Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network – Social Innovation & Reconciliation

Review of Social Innovation and the Indigenous Community

UAKN National Secretariat

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National Association of Friendship Centres

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Background

In 2015, the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) hosted a first of its kind Indigenous Innovation Summit on Treaty 1 territory (Winnipeg, Manitoba), the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, Dene, and the homeland of the Métis Nation. It was the first of a series of three summits that the NAFC committed to hosting in order to support the growth of the Indigenous social innovation space. The theme of this inaugural event was reconciliation and, as such, brought together both Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders from a variety of backgrounds to share and learn about from one another about how social innovation can serve as a means of overcoming the multitude of challenges Indigenous people and communities face. In addition to highlighting existing innovations, it also provided non-Indigenous innovators with an opportunity to learn how to integrate Indigenous values in a way that ensures development of respectful and reciprocal partnerships within the innovation space.

The intent of this Review is two-fold:

- To identify the innovative or creative ways that Indigenous programs are achieving the goal of social innovation through partnerships, and relationship to shared power, cultural solutions, and community grounding.
- To bridge the gap from last years' challenges and comments regarding work currently being undertaken with some of the Innovations projects. Specifically, the literature review and case studies will identify success and challenges in the following areas:
  - Community Driven Work
  - Shared Power (funder/ partner vs community)
  - Cultural Safety (social innovation and ethical space)

Building on the success of the first event, the 2016 Summit was hosted on Treaty 6 traditional territory, now Edmonton AB. Historically known as a traditional meeting ground and home for many Indigenous peoples, including Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Métis, and Nakota Sioux, today it boasts one of the largest urban Indigenous populations, making it the ideal location for this year's Summit. Similar in context to the previous gathering, the 2016 Summit brought together more than 200 innovators from a variety of backgrounds from across Canada for two days of learning, networking, and partnership development. Participants shared ideas and strategies for achieving better ways of addressing the challenges faced by Indigenous people and communities, including those related to policy, governance, business, and service delivery. While the 2016 event still embraced the theme of reconciliation, its focus was on how to move the field of Indigenous innovation forward.

About the NAFC

Established in 1972, the NAFC is a network of 118 Friendship Centres from coast-to-coast-to coast. The NAFC is Canada's largest and most effective urban Indigenous service-delivery organization. Founded by Indigenous people for Indigenous people, friendship centres offer a unique wrap-around service model to assist and support Indigenous people living in urban areas. The NAFC is democratically governed, status blind, and accountable to its membership.

Nearly 60% of Indigenous people in Canada live in the urban environment, with a population base that is growing 6 times faster than the non-Indigenous population. Indigenous peoples in Canada are also distinctly young, with 48% of the population being under the age of 25. In 2014/15, Friendship Centres across Canada engaged more than 2.3 million points of service contacts through the delivery of more than 1,800 programs. The majority of these programs and services include elements of social innovation and social enterprise concepts, including co-ops, community-drive initiatives, and other venues.

Between Summits

Between the development and delivery of the Innovation Summits, the NAFC and its partners continued their efforts to advance the Indigenous innovation field. In addition to planning the 2016 Summit, the NAFC participated in two key initiatives: 1) Development of the Indigenous Innovation Demonstration Fund (IIDF), and; 2) Participation in a RECODE Dialogue. As part of the ongoing dialogue around the relevance of the Social Innovation concept to the Indigenous community, this document reviews five different innovation initiatives (case studies) funded through, or delivered within, the context of the IIDF. Information gathered will be used to inform the next Innovation gathering in July 2017 in Montreal.

Indigenous Innovation Demonstration Fund (IIDF)

In March 2016, the NAFC, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), and the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation came together to form the Indigenous Innovation Demonstration Fund (IIDF). The IIDF is a direct outcome of the first Indigenous Innovation Summit held in 2015, and was established to support organizations seeking to develop or expand their Indigenous social innovation and social enterprise projects by unlocking much-needed capital for early-stage, high potential innovations.

Since its launch in July 2016, the IIDF has received over 70 Expressions of Interest from across Canada, highlighting the exceptional work being done within communities. The quality and number of applications received demonstrates the significant need for investment support and resources required to positively impact conditions among the Indigenous population. Ideas ranged from food security solutions, systemic changes to the child welfare system, Indigenous hotel and food enterprises, use of technology to disseminate traditional teachings, site-specific residential and commercial building codes. Funding recipients were announced at the Summit.

