
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Robert B. Anderson is the Editor of the *Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship* and Co-editor, with Leo Paul Dana, of the *Journal of Enterprising Communities*. He is former President of the Canadian Council for Small Business and Entrepreneurship and a Director of the International Council for Small Business. Anderson is a Professor in the Faculty of Business Administration at the University of Regina, in Saskatchewan, Canada.

In this issue there are seven papers all around the theme of Indigenous Business. The papers take us on a journey that begins with American Indian¹ in the Pacific Northwest of the USA (Stewart and Schwartz). We then move north to Canada and examine the entrepreneurial activities of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous resident of a community in the far north (Dana). Next, we cross to northern Europe for two papers on the Sámi, one set in Russia (Ruotsala) and the other in Finland (Heikkinen). Our journey continues with us travelling south, first to Australia to look at the business activities of the Aborigines (van Diermen) and then east to New Zealand to consider the Maori (Water and Cahn). Our final stop is in Israel, where the Indigenous people are the Israelis and their business activities are compared to those of recent immigrants (Heilbrunn and Kushnirovich).

As diverse as these groups are both geographically and historically, a common theme runs through all the stories. That theme revolves around traditional lands, cultures and values, a history different from those around them. And in all but the final story, those around the Indigenous people are the dominant group both politically and economically, and the Indigenous group is socio-economically disadvantaged relative to them. Each of the authors examines these 'Indigenous differences' from the dominant group in their particular case and explores the impact of these differences on the Indigenous peoples' business activities, objectives, strategies and practices.

What emerges, not surprisingly, is a remarkable degree of similarity in these differences from the mainstream among the Indigenous groups. Many of these differences are the things that make them Indigenous and are highly valued; for example, culture, languages and values, traditional practices and forms of organisation, traditional lands and resources, and the relationship between people and the land. Other 'differences' are the result of their subordinate position with respect to the dominant society around them. These include dispossession of lands and resources and efforts to eliminate them as

a 'different people' extending from well-intentioned efforts at modernisation in some instances and to outright genocide in others and, as a result, socio-economic circumstances that are much worse than those of the members of the surrounding society. Both the valued Indigenous differences and differences of disadvantage figure prominently in the business activities of the group studies; the former shaping the nature of the business activities and the latter acting both as a constraint on these activities and the motivation for them.

In the remainder of this editorial, I draw your attention to two things that are well illustrated in these papers. The first are the events that have given rise to the current disadvantaged circumstances of the Indigenous people, including the impact of these things on the ability of the Indigenous people to do business successfully. The second is the role that valued aspects of Indigenousness play in the business activities being pursued.

First, the causes of the current disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances of Indigenous people, and the implication of these circumstances on their business activities. In 'Native American business strategy: a survey of northwest US firms', Stewart and Schwartz first describe the historic events that have led to the current disadvantaged circumstances of the American Indian, saying:

"Before the Americas were colonized ... native tribes had a long history of success through inter-tribal barter ... were forced onto tracts of land ... no longer afforded the opportunity to roam the land, many tribes lost their sources of trade income ... met their needs through welfare programs subsidized by the U.S. government."

Similarly, in 'Business strategies of the eastern Sámi in the Russian Sápmi', Helena Ruotsala tells the story of the Sámi and the impact of the encroachment of outsiders on their lives and livelihood beginning with efforts to convert them to Christianity in the 11th century and the formation of monasteries controlling huge tracks of traditional *Sámi* land, through Karelian and Russian in-migration in the 15th century, the development of the fur trade, further in-migration in the 19th century, and then ongoing efforts at collectivisation and modernisation during the Soviet era. And yet in spite of this Ruotsala says, "traditional livelihoods have remained part of the daily life of the Russian Sámi, but their contents and practices have been adapted to the modern society".

While the details differ, the story is similar for the First Nations and Inuit in Canada, the Sámi in Finland, the Aborigines in Australia and the Maori in New Zealand. All have been disposed of land and resources and, as a result, their traditional means of livelihood has been impaired and they are struggling to adapt to these circumstances while maintaining, indeed strengthening, what makes them Indigenous. As Bebbington says:

"like it or not, Indigenous peoples are firmly integrated into a capricious and changing market" (Bebbington, 1993, p.275). Generally, the Indigenous approach to negotiating this integration, he continues, is not to reject outright participation in the modern economy "But rather to pursue local and grassroots control... over the economic and social relationships that traditionally have contributed to the transfer of income and value from the locality to other places and social groups." (Bebbington, 1993, p.281)

While details differ, this same desire to participate in the broader economy in order to improve socio-economic conditions is evident in all the cases, as is the desire to do so in a way that incorporates traditional values and practices.

As the papers illustrate this incorporation of valued Indigenous differences occurs in two ways; as the result of conscious strategic decisions and unconsciously as people behave in a manner dictated by their culture and values. The cases discussed by Hannu Heikkinen in the 'Changing business strategies of reindeer cooperatives in Finland' provide good examples of the conscious strategic struggle of various groups to find a workable solution combining traditional Sámi practices with the exigencies of the modern market system for the production and distribution of meat in Europe. Similarly, 'Mahinga Kai' in Cahn and Water illustrates the efforts of the Maori to consciously incorporate their culture and value in their business activities, saying "This has been identified as critical to Maori success, as development – is then generated within a Maori political, economic and social context" (Munn *et al.*, 1994).

Dana's description of the responses of Indigenous entrepreneurs in comparison to non-Indigenous ones in 'A comparison of indigenous and non-indigenous enterprise in the Canadian sub-Arctic' illustrates the unconscious expression of culture and values in business activities. Evidence of this also emerges in the paper by Stewart and Schwartz as they explore differences between community and individually owned businesses, as well as the reasons why the rate of entrepreneurship is lower among Indigenous people. Interestingly, the impact of culture and values also emerges in 'Immigrant and indigenous enterprises: similarities and differences' by Heilbrunn and Kushnirovich when they cite the reasons for the difference between the response of Indigenous (Israeli) and non-Indigenous (recent immigrants) entrepreneurs.

It is clear from all the papers that the current socio-economic circumstances of Indigenous people flowing from the past disadvantage them when they undertake business activities. Peter van Diermen provides a very good description of this in 'Business strategies for indigenous Australians: failure to thrive', as do Stewart and Schwartz, Heikkinen and Ruotsala. All lucidly discuss the nature of the problem and either explicitly suggest solutions or do so implicitly by identifying particular problems (education, lack of financing, inappropriate or absent support service and so on). While serious, these problems are understandable and there are understood tools to address them.

What is more interesting and I think as yet not well answered is the question: Can Indigenous people create businesses that will allow them to operate effectively in the broader economy while at the same time respecting, preserving and even strengthening the valued differences that make them Indigenous? They certainly want to. The cases presented offer some evidence that they can and are. Exploring this and the following related questions offers great opportunity for those interested in Indigenous business strategies. With respect to Indigenous people, what are 'their own terms' for participation in the global economy? Who determines these terms and how? Do the terms vary from place to place, group to group and over time? If so, why? How do these terms relate to the new economy? And given the topic of this special issue and the target audience of this journal, what implications do these terms have for business strategy?

Acknowledgement

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References

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- Munn, S., Loveridge, A. and Matunga, H. (1994) *Development Issues for Maori Landowners: Two Case Studies*, New Zealand Institute for Social Research & Development Ltd. Christchurch.

Note

- 1 I will use the name used by the authors for the Indigenous group(s) they have studied when speaking about a particular paper and the word Indigenous as a general category including all.