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The American Indian Quarterly, Volume 39, Number 1, Winter 2015,
pp. 73-94 (Article)

Published by University of Nebraska Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5250/amerindiquar.39.1.0073>



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Warrior Entrepreneur

BRYAN GALLAGHER AND MARK SELMAN

Entrepreneurship is increasingly playing an important and productive role in the lives of Indigenous peoples, but it is not contributing fully to Indigenous economic development due to concerns about control of resources and economic benefits, as well as negative impacts on Indigenous culture.¹ Indigenous entrepreneurs across North America are following their dreams and providing income and spin-off benefits for their families and communities, but despite these productive roles, entrepreneurship remains, at least in some communities, contentious. Many are wary that entrepreneurship could erode Indigenous culture and identity or that it could interfere with or undermine more centralized approaches to nations' economic development.² In other communities, entrepreneurship is simply ignored, as the limited attention available for economic development is all devoted to larger-scale, band-level business opportunities. For these and other reasons, entrepreneurship has been an underutilized mechanism for the rebuilding of Indigenous economies eroded by colonialism.

We stand with authors such as Robert Miller, Calvin Helin, and Stephen Cornell and colleagues to suggest that entrepreneurship can play an important role in the rebuilding of Indigenous economies and that it can be linked to traditional practices and can support Indigenous ways of life.³ Further, we argue that entrepreneurship is critical to building healthy economies that are a needed complement to other forms of economic development. To advance these beliefs, in this article we outline a conception of "warrior entrepreneur," which is a modern-day Indigenous warrior who operates in the economic realm with the independence and sense of commitment to community well-being that

characterized traditional Indigenous warriors. We do so to express how entrepreneurship can be linked to the political, cultural, and social goals common to many Indigenous peoples.

In our development of the concept of warrior entrepreneur, we outline three functions of Indigenous entrepreneurs who operate in a warrior way: anticolonial actors, rebuilders of Indigenous economies, and agents of self-determination. "Anticolonial actors" refers to the role that warrior entrepreneurs can play in battling existing colonial mindsets and institutions. "Rebuilders of Indigenous economies" refers to revitalizing the Indigenous economic activity that was present in Indigenous communities both before and sometimes long after contact. Unfortunately, in many cases, this economic activity has been stifled, as Indigenous peoples have had their access to key resources limited and have increasingly turned to "border towns" or other outside-of-community providers for most goods and services. "Agents of self-determination" highlights the role that warrior entrepreneurs can have in increasing both community self-sufficiency and a sense of agency within communities that are grappling with enforced cultures of dependency.

In making these assertions, we recognize that entrepreneurship by Indigenous peoples is not always motivated by a desire to be anticolonial, to be part of rebuilding local Indigenous economies, or to create self-determining individuals and communities. For many, starting and running a successful business is enough of a challenge. We recognize that entrepreneurs start their businesses for a host of reasons, including the desire to live a certain lifestyle or to provide income after retirement. Some entrepreneurs may even find themselves running a business somewhat accidentally after they develop a product or service for their personal use that others then wish to buy.⁴ Thus, only some Indigenous people who are entrepreneurs will have the motivation and capacity to run their business in a warrior way. Despite this, in this article we argue that entrepreneurship has the potential for some to be a platform to advance political, cultural, social, and economic goals. We suggest this while recognizing that entrepreneurship can be compatible with these roles and may be critical to entrepreneurship gaining broader acceptance in Indigenous communities and in turn contributing to their well-being.

Our focus is on Indigenous people in Canada and the United States, and we construct the idea of warrior entrepreneur based on writings of Indigenous authors and our experiences with Indigenous entrepreneurs.

We focus on North America in order to limit our discussion to the contexts with which we are most familiar. Whether the ideas outlined in this work can be employed by other Indigenous peoples outside of these contexts remains an open question. We chose to draw upon the work primarily of Indigenous authors in order for the main elements of our writing and ideas to emerge from or reference Indigenous thought.⁵ We also base our ideas on primary research undertaken by one of the authors, research that includes over eighty interviews.⁶ We have had a number of informal interactions with entrepreneurs, such as through our involvement in the development and teaching of the Executive MBA in the Aboriginal Business and Leadership Program at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada, as well as our economic development work in Nuu-chah-nulth communities on the west coast of Vancouver Island.