Innovation Projects – Project descriptions

The following five Social Innovation projects are reviewed here:[1]

1. Wachiay Friendship Centre, Wachiay Studio & Multimedia, Courtenay BC
2. Food Security, Sagitawa Friendship Society, Peace River AB
3. Siem Lelum Housing, Victoria Native Friendship Centre
4. Indigenous Building Code, AKI Energy & Cross Lake First Nation. Cross Lake MB
5. Indigenous Family Reunification Centre, Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, Beausejour MB

Wachiay Friendship Centre – Courtenay, BC

Wachiay Studio is a social enterprise operated by the Wachiay Friendship Centre (WFC) in Courtenay, BC, within the traditional lands of the K'omoks First Nation. The WFC provides applied instruction in new technologies through the following social enterprise companies: Wachiay Studio (www.wachiaystudio.com) and Wachiay Multimedia (www.wachiaymultimedia.com).

Beginning as a Thursday afterschool art and screen-printing class for youth in 2012, the new 2,500 sq. ft. studio facility opened in May 2015 and features a dedicated art room for analog and digital art preparation and film, a t-shirt & textile department, limited edition screen-printing up to 30 x 40" using water based inks, and industrial/functional print capabilities. The studio offers services for artists, schools, community groups and individuals along with an opportunity for urban and rural aboriginal youth interested in a career in art and screen-printing to learn while working alongside professionals.

The youth program, One Tribe, has launched an online store with new designs promoted and exhibited at booths and online. The 'print-your-own shirt' programs for school and community groups are extremely popular with both kids and Elders. "Best school trip ever!" was one comment recently. We'll take that!

Although the Studio has a strong focus on Northwest Coast traditional art, recent assignments include a series of limited edition prints by a trio of British designers celebrating pinball. Whatever the style, the Studio offers top quality screen-printing of fine art and posters, and will work with artists and designers to bring their ideas to life on paper and other materials.

The textile department features environmentally safe water based inks, and offers contract printing on a wide range of garments, bags, and other material in men's, women's, and children's styles, on brand names such as American Apparel, Gildan, Haines, Fruit of the Loom, and Bella & Canvas.

Sagitawa Friendship Society – Peace River, AB

Food Security Sagitawa Friendship Society's project is focused on creating food security in Peace River, AB. A community garden was created seven (7) years ago through a partnership between the town, local Rotary Club and the Centre's Youth Council. Today youth, along with community members, continue to maintain the garden and share the space.

[1] A total of nine (9) Innovation projects were identified to be contacted; five (5) projects responded to the request for review

Building on the success of this small project, the vision is to expand its impact by acquiring more garden space. Sagitawa FC will have secured a 10-acre parcel of land to teach families how to plant a garden, nurture it, and then harvest the crop that grows from it. A garden of this size will provide enough produce for families to harvest and learn about preserving and canning food for the remainder of the year.

The next step is to provide various courses over the Autumn and Winter seasons to teach participants how to cook with the preserves harvested and to create balanced meals. The long-term vision for this project is to start with the garden, and build a social enterprise that provides produce to, in order of preference, families, local markets, and restaurants.

Cross Lake First Nation & AKI Energy – Cross Lake, MB

Indigenous Building Code Cross Lake First Nation in partnership with AKI Energy is working towards the development of an Indigenous Building Code, ensuring that new buildings in the community are culturally and environmentally appropriate, maximizing opportunities for renewable energy and local job creation. The building code will be fully illustrated and highly accessible.

The Cross Lake community building code will be the first of its kind in Canada, and is intended to provide a model for the development of similar building codes in First Nations across Canada. These local building codes will be a powerful tool for First Nations to take control of new housing development in their communities.

This project is taking place within the context of a larger partnership between AKI Energy and Cross Lake First Nation to develop a Sustainable Community Development Strategy. This Strategy will look at how the community develops housing, water and energy resources, with the goal of developing a long term sustainable development strategy that prioritizes local jobs and economic development and the development of sustainable, high quality infrastructure for the community.

The initiative started when Cross Lