low levels of education, a lack of business experience, scant individual or familial capital, a dependency mindset and a lack of community support (Cornell et al., 2007; Miller, 2008; Shoebridge et al., 2012). Indigenous identity may also facilitate entrepreneurship by providing cultural knowledge and heuristics, ethnical frameworks, opportunities for mentorship, government assistance and community support (Shoebridge et al., 2012). These factors may make aspects of Indigenous entrepreneurship distinct from non-Indigenous entrepreneurship. Other factors that may make Indigenous entrepreneurship distinct from non-Indigenous entrepreneurship include: placing little focus on profits, including extended family as important stakeholders; using cultural principles as guiding mechanisms in making decisions (Foley, 2005); placing emphasis on cultural sensitivity and highlighting the

need for autonomy due to the large numbers of Indigenous stakeholders that can claim interest in a business (Hindle & Lansdowne, 2005). Although important contributions to our understanding of Indigenous entrepreneurship, each of the above studies or writings do not explore in sufficient depth how Indigenous identity may influence entrepreneurial practices as how Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices is only an ancillary inquiry subordinate to their larger questions, such as Shoebridge's (2012) investigation into the success factors of Indigenous entrepreneurship. This lack of depth means that there exists only a shallow and relatively vague understanding of how Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices. Studies need to be conducted that investigate specific ways in which Indigenous identity shapes both actions surrounding entrepreneurship as well as shared understandings and norms around these actions. This line of inquiry will form the second research of this paper: How do entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity (RQ2)?

The literature review on the connections between practices and identity in general revealed that there may be self-reinforcing iterative cycles that involved Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. These cycles could be largely virtuous, which would enable people to strengthen their involvement in a practice as well as their identity. Alternatively, cycles could be largely damaging and lead to less involvement in a practice as well as the erosion of an identity. For Indigenous entrepreneurs, the question must be asked: Are there connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices that oscillate erratically, or are there important patterns where a change in practice results in a change in identity that in turn results in a change of practices, etc., where momentum builds into a virtuous or vicious circle (RQ3)? This study will explore these three research questions which are diagrammatically represented in *Figure 3.2*.

**Figure 3.2. Research Questions**



### **3.3. Methods**

Because the research questions in this paper ask not just if the constructs connect but also *how* they connect, identifying mechanisms is perhaps the best way to provide a parsimonious answer as to how constructs connect. In social science research, mechanisms typically explain rather than merely describe the connections between concepts (P. J. J. Anderson et al., 2006; Hedström & Swedberg, 1998). Mechanisms provide one or a set of abstract explanations about the “connections among phenomena, a story about why these acts, events, structures and thoughts occur” (P. J. J. Anderson et al., 2006, p. 104). The validity of mechanisms does not only lie in how accurately they describe the connections between concepts but also in how useful they are for answering a study’s research questions (Hedström & Swedberg, 1998). The identification of mechanisms can raise additional research questions, such as for whom or under what conditions do the mechanisms not apply. The raising of additional questions could create an untenably expansive study (P. J. J. Anderson et al., 2006). An appropriate place to cease analysis is when the mechanisms identified move one step beyond what is known in existing literature (P. J. J. Anderson et al., 2006).

Interviews are appropriate for identifying mechanisms and exploring my research questions for several reasons. First, interviews can enable an in-depth understanding of how an individual portrays and gives meaning to their experiences and the world around them (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2005; McCracken, 1988). Second, studies in entrepreneurship often use interviews to explore how individuals construct identities (Cohen & Musson, 2000; Essers & Benschop, 2009; Lewis, 2013; Nadin, 2007; Nielsen & Lassen, 2012; Orser, Elliott, & Leck, 2011; Thomas & Linstead, 2002), as interviews create an interaction where participants construct their identities through narrative that can then be analyzed (Clark et al., 2009; Essers & Benschop, 2009). Third, interviews are appropriate for exploring the practices that entrepreneurs engage in as well as the meaning they give to these practices (Fenton & Langley, 2011). Observations would also have been useful for understanding entrepreneurial practices (Miettinen, Samra-Fredericks, & Yanow, 2009), but I chose not to conduct observations because of the busy schedules of most Indigenous entrepreneurs as well as budgetary limitations for field work<sup>8</sup>. Fourth, interviews are consistent with Indigenous traditions of oral inquiry (Kovach, 2010). Fifth, and perhaps most importantly, in analyzing interviewees' narratives about how their Indigenous identities and entrepreneurial practices connect, mechanisms may be able to be identified which explain how Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices connect in a theoretical way.

Although they are a useful method of inquiry, interviews do have several drawbacks for this study. First, they are not "pipelines" for revealing peoples' true experiences, thoughts or feelings that can be revealed through objective procedures and coding (Alvesson, 2003a, p. 28). Instead, interviews are co-constructed by the interviewer and the interviewee and reflect interviewees' on-going and changing interpretations of their experiences (Jones et al., 2008; C. Watson, 2006). Second, interviewees are likely biased in terms of each research question due to their involvement in the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice. This means that some topics will be discussed more or less frequently as well as narrated in a specific way. For instance, interviewees would be unlikely to say, 'I love being an entrepreneur even

<sup>8</sup> I did, however, conduct a focus group. Data from this focus group was not included in this paper because the interviews generated rich and diverse data. Moreover, excluding focus group data reduced the complexity of the study.

though it undermines my identity as an Indigenous person'. The potential influences that the practice has on Indigenous entrepreneurs, as well as how they attempt to transform the practice, will be examined in this study.

Interviewees of this study lived in New South Wales and Victoria in urban areas with greater than twenty thousand residents and were sourced primarily from the Mandurah Indigenous Chamber of Commerce in Newcastle, New South Wales and the Kinaway Indigenous Chamber of Commerce in Melbourne, Victoria. Interviewees were theoretically selected on several categories that the author thought might affect the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practice such as gender, age, industry which they operate in, ethnicity of clients and whether they employed Indigenous people or not. Common in Indigenous research are discussions around who has an authentic Indigenous voice to speak on behalf of Indigenous peoples (Marker, 2003; L. T. Smith, 1999). Non-Indigenous researchers, blinded by nostalgic desires, often only want to involve what they consider 'traditional' Indigenous people as credible voices for Indigenous experiences (L. T. Smith, 1999). To avoid this trap, I interviewed anyone who identified as Indigenous.

I contacted participants over the phone to request an interview. Interviews were conducted at participants' businesses or at a mutually agreed upon location. Interviews followed the 'Long Interview' process identified by McCracken (1988). I started each interview by generating polite conversation to develop a relationship between researcher and participant (McCracken, 1988). I achieved free and informed on-going consent (Piquemal, 2001) from research participants, which included signing a consent form approved by the Simon Fraser University Research Ethics Board. The interviews were semi-structured, which means that I had a series of questions that I asked each participant but also let each participant to guide the discussion (McCracken, 1988). I asked 'non-leading' questions to enable participants to share their experiences and stories in their own terms (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). After developing rapport through polite conversation, I moved to general questions about the experience of starting and running a business. I then transitioned into more specific questions as the

interview progressed<sup>9</sup> (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; McCracken, 1988). After listening to participants' initial responses, I asked for clarification on key terms (McCracken, 1988) such as being a 'modern' Indigenous person. I provided prompts such as 'what do you mean by modern?' or 'can you tell me what being modern is in contrast to?' I included the concept of relations<sup>10</sup> in my questions as a sensitizing concept because relations are a fundamental aspect of Indigenous ontology that enabled a different angle into my topic of inquiry. This meant asking questions about how entrepreneurship affected important relations with other people, animals, places and spiritual beings as well as about how important relations in their lives affected their entrepreneurial practices.

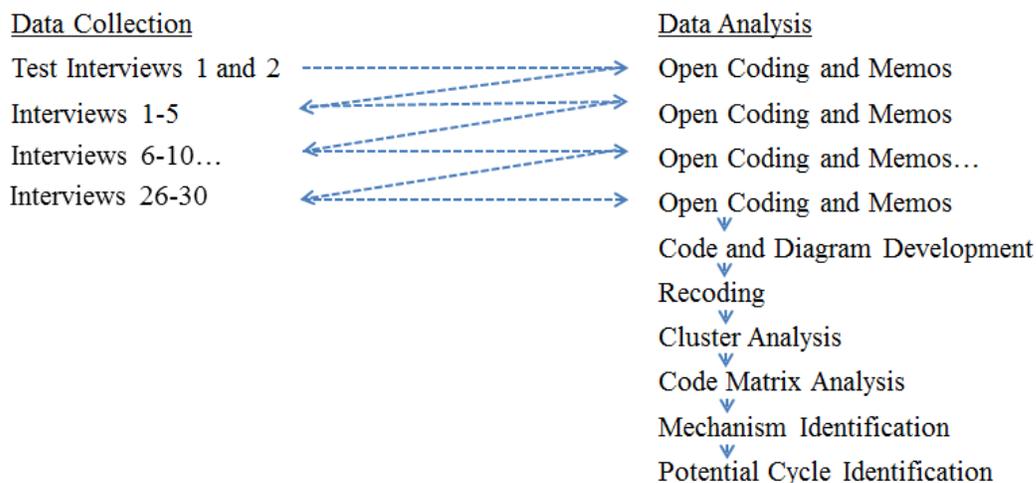
In each interview I asked questions in the same order to reduce variation across interviews and because routine allows the interviewer to listen more carefully (McCracken, 1988). The full interview protocol used can be found in Appendix B. Interviews lasted approximately one and a half hours, including small talk. I thanked each participant for taking a risk to meet with me, for sharing their experiences and stories, and for taking time out of their busy day. Many participants suggested that they had enjoyed the interview and had benefited from reflecting on their experiences and perspectives. After thirty interviews I stopped data collection as no new information relevant to the concepts or connections between the concepts emerged in the last three interviews.

<sup>9</sup> To prepare for conducting interviews, I created draft interview questions based on the literature review that I completed (McCracken, 1988) and conducted two practice interviews with two British Columbian Indigenous entrepreneurs in the fall of 2013 in order to test my interview questions, including their scope and coherence. I debriefed the interview with two of my supervisors and subsequently changed several questions and altered the style of interview.

<sup>10</sup> The term 'relations' can often be found in the Indigenous saying 'all my relations', which is used to acknowledge and give credence to significant Indigenous relationships (L. Brown, 2003; Wilson, 2008). For many Indigenous people, forging and maintaining respectful relations constitutes what it means to be Indigenous (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Martin, 2003; Wilson, 2008). Many Indigenous people do not view themselves as "being in relationship with other people or things, [instead] we are the relationships that we hold and are part of" (Wilson, 2008, p. 80). Thus, from an Indigenous standpoint, reality is not objective or 'out there', rather reality is the totality of relations. This means that "relationships do not merely shape reality, they are reality" and "nothing could be without being in relationship" (Wilson, 2008, pp. 7, 77).

I wrote memos directly after each interview (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2005). In the memos, I reflected on responses that surprised me, on how one interviewee’s response differed from a previous interviewee, my interview style and theoretical thoughts. Interviewees “judge the institutional affiliation of the investigator, the project description, and even his or her appearance, mode of dress and patterns of speech” (McCracken, 1988: 25). This judgement influences interviewee responses. I reflected on how I thought people judged me as well as how this potentially influenced their responses. I also developed tentative theories based on the interviews, which informed later analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Memos took approximately an hour to write and produced, on average, two pages of text. My process of creating memos, as well as other stages of analysis, is represented diagrammatically in *Figure 3.3*. I recorded each interview on tape and had the audio files transcribed by a professional transcriber. I wrote notes during each interview to highlight key points in case of a tape recorder malfunction.

**Figure 3.3. Data Collection and Analysis Process**



The goal of my data analysis was to identify mechanisms that connect Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. To do so I used the McCracken ‘Long Interview’ concept as a foundation, which advocates first for open coding that treats each utterance as an entranceway to exploring what the interviewee actually says. Second, it advocates for the developing codes and comparing codes to one another within the context of transcripts. Third, it advocates for the development of categories and the organization of categories not in reference to transcripts. Finally, it advocates for

the genesis of analytical categories which are abstracted from any one interviewees experience (McCracken, 1998). Although I followed the spirit of this foundation, I have significantly adapted my analysis to my particular research questions to allow my creativity to guide me toward the most relevant and useful data, codes, categories and connections (Cutcliffe, 2000; Suddaby, 2006). Almost all analysis was completed in Nvivo and involved seven primary stages: open coding, developing more abstract codes and organizing codes, recoding interviews to place a greater emphasis on the connections between concepts, running a Cluster Analysis in order to find the similarity and variation of participants based on codes, running Coding Matrix queries for each cluster to identify common codes and attributes of each cluster, comparing common codes and attributes of each cluster, developing mechanisms based on the common codes of each cluster and identifying potential cycles based on the mechanisms.

Stage one – open coding – explored what interviewees related in the interviews while attempting not to apply meaning beyond what was uttered. Open codes were typically half-sentence length and attempted to remain as close to the terminology used by participants as possible. Approximately one hundred open codes focusing on interviewee experiences/perspectives were created such as ‘parents denied Indigenous identity to protect children growing up’ and ‘don’t want people to buy from them just because they are Indigenous’. Interviews were analyzed in this way in groups of five throughout field work. Stage two – developing abstract experiences/perspectives codes – occurred after field work was complete and attempted to “extend the observations [or ‘codes’] beyond its original form until its implications and possibilities are more played out by attempting to group like codes into categories and then attempted to assign a more abstract title to each category” (McCracken, 1988, p. 45). I then compared categories to one another and grouped the categories into folders with like-information such as ‘Indigenous identity’ and ‘entrepreneurial practices’. Using this information, I created a summary diagram by hand that outlined how people conceptualized their Indigenous identity, what entrepreneurial practices they engaged in and what relations they felt were important to their businesses. The diagram also delineated connections between these concepts. These summary diagrams were created with constant reference to transcripts to ensure accuracy and complexity. Through doing this summary work, it was clear that although useful, the initial open coding lacked enough focus on

the connections between constructs. As such, and using the summary diagrams as guides, stage three involved recoding interviews with a greater emphasis on the connections between constructs. This secondary coding created codes focused on connections which were grouped into very different categories and focused on how Indigenous identity enables and constrains entrepreneurial practices as well as vice versa. During this analysis, I emphasized the action dimension of entrepreneurial practices, i.e. what people do rather than how they affect the overall practice. I did so in order to obtain more specific and detailed data rather than more general and abstract notions of how people thought they were reproducing or altering the common understandings and norms of the practice. My hope was that through focusing on the specific, I could also learn more about the general way that people interact with practices as a whole. Because of this focus on actions, I chose to use the language 'enables and constrains' for how Indigenous identity influences the action aspect of entrepreneurial practices rather than the language identified in the literature review of 'reproduction or alteration', in order to signify that my primary interest is about what people do and how they understand what they do. When discussing the general norms and understandings about the practice I retained the language of 'reproduction and alteration'.

Stage four involved running an NVivo Cluster Analysis in order to find the similarity and variation of participants based on experiences/perspectives codes. I conducted this stage to explore in more fine-grained detail the connections between constructs through comparison (Heath & Cowley, 2004) as well as how these connections may vary for different individuals. At this stage of the analysis, the interview transcripts were no longer referenced and the focus was placed on the categories developed (McCracken, 1988). In order to find out how interviewees may be similar and different based on the coding, I used the NVivo Cluster Analysis function using the Pearson Correlation Coefficient to group interviewees in clusters based on similarity of coding. Using this function, users must select the desired amount of clusters. After experimenting with the number of clusters, I selected six as the appropriate number as it maximized the commonality of codes in each cluster while still being manageable for analysis. The output of the six cluster analysis can be found in Appendix B.

Stage five involved using the NVivo Coding Matrix function to create figures for experiences/perspectives codes and attributes for each cluster. An example of each graph can be found in in Appendix B. Using these graphs, I counted how many interviewees referred to a code and identified codes shared by at least half of the interviewees in each cluster. I conducted the same analysis of attributes. For attributes, I selected a threshold of greater than fifty percent due to the fact that many attributes are binary. The only attributes included which equalled fifty percent were non-binary codes in *Cluster 5*. These were ‘connections to community’ and signified that this cluster had some connections to community as well as to ‘employing Indigenous’.

Stage six involved creating a summary table of these commonalities of codes and attributes for each cluster and using this table to compare clusters. Next, I ranked clusters according to their codes and attributes, which produced a list of clusters from ‘most Indigenous community-connected and contributing businesses’ to ‘least Indigenous community connected and contributing’. I did so in order to start exploring overall patterns of what attributes and experiences affect the connections interviewees identified between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. Next, I compared each cluster based on codes and attributes to identify which codes and attributes were the most important for explaining why interviewees in different clusters identified connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices.

Finally, in stage seven, in order to develop simple and parsimonious theoretical ideas around how Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practice affect each other, I grouped common codes from all six clusters together into larger and more abstract categories. I dropped two codes – spiritual support and time – as they did not fit into any of the categories that were developed and did not form coherent categories on their own. In doing this, three mechanisms for how Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices as well as three mechanisms for how entrepreneurial practices affect Indigenous identities emerged. After that, I listed which of the six clusters were associated with each mechanism and identified patterns in what clusters were related to each mechanism. The result of this process was the creation of two Cluster Groups: *Clusters 1 and 2* and *Clusters 3, 4 and 5*. I used these two groups to identify unique sets

of mechanisms for each Cluster Group and to determine potential cycles that may connect Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices.

### **3.3.1. Outsider-Insider Status**

There is a wide body of knowledge about the advantages and disadvantages of researchers having an insider or outsider status in the community being researched (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Merriam et al., 2001). This corpus will be applicable to understanding how being non-Indigenous may influence my study of an Indigenous topic. Insiders typically share similar characteristics such as age, gender and class with participants. They also usually share similar socio-cultural knowledge with participants and could be part of, or be accepted into, the community of research participants. Outsiders typically do not share similar characteristics to participants, are not directly active or included in the community of research participants and do not share the same socio-cultural knowledge of participants. There are both benefits and downsides to being an insider or an outsider since both can influence access, trust and rapport with participants (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; MacIntyre, 2007; Merriam et al., 2001). Recent scholarship, however, highlights that being either an insider or an outsider is a false duality (Mullings, 1999) and that researchers should understand themselves as being on an insider-outsider continuum based upon the nexus of multiple complex identities that changes across context and time (Merriam et al., 2001). Researchers may be insiders in some respects and outsiders in other respects and a researcher's status can vary greatly depending on the unique nexus of identities of both the researcher and participant. Because of this complexity, it is hard, if not impossible, to precisely predict how a researchers' status will affect the research process (Merriam et al., 2001; Mullings, 1999).

This being said, I anticipate that I will be considered an outsider-insider by participants. I will likely be labeled more as an outsider than an insider due to my ethnicity and organizational role. Being non-Indigenous will most likely signal that I am an outsider (Champagne, 1996). This outsider status may inhibit my ability to ascertain complex social cues and metaphors (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000) and may require a longer and more involved process to build trust (Merriam et al., 2001). On the positive side,

being non-Indigenous means that I may be able to ask different questions than an Indigenous person, since it is often assumed by other Indigenous people that Indigenous people know a great deal about Indigenous experiences, which can reduce the ability for them to ask other Indigenous people particular questions (Kovach, 2010). Similarly, my organizational position as a PhD Candidate in business may lead people to believe I am an aloof academic not interested in the on-the-ground reality of Indigenous entrepreneurs. This could alter how participants interact with me. For example, they may explain their perspective in more abstract language than if I were not a PhD Candidate. Alternatively, my organizational position as well as my knowledge of and connections to important members of the Indigenous entrepreneurship community may make me an insider, which may generate access, trust and rapport. I demonstrated this knowledge and these connections in interviews by discussing common relations in the Indigenous entrepreneur community as well as by sharing information on, or experiences surrounding, Indigenous entrepreneurship. How these and other identities affect my insider-outside status will likely vary for each participant.

Because I may be viewed by many as an outsider-insider, I attempted to achieve a greater insider status through several strategies. First, Indigenous scholars John Borrows and Dennis Foley guided my research process. Second, I built relationships with important community members and organizational actors in order to gain legitimacy in the field. Third, I worked to understand historical and contemporary Australian Indigenous experiences which include struggles for rights and sovereignty. Fourth, I followed the Kaupapa Maori research practice protocols outlined by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999). In Appendix B I detail how I integrated these guidelines into the interview process. Fourth, I scheduled ample time for interviews in order not to rush the interactions and to demonstrate my goal to build relationships with each participant (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000). Fifth, in order to combat being viewed as an Ivory Tower academic, I attempted to dress, act and talk casually during interviews.

## 3.4. Findings

### 3.4.1. Constructs

In this section, I outline elements used by interviewees in this study to describe their Indigenous identity as well as to denote the entrepreneurial practices they suggest connect to their Indigenous identity. I focus on examining how interviewees describe these two concepts as a precursor to answering my primary research questions. In order to answer what influence do entrepreneurial practices have on Indigenous identity, as well as vice versa, I first need to explore what Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices mean to interviewees—both the total range of understandings as well as the most commonly cited elements—before exploring how they influence one another. To expediently communicate this material, *Tables 3.4* and *3.5* are provided below. Each table lists items discussed by participants, in order of the frequency with which they were discussed.

In terms of Indigenous identity, interviewees often constructed aspects of their Indigenous identities through narratives. For instance, Interviewee 14 related a story about his decision on whether to apply for an English passport, which helped him to clarify and articulate how his Indigenous identity relates to having English ancestry.

When I finished playing football, I had a 10-year career in the NRL and it was towards the end of the time and I could have got a contract in the UK if I had an English passport. And my mom said, “you can get an English passport”. And I said, “mom, I’m not English”. She said, “but I am and I’m your mother”. I said, “I am not getting an English passport because I am not English, I am Aboriginal”. It was a difference of I could have got a contract in the UK for a couple of years and extended my career or I could have just not claimed that. And I don’t claim it because I’m not. I think that if I was in England and my dad was Aboriginal and my mom and my grandparents were Scottish and I hang around all English people, I would feel a sense of belonging...and I would feel, you know, I’m English. But I don’t have a sense of belonging about my English background or my English culture because my mother came here when she was three months old and has never returned although she had aunties and stuff in England. I don’t identify as being English because I was born here, I was raised here and I lived here and I know nothing other than being an Aboriginal Australian. (114)

**Table 3.4. Elements Used in the Construction of Indigenous Identity**

| Elements Used to Construct Identity                           | Number of Participants Who Referenced Element |
|---|---|
| Community Connections   | 19  |
| Family connections  | 19  |
| Indigenous Nation/community connections                       | 15  |
| Mixed heritage  | 15  |
| Affected by colonization including Stolen Generation Policies | 15  |
| Skin colour   | 14  |
| Time identified as Indigenous                                 | 13  |
| Significant development of identity over time                 | 11  |
| Proud to be Indigenous  | 10  |
| Cultural knowledge  | 8   |
| Self-sufficient   | 5   |
| Indigenous people are survivors                               | 4   |
| Take advantage of opportunities                               | 4   |
| Urban and modern  | 4   |
| Lower social status   | 3   |
| Involvement in Indigenous organizations                       | 3   |
| Contested   | 3   |
| Hard work ethic   | 3   |

Across all interviewees, the five most common elements used in the construction of Indigenous identity were: community connections, family connections, Indigenous Nation/community heritage, mixed heritage and colonization including Stolen Generation Policies. Only one element cited in the literature review, concentration of Indigenous blood, did not arise in the narratives of interviewees. This may be because it is an outdated colonial idea with little rooting in historical Indigenous culture (Palmater, 2011). One element mentioned that was not identified in literature review, found in blue font in *Table 3.4* was involvement in Indigenous organizations. Three interviewees suggested that their Indigenous identity was significantly tied to their involvement in Indigenous organizations. It was through paid and unpaid organizational roles that they developed, maintained and expressed who they are as Indigenous people as well as up kept important relations with other Indigenous people.

In terms of entrepreneurial practices, interviewees also often related what was important in their business through narratives. For instance, Interviewee 12 shared:

There was an [Indigenous] kid that worked for me who didn't have a great deal of guidance from any parents or any structure at home or anything else like that. So, I showed him structure. I showed him right from wrong....One day I was at my local club and quite often I would take new employees in...This one time, I took this kid in and from the first time that the bar staff had met him, they said that he was really rude and a brat. And I had a little chat to him and we had conversations around what was right and what was wrong and about being a good person... There was this one time where he stuffed up because he hit the poker machine and it smashed the glass. The bar staff said to me, "this kid's just done something". And I said, "leave it with me. I'll have a chat to him". So I had a chat to him and I asked him what happened. He explained it to me and I said, "well, if I was you and I had done that and I didn't mean to do it, I would go and tell the bar staff what happened and apologize". I said, "and it may cost you money...but you know that if you walk down there and you say sorry, you've let that one go and you've done something good". So, a few weeks after, I'd walked in and this bartender came up to me and said, "he has changed so much. He came down, he apologized and he's been really nice. My manager said that we need to get the money off him for what he had done". He made the first payment but the manager gave him back his money and said, "I appreciate your honesty and I thank you for what you've done. I know that you won't do it again and I know that you are sorry for it". So he gave him back his money and my employee came up to me and said, "thank you for -- I feel a lot better for what I've done and they've rewarded me by not penalizing me". So, that's what I mean about [mentoring my staff to be better people]. (I12)

During interviews, participants described several common entrepreneurial practices—most accurately expressed the action components of entrepreneurial practices. Of the practices that interviewees mentioned, several—those in blue font in *Table 3.5*—have not been identified or explored at any length in terms of how they connect to Indigenous identity in existing literature. Each entrepreneurial practice that was identified connected some way to Indigenous identity. For instance, for Interviewee 12 supervising and mentoring Indigenous employees both in and outside of work settings was driven by a responsibility he felt to improve the situation of other Indigenous people.

Some of the practices the interviewees mention likely overlap with non-Indigenous entrepreneurs. For instance, many entrepreneurs are concerned with the

creation of a quality product or service that is affordable. However, many interviewees suggested they raised this either because of the stereotypes of Indigenous people that non-Indigenous people hold (e.g. Indigenous people may not be able to ensure quality or complete jobs on time) or on account of non-Indigenous peoples' concern that many Indigenous businesses obtain customers or contracts simply because they are an Indigenous business. Thus, each entrepreneurial practice mentioned below connects in some way to Indigenous identity.

**Table 3.5. Entrepreneurial Practices that Connect to Indigenous Identity**

| Entrepreneurial Practices that Connect to Indigenous Identity          | Number of Participants Who Referenced Practice |
|--|--|
| Ensuring quality, performance and an affordable product or service     | 15   |
| Indigenizing company name or logo                                      | 10   |
| No conventional advertising or marketing                               | 10   |
| Providing preferential pricing for Indigenous customers                | 9  |
| Respecting Indigenous protocols  | 9  |
| Donating to charitable Indigenous initiatives                          | 7  |
| Listening to spiritual support or guidance                             | 7  |
| Hiring and mentoring Indigenous employees                              | 7  |
| Ensuring financial management  | 6  |
| Being sensitive to customers' cultural perspectives and needs          | 6  |
| Social media marketing   | 6  |
| Receiving mentorship   | 5  |
| Reacting against cultural stereotypes                                  | 5  |
| Developing policies and procedures to access procurement opportunities | 5  |
| Acting in a professional manner  | 4  |
| Accreditation and licensing  | 4  |
| Communicating face-to-face   | 4  |
| Building long-term relations with clients                              | 3  |
| Connections to land  | 3  |
| Selecting customers  | 3  |
| Buying environmentally-friendly products                               | 2  |

### 3.4.2. Clusters

The two central research questions for this paper that emerged from the literature review are how do entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identities and how do Indigenous identities influence entrepreneurial practices? In order to answer these questions, this section will focus on the six clusters created through the cluster analysis. Doing so can reveal much about how entrepreneurial practices both enable and constrain Indigenous identity, as well as vice versa. I will achieve this by exploring the common experiences/perspectives codes as well as the attributes of interviewees in each cluster. Common experiences/perspectives codes can tell us what interpretations the majority of participants in each cluster hold in common, which can provide information about how their entrepreneurial practices and Indigenous identity connect. Common attributes can tell us how interviewees in each cluster are similar to or different from one another, which could present clues about whether there are differences between individuals or their businesses that can affect the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. I created two tables, *Table 3.6* and *Table 3.8*, to summarize common experiences/perspectives and attributes. In both tables in the left column, I provide the name given to each cluster of interviewees as well as the number of interviewees in each cluster. In *Table 3.6*, the middle column indicates the connection between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices that the prose and values in the right column address. The prose in the right column indicates common experiences/perspectives for each salient connection. Several of the experiences/perspectives codes are motivations for being an entrepreneur and are denoted with '(m)' beside the code name. The number beside each code records the number of interviewees in that cluster who discussed this experience/perspective. *Table 3.7* provides a description of each code. *Table 3.8* summarizes the attributes of interviewees. This table has three columns that indicate the commonality of an attribute for interviewees within a cluster. This was done in order to enable the reader to understand to what extent attributes were shared by interviewees in the same cluster. Similarly, the number beside each attribute indicates how many interviewees in the cluster held that attribute. In both *Table 3.6* and *3.8*, clusters are listed in order according to their connections and contributions to Indigenous communities, from highest connections and impact (listed first) – 'Fused Connections' – to lowest connection and

impact – ‘Disjointed Connections’. In order to be able to put the attribute cluster findings in context, *Table 3.9* has been provided to give a summary of interviewee attributes. This can be used to compare the common attributes of each cluster to the overall distribution for each attribute. This comparison illustrates that, generally, differences between interviewees in different clusters do reflect differences between interviewees rather than variations in demographics.

In this following sub-sections, for each cluster, one interviewee will be highlighted as an illustrative example in order to highlight common experiences/perspectives and attributes of each cluster. An interviewee was chosen as an illustrative example if they had the highest number of experiences/perspectives and attributes indicative of their cluster. These examples should highlight some similarities and differences between interviewees in each cluster.

**Table 3.6. Cluster Common Experiences/Perspectives Coding Summary**

| Cluster Information              | Influence Category   | Codes  |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Cluster 1<br>Fused<br>N=7        | Indigenous identity <b>enables</b> entrepreneurial practices | Assist or give back to community (motivation) (5); build Indigenous capacity (motivation) (7); cultural revival and revitalization (motivation) (5); spiritual support (4) |
|                                  | Entrepreneurial practices <b>enables</b> Indigenous identity | Cultural preservation and sharing (5); employing and empowering (4); connections to family, Indigenous entrepreneurs and community (4); role model (4)                     |
| Cluster 3<br>Integrated<br>N = 3 | Indigenous identity <b>enables</b> entrepreneurial practices | Assist or give back to community (motivation) (2); authenticity and reputation (2)   |
|                                  | Entrepreneurial practices <b>enables</b> Indigenous identity | Cultural preservation and sharing (2); connections to family, Indigenous entrepreneurs and community (2); income and donation (2); role model (2)                          |

| Cluster Information               | Influence Category   | Codes   |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Cluster 6<br>Complementary<br>N=5 | <p>Indigenous identity <b>enables</b> entrepreneurial practices</p> <p>Indigenous identity <b>constrains</b> entrepreneurial practices</p> <p>Entrepreneurial practices <b>enables</b> Indigenous identity</p>   | <p>Indigenous products and services needed for Indigenous customers (motivation) (6); authenticity and reputation (3); communication style (3)</p> <p>Reacting against cultural stereotypes (3)</p> <p>Role model (3)</p>                   |
| Cluster 2<br>Coupled<br>N=6       | <p>Indigenous identity <b>enables</b> entrepreneurial practices</p> <p>Indigenous identity <b>constrains</b> entrepreneurial practices</p> <p>Entrepreneurial practices <b>enables</b> Indigenous identity</p> <p>Entrepreneurial practices <b>constrain</b> Indigenous identity</p> | <p>Access to Indigenous and non-Indigenous customers (4); communication style (3); respect for protocols (3)</p> <p>Time or customers (3)</p> <p>Connections to family, Indigenous entrepreneurs and community (4)</p> <p>Voice (3)</p>     |
| Cluster 5<br>Instrumental<br>N=4  | <p>Indigenous identity <b>enables</b> entrepreneurial practices</p> <p>Indigenous identity <b>constrains</b> entrepreneurial practices</p> <p>Entrepreneurial practices <b>enables</b> Indigenous identity</p>   | <p>Access to Indigenous and non-Indigenous customers (2); business aesthetic (logo and name) (4);</p> <p>Tokenism (3); policies and procedures (2)</p> <p>Income and donations (3); employing and empowering (3); sparks Indigenous (2)</p> |
| Cluster 4<br>Disjointed<br>N=4    | Indigenous identity <b>enables</b> entrepreneurial practices   | Connect with Indigenous identity (motivation) (2)   |

**Table 3.7. Code Descriptions**

| Cluster Information                                   | Code  | Description   |
|---|---|---|
| Indigenous identity enables entrepreneurial practices | Build Indigenous capacity (motivation)            | Increase the skills and human capital of a wide range of stakeholders including employees, suppliers and customers  |
|   | Cultural revival and revitalization (motivation)  | Bring back and transform aspects of Indigenous culture  |
|   | Assist or give back to community (motivation)     | Contribute to Indigenous communities in ways other than cultural revitalization, building the capacity of Indigenous people or providing needed products or services. This included using an entrepreneurial venture as a platform to advocate on behalf of Indigenous peoples in the business world. |
|   | Connect with Indigenous identity (motivation)     | Connect with or significantly develop an Indigenous identity through entrepreneurship.  |
|   | Spiritual support                                 | For some, spiritual support involved tapping into gut feelings driven by an unidentified spiritual source that guides them in business activities. For others, this involved being driven and assisted by the Creator, God or both.   |
|   | Authenticity and reputation                       | Being deemed appropriate and authentic providers of Indigenous goods and services by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people due to either ethnicity or cultural affiliations/knowledge.   |
|   | Access to Indigenous and non-Indigenous customers | Access to customers typically driven by a lack of existing Indigenous products or services, or if they did exist in insufficient quality or quantity.   |
|   | Communication style                               | A unique Indigenous approach to communication which includes listening and thinking before speaking, talking in person rather than through digital forms of communication as well as building long-term relationships.  |
|   | Respect for protocols                             | Getting elder approval, not being boastful about success or money and acknowledging the efforts of others.  |
|   | Business esthetic: logo and name                  | Creating and Indigenous logo or business name.  |
|   | Reacting against cultural stereotypes             | React against stereotypes such as being lazy or not being able to deliver a project on time or within budget.   |

| Cluster Information   | Code  | Description   |
|---|---|---|
| Indigenous identity <b>constrains</b> entrepreneurial practices | Time or customers   | Both time they had to spend on their business, which was largely due family obligations, or that their Indigenous identity constrained customers as non-Indigenous customers were unsure of whether an Indigenous business served non-Indigenous clients.   |
|   | Tokenism  | Not wanting customers selecting them only because they were Indigenous. Instead, they wanted to, in addition to being an Indigenous business, be selected for their price, quality and customer service. This worry was particularly salient for entrepreneurs who were affiliated with Supply Nation.                    |
|   | Policies and procedures                                       | The requirement to develop standards around key organizational tasks such as hiring and safety demanded by corporations involved with Supply Nation.  |
|   |   |   |
|   | Cultural preservation and sharing                             | Creating or innovating cultural products or services which reinforced their Indigenous identity.  |
|   | Employing and empowering                                      | Hire and mentor Indigenous workers, which built the capacity of individuals as well as Indigenous communities and which helped to enhance their identity as a community-enhancing Indigenous person.  |
| Entrepreneurial practices <b>enable</b> Indigenous identity     | Connections to family, Indigenous entrepreneurs and community | Connections reinforced or strengthened aspects of their identities such as where they come from and who their relatives are.  |
|   | Role model  | Through their entrepreneurial practices becoming a role model for other Indigenous people in how to be a successful and community-engaged Indigenous person.  |
|   | Income and donations  | Entrepreneurship provides financial gains, which ensured they could provide for family and give donations to charitable Indigenous initiatives. This enabled people to feel that they are a strong and self-sufficient Indigenous person who redistributed wealth to community.   |
|   | Sparks Indigenization   | Relationships developed through the course of their business sparked them to undergo <i>Indigenization</i> —to identify as an Indigenous person and to start the journey of developing an Indigenous identity. For instance, one interviewee identified more strongly after they became more involved with Supply Nation. |
| Entrepreneurial practices <b>constrain</b> Indigenous identity  |   |   |
|   | Voice   | Being an entrepreneur meant that they needed to ensure they were not being too vocal, were not making claims on behalf of others or were not discussing topics they did not have credibility to speak about in order to not receive criticism.  |

**Table 3.8. Cluster Common Attribute Summary**

| Cluster Information               | Significant Commonalities (80-100%)  | Moderate Commonalities (66-79%)   | Low Commonalities (50%-65%)   |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Cluster 1<br>Fused<br>N=7         | -Connections to community (6)<br><br>-Not Supply Nation members (6)  | -Indigenous-specific product or service; full-time (5)  | -Dark skin; always identified; middle-aged; male (4)<br><br>- Not consulting or arts; employing Indigenous; old company (4) |
| Cluster 3<br>Integrated<br>N = 3  | -Connections to community (3)<br>-Not Supply Nation members; consulting or arts; age of company young; employing Indigenous NA (3) | - Light skin; young; male; always identified (2)<br>- Indigenous-specific product or service; full-time (2)                             |   |
| Cluster 6<br>Complementary<br>N=5 | -Connections to community (4)<br>-Indigenous-specific product or service; not Supply Nation members (4)                            | -Light skin; identified early; female (3)<br>-Consulting or arts; company age young; employing Indigenous not applicable; full-time (3) |   |
| Cluster 2<br>Coupled<br>N=6       |  | -Connections to community; female (4)<br>-Not an Indigenous specific product or service; company age old; part-time (4)                 | -Not employing Indigenous (3)   |
| Cluster 5<br>Instrumental<br>N=4  | -Not an Indigenous-specific product or service (4)   | -Light skin, female, middle-aged (3)<br>-Supply Nation members; full-time (3)   | -Connections to community (2)<br>-Employ Indigenous (2)   |
| Cluster 4<br>Disjointed<br>N=4    | - No connections to community; light skin (4)<br>-Not Supply Nation members; full-time (4)   | -Male; middle-aged (3)<br><br>-Not an Indigenous-specific product or service; not employing Indigenous; young company (3)               |   |

**Table 3.9. Summary of Interviewee Attributes**

| Connections to Community               | 19 More and 11 Fewer               |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Time Identified                        | 11 Always, 10 Early and 9 Late     |
| Skin Colour                            | 19 Lighter and 11 Darker           |
| Gender                                 | 16 Female and 14 Male              |
| Age Group                              | 7 Young, 14 Middle and 9 Old       |
| Indigenous-Specific Product or Service | 16 Yes and 14 No                   |
| Consulting or Arts                     | 16 Yes and 14 No                   |
| Supply Nation Member                   | 21 No, 8 Yes and 1 Not Applicable  |
| Employing Indigenous                   | 13 Not Applicable, 10 No and 7 Yes |
| Age of Company                         | 16 Young and 14 Old                |
| Full or Part Time                      | 20 Full-time and 10 Part-time      |

***Cluster 1: Fused***

I call the connections in *Cluster 1* ‘Fused’ since, for interviewees in this cluster, Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices are largely inseparable. Interviewee 16, Rebecca<sup>11</sup>, embodied many of the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices which characterize interviewees in *Cluster 1: Fused*. Rebecca identified as Indigenous all her life, had strong connections to community and was middle-aged. She reported: “I’ve grown up and I’ve lived being Aboriginal. This is my life, you know, and my family is everything to me. I understand who I am, where I come from, my family and my culture”. She operated a successful and long-standing Indigenous restaurant in New South Wales, has an Indigenous-specific product or service, was full-time, was not in the consulting or arts industries and employed Indigenous people. She differed from the majority of interviewees in *Cluster 1* in that she was female and a Supply Nation member.

One of Rebecca’s primary motivations for starting her business was to cook Indigenous-inspired contemporary meals, using Indigenous ingredients. When she launched her business twenty years ago, Indigenous cuisine was largely unknown by most non-Indigenous and many Indigenous Australians. This was a serious issue since

<sup>11</sup> In order to maintain the anonymity of interviewees, in each illustrative example the names and some demographic details of each interviewee have been changed.

she viewed Indigenous cooking as a critical aspect of reinvigorating Indigenous culture that can be best introduced at a young age:

It's important to get Indigenous foods and the meats of this country on the pallet of kids at a young age. I mean, you know, it's only when they become older that the taste buds are developed and it's like "kangaroo, yuck!" We have to educate our kids to eat things like kangaroo and crocodile because they are our traditional foods and are high in protein and full of iron, foods that are going to keep you on track and healthy. (I16)

Through her entrepreneurial practices, Rebecca felt that she has assisted and given back to the community and aided in the revival and revitalization of Indigenous culture by being an advocate for Indigenous foods. This reinforced her identity as a community-oriented and culturally-connected Indigenous person. Rebecca also suggests that she contributed to her Indigenous community by having hired and empowered Indigenous workers. Despite her intentions, often times it was challenging for her to find Indigenous employees who were motivated to work hard. She suggested that she was more than willing to help build employee capacity through employment so long as employees were motivated and committed:

We try to employ Indigenous kids in the business. We've tried over the last few years. It's just really hard to get Indigenous kids to actually stay in the city if they are from remote areas. Kids that come from remote areas to the city just get lost in the lights...It's [also] really hard to get Indigenous people engaged sometimes, you know, and to really have a strong team. Indigenous kids are extremely shy, you know, and they can be really timid and people will run all over them. (I16)

When running her business, Rebecca suggested her Indigenous identity enabled her to feel supported by spirits or ancestors who help her understand herself and the world. This aspect of her identity led to better business decisions:

I'm always visited by a Willie Wagtail bird. And when you are visited by things like that, you know something happened or is about to happen... I do feel like I've been looked after and guided. We certainly have had many ups and downs in this business. You have to listen to your gut feeling and take note of your dreams and really take a hard look at yourselves sometimes, which is not pretty...But I think you create a better understanding of yourself, your limitations, what you expect out of yourself and what you expect from others. (I16)

During the interview, Rebecca discussed these important dimensions of her business in reference to common understandings and norms about Indigenous entrepreneurship. One particular norm which appears to be common to the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice is that Indigenous entrepreneurs have something to prove to non-Indigenous people through their business: “Non-indigenous people look at Aboriginal people and think ‘they’re hopeless’. We want to prove them wrong in a lot of ways, you know, and we have”. Through statements such as these and through her actions in the business, Rebecca reinforces this norm. In contrast, there are norms and understandings of the practice which Rebecca does not feel fit with her experiences, particularly around spirituality. Through the way spirituality was discussed by a few interviewees in this study, conversation about Indigenous spirituality does not appear to be a part of the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice, as it is considered to be too ‘out there’. When discussing spirituality, Rebecca prefaces her thoughts by relating: “I have heard voices. But I’m not on medication, but, you know, I’m not crazy”. Statements such as these could be due in part to the social situation of the interview where Rebecca may feel that discussing spirituality is too bizarre for a non-Indigenous business researcher. However, there were a few instances, such as with Rebecca, during interviews where people needed to preface their ideas, even during complex discussions about culture and traditions where it is plausible that interviewees would feel a careful introduction is required. This leads me to believe that statements such as “I’m not crazy” have more to do with not being an aspect of the practice than to do with our interaction as interviewer-interviewee. Through discussions about spirituality, interviewees such as Rebecca appear to be attempting to alter the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice in order to make space for being both an Indigenous person and an entrepreneur.

### ***Cluster 3: Integrated***

I term connections in *Cluster 3* ‘Integrated’, as Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices form a relatively cohesive whole but are not completely fused since they do not span all areas of life, such as the spiritual domain. Interviewee 18, Mike, embodied many of the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices which characterize *Cluster 3: Integrated*. Mike had identified as Indigenous all his life and had had strong connections to community. He had lighter skin

and was of a young age. Mike operated a one-person full-time consultancy business that focused on Indigenous economic development and cultural awareness training in New South Wales. He was not involved in Supply Nation.

For Mike, a primary motivation for starting and running his business was to assist Indigenous people:

For me, being Aboriginal is an innate part of your identity. There's no kind of separation. And I guess driving my life has always been about making a difference in our community and wanting to see, in particular, young people provided with opportunities to really advance...And I particularly see that economic development and people making their own decision about getting into business as one of those things that'll change our community....And this does doesn't change...my Aboriginality but [instead] it allows me to function and contribute back to the Aboriginal community in different ways. (I18)

One of the most prevalent norms and understandings of the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice appears to be the need to assist Indigenous people through business. This is evidenced by interviewees, such as Mike, suggesting they are motivated to run their business in a way that contributes to Indigenous communities. It is also evidenced by many of the specific practices in which interviewees suggest they should engage: providing preferential pricing for Indigenous customers, donating to charitable Indigenous initiatives and hiring and mentoring Indigenous employees, among others. The reproduction of the norm to assist is essential to being accepted within the practice and to dissuading criticisms centred on being a profit-hungry entrepreneur whose business is entirely self-serving.

Mike's Indigenous identity and reputation within the Indigenous community enabled him to be seen as an appropriate person to provide consulting services on Indigenous economic development and cultural awareness:

A lot of the work that comes to me because I've got people who know me and when they need me they give me a ring...Standing within the Aboriginal community is very important to me. I mean, that is paramount. I mean, you don't want people to see you as somebody who just jumps in and out of projects and someone who does not produce quality work. I want people to value the advice that they're getting from me...The Aboriginal community is relatively small...If you

do the wrong thing, everyone's going to know about it pretty quick.  
(I18)

His entrepreneurial practices enabled him to connect with Indigenous entrepreneurs from across the state. This was facilitated through participation in an Indigenous Chamber of Commerce which made him feel supported as an Indigenous entrepreneur:

Like-minded entrepreneurs gather together and talk about ideas and end up supporting one another. Because when you are out in community you feel like you might be one of a very few [entrepreneurs]. But when you're in a room with like-minded individuals from right across the state, it's a very different feeling about the possibilities [of being Indigenous and being an entrepreneur].  
(I18)

Mike's entrepreneurial practices have also enabled him to share his culture, which has enhanced his appreciation for and knowledge of Indigenous culture:

The connection with culture to me is fundamental. And it's expressed in my brand as a company. My logo and that kind of stuff are lifted straight from out of designs that come from my area. And I've been involved in writing documents where reviews, language names and stuff are needed and so I've been the person who's made approaches to my own community about getting permissions to use those... Those kinds of cultural touch points are really important...While most people would look at my skill set and related it easily to the Aboriginal community, the more I've done consulting work, I've also started to understand the value of the skills and knowledge I hold around Indigenous ways of doing things.  
(I18)

Finally, his entrepreneurial practices have also assisted him to be seen as a leader, resource person and role model in his community to whom people come for advice:

Different organizations ring me up from my own community and, you know, want to seek my advice and stuff. And a lot of that you just do for free, particularly when it's just general advice. I do this because it's an innate part of who I am so I can't just say to them "go away". That's not going to happen.  
(I18)

## ***Cluster 6: Complementary***

I call connections that interviewees experience/perceive in this cluster 'Complementary' as Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices are largely separate but yet enhance one another. Interviewee 26, Sandra, embodied many of the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices which characterize *Cluster 6: Complementary*. Sandra had strong connections to community and had identified as Indigenous all her life: "If I couldn't identify as Aboriginal, I wouldn't be true to myself; I live and breathe it in my everyday life". She also had lighter skin. She operated a graphic design company in New South Wales, had an Indigenous-specific product or service, was in the consulting or arts industries and was full-time. She differed from the majority in *Cluster 6* in that she was a Supply Nation member, had an older company and did have employees on a project basis.

A significant motivation for Sandra to run her business was to provide Indigenous products and services to Indigenous customers. In particular, she observed Indigenous entrepreneurs needing print media services for their Indigenous content: "We started to realize that we can design video covers, we can do pamphlets and we can do posters...we realized there's a market out there within Indigenous businesses for print media". Sandra was able to work on projects with Indigenous content because she was Indigenous.

When working with Indigenous customers, she employed certain principles such as securing community buy-in to ensure that her company was doing work in a respectful way:

When I go into every community, I say who I am, where I'm from, who my mother is. You sit there until you're welcome in that community. And I might have a project to do with them, but until they want it and own it, want to take it and run with it [I won't start working on it]. I'll just turn my car around and keep going. I will not push something on a community that doesn't want it. (126)

In addition to having Indigenous entrepreneurs as customers, Sandra also had non-Indigenous customers who needed to source an Indigenous artist because they did not have the cultural knowledge or social licence to produce Indigenous design work.

Sandra stated, “You do get those people coming to you because even though they've got an in-house design team, they can't touch or design an Indigenous logo”. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous customers heard about Sandra's business through word-of-mouth, based on her solid reputation:

People are able to recommend you as a business. You have that relationship with them. They know what you're about and they know that you stand for integrity and culture. So if we talk about where we get our business from, it is through that kind of networking. It is word of mouth. Someone's worked with us and went, “hey, they're really cool”. (126)

Through their entrepreneurial practices, Sandra suggests she felt she became a role model for Indigenous people who have come from disadvantaged backgrounds. This involved confronting cultural stereotypes about what Indigenous people can achieve in their life:

Yeah, I think any of us [Indigenous people] can do anything we want and succeed. We are out there and showing other people to not label us Indigenous as no-hopers, alcoholics, or whatever....We made something of ourselves...And that's just putting it back in those bastards' faces....I'm about to start a youth project myself in the next month. And for me, that's about giving and sharing. It's about skilling up our mob. And I have pleasure in that...Recently I got a tap on the shoulder [by a past participant in a project] and they said “remember me? You taught me how to do this and now I'm doing media!” (126)

### ***Cluster 2: Coupled***

I call connections in *Cluster 2* ‘Coupled’ because, for interviewees in this cluster, Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices appear largely separate but connect in enabling and constraining ways that are roughly equal. Interviewee 12, Kaylie, embodied many of the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices that characterize interviewees in *Cluster 2: Coupled*. Kaylie identified as Indigenous all her life and was the “the minority of the minority because I am a Torres Strait Islander”. She had some connections to community and was middle-aged. She operated an apparel company in Victoria, had a non-Indigenous-specific product or service, was part-time and was not in the consulting or arts industries. She differed from the majority in *Cluster 2* in that she was a young company and had employees.

Being an Indigenous business and a member of Supply Nation allowed Kaylie access to non-Indigenous customers that she would have otherwise not have had access to. As she claimed, "It's like shooting fish in a barrel and they are so accommodating because they're committed to engage...You get people who are willing to engage and they see the benefits of engaging in supplier diversity". This being said, being Indigenous means that certain customers might be hesitant to deal with her because she runs an Indigenous business:

We don't go in say, "you need to do business with us because we're an Indigenous business", we go in and say, "you need to do business with us because you want to make the right businesses decision. We just happen to be an Indigenous business". So we don't really sell ourselves as an Indigenous business. I think that's appreciated as people don't feel uncomfortable about it...They are just going to give us the opportunity to sit at the table. That's all we've got; we don't have any special treatment. (I12)

Kaylie relates that they employed an Indigenous-based communication style and approach to building relations in business settings, using Google as a contemporary resource to situate those that she met:

I'm always interested in the people I'm dealing with. Sadly, for those people [laughter] I have Google. But that's the same what used to happen and still happens in the Indigenous world. If I took you down to the Koorie centre now and you said that you were from a particular part of Australia from a particular tribe, somebody -- I could guarantee you, somebody in that group of 30 or 40 people would know somebody that knows somebody that's related to you. And that is a natural thing to do. So if I'm going to meet with somebody tomorrow, I will Google them and find out a bit about them or I will ask somebody I know who knows them. I think that's...a very business savvy thing to do-- but it's not until you experience it, until you see it happening [that you realize its utmost importance]... I'm always interested in family and I think a lot of Indigenous people are interested in family. It's about understanding those relationships. (I12)

When building relations with customers, she suggested that she showed humility by acknowledging where she was from. This acknowledgement demonstrates that she appreciates the role that others have had in her success and does not attribute her success to her own actions:

I always mention where I'm from because I'm proud of where I'm from. I am not just an Indigenous businesswoman. I'm from the Torres Strait and that means a lot to me because I think my family or my people have gone through as much anybody else in any of the First peoples of the world. We've come a long way for me to be able to be invited into the boardroom of a large company. I always mention where I'm from. (I12)

Several interviewees in *Cluster 2* discussed lateral violence from other Indigenous people, especially in terms of criticism they received about their achievements. They noted that this undermined their own voices and feelings of authority. However, Kaylie remarked that it is around non-Indigenous people that she must be modest and not overstep her boundaries. This potentially limits the power and reach of her voice as well as her authority to make strong claims about racist opinions:

I think a lot of people in my age group are chameleons; we try to fit in. If someone is saying or doing some racially inappropriate thing, I'm not going to say, "well, excuse me!" It's like, okay, fine, that's your opinion. There are those people who like to beat the drum and call the protest and this and that and I appreciate that aspect. However, in business I'm just going to sit here and do my own thing. (I12)

### ***Cluster 5: Instrumental***

I call the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices in this cluster 'Instrumental' since interviewees in this cluster employed their understanding of their Indigenous identity as a means of achieving business goals. Interviewee 15, Trish, embodied many of the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices that characterize interviewees in *Cluster 5: Instrumental*. She had few connections to community, light skin and was of middle age. She operated a furniture cleaning company in Victoria, had a non-Indigenous-specific product or service, was a Supply Nation member and was full-time. She differed from half of the interviewees in this cluster in that, while she employed people, many of her employees were not Indigenous.

Several years ago, Trish became acquainted with Supply Nation. This ignited a desire to Indigenous her company and arguably herself:

I suppose for many years, we didn't -- I don't know how to say this, it's not that we looked at ourselves as Aboriginal or anything else... But we never put ourselves out there as an Aboriginal owned and operated company until we won an [Aboriginal business] award. So when I attended the first meeting of the award and was talking to the other people who are also up for it, it was a matter of getting it in our head that we could make a difference by saying, "look we are Aboriginal owned and operated business", making people a little bit more aware of that and what benefits we could give the community by having ourselves known as Aboriginal company...Most of our clients didn't know we were an Aboriginal owned and operated company. So I sent out a press release to all of them and yeah, a number of them were like, "oh, congratulations! We didn't even realize that you were Aboriginal". And it's like, "well yeah", and that just never had come up in discussions I suppose. (I15)

This connection with Supply Nation gave her access to non-Indigenous customers:

Supply Nation have got a big conference coming up in May. So we're attending that and they've organized a meeting between us and a big Australian company. And our fingers, toes and everything else we've got crossed that we might be able to convince them to use an Indigenous owned and operated company. And, you know, we'll provide them better work that they're used to getting. (I15)

The importance of not being viewed as receiving business only because they are Indigenous is evidenced by quotes such as these. It is also demonstrated in the most often-cited entrepreneurial practice by interviewees – providing a quality product or service and delivering that product or service on time and within budget.

Interviewees appeared to be grappling with two somewhat contradictory norms and understandings of the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice: one, that Indigenous people are disadvantaged and deserve assistance over and above non-Indigenous business and two, that they don't want to be viewed only as an 'Indigenous' business and want their business to stand on their own two feet. These two norms and understandings of entrepreneurial practice are typically reconciled by suggesting that being Indigenous provides people with an opportunity to meet with customers through avenues such as Supply Nation but does not secure them a contract; they need to be good businesspeople and provide a quality product or service in order to do so. In this

way, interviewees such as Trish simultaneously reproduce and support these important norms of the practice but also try to alter these norms by reconciling them with one another.

In an effort to better publicize her Indigenous identity in her business as well as to attract customers, Trish re-worked the company aesthetics. For example, she created a new logo: “We've redesigned our company logo to show Indigenous colors in our logo so that you'll just have to look at it to surmise that it's an Aboriginal owned and operated company”. Despite the benefits of attracting more non-Indigenous clients through Supply Nation, she felt constrained by demands from new clients for clear policies and procedures on areas such as hiring and safety. She made the following comment about the feelings she experienced after a meeting with a large non-Indigenous Supply Nation member company: “We got scared off after we went to the meeting. The company looked at our information and went ‘you need this and we need that’ which then made us go, ‘our policies and procedures aren't good enough’. By the time we stuffed around with that and got them fixed up we missed the cut off for the RFP”.

Trish's entrepreneurial venture had several positive effects on her Indigenous identity, most notably in the areas of economic advancement. Running her business has enabled her to make money, which she can give back to the community. This giving back reinforced her identity as an Indigenous person who has some, albeit loose, connections to the Indigenous community:

We've moved into looking at what we can do for the community. My eldest sister is heavily involved in working with the Stolen Generations and teaching lawyers and judges, etcetera how to interact with the [Aboriginal] community. So she's connected herself to a few things that we've made donations to. My goal is...to give back to the community a lot more. It's a little dream at the moment, but I have a dream to try to bring cleaning work to the Outback. (115)

Although Trish did not employ Indigenous people, doing so was among her objectives. This is another way to give back to the Indigenous community with whom she increasingly attempted to integrate with:

You know, as for having anything Aboriginal that we do, we've looked to employ, to try and employ Aboriginals every time we've got a

position available. But we don't find it an easy task either because we start work at 4:30 in the morning. So the majority, they can't do it because there's no transportation down this way. That's a big problem in the community... If I could get this company to have, you know, 50 percent Aboriginal staff, you know, there's 20 people off the dole or whatever they may be on, and feeling better about themselves because undoubtedly, having a job you feel more confident in yourself than you do as living on the dole or something along them lines. (I15)

#### ***Cluster 4: Disjointed***

I call the connections in this cluster 'Disjointed' as interviewees' Indigenous identities are almost completely disconnected from their entrepreneurial practices. Interviewee 9, Dylan, embodied many of the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices which characterize *Cluster 4: Disjointed*. He had almost no connections to the Indigenous community, had light skin and was middle-aged. He thought of himself as primarily Australian, of which being Indigenous is of just one component: "I'm Australian. And I'm probably the quintessential Australian in that I come from a multi-cultural background with an Aboriginal influence...Until recently I didn't know that we had Aboriginal blood, though we always suspected it". He operated a cafe in New South Wales, was not a Supply Nation member, did not employ Indigenous people and was a young company. He differed from the majority of interviewees in that he had a quasi-Indigenous-specific product or service and was part-time. The first few minutes of the interview, listed below, explained how he understands himself as a person with Indigenous ancestry, why he started to incorporate Indigenous foods into his cafe and what he hoped to achieve with his business:

The business in its original form was not Aboriginal food. It was just a business and just a restaurant and a cafe and that's because we've got a lot of cooks and chefs and so forth in the family so we all joined together and tried to make something of it for a living...It's only been recently that we found out that my grandfather was part of the Stolen Generation and we just sort of think, well it would be really good if we did some Indigenous food...And then when we spoke with the local Aboriginal community, most of them didn't even know what Aboriginal food was. And that's when it dawned on us that we had to do this because if our own people don't know what Aboriginal food is and after 200 years of white man settlement, we've almost lost our culture. That was shocking and we just couldn't stand by and watch it happen anymore. So that was why this business changed very much to be Aboriginal.

We do normal stuff during the day [on the menu] with a little bit of an Aboriginal flavour every so often when we can get away with it. And then at night it's nothing but Indigenous food...So it's maybe yams and warrigals, everything that should be there. We've even drilled down to foods from the same region when we put a plate together so that it would be logical that 3,000 years ago the Aboriginals would have been eating that combination of foods. (19)

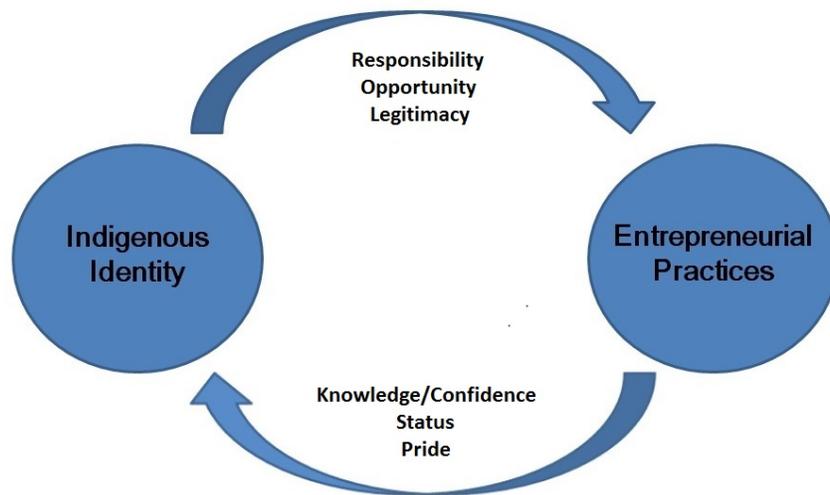
Switching to some Indigenous ingredients and dishes is an important way for Dylan to connect with his newly-discovered Indigenous identity. What is particularly striking in this narrative is how Dylan uses language such as 'the Aboriginals', which denotes that he sees himself as different and separate from 'the' Aboriginal people. Later in the interview, he also frequently related that he was not exploiting his Indigenous identity: "And so, I mean, as far as my Aboriginality is concerned, I don't use it for an unfair advantage [in the business]".

### **3.4.3. Mechanisms**

In order to identify mechanisms of how Indigenous identity and entrepreneurship connect, I needed to further analyze the clusters. This was required because, although the twenty or so experiences/perspectives codes that were created in the findings section are analytical codes abstracted from data, there remained too many codes to see any overall mechanisms. In order to identify mechanisms and provide a more parsimonious answer to how entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity as well as vice versa, the number of codes needed to be reduced through abstraction. To identify mechanisms, I explored whether clusters could themselves be grouped together based on similar experiences/perspectives coding. My hope was that this further clustering would provide a clearer picture of how entrepreneurial practices and Indigenous identity influence one another. To do so, I created a table which grouped similar experiences/perspectives codes. I turned groupings of experiences/perspectives codes into six higher level mechanisms. Following this, I listed the clusters of interviewees who were involved with each mechanism. A summary of this work can be found in *Tables 3.10 and 3.11*. In the following sections, I discuss how the six mechanisms I identified connect Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices, starting with three ways that entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity:

knowledge and confidence in Indigenous identity, status in Indigenous entrepreneur networks of practice and pride in Indigenous identity. Next, I outline three ways that Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices: the responsibility to be a role model for and to give back to Indigenous people, the creation of entrepreneurial opportunities and the ability to be deemed a legitimate person to provide Indigenous-specific products and services. These mechanisms are summarized in *Figure 3.4* and provide one set of answers to research questions 1 (RQ1) and 2 (RQ2).

**Figure 3.4. How Indigenous Identity and Entrepreneurial Practices Connect**



**Table 3.10. How Entrepreneurial Practices Influence Indigenous Identity**

| Similar Experiences/Perspectives Code  | Clusters That Referenced Code | Mechanism  | Summary of Clusters that Referenced Mechanism |
|--|-------------------------------|--|---|
| -Connections to family, Indigenous entrepreneurs and community<br>-Sparking Indigenization | 1, 3, 2<br>5                  | <b>Knowledge and confidence</b> in Indigenous Identity       | 1, 2, 3, 5                                    |
| -Role model<br>-Voice (enabling and constraining)  | 1, 3, 6<br>2                  | <b>Status</b> in Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice | 1, 2, 3, 6                                    |
| -Cultural preservation and sharing<br>-Employing and empowering<br>-Income and donations   | 1, 3<br>1, 5<br>3, 5          | <b>Pride</b> in Indigenous identity                          | 1, 3, 5                                       |

### ***Knowledge and Confidence in Indigenous Identity***

The Indigenous identities of many of this study's interviewees developed and transformed over time. Many Indigenous peoples in Australia have been ripped from their communities and cultures either through attempted eradication or by colonizers' assimilation tactics (Foley & Maynard, 2001). This has meant that generations of people have grown up without strong connections to Indigenous communities and cultures (Read, 2009). As mainstream Australian society becomes, according to several interviewees, less racist and more welcoming to Indigenous people—for instance Interviewee 20 suggested that in terms of racism, “in the past five or ten years, there's been a huge change; we didn't know about our Aboriginal heritage until Kevin Rudd gave the apology”—many are increasingly and publicly self-identifying and are attempting to develop their Indigenous identity. For most in this study, entrepreneurial practices provide either the stimulus or the resources for increasing their knowledge of and confidence in their Indigenous identity. This is because entrepreneurial practices put entrepreneurs in contact with family members, other entrepreneurs and members of the wider community, all of whom can provide both general knowledge on what it means to be Indigenous as well as specific knowledge about family members, heritage and cultural practices. Entrepreneurship can also compel people who have not had the opportunity to develop their Indigenous identity to embark upon a developmental journey. For interviewees, a typical entry point for fostering more interest in one's Indigenous identity and heritage was involvement in an Indigenous Chamber of Commerce such as the Mandurah Hunter Indigenous Business Chamber. This likewise sparked people's desire to become more involved in the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice.

In addition to knowledge about Indigenous identity, the relations which entrepreneurial practices facilitate also provide confidence for claiming and displaying Indigenous identity. Relations to other Indigenous people are an important part of Indigenous identity for many involved in this study, as evidenced by the three most prevalent aspects of Indigenous identity cited by interviewees having to do with relations to other people or communities. Having these relations appears reassure interviewees that they are an insider in Indigenous networks of practices. This increases their confidence to claim and display their Indigeniety. Also, individuals may have their

confidence directly bolstered by receiving support from Indigenous people they meet, such as other Indigenous entrepreneurs. In these and other ways, entrepreneurial practices lead to the increased capability to maintaining or developing an Indigenous identity.

This being said, relations with other Indigenous people are not all positive, yet people deal with any negative reactions through identity work. Several interviewees in this study related that they do not receive support from some Indigenous people. They refer to this as the 'tall poppy syndrome', a metaphor which suggests that the flower that achieves success or notoriety and rises up above the rest will get chopped off and brought back down to the height of other poppies (Peeters, 2004). If people have an Indigenous identity disconfirmed or critiqued in a tall poppy situation, surprisingly, this does not impact their capability to display their Indigenous identity in a significant way. For instance Interviewee 16, Rebecca, recounts:

When I had my first restaurant, everybody called me a coconut because I was working in, you know, a white fella world. I can't take on other people's shit and I've got to lead by example. I don't sit and worry about what people think. I don't give a shit about them. They don't know anything about being Indigenous, you know. I know my culture, I'm involved in our communities and know where we need to get to. It's just—I'm over it. (116)

Interviewees use a number of strategies to achieve this stability. For instance, Rebecca *discredits* the person who called her a coconut by saying 'they don't know anything about being Indigenous'. This serves to erode the legitimacy of their comments. In a similar way, when discussing firing an employee who then engaged in lateral violence, Interviewee 5 explains:

[When I fired him I said] "That's it, mate. Go on. You're sacked. Pack your gear up". Now, he's a black fella just like me and he called me a racist. I said, "Are you crazy? I'm black just like you". How ignorant do you have to be to call me a racist? (15)

In addition to discrediting, Rebecca also *praises* herself as a credible source based on involvement in and contributions to Indigenous communities and cultures. These forms of identity work are important for this study as they are narrative strategies

that are used to connect Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. This is particularly true in tall poppy situations arising in business and in the positive statements they make about their Indigenous identity to refute such claims. This identity work focuses on the credibility of oneself and others rather than the content of an interaction. This is significant since previously reported narrative identity work strategies—which I characterized in the literature review as adopting part of or an entire identity (*embracing*), rejecting part of or an entire identity (*distancing*), altering or transforming an identity (revising), creating boundaries between two or more identities (*compartmentalization*) or creating overlap between two or more identities (*integration*)—focus on the identities themselves rather than on the credibility of actors. For instance, if Rebecca used a *distancing* strategy instead of a *discrediting* strategy she may have said, “I know what they mean about being a coconut, but I’m not a coconut” rather than discrediting the people lobbing the criticisms. Thus, *discrediting* and *praising* are two new forms of identity work not previously outlined in the literature and which focus on the positioning of actors rather than on the content of identities.

### ***Status in Indigenous Networks of Practice***

Entrepreneurship can act as a platform for developing status both within and outside of the east coast Australian Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice. Inside this network of practice, practitioners develop credibility as they adopt the norms and expectations of the practice. Those who conform to central standards of the practice and who can shape their identity accordingly will likely be those with status. Narratives and actions that appear to be rewarded in the network include connections often cited during interviews, including contributions to community, strengthening culture, generating self-sufficiency and building the capacity of Indigenous workers through mentorship and training. Individuals who fit these normative standards and who develop identities which include being community-active and culturally-sensitive appear to be more likely to become role models through venues such as Indigenous chambers of commerce. Outside of the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice, voice and status may also spill over into the wider business and Indigenous communities. This may occur as practices and associated identities overlap (Handley et al., 2006), which means that benevolent actions and identities in the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice may also be valued by a non-business Indigenous community as well as vice versa.

Despite the ability for entrepreneurial practices to contribute to the prominence of an Indigenous identity, the extent to which status is increased needs to be carefully negotiated. As detailed above, an aspect of the Australian Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice is the tall poppy syndrome (Foley, 2006a). This syndrome provides sanctions for behaviour that deviates from the norms of the practice in the form of ridicule, disapproval and lack of patronage of a business. For these reasons the norm of the practice, as evidenced by interviewees' responses to questions, is to be modest and careful which means Indigenous entrepreneurs sometimes need to remain quiet about their opinions and about claiming their status in the community. For some, this constricts their ability speak up inside the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice. For others, this means that they need to situate their success within their familial and community support network so as not to appear either as though they have achieved success single-handedly or as though they feel they are superior. Interviewee 20 explains:

[If I did not give thanks to those who have supported me at public events] I would be very pretentious and proud and all about me and not about anybody else. Whereas saying you're part of a greater body of people or family or community is to share that you're only one drop of water in a great ocean and that great ocean is really what counts, not me standing up front. I think it's a humbling thing and I think it's really important to remain humble when you're often in a public realm. I don't like being famous but I like making my community famous. (120)

### ***Pride in Indigenous Identity***

Entrepreneurial practices can generate pride in Indigenous identity through providing resources to confirm core elements of Indigenous identity. As was evidenced in *Table 3.4*, the most frequently cited aspect of the Indigenous identity in this study was community connections. Entrepreneurial practices can enable this aspect of Indigenous identity by providing opportunities to assist or give back to community, engage in cultural preservation and sharing, employ and empower Indigenous workers and generate income which can be donated to charitable Indigenous initiatives. These actions are generally supported by other Indigenous people and entrepreneurs both inside and outside the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice, as they benefit Indigenous people and represent an important aspect of what it means to be Indigenous. Generally, the confirmation of one's identity by others generates positive emotions/feelings (Burke

& Stets, 2009). When the identity of being a community-oriented Indigenous person is confirmed, the positive emotion of pride appears to be generated. As interviewee 18, Mike, suggests:

For me, being Aboriginal is an innate part of your identity. There's no kind of separation [in business]. And I guess driving my life has always been about making a difference in our community and wanting to see, in particular, young people provided with opportunities to really advance...And I particularly see that economic development and people making their own decision about getting into business is one of those things that'll change our community....And this doesn't change...my Aboriginality but [instead] it allows me to function and contribute back to the Aboriginal community in different ways. (I18)

Interestingly, pride does not seem to be created through practices focused on the environment. Few interviewees in this study talked about practices relating to protecting the environment. This is interesting as often environmental protection is a commonly cited role of Indigenous peoples (Talbot, 2012). This may be because there are few rewards or sanctions in the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice for engaging or not engaging in environmental practices. Alternatively, interviewees may engage in environmental practices but might not develop an identity around these practices, which means no generation of positive emotions of pride when an environmental steward identity becomes instantiated and confirmed. Regardless of the reasons why, this finding challenges the assumption held by many that Indigenous peoples value environmental protection over entrepreneurship and innovation (Galbraith et al., 2006).

#### **3.4.4. How Indigenous Identity Influences Entrepreneurial Practices**

This section will discuss how Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices. Three mechanisms that were created by grouping similar experiences/perspectives codes and which appear to connect these concepts are responsibility, opportunity and pride. These will be discussed in turn.

**Table 3.11. How Indigenous Identity Influences Entrepreneurial Practices**

| Common Experiences/ Perspectives Codes from Findings  | Clusters That Referenced Code  | Mechanism   | Summary of Clusters that Referenced Mechanisms |
|---|--------------------------------|---|--|
| -Build Indigenous capacity (motivation)<br>-Cultural revival and revitalization (motivation)<br>-Assist or give back to community (motivation)  | 1<br>1<br>1, 3                 | <b>Responsibility</b> to Indigenous people                    | 1, 3   |
| - Indigenous products and services needed for Indigenous customers (motivation)<br>- Access to Indigenous and non-Indigenous customers (both enabling and constraining)<br>-Connect with Indigenous identity (motivation) | 6<br>4<br>2, 5                 | <b>Opportunity</b> to develop Indigenous products or services | 2, 4, 5, 6                                     |
| - Authenticity and reputation<br>- Communication style<br>- Respect for protocols<br>- Business esthetic<br>- Reacting against cultural stereotypes   | 3, 6<br>2, 6<br>2<br>5<br>2, 5 | <b>Legitimacy</b> to develop Indigenous products or services  | 2, 3, 5, 6                                     |

### ***Responsibility***

Indigenous identity may generate a drive to contribute to Indigenous people through entrepreneurship (Cote, 2012). Many of the interviewees in this study either implicitly or explicitly suggested that their Indigenous identity creates a responsibility to contribute back to their family, community and network and to remember important individuals that helped them to be who they are and achieve their current successes. This may be especially the case for those who construct their identities as being community-oriented, Indigenous people. Being community-oriented necessitates honouring and giving back to one's community. Entrepreneurship can be viewed as a flexible idea that can be tailored by entrepreneurs to their unique circumstances and goals (Sarasvathy, 2001) that allows for this honouring and giving back. Interviewees stated that they uphold their responsibility to communities in several ways including being a role model, donating products or services and hiring and mentoring Indigenous employees. Of course, these types of actions are limited by constraints such as availability of time and profits. However, the main point many interviewees relate through narratives about their experiences and perspectives is that their Indigenous identity

creates a responsibility to give back to Indigenous people, which can be upheld through entrepreneurship.

### ***Opportunity***

Interviewees in this study suggested that being Indigenous enables them to discover or create entrepreneurial opportunities (Alvarez & Barney, 2007). It also provides them with the opportunity to strengthen their Indigenous identity through entrepreneurship. It is well known within the general entrepreneurship (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000) as well as the ethnic entrepreneurship (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Chaganti & Greene, 2002; Essers & Benschop, 2009; Harvey, 2005; Volery, 2007) literature that specific knowledge about products or customers not held equally by all in the marketplace can be useful for discovering or creating entrepreneurial opportunities. Indigenous entrepreneurs are no different, and they use their knowledge about the needs and desires of Indigenous consumers in order to fill gaps in the Indigenous marketplace. These initiatives include services tailored to Indigenous customers such as governance consultants. Indigenous entrepreneurs also have the knowledge and legitimacy to run Indigenous-specific businesses that fulfill a range of purposes for non-Indigenous clients such as giving 'welcome to country' statements at events. In this way, entrepreneurs frame these benefits of their Indigenous identity as being enablers of business success. In addition, although somewhat of a tautology, several interviewees suggested that their Indigenous identity created a desire to further connect with their Indigenous identity through entrepreneurship. This is the case, as being an entrepreneur provides opportunities to develop an Indigenous identity (Gallagher & Lawrence, 2012). This desire may influence the entrepreneurial practices in which Indigenous entrepreneurs engaged to heighten the opportunities that maintain or bolster their Indigenous identity.

### ***Legitimacy***

Interviewees in this study suggested that they must confront issues around legitimacy from non-Indigenous and Indigenous customers. Non-Indigenous people often hold out-dated and racist views about Indigenous people (King, 2012). Regardless of the incorrectness of these views, these standards may affect the decisions of non-Indigenous people, such as where they buy their products or services. Generally,

consumers hope to see a match between the ethnicity and identity of the person with the product or service. For instance, many customers visiting a sushi restaurant want to see Japanese entrepreneurs and staff running the business, not French or Thai entrepreneurs and staff. If there is a perceived mismatch between the identity of the owner and the service or product, customers could perceive the service or product or the delivery of the service or product as being inauthentic. Interviewees attempted to approach questions of legitimacy from non-Indigenous people in several ways including creating an Indigenous name and logo to establish a certain Indigenous business aesthetic, obtaining Supply Nation certification as an Indigenous business or taking out membership in an Indigenous Chamber of Commerce. Interviewees also suggested that Indigenous customers can be concerned about legitimacy as well. As was discussed earlier, within the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice, there are loosely defined standards of how Indigenous entrepreneurs should think, talk and act. Two of these standards are to respect protocols and to act humbly. Several interviewees in this study implied that they comply with these standards in order to be deemed a legitimate Indigenous entrepreneur. If one breaks these standards, there will likely be sanctions in the form of tall poppy behaviour.

Interviewees leveraged several specific entrepreneurial practices in order to gain legitimacy with Indigenous people. These included having a relaxed and in-person communication style and approach to building relations that focused on long-term mutually beneficial dealings. There are, however, limits to what interviewees in this study suggested they would do to gain legitimacy in the eyes of customers and other stakeholders. Many interviewees refused to engage in practices that reinforce cultural stereotypes of Indigenous peoples, such as dressing or talking in stereotypically 'traditional' ways (King, 2012). Also, some interviewees talked about not giving into individuals who criticized them in a tall poppy fashion. Despite these contentious claims, as was discussed in the findings section, interviewees resist by discrediting tall poppy propagators and by praising their own normative stance.

In the previous two sections, I have outlined six mechanisms that emerged from further data analysis as to how entrepreneurial practices and Indigenous identity connect. These mechanisms provide one set of answers to research questions 1 (RQ1)

and 2 (RQ2) as they outline one set of abstract explanations concerning how Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices connect.

### **3.5. Discussion**

In this discussion section, I provide one set of answers to research question 3 (RQ3), which emerged after considering from the literature on how practices and identity generally connect. RQ3 asks whether the mechanisms that connect Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices are sporadic or whether there are trends or patterns that can be identified in terms of which mechanisms are associated with one another. Furthermore, if there are mechanisms which are associated with one another, is it plausible that they form a self-reinforcing iterative cycle? Although rooted in the findings, this line of inquiry moves beyond the data to suggest how Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices may connect on an abstract theoretical level.

To explore whether any mechanisms paired with one another, I first examined *Table 3.10* and *3.11* to determine whether particular mechanisms from the two different tables shared the same clusters. Upon investigation, I observed that *Clusters 1* and *3* shared similar mechanisms and that *Clusters 2, 5* and *6* shared similar mechanisms. I used this information to create two 'Cluster Groups' in order to investigate whether more could be observed by grouping clusters together than viewing them separately. It should be noted that due to the small numbers of stated connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices by interviewees in 'Disjointed' *Cluster 4*, *Cluster 4* did not hold any relevance to this exploration of the connections between mechanisms and was thus dropped from subsequent analysis. The mechanisms which interviewees in each Cluster Group discussed are diagrammatically represented below in *Figures 3.5* and *3.6*. From studying these two Cluster Groups, it appeared that there were mechanisms that both *Cluster Group 1* and *2* had in common and some that were largely unique to interviewees in only one Cluster Group.

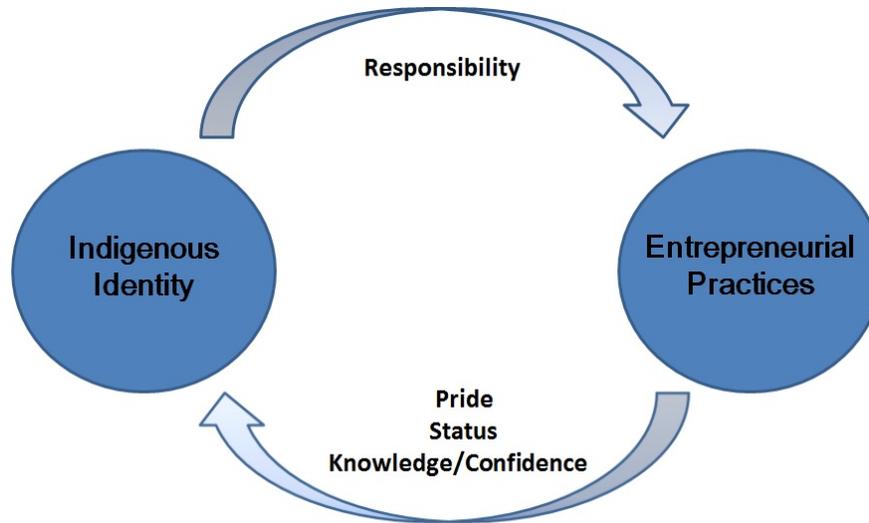
Interviewees in both Cluster Groups cited entrepreneurial practices as providing knowledge about Indigenous identity and status in the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice. However, interviewees in *Cluster Group 1* cited Indigenous identity as

creating responsibility and entrepreneurial practices generating pride whereas interviewees in *Cluster Group 2* did not. I focused on these unique factors to this of *Cluster Group 1* to examine whether these mechanisms connected. Similarly, interviewees in *Cluster Group 2* referred to Indigenous identity leading to opportunity and legitimacy whereas interviewees in *Cluster Group 1* did not. I focused on these unique mechanisms to examine which other mechanisms they might connect with. From this exploration, I identified mechanisms for each cluster that logically could connect to one another and which seemed the most relevant for answering my research question. Through this identification of linked mechanisms, it appeared that there may be one self-reinforcing and iterative cycle for each of the Cluster Groups. To explore why two different cycles may exist, I tabulated common attributes of interviewees in each Cluster Group. These percentages are shown in *Table 3.12*. Numbers in dark blue have equal or greater than 25% variation between the two Cluster Groups, in light blue possess 15%-24% variation and in white have less than 14% variation.

In the two sections that follow, I examine how the mechanisms unique to each Cluster Group may interact with the focal concepts of Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. In doing so, I suggest that a positive reinforcing cycle may exist between particular mechanisms and concepts for interviewees in each Cluster Group. Next, I discuss implications which the identification of these cycles may have for Indigenous entrepreneurship research as well as broader research on activism and change making in Indigenous contexts.

### 3.5.1. Cluster Group 1

Figure 3.5. Cluster Group 1



For interviewees in *Cluster Group 1*, there appear to be connections between the following: Indigenous identity and responsibility; responsibility and entrepreneurial practices; entrepreneurial practice and pride and pride and Indigenous identity. Indigenous identity may instill feelings of obligation to assist and give back to Indigenous networks of practice. This was the case for many interviewees, as they suggested some Indigenous people are in need of assistance and leadership. They also substantiated the claim that sharing and reciprocity are often central values within Indigenous communities (R. Atleo, 2005). This perceived responsibility, which is likely generated by strong connections to Indigenous communities (90% of interviewees in *Cluster 1* had connections to communities versus 50% in *Cluster 2*), may influence entrepreneurial practices in several ways including engaging in practices that build the capacity for hiring more Indigenous employees. These practices can create pride in fulfilling one's responsibility to Indigenous people. Several factors unique to interviewees in *Cluster Group 1* may explain the possibility of entrepreneurial practices generating pride. For instance, cultural preservation and sharing may be possible because interviewees have an Indigenous product or service (70% had an Indigenous product or service in this Cluster Group versus 35% in *Cluster Group 2*), which means they can revitalize culture through their businesses. Likewise, pride generated from empowering Indigenous people can be perhaps most directly accomplished through employing Indigenous

people (40% in this Cluster Group had Indigenous employees versus 15% in *Cluster Group 2*).

Indigenous identity, responsibility, entrepreneurial practices and pride may create a positive reinforcing cycle. Although I do not have temporal or static data which speaks directly to this cycle occurring, the existence of a responsibility-pride cycle can be inferred through my analysis. Several factors could ignite the cycle but perhaps the most likely are changes to Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. Changes in Indigenous identity, such as increased connections with Indigenous networks of practice, may create important changes in the responsibility that one feels, which can then influence entrepreneurial practices, which may in turn create feelings of pride. Likewise, changes to entrepreneurial practices, such as pride felt through hiring the first Indigenous employee, may trigger this cycle. Regardless, a cycle in which acting on responsibility creates pride or in which pride generates feelings of responsibility could create an iterative feedback loop where responsibility and pride increase in tandem, up to a certain limit. This limit may be enforced, for instance, by available profits, time or mental energy to contribute back to Indigenous people and communities.

The identification of this potential cycle has implications for Indigenous entrepreneurship research as well as for broader research on activism and change making in Indigenous contexts. For Indigenous entrepreneurship research, this cycle suggests that many Indigenous entrepreneurs neither assimilate nor leave their relations and connections to Indigenous communities behind. Instead, some Indigenous entrepreneurs suggest that they feel a responsibility to contribute and give back and that through this cycle they could feel an increased responsibility to give back. Entrepreneurship also enabled interviewees to engage in practices that increase their pride in their Indigenous identity. This means that for many interviewees in this study entrepreneurship does not lead to assimilation. On the contrary, it can strengthen Indigenous identity. Much research on Indigenous thought and activism focuses on the connections between responsibility and pride. One such body of research was created by a Mohawk scholar living in Canada, Taiaike Alfred, who focuses on the responsibility that Indigenous peoples have to live lives in Indigenous ways and to resist colonization and other threats to Indigenous existence (Alfred, 2005, 2008; Alfred & Corntassel,

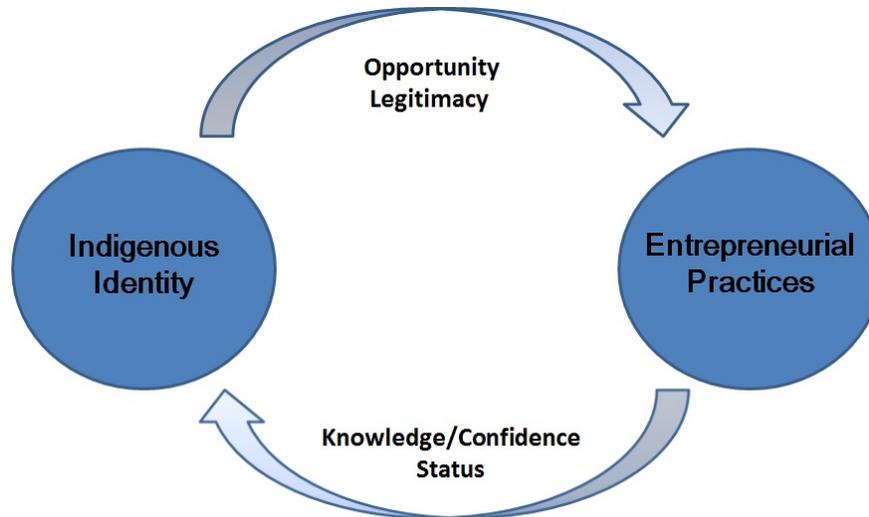
2005). Along with efforts to decolonize and strengthen oneself, these actions can create pride in being an Indigenous person who defends Indigenous agency and sovereignty. For Alfred, business and entrepreneurship often acts as a destructive force in this benevolent cycle, as they are colonial instruments that drive a further wedge between people and their traditional values and cultures (Alfred, 2005). My study, where the cycle emerged from the perspectives and experiences of Australian Indigenous entrepreneurs, suggests otherwise. Although the responsibility-pride cycle may be experienced differently by Indigenous entrepreneurs compared with how it is experienced by political activists – Alfred’s primary focus – the fundamental cycle can be viewed as being similar. This should prompt scholars such as Alfred who focus on responsibility and pride to reconsider or explore in more depth how entrepreneurship can help to facilitate such a cycle.

**Table 3.12. Common Attributes of Cluster Groups**

| Attribute                              | Attribute Value | Cluster Group 1 | Cluster Group 2 | Difference Between Cluster Groups |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Connections to Community               | Yes             | 90%             | 50%             | 40%                               |
| Indigenous-specific product or service | Yes             | 70%             | 35%             | 35%                               |
| Supply Nation Member                   | No              | 90%             | 60%             | 30%                               |
| Employing Indigenous                   | Yes             | 40%             | 15%             | 25%                               |
| Time Identified                        | Always or Early | 80%             | 65%             | 15%                               |
| Gender                                 | Female          | 40%             | 55%             | 15%                               |
| Skin Colour                            | Light           | 50%             | 65%             | 15%                               |
| Company Age                            | Young           | 60%             | 50%             | 10%                               |
| Consulting or Arts                     | Yes             | 60%             | 50%             | 10%                               |

### 3.5.2. Cluster Group 2

Figure 3.6. Cluster Group 2



For interviewees in *Cluster Group 2*, there appear to be connections between Indigenous identity, opportunity and legitimacy; opportunity, legitimacy and entrepreneurial practices; entrepreneurial practices, status and knowledge/confidence as well as status, knowledge/confidence and Indigenous identity. For individuals who may not have strong connections to community (only 50% of interviewees in this Cluster had connections to community), Indigenous identity may create an entrepreneurial opportunity as well as assurances about concerns around legitimacy. Being Indigenous may mean that entrepreneurial opportunities can be discovered or created since knowledge about Indigenous customers or membership in a Supply Nation can provide access to new customers. Being Indigenous may also mean that others will deem the Indigenous entrepreneur authentic and therefore permitted to provide Indigenous products and services to Indigenous people. However, the access to opportunities provided by one's Indigenous identity also sensitized interviewees to questions around their legitimacy. This appeared to particularly be the case for entrepreneurs who are Supply Nation members and who do not employ Indigenous people but who do not want to be treated as token Indigenous businesses to fulfill Indigenous procurement goals (60% of interviewees in this Cluster Group are Supply Nation members).

Opportunity and legitimacy may in turn alter entrepreneurial practices. For instance, if concerns around legitimacy arise, this may cause Supply Nation member entrepreneurs to focus on refuting any claims of a lack of authenticity or to concentrate on providing quality products and services at a competitive price. Entrepreneurial practices in turn may increase or decrease status in Indigenous networks of practice as well as knowledge/confidence in Indigenous identity. For instance, if entrepreneurs become Supply Nation members, and this increased contact with Indigenous businesses moves them to Indigenize aspects of their business such as logo and name, then these changes to their business could create knowledge/confidence in their Indigenous identity. Finally, status and knowledge/confidence will impact Indigenous identity largely in positive ways, other than constraints to status within Indigenous communities or networks of practice which may mute or negatively impact the development or display of Indigenous identity.

Indigenous identity, opportunity and legitimacy, entrepreneurial practices, and status and knowledge/confidence may create a reinforcing cycle. Again, although I do not have temporal data or statistics to substantiate this claim, my analysis has uncovered the plausibility of this cycle's existence. This opportunity and legitimacy-status and knowledge/confidence cycle appears to catch entrepreneurs in a potentially anxious sequence where Indigenous identity provides opportunities but also generates worries about authenticity and credibility, especially in terms of developing an Indigenous-specific product or service. This cycle may create an iterative feedback loop where opportunity and legitimacy create both benefits and concerns around status and knowledge/confidence, which can in turn create new opportunities, assurances or concerns of legitimacy. If opportunities are developed with legitimacy, this can bolster status and knowledge/confidence. If, however, opportunities are not developed with perceived legitimacy, this could decrease one's status within Indigenous communities or networks. There is no indication that knowledge/confidence in Indigenous identity could be decreased through entrepreneurial practices. Status and knowledge/confidence could, however, affect Indigenous identity in other positive ways that can influence entrepreneurial opportunities as well as perceptions of legitimacy.

The identification of this potential cycle has implications for Indigenous entrepreneurship research. First, as with other ethnic identities (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Chaganti & Greene, 2002; Essers & Benschop, 2009; Harvey, 2005; Volery, 2007), Indigenous identity can lead to the identification of entrepreneurial opportunities. These opportunities can be identified and developed by Indigenous entrepreneurs because they are Indigenous. Generally speaking, non-Indigenous people cannot take advantage of businesses where there is an Indigenous-specific product or service and cannot generally benefit from businesses that are developed from involvement in Indigenous organizations such as Supply Nation. This means that being Indigenous can be a business advantage. This positive influence of Indigenous identity on entrepreneurial practices is rarely mentioned in Indigenous entrepreneurship research. To not do so, but to highlight several negatives of being Indigenous on the entrepreneurial process, does not do justice to the benefits which being Indigenous has for entrepreneurship. Second, even for entrepreneurs in *Cluster Group 2*, who are ordinarily less involved in Indigenous communities (50% versus 90%), generally do not have Indigenous-specific products and services (35% versus 70%) and employ few Indigenous employees (15% versus 40%), entrepreneurship provides a way to increase status in Indigenous networks of practice as well as knowledge/confidence in Indigenous identity. It is a surprising and hopeful observation that Indigenous people with weaker connections to Indigenous communities and less developed identities can create or find themselves in largely positive cycles that help their business and reinforce their identities. However, this cycle indicates that less community-involved entrepreneurs are much more aware of their legitimacy than more community-involved entrepreneurs. This could be due to the tall poppy syndrome where Indigenous people criticize one another for bettering themselves or achieving success. If kept in check, however, concerns around legitimacy can likely be healthy and productive for the development of a business. However, if allowed to spin out of control, concerns about legitimacy could create uneasiness and anxiety which could negatively impact Indigenous identity as well as the experience of starting and running a business.

### 3.6. Conclusion

This study attempted to answer three research questions: 1) How do entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity? 2) How does Indigenous identity influence entrepreneurial practices? and 3) Are there mechanisms that connect Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices that create self-reinforcing iterative cycles? These questions were explored through thirty interviews with Indigenous entrepreneurs in New South Wales and Victoria in Australia. Out of this qualitative research, overall I found that entrepreneurial practices create pride in Indigenous identity and increased status – albeit with a potentially muted voice – in Indigenous networks of practice. Furthermore, I found that, overall, entrepreneurial practices generate knowledge/confidence in Indigenous identity. Indigenous identity influenced entrepreneurial practices by providing the following: responsibility to run a business in a way that contributed to Indigenous people, entrepreneurial opportunities and resources to claim and show one’s legitimacy as a credible and authentic provider of Indigenous goods and services. These connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices, however, varied greatly between interviewees grouped into six clusters. Each of these clusters had unique combinations of personal and business attributes which influenced connections between entrepreneurial practices and Indigenous identities. From these clusters I created two Cluster Groups that led to the identification of mechanisms which linked to one another and which might create iterative cycles of either ‘responsibility—pride’ or ‘opportunity and legitimacy—status and knowledge/confidence’.

Despite the care taken to be robust, this study has several limitations related to methods and available data. One limitation of conducting interviews is that interviews cannot reveal what a participant actually thinks, feels or does (Alvesson, 2003). I acknowledge this by reaffirming that in this study I have only been able to understand how participants portray the connections of their Indigenous identities and entrepreneurial practices. A second limitation of interviews is that the more support people get from an audience for a particular identity, the more prominence it will hold in the narratives they create (Burke & Stets, 2009). This means that if interviewees thought I supported their Indigenous identity, their Indigenous identity might hold more

prominence in their narratives about themselves than in other social interactions. I deal with this by acknowledging that Indigenous identities may be highlighted in this study more than would likely happen in other types of social interactions (Alvesson, 2003). A third limitation of interviews is that the overall themes found may be more skewed toward positive connections between entrepreneurial practices, Indigenous identities and relations, as individuals often create situations to confirm their identities (Burke & Stets, 2009) and because the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice has norms and understandings which influence interviewees' narratives. I deal with this by acknowledging that my results may be slanted toward positive connections. In terms of sampling, my study only included Indigenous entrepreneurs. Other Indigenous community members and related stakeholders could be included in future studies in order to gain a greater multi-stakeholder perspective on the focal connections. In addition, this study included only successful Indigenous entrepreneurs who agreed to meet with me, which could create some bias in the findings. For instance, entrepreneurs who agreed to talk with me may have a higher propensity to think of themselves as role models than entrepreneurs who did not meet with me. To overcome this limitation, future studies could seek to include those who had failed businesses as well as those entrepreneurs who are not as active in the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice. Finally, this study suggested potential cycles in which interviewees may be immersed. Although emergent from data, more field work and analysis would be needed to confirm these inferences.

This study has implications for research on Indigenous identity, Indigenous entrepreneurship, narrative identity work as well as for governments and organizations involved in supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship. This study found that some interviewees felt their Indigenous identities evolved and were closely linked to their work and organizational affiliations. In conceptual writings on Indigenous identity, typically ancestry, connections to communities and cultures and colour of skin present themselves as the dominant concepts (e.g. Palmater, 2011; Peroff, 1997; Weaver, 2001). Many writings also fail to highlight how important work and organizational affiliations are to Indigenous identity. With connections to ancestral communities and cultures deeply shattered by colonialism, for many, work and organizational roles play an important aspect of what it means to be a contemporary Indigenous person.

Organizational roles appear to be particularly important for driving people to identify as Indigenous and to develop their Indigenous identity.

This study contributes to Indigenous entrepreneurship research in several ways. First, it has found that entrepreneurial practices provide more resources than constraints for the development and maintenance of an Indigenous identity. This suggests that, from the perspective of entrepreneurs in this study, entrepreneurship provides more benefits than risks to the maintenance and development of an Indigenous identity. This may be due to several factors including: the flexible platform which entrepreneurship provides for people to run businesses the way they want, which enables them to build identity synergies and limit identity conflicts; the reality that many people are still developing their Indigenous identities and have more to gain than lose from entrepreneurship in terms of how they understand themselves as an Indigenous person and the fact that people who engage in identity work may be compelled to either address or work around any constraints. Regardless of the reasons on why this is the case, this study lends credence to the idea that entrepreneurship is appropriate and useful economic, social and cultural mechanism for some Indigenous people (Cornell et al., 2007; Miller, 2008).

Second, this study documented entrepreneurial practices which entrepreneurs purportedly felt were connected to their Indigenous identity. Research done to date has suggested that Indigenous entrepreneurship may guide one's motivation to be an entrepreneur; it may also influence specific strategies such as incorporating cultural principles into the business (Shoebridge et al., 2012). This study has suggested several other practices entrepreneurs feel may be uniquely Indigenous, including: Indigenizing a company name or logo; not conducting conventional advertising and marketing because of the close connections within the Indigenous community; giving preferential pricing to Indigenous customers; hiring and mentoring Indigenous people as whole people both inside and outside of work settings; developing policies and procedures to take advantage or procurement opportunities; communicating face-to-face; building long-term and mutually beneficial relations with clients and listening to ancestors and spirits. Of course, some of these practices will overlap with other entrepreneurial networks of practice. For instance, entrepreneurs of other cultural groups will value and practice building good relationships with clients. However, for many Indigenous peoples, relations

take on a different meaning and priority (Wilson, 2008). In this way, although many of the practices outlined in this paper are not wholly unique to Indigenous entrepreneurs, they do have dimensions that Indigenous entrepreneurs suggest are unique to Indigenous people. The identification of these practices contributes significantly to our understanding of how Indigenous entrepreneurs may be unique.

Finally, this study is one of the first that looks at the heterogeneity of Indigenous entrepreneurs in one country and has found that the heterogeneity of connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices can be organized around a few core mechanisms. Most studies do not look at the variation between participants, which tends to paint Indigenous experiences of entrepreneurship homogeneously (e.g. Hindle & Lansdowne, 2005; Reveley & Down, 2009; Shoebridge et al., 2012). Identifying different experiences does justice to the diversity of Indigenous business owners. Furthermore, this study has shown that the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices vary between Indigenous entrepreneurs and are organized around several key mechanisms such as responsibility, legitimacy and pride. It is my hope that researchers in this area will see the value of looking for variation and will construct future studies to further explore how entrepreneurs' businesses and experiences differ according to key mechanisms outlined above.

This study also contributes to literature on narrative identity work. Although many different terms are used in different studies, in the literature review I describe several core narrative identity work strategies as involving how individual(s): adopt part of or an entire identity (embracing), reject part of or an entire identity (distancing), alter or transform an identity (revising), create boundaries between two or more identities (compartmentalization) or create overlap between two or more identities (integration). In addition to these strategies, this study found that people also engage in *discrediting* and *praising* narrative identity work strategies that focus on the credibility of the narrator rather than on the content of narratives. These strategies are particularly important for this study as they are often used as narrative mechanisms that touch on how entrepreneurial practices and identity connect. This identification of two new forms of identity work suggests new research pathways for examining how individuals attempt to situate themselves and others in terms of credibility.

For governments or organizations involved in policy surrounding Indigenous entrepreneurship, the two potential cycles outlined in this paper linking Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices could be used to understand the variation in entrepreneurs and how to support them. For instance, Indigenous Chambers of Commerce support many aspects of entrepreneurial development. The support that entrepreneurs need in terms of the connections between their Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices will vary between entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs who are similar to interviewees in *Cluster Group 1* may need assistance in heightening the effectiveness of how their business can enable them to fulfill their felt responsibility to Indigenous people and communities. In contrast, entrepreneurs who are similar to interviewees in *Cluster Group 2* may need to be supported in their attempts to increase legitimacy. Efforts to support entrepreneurs such as those in this cluster group are likely already underway, but the identification of the two cycles in this paper could help to provide a systematic outline of what mechanisms might need to be established for different sets of entrepreneurs. In addition, this research suggests that, as well as conventional aspects of business such as business plans and funding, support should be given to practices which Indigenous entrepreneurs claim constrain them, such as reacting against cultural stereotypes, being approachable to non-Indigenous customers, finding a voice within community, not being a token business to meet the procurement goals of non-Indigenous organizations and dealing with having to develop policies and procedures. These practices appear critically important to Indigenous entrepreneurs and should be further investigated and sustained to increase the effectiveness of training, support and, in turn, success of Indigenous businesses.

For Indigenous people practising entrepreneurship, this research could provide an understanding about how they relate to other Indigenous entrepreneurs. It could also offer ideas about how they can navigate connecting their Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. For many Indigenous entrepreneurs, considering how their identity connects with being an entrepreneur is important. The typology in this study provides a framework for understanding how their connections compare to other Indigenous entrepreneurs. This could provide confidence and assurance that their experiences are similar to certain groups of entrepreneurs. This study could also provide ideas in terms of how to conduct oneself or operate a business in ways that maximize

the advantageous influence of Indigenous identity on entrepreneurial practices as well as vice versa. In particular, the tables presented that documented how interviewees relate their identities and what entrepreneurial practices they engage in, as well as the figures of cycles, may be particularly useful.

In conclusion, Indigenous entrepreneurship is an important aspect of Indigenous life. There are several ways in which being Indigenous affects what people do in their entrepreneurial ventures. Conversely, there are several ways in which what people do in their ventures impacts their Indigenous identities. These connections vary between different groups of entrepreneurs who have wide-ranging histories and business characteristics. Overall, entrepreneurship provides more ways to strengthen Indigenous identity than to weaken it. This provides credence to the perspective that entrepreneurship can positively affect Indigenous life. Indigenous entrepreneurs are also running their businesses in several ways they feel are unique to being Indigenous. This supports the perspective that some Indigenous entrepreneurs run their businesses in uniquely Indigenous ways. The business landscape and what it means to be an Indigenous entrepreneur in Australia is in constant flux. Indigenous entrepreneurs are navigating these changes and are finding ways to bridge being Indigenous and an entrepreneur in ways that are useful and beneficial for themselves, their families and their communities.

## **Chapter 4.**

### **Paper 3: An International Comparison of the Connections Between Indigenous Identities and Entrepreneurial Practices in Canada and Australia**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

Entrepreneurship is gaining prominence within Indigenous populations (Cornell et al., 2007; Hunter, 2013; Miller, 2012). Concurrently, many Indigenous people are attempting to revitalize fundamental aspects of who they are that have been damaged by colonialism – including their Indigenous identity (Alfred, 2005; Borrows, 2010b; Foley & Maynard, 2001). With increased interest in the resurgence of Indigenous identity and entrepreneurship, questions emerge regarding if and how entrepreneurship can influence Indigenous identity as well as if and how Indigenous identity may influence entrepreneurship. These questions hold fundamental importance for Indigenous people, many of whom are looking to strengthen or resurrect their Indigenous identity (Borrows, 2010b; Foley, 2006a; Read, 2009). They are also seeking to improve their standard of living and community conditions through engagement in entrepreneurship (Foley, 2006b, 2010; Hindle & Lansdowne, 2005; Peredo et al., 2004). Scholars have weighed in on these questions, but there lacks both consensus (Gallagher & Lawrence, 2012; Shoebridge et al., 2012) as well as specificity in terms of how Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices as well as how entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity.

In order to develop rich understandings about these lines of inquiry, in this paper I compare the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous entrepreneurs in two different region/country contexts. By comparing two sets of experiences and perspectives, a different understanding can be gained than if I were to investigate only one context. This

is because in considering only one context, important aspects of context that affect the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices could remain taken for granted and unidentified. By comparing the factors of context that influence the connections between Indigenous identities and entrepreneurial practices in two contexts, differences among what contextual factors are important in each context, or how the same factors differently affect the connections in each context, may alert me to contextual factors and their influence on the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices.

In order to explore the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices in two contexts, this paper will leverage the concepts of context, Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. Context refers to any aspect of the region or country's social, cultural, political or economic environment that is not directly within the control of individual Indigenous entrepreneurs and which affects either how Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices or how entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity. Identity refers to "the set of meanings that define who one is" as well as who one is not (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 1). This study will focus on the way that Indigenous entrepreneurs use narratives to reveal or construct meaning around who they are as Indigenous people. Narratives surrounding Indigenous identity may touch on multiple elements including lineage (Palmater, 2011; Weaver, 2001), urban residence (Andersen, 2014), colour of skin and hair (Krouse, 1999) and involvement in Indigenous culture and communities (Borrows, 2010b; Palmater, 2011; Weaver, 2001). Entrepreneurial practices are actions engaged in by entrepreneurs as well as the common understandings and norms surrounding these actions. Entrepreneurial practices, like all practices, are enabled by shared know-how and understandings of communities or networks of practice (Tagliaventi & Mattarelli, 2006; Wenger, 2010) which take the form of rules, guidelines and norms. The actions that entrepreneurs take, in turn, either reproduce or alter these norms and understandings (Sarason et al., 2006).

To explore how context influences the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices, I conducted sixty interviews and two focus groups across New South Wales and Victoria on the east coast of Australia (NSW/VIC) and British

Columbia, Canada (BC). I selected participants who lived and conducted business in urban areas, as the majority of Indigenous people in both regions are urban-based (Environics Institute, 2011; Hunter, 2013) and because the majority of research on Indigenous entrepreneurship has neglected urban entrepreneurial activity (Cote, 2012; Foley, 2006b). I theoretically sampled participants and sourced NSW/VIC participants primarily from Indigenous Business Chamber membership lists and BC participants primarily from the BC Aboriginal Business Awards recipients' lists as well from personal contacts. Interviews lasted on average one hour and eleven minutes while focus groups lasted on average one hour and twelve minutes. After each interview and focus group, I wrote approximately two pages of memos, and I had both kinds of interactions professionally transcribed. In total, interviews and focus groups from both BC and NSW/VIC Indigenous entrepreneurs amounted to 73.42 hours of recording and 1756 pages of transcription. I analyzed the data in seven stages, employing the qualitative analysis program NVivo, which uses coding, code matrix and cluster analysis functions. I did this in order to explore how entrepreneurs differed from one another in their experiences of context and how they responded differently to context.

This paper makes several contributions to research, policy and practice. For Indigenous entrepreneurship research, this paper highlights different contextual factors that influence the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices that have been underemphasized in existing research, such as physical location of Indigenous entrepreneurs as well as the history and development of Indigenous networks of practice. Also for Indigenous entrepreneurship research, this study shows that despite an emphasis in existing literature that Indigenous identity will largely inhibit or interfere with entrepreneurial practices (e.g. Furneaux & Brown, 2007; Reveley & Down, 2009), many Indigenous entrepreneurs in both contexts state that their Indigenous identity positively influences their entrepreneurial practices. This opens up new lines of potential research that could explore the wide range of benefits that being Indigenous can have for entrepreneurial ventures. Findings of this paper may also prove useful for policy makers and organizations that support Indigenous entrepreneurs, particularly in Canada. Although not a core focus of this study, through this paper it emerged that Australian policies and programs that encourage government organizations and non-Indigenous corporations to buy Indigenous do appear to support

some Indigenous entrepreneurs. Although Canada is typically heralded as a global leader in policy surrounding Indigenous entrepreneurship (Hindle, 2005), similar policies in Canada such as the Federal Government's Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business were not discussed by participants as supporting their entrepreneurial ventures. Canadian organizations that support Indigenous entrepreneurs should look to Australian organizations such as Supply Nation as potential templates upon which to construct meaningful procurement programs and policies that can support Indigenous entrepreneurs. Finally, for Canadian and Australian Indigenous entrepreneurs, this study may provide comfort in showing commonalities they have with Indigenous entrepreneurs in different contexts as well as reveal strategies that their counterparts use to link their Indigenous identities to their entrepreneurial practices that may prove useful in their own context.

This paper is organized as follows. First, I discuss how context may influence Indigenous entrepreneurship. To do so I explore existing literature in the general and ethnic entrepreneurship literatures, followed by the literature on international comparisons of Indigenous entrepreneurship across countries. Next, I outline the concepts of Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices as well as potential connections between these concepts. Following that, I discuss my methodology by providing my rationale for selecting BC and NSW/VIC as research contexts, my familiarity with these contexts and my methods of generating and analyzing data. Next, I discuss differences in the findings from each region/country and provide explanations for how differences in context may have led to variation between the BC and NSW/VIC interviewees' answers. I conclude the paper by discussing implications for research, policy and practice.

## **4.2. Literature Review**

### **4.2.1. How Context Influences Indigenous Entrepreneurship**

In this paper, context refers to any aspect of the region or country's social, cultural, political or economic environment that is not directly within the control of individual Indigenous entrepreneurs and which influence either how Indigenous identity

influences entrepreneurial practices or how entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity. This broad definition of context leaves room for multiple and diverse aspects of the external environment that influence Indigenous entrepreneurship to emerge in this study. Context will be thought of at the regional or country level rather than more specific social environments surrounding cities, families or workplaces in order to match the region—BC and NSW/VIC—and country—Canada and Australia—focus of this comparative study.

Recent literature has highlighted the role that context plays in entrepreneurship. Perhaps the most influential scholars in this area have been Shane and Venkataraman (2000) who suggested that entrepreneurship research should be about the nexus of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial opportunities. Entrepreneurial opportunities, they suggest, are objective phenomena which are created by contextual factors such as inefficiencies in markets. Other scholars have highlighted the important role that context has for entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial endeavours, including Sarason et al. (2006) who use structuration theory to argue that entrepreneurs are both assisted and restricted by social systems and that they are co-creators of the systems in which they are immersed. Entrepreneurs are not separate or outside of the contexts in which they are immersed. In order to fully understand many aspects of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship, research “must be carried out, and therefore understood, within the context of social systems” (Sarason et al., 2006, p. 28). Although Shane and Venkataraman (2000) and Sarason et al. (2006) approach their work from different ontological vantage points, both highlight the important role that context has for the opportunity discovery/creation and exploitation process.

Literature on ethnic entrepreneurship can contribute to this paper by outlining ways that identity may affect entrepreneurship. Although these studies generally focus on impacts on entrepreneurship rather than on specific entrepreneurial practices, these studies are still valuable since they have the potential to inform my theorization of the potential impact of context on the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. Ethnic identity literature typically focuses on immigrants who are of a minority population and share common social-cultural traditions and experiences (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Chaganti & Greene, 2002; Greene et al., 2003). The ethnic

identity literature highlights several important facets of context that restrict and support entrepreneurship. In terms of support, a lack of employment opportunities that exists in an economy or locality for people of ethnic descent may, in a way, assist in fostering entrepreneurship by propelling people toward becoming entrepreneurs in order to make a living (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Bogan & Darity Jr., 2008; Chaganti & Greene, 2002; Chan, 1997; Essers & Benschop, 2009; Harvey, 2005; Pécoud, 2004; Phillips et al., 2013; Volery, 2007; Zhou, 2004). The lack of employment opportunities and role models for co-ethnics may also drive an individual to become an entrepreneur (Chaganti & Greene, 2002; Volery, 2007; Zhou, 2004). Aspects of context may also restrict ethnic entrepreneurship several ways. First, views held by members of a society on what industries are appropriate for an entrepreneur with a certain ethnicity may limit the industry an ethnic entrepreneur chooses (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Bates et al., 2007; Volery, 2007). Second, the relative poverty of ethnic minorities in most societies might result in rent prices that may limit the location of an entrepreneurial venture to socio-economically disadvantaged areas, which in turn may restrict access to non-minority and wealthy customers (Pécoud, 2004). Finally, racism may mean that ethnic entrepreneurs have few ties to non-ethnic resources such as information and capital (Chaganti & Greene, 2002; Harvey, 2005; Volery, 2007). These and other contextual factors may restrict or support entrepreneurship among ethnic minorities. How these factors will influence specific entrepreneurial practices is unclear, but the overall theme of this brief literature review on ethnic identity and entrepreneurship is that context may negatively influence entrepreneurship, which may in turn negatively influence specific entrepreneurial practices ethnic entrepreneurs engage in, more than positively influence entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial practices.

Literature on Indigenous entrepreneurship has identified several ways that Indigenous identity interferes with entrepreneurship, which could alter both the entrepreneurial practices Indigenous entrepreneurs engage in as well as their Indigenous identity. Aspects of context that could interfere with entrepreneurship include a lack of capital to invest in business, a lack of infrastructure and governance practices surrounding entrepreneurship in Indigenous communities, a lack of skilled and motivated Indigenous work force and a lack of Indigenous community support (Cornell et al., 2007; Foley, 2005; Miller, 2008). These constraining factors that influence entrepreneurship

could affect entrepreneurial practices, either by influencing the common understandings and norms surrounding Indigenous entrepreneurship or by influencing the specific practices that entrepreneurs engage in. For instance, the lack of a skilled and motivated Indigenous workforce could lead entrepreneurs to develop ways to train and mentor Indigenous people or could lead them to partner with an Indigenous training organization.

These interfering factors, however, may be affecting Indigenous entrepreneurs less in recent times as Indigenous entrepreneurship in countries such as Canada is changing at a rapid rate. In Canada, the growth rate of entrepreneurs is approximately five times that of the non-Indigenous Canadian population (Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, 2011) and events, such as the BC Aboriginal Business awards have rapidly matured, from around 200 guests in their commencement in 2009 to approximately 700 in 2014. Some First Nations are developing infrastructure and policy to support entrepreneurship and economic development (Cornell et al., 2007). Some entrepreneurs claim they are feeling much more support than ever before from Indigenous communities (O'Neil, 2014). With the increased normalization of and support for entrepreneurship by Indigenous populations within the past few years, it is unclear whether Indigenous people cite the same concerns in terms of how context may interfere with entrepreneurship as they did in previous studies conducted as recently as five and ten years ago (e.g. Foley, 2005; Furneaux & Brown, 2007)

Literature on Indigenous entrepreneurship has also identified ways that context may restrict the display of Indigenous identities in entrepreneurial ventures. Indigenous entrepreneurs who boast about an aspect of Indigenous identity in their business activities, such as their cultural knowledge or status in their ancestral community, may be subject to judgement from other Indigenous people (Foley, 2005). These criticisms of lateral violence, labeled 'crab pot' in BC and 'tall poppy' in NSW/VIC, are lobbed at those who, according to the accuser, think they are better than other Indigenous people or who do not spread the wealth of their success derived from communal resources (Griffin, 2004; Khelsilem, 2012). Anxiety about such criticisms may constrain Indigenous entrepreneurs to only displaying aspects of their Indigenous identity that will not expose them to criticism and ridicule.

Contextual factors, on the other hand, may also support Indigenous entrepreneurship by providing the motivation to become an entrepreneur. Some Indigenous entrepreneurs look to aspects of their contexts which they do not see as just or which they would like to make better as motivators to start a business. These include the paucity of employment opportunities for Indigenous people, the lack of role models for Indigenous youth and the plethora of racist attitudes toward Indigenous people (Gallagher & Selman, 2015; Shoebridge et al., 2012). Other aspects of context that may support entrepreneurship include opportunities for mentorship and financing as well as Indigenous community support (Foley, 2005; Shoebridge et al., 2012). These aspects of context which may spark or support entrepreneurship could influence common understandings around Indigenous entrepreneurship or the specific entrepreneurial practices that Indigenous entrepreneurs engage in. For instance, the level of community support an Indigenous entrepreneur receives may influence whether they attempt to acquire customers through leveraging relationships with community members, an action fondly described by one BC interviewee in this study as the 'moccasin grapevine'.

Although they have made extremely useful contributions to research, studies which have touched on how context may influence entrepreneurship or Indigenous identity typically have had three main drawbacks. First, they tended to focus on a general level of how context influences entrepreneurship, such as how culture influences general approaches to entrepreneurship (e.g. Helin, 2006), but not on how context influences the entrepreneurial practices that Indigenous entrepreneurs select in response to their regional or country context. Secondly, few, if any, studies examined how the same regional or country context may influence Indigenous entrepreneurs differently, which could alter their entrepreneurial practices (Hindle, 2007; eg. Hindle & Lansdowne, 2005; Wood & Davidson, 2011). Thirdly, some studies that explored how context influences entrepreneurial practices or Indigenous identity assumed that findings from one context would hold in other contexts (e.g. Peredo & McLean, 2013; Reveley & Down, 2009). This leap of faith, although convenient, is suspect given both the influence that variation in context likely has on Indigenous entrepreneurship as well as the diversity of Indigenous peoples and cultures around the world (Davis, 2009).

There are only a handful of studies which have compared Indigenous entrepreneurship across international boundaries. Differences in how context at the country level influences Indigenous entrepreneurship include: the extent to which traditional and contemporary Indigenous cultures and values have survived and are accessible for Indigenous entrepreneurs to integrate in their entrepreneurial practices (Foley, 2005); access to business capital (Foley, 2005; Frederick & Foley, 2006); and the amount of social capital within Indigenous entrepreneur networks of practice (Frederick & Foley, 2008). These differences are attributed to a number of factors including: patterns of colonialism (Chamard & Christie, 1993; Cornell, 2006; Foley, 2005); title and rights legislation (Cornell, 2006; Frederick & Foley, 2006; Hindle, 2005; Wilkins, 2007); racism and contemporary relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (Foley, 2005; Frederick & Foley, 2008); programs and services to assist Indigenous entrepreneurs (Foley, 2005; Hindle, 2005); and historical Indigenous traditions of entrepreneurship (Frederick & Foley, 2006). Of these factors, the overwhelming majority of emphasis has been placed on historical patterns of colonialism and rights and title legislation.

Of particular interest to this study are three international studies that have compared conditions of Indigenous entrepreneurship specifically in Australia and Canada: Chamard and Christy (1993), Hindle (2005) and Wilkins (2007). Interestingly, each of these studies attributes patterns of colonialisms and legislation to creating differences between Indigenous entrepreneurs, although they each do so loosely and imprecisely. For instance, Hindle (2005) suggests that Canada is a leader in policies supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship due to effective programs specifically targeting Indigenous entrepreneurship and broad Canada rights and title policies which are culturally sensitive and evidence-based (Hindle, 2005). Almost no evidence is presented to back up these assertions and most Indigenous people in Canada would balk at the claim that Canadian legislation, especially the *Indian Act*, is culturally sensitive (e.g. Borrows, 2010a; Cardinal, 1999; Palmater, 2011). Chamard and Christy (1993) do signal the importance of other contextual factors, such as organizations and government programs, to support entrepreneurs, but do not provide any evidence as to the impacts of these programs on Indigenous entrepreneurs' practices. Because of this lack of in-depth evidence and specificity, it is challenging to ascertain whether and how these

aspects of context influence contemporary Indigenous entrepreneurs in Canada and Australia. In order to be grounded in the realities of Indigenous entrepreneurs, some comparative studies should be based on the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous entrepreneurs themselves. Findings should arise out of careful analysis of data, not just from preconceived ideas or high-level policy analysis. Thus, although there have been a few international comparisons of Indigenous entrepreneurship, more comparisons that are grounded in data and which focus on the specifics of how contexts in different countries may affect the Indigenous identities and entrepreneurial practices of Indigenous entrepreneurs would be a useful contribution to literature on Indigenous entrepreneurship. The primary research question of this paper will focus on this gap in understanding and method and will ask: How does context influence the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices in Canada and Australia (RQ1)?

#### **4.2.2. Indigenous Identity**

Identity refers to “the set of meanings that define who one is” (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 1). This definition encompasses how individuals understand themselves as well as how others understand them, both in terms of who they are as well as who they are not (Alvesson et al., 2008). Of the several prominent approaches found in organizational and entrepreneurship research that are focused on identity, this paper adopts a narrative perspective. From a narrative perspective, identities are partially brought into being and understood through stories that represent context-dependent and constantly evolving understandings of oneself or others. These narratives are largely generated through interaction (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004). The narrative perspective highlights the importance of “the internalized and evolving story [or stories] that results from a person’s selective appropriation of past, present and future” events that significantly shape how people view themselves as well as how others view them (McAdams, 1999, p. 486). For some, “identities exist only as narratives” (Currie 1998, 17), and life is an enacted narrative (MacIntyre 1981) that is plotted over time (Chappell *et al.* 2003). This view on identity seems appropriate for exploring Indigenous identities, as story plays an important role in many Indigenous cultures and in the building, maintaining and shaping of Indigenous identities (Wilson, 2008).

The idea of there being an Indigenous identity is a relatively recent development. Before contact with Europeans, Indigenous peoples understood themselves primarily as members of a linguistic group, nation, community, clan or family (Palmer, 2011; Weaver, 2001). These identities were disrupted as colonial entities waged war on the identities, cultures and ways of life of Indigenous peoples, as colonizers stripped Indigenous peoples of their land and rights and outlawed important Indigenous practices (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; C. G. Atleo, 2010). Despite colonization, many aspects of specific and local Indigenous identities endure. Emerging since colonialism has been the identification by first peoples around a more general and less specific set of identities such as 'Indigenous' and 'Aboriginal' which focus on commonalities between first peoples regionally, nationally or globally, or at all of these levels. Despite the fact that Indigenous identity is an invention of colonialism (Alfred, 2005), it has been coopted by Indigenous people for political anti-colonial purposes. For some Indigenous people, because of the disruptive nature of colonization on Indigenous peoples' connections with specific nations, communities and territories, these pan-Indigenous identities are the only kind of Indigenous identity with which they can and do identify. Regardless of the kind of identity or identities individuals maintain or adopt, most Indigenous people prioritize resurrecting or strengthening aspects of either their specific/local identity or their general/regional, national or global Indigenous identity (Alfred, 2008; Borrows, 2010a; Foley & Maynard, 2001; Laliberte, 2014). When sharing narratives about either their specific/local or pan-Indigenous identity, Indigenous people may touch on several elements including ancestry and current involvement in ancestral or non-ancestral rural or urban communities and cultures (Andersen, 2014; Laliberte, 2014; Palmer, 2011; Peters & Andersen, 2014; Peters & Lafond, 2014; Taylor, 2014; Weaver, 2001); being of mixed ancestry (Laliberte, 2014); experiences of past and current forms of colonialism (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Andersen, 2014; LeRat & Ungar, 2005); physical features (Krouse, 1999; Laliberte, 2014) and involvement in Indigenous organizations (Gallagher, 2014; Laliberte, 2014; Peters & Lafond, 2014). In Canada, there are three distinct Aboriginal groups: First Nation, Metis and Inuit (Laliberte, 2014). In Australia there are two distinct groups: Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders (Frederick & Foley, 2006).

Indigenous identities discussed by participants in Canada and Australia may differ on account of differences in cultures, patterns of colonization and title and rights

legislation. Specific/local Indigenous cultures in Canada and Australia likely differ because of differences in Indigenous laws, governance, stories, rituals and economic activity. Differences in both specific/local and general/regional, national or global Indigenous identities will also likely occur on account of patterns of colonization and different title and rights. When settlers first arrived in Canada, interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples were based on trade and were on the whole respectful (Chamard & Christie, 1993; Vaillant, 2006). For a long time interactions remained this way; colonists depended on Indigenous peoples to enable them to live and travel on the land and because they were important trading partners (Saul, 2008). In the 1800s, this relationship began to change as colonists took over Indigenous lands, pushed by a wave of immigration from Europe and a belief in manifest destiny (LeRat & Ungar, 2005). Many Indigenous peoples were forced onto reserves, their rights were limited and their children were removed from their families and placed in Residential Schools that attempted to eradicate Indigenous identity and culture (Cardinal, 1999; LeRat & Ungar, 2005). Today, Indigenous peoples have some rights to land and resources guaranteed by the Canadian Constitution and treaties (Borrows, 2010a). Slowly but surely the Supreme Court of Canada is expanding the scope of Indigenous rights. Despite this grim history in Canada in general and BC specifically, many aspects of local/specific Indigenous identities remain. This may also in part be due to the geography and climate of Canada, which made access to remote areas such as Haida Gwaii difficult for colonists and which enabled aspects of specific/local Indigenous identities to endure throughout colonization (Vaillant, 2006). In Australia, colonization was brutal and wide sweeping from the beginning, which may be due to its start as a British penal colony (Chamard & Christie, 1993). Indigenous peoples were often hunted down for sport and deliberate attempts were made to destroy Indigenous peoples and cultures, including the decimation of sacred water bodies with cattle. Indigenous peoples in Australia were given few rights and were forced onto reserves (Peters & Andersen, 2014). 'Mixed Blood' children were taken away by the government and put into homes and institutions in order to ensure no more cultural mixing ensued and to guarantee that mixed-blood children grew up in a 'civilized' way (Peters & Andersen, 2014). Today, Indigenous peoples in Australia have few overall rights to land and resources, much less than in other countries such as Canada (Cornell, 2006; Peters & Andersen, 2014). Traditional owners are gaining some claim to land, and governance of land is managed

by Land Councils (Chamard & Christie, 1993). Overall, although patterns of colonization have been similar, Canadian Indigenous peoples appear to have emerged with more of their specific/local identities intact and more rights to land and resources than Indigenous peoples in Australia.

### **4.2.3. Entrepreneurial Practices**

Practices are the social structures which guide and regulate human interaction (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). From a practice perspective, most human thought, belief and action is structured within one or more sets of practices (Schatzki, 2001). Practices are composed of shared rules and understandings as well as actions (Schatzki, 2001). Shared rules and understandings make it possible for humans to think and distribute ideas as they provide commonalities around meaning of actions, language and events. They also stipulate what is acceptable or deviant behaviour within that practice. Actions are the media through which practices are enacted that give substance to shared norms and understandings and which either reproduce or transform common understandings (Fenton & Langley, 2011; Handley et al., 2006; Warde, 2005; Whittington, 2006). In this way, practices provide the basis for practitioner interaction as well as restrictions in terms of how practitioners think, talk and act (Barnes, 2001).

Practices are a product of communities of practice, and communities of practice are built upon the actions of practitioners (Tagliaventi & Mattarelli, 2006). In order for shared meanings to be developed there needs to be groups of people with “ways of doing and approaching things that are shared to some significant extent among members” through avenues such as “tools, documents, routines, vocabulary and symbols that in some way carry the accumulated knowledge of the community” (M. K. Smith, 2009). Rewards or sanctions serve to keep actions of practitioners in line with the common understandings and norms of a practice. Practices are also those aspects of social life that comprise communities of practice, as both the reproduction of action and common understanding around action are what maintain or transform standards and norms. Communities of practice can be usefully thought of as existing on different overlapping scales, most notably language groups, communities or networks. Here networks would refer to both strong and weak ties between Indigenous entrepreneurs or

other actors based on a shared interest of Indigenous entrepreneurship. Typically, practices surrounding Indigenous people are discussed at the community level. Nevertheless, the level discussed in the literature which best fits with the fields of BC and NSW/VIC Indigenous entrepreneurship is networks. This is because Indigenous entrepreneurs are typically not located close to one another and many do not interact on a regular basis; however, they share common actions and understandings (J. S. Brown & Duguid, 2001). Although networks are not typically employed by researchers when referencing Indigenous relationships, the concept of networks is valid given the loose and sometimes infrequent relationships between Indigenous entrepreneurs and other organizational actors. The concept of Indigenous entrepreneur networks of practice overlaps with the concept of context presented earlier. Many of the contextual factors that could influence Indigenous entrepreneurship may only have their primary influence within these networks, such as government policies that support entrepreneurship. Other aspects of context, such as national legislation around Indigenous title and rights, will exert influence on many networks and communities of practice beyond Indigenous entrepreneur networks of practice.

Entrepreneurial practices are shared understandings and actions that shape what it means to be an entrepreneur and what an entrepreneur does and does not do. This involves either the search, identification and exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000) or the leveraging of who one is, what they know and who they know in order to create entrepreneurial opportunities (Saravathy, 2001). Common actions within entrepreneurial networks of practices include making products or providing services, selling to customers and keeping track of finances (Sirolli, 1999). However, entrepreneurial practices are likely general and vague with significant variation between entrepreneurs due to the diversity of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial ventures. Communities of practice with specific entrepreneurial practices may develop around localized networks linked to industries, professions or geographies.

Indigenous entrepreneurial practices are shared understandings and actions that comprise what it means to be an Indigenous entrepreneur. Several entrepreneurial practices which Indigenous entrepreneurs feel have dimensions specific to them have been identified. They include: placing limited focus on profits, including extended family

as important stakeholders, using cultural principles as guiding mechanisms in making decisions (Foley, 2005); having a heightened concern for cultural sensitivity when interacting with customers, maintaining business autonomy due to the large numbers of Indigenous stakeholders that can claim interest in a business (Hindle & Lansdowne, 2005); procuring from Indigenous businesses, making donations to Indigenous charitable events, using business to advocate on behalf of Indigenous people, accessing Indigenous entrepreneur-specific programs and not having ties to members of ethnic or immigrant communities (Cote, 2012). Other important Indigenous entrepreneurial practices that have been identified include: Indigenousizing a company name or logo, not engaging in conventional advertising or marketing, providing preferential pricing for Indigenous customers and listening to spiritual support or guidance (Gallagher, 2014).

#### **4.2.4. Connections between Indigenous Identity and Entrepreneurial Practices**

Of the studies that have focused on how Indigenous identity and entrepreneurship or entrepreneurial practices connect, none have identified underlying mechanisms linking these concepts. In terms of the general connections between Indigenous identities and entrepreneurship that have been identified, scholars have expressed concern about the impact which being an entrepreneur may have on Indigenous people. The most cited concern is that entrepreneurship is a capitalist activity that promotes individualism and a hunger for profit, which will lead to the erosion of Indigenous identity (C. J. Atleo, 2008; C. Stiles, 2004; Newhouse, 2001). Other scholars, however, argue that entrepreneurship can play a vital and positive role in the construction of Indigenous identities as Indigenous people have always acted entrepreneurially and that running a business can bring greater autonomy, self-sufficiency and freedom than other employment options and can lead to the assertion and development of Indigenous identity (Foley, 2010; Miller, 2012). The outcome of this debate is inconclusive. Although they have made important contributions to research, these studies remain silent on what the underlying processes are in terms of how entrepreneurship may influence Indigenous identity. Knowledge of what underlying processes are at play is critical to developing a fuller understanding about this connection.

Studies have also touched on how Indigenous identity may influence entrepreneurial practices. Indigenous identity may shape motivations to be entrepreneurs, including providing a way to give back to Indigenous people (Cote, 2012). Conditions associated with being Indigenous may also provide several constraints to starting and running a business, including low levels of education, racism, a lack of business experience and scant individual or familial capital (Cornell et al., 2007; Shoebridge et al., 2012). Indigenous identity may also facilitate entrepreneurship by providing cultural knowledge, ethnical frameworks, opportunities for mentorship, government assistance as well as community support (Shoebridge et al., 2012). Although they have made important contributions to our understanding of Indigenous entrepreneurship, each of the above studies does not explore in sufficient depth how Indigenous identity may influence entrepreneurial practices, as this line of inquiry is ancillary to what the studies stated were larger research questions. For instance Shoebridge et al. (2012) focus on the sizeable question of the success factors of Indigenous entrepreneurs. Studies need to be conducted that investigate specific ways in which Indigenous identity shapes both actions surrounding entrepreneurship as well as shared understandings and norms around these actions. Doing so will bring the complexity and diversity of these connections to light. Furthermore, the underlying mechanisms of these connections should be identified in order to move beyond surface-level examinations. In order to explain how Indigenous identity and entrepreneurship connect, which will be required to explore how context influences the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices, the first subordinate research question for this paper will be: Are there underlying mechanisms that can explain the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices (RQ1-1)?

As has been shown, several studies have explored how Indigenous identity and entrepreneurship or entrepreneurial practices connect, but few, if any, have systematically explored how Indigenous entrepreneurs' experiences and perspectives surrounding these connections vary for Indigenous entrepreneurs in the same context. Grasping the idea that Indigenous entrepreneurs within the same regional/country context would have heterogeneous experiences and perspectives surrounding entrepreneurship does not require a far stretch of the imagination. Despite the obviousness of this possibility, few studies systematically examine how the experiences

and perspectives of Indigenous entrepreneurs will differ in the same context. The question of whether the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices vary for Indigenous entrepreneurs in the same context, and if so how they vary, will serve as the second subordinate question of this study (RQ1-2). This question stands as important for answering RQ1 since, in order to explore how different regional/country contexts influence Indigenous entrepreneurship, it must be first understood how each of those contexts influences the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurial practices and Indigenous identity may influence one another in iterative cycles. In general, identity affects the participation within and reproduction and alteration of practice (Bowman, 2007; Burke & Stets, 2009; Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011, 2011; Handley et al., 2006; Warde, 2005). Participation in practice can assist or restrain the way individuals understand themselves as well as how other individuals understand them (J. S. Brown & Duguid, 2001; Handley et al., 2006; Nielsen & Lassen, 2012; Wenger, 2000). Changes to identity can affect participation in practices which could lead to identity effects. Likewise, changes within a practice could create identity implications. This could generate either positive or negative feedback loops where changes to either Indigenous identity or entrepreneurial practices lead to more changes in the other construct. Are there patterns in the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices where momentum builds into a virtuous or vicious circle (RQ1-3)? This question will stand as the third subordinate research question of this study. This study will explore these three subordinate questions as a way to provide answers to the primary research question of this paper. Each of the research questions are summarized below as well as in *Figure 4.1*.

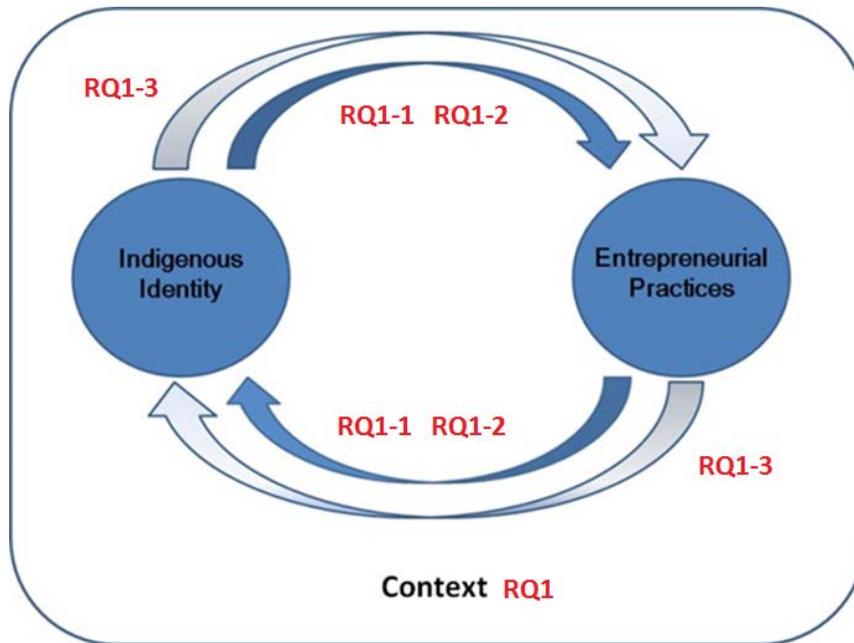
**RQ1:** How does context influence the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices?

**RQ1-1:** Are there underlying mechanisms that can explain the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices?

**RQ1-2:** Do the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices vary for Indigenous entrepreneurs in the same context, and if so how do they vary?

**RQ1-3:** Are there patterns in the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices where momentum builds into a virtuous or vicious cycle?

**Figure 4.1. Research Questions**



### **4.3. Methodology**

In this section on methodology I will provide my rationale for selecting Australia and Canada as research contexts. Next, I will give a brief overview of each research context. Following that, I will discuss my familiarity of and involvement in each context. Finally, I will describe my philosophy and strategies around conducting interviews.

#### **4.3.1. Selection of Research Contexts**

I selected Australia and Canada as research contexts as they have enough similarities in order to create commonalities between Indigenous experiences in both countries yet enough differences in order to explore how variations in context may affect the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. In terms of similarities, firstly, they have relatively similar patterns of colonization by primarily British English speaking colonists (Chamard & Christie, 1993; Cornell, 2006), although Canada

differs in that the French were also important colonists (Saul, 2008). Secondly, Indigenous people in both countries have experienced the horrific legacies of being colonized, which today includes low levels of education, poverty and economic dependency (Cornell, 2006; Foley, 2006a; Helin, 2006); however, they have fought against colonialism in both countries and have maintained aspects of their Indigenous culture (R. Atleo, 2005; Foley & Maynard, 2001). Thirdly, the percentage of Indigenous people in Canada and Australia relative to the total population are roughly the same—around three percent—and both are primarily urban based (Cote, 2012; Hunter, 2013b).

Indigenous experiences in Australia and Canada also prove different in several important ways. Firstly, as was discussed in the literature review, although the broad forces of colonialism were similar, they manifested themselves differently. Initial interactions between Indigenous peoples and foreign settlers were more balanced and beneficial in Canada than in Australia (Chamard & Christie, 1993). Also, in Canada, Residential Schools forced non-Indigenous ways of knowing and being onto Indigenous children but many children still had some contact with their families and communities (Cardinal, 1999; George, 2003). In Australia, by contrast, children with mixed blood were stolen by the government and placed into mission schools, which often severed familial, community and cultural connections (Read, 2009). Secondly, treaty making occurred, and continues to occur, in Canada, whereas recognition of Indigenous rights to land has only recently moved forward in Australia (Cornell, 2006). In addition to theoretical reasons, I also selected Canada and Australia for practical reasons. British Columbia is my home province, which made data collection more expedient and cheaper than other locations and Australia had funding available for PhD student research.

Indigenous peoples in other countries such as the United States of America and New Zealand also would have been appropriate to compare to Canadian Indigenous peoples. I did not choose the United States as the experience of Indigenous peoples in this country may be too similar to Canada to create enough variation in findings. This lack of variation could mean that there would not be enough data with which to compare how differences in context affect the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. Also, I wanted choose a location geographically distant from Canada and in the southern hemisphere in order to reflect the international and multi-

hemispherical nature of Indigenous entrepreneurship research. I did not choose New Zealand as Maori make up a much larger percent of the overall populations of their country, which may create too many differences for a useful comparison to be made. Finally, I chose not to conduct research in other countries on account of language barriers.

#### **4.3.2. Description of Research Contexts**

The BC Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice is composed of Indigenous entrepreneurs and organizational actors who are involved in Indigenous entrepreneurship. As was discussed earlier, only urban residents were selected for this study. In BC, some interviewees were immersed in the BC network. Their participation included attending Indigenous business events and being involved in organizations that focus on Indigenous business. Other interviewees were more on periphery, only infrequently interacting with others in the network. There are several organizations that interviewees mentioned were key players in the BC Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice. The first is the BC Achievement Foundations, whose BC Aboriginal Business Awards gala is the flagship event in BC for honouring Indigenous business. The second is Stó:lō Community Futures, located in Chilliwack, BC. This organization primarily provides financing to Indigenous entrepreneurs in the Fraser Valley. The third important organization is Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, whose Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business attempts to encourage the federal government and corporations to buy Indigenous from businesses included in their Aboriginal business directory. There are a host of other organizations involved in the Indigenous entrepreneur networks of practice, such as various Aboriginal Capital Corporations and Bands, but none were highlighted by interviewees to the same extent in terms of shaping how they see the connections between their Indigenous identities and their entrepreneurial practices.

The NSW/VIC Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice is also composed of Indigenous entrepreneurs and other organizational actors. The former are urban and rural Indigenous entrepreneurs who run businesses in a wide range of industries. As with the BC portion of the study, only urban residents were selected. Also like the BC

portion of the study, some interviewees were deeply immersed in the NSW/VIC network while others were more on periphery. Due to the sampling of NSW/VIC interviewees, which heavily utilized Indigenous Business Chamber membership lists, twenty-two out of thirty interviewees in this study are connected with Indigenous Business Chambers. Indigenous Business Chambers are organizations that build Indigenous entrepreneurial capacity and skills, promote Indigenous-Indigenous and Indigenous-non-Indigenous trade and advocate on behalf of Indigenous entrepreneurs. This wide range of goals means that Indigenous Business Chambers play a larger role in the lives and businesses of their members than do similar organizations in Canada. In NSW/VIC, the Indigenous Business Chambers are the Mandurah Hunter Chamber in Rutherford, which serves the Hunter Region of NSW, the NSW Chamber, which serves all of NSW and the Kinaway Chamber, which serves Victoria. Another important organization involved in the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice is Supply Nation, which certifies Australian businesses as being Indigenous and which links certified businesses with non-Indigenous businesses that have made commitments to 'buy Indigenous' in Reconciliation Action Plans. Yet another important organization is Indigenous Business Australia, which provides funding and training to Indigenous-entrepreneurs across Australia. These three sets of organizations each fulfill different needs within the network and Indigenous businesses owners will frequently interact with several of these organizations over the lifespan of their business.

The BC and NSW/VIC Indigenous networks of practice have had different histories and developmental trajectories which can be evidenced by statistics surrounding Indigenous entrepreneurship in both countries. In Canada, Indigenous peoples played a large role in trading after contact with Europeans. Indigenous peoples were central to the fur trade and to other industries such as fishing (George, 2003; Vaillant, 2006). Although Indigenous peoples' role in the economy was greatly diminished, colonists were not able to fully shut down Indigenous economic activity that resembles modern day entrepreneurship, at least in part due to the rugged terrain, especially in BC. In recent years in Canada, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of Indigenous entrepreneurs. In 2001 there were an estimated 27,000 Indigenous entrepreneurs representing 7.2% of the Indigenous population whereas in 2006 there was an estimated 37,000 Indigenous entrepreneurs representing 6.6% of the

Indigenous population (Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, 2011). In contrast, some authors such as Foley (2005) and Frederick and Foley (2006) have suggested that in Australia colonial governments have managed to significantly stifle Indigenous business more than in other countries. This has meant that only recently have Indigenous Australians been able to participate more substantially in the economy through entrepreneurial ventures. This history can be evidenced by the fewer amount of Indigenous entrepreneurs in Australia who represent a smaller proportion of the Indigenous population than in Canada. In Australia in 2001 there were an estimated 7000 Indigenous entrepreneurs and in 2006 there were an estimated 8900 Indigenous entrepreneurs, with both snapshots in time representing less than 3% of the Indigenous population (Hunter, 2013). The different histories of the networks of practice can be seen in the differences in the age of interviewees' companies in this paper; in the BC sample twenty-one interviewees had businesses five years or older versus only sixteen in the NSW/VIC sample.

### **4.3.3. Familiarity with Research Contexts**

Upon the start of data collection, I was very informed about and connected within the BC Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice and was unfamiliar with the NSW/VIC network of practice. My involvement in the BC network of practice is multi-faceted. First, having worked with First Nations on Vancouver Island before doing a PhD, I had come to know several entrepreneurs and had assisted in the creation of entrepreneurial ventures. Second, I had previously conducted thirty interviews with Indigenous entrepreneurs, which had created several long-lasting relationships. Third, each year I attend the BC Aboriginal Business awards as well as other events focused on Indigenous entrepreneurship. Fourth, I co-taught an entrepreneurship and innovation course in the Executive MBA in Aboriginal Business and Leadership at SFU which gave me direct access to current thinking within the BC Indigenous entrepreneur network. Fifth, I am also currently supervising one directed readings course and one final project in this program, both of which are focused on Indigenous entrepreneurship. These experiences, in addition to broad knowledge I hold about the Indigenous experiences in Canada, means that I was informed, and in some ways immersed in, the BC Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice.

In contrast, when I started my five month research journey in Australia, I knew little about the NSW/VIC network of practice. In order to familiarize myself with it, I read several books and watched television shows and videos about Australian Indigenous experiences and Australian Indigenous economic development and entrepreneurship. I also engaged in frequent conversations with expert advisors including Dr. Dennis Foley, Indigenous entrepreneurship expert at the University of Newcastle and Board Member of the Mandurah Hunter Indigenous Business Chamber as well as Debbie Barwick, Founder, CEO and Chairperson, Mandurah Hunter Indigenous Business Chamber and Founding Director and Chairperson, N.S.W. Indigenous Chamber of Commerce. I also partook in less frequent but no less important discussions with many others including Neil Willmet, founder and editor-in-chief of the Aboriginal Business Magazine and Peter Reid, scholar and activist who coined the term 'Stolen Generations'. These and other experiences helped me to become more familiar with the NSW/VIC Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice. By the time I had completed my immersion into the Indigenous entrepreneurial network of practice in NSW/VIC, I had enough comprehension to intelligently and sensitively attempt to understand one aspect of the lives of Australian Indigenous entrepreneurs.

#### **4.3.4. Data Collection and Analysis**

The primary research question of this paper is how does context influence the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices (RQ1)? In order to explore the role of context, data surrounding the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices will be explored through answering the three subordinate research questions which are: What are the underlying mechanisms that connect Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices (RQ1-1); Do the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices vary for Indigenous entrepreneurs in the same context (RQ1-2) and Are Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices linked in iterative cycles (RQ1-3)? In order to answer RQ1-1, mechanisms will be identified. Mechanisms provide an abstract explanation for the "connections among phenomena, a story about why these acts, events, structures and thoughts occur" (P. J. J. Anderson et al., 2006, p. 104). Identifying mechanisms is one means of moving beyond describing the ways that phenomena or concepts connect to

explaining underlying ways of *how* they connect (P. J. J. Anderson et al., 2006; Hedström & Swedberg, 1998). In order to answer RQ1-2, how interviewees within each context variously discuss the connections between their Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices will be explored. Answering RQ1-3 will be achieved by exploring whether mechanisms connect to form iterative cycles between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices.

Interviews are appropriate for answering the research questions in this paper for several reasons. First, interviews can enable an understanding of how an individual portrays and gives meaning to their experiences and perspectives to a particular listener (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; McCracken, 1988). Second, studies that focus on entrepreneurship often use interviews to explore how individuals construct identities including ethnic and gender identities (Cohen & Musson, 2000; Essers & Benschop, 2009). Third, interviews are appropriate for exploring the specific practices which entrepreneurs suggest they engage in as well as for investigating the common norms and understandings surrounding specific practices (Fenton & Langley, 2011). Although interviews are a useful way to answer my research questions, they do have several drawbacks for this study including that they are not “pipelines” for revealing peoples’ true experiences, thoughts or feelings through precise interview procedures and coding (Alvesson, 2003, p. 28). Instead, interviews are co-constructed by both the interviewer and the interviewee and reflect interviewees’ changing and selective recollections and interpretations of their experiences and perspectives.

Interviewees in this study lived in British Columbia, Canada or New South Wales and Victoria, Australia in urban areas with greater than 20,000 residents. In BC, interviewees were identified through several sources including the BC Aboriginal Business Award recipient lists, the Industry Canada Aboriginal Business Directory, the Stó:lō Community Futures Business Directory and personal connections. In NSW/VIC participants were sourced primarily from the Mandurah and Kinaway Indigenous Business Chambers. I interviewed anyone who self-identified as Indigenous but theoretically selected interviewees based on several categories that I thought might affect the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practice. These categories included gender, age, industry and whether they had Indigenous employees.

Interviewees in both sample sets were very similar on the numerous attributes which I took into consideration. An analysis of the similarity and differences between the two sample sets can be found in *Table 4.1*. Large and medium differences between the sample sets, highlighted in blue, may be due to two possible factors. The first is the way that I sourced participants. For the NSW/VIC sample I used primarily the Indigenous Business Chambers' member directories; membership in directories is based on proof of status and payment of membership fees. In BC I largely leveraged award lists, which may bias my BC sample towards being more culturally-engaged. In other words, they may be entrepreneurs who are generally more rooted in their cultures and communities and intentional about making contributions to both. They may more likely be role models for important norms and common understandings of the network of practice and more likely to receive awards than those who are not as engaged. Differences in the sample sets, however, may also be due to variations in the Indigenous entrepreneur population and not due to my particular sampling techniques. It is not surprising by any means that Indigenous entrepreneurs in Canada identified earlier, have more connections to communities, sell more Indigenous-specific products or services and have older companies.

**Table 4.1. Comparison of Aggregate Interviewee Attributes**

| Attribute                              | BC  | NSW/VIC  | Difference    |
|--|---|--|---------------|
| Time Identified                        | 21 Always, 5 Early and 4 Late                                       | 11 Always, 10 Early and 9 Late                                       | Large         |
| Employing Indigenous                   | 13 Not Applicable, 3 No and 14 Yes                                  | 13 Not Applicable, 10 No and 7 Yes                                   | Large         |
| Age of Company                         | 9 Less than 5 years old and 21 equal to or greater than 5 years old | 16 less than 5 years old and 14 equal to or greater than 5 years old | Large         |
| Connections to Community               | 24 More and 6 Fewer   | 19 More and 11 Fewer   | Medium        |
| Indigenous-Specific Product or Service | 19 Yes and 11 No  | 16 Yes and 14 No   | Medium        |
| Gender                                 | 14 Female and 16 Male   | 16 Female and 14 Male  | Insignificant |
| Age Group                              | 6 Young, 14 Middle and 10 Old                                       | 7 Young, 14 Middle and 9 Old   | Insignificant |

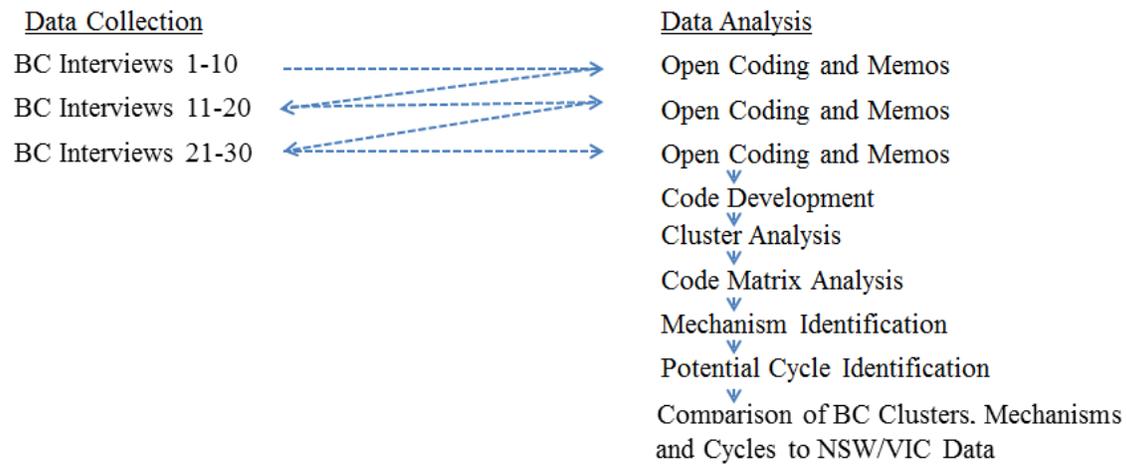
| Attribute          | BC   | NSW/VIC  | Difference    |
|--------------------|--|--|---------------|
| Consulting or Arts | 15 Yes and 15 No   | 16 Yes and 14 No   | Insignificant |
| Full or Part Time  | 18 Full-time and 12 Part-time  | 20 Full-time and 10 Part-time  | Insignificant |
| Heritage           | 5 Metis and 25 First Nation including Cree, Musqueam, Sto:lo, Squamish, Tahltan and Westbank | 2 Torres Straight Islander and 28 Aboriginal including Awabakal, Gamillaroi, Gunnai and Wonnarua | N/A           |

Interviews were conducted at participants' businesses or at a mutually agreed upon location such as a restaurant and followed the 'Long Interview' process identified by McCracken (1988). I achieved free and informed on-going consent from research participants which included signing a consent form (Piquemal, 2001). The interviews were semi-structured, which means that I had a series of questions that I asked each participant but also let each participant guide the discussion (McCracken, 1988). I asked 'non-leading' questions to enable participants to share their experiences and stories in their own words and to not signal how I wanted them to answer (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). I opened each interview with small talk and then started with general questions about the experience of starting and running a business, followed by more specific questions (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; McCracken, 1988). After listening to participants' initial responses, I asked for clarification on key terms (McCracken, 1988) such as being an Indigenous person who is an 'environmental steward'. For both BC and NSW/VIC interviewees, I asked the same general questions. After interviews, memos took around an hour to write and produced approximately two pages of text. I wrote more memos for the NSW/VIC data than for the BC data as many of the ways BC interviewees discussed the concepts and connections between concepts were familiar to me through the NSW/VIC experience and analysis. My process of creating memos, as well as other stages of analysis, is represented diagrammatically in *Figure 4.2*. I recorded each interview on tape and had the audio files transcribed by a professional transcriber. BC interviews lasted an average of one hour and ten minutes and created an average of 23.23 pages of transcription. In total, BC interviews lasted 35.87 hours which created 697 pages of transcription. NSW/VIC interviews lasted an average of one hour and twelve minutes and created an average of 33.57 pages of transcription. The

increased length of transcription for the roughly same amount of interview time reflects the generally faster discourse by Indigenous people in Australia. In total, NSW/VIC interviews lasted 36.16 hours which created 1007 pages of transcription. I should note that I only began calculating the length of the interviews at the point at which I asked the first interview question. This question was typically preceded by approximately twenty minutes of small talk as well as explanations of the study and the consent form. I had already analyzed the NSW/VIC data and analyzed the BC data in NVivo in groupings of ten.

In addition to interviews I also conducted two focus groups in order to explore the role that I played during the interviews. During interviews, the interviewer plays a critical role in the co-construction of data due to how the interview is framed, their reactions to interviewees' responses and the follow-up questions asked. Although I have contemplated the role that I played in the interviews in reflective memos, I wanted to explore more systematically how I influenced interviewees' responses in order to ensure that my values and perspectives were not wildly influencing interviewees' responses. Focus groups can create different knowledge from interviews since in focus groups participants interact with each other and "disagree, explain themselves, and query each other", which can create different data from that which is generated by the interaction between the interviewee and interviewer (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2005, p. 167). In the focus groups I played the smallest possible role, essentially acting as timekeeper, to make sure all participants had an opportunity to share. I held the NSW/VIC focus group at the Mandurah Indigenous Business Chamber in Rutherford, NSW with six participants. The BC focus group was held at Stó:lō Community Futures in Chilliwack with five participants. After analyzing the focus groups I determined that the same experiences/perspectives were discussed in the focus groups and that the focus group data did not add anything beyond the in-depth interviews I conducted. Thus, although they were useful for confirming that the data that came out of interviews was very similar to that generated out of participant-led group discussion, the focus groups will not be analyzed or incorporated further in this study. In total, the interviews and focus groups from both data sets amounted to 73.42 hours of recording and 1756 pages of transcription.

**Figure 4.2. Interview Data Collection and Analysis Process**



In order to analyze my data, which in turn I used to provide answers to my three subordinate research questions, I undertook seven stages of analysis, each of which are represented in *Figure 4.2*. In stage one – open coding and memos – I explored what interviewees related in the interviews while attempting not to abstract data or to make judgemental conclusions. Open codes were typically a few words to a half-sentence and attempted to remain as close as possible to the language used by interviewees. Approximately one hundred and fifty open codes focusing on interviewee experiences/perspectives were created such as ‘grew up on reserve and has lived there all their life’. In stage one I also wrote memos after each interview in order to reflect on what the interviewee discussed as well as my role in the meaning creation process. In stage two, I developed more abstract experiences/perspectives codes. To do so, I grouped similar codes. For instance, initially, I had several common codes that dealt with interviewees’ discussing criticisms they had received from Indigenous people about their entrepreneurial endeavours. I incorporated these codes into the higher-order code ‘crab pot’, a common metaphor in Canada which describes colonized peoples’ tendency to keep each other oppressed rather than to let one another succeed and better themselves (Khelsilem, 2012). During this and subsequent stages of analysis, I did not note whether narratives that interviewees shared touched on their specific/local or generic/regional, country or global aspects of their Indigenous identities. This was because interviewees’ narratives frequently bounced between different kinds of

Indigenous identity, which made clear identification of what kind of Indigenous identity they were referencing difficult.

In stage three I used cluster analysis to focus on how interviewees in each data set were similar to and different from one another. In order to answer the three subordinate research questions in this paper, mechanisms needed to be identified. Separate mechanisms could not be identified for both data sets because of the large amount of coding for each interviewee. In order to identify mechanisms and find the core ways that Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices influence one another for each data set, the data would need to be further reduced. To reduce the coding complexity, clusters which grouped interviewees according to overlapping experiences/perspectives codes were created. The cluster analysis function in NVivo was used in order to find the similarity and variation of participants based on experiences/perspectives codes. In NVivo, users can determine the amount of clusters that best fits their data and the goals of their study. After experimenting with the number of clusters, I selected six as the appropriate number it maximized the commonality of codes in each cluster while being a manageable number to further analyze. The result of the cluster analysis was six groups of interviewees that were similar in terms of coding for each data set. The six clusters for of BC interviewees can be found in *Table 4.2*. The six clusters of NSW/VIC interviewees can be found in *Table 4.3*. These clusters provided a foundation upon which to explore core codes that the majority of interviewees in each cluster held in common.

In stage four I determined what codes interviewees in each cluster had in common. To do so, I used the matrix coding function in NVivo, which creates a table useful for comparing the interviewees in each cluster to all of the common experiences/perspectives codes. Using these tables, I counted how many interviewees referred to each code and identified codes which the majority of interviewees in each cluster were associated with. I selected a threshold of equal to fifty percent, determining that if at least half of the interviewees in a cluster expressed a belief or action, then this constituted a significant overlap which was worthy of capturing. I also created matrix coding tables in order to explore whether interviewees in the same cluster shared certain attributes as this information could be useful in explaining the differences between

interviewees in each cluster. I created summary tables of common codes held by interviewees in the same cluster for both data sets; these can be found in *Table 4.2* for the BC dataset and *Table 4.3* for the NSW/VIC data. Descriptions of the codes used in both tables can be found in Appendix C. These tables enabled me to identify codes which connected how Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices influenced one another and which were shared by multiple interviewees in each data set. This reduced the amount of data and providing a launching point upon which to develop mechanisms.

In stage five, I grouped common codes for each data set in *Table 4.4* in terms of how Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices, and in *Table 4.5* in terms of how entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity. To group the codes, I placed codes close to one another if they shared certain similarities. For instance, in *Table 4.2* the codes *assist or give back to community* and *build Indigenous capacity* appeared to be related in that they both focused on a way to contribute to Indigenous people. This process was continued until all codes were grouped with other similar codes. I did, however, drop two codes associated with NSW/VIC interviewees—spiritual support and time—as they did not fit into any of the categories that were developed and did not form a coherent category on their own. Once codes were grouped, these groupings appeared to have underlying themes that spanned across each of the code groupings. These underlying themes were labeled ‘mechanism’. These mechanisms provide answers to research questions RQ1-1 and RQ1-2.

In stage six, in order to answer research question RQ1-3 – are there iterative cycles which connect Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices? – I identified whether any mechanism for how Indigenous identity influenced entrepreneurial practices could be linked to a mechanism for how entrepreneurial practices influenced Indigenous identity. Mechanisms that were linked would occur if they were associated with the same clusters. Doing this would enable me to show that for certain groups of entrepreneurs, their Indigenous identities and entrepreneurial practices are linked by specific mechanisms. To complete this task, I created a summary list of which clusters were associated with each mechanism in *Tables 4.4* and *4.5*. I then looked across *Tables 4.4 and 4.5* to identify for each data set whether a certain cluster or group of clusters could be found associated with a mechanism in each table. I highlighted those clusters that

were associated with both a mechanism in terms of Indigenous identity influenced entrepreneurial practice (*Table 4.4*) as well as how entrepreneurial practices influenced Indigenous identity (*Table 4.5*). These highlighted matching mechanisms formed two cycles for the NSW/VIC data and three cycles for the BC interviewees in terms of how Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices connect in circular feedback loops.

In stage seven, I compared the BC and NSW/VIC data by comparing answers to RQ1-1, RQ1-2 and RQ1-3. To compare answers to RQ1-1, I explored the diversity of experiences and perspectives in both data sets. To compare answers to RQ1-2, I explored the similarities and differences between the mechanisms that were identified for both data sets that link Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. To compare answers to RQ1-3, I compared the cycles that were created. In this comparison process I focused on those aspects that were different between the two clusters in order to illuminate how context might create variation for the focal connections.

#### **4.4. Findings**

In this findings section, I will first explore how BC and NSW/VIC interviewees connect their Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. To do so, I will group Indigenous entrepreneurs who have similar experiences and perspectives around these connections. This will enable me to identify specific ways that groups of Indigenous entrepreneurs connect their Indigenous identities and entrepreneurial practices. I chose to group Indigenous entrepreneurs together because this grouping should provide a sound basis for identifying mechanisms common to multiple Indigenous entrepreneurs. In grouping Indigenous entrepreneurs from each data set in terms of how they discuss connections between their Indigenous identities and entrepreneurial practices, I will lay the groundwork for answering RQ1-1: Are there underlying mechanisms that connect Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices? I will also answer RQ1-2: Do Indigenous entrepreneurs within the same context discuss the connections between their Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices differently, and if so, in what ways?

In this findings section, I will then develop mechanisms by organizing specific experiences and perspectives discussed by Indigenous entrepreneurs in each group. Mechanisms will explain the underlying processes of several experiences and perspectives that touch on the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. Identifying mechanisms will enable me to fully answer (RQ1-1). Once the mechanisms are developed, I will explore whether any mechanisms in terms of how Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices link with mechanisms in terms of how entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity. If mechanisms do link, this could point to the existence of a cycle. The identification of cycles will in turn answer whether Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices are involved in any iterative cycles (RQ1-3). Answers to these three subordinate research questions will establish a means through which to explore how context affects the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices (RQ1).

#### **4.4.1. The Heterogeneity of Connections between Indigenous Identity and Entrepreneurial Practices**

To usefully explore the connections interviewees discuss between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices for both BC and NSW/VIC Indigenous entrepreneurs, I will group interviewees from each region based on similarities in how they discussed these connections. Doing so will hopefully enable me to understand how Indigenous entrepreneurs in each region are similar to or different from one another in terms of how they connect their Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. To accomplish this task, I will develop 'clusters' of interviewees. Clusters are groups of interviewees who share several experiences/perspectives codes that capture how Indigenous identity influenced entrepreneurial practices or how entrepreneurial practices influenced Indigenous identity. Clusters were created using the qualitative analysis program NVivo, which can group interviewees based on the similarity of coding attributed to each interviewee. The output of the NVivo cluster analysis for both data sets can be found in Appendix C. The codes held in common by interviewees within BC clusters can be found in *Table 4.2*. In this table, in the leftmost column, the cluster number is given along with a name I have given each cluster. The order of the clusters spans from the most to the least community and culturally-involved entrepreneurs. The

number of interviewees in each cluster is also indicated in this first column. The second column lists the influence category that the codes in the rightmost column refer to, which are how Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices and how entrepreneurial practices influences Indigenous identity. The codes held in common by interviewees in each cluster are provided in the rightmost column which is organized according to the influence category to which the codes refer. The number beside each code is the number of interviewees in that cluster who referenced the code. *Table 4.3* provides the same information for NSW/VIC interviewees. In order to demonstrate that clusters are based on the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous entrepreneurs, in Appendix C I explain each of the six BC clusters by using one interviewee from each cluster as an illustrative example.

**Table 4.2. BC Clusters**

| Cluster Information                    | Influence Category  | Common Experiences/Perspectives Codes   |
|--|---|---|
| Cluster 6<br>Fused<br>N=4              | How Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices<br><br>How entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity | Assist or give back to community (m <sup>12</sup> ) (2); Indigenous products and services needed for Indigenous customers (m) (2); authenticity and reputation (2); community consultation (2); inclusion of spirituality (2); trade and barter (2); hiring family (2); access to product (2); spiritual support (2); sharing knowledge (2); reacting against cultural stereotypes (3); lower profits (2); not enough Indigenous candidates for jobs (2)<br><br>Role model (2); strategic pricing (2); donations (2); follows protocols (2) |
| Cluster 5<br>Employment-focused<br>N=8 | How Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices<br><br>How entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity | Assist or give back to community (m) (6); build Indigenous capacity (m) (5)<br><br>Role model (6); employing and empowering (6); cultural preservation and sharing (4)  |

<sup>12</sup> The letter m indicates a code that is associated with a motivation for becoming an entrepreneur.

| Cluster Information  | Influence Category  | Common Experiences/Perspectives Codes  |
|--|---|--|
| Cluster 4<br>Culturally- and<br>Instrumentally-<br>focused<br>N=10 | How Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices<br><br>How entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity | Indigenous products and services needed for Indigenous customers (8), business aesthetics (7), authenticity and reputation (6); cultural sensitivity (6); assist or give back to community (motivation) (5); access to Indigenous customers (5); financial support (5)<br><br>Role model (6); cultural preservation and sharing (9); exposure to culture (7) |
| Cluster 3<br>Culturally-<br>focused<br>N=3                         | How Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices<br><br>How entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity | Cultural revival and revitalization (m) (2); authenticity and reputation (2); communication style (2); listing in directory (2); Indigenous products and services needed for non-Indigenous customers; respect for protocols (2)<br><br>Holding onto ethics difficult (2)  |
| Cluster 2<br>Instrumental<br>N = 3                                 | How Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices<br><br>How entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity | Financial support (3)<br><br>Receiving awards (2); connections to family, Indigenous entrepreneurs and community (2)   |
| Cluster 1<br>Inhibiting<br>N=2                                     | How Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices  | Crab bucket (2); limited capital or difficulty getting funding (2)   |

**Table 4.3. NSW/VIC Clusters**

| Cluster Information               | Influence Category   | Common Experience/ Perspectives Codes   |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Cluster 1<br>Fused<br>N=7         | How Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices | Assist or give back to community (m) (5); build Indigenous capacity (m) (7); cultural revival and revitalization (m) (5); spiritual support (4)                               |
|                                   | How entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity  | Cultural preservation and sharing (5); employing and empowering (4); connections to family, Indigenous entrepreneurs and community (4); role model (4)                        |
| Cluster 3<br>Integrated<br>N = 3  | How Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices | Assist or give back to community (m) (2); authenticity and reputation (2)   |
|                                   | How entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity  | Cultural preservation and sharing (2); connections to family, Indigenous entrepreneurs and community (2); income and donation (2); role model (2)                             |
| Cluster 6<br>Complementary<br>N=5 | How Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices | Indigenous products and services needed for Indigenous customers (m) (6); authenticity and reputation (3); communication style (3); reacting against cultural stereotypes (3) |
|                                   | How entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity  | Role model (3)  |
| Cluster 2<br>Coupled<br>N=6       | How Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices | Access to Indigenous and non-Indigenous customers (4); communication style (3); respect for protocols (3); time or customers (3)  |
|                                   | How entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity  | Connections to family, Indigenous entrepreneurs and community (4); voice (3)  |
| Cluster 5<br>Instrumental<br>N=4  | How Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices | Access to Indigenous and non-Indigenous customers (2); business aesthetic (4); tokenism (3); policies and procedures (2)  |
|                                   | How entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity  | Income and donations (3); employing and empowering (3); sparks Indigenous (2)   |
| Cluster 4<br>Disjointed<br>N=4    | How Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices | Connect with Indigenous identity (m) (2)  |

It is clear that for both BC and NSW/VIC interviewees, how they discuss the connections between their Indigenous identity and their entrepreneurial practices varies significantly from other Indigenous entrepreneurs in the same region/country. For both regions/countries, six groups of interviewees were created that each have unique sets of connections. As but one example of this heterogeneity, interviewees associated with BC *Cluster 6* (Fused) differ dramatically from interviewees in BC *Cluster 1* (Inhibiting). For interviewees in *Cluster 6* (Fused), Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices are connected in a multitude of primarily positive ways. For instance, Indigenous identity provides the motivation to assist and give back to Indigenous people; it also offers spiritual support. For interviewees in *Cluster 1* (Inhibiting), Indigenous identity plays an interfering role in their entrepreneurial practices by generating crab bucket criticisms from other Indigenous people and by limiting their access to capital. There are no commonalities between interviewees in this cluster relating to how entrepreneurial practices influence their Indigenous identities. This one example of differences between these two clusters speaks to the heterogeneity of connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices for both BC and NSW/VIC interviewees.

In terms of how Indigenous entrepreneurs in both contexts discuss the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices differently than one another, BC Indigenous entrepreneurs appear to discuss more ways that Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices than do NSW/VIC Indigenous entrepreneurs. This difference is likely due to Indigenous identity in Canada being less eroded by colonialism than in Australia, which means that there is a greater repertoire of understandings of specific/local Indigenous identities which BC entrepreneurs can integrate into their businesses. This difference may also be due to different common understandings within the Indigenous entrepreneur networks of practices in terms of how Indigenous identity can influence and be valuable for entrepreneurial practices.

The identification of groups of entrepreneurs within each context that have different connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices, provides one answer to RQ1-2 — whether the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices vary for Indigenous entrepreneurs and if so how). The identification of differences between the groups of BC and NSW/VIC Indigenous

entrepreneurs provides one answer for RQ1 – How does context influence the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices?

#### **4.4.2. Underlying Mechanisms that Explain the Connections between Indigenous Identity and Entrepreneurial Practices**

In this section I use the groups of Indigenous entrepreneurs developed in the preceding section in order to develop mechanisms. The identification of mechanisms will enable me to answer RQ1-1, which is whether there are underlying mechanisms that explain the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. Mechanisms are concise explanations for how Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices connect. Identifying mechanisms is important for moving beyond describing the various connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices to explaining the underlying processes for how they connect. This information is vital for gaining a deep understanding of the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices.

To create mechanisms, I took the common experiences and perspectives identified for each BC cluster in *Table 4.2* and grouped them with other similar experiences and perspectives associated with other clusters. I did the same for NSW/VIC Indigenous entrepreneurs in *Table 4.3*. As these groupings of experiences and perspectives developed, they revealed common mechanisms. The mechanisms that I identified through this grouping process can be found in *Tables 4.4* and *4.5*. In these tables, the first column lists what context the mechanisms is associated with. The second column lists each of the common experiences and perspectives grouped with similar experience and perspectives. The third column lists which cluster of interviewees referenced each experience or perspective. The fourth column lists the mechanism developed. The fifth column summarizes which clusters are associated with each mechanism.

**Table 4.4. Comparison of Mechanisms that Explain How Indigenous Identity Influences Entrepreneurial Practices**

| Data Set | Common Experiences/Perspectives Codes From Findings  | Clusters That Referenced Code                  | Mechanism             | Summary of Clusters that Referenced Mechanisms |
|----------|--|--|-----------------------|--|
| BC       | -Assist or give back to community (m)<br>-Build Indigenous capacity (m)<br>-Not enough Indigenous candidates for jobs<br>-Strategic pricing<br>-Hiring family  | 4, 5, 6<br>5<br>6<br>6<br>6                    | Responsibility        | 4, 5, 6  |
|          | -Indigenous products and services needed for Indigenous customers (m)<br>-Indigenous products and services needed for non-Indigenous customers (m)<br>-Access to Indigenous customers<br>-Access to product<br>-Financial support<br>-Limited capital or funding<br>-Spiritual support | 4, 6<br>4<br>4<br>6<br>2, 4<br>1<br>6          | Opportunity           | 1, 2, 4, 6                                     |
|          | -Cultural revival and revitalization (m)<br>-Cultural sensitivity<br>-Communication style<br>-Respect for protocols<br>-Spiritual support<br>-Community consultation<br>-Inclusion of spirituality<br>-Sharing knowledge<br>-Trade and barter<br>-Lower profits                        | 3<br>4<br>3<br>3<br>6<br>6<br>6<br>6<br>6<br>6 | Cultural Intelligence | 3, 4, 6  |
|          | -Authenticity and reputation<br>-Business aesthetics<br>-Listing in directory<br>-Crab bucket<br>-Reacting against cultural stereotypes  | 3, 4, 6<br>4<br>3<br>1<br>6                    | Legitimacy            | 1, 3, 4, 6                                     |
|          | -Build Indigenous capacity (m)<br>-Cultural revival and revitalization (m)<br>-Assist or give back to community (m)  | 1<br>1<br>1, 3                                 | Responsibility        | 1, 3   |

| Data Set    | Common Experiences/Perspectives Codes From Findings   | Clusters That Referenced Code  | Mechanism   | Summary of Clusters that Referenced Mechanisms |
|-------------|---|--------------------------------|-------------|--|
| NSW/<br>VIC | - Indigenous products and services needed for Indigenous customers (m)<br>-Connect with Indigenous identity (m)<br>- Access to Indigenous and non-Indigenous customers (both enabling and constraining) | 6<br>2,5<br>4                  | Opportunity | 2, 4, 5, 6                                     |
|             | - Authenticity and reputation<br>- Communication style<br>- Respect for protocols<br>- Business esthetic<br>- Reacting against cultural stereotypes   | 3, 6<br>2, 6<br>2<br>5<br>2, 5 | Legitimacy  | 2, 3, 5, 6                                     |

**Table 4.5. Comparison of Mechanisms that Explain How Entrepreneurial Practices Influence Indigenous Identity**

| Data Set    | Common Experiences/Perspectives Code  | Clusters That Referenced Code  | Mechanism                | Summary of Clusters that Referenced Mechanism |
|-------------|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| BC          | -Holding onto ethics difficult<br>-Follows protocols  | 3<br>6                         | Discipline               | 3, 6  |
|             | -Connections to family, Indigenous entrepreneurs and community<br>-Exposure to culture                            | 2<br>4                         | Knowledge/<br>Confidence | 2, 4  |
|             | -Employing and empowering<br>-Cultural preservation and sharing<br>-Donations<br>-Receiving awards<br>-Role model | 5<br>4, 5<br>6<br>2<br>4, 5, 6 | Pride                    | 2, 4, 5, 6                                    |
| NSW/<br>VIC | -Connections to family, Indigenous entrepreneurs and community<br>-Sparking Indigenization                        | 1, 3, 2<br>5                   | Knowledge/<br>Confidence | 1, 2, 3, 5                                    |
|             | -Role model<br>-Voice (enabling and constraining)   | 1, 3, 6<br>2                   | Status                   | 1, 2, 3, 6                                    |
|             | -Cultural preservation and sharing<br>-Employing and empowering<br>-Income and donations                          | 1, 3<br>1, 5<br>3, 5           | Pride                    | 1, 3, 5                                       |

## ***Mechanisms that Explain How Indigenous Identity Influences Entrepreneurial Practices***

Four mechanisms were identified that explain how Indigenous Identity influences entrepreneurial practices. First, Indigenous identity generates feelings of responsibility, which influences entrepreneurial practices. Second, Indigenous identity provides entrepreneurial opportunities, which influences entrepreneurial practices. Third, Indigenous identity contributes to legitimacy in terms of being an appropriate person to develop and sell Indigenous-specific products and services, which influences entrepreneurial practices. These three mechanisms are shared by some BC and NSW/VIC interviewees. Fourth, Indigenous identity generates cultural intelligence, which influences entrepreneurial practices. This mechanism is only associated with certain BC interviewees. I will now briefly explain each shared mechanism followed by a deeper explanation of the mechanism unique to BC interviewees—cultural intelligence.

### **Responsibility**

Indigenous identity generates feelings of responsibility, which influences entrepreneurial practices. For some interviewees, Indigenous identity generates a responsibility to contribute to Indigenous people through entrepreneurship (Cote, 2012). Responsibility manifests itself in terms of providing value to Indigenous people through the selling of products or services, providing opportunities to build Indigenous employee or supplier capacity and to give back to the wider Indigenous community through business. This felt responsibility impacts the entrepreneurial practices which interviewees who feel responsible engage in such as hiring and mentoring Indigenous employees and donating to charitable Indigenous initiatives.

### **Opportunity/Resources**

Indigenous identity provides entrepreneurial opportunities, which influences entrepreneurial practices. Some interviewees in this study suggest that being Indigenous enables them to discover or create entrepreneurial opportunities (Alvarez & Barney, 2007). It is well known within the general entrepreneurship (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000) as well as the ethnic entrepreneurship (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Chaganti & Greene, 2002; Essers & Benschop, 2009; Harvey, 2005; Volery, 2007) literatures that

specific knowledge about products or customers not held equally by all in the marketplace can be useful for discovering or creating entrepreneurial opportunities. Indigenous entrepreneurs are no different and use their knowledge about the needs and desires of Indigenous consumers in order to fill gaps in the Indigenous marketplace. Some Indigenous entrepreneurs also provide Indigenous-specific products or services to non-Indigenous clients. Entrepreneurial opportunities that are enabled by being Indigenous may influence entrepreneurial practices such as gaining access to unique raw materials or other inputs.

### **Legitimacy**

Indigenous identity contributes to legitimacy in terms of it creating the image of the entrepreneur being an appropriate person for developing and selling Indigenous-specific products and services. This influences entrepreneurial practices. Interviewees in both data sets suggested that they must confront issues around legitimacy from non-Indigenous and Indigenous customers. As was discussed earlier in the literature review, within the Indigenous entrepreneur networks of practice there are loosely defined standards for how Indigenous entrepreneurs should think, talk and act. These standards are different for BC and NSW/VIC interviewees. BC interviewees appear to be more concerned about standards around cultural legitimacy than NSW/VIC interviewees who appear more concerned about standards around legitimacy of being worthy to receive contracts from non-Indigenous companies. Both sets of interviewees appear to be complying with the standards of their networks of practice in order to be deemed a legitimate Indigenous entrepreneur. Being viewed as a legitimate or illegitimate person by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can influence entrepreneurial practices such as creating an Indigenous logo or by rebutting claims of inauthenticity.

### **Cultural Intelligence (only associated with BC interviewees)**

Indigenous identity generates cultural intelligence, which influences entrepreneurial practices. For some BC interviewees, being Indigenous sensitizes them to the diversity of cultures, particularly to the diversity of Indigenous cultures and the need to act sensitively and reflexively during cross-cultural interactions. This is because some interviewees grew up within Indigenous communities or other settings where

culture, including protocols, stories and ceremonies, were important aspects of life. This upbringing may have assisted some Indigenous peoples in the development of their cultural intelligence.

Cultural intelligence is typically defined as “a person's capability to adapt effectively to new cultural contexts” (Earley & Ang, 2003, p. 59). It has been argued that there are four components of this ability to adapt to new cultural contexts: “Metacognitive (an individual's consciousness and awareness during intercultural interactions), cognitive (general knowledge about the norms, practices and of a culture), motivational (capability to direct attention and energy toward learning about appropriate responses and functioning effectively), and behavioral (flexibility in exhibiting situationally appropriate verbal and nonverbal actions during intercultural interactions)” (Şahin, Gurbuz, & Köksal, 2014, p. 153). This definition of cultural intelligence captures the experiences and perspectives in this study in terms of how BC interviewees interact with other people from other Indigenous cultures. However, some BC interviewees also shared narratives about adapting to new ideas and protocols within their own cultures on account of learning more about their Indigenous identity through engagement in entrepreneurship. Several of those interviewees did not grow up on a reserve nor were they immersed in an Indigenous culture, which means that there was not an opportunity to develop knowledge of their specific/local culture and identity to the same extent as other interviewees. However, through entrepreneurship some interviewees learned more about their communities and cultures. This occurred through several avenues such as having their Band government as a client, which created relationships with community decision makers. One could argue that these are ‘new cultural contexts’. Regardless, the main point of making this distinction is that cultural intelligence can apply to both one’s own culture as well as to other Indigenous cultures to which one has no direct or ancestral connections.

Indigenous peoples and cultures in British Columbia are incredibly diverse which means many entrepreneurs suggest they need to learn more about other Indigenous cultures in order to work effectively with Indigenous peoples and communities. Cultural differences can be found in a plethora of dimensions including language, myths, art, governance models, protocols and trading practices. Particularly stark contrasts can be

seen across the different climates and geographies of the province. The Westbank culture of the arid semi-desert of the Okanagan likely has more differences than similarities to Nuu-chah-nulth culture rooted in the open seas and ancient rainforests of Clayoquot Sound. Even amongst communities from the same region, cultural practices can be quite different based on unique geographies and histories. The Haida on Haida Gwaii, for example, have distinct cultural practices from their neighbours on the mainland the Tsimshian (Vaillant, 2006). Several interviewees relate that cultural differences need to be understood and identified in order for their entrepreneurial practices to be respectful and effective. One example is I22, an architect, who states:

When I'm working with a community I follow protocols of the community. I find what those protocols are and it reinforces how I work. It reinforces the knowledge I have access to from the community in knowing that that's their knowledge. I respect that and I follow that. So I follow that direction. I always say that it's not my information I'm just a facilitator. So I'm just taking whatever they give me and coming up with the design that they approve. So in that sense I can leave that community and know that the building's theirs. (I22)

From this quote, it is clear that I22 applies all four components of cultural intelligence outlined by Şahin, Gurbuz, and Köksal (2014) in his entrepreneurial activities. I22 demonstrates metacognitive awareness of the differences in protocols between different communities. This awareness appears to motivate him to learn about the local culture in order to be a respectful and effective architect. He applies cognitive abilities to understand the norms and practices of communities. After an understanding has been developed, he uses his knowledge in order to adjust his behaviour and to design a process and a building that reflects the community's local culture.

Other BC interviewees will only engage in a few of the four components in cultural intelligence based on different situations. For instance, I20, a video producer, suggests: "We've been doing a lot of videos about treaty, a lot of videos about aboriginal rights and title, the constitution and law making. You know, and with that we're getting to know more and more, you know, like all the information that we just soak up because of this business. Its making me feel so much more informed". For I20, this information about her community, which is a core component of her specific/local Indigenous identity, and its relationships to law is important but she does relate it past the

metacognitive and cognitive dimensions into the domain of action. This information, of course, may lead I20 to make adaptations to her entrepreneurial practices.

### ***Mechanisms that Explain How Entrepreneurial Practices Influence Indigenous Identity***

Four mechanisms were identified that explain how Indigenous Identity influences entrepreneurial practices. First, entrepreneurial practices can generate pride in an Indigenous identity. Second, entrepreneurial practice can provide either the stimulus or resources for increasing knowledge about and confidence in an Indigenous identity. These mechanisms are attributed to certain Indigenous entrepreneurs both in BC and in NSW/VIC. Third, entrepreneurial practices can influence the status of an Indigenous entrepreneur in the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice. This mechanism is only associated with NSW/VIC interviewees. Finally, entrepreneurial practices can provide a basis for Indigenous entrepreneurs to uphold and demonstrate their discipline to Indigenous traditions and protocols which can strengthen an Indigenous identity. This mechanism is only attributed to certain BC Indigenous entrepreneurs.

#### **Pride**

Entrepreneurial practices can generate pride in Indigenous identity by providing opportunities to achieve the following: assist or give back to community, ensure cultural preservation and sharing, employ and empower Indigenous workers and generate income that can be donated to charitable Indigenous initiatives. These actions can generate the positive emotion of pride when the responsibility to give back to Indigenous peoples is accomplished through entrepreneurship. Pride can also be developed if these actions which contribute and give back to Indigenous peoples are acknowledged by others inside the Indigenous entrepreneur networks of practice, such as when one receives an award. Pride can reinforce or strengthen aspects of an Indigenous identity, such as being a contributor to Indigenous peoples and communities.

#### **Knowledge/Confidence**

Entrepreneurial practices can provide either the stimulus or resources for increasing knowledge about and confidence in an Indigenous identity. For some BC and

NSW/VIC interviewees in this study, their Indigenous identities evolve over time. This is because many Indigenous peoples did not have the opportunity to be connected to communities, which leads them to want to learn more about aspects of their specific/local and general/regional, country or international Indigenous identities or cultures. Entrepreneurial practices can provide the stimulus or resources for increasing knowledge about and confidence in an Indigenous identity. An example of this would be when entrepreneurial practices put entrepreneurs in contact with Indigenous family members, entrepreneurs and members of the wider community with whom they previously had no relations. These new relationships can provide both knowledge around specific/local Indigenous identities as well as general/regional, country or global Indigenous identities. Entrepreneurship can also spark people who have not had the opportunity to develop their Indigenous identity to embark upon a developmental journey. A typical entry point in NSW/VIC was involvement in an Indigenous Chamber of Commerce. A typical entry point in BC was receiving an award. These entry points sparked some interviewees' interest in learning more about who they are as Indigenous peoples and becoming more involved in the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice. This new knowledge, combined with more connections to Indigenous networks of practice, led to more confidence in terms of claiming and displaying an Indigenous identity. Increased knowledge and confidence typically strengthened the Indigenous identities of some Indigenous entrepreneurs associated with this mechanism.

**Status (only associated with NSW/VIC interviewees)**

Entrepreneurial practices can influence the status of an Indigenous entrepreneur in the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice. Practitioners of the NSW/VIC Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice develop credibility as they adopt the norms and expectations of the practice. Those who conform to central standards of the practice and who can shape their identity accordingly will likely be those who have status within this network. Status in the NSW/VIC Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice would involve being considered a leader in Indigenous business and a role model for Indigenous peoples. Narratives and actions that appear to be rewarded in the network include contributions to community, strengthening culture, generating self-sufficiency and building the capacity of Indigenous workers through mentorship and training. Individuals who comply to these standards can become higher-status individuals within

the network of practice. Being a higher status member within the network of practice can in turn lead individuals to view their Indigenous identity in a different light, such as shifting from viewing themselves as 'regular' Indigenous persons to viewing themselves as role models.

Despite the capacity for entrepreneurial practices to contribute to the increased status of an Indigenous entrepreneur, which can have positive identity implications, the method and extent to which status is increased needs to be carefully managed. As was discussed earlier, an aspect of the Australian Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice is the tall poppy syndrome (Foley, 2006a). This syndrome provides sanctions on behaviour that deviate from norms of the practice, including being humble and observing responsibilities to the wider community. Repercussions come in the form of ridicule, disapproval and lack of business patronage. For these reasons the norms of the practice, as evidenced by interviewees' responses to questions, are to be modest, careful and sometimes muted in voicing one's opinion and about claiming their status in the network. For some, this restricts their ability speak up inside the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice. For others, such as NSW/VIC Interviewee 20, this means that they need to situate their success within their familial and community support network in order to not appear as though they have done it alone or think they are better than other people:

[If I did not give thanks to those who have supported me at public events] I would be very pretentious and proud and all about me and not about anybody else. Whereas saying you're part of a greater body of people or family or community is to share that you're only one drop of water in a great ocean and that great ocean is really what counts, not me standing up front. I think it's a humbling thing and I think it's really important to remain humble when you're often in a public realm. I don't like being famous but I like making my community famous.  
(120)

### **Discipline (only associated with BC interviewees)**

Entrepreneurial practices can provide a platform upon which Indigenous entrepreneurs can uphold and demonstrate their discipline related to maintaining Indigenous traditions and protocols, which can strengthen an Indigenous identity. The mechanism 'discipline' differs from common understandings of the term discipline that

focus on punishments and sanctions and instead refers to a commitment to Indigenous values and practices and a conformation to the norms of the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice. This kind of discipline demands commitment, willpower and self-control. As Duckworth describes (2009, p. 1), “self-discipline is the ability to marshal willpower to accomplish goals and uphold standards that one personally regards as desirable. That is, self-discipline isn’t the capacity to do what other people order you to do; rather, it is the capacity to do what you want to do. It’s knowing how to manage your emotions and thoughts and knowing how to plan your behaviour so you can reach your goals”.

The concept of discipline has roots in Indigenous cultures. Many Indigenous cultures emphasize rituals and ceremonies which involve the act of discipline with regard to protocols and traditions. As just one brief example, some Nuu-chah-nulth people in BC engage in ritual cleansing called *oosumich* which involves sometimes-daily cold water bathing typically in rivers (R. Atleo, 2005). When in the water, prayers are recited along with body scrubbing with cedar branches (R. Atleo, 2005). This cultural practice takes great commitment, especially during winter months when frigid waters cool skin and flesh to painful extremes.

Identities, including Indigenous identities, are not formed merely through thought or will; they are formed through engaging in practices and in repeating actions which conform to these practices. Both within the BC Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice as well as in other communities or networks of practice, the ability to claim an identity requires the performance of certain actions that fit with the norms of that community or network. Entrepreneurship is just one dimension of Indigenous life where discipline is required in order to maintain, develop and claim a particular local/specific Indigenous identity. Entrepreneurial practices which build legitimacy in terms of discipline in maintaining Indigenous traditions can include protocols such as acknowledging whose traditional territory business is being conducted upon. Engaging in these entrepreneurial practices could assist in the maintenance of an Indigenous identity. Engaging in more entrepreneurial practices which uphold and display discipline in maintaining Indigenous traditions and protocols could strengthen an Indigenous identity.

Entrepreneurial practices, however, can create challenges that test Indigenous traditions and protocols. To share one example, BC Interviewee 9 states that as an artist, she struggles with having to 'sell herself' in order to sell her handmade jewelry:

I really struggle with having to sell myself in order to promote my business which it shouldn't be that way. Because my design is my design, it has nothing to do with how well I sell myself and yet they keep putting us women in that position where we have to sell ourselves in order to fill our economic needs...so I try and promote the story that's in the piece when they look at it. Like it's not me you're buying it's this piece and here's the story that goes with that and here's where it came from. So I take myself out of that line of importance and out of that feeling cheap by having to use myself to sell that piece. Because that's what you're buying, that's the piece of quality that's going to speak to itself and give you the story. So I make them intent on listening to the story because you're going to tell it next time somebody asks you 'where did you get that?'...Like I said if I let my product be the light and the story behind it then it takes the pressure off of me in having that recognition. I don't have to put myself in that position of having to do that. This makes me stay a strong First Nations woman. (19)

A key struggle BC I9 appears to be dealing with is the tension between the entrepreneurial practice of selling and Indigenous practice of being humble and not talking about oneself in positive and self-serving ways. Being humble is a core aspect of many Indigenous ways of being, which can be evidenced by important chiefs and leaders having speakers praise them and their wealth on their behalf rather than being self-laudatory about their own status (Clutesi, 1969). Thus, the issue for I9 appears to be how to remain disciplined regarding this Indigenous norm while at the same time being able to effectively sell her product. This question is a key source of tension for several entrepreneurs in this study. Also likely at stake for I9 in this arena are issues around gender.

Although several common norms and understandings have developed in the BC Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice, such as the need to give back (Cote, 2012), no clear standards appear to have developed in terms of how to promote a product and business while remaining humble. This tension is resolved by I9 by focusing on the story of her jewelry rather than on herself. This enables her to remain disciplined regarding the important norm of humility and to remain a 'strong First Nations woman'.

Other interviewees will deal with or resolve this tension in different ways such as by explaining the revision of their Indigenous identity, including the promotion of oneself, as a necessary adaptation to modern times. Not resolving this tension could negatively influence Indigenous identity in that it could, for example, cause individuals to consider themselves sellouts.

### ***How Context Influenced Differences in Mechanisms***

The two mechanisms of discipline and cultural intelligence likely emerged only in the BC data largely due to different patterns of colonization, different legislation and the more mature development of the BC Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice. In many ways, Indigenous cultures have been better preserved and renewed in Canada because of its geography: Limited transportation infrastructure restricted colonial control over Indigenous peoples, especially in coastal and mountainous areas of BC. This meant that outlawed cultural practices such as the potlatch could be taken underground and, for core elements of those practices, preserved and reinstated (Borrows, 2010b; Vaillant, 2006). Legislation, such as the *Indian Act* that created reserves, although incredibly destructive, may have enabled more retention of culture than Australian legislation which did not set aside land for Indigenous peoples. Cultural intelligence and discipline both depend on cultural knowledge and likely cultural involvement which are more present in Canada than Australia. This difference may also be on account of variances in the development of the networks of practice, where the BC Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice is older and likely more mature, which may facilitate the integration of cultural considerations. In the relatively nascent NSW/VIC Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice, fundamental concerns such as who has status within the network of practice may be more pressing. As the NSW/VIC network of practice is nascent, roles, hierarchy and norms within the may not be as established as in the older BC network of practice. This may mean that there are questions around who can claim membership or a leadership role in the network of practice. This lack of clarity has likely led to the concern around status within the NSW/VIC Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice for interviewees in this study.

In summary, in this section I identified mechanisms that appear to underlie the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices that interviewees

in both data sets discuss. The identification of mechanisms answers RQ1-1 which is whether any mechanisms can be identified that explain the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. The identification of a mechanism has also shown that mechanisms are only associated with certain interviewees, which provides an answer to RQ1-2, are the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices Indigenous entrepreneurs within the same contexts heterogeneous? In exploring how context may have influenced unique mechanisms associated with BC and NSW/VIC Indigenous entrepreneurs, I have also provided one set of answers to the primary research question of this paper, how does context influence the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices?

#### **4.4.3. How Indigenous Identity and Entrepreneurial Practices Connect in Iterative Cycles**

The literature review focusing on the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices revealed that Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices may be linked in iterative cycles. This is a possibility as, in general, identity shapes involvement in practices as well as how practitioners reproduce or alter practices (Bowman, 2007; Burke & Stets, 2009; Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011, 2011; Handley et al., 2006; Warde, 2005) and Involvement in practices can assist or constrain both the way individuals understand themselves and the way other individuals understand them (J. S. Brown & Duguid, 2001; Handley et al., 2006; Nielsen & Lassen, 2012; Wenger, 2000). The development or alteration of an identity could lead to an engagement in new entrepreneurial practices that could impact identity, which in turn could affect reproduction or alteration of a practice. Likewise, a change in entrepreneurial practices could create changes in one's identity, which could drive engagement in different entrepreneurial practices. This pattern could continue in a cycle where changes in either identity or practices trigger virtuous or vicious cycles where both identity and practices are either negatively or positively impacted.

My goal for the following sections will be twofold. First, I will explore whether any cycles can be identified that link Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. This will answer RQ1-3 which is, do iterative cycles exist between Indigenous identity and

entrepreneurship? Second, if cycles can be identified and if there are differences between cycles associated with BC and NSW/VIC interviewees, this will stand as another way for me to explore this paper's primary research question, how does context influence the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices (RQ1)?

In order to explore whether any cycles exist, I first investigated whether any mechanisms paired with one another. Mechanisms are explanations as to how Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices as well as vice versa. If one mechanism that explains how Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices is matched with one mechanism that explains how entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identity, this could suggest that these mechanisms may exist in a cycle. Mechanisms would match with one another if clusters of interviewees were associated with both sets of mechanisms. Any cycles that are identified may be iterative if the concepts and mechanisms could logically continue to affect one another in recurring loops.

To explore whether any mechanisms paired with one another, for each data set I compared *Table 4.4: Comparison of How Indigenous Identity Influences Entrepreneurial Practices* with *Table 4.5: Comparison of How Entrepreneurial Practices Influence Indigenous Identity* to see whether any groups of interviewees appeared together in both tables. For the BC data, three cluster groups were linked in both tables: *Clusters 2, 4, 5 and 6; Clusters 2, 4 and Clusters 3 and 6*. This identification of potential cluster groups was not perfectly clean-cut. For example, although *Clusters 2 and 4* are the only clusters associated with the mechanism knowledge/confidence in *Table 4.4*, in *Table 4.5* *Clusters 2 and 4* are found together in the opportunities/resources mechanism along with *Clusters 1 and 6*. This lack of a complete match is acceptable as the overall goal was to see whether any groups of interviewees shared any pairings of mechanisms. For the NSW/VIC data, two cluster groups were identified as occurring together in both tables: *Cluster 1 and 3 and Clusters 2, 5 and 6*. Interviewees in *Cluster 4* were not included as they shared so few common connections that they would not hold relevance in terms of how Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices connect. For both BC and NSW/VIC interviewees, one mechanism for each cluster that was associated with

how Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices was paired with the mechanism on how entrepreneurial practices influences Indigenous identity. These pairings of mechanisms created three cycles for BC interviewees and three cycles for NSW/VIC interviewees. Two of the cycles which I identified – ‘pride’ and ‘knowledge/confidence’ – were associated with both BC and NSW/VIC interviewees. One cycle, ‘status’, was unique to NSW/VIC interviewees. Another cycle, ‘discipline’, was unique to BC interviewees. I should note that BC *Clusters 4 and 6* and NSW/VIC *Clusters 2 and 3* are attributed to multiple cycles, but this is acceptable as there are overlapping experiences that may be activated at different times or in different interactions. In order to gain more information on what kinds of interviewees were associated with each cycle, I tabulated individual and business attributes of interviewees associated with each cycle. This can be found in *Tables 4.6 and 4.7*. Average variation between attributes of the cycles for each data set was calculated by adding the difference between *Cycles 2 and 1*, *Cycles 1 and 3* and *Cycles 2 and 3* and then dividing that total by three to get the average difference between cycles. The average difference found between the cycles in each data set presents only a rough estimate and was only calculated in order to indicate what kind of interviewees were associated with each cycle and what attributes may be the most important in determining which cycle an Indigenous entrepreneur will be associated with.

In the following two subsections on cycles common to BC and NSW/VIC interviewees, I will briefly explain each cycle, will explain existing differences (if there are any) between the cycles and will explore how context may have created unique variations in each cycle. In the last two sections on cycles unique to either BC or NSW/VIC interviewees, I will explain each unique cluster and will explore the role that context played in leading to the potential existence of this unique cluster. To inform these tasks, when appropriate, I incorporate attribute data of interviewees associated with each cycle.

**Table 4.6. Attributes of BC Interviewees Associated with Each Cycle**

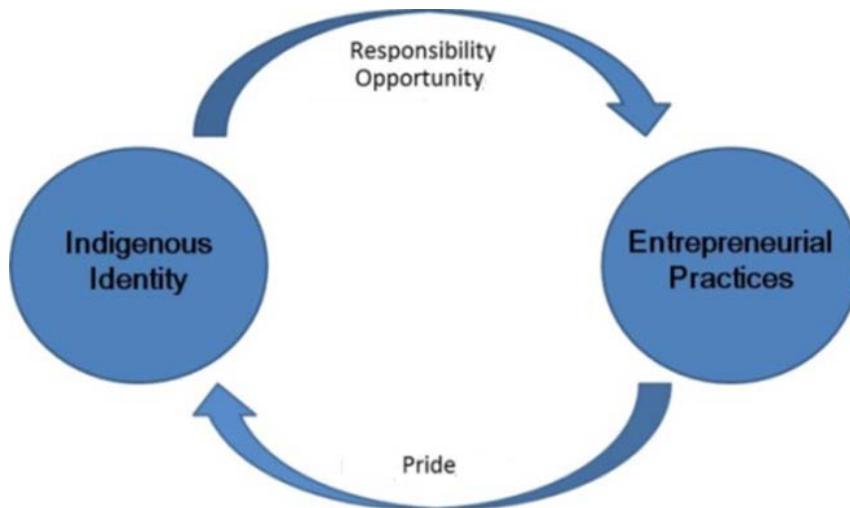
|                                   | Connections to Community | Indigenous-specific product or service | Age Group | Time Identified | Gender | Company Age | Business on Reserve |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|--|-----------|-----------------|--------|-------------|---------------------|
| Attribute Value                   | Yes                      | Yes                                    | Middle    | Always          | Female | Old         | Yes                 |
| Pride                             | 84%                      | 68%                                    | 48%       | 72%             | 44%    | 76%         | 68%                 |
| Knowledge/Confidence              | 63%                      | 54%                                    | 36%       | 63%             | 56%    | 72%         | 72%                 |
| Discipline                        | 100%                     | 86%                                    | 57%       | 78%             | 50%    | 78%         | 64%                 |
| Average Difference Between Cycles | 25%                      | 21%                                    | 14%       | 10%             | 8%     | 6%          | 5%                  |

**Table 4.7. Attributes of NSW/VIC Interviews Associated with Each Cycle**

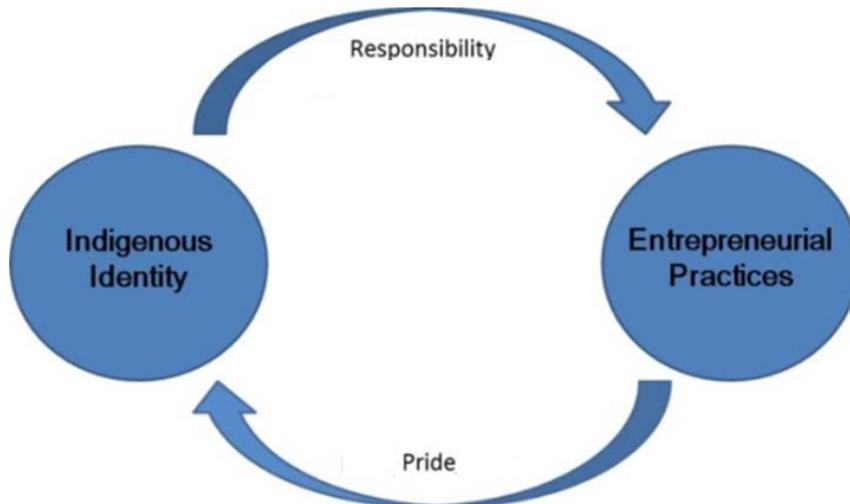
|                                   | Supply Nation Member | Indigenous-specific product or service | Employing Indigenous | Gender | Connections to Community | Consulting or Arts | Time Identified |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|--|----------------------|--------|--------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Attribute Value                   | Yes                  | Yes                                    | Yes                  | Female | Yes                      | Yes                | Always or Early |
| Pride                             | 10%                  | 70%                                    | 40%                  | 40%    | 90%                      | 60%                | 80%             |
| Knowledge/Confidence              | 60%                  | 20%                                    | 20%                  | 70%    | 60%                      | 50%                | 70%             |
| Status                            | 29%                  | 57%                                    | 1%                   | 57%    | 79%                      | 64%                | 79%             |
| Average Difference Between Cycles | 33%                  | 33%                                    | 26%                  | 23%    | 20%                      | 15%                | 15%             |

### ***Pride Cycle***

**Figure 4.3. BC Pride Cycle**



**Figure 4.4. NSW/VIC Pride Cycle**



Twenty-five BC and ten NSW/VIC interviewees were associated with a 'responsibility—pride cycle', which I will call the 'pride cycle', in which Indigenous identity may give rise to a sense of responsibility to give back to Indigenous peoples and which may alter the entrepreneurial practices that entrepreneurs engage in to provide more benefits to Indigenous peoples. These entrepreneurial practices may in turn create pride in being a community-oriented Indigenous person which may successively generate

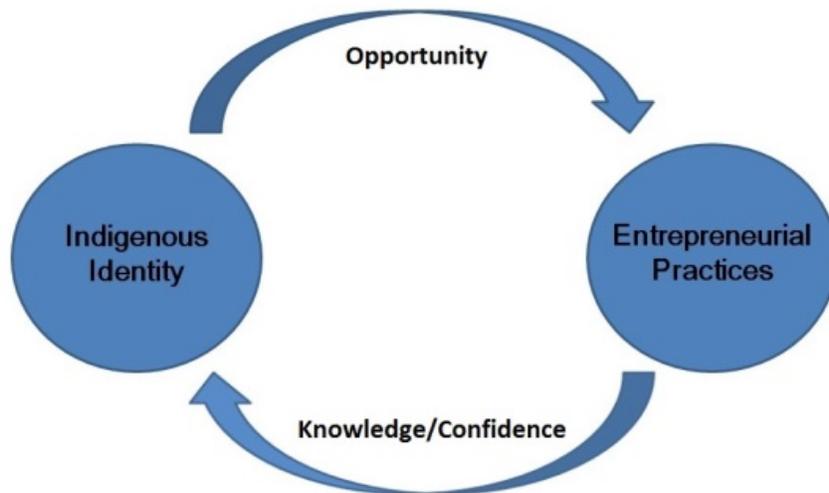
more feelings of responsibility toward Indigenous peoples. Thus, responsibility and pride may create a positive self-reinforcing cycle. Twenty-five out of thirty BC interviewees were associated with this cycle whereas only ten out of thirty NSW/VIC interviewees were associated with this overall cycle. This large difference is likely due to BC Indigenous entrepreneurs' having more specific/local cultural knowledge to leverage on account of differences in colonialism. This could also be due to a stronger commonly understood narrative in the BC Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice around the importance of responsibility and outcome of pride, which may have become a dominant network norm because of its relatively older age. Finally, this difference may also be due to NSW/VIC interviewees' citing that their Indigenous identity is contentious both inside as well as outside the network. This contentiousness may dissuade people from discussing how their entrepreneurial practices create pride around being Indigenous in order to not open themselves up to tall poppy criticisms.

For BC interviewees opportunities also lead to pride whereas for NSW/VIC interviews this was not the case. Why not? Likely, this is due to benefits accruing out of Supply Nation where people are given opportunities based on their Indigenous status. For several NSW/VIC interviewees, this generated concern over the potential of being seen as a token Indigenous business securing contracts and clients only due to the assistance of Indigenous-specific programs or support. Although only ten percent of NSW/VIC interviewees associated with this cycle are members of Supply Nation, this concern over how people are given opportunities likely shapes the entire network of practice, even for those who are not directly linked to Supply Nation. Many NSW/VIC interviewees appear to attempt to disentangle their Indigenous identity with their exploitation of opportunities. In Canada, there are not similar organizations or support mechanisms around opportunities. The closest frameworks to Supply Nation would be procurement programs such as the Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business (PSAB) which attempts to link Aboriginal businesses to opportunities in the federal government or industry. These programs appear largely ineffective. Only two interviewees related involvement in PSAB or being listed in a directory. Most cited that involvement in these directories created no tangible business opportunities. The lack of effective procurement programs based on Indigenous identity likely leads to a more acceptable connection within the BC Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice

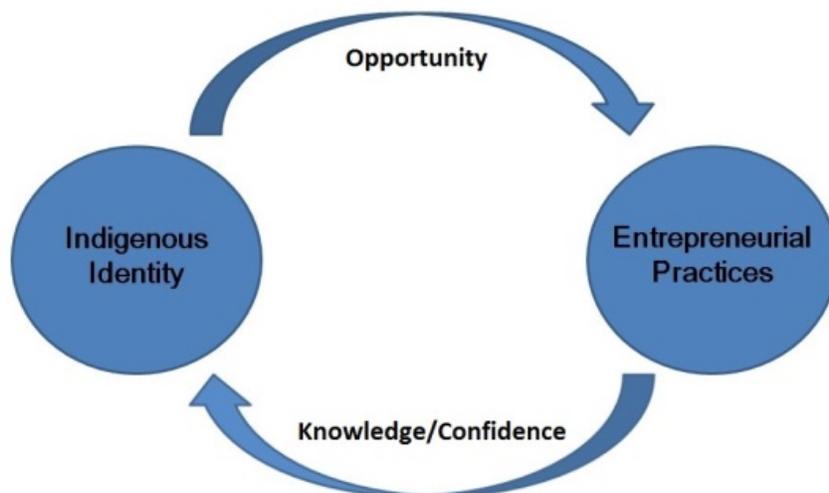
between opportunity and pride. Another explanation for why taking advantage of entrepreneurial opportunities leads to pride for BC Indigenous entrepreneurs but not for NSW/VIC Indigenous entrepreneurs is that it may simply be harder to be proud to be Indigenous in Australia due to the devastating effects of colonization, including racism.

### ***Knowledge/Confidence Cycle***

**Figure 4.5. NSW/VIC Knowledge/Confidence Cycle**



**Figure 4.6. BC Knowledge/Confidence Cycle**



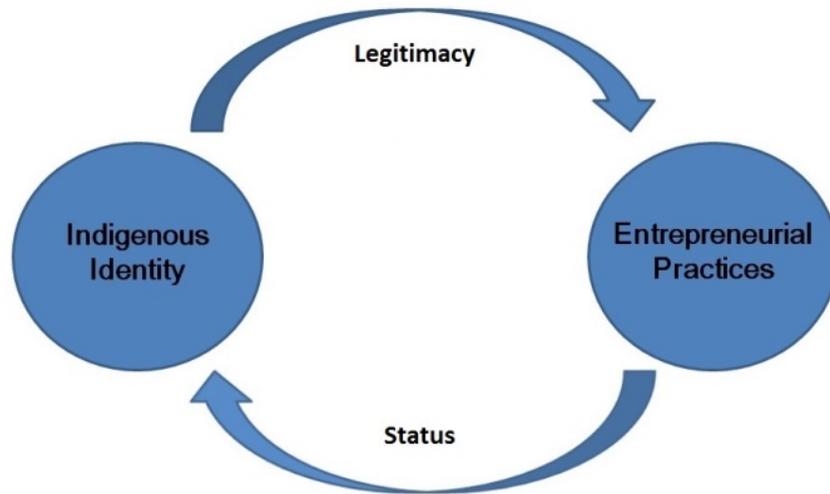
Thirteen BC and ten NSW/VIC interviewees were associated with an ‘opportunity—knowledge/confidence’ cycle that I will call the ‘knowledge/confidence cycle’. Being Indigenous may assist in the creation or discovery of entrepreneurial opportunities based on either knowledge about Indigenous customers or involvement in a procurement mechanism such as Supply Nation. This identification of opportunities may lead Indigenous entrepreneurs to take advantage of these opportunities by either forming new businesses or adapting their existing businesses to take advantage of these opportunities. For instance, an entrepreneur who is looking to take advantage of a recently identified entrepreneurial opportunity to provide Indigenous products to Indigenous customers may change their logo to reflect their Indigenous heritage. Entrepreneurial practices such as these may in turn create knowledge about and confidence in one’s Indigenous identity which may in turn strengthen how people think about or display their identity. For instance, through developing their logo, if they learned more about the art of their ancestral community, this could provide more knowledge around what it means for them to be Indigenous. In this way, for some entrepreneurs in both data sets, Indigenous identity, opportunity, entrepreneurial practices and knowledge/confidence may be linked in iterative feedback loops that both alter the entrepreneurial practices in which they engage as well as modify their Indigenous identity.

Interviewees from both data sets that are associated with this cycle have the least amount of community connections compared with interviewees associated with the other two cycles (for BC 63% versus 84% and 100% for the other two cycles; for NSW/VIC 60% versus 79% and 90% for the other two cycles). They also have the least Indigenous-specific products or services than the other two cycles (for BC 54% versus 68% and 86% for the other two cycles; for NSW/VIC 20% versus 57% and 70% for the other two cycles). Finally, NSW/VIC interviewees have the highest number of Supply Nation members (60% versus 10% and 29% for the other two cycles). This suggests that those who gain knowledge about and confidence in developing an opportunity are those who have the least connections to Indigenous communities and cultures. It also suggests that NSW/VIC Supply Nation could be an important resource for increasing some Indigenous entrepreneurs’ knowledge about and confidence in their Indigenous identity. Other than the apparent importance of Supply Nation in this cycle, few

differences can be identified in ways that this cycle differs between NSW/VIC and BC interviewees.

### **Status Cycle**

**Figure 4.7. NSW/VIC Status Cycle**



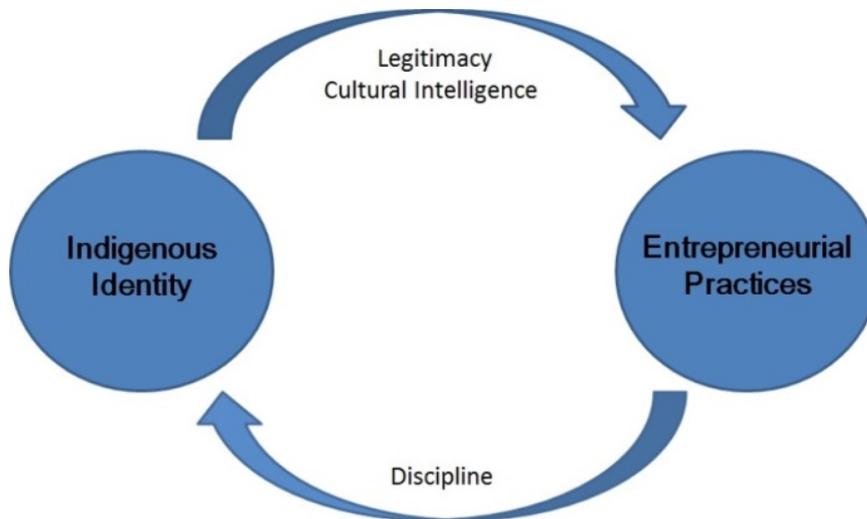
Fourteen NSW/VIC were associated with a legitimacy—status cycle that I will call the ‘status cycle’. Interviewees associated with this cycle suggested that they were both aware of and concerned about the need to be seen as a ‘legitimate’ or ‘authentic’ Indigenous entrepreneur. This concern influenced the entrepreneurial practices that they engaged in such as being humble and respecting protocols, creating an Indigenous business name, getting certified by Supply Nation and being a members of an Indigenous Business Chamber. These entrepreneurial practices are largely focused on the legitimacy of oneself as perceived by those inside and outside of the network of practice. This is evidenced by legitimacy’s companion mechanism – status – within the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice. As was discussed earlier, legitimacy around opportunities may be a particularly salient concern for Australian Indigenous entrepreneurs due to Supply Nation which for many Australian Indigenous entrepreneurs necessitates making clear that they don’t get contracts and clients just for being Indigenous (29% of interviewees associated with this cycle are members of Supply Nation versus 10% and 60% for the other two cycles). Legitimacy may be a particularly large concern for those who do not have any Indigenous employees (1% of interviewees

associated with this cycle versus 20% and 40% for the other two cycles). Building the capacity of Indigenous employees is a key way to gain legitimacy, as this practice is praised within the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice. Without this way of building credibility, Indigenous entrepreneurs who do not have Indigenous employees – either because they are a one-person businesses or because they hire people who are not Indigenous – likely worry more about their legitimacy than those who have Indigenous employees. If entrepreneurial practices are engaged in and are viewed positively by others in the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice, this could lead to status within the network. This increased status could in turn bolster Indigenous identity. On the other hand, if an entrepreneur engaged in certain practices in an attempt to build legitimacy but was labeled a sellout, a ‘flash black’ or inauthentic, this could decrease their status in the practice which could erode Indigenous identity.

The importance of this cycle for NSW/VIC interviewees but not for BC interviewees can be usefully explained by difference in context. As was described in earlier sections, the focus on legitimacy and status for NSW/VIC interviewees could be attributed to the nascent nature the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice. These mechanisms, however, could also be explained by the relatively dispersed nature of Indigenous entrepreneurs in NSW/VIC where many entrepreneurs do not have the opportunity to connect with other practitioners other than through events held by organizations such as Indigenous Business Australia. With this lack of face-to-face contact, NSW/VIC entrepreneurs may be more concerned about – and may actively attempt to shape – their status in the network, which, of course, is a key way that practitioners could get sensitized to or come to know aspects of an Indigenous entrepreneur. BC, by contrast, has several hotbeds of Indigenous business including Chilliwack, Port Alberni, Vancouver, West Vancouver and Westbank where Indigenous entrepreneurs are located close to one another. This may make personal interaction an important factor in determining the importance of status.

## ***Discipline Cycle***

**Figure 4.8. BC Discipline Cycle**



For the seven BC interviewees associated with a potential *Cycle 3* that I term the ‘discipline cycle’ there appear to be connections between the Indigenous identity, cultural intelligence, legitimacy, entrepreneurial practices and discipline that may form an iterative cycle. Several factors could spark the cycle but perhaps the most likely are changes to Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. Changes in Indigenous identity, such as increased involvement in Indigenous cultural activities may prompt people to become more culturally sensitive. This could in turn influence entrepreneurs to be more culturally-attuned when running their business and to engage in entrepreneurial practices which reflect this awareness. Once completed, these practices could then reinforce discipline in terms of adhering to Indigenous protocols. This enacting of discipline could in turn enable them to understand themselves as an Indigenous person who is culturally informed and legitimated as a part of the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice. This change in identity could in turn create an increased impulse to further consider cultural considerations in business, which could lead to further changes in entrepreneurial practices, and so on. This largely virtuous cycle could over time both lead to more entrepreneurial practices that focus on and demonstrate cultural sensitivity and legitimacy as well as bolster important cultural and social aspects of Indigenous identity.

Interviewees associated with this cycle have strong connections to communities (100% versus 63% and 84% for the other two cycles) which may enable engagement in cultural activities that would be advantageous to building cultural sensitivity. Without connections to communities and cultures, Indigenous entrepreneurs do not become immersed in a cycle of cultural intelligence, legitimacy—discipline. The lack of connections to communities and cultures due to patterns of colonialism and legislation may explain why NSW/VIC interviewees are not associated with the discipline cycle. Concerns around cultural legitimacy may be driven by the vast majority of interviewees in this cluster having an Indigenous-specific product or service. This may predispose people to be concerned with cultural legitimacy as they open themselves up to advantages and disadvantages of touching on some aspect of Indigenous identity and culture. Questions of cultural legitimacy can be contentious for these entrepreneurs – certainly more so than for an entrepreneur who does not have an Indigenous-specific product or service (83% of interviewees associated with this cycle have an Indigenous-specific product or service versus 68% and 54% for the two other BC cycles). As was explained in previous sections, although both BC and NSW/VIC interviewees are concerned about legitimacy, NSW/VIC interviewees would be unlikely to be concerned about legitimacy in terms of being disciplined regarding maintaining cultural practice due to the fewer connections many NSW/VIC interviewees had with communities.

In summary, in the preceding sections I outlined two clusters which are attributed to interviewees of both data sets: the pride and knowledge/confidence cycles. I also outlined one cycle that is unique to BC interviewees – the discipline cycle – and one that is unique to NSW/VIC interviewees – the status cycle. The identification of cycles serves as an answer to RQ1-3, which is whether for interviewees in this study there are iterative cycles that connect Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. The identification of cycles has also provided another set of answers to RQ1-2, which is whether Indigenous entrepreneurs within the same context discuss connections between their Indigenous identities and entrepreneurial practices in different ways. Each cycle demonstrates that interviewees associated with that cycle have different connections, or different kinds of connections, that are active at different times or in different interactions, than interviewees associated with other cycles. In the preceding section I also explored how differences in context may have led to one unique cycle being attributed to a subset

of both BC and NSW/VIC interviewees. In doing so I identified several contextual factors that provide explanations for these differences. The identification and discussion of the impact of these contextual factors has provided another set of answers to the primary research question of this paper, RQ1: How does context influence the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices?

In the concluding section that follows, I will summarize the aspects of context that influence the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. I will then discuss limitations of this study and will outline implications that this study has for research, policy and practice.

## **4.5. Conclusion**

In this paper, several aspects of context were identified as influencing the connections that BC and NSW/VIC interviewees discussed between their Indigenous identities and their entrepreneurial practices. These aspects of context are: patterns of colonialism, legislation, the history of Indigenous entrepreneur networks of practice and the geographical proximity of practitioners in the networks of practice. I will now discuss each of these aspects of context in greater depth. Patterns of colonialism did shape the connections interviewees in different data sets expressed between their Indigenous identities and their entrepreneurial practices. Perhaps the largest difference that emerged in this study in terms of how context may influence these connections was the existence of the discipline cycle for BC interviewees but not for NSW/VIC interviewees. The existence of this cycle associated with BC interviewees may be due to BC Indigenous entrepreneurs having enough aspects of their specific/local Indigenous identities intact after colonialism to provide knowledge of and guidance around how to be aware of and uphold cultural principles and practices. Indigenous entrepreneurs in NSW/VIC, on the other hand, were not engaged in this cycle, potentially due to the relatively greater erosion of specific/local Indigenous identities through colonialism.

Differences in legislation also influenced interviewees' connections between their Indigenous identities and entrepreneurial practices. In Australia there are few rights to land, and community governance is conducted by Land Councils (Chamard & Christie,

1993). In Canada, there are some rights to land, and there are reserves ensured by *Indian Act* legislation (Cardinal, 1999). This land base provides entrepreneurial opportunities (R. Anderson, Dana, & Dana, 2006) as well as specific/local identities grounded in reserve communities (LeRat & Ungar, 2005). Although it has not been addressed in this paper yet, legislation also affords some BC Indigenous entrepreneurs who conduct business on reserve tax privileges that can support entrepreneurial development. Differences in legislation thus affect both Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices, which in turn affects connections between them. In Australia, because rights are so nascent, there appear to be concerns about what Indigenous communities are and who can represent these communities. This could explain an emphasis by NSW/VIC entrepreneurs on the mechanisms of legitimacy and status.

Important organizations in both networks of practice significantly influence the connections between the focal concepts in this paper, particularly in terms of the connections between opportunity and knowledge/confidence. Funders and support agencies, including the Mandurah Hunter Indigenous Business Chamber in NSW, provide a pathway for many Indigenous entrepreneurs to develop their Indigenous identities. Entrepreneurs draw support from these agencies in identifying themselves as Indigenous business owners and in becoming more involved in the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice. This involvement creates knowledge and confidence in Indigenous identity which can significantly strengthen identity and lead to a hunger to learn more and to become involved in the Indigenous network of practice. Although the pride cycle is an important virtuous cycle for reinforcing Indigenous identity, the knowledge/confidence cycle perhaps has the most transformational potential in NSW/VIC to move people from relatively undeveloped Indigenous identities to significantly more developed identities. Organizations such as Mandurah, in addition to supporting the business aspects of entrepreneurial ventures, also play a key role in the resurgence of Indigenous identity.

Of comparisons which have been made between Canada and Australia in terms of organizational support for Indigenous entrepreneurs, Canada has typically been heralded as a global leader (e.g. Hindle, 2005). There are many organizations that do support Indigenous entrepreneurs in BC such as Stó:lō Community Futures as well as

individual First Nations such as the Squamish and Westbank First Nations. However, Canada falls short of Australia in terms of procurement mechanisms. Supply Nation was cited by eight NSW/VIC interviewees as playing a role in providing entrepreneurial opportunities. In comparison, major Canadian procurement policies benefited no BC interviewees.

The final key difference this study identified in terms of how context influences the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices in BC and NSW/VIC is the history and development of the Indigenous entrepreneur network of practice. I have claimed that the network of practice in BC has a longer history and is more mature than the network of practice in NSW/VIC. The different developments of Indigenous entrepreneur networks of practice have been touched on in terms of historical entrepreneurship dating back centuries (e.g. Frederick & Foley, 2006). However, less emphasis has been placed on how the recent development of the practice well after colonization can significantly impact the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. One way that this manifests itself today is the physical proximity of Indigenous entrepreneurs, which may have had an impact on the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices in this study, such as NSW/VIC interviewees being more aware of and concerned about status in a network that is more geographically spread out. This, and other aspects of the recent histories and developments of Indigenous entrepreneur networks of practice, surely warrants further study.

Other studies have highlighted the effects that differences in Indigenous cultures have on entrepreneurship (e.g. Foley, 2005; Frederick & Foley, 2006). In this study, cultural differences in the sense of some central and enduring facets of culture pre- and post-colonialism that affect the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices did not arise. Any factors that may have been linked to differences in culture were attributed to patterns of colonization and legislation. Cultural differences between Indigenous Canadians and Australians do most certainly exist. However, making claims about differences in cultures and how this affected the focal connections in this paper steps beyond both what the data suggested and my expertise. In order to link findings of this paper to difference in culture, more in-depth,

anthropologically-oriented fieldwork or historical interpretation would need to be undertaken.

As with all studies, this study has several limitations. First, interviews and focus groups can only record how participants convey their experiences and perspectives within the particular social situation of an interview or focus group (*Alvesson, 2003*). Second, this study only included self-identified surviving or successful Indigenous entrepreneurs, which may result in biased findings more toward positive outcomes. Finally, although care was taken to explain how context influenced differences in the connections between concepts, no data was presented to prove these assertions. Future studies could build on this important but limited work by conducting interviews with a number – likely limited – of Indigenous entrepreneurs who had experience working in both contexts.

This study has several implications for the literature on Indigenous entrepreneurship. The literature review both on ethnic entrepreneurship and Indigenous entrepreneurship highlighted the possibility that Indigenous entrepreneurs would frame their Indigenous identity largely as inhibiting their entrepreneurial practices, for example by limiting them to only Indigenous customers. Interviewees in both data sets did share nine ways that Indigenous identity interferes with their entrepreneurial practices. However, they also cited forty-one ways that Indigenous identity supported their entrepreneurial practices. Overall, Indigenous identity plays a much more beneficial role in entrepreneurship than most previous research suggests. This could, in part, be due to the increased normalization of entrepreneurship within Indigenous populations (*Cornell et al., 2007; O’Neil, 2014*). Hopefully, this implication will motivate scholars to explore the positive ways that Indigenous identity can support entrepreneurship rather than strictly dwelling on the negative connections.

For research on Indigenous entrepreneurship, this paper has also shown that there are several contextual factors that influence how Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices as well as the reverse. These contextual factors emerged from differences in the data, not through pre-determined opinions or broad a priori analysis of both contexts, as has been the case with many other studies (eg. *Hindle, 2005; Hindle &*

Lansdowne, 2005). The aspects of context that emerged were the results of specific differences between the data sets, generated through cluster, mechanism and potential cycle development, that explored the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices. This linking of context to these elements provides specificity largely unseen in existing literature on Indigenous entrepreneurship which tends to link contextual factors to broad approaches to conducting business. Some of the contextual factors this study identified as influencing the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurship, including patterns of colonialism and current legislation, have been addressed in existing literature (e.g. Chamard & Christie, 1993; Foley, 2005; Hindle, 2005). This paper suggests that other factors are important, including the history and geography of the networks of practice as well as organizations in the networks of practice. These aspects of context have been briefly discussed in existing literature (e.g. Chamard & Christie, 1993; Frederick & Foley, 2006). However, for this study these aspects of context appear to have played a larger role than has been emphasized in existing literature. Although the development, geography and important organizations within the practice have been shaped by colonialism and other legislation, other organizational and market-based influences, such as the integration of support for entrepreneurs as well as the effectiveness of support organizations, also appear to be at play. When carrying out international comparisons, scholars who study Indigenous entrepreneurship would be wise to consider these factors in addition to the more popular lenses of colonialism and government legislation that are typically employed.

This study has one potential implication for policy in terms of procurement mechanisms that support Indigenous entrepreneurs. BC Indigenous entrepreneurs have suggested that there are few effective procurement mechanisms which give them an advantage over non-Indigenous businesses. By contrast, Supply Nation in Australia appears to provide entrepreneurial opportunities to some Indigenous entrepreneurs. Canada could learn from the Australian experience and should explore whether a similar procurement mechanism to Supply Nation could better support Indigenous entrepreneurs.

For Indigenous entrepreneurs, this study may provide value in terms of understanding who they are as Indigenous entrepreneurs and what approaches they

take to entrepreneurship. This study may inspire Indigenous entrepreneurs to consider the effect entrepreneurship has on their Indigenous identities as well as how their Indigenous identities influence the entrepreneurial practices that they engage in. It may also provide ideas for how they could alter these connections in order to best fit their situations and aspirations. The findings of this study may also be interesting for Indigenous entrepreneurs as it may help them gain an understanding of how they compare with other Indigenous entrepreneurs in a different context. Many interviewees, particularly in Australia, mentioned that it would be very interesting to hear how they compare to BC entrepreneurs. This study may provide Indigenous entrepreneurs comfort that they share experiences with other Indigenous entrepreneurs across the world. It may also give them pride in aspects of their shared connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices as well as pride in organizations and policies that support Indigenous entrepreneurs and appear to be working. This study could also give Indigenous entrepreneurs other ideas upon which to approach their government or other organizations for supplementary forms of support.

In conclusion, the connections between Indigenous identities and entrepreneurial practices are important to researchers and practitioners since entrepreneurship could play an important role in Indigenous economic development. Likewise, it could be significant for the strengthening of Indigenous identity. In this study, I have identified how Indigenous entrepreneurs in BC and NSW/VIC discuss the connections between their Indigenous identities and entrepreneurial practices. By examining these connections in two regional/country contexts, I was able to better understand the connections discussed by both groups of Indigenous entrepreneurs. Through comparing the connections discussed by BC and NSW/VIC Indigenous entrepreneurs, I also identified several aspects of context that affected the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurship, including the history and geography of the Indigenous entrepreneur networks of practice as well as important organizations in the networks of practice. Overall, this study has found that BC and NSW/VIC Indigenous entrepreneurs are working within different contexts to develop ways in which their Indigenous identity can inform or support their entrepreneurial practices as well as to develop ways in which entrepreneurial practices can support or bolster who they are as Indigenous people. This provides hope that even in very different contexts Indigenous people can utilize

entrepreneurship to achieve business success as well as to assert and strengthen their unique identities.

## **Chapter 5.**

### **General Conclusion**

In the three papers in this dissertation, I explore how Indigenous identity and entrepreneurship or entrepreneurial practices connect. In the first paper, I utilize an identity work lens to investigate how engagement in entrepreneurship impacts the Indigenous identities of thirty Indigenous entrepreneurs in BC. In the second paper, I investigate how entrepreneurial practices influence Indigenous identities as well as how Indigenous identities influence entrepreneurial practices for thirty Indigenous entrepreneurs in NSW/VIC. In the third paper, I compare the experiences and perspectives of the thirty NSW/VIC interviewees with thirty more interviewees in BC to explore how regional/country context influences the connections between Indigenous identities and entrepreneurial practices. I will now present a summary of the implications this dissertation has for research, policy and Indigenous entrepreneurs.

#### **5.1. Implications for Research**

The three studies that comprise this dissertation have four broad implications for research on Indigenous entrepreneurship. First, the majority of interviewees in each study expressed that engagement in entrepreneurship either had a neutral or positive effect on their Indigenous identity. This finding holds significance as a great deal of research in this area, as well as concern within communities (Weir, 2007), has focused on the potential role that entrepreneurship may have in eroding Indigenous identity and culture and assimilating Indigenous people (Foley, 2006a). Concerns around the potential of entrepreneurship to erode Indigenous identity largely revolve around entrepreneurship being an individualistic activity which may corrode community-based values and relationships (Alfred, 2005; C. J. Atleo, 2008; C. Stiles, 2004; Newhouse, 2001). This concern has meant that entrepreneurship has been discouraged in many

communities, which limits promising avenues for economic development (Cornell et al., 2007). Again, the three papers in this dissertation found that entrepreneurship plays a neutral or positive role in the maintenance or development of Indigenous identity. Only a handful of interviewees suggested any ways that entrepreneurship or entrepreneurial practices limited their Indigenous identity. However, the negative connections that interviewees discussed did not in any way dissuade them from continued engagement in entrepreneurship.

These overall findings contribute significantly to the broad discussion of whether entrepreneurship is an appropriate approach to economic development for Indigenous people by suggesting that for some Indigenous people entrepreneurship is an important way for them to maintain or develop their Indigenous identities. In addition, Indigenous identity can positively influence entrepreneurial practices, which enables Indigenous entrepreneurs to provide value to customers as well as benefits to the wider Indigenous community.

Second, the latter two papers of this dissertation outline specific ways that Indigenous identity influences the entrepreneurial practices in which Indigenous entrepreneurs engage. Previous literature has paid scant attention to how Indigenous identity influences entrepreneurial practices, and research which has been conducted in this area typically focuses on general impacts on entrepreneurship rather than impacts on specific entrepreneurial practices. The detail presented in these two papers in terms of how Indigenous identity influences specific practices provides a rich understanding of how Indigenous people integrate their identities and cultures into their business and how they respond to the unique challenges and opportunities of being an Indigenous business owner. Some Indigenous entrepreneurs suggest that they engage in specific entrepreneurial practices that are unique to them as Indigenous business owners. These specific connections can help researchers who focus on Indigenous entrepreneurship to understand and articulate how Indigenous entrepreneurship may be similar to or different from entrepreneurship conducted by other populations, such as ethnic entrepreneurs (Peredo & Anderson, 2006; Peredo et al., 2004).

Third, the latter two papers in this dissertation found that Indigenous entrepreneurs within the same regional/country view the connections between their Indigenous identities and entrepreneurial practices differently. These differences can be attributed to several aspects of personal and business demographics. The idea that Indigenous entrepreneurs within the same regional/country would have heterogeneous experiences and perspectives is not novel. However, despite the obviousness of this assertion, few, if any, studies have systematically examined how Indigenous entrepreneurs will have different experiences and perspectives. Typically, Indigenous entrepreneurs are interviewed and several themes emerge out of an underspecified process of coding and analysis with little regard to how these themes vary for different kinds of interviewees. The second and third papers of this study systematically grouped interviewees according to shared experiences and perspectives. This resulted in the identification of six distinct groups which systematically highlighted the similarities and differences between Indigenous entrepreneurs. On a more abstract level, the second and third papers also found that the diversity of Indigenous entrepreneurs' experiences and perspectives could be captured by differences in eight mechanisms and four cycles attributed to six groups of interviewees. The existence of these differences suggests that researchers should not assume that Indigenous entrepreneurs within the same regional/country have the same experiences. Instead, the heterogeneity of the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous entrepreneurs should be explored in order to create more complex and nuanced theories that more closely reflect the diverse lived experiences of Indigenous entrepreneurs. These papers provide several ways to conceptualize these differences which researchers could use to achieve these objectives.

Finally, by examining differences across region/country contexts, I outlined in paper three several elements of context that appeared to lead to differences between interviewees in BC and NSW/VIC that were underrepresented in existing literature on Indigenous entrepreneurship. Although more work needs to be done to establish categorically that these aspects of context are associated with particular experiences and perspectives, this general finding should prompt researchers who compare the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous entrepreneurs in different contexts to explore the role of underemphasized aspects of context, such as the function of

organizations that support Indigenous entrepreneurs and the geographical proximity of Indigenous entrepreneurs to one another, in addition to the previously emphasized contextual factors of differences in colonialism and national legislation.

## **5.2. Implications for Policy**

The three papers in this dissertation have two main implications for policy surrounding Indigenous entrepreneurship. First, for Indigenous communities and governments, these papers dispel the worry that entrepreneurship undermines Indigenous identity. This research, along with works by Cornell et al. (2007), Gallagher and Selman (2015) and Miller (2008, 2012), should prompt Indigenous communities and governments to consider entrepreneurship as a positive facet of Indigenous economic development alongside other ways of organizing economic activity such as band-owned businesses. This research should also drive Indigenous communities and governments to ask questions about the utility of viewing entrepreneurship as a way to reassert and strengthen important aspects of Indigenous identity.

The second main contribution the three papers in this dissertation can make to policy relates to approaches by governments and other organizations for encouraging and supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship. When promoting entrepreneurship to Indigenous people, governments and Indigenous communities should not limit their description of potential benefits only to individualistic outcomes, such as income and a flexible schedule. They should additionally highlight the wider community and cultural benefits. For instance, they should assert that contemporary entrepreneurship can be an expression and continuation of traditional Indigenous economic practices and that it can provide a wide array of benefits to Indigenous communities. Furthermore, the second and third papers of this dissertation suggest support for Indigenous entrepreneurs should be go beyond conventional aspects of business support, such as the development of business plans and the supply of funding, to include how to respond effectively to aspects of context that inhibit Indigenous entrepreneurial practices, such as the need to react against cultural stereotypes. These inhibiting factors and associated responses are critical to Indigenous entrepreneurs and should be further investigated and substantiated to increase the effectiveness of training and support. In addition, these

three papers have highlighted ways that the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous entrepreneurs within the same regional/country context are heterogeneous, which could be useful for organizations or governments that attempt to spark or support Indigenous entrepreneurship. As just but one example, in the second paper, the two potential cycles identified that link Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices could be used to understand the variation in NSW/VIC entrepreneurs and how to support them. For instance, Indigenous Business Chambers support many aspects of entrepreneurial development in Australia. The backing that entrepreneurs need in terms of the connections between their Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices will vary. Entrepreneurs who are similar to interviewees associated with Cycle 1 ‘responsibility—pride’ may need assistance in heightening how their business can fulfill their felt responsibility to Indigenous people and communities. By contrast, entrepreneurs who are similar to interviewees associated with Cycle 2 ‘opportunity and legitimacy—knowledge/confidence and status’ may need support in attempting to increase their legitimacy and status within the network of practice of Indigenous entrepreneurship. Efforts to support entrepreneurs such as these are likely already underway, but the identification of these two cycles as well as two additional cycles in the third paper, could help organizations such as Indigenous Business Chambers to understand how to further bolster the diverse needs and aspirations of Indigenous entrepreneurs.

### **5.3. Implications for Indigenous Entrepreneurs**

The three papers in this dissertation could be useful for Indigenous entrepreneurs in three ways. First, these three papers could enable Indigenous entrepreneurs to develop a deeper understanding of how to navigate the connections between their Indigenous identities and entrepreneurial practices. Second, these three papers could assist Indigenous entrepreneurs in understanding how they relate to other Indigenous entrepreneurs. The six groups of Indigenous entrepreneurs developed for both BC and NSW/VIC interviewees in the second and third papers provide a framework for Indigenous entrepreneurs to explore how to conceptualize the connections between their Indigenous identities and entrepreneurial practices as well as how their experiences and perspectives compare to other Indigenous entrepreneurs. This could provide

confidence and assurance that their experiences and perspectives are shared by others. Finally, these three papers could also provide Indigenous entrepreneurs ideas in terms of how to operate a business in ways that maximize the advantageous influence that both Indigenous identity can have on entrepreneurial practices as well as the advantageous influence that entrepreneurial practices can have on Indigenous identity.

To conclude, this dissertation has explored one important topic on Indigenous entrepreneurship by interviewing ninety Indigenous entrepreneurs in Canada and Australia. Although Indigenous entrepreneurs face challenges in terms of usefully and appropriately connecting their Indigenous identity and their entrepreneurial practices, on the whole, Indigenous entrepreneurs in these two contexts are finding ways to do so. The ways that Indigenous entrepreneurs connect their Indigenous identities and their entrepreneurial practices have the potential to both maintain and strengthen Indigenous identity as well as to transform entrepreneurial practices in order to fit with Indigenous norms and aspirations. Entrepreneurship can play a positive role in the lives of some Indigenous people and Indigenous identity can usefully contribute to the running of entrepreneurial ventures. Indigenous entrepreneurs are proving this each day in diverse and distinct ways.

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# Appendix A.

## Paper 1

### *Interview Questions*

I am interested in how you came to start a business. Can you tell me a bit about your earlier life, and how you came to start this business?

What does it feel like to be an Aboriginal entrepreneur in \_\_\_\_\_? *\*insert appropriate city name.*

Can you tell me about a time when you tried to play up/ down the fact that you are an entrepreneur?

Can you tell me about parts of your life as an entrepreneur which are not connected to being an Aboriginal person?

Can you tell me about parts of your Aboriginal identity which are not connected to being an entrepreneur?

Can you tell me about aspects of your life where being an Aboriginal person and an entrepreneur overlap?

Are there any ways in which running a business weakened/strengthened your Aboriginal identity? If so can you tell me about one of the ways in which it has?

How do you see the fit between what you are doing as an entrepreneur and the history of Aboriginal people?

How does what you do as an entrepreneur fit with what your see as Aboriginal peoples' future?

### *Supplementary Interview Data*

#### *Not A Stereotypical Indigenous Person*

People only formulate their opinions based on what they're exposed to which is sometimes just the media and other negative things right. I'm thankful that I can be part of how big people change their opinions or minds and say that you know what there have been some good things that have been going on in my life and I'm proud to share so I'm more than willing to share my time with individuals such as yourself and I wanna know more because there's a lot more that's going on out there than people think...I wanna make the best out of this opportunity, not just for me and my family. Again possibly overall like maybe they have the wrong perception of what Aboriginals are or what Aboriginal entrepreneurs are capable of...There's a lot more successes. There's a lot more progressiveness in the aboriginal communities and Aboriginal people than people probably realize. 14

In our area we have some people that are very racist. When we had our grand opening

we [for our business] were told to take down our roadblocks because we had a part of the parking lot blocked off. One of the business people around here that said, you know to take down our roadblocks and "You're blocking traffic! And you know I pay taxes and you don't"...So that was probably one of the most racist things that we had to deal with, and then to work with beside them for years, it has been really tough so...I think it happened because I was an Aboriginal business. I'm like "you're so ignorant, you don't even know what's going on", right?...I'm looking like "No, I pay taxes just like everybody else"... I thought "You know what? I'm not going to stoop to this guy's level. I have to just get over this and move on". But it was really frustrating to hear these comments because you just want to sit him down and give him a history lesson. I22

### *An Entrepreneurial Indigenous Person*

Well, I think there has always been some sort of [entrepreneurial] history there whether it's trading, gathering, trapping, hunting, trading, so there has always been something there. And what I think is with Aboriginal people in order to survive they kind of have some sort of business attitude...[when coastal people] trade it inland for something else, it's a form of entrepreneurship. You know even though it's communal, you still have those families and those families will -- they will do things a little different, some might be in an excellent fishing area, others may be in a good deer hunting or moose hunting area so that -- all have different resources they are dealing with and when you've got very large nations, like the Gitksan nation, they have houses and territories all over there and they're all a little different. Some will have like excellent berries and that kind of thing. So even though it was communal and there's a lot of sharing going on, you still may have families or extended families or houses doing things a little different, trading things or bartering or that kind of thing. I20

Well, I think Aboriginal businesses are the - we are the future. There's a lot more Aboriginal people getting into business and it'd be nice to see more young people opening up their own businesses and becoming self-sufficient and taking care of themselves, not relying on the government and not relying on whatever, you know? And that has been my goal for probably the last -- I don't know. I just was on welfare once, I was 22. I had a kid and I just thought that's not what I wanted in my life, right? So I just have to work my butt off to build my life for myself and my two kids. I don't need anyone to look after me. I22

### *An Indigenous Entrepreneur*

I'm not going to deny that I would like to have a high status level, it's how you want to perceive that status. For me, our [Aboriginal] status is based on how much you give, not how much you bring home in money...I think that for the most part, Aboriginal businesses care. I know quite a few Aboriginal businesses, some of which I compete with, and they make their stuff overseas. It's harder for me to compete against them, but saying that, I see what they give back to their communities. The money they make seems to be dispersed a lot more communally [than non-Aboriginal businesses]. I15

We hire a lot of Aboriginal installers stuff like that, I take pride in that. Creating employment opportunities and things like that, it feels good so we're doing a job for and Aboriginal community and bring our installers there and they could see kind of a bigger

picture of what they're supporting and stuff. I4

*A Modern Indigenous Entrepreneur*

I help whichever First Nation I am working with keep one foot in the past and one foot stepping in to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And, that's my key thing because I like to design modern buildings. I don't mimic the past, but at the same time I try to reflect First Nation people. I13

You have to blend the traditional with the modern and that can be tricky sometimes because you don't want to step on toes. I see the gift of being able to help people and using it in kind of a modern context, workshops, naming the workshops and those kinds of things. What I love about what I do is that it's life skills. So it's hands on. And it's not me standing in front of a group lecturing for two hours, it's life skills. So you learn by doing. And I think traditionally that's how we are as people is we learn by doing. The children and the communities a long time ago would go and sit with the grandparents and learn, "This is how you do berries", or the boys, "This is how you do the fish and the hunting", that kind of thing. So what I hope to do is encourage and return to those traditional roles. And if it's through the modern type of workshops then so be it. I18

# Appendix B.

## Paper 2

### Interview Protocol

In this interview, I will be exploring the connections between your Indigenous identity and the entrepreneurial practices which you engage in. The way I would like to understand these connections is to understand your life history, where you came from, how you started your business and what it has been like to run your business. I want to hear your story and your experiences more than your opinions on a topic. I want to be clear that I will not be evaluating or making judgements on what you do or experience in your business, only to hear your story and experiences. I should also mention that I'm interested in diverse Indigenous experiences and businesses.

#### **Questions**

Can you please tell me about how you came to start your business?

In this interview, what term would you feel most comfortable with me using to discuss your Indigenous/Aboriginal/First Nation identity?

What does it mean for you to be an Indigenous person?

Tell me about several practices you do in your business which are particularly important, especially in terms of how you understand yourself as an Indigenous person.

Additional Prompts:

Tell me a story of an important day-to-day practice/action you do in your business which you think would be relevant to this discussion.

Are there any actions that you take while running your business that make you feel less or more Indigenous? If so, tell me about one of them.

As an Indigenous entrepreneur, do you think you run your business differently than non-Indigenous entrepreneurs in the area? If so, in what ways?

In my dissertation, I'm interested in exploring the role of relationships in the connections between your Indigenous identity and the entrepreneurial practices which you engage in. By relationships I mean important and meaningful connections with other people, animals, places, etc. I am exploring this, as the idea of relationships is an important concept for many Indigenous peoples.

Can you tell me about one important relationship in your business?

Additional Prompts:

Are these relationships affected by you being Indigenous?

Does your business affect relationships you have with other Indigenous

people?

Of these relationships, do any strongly connect your identity as an Indigenous person and an entrepreneur? Are there any relationships which strongly connect these worlds?

We've been focusing primarily on the Indigenous aspect of your identity. Are there any other important aspects of your identity which may affect the connections between being Indigenous and your entrepreneurial practices? For instance, some people talk about gender, age or income. Other people may talk about their occupational/professional identity as say a carver or doctor.

Additional Prompts:

Does being \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_ create something more than just being \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_?

In your industry, how distinctive are you as an Indigenous entrepreneur? Tell me about a way it lends to your advantage or lends to your disadvantage.

Are there any other entrepreneurs who you think I should talk to?

### ***Kaupapa Maori Research Protocols***

In this section, I outline how I adhere to the Kaupapa Maori Research Protocols. The protocols are:

“Aroha ki tangata (a respect for people).

Kanohi kitea (the seen face, that is to present yourself to people face to face).

Titiro, whakarongo...korero (look, listen...speak)

Manaaki kit e tangata (share and host people, be generous)

Kia tupato (be cautious).

Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata (do not trample over the *mana*<sup>13</sup> of people)

Kaua e mahaki (don't flaunt your knowledge)” (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 120).

The first principle is a respect for people. The word respect gets used widely in discussing aspirations for research with Indigenous people. Unfortunately, even those who believe that they are being respectful may often not be (Marker, 2003). To more deeply understand what it means to be respectful and to act in a respectful way I rely on Steinhauer (2001):

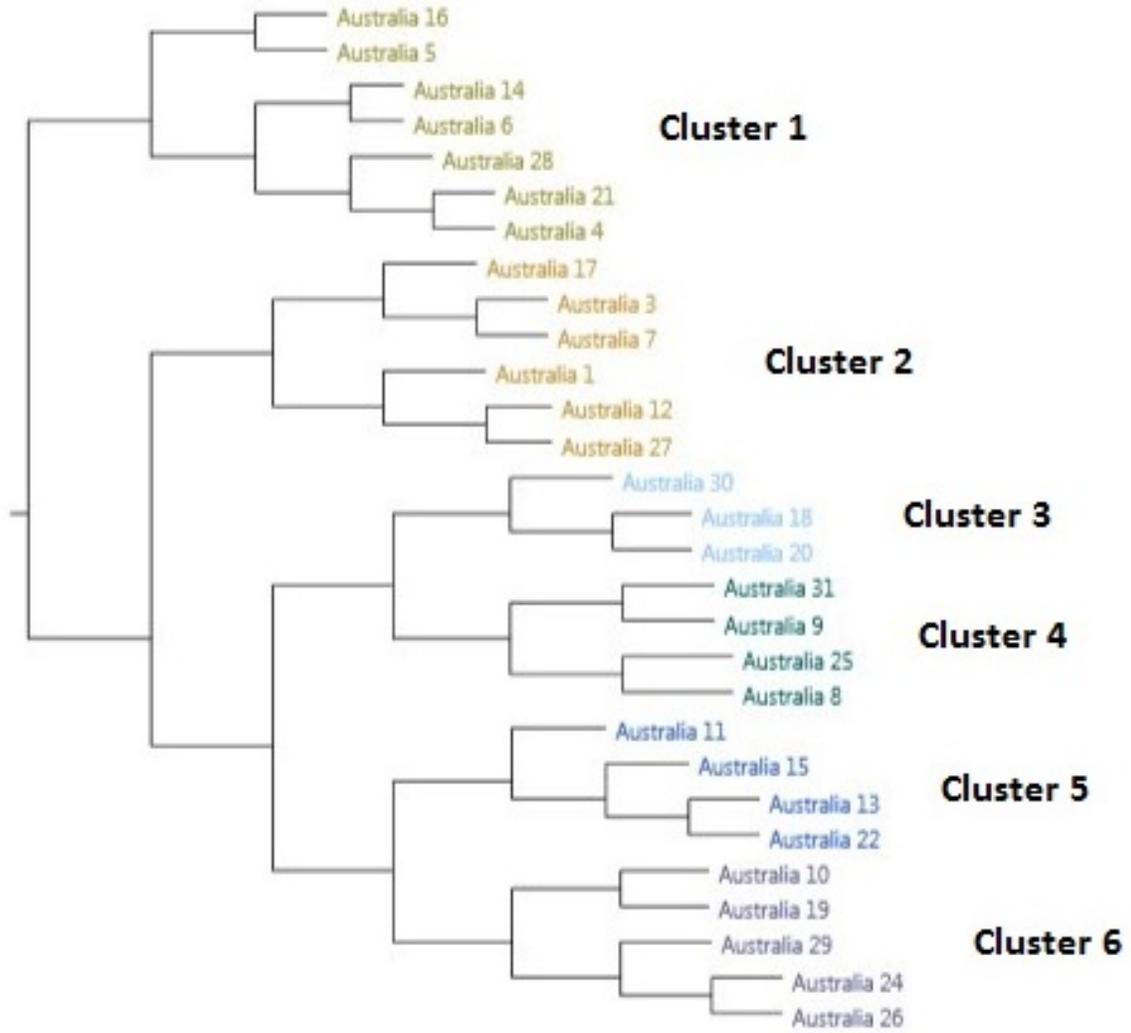
<sup>13</sup> According to Dr. Foley, mana means spirit or strength.

“Respect is more than just saying please and thank you, and reciprocity is more than giving a gift. According to Cree Elders, showing respect or kihceyih towin is a basic law of life. Respect regulates how we treat Mother Earth, the plants, the animals, and our brothers and sisters of all races...Respect means you listen intently to others’ ideas, that you do not insist that your idea prevails. By listening intently you show honour, consider the well-being of others, and treat others with kindness and courtesy” (found in Wilson, 2008, p. 58)

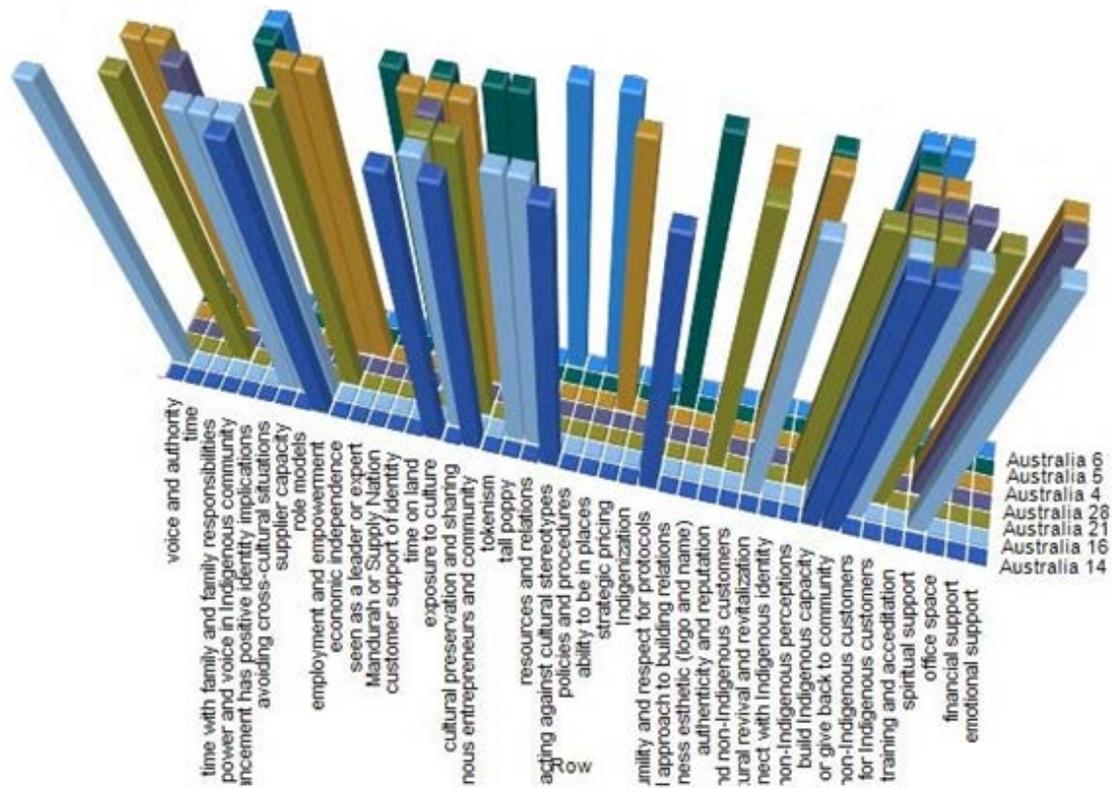
Of utmost importance for this study will be respect shown through listening. Atleo suggests that a respectful way of interacting with people is to listen to what they say, then listen to what they mean, then listen to what they are trying to tell you (2011). Another important concept which may help me to understand respect is a Nuu-chhala-nulth concept called *iisaak*, meaning ‘respect’. *lisaak* means “moving through the world and through life carefully” (Enns, 2008). What comes before *iisaak* is *wii-tsiki-ach-cu* which means to—pause—and explore options of moving forward in the world (Enns, 2008, p. 211). *lisaak* is a mindset of thoughtfulness, cautiousness and patience which can lead to showing proper respect.

In order to comply with the second Kaupapa Maori protocol, all interviews occur in person. For the third protocol, I follow Atleo’s suggestions for trying to move beyond what people say to really trying to understand who they are and what they are trying to communicate (2011). For the fourth protocol, I share aspects of myself, including my lineage, where I am from and my intentions for research with participants and other contacts (L. T. Smith, 1999). To be generous, I keep in mind another Nuu-chhala-nulth concept, *aphey*, which means to be generous. A part of *aphey* is that it is ungenerous to not ask for help when needed. Thus, in order to be generous I ask for help from my advisors and from interviewees. For example, I ask them to clarify any potentially ambiguous statements. Furthermore, in order to be generous, when conducting interviews or focus groups I offer to pay for drinks or food, and I will purchase gifts for those who assist me in my research. For the fifth protocol, I attempt to *wii-tsiki-ach-cu*, which means to pause and move forward carefully. For the sixth protocol, I attempt to leave all those with whom I interact over the course of my research feeling as confident, secure and nourished as they did before meeting me. For the seventh protocol, I find a balance between not flaunting my knowledge and sharing and being generous. On the one hand, I don’t want to flaunt my status or knowledge. On the other hand, I do want to show that I have a lot of interest and knowledge in this field and that I do have something potentially worthwhile to give back to participants. I will find a level that demonstrates my credibility but does not position myself as an expert.

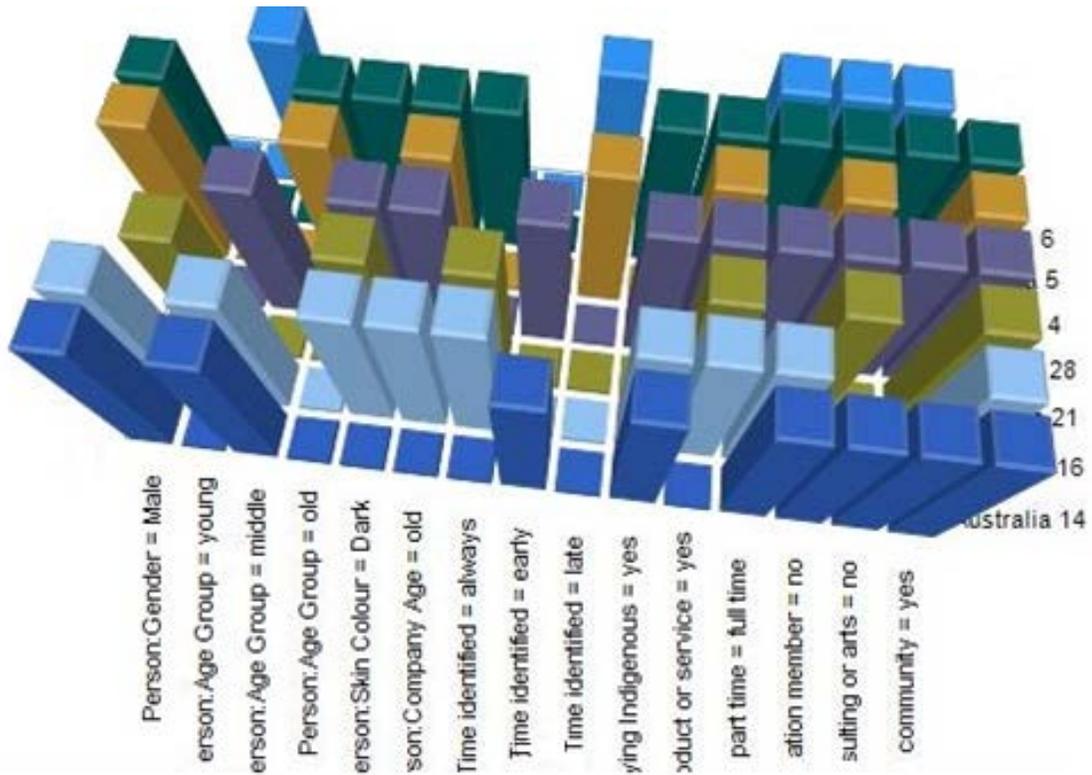
**Cluster Analysis of Interviews Based On Coding Similarity**



### Coding Matrix Diagram for Cluster 1



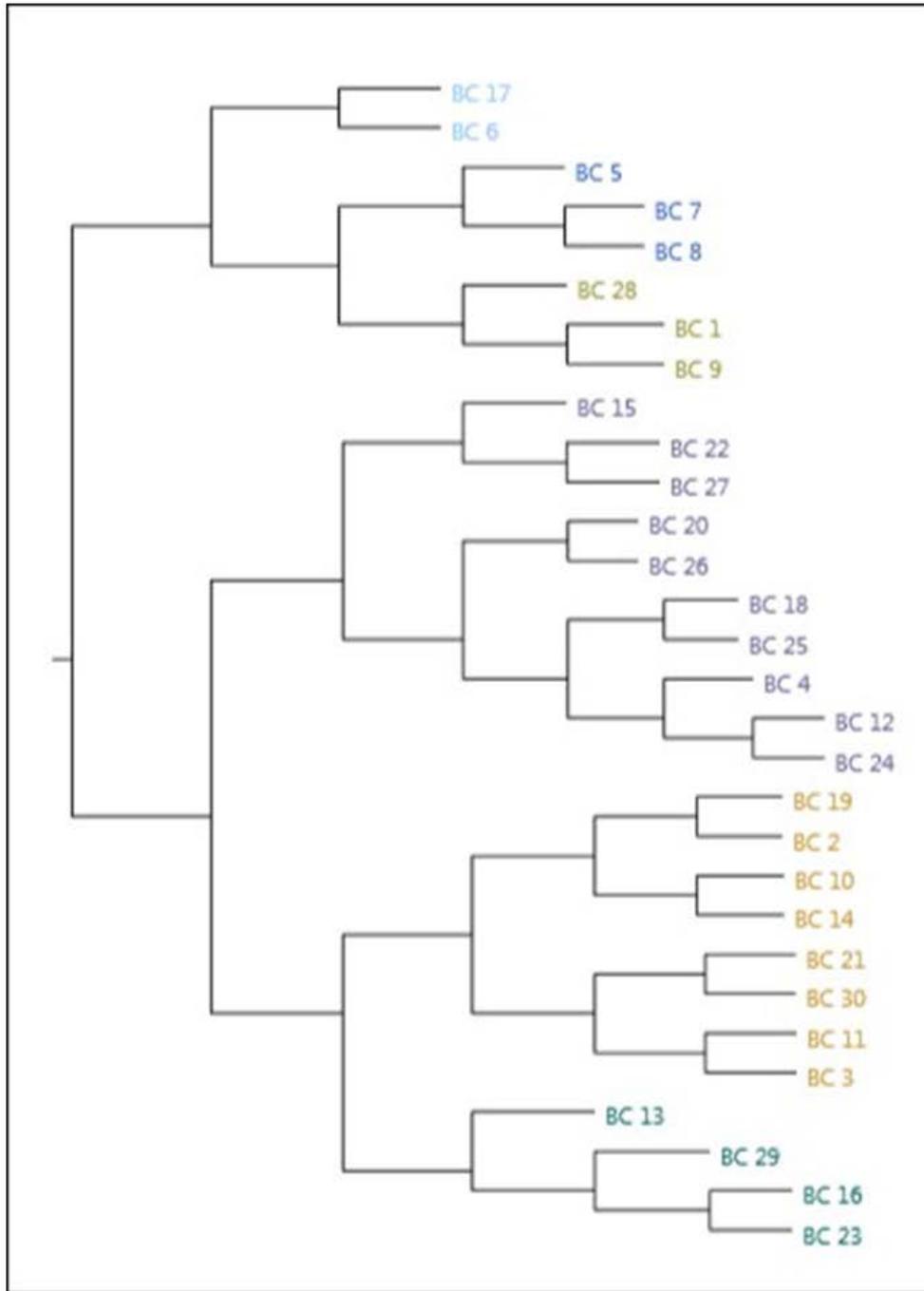
**Attribute Matrix Diagram for Cluster 1**



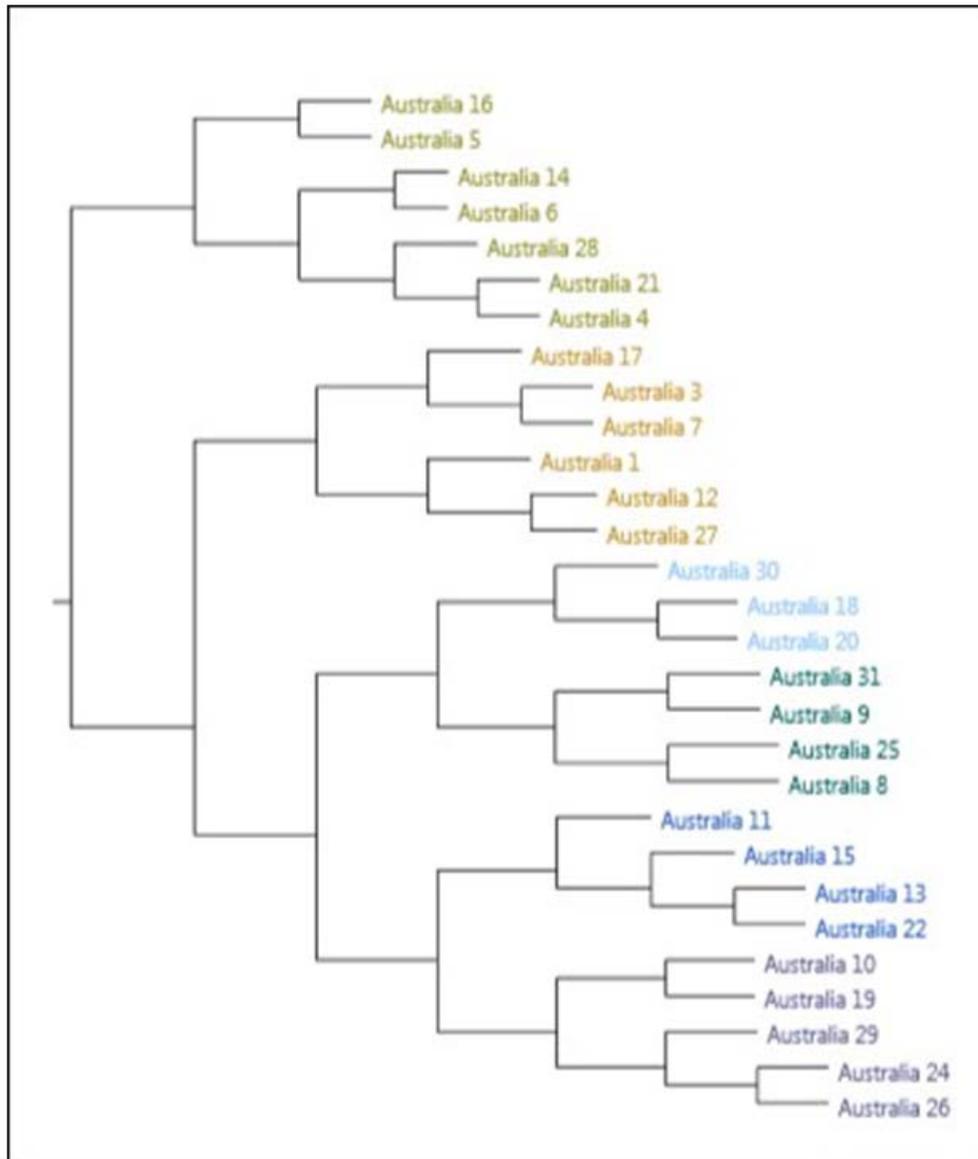
## Appendix C:

### Paper 3

#### NVivo Output of BC Cluster Analysis



## NVivo Output of NSW/VIC Cluster Analysis



## Code Descriptions

| Cluster Information   | Code  | Description   |
|---|---|---|
| Indigenous identity enables entrepreneurial practices                       | <b>Access to Indigenous customers</b>   | Indigenous nations buying products or services or word-of-mouth advertising being spread through Indigenous networks.   |
|   | <b>Access to product</b>  | Having access to a product or product material through being Indigenous or through connections within Indigenous networks.  |
|   | <b>Assist or give back to community (m)</b>   | Contribute to Indigenous communities.   |
|   | <b>Authenticity and reputation</b>  | Being deemed and appropriate and authentic provider of Indigenous goods and services due to either ethnicity or cultural affiliations and cultural knowledge.             |
|   | <b>Build Indigenous capacity (m)</b>  | Increase the skills and social capital of a wide range of stakeholders including employees, suppliers and customers.  |
|   | <b>Business esthetic</b>  | Creating an Indigenous logo or business name.   |
|   | <b>Communication style</b>  | Respectful, active listening and/or non-threatening communication style.  |
|   | <b>Community consultation</b>   | On account of the lack of consultation often experienced by Indigenous peoples by governments and businesses, a need is created to consult communities whenever possible. |
|   | <b>Connect with Indigenous identity (m)</b>   | Connect with Indigenous identity through entrepreneurship.  |
|   | <b>Cultural revival and revitalization (m)</b>  | Resurrect or revitalize aspects of Indigenous culture.  |
|   | <b>Cultural sensitivity</b>   | Taking into account customers' cultures and tailoring sales or services accordingly.  |
|   | <b>Financial support</b>  | Accessing Indigenous-specific loans and grants.   |
|   | <b>Hiring family</b>  | Hiring Indigenous family members as reliable employees.   |
|   | <b>Inclusion of spirituality</b>  | Conducting smudges or other Indigenous cultural prayers or ceremonies.  |
|   | <b>Indigenous products and services needed for Indigenous customers</b>                               | Unmet or underserved supply of Indigenous-specific products or services for Indigenous customers.   |
| <b>Indigenous products and services needed for non-Indigenous customers</b> | Unmet or underserved supply of Indigenous-specific products or services for non-Indigenous customers. |   |

| Cluster Information                                     | Code   | Description   |
|---|--|---|
| Indigenous identity restricts entrepreneurial practices | <b>Listing in directory</b>                          | Being listed in Indigenous-specific directories such as Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada's Aboriginal Business Directory.   |
|   | <b>Respect for protocols</b>                         | Getting elder approval, not being boastful about success or money and acknowledging the efforts of others.  |
|   | <b>Sharing knowledge</b>                             | Culturally valuing the importance of sharing knowledge with others when possible means that people will share knowledge with competitors or nascent entrepreneurs.                        |
|   | <b>Spiritual support</b>                             | Being supported by the Creator, God or both.  |
|   | <b>Trade and barter</b>                              | Engaging in trade and barter which is one way to include Indigenous customers who do not have sufficient funds to make a monetary transaction.  |
|   |  |   |
|   | <b>Crab bucket/tall poppy</b>                        | Criticisms from other Indigenous people due to involvement in entrepreneurship such as entrepreneurs thinking they are better or more important than other Indigenous people.             |
|   | <b>Limited capital or difficulty getting funding</b> | Being Indigenous can limit access to capital and funding particularly due to having little collateral due to living on reserve.   |
|   | <b>Lower profits</b>                                 | Running their business in a way that serves Indigenous clients can restrict profits due to, for instance, Indigenous customers being less able to pay less than non-Indigenous customers. |
|   | <b>Not enough Indigenous candidates for jobs</b>     | Despite intentions to hire Indigenous workers, there are not enough candidates who have either the work ethic or the skills to be hired or last long-term in a job placement.             |
|   | <b>Policies and procedures</b>                       | The requirement to develop standards around key organizational tasks.   |
|   | <b>Reacting against cultural stereotypes</b>         | React against stereotypes such as being a drunk or not being able to deliver a project on time or within budget.  |
|   | <b>Time or customers</b>                             | Time constraints due to family obligations. Customer constraints as non-Indigenous customers unsure of ability to patronize business.   |
|   | <b>Tokenism</b>                                      | Not wanting customers selecting them only because they are Indigenous.  |
|   |  |   |

| Cluster Information                                      | Code   | Description   |
|--|--|---|
| Entrepreneurial practices strengthen Indigenous identity | <b>Connections to family, Indigenous entrepreneurs and community</b> | More connections to family, Indigenous entrepreneurs and community through entrepreneurship, which provides new information or reinforcing aspects of their identities such as their origins and their relatives. |
|  | <b>Cultural preservation and sharing</b>                             | Creating or making improvements to cultural products or services.   |
|  | <b>Donations</b>   | Entrepreneurship provides financial gains, which enables donations to charitable Indigenous initiatives.  |
|  | <b>Employing and empowering</b>                                      | Hiring and mentoring Indigenous workers.  |
|  | <b>Exposure to culture</b>   | Learning more about other Indigenous cultures through interaction with diverse Indigenous people.   |
|  | <b>Following protocols</b>   | Following important cultural protocols in business, such as acknowledging the traditional territory upon which business is being conducted.   |
|  | <b>Receiving awards</b>  | Receiving awards validated involvement in Indigenous business community and contribution to Indigenous people.  |
|  | <b>Role model</b>  | Becoming a role model for other Indigenous people in how to be a successful and community-engaged Indigenous person.  |
|  | <b>Sparks Indigenization</b>   | The process of developing an Indigenous identity.   |
|  | <b>Strategic pricing</b>   | Giving Indigenous people a discount.  |
| Entrepreneurial practices hinder Indigenous identity     | <b>Holding onto ethics difficult</b>                                 | Being an entrepreneur creates situations that test ethical principles that are often rooted in Indigenous cultures.   |
|  | <b>Voice</b>   | Not being too vocal and not making claims on behalf of others.  |

## Describing Each BC Cluster with an Illustrative Example

In this section, I explain each of the six BC Clusters in greater depth by providing quotes from one interviewee, for each cluster, who typifies the common experiences and perspectives of the cluster to which they have been assigned. The interviewee serving as the illustrative example had the greatest amount of codes in common with other interviewees in that cluster. In each section, I discuss the reasoning behind the naming of the cluster. I then provide a brief introduction of the illustrative interviewee, both in terms of their business and personal attributes, and outline any differences between the example interviewee and the majority of other interviewees in that cluster. Finally, I

illustrate the experiences/perspectives codes the interviewee touched on that were indicative of the majority of interviewees in that cluster. I do so by providing quotes surrounding each common experiences/perspectives code. In order to aid the reader in keeping track of what are codes, they will be given in *italic* font.

### ***Cluster 6: Fused***

I term connections in *Cluster 6* 'Fused' as for interviewees in this cluster, Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices have many connections and are largely inseparable. Interviewee 23, Marty,<sup>14</sup> embodied all of the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices which characterize *Cluster 6: Fused* except for *reacting against cultural stereotypes*. Marty ran an Indigenous clothing company. Like the majority of others in the cluster to which he was assigned, Marty was male, had more connections to community and had always identified as being Indigenous. His company was equal to or greater than five years old, had an Indigenous-specific product or service and employed Indigenous people. Because of the large number of common experiences/perspectives codes for this cluster, I will only discuss those codes which are unique to this cluster as well as a few codes that may help to demonstrate the distinctiveness of interviewees in *Cluster 6*.

Marty was motivated to *assist Indigenous people* who cannot afford other kinds of clothing or who need their items tailored to their peculiarities.

And the reason why I started making and selling clothes was because I couldn't afford them. You know, you see other products on the market and you can't afford it...[Another benefit of the business is that if we are making footwear] somebody who is otherwise normal but has a foot a good inch shorter than the other and they always say they can't walk into a store and buy a pair of shoes because they have to get two different sizes. And so we come along and we're able to just custom make it to fit both feet and they're really happy. (123)

Being Indigenous allowed Marty to engage in *trade and barter* with other Indigenous people. This allowed him to assist other Indigenous people and provided him access to clients:

People that can't afford them trade wild meat. So we do more than just take cash; we also barter because we know a lot of people can't afford it and we're open to that. So it gives us food to eat....It's only the traditional First Nations that know about the barter. We don't go and put it on Facebook saying "we barter". (123)

Being Indigenous also gave him *access to products* due to Indigenous rights to hunt and trap:

<sup>14</sup> In order to maintain interviewee anonymity, names and some demographic details have been altered.

One of the things is securing our leather so where possible we like to go to the source. So for example I have uncles that trap so we've got beaver, we've got lynx, and we've got fox from them. So we've tanned them ourselves. It supports local business or local hunters, it's a better price and we have a chance of getting good quality stuff as opposed to going to a store. (123)

Being Indigenous also spurred him to *share knowledge* with others and to recognize others' contributions:

One of the things we did after the [big fashion] show is we had also taken a bundle of sweet grass braids and we gave them all out to the models that modeled for us. And we didn't make a big fuss about it or anything, just after the show they had a bit of a get together and meet and greet kind of thing and we just walked around and I just had a bunch of sweet grass braids in hand and when I'd see a model I'd say `here we want to thank you for being our model and this is a little just a thank you of appreciation and here is what the sweet grass means to us`. And so many were just blown away...because nobody gives them gifts, they just use them as workhorses, they don't see them as people. (123)

However, Marty's Indigenous identity also interfered with his entrepreneurial practices. When he provided strategic pricing and donations to clients, this *lowered profits*:

We have things like elder pricing. We give a lot away too just to people we think deserve it...We never say no. Usually if it's a person who needs us we'll find a way. It's mostly donations that people want and sometimes the donations are more than we can handle so we've tried to cut back on donations especially. If we have the product on hand we have no problem but if we have to make it then we have a problem...And I want to be able to have money coming out of the company, being able to live with it, live on it. But the way we're doing it we won't be able to because of the cultural aspect of it. Our belief is that you got to help whoever needs it. (123)

In addition, although he would have like to hire Indigenous employees, there were *not enough Indigenous candidates* to fill vacant positions: "yeah, it's been hard because we try to stay with First Nations workers but sewers, beaters. But there's just not enough people around to help out". Being an entrepreneur did assist him, however, in becoming a *role model* and in feeling good about incorporating Indigenous *protocols* and *spirituality* into his business:

We do the occasional fashion show. Like we went to San Francisco Fashion Week last year and we won a competition...So it has been interesting to be in the spotlight and to have people look up to you....

When making the clothing we always do a thanking or smudging. Like when we get hide I take it home and I thank the cow or the elk that died just so that I could use this hide. And I give tobacco for it and we do smudging and I ask and thank it for giving its life so that I could do something with it and not misuse it in any way and try to use every part of it. And then I cut out the pieces and start praying for that person that's going to be wearing it. And it's trying to pass on the good energies, so if I have a bad day there's just no way I could so because the energies just would not allow me to do it. So we do a lot of praying, smudging with the items from the beginning and like to the end to when we send them out. So as soon as we're done I smudge it one more time before it goes out so that there are no bad energies that go in with those boots. (123)

Spirituality does appear to be part of the shared norms and understandings of the BC Indigenous entrepreneur community of practice. This is evidenced by six interviewees mentioning this as an important entrepreneurial practice as well as the apparent ease with which people discussed spiritual aspects of their business with me. No prefaces were needed to make space for Indigenous spirituality as being a credible spiritual tradition that had a rightful place in their entrepreneurial ventures. Those that mentioned spirituality, such as Marty, described proudly and in great detail how Indigenous spirituality is an important component of their business and how it can contribute to business success.

#### ***Cluster 5: Employment-focused***

I term connections in *Cluster 5* 'Employment-focused' as Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices largely seem to connect around motivations to and benefits arising out of employing Indigenous people. Interviewee 12, Cary, embodied all of the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices which characterize *Cluster 5*. Cary ran a studio that trains primarily Aboriginal women in self-defence. Like the majority of others in the cluster she was assigned, Cary had more connections to community and had always identified as being Indigenous. Her company was equal to or greater than five years old and had a quasi-Indigenous-specific product or service. She differs from others in this cluster in that she did not have employees and worked part-time.

Cary was strongly motivated to *assist and give back to the community* as well as to *build Indigenous capacity* and *empower* Aboriginal women through self-defence training. As part of this training, she focused on the preservation and sharing of her Indigenous culture:

For us we always align the self-defence and fighting training with our cultural values such as respect, humility and honesty...Traditionally people would train as warriors to protect their community. And your first job is to learn how to protect yourself, then your family, then your community, then your nation. So that's what you are here doing right when you train this way you need to carry this training now with

respect and humility, you can't go out and look to harm somebody; this is not what it's about.

[There are some difficult students] And you know I'll draw that line right away like, 'look, I will not put up with disrespect in class, I'm going to treat you with respect, I expect to be treated with respect back'. I'll also share some of our culture. "Here are the values that go along with protecting yourself and there are the same values in our culture that I was taught by my grandmother in the long house".

For First Nations women this gives them the confidence to step up their focus on a job, a career or school. And that's ultimately what we are going for, right, is to just help them in their life. (I12)

#### ***Cluster 4: Culturally and Instrumentally-focused***

I term connections in *Cluster 4* 'Culturally and Instrumentally-focused' as Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices are connected with cultural elements as well as more instrumental considerations such as financial support and access to customers. Interviewee 18, Betty, embodied most of the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices which characterize *Cluster 4* other than *cultural preservation and sharing*. Like the majority of others in the cluster she was assigned, Betty was a middle-aged female who had more connections to community. She differed from others in that she identified as Indigenous early rather than always. Her company was a consulting firm which focuses on building healthy parent-child and community-child relationships in First Nation communities. Her business was greater than five years old, was full-time and was located on reserve.

In terms of how her Indigenous identity influenced her entrepreneurial practices, being Indigenous gave her an appreciation for the importance and diversity of culture, which she recognized in her work by being *culturally sensitive*:

I do honour culture and spirituality in the work I do and that doesn't mean that I come in imposing my belief system or what my teachings are on people but I invite and create space for whatever the culture of the organization or community I'm in to be part of the process...Whenever I'm coming into a group and I'm starting something I also always take space and take my time to effect contact and share with people who I am and what my story is. (I18)

Her Indigenous identity gave her *authenticity* in terms of being genuine about who she was. When asked, "So do you think you run your business differently than a non-Indigenous consultant or business owner in the same industry?" Betty replied:

I don't know every other consultants' work but from what I can tell yeah. In my experience other folks working in the area can be – sometimes it feels like there's a disconnect between who they are and the work they're doing. I feel like I am the business. I could put anything on the website but the truth is that when people engage with

me and we form a relationship, it's me, my knowledge and the relationship they're hiring. (I18)

On a more instrumental level, Betty's Indigenous identity had also given her an ability to discover *Indigenous products and services needed for Indigenous people* that contributed to Indigenous communities, *access to Indigenous customers* and *financial support* as well as the integration of Indigenous language into the *name* of her business:

[I worked with teachers in a struggling community last week]. The feedback I had was that it was the best professional development they'd ever had and some of those teachers are well seasoned. They were open, there was rich dialogue and it was emotional. People were able to be vulnerable. And I felt that there was movement in the group and that was a very satisfying experience for me. I often find that when we're talking about children people are able to look at things that they wouldn't otherwise be able to look at in themselves which is beneficial for the entire community...

My Nation has, I would say that they as my own community, have been the number one resource in terms of support, supported my business, funding for my business, funding for my education and my ongoing development and continuing to engage in contracts and provide work, call me up for work...

Well, the name of my company is a Coast Salish word that was given to me by one of our elders here who's a language specialist and she knows the work I do and I had spoken with her and she had given me the word... (I18)

Being an entrepreneur had also strengthened her Indigenous identity in several respects, including being a *role model*: "I think I can safely say that I'm regarded in my own community and the other communities through business as a role model, a person of integrity and purpose and someone that people trust and feel safe with". Being an entrepreneur had also given her *exposure to aspects of culture*: "I now have elders in my life, I have received teachings that I cherish that I know that it's part of how I relate to myself and if that took a long time to have that confidence to be able to own who I am, all of who I am. So certainly my work has helped that fact... I can't really separate my work from that personal growth".

### **Cluster 3: Culturally-focused**

I term connections in *Cluster 3* 'Culturally-focused' as Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices connect largely around cultural considerations. Interviewee 1, Ashley, embodied most of the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices which characterize *Cluster 3* other than *cultural revival and revitalization* and *listing in directory*. Like all others in the cluster she was assigned to she was a middle-aged female who had more connections to community and who had always identified as Indigenous. Ashley's company was a consulting firm that works for

proponents looking to do business on First Nation land, which means she had an Indigenous-specific product or service. Her business was greater than five years old, was part-time and was located on reserve.

Being Indigenous provided her *authenticity and reputation* in terms of being experienced and trustworthy to manage interactions between proponents and communities:

People are I think very aware and grateful [when I became an entrepreneur] because of my work as a teacher with the band and other things I've done working with membership, working with the elders. I have their respect and their regard with the community as well as entrepreneurs. And then in working with council in my past job I can honestly say that I have a good relationship with chief and council...And so what I'm finding as well is that members of chief and council are advocating my services to potential business partners. (I1)

Relatedly, being Indigenous gave her *access to non-Indigenous customers* in need of Indigenous products and services:

So anything Aboriginal I'm sort of the one that they, [proponents], get advice from...It's not just run as a business for Aboriginals, I'm also aware of the Aboriginal gift that's being included in whatever I'm being contracted for. And that's part of the value added for the proponent. Also, proponents are grateful because it's just one person versus a variety of different people that they have to engage with. (I1)

Her involvement in community gave her the knowledge and experience to *communicate effectively* with Indigenous leaders and membership as well as business proponents:

I'm very skilled at bridging between the two sides and explaining to the proponent what it takes to do business and to expect delays because of the process, the Aboriginal affairs...Also, I'm able to explain to membership what this business wants to do and keeping that very neutral and respectful in how I communicate. And knowing that I do have that skill and that talent to be able to bridge no matter who is involved, whether it's a lawyer or a politician or a proponent or chief of council or membership or an elder I just seem to know how to communicate in the various languages for the audience. (I1)

When fulfilling her role as a consultant, Ashley demonstrated a *respect for protocols* which includes asking elders for advice:

I bring proponents to meet the elders, the elders' advisory group and now the proponent wants them to be the advisory group when they do start to break ground...Another important one for me is still communicating with the chief out of anybody that I work with because of how supportive she is of my business in promoting me. (I1)

For Ashley, a difficult part about being an entrepreneur was to *hold onto her ethics*. This challenge arose most prominently when she had to decide whether to take a contract from oil and gas company:

At first, yeah, there was a lot of inner conflict of even whether I should accept the contract. And I realized it's actually about the relationships, it's not that the people are bad or just because they work for an oil and gas company. And it's better to talk to them and have that relationship than to be opposed and not participate at all. And so I think that kind of changed my perspective in looking at things from that point. [But with some projects] I'm not going to get involved, my integrity means a lot. (11)

### ***Cluster 2: Instrumental***

I term connections in *Cluster 2* 'Instrumental' as Indigenous identity acted largely as a means of achieving business goals, such as receiving financing or awards. Interviewee 8, Richard, embodied all of the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices which characterize *Cluster 2*. Richard found out about his Indigenous identity later in life, had fewer connections to the Indigenous community, was male and ran a full-time longboard shop that is equal to or greater than five years old and that was not on reserve. Richard had staff but did not employ Indigenous people.

When asked about how he understood himself as an Indigenous person he replied:

Yeah, and this is the tough part, man, this is the tough part for me. It's I didn't know my heritage, I didn't know like any of that stuff till I started looking into it like probably seven or eight years ago. Somebody asked me "is there any like support you guys get from the government?" I said "no, what are you talking about?" She said "where did you guys come from?" because she knew the family a little bit and she was like "you're from Saskatchewan, right?" and I was like "I'll talk to my family and see where I'm from" because my mum didn't even know about it. So my mum, through most of her life had no idea. So it turned out that my grandma and grandpa are right from the Red River area. So we have Metis blood in our veins. So I learnt this about seven or eight years ago. It was like okay, cool, like what does this mean for me?...Like I guess I don't look as Native as Native people look and I don't even know a lot about that. (18)

For Richard, being Indigenous enabled him to access *financial support* through a regional financial services company that backs Indigenous entrepreneurs:

From the financing company we got the grant from for the business and what not. It was purely just like Internet search and just like "hey, what kind of support does a Metis guy have as far as like business goes?" And they were the first ones that popped up and we phoned them and they were pretty awesome...they definitely like spelt everything out for us so we could understand what we were eligible for

and what we weren't eligible for and what maybe what would suit us best. (18)

The financing company eventually nominated his business for a local Indigenous business *award*, which prompted him to learn more about his Indigenous lineage:

Like I think coming up to the awards I just had no idea what to expect and same thing like with kind of finding about my ancestry late I didn't feel like I was fully prepared in understanding of what the whole thing meant. I think as the evening went on I really more got a feeling of what the event was all about and where these people have come from. And it was like and since then definitely felt a little bit more like just proud of my ancestry and where we come from. It was kind of just like taking it as it comes and learning from it...[but after the] award ceremony I said "man, this is pretty cool". Like I'm definitely more interested to learn a lot more about my heritage and like where I've come from. (18)

The awards ceremony was an important event for Richard because he started to form *connections to the Indigenous entrepreneurs and the wider Indigenous community*: "I just felt completely honoured to be like in the same room – like I was watching some of these other businesses up there and here are some really hard-working people. I felt pretty honoured to kind of be mentioned with the same kind of caliber of people and especially some of those multimillion dollar community businesses out there. And I still see some of them to this day".

### ***Cluster 1: Inhibiting***

I call the connections in *Cluster 1* 'Inhibiting' as for interviewees in this cluster Indigenous identity largely inhibits their ability to feel supported in their entrepreneurial practices. Interviewee 17, Simon, embodied all of the connections between Indigenous identity and entrepreneurial practices which characterize interviewees in *Cluster 1*. Simon was male and ran a full-time construction business that is younger than five years old and did not have its office on reserve. For Simon, being Indigenous was largely framed as constraining his entrepreneurial practices, particularly in terms of a lack of support from other Indigenous people and difficulty getting funding. In terms of a lack of support often referred to as '*crab bucket*', for Simon, being Indigenous means other Indigenous people are skeptical about and jealous of him. They also view him as an outsider when in their territory:

Our gig in the Northwest Territories would be a good example [of a lack of initial support from the community]. Because that was one project that took a while to get all the way going because we were a company from British Columbia that no one heard of before and yes, we're Aboriginal but we weren't their Aboriginal. So you get "oh, you're a BC aboriginal, not a Northwest Territories Aboriginal" and stuff like that. They were very distrustful with us and some of the people were actively going out of their way and trying to mess things

up for us. There's a massive jealousy complex. They see an Aboriginal person succeed and they're going to try and find a way to eff him up.... You have a massive problem with greed and jealousy, massive. And that comes from years of not having any economic opportunities. And then they say "oh, shit, that guy's making lots of money, I can do that too". "He's an Aboriginal like me; I must be able to do that too". And that's a complex that our First Nations people need to get their heads out of. (I17)

Being Indigenous also *restricted his ability to access capital* due to funders' lack of confidence that an Indigenous business will be able to make money and stay alive in order to repay a loan:

We are not getting any help from a bank or any other places; Aboriginal guys can't get help from banks. We put our own necks on the line a lot of the time to get our financing using commodity futures and things like that. And only after the banks they saw that "hey, these guys are actually making money and they're still out working" then they start to say "okay, we'll start talking to you". (I17)