The idea of warrior entrepreneur could contribute to an understanding of entrepreneurship by Indigenous peoples in the following ways. First, it could prove useful in encouraging Indigenous people to see entrepreneurship as an option that can strengthen their communities and families economically and politically. Among various options for making a living and providing for one's family, entrepreneurship provides flexibility for business owners to run their businesses in ways that match their economic, social, political, and cultural aspirations. Second, it could prove useful in encouraging Indigenous nations to make entrepreneurship a larger part of their economic development plans rather than focusing almost exclusively on businesses developed at the band or tribal council level. To advance our arguments, we proceed by first outlining a conception of an Indigenous warrior. Next, we clarify what we consider to be Indigenous entrepreneurship. Following that, we develop the three core components of what it means to be a warrior entrepreneur. In most sections, we weave philosophically oriented exploration, examination of tangible examples, and fictional narratives in order to elucidate our ideas.

BEING A WARRIOR

For Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred, the fundamental goals of an Indigenous warrior are to live life in an Indigenous way, to protect or work toward peace, to generate social unity, to work toward decolonization, and to achieve freedom and happiness.⁷ The enemy of modern-day war-

riors is colonialism, which is a “narrative in which the Settler’s power is the fundamental reference and assumption, inherently limiting Indigenous freedom and imposing a view of the world.”⁸ Overt and covert colonialism still exists, albeit through more nuanced pathways than historical colonialism, which overtly and brutally attempted to destroy or “civilize” Indigenous peoples.⁹ Modern Indigenous warriors target thinking with colonial mindsets and institutions that hold back Indigenous peoples. Warriors combat colonial mindsets both inside the “colonized” Indigenous peoples and in non-Indigenous “colonizers.” For Indigenous peoples, colonial mindsets can involve fear, a lack of agency, and an unhealthy dependence on others.¹⁰ Being a warrior involves recognizing any colonial mindsets within oneself and overcoming any associated personal ingrained fear associated with these mindsets.¹¹ For non-Indigenous peoples, colonial mindsets are characterized by racism, arrogance, complacency, and the “othering” of Indigenous peoples in order to justify the oppression of Indigenous people and the privilege of non-Indigenous people.¹² Alfred argues that Indigenous warriors also target colonial institutions, particularly governments that fail to recognize the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples. Institutions that do not support Indigenous self-determination should be critiqued and protested against, whereas institutions that respect Indigenous rights and worldviews should be praised, supported, and strengthened. Specific strategies that warriors can use include challenging the intellectual and cultural foundations of a society or institution, rejecting colonizer values, opposing racism, and strengthening Indigenous individuals and culture. These actions must be based on a reimagined and reinterpreted traditional Indigenous culture that is appropriate for modern contexts. Following Alfred, we conceptualize Indigenous culture as a continuous stream of values, beliefs, and practices that stretches from the past to the current day. This means there is already a regeneration of Indigenous cultures that can provide value in a multitude of contexts, including urban areas.¹³ The challenge for Indigenous warriors, therefore, is to continue walking uniquely Indigenous paths that merge contemporary and traditional values, beliefs, and practices.

The idea of “warrior” has been used in contemporary contexts other than in the political context that Alfred largely focuses on. The term “warrior” is used by some in Indigenous communities to refer to anyone who stands up for the community or represents it in a positive way,

such as someone who prompts a court case to assert Indigenous rights. Indigenous academics have extended this use in various ways. Dale Turner suggests that there are Indigenous “word warriors,” intellectuals who interact with both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous world in order to bring about change.¹⁴ He contrasts the idea of word warriors with “Indigenous philosophers,” who focus on and interact with only Indigenous knowledge in order to preserve Indigenous culture. Similarly, Indigenous methods scholar Shawn Wilson describes his role as a promoter of Indigenous-led research as a warrior: “As a warrior, I chose to make this my battle ground.”¹⁵ Individuals who seek to save Indigenous languages have also been deemed “language warriors.”¹⁶ Our usage of the word “warrior” is intended to build on these interpretations rather than on the battle-hungry and usually doomed caricatures of Indigenous warriors found in Hollywood movies. The word “warrior” has been mentioned in the context of Indigenous entrepreneurship scholarship by Dennis Foley and Douglas Clement,¹⁷ though the idea of a warrior in an economic arena has not been fully developed.

BEING AN INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEUR

Before developing our conceptualization of warrior entrepreneur, it is important to clarify what we mean by Indigenous entrepreneurship. For the purposes of this article, we define an Indigenous person as one who is registered as a member of an Indigenous nation, such as the Squamish or Mohawk Nation. Being an entrepreneur means starting and running a small business as an individual, in partnership, or as a family enterprise with the goal of producing a profit, recognizing that profit may be only one of several goals.¹⁸ In particular, for this article, we have in mind entrepreneurs who start small businesses primarily intended to serve the local community, such as grocery stores, hair salons, mechanic shops, consultancies, computer repair services, and restaurants. Following Saras D. Sarasvathy, we understand the process of starting and running a business as entrepreneurs leveraging who they are, what they know, and whom they know in order to discover or create entrepreneurial opportunities.¹⁹ “Who they are” includes entrepreneurs’ unique motivations, attributes, identities, and worldviews. “What they know” refers to the particular skills and knowledge that entrepreneurs have acquired, such as carving techniques or specific knowledge of Indige-

nous law. "Whom they know" are individuals in entrepreneurs' social networks, which for many Indigenous people includes many important familial connections who can provide business support and advice.²⁰ These three factors provide a set of flexible sociocultural resources that entrepreneurs can use to run their business in ways that work for them. Although there are expectations within cultural groups about what it means to be an entrepreneur, these sociocultural resources are general in nature, which means there is space within these expectations for individual entrepreneurs to define who they are and what they care about.²¹ Entrepreneurs may need to set up their business according to some government standards, pay taxes, and comply with local non-Indigenous or Indigenous bylaws. But other than these basic constraints, which set the playing field of business, as well as general sociocultural understandings surrounding entrepreneurship, entrepreneurs can run their businesses in many ways that work for them.

BEING A WARRIOR ENTREPRENEUR

Warrior Entrepreneurs as Anticolonial Actors

As the sun sets beyond the mountains to the west, Dave walks up the wharf after a long day on the ocean. It's time to have dinner and relax with the family, followed by a visit to the community center to check out singing and dancing practice. As he nears the top of the dock ramp, his legs are lethargic and sore. It was a blustery day in Clayoquot Sound on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, and he has been standing behind the wheel of his vessel since the first trip to drop off a crew to the fish farms at 5:00 a.m.

The only customers Dave hates taking in his boat are those passengers that, when they see his community for the first time, make judgmental comments about the sunken boats in the harbor and the beat-up houses. By the time they reveal themselves as being ignorant or racist white people, the trip is almost over. In a perfect world, Dave would throw these passengers overboard, but he will usually settle for confronting and teaching them about First Nations people and his community. "So, you think our community looks rough," he says to a group of government employees visiting the community for the first time. "What about your communities, like downtown Victoria and Vancouver, with

people living on the streets? No one starves here. We all help each other. You just wait until you see how beautiful this place is and how great my people are.”

Off the dock, Dave now rounds the bend to his house, climbs up the front steps, and opens his front door. In the living room is his younger cousin Melanie, who is staying at his place over her university spring break. “So, cousin, how was your day? Make lots of cash?”

Dave ponders how to respond, as he knows Melanie’s views on him running a boat. “It was good,” Dave responds. “I was able to take a few school groups back and forth to town, which was fun.”

“Making money for yourself off of schoolchildren, are ya?” she teases.

“Look, Melanie, we’ve talked about this before. Just because I run my own boat does not mean I’m getting sucked into the business world of capitalism, or whatever you call it.”

“You’re sure not staying true to your Aboriginal roots,” Melanie charges. “Us Indians never used to charge for things, we just helped each other. Now everyone is asking people to pay for stuff that should be given for free.”

“You’re right, Melanie, that used to be the way it was. But the times are very different now. I charge money because I have to pay for gas and maintenance. But I try to run my business in a way that upholds our communities’ values and laws, like creating harmony and being humble.”

As Dave leaves the living room, heading for the kitchen, Melanie responds, “Ya, I hear you. But I have one more question for you. Can you please make stir fry again for dinner?”

Dave stops in his tracks and laughs, as it’s the second time he’s cooked stir fry this week. “Sure Melanie, anything for you.”²²

An Indigenous Basis of Entrepreneurship

In some Indigenous communities, and in the views of some writers, entrepreneurship is seen as a foreign method of organizing that was adopted after colonization. From this perspective, entrepreneurs such as Dave are “sellouts,” “colonials,” or “too white.” Entrepreneurship is regarded as a particularly invidious extension of capitalist economies that emphasizes individual wealth creation at the expense of traditional practices of wealth redistribution and that hastens the privatization of communal resources and opportunities into the hands of a few commu-

nity members.²³ Those who hold such a perspective tend to favor a kind of “band capitalism” in which business development keeps community interests in view and under the control of community leaders.²⁴ However, we follow in the footsteps of others such as Miller and Foley to suggest that among the traditional practices of many Indigenous peoples there was a large variety of economic practices, including activities that resemble modern-day entrepreneurship.²⁵

As just one example, in Nuu-chah-nulth nations, whose traditional territories are primarily on the west coast of Vancouver Island in British Columbia and on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington State, family groups traditionally traded through accruing raw materials, assembling products, and conducting expeditions across dangerous bodies of water. Products traded included dried fish, slaves, canoes, whale and fish oil, shells, and tools. The Nuu-chah-nulth were well known for being suppliers of dentalium shells, which were premium goods primarily for jewelry. These shells have been found in regions as distant as the Canadian plains and the western subarctic, which implies that trade was conducted over vast distances. As was typical of many coastal First Nations, many Nuu-chah-nulth families led by chiefs had access to specific land or resources that these families had rights and obligations to manage. For instance, one Nuu-chah-nulth family may have rights and obligations to several beaches, whereas another family may have rights to several forested areas. Nuu-chah-nulth families developed wealth through hunting, fishing, or crafting sophisticated cultural items, among other things, and by trading these items within families or between communities. Each family could assemble and transform the resources in their territory for their own familial gain. For instance, one family that has rights and obligations to forests might use cedar bark to create complex and beautiful clothing and regalia that are unique to that family. This activity was driven primarily by Nuu-chah-nulth families, not chiefs or other central sources of influence. Wealth created was not necessarily held communally. In fact, individuals and families could own many things, including stories and songs, tools, and many other material objects. Economic activity and wealth accumulation such as this, where entrepreneurial chiefs and citizens leveraged who they were (families with specific rights and obligations, such as to forests), what they knew (knowledge of their assets, including trees and how to transform those assets into goods such as clothing), and whom they knew (other fami-

lies, chiefs, and communities) in order to build wealth, resembles fundamental aspects of contemporary entrepreneurship.

Nuu-chah-nulth economic activity was situated within a system of redistribution where wealth and prestige were generated through giving away items such as tools, blankets, ceremonial objects, and food.²⁶ The more you gave away, the more wealth you accrued. Redistribution of wealth occurred through events such as the *tloo-qwah-nah*, which was one type of social, cultural, spiritual, and economic event that outsiders referred to as a potlatch. At a *tloo-qwah-nah* chiefs and families would host visitors from neighboring communities for several days or up to a month, providing them lodging, food, entertainment, gifts, and ceremonies with spiritual significance. Thus, wealth creation and redistribution by both chiefs and families were central to the overall economic, social, and cultural health of Nuu-chah-nulth societies.

Indigenous entrepreneurship today clearly differs from historical economic activity in some respects. Contemporary entrepreneurship by Indigenous peoples such as the Nuu-chah-nulth largely takes place within the contexts of colonialism and capitalism rather than within the context of Indigenous spirituality and economic redistribution.²⁷ Colonialism has reduced Indigenous people's ability to continue Indigenous-led economic activity. Indigenous peoples often also find it difficult to participate in mainstream economies, as government policies have resulted in limited access to resources and to low educational attainment. Capitalism has fundamentally altered what wealth means and how it is accrued.²⁸ For instance, for some people, wealth now means a new pickup truck every few years paid for by wage employment. These profound changes, however, do not preclude viewing contemporary Indigenous entrepreneurship as evolving from historical economic practices that resemble modern-day entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship as an Anticolonial Activity

Canada, like many other countries where settlers have occupied land that once was occupied by Indigenous peoples, still retains a colonial relationship to Indigenous peoples.²⁹ While many of the worst excesses of assimilationist policies and practices have been left behind, under comprehensive legislation called the Indian Act, First Nations peoples are still treated as wards of the state. They occupy land held by the Crown

on their behalf and need to apply to the government to approve land development on their own reserves. Individuals do not own the land on which their houses sit and are subject to a governance system that was imposed upon them. In this context, entrepreneurship is one avenue through which First Nations and other Indigenous peoples can build their own organizations in their own ways to fulfill their own purposes and step outside many of the constraints of legislation like the Indian Act. For many entrepreneurs, their work creates an opportunity to construct their own working conditions largely free of the bureaucratic constraints and paternalistic attitudes that characterize reserve life and relations with outsiders. From this vantage point, starting a business can be seen as an anticolonial action by refusing to be mired down in bureaucratic structures and to be put on a level playing field with non-Indigenous entrepreneurs. Ironically, a business formed by an Indigenous person can carry out the full range of business transactions under the law, whereas an Indigenous person has circumscribed powers due to his or her status as a ward of the state.

One of the prominent effects of colonialism is a type of enforced dependency.³⁰ Entrepreneurship can be a way to step outside of this disabling aspect of life in communities and to show through actions that one is capable of steering one's own course and being successful on one's own terms. The very act of starting a business can be seen as a rejection of being dependent on various levels of government. Rejecting dependency as way of life is one important way in which a warrior entrepreneur can play an anticolonial role. In addition, a business that stands on its own two feet is a concrete rejection of stereotypes about Indigenous people being lazy, poor workers, and exclusively collective economic actors.³¹ Starting and running a business can be seen as a rejection of these stereotypes and supporting more balanced and positive perceptions about Indigenous peoples.

In order to sidestep constraints and reduce dependency, warrior entrepreneurs resist colonial values and actions and inject Indigenous values and ways of being into their entrepreneurial activities. Taiaiake Alfred argues that colonial values and practices include profit, growth, competition, aggression, amorality, quantification, and exploitation.³² We agree in general with this stance but should note that the values resembling profit, growth, and competition were a part of some traditional practices and may not be completely colonial if accompanied by

other values such as sharing and redistribution. For instance, during the fur trade Nuu-chah-nulth chiefs tried to negotiate exclusive trading agreements with settlers to maximize community and family wealth.³³ Profit in the modern purely individualistic capitalism that Alfred likely had in mind may be quite different from traditional practices around wealth accumulation and relationships between trading families and communities, but nevertheless accruing surplus wealth from economic activity has a long tradition and is thus not always colonial. But beyond rejecting non-Indigenous values, warrior entrepreneurs may integrate and strengthen traditional Indigenous values and actions in their entrepreneurial activities. Listed below are some of our suggestions regarding Indigenous values and actions that a warrior entrepreneur could incorporate in his or her entrepreneurial activities.

- Rootedness “is entrepreneurial leadership that evolves in response to experience with success, failure and takes on a spiritual-like quality that is often considered intuitive or good business sense.”³⁴
- Humility “is often measured by public reputation and customer satisfaction; it relates to the recognition of the enterprise within the community as a part of the greater whole” (36). It’s about doing what you need to do in order to promote the business and to be proud of your accomplishments while not being obnoxious or self-indulgent.
- Honor is “a business ethic associated with accountability; acting with transparency; integrity in all relationships including your investors . . . and your community” (36).
- Courage “is entrepreneurial risk-taking to create the opportunity to provide for self, family, and community; away from dependency towards self-determination” (36).
- Sharing is “exemplified as profit distribution and fair pricing; it is also business social responsibility with the business taking into account the impact and interconnectedness with the community” (36).
- Interdependence is acknowledgment that entrepreneurial activities, like all activities, are connected to the land, plants and animals, other people, and the spiritual world.³⁵
- Balance is about running a business while fulfilling and nurturing other cultural, spiritual, family, and community responsibilities

and relationships.³⁶ It's also about balancing economic and non-economic goals for the business.

- Respecting community protocols and practices is about running businesses in ways that align with Indigenous protocols.³⁷ This could include structuring the business to allow employees to participate in seasonal activities such as hunting and fishing or to attend funerals.

The idea of a warrior entrepreneur as an anticolonial agent may be useful for entrepreneurs and other stakeholders to refute concerns around entrepreneurship being non-Indigenous and a pathway to selling out or assimilating. Indigenous entrepreneurs have reported receiving criticism from other Indigenous peoples surrounding their business activities.³⁸ The idea of warrior entrepreneur could provide entrepreneurs with arguments against these critiques and tools to persuade others about the importance of entrepreneurship for Indigenous peoples. Historical examinations, such as our brief look at Nuuchah-nulth economic activity, can be used to rebut suggestions that entrepreneurship is a foreign or a primarily colonial instrument. In addition, adopting warrior mentalities in entrepreneurship can ensure that entrepreneurship is anticolonial at its core and can be used as an instrument to assert Indigenous values and ways of being. These and other ideas to be developed in later sections can also assist those who promote entrepreneurship within Indigenous populations. If becoming an entrepreneur is regarded in Indigenous communities as being colonial or a sell-out, it is likely that many of the brightest and most capable young people will avoid it. If, on the other hand, being an entrepreneur is recognized as protecting and strengthening the interests of Indigenous peoples and battling colonial mentalities and institutions, more people will be interested and more likely to become business owners.

WARRIOR ENTREPRENEURS AS REBUILDERS OF INDIGENOUS ECONOMIES

At 8:30 p.m. Dave visits his mom in the next room before going to bed. "Mom, are you awake?" he carefully probes, standing at her door.

"Yes, come on in. What's going on?" she asks as she looks over the book she's reading while lying in bed.

“Melanie confronted me again, which really got me thinking about what you said a few weeks ago on what things were like in this community before businesses like mine sprouted up.” Dave’s mom gently places her book beside her as Dave approaches to sit on the edge of the bed. “I remember when I was a teenager,” he continues. “People could hardly buy anything that they needed or wanted. Everyone complained about the time and money it took to do simple things like get groceries. There was nothing going on, and the community felt dead. From what you and Gran have told me, I know that it didn’t used to be like this. We used to make a lot of things here and traded with neighboring communities. Our economies were strong and helped our people to live a good life. I see myself as doing what I can to get us back to that type of community, where Indigenous people trade with one another and will go out of their way to buy from other Indigenous people and to not buy from places like Wal-Mart. I’m starting to think of my business as playing a small part in the rebuilding of the Native economy that was once here.”

He pauses as he stares out the window across the room. After collecting his thoughts he asks, “Is this a stretch for me to think this way? What do you think?” As Dave shifts his focused stare to the bed, he realizes that his mom has nodded off. It was late, and she had had a long day gutting and filleting fish and teaching dancing at the gym. “I guess it was kind of late for a heavy conversation,” Dave chuckles to himself. “I’ll talk to her in the morning about this over a tea,” he thinks to himself as he turns off her light and quietly leaves her room, careful not to disturb her well-deserved sleep.

Underdeveloped Indigenous Economies

As we discussed in previous sections, before colonization many Indigenous communities around North America, including the Nuu-chah-nulth, had thriving intra- and intercommunity trade.³⁹ Unfortunately, many remote Indigenous communities now have relatively weak economies. Often there are few entrepreneurs with businesses and few places to spend money within a community. On many remote reserves there are no grocery stores, hardware stores, or hairdressers, meaning that community members need to travel long distances and spend significant amounts of money to buy ordinary products and services. In many communities there are informal businesses such as automotive repair

shops and taxis, but these businesses only go part of the way to providing people with the products and services that people demand or require. The result is that almost all money that is earned, provided through government programs, or derived from any other source quickly leaves the community and often gets spent in the nearest major town at non-Indigenous businesses. This has two major repercussions. First, individuals often cannot access goods and services that they need, which can reduce the quality of life of individuals and families. Second, opportunities to have the money circulate within the community or to create jobs by employing other members of the community are lost. The longer money circulates within a community, the more wealth that money creates.⁴⁰ An important consequence of this notion of economic leakage or the absence of a “multiplier effect” is that other forms of economic development do not tend to produce the same economic benefits that they would in a community with a better-developed economy where money generated from large-scale economic development would cycle within the community rather than making a hasty exit.

*The Role of Warrior Entrepreneurs in
Rebuilding Indigenous Economies*

Entrepreneurs can play a productive role in rebuilding Indigenous economies.⁴¹ Communities with entrepreneurs allow individuals to get more basic goods and services within the community. Increased entrepreneurial activity is also associated with more jobs, as small ventures are the biggest creators of new jobs in countries such as Canada and the United States. As an additional consideration, jobs created by Indigenous people, as opposed to big resource development or other major businesses, are likely to provide employment conditions that take into consideration the needs of community members, including accommodating local customs. Jobs provided on reserves by Indigenous entrepreneurs provide more opportunities to employ Indigenous youth rather than losing them to the city, where there are often more recreational and employment opportunities. All of these benefits that entrepreneurship can bring can be seen as an integral part of rebuilding Indigenous economies that were once vibrant. There are many barriers and impediments to rebuilding Indigenous economies, especially on reserves, such as poor infrastructure, not enough available land or office space, and an untrained potential workforce.⁴² But by starting and running small businesses, even small

one-person operations, warrior entrepreneurs contribute to the revitalization of healthy Indigenous communities and economies.

Warrior entrepreneurs may differ from other Indigenous entrepreneurs in that they are fervently focused on the wider benefits their entrepreneurial activity has for their communities. Being a modern-day Indigenous warrior involves generating social unity and achieving freedom and happiness for community members. This can occur only if economic conditions on reserves can provide people with income and products and services that they need or desire. Warrior entrepreneurs recognize this reality and run their businesses in ways that generate wider benefits such as hiring and mentoring local Indigenous employees, procuring necessary products and services from other Indigenous business owners, and supporting the development of community policies or infrastructure surrounding entrepreneurs. These practices could decrease profits; however, lost profits do not deter warrior entrepreneurs from running their businesses in ways that develop their local economies.

Warrior entrepreneur is a useful framing that could be used by Indigenous individuals and communities to make sure that they or other entrepreneurs are conducting business in ways that help to rebuild Indigenous communities. If the people who choose to be entrepreneurs understand their role in their community as being at least in part a means for developing local economies and making them less dependent on government programs or even on one or two major resource projects, they will be more inclined to operate their businesses in a way that supports those goals. This could be critical in communities to rebuild what economic activity was once there, especially where traditional ways of regulating behaviors, including commercial behavior, have largely fallen into disuse and there are few regulations to guide how businesses are to be operated.

WARRIOR ENTREPRENEURS AS AGENTS OF SELF-DETERMINATION

The next morning Dave has an interview with a reporter from the local Indigenous newspaper. The story is about profiling local entrepreneurs, and the reporter, Sarah, a slight woman holding a yellow pad of paper and pen, wants to know how Dave enjoys being an entrepreneur. Sitting in Dave's living room on comfy sofas, the reporter says, "So, Dave, tell me about being an entrepreneur."

“Well, Sarah, I like running my own business more than my old job feeding fish on a salmon farm. Working five days a week on a floating mass of plastic and steel an hour’s boat ride away from here, repeating the same boring task of spreading feed at set times throughout the day, and working for an asshole non-First Nations manager was not my idea of a rewarding job, especially because I feel that the fish farms are disrespectful to the salmon and damaging to wild salmon stocks. Working there made me miserable, which took a toll on my family. But there were not many other options to make a living here, other than working for the Band or going on social assistance.”

“Yes, that does not sound at all pleasant, nor does it sound like it fits with who you are,” she responds.

“No, it did not, but now I feel lucky that I work for myself and that I can provide for my family. When out on the water I call the shots. With no one telling me what to do, I accept trips, set prices, and deal with customers as I see fit.”

“Interesting,” Sarah adds.

“I remember older times when my dad and my uncles built their own boats and supported their families from their commercial fishing. Often they were able to share their catch with the community, just like I try to transport school teams without charging them now and then. I think running this business has created a lot more pride in what I do during the day and has probably made me overall a happier father, husband, friend, and community member. And my new attitude on things is spilling over to those around me. I think the youth are taking a look at what I’ve done and saying ‘Hey, I could do something similar and run a business.’ That makes me feel really good.”

Warrior entrepreneurs like Dave are agents of self-determination both at the individual level and in terms of contributing to the capacity of their nation as a whole to be self-determining. At the individual level, many people in Indigenous communities are poor and lack the qualifications to compete for professional jobs, which means that they live on social assistance or by doing jobs in which they have little control over working conditions. Many of the jobs that allowed greater degrees of autonomy, such as commercial fishing, forestry, and guiding for fishing and hunting, have disappeared as the resources on which those industries depended have become depleted or the territory in which they took

place is no longer suitable. Thus, entrepreneurship has become one of a limited number of options through which people can put themselves in a position to be self-sufficient and avoid the dependency associated with poverty or the lack of control over working conditions associated with many laboring jobs while staying in traditional communities.

Entrepreneurship can also contribute to self-determination at the level of the nation or the community as a whole in several ways.⁴³ First, in the long run, a healthy economy of interdependent businesses run by entrepreneurs creates many potential sources of revenue for local governments through the possibilities of taxation, user fees for use of community resources, and the leasing of community-owned facilities. These combined sources of revenue can blunt the almost complete dependence that many communities have on government funding and can possibly mitigate the worst effects of dependency on revenue from resource projects that operate in highly cyclical markets. Communities can build a healthier economy when they are better able to steer an independent course economically and create more options when government programs are not working for them. Thus, we see entrepreneurship, and in particular the development of small businesses that provide goods and services in local communities, as being a critical piece in the rebuilding of nations that can increasingly steer their own course because they have the economic wherewithal to do so.

Second, entrepreneurship can bring about a change of attitude within a community. We have spoken to many people in remote communities who have had some success in developing their own businesses, and almost universally they talk about the fear of failure and challenge of overcoming their own barriers to do things like securing financing or other tasks associated with starting a business. Once on the other side of those challenges they tend to look back and say that while daunting, those challenges made them stronger and better equipped to make their own decisions and to be more assertive in dealing with governments and institutions such as banks. This “can-do” attitude, which is common to entrepreneurs everywhere, seems critical in communities that are still in many ways being told by governments and other institutions what they can and cannot do. Having more people who have had the experience of having to overcome their fears and have learned how to take on new challenges and succeed is essential to building communities that

will not accept the constraints that still shackle many communities in a less than fully self-determining state.

Warrior entrepreneurs are well suited to contribute to community self-determination. Because their goals for their business are diverse, they could play important roles in helping to advocate for policies governing entrepreneurship that can increase the self-sufficiency of their community or in helping bands operate other businesses successfully. Standing as an entrepreneur within the community would create a powerful platform upon which to demand changes to the governance and regulation of entrepreneurship, including permitting with associated fees, especially when changes would increase the cost of doing business of the advocating entrepreneur. In addition, warrior entrepreneurs are well equipped to generate different attitudes within communities. A core component of being a warrior is to target the ingrained fear within oneself and to transform it and use it as a tool to fulfill one's aspirations.⁴⁴ By engaging in this mental work around fear to do with the business, warrior entrepreneurs can join others who are developing confident and resourceful attitudes. Others around warrior entrepreneurs will likely notice their transformation over the course of running a business, which can inspire people to do the same in their own lives. Although not an instant way to transform communities toward being more self-sufficient, over the long term these kinds of changes, one individual at a time, add up, improving the attitudinal climate of a community.

CONCLUSION

In the preceding sections, we have argued that the conception of entrepreneur as modern-day warrior in an economic realm reflects the notion that entrepreneurship can build on traditions of independence and participation in commerce that were traditional for many Indigenous communities. Building a place for entrepreneurship that recognizes these connections and refutes the notion that entrepreneurship necessarily involves becoming a "sell-out" is a critical part of making entrepreneurship attractive to individuals who are proud of their Indigenous heritage and committed to strengthening their communities. It is also important for entrepreneurs who currently run their businesses in warrior ways to explain their intentions and contributions in order to be accepted and supported rather than treated with suspicion or dis-

dain by fellow community members. We have also argued that the concept, carefully considered, ought to encourage Indigenous governments to place more emphasis on entrepreneurship as part of their plans for rebuilding their economies and strengthening their capacity as nations that want to lessen their dependence on government agencies and corporations. Even quite modest local businesses aimed at meeting the everyday needs of community members can, in sufficient numbers, make a significant difference both by reducing costs for community members using local services and by strengthening the local economy through creating opportunities for money to circulate within the community rather than disappearing into communities and businesses elsewhere.

To conclude, warrior entrepreneurs, together with other entrepreneurs and community-owned enterprises, are creating a better future for their nations. Warrior entrepreneurs have critical protective and instigative roles to play in the important work of rebuilding healthy economies that once flourished and in creating nations that can surge against and rise above aspects of colonialism. By generating a range of benefits for themselves and for those around them, the actions of warrior entrepreneurs will contribute to communities becoming healthier and more vibrant, self-determining, and self-sufficient places to live, work, and play.

NOTES

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22. This article incorporates a fictional story surrounding a water-taxi owner named Dave that highlights how he makes sense of being an Indigenous person and an entrepreneur. This story is compiled from several stories from entrepreneurs whom we have interviewed. We include this story to show the importance of small business for some Indigenous peoples, to introduce the three core aspects of warrior entrepreneur, and to root our theoretical discussions in the on-the-ground reality of one Indigenous person. Although we attempt to integrate the story into the rest of the article, we deliberately choose not to deconstruct or analyze the story in order to respect each reader's agency. See Borrow, *Drawing Out Law*.

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35. Alfred, *Wasáse*.

36. For Alfred’s notion of balance, see Alfred, *Wasáse*.

37. For Atleo’s notion of respecting community protocols and practices, see Atleo, *Principles of Tsawalk*.

38. Foley, “Does Business Success.”

39. Miller, *Reservation Capitalism*.

40. This relationship can perhaps be best explained by a simple example. Say Dave the water-taxi owner spends his profits at the gas station on his reserve. The gas station owner makes a profit on Dave’s purchases. With this profit the gas station owner buys a new gas pump from a local supplier, who in turn makes a profit. Through these exchanges, money circulates between people in the community, which creates opportunities to generate new wealth. In contrast, if Dave spent all of his profits outside of his community, there would be no opportunities to locally create this new wealth.

41. Cornell et al., “Citizen Entrepreneurship”; Miller, *Reservation Capitalism*.

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44. Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*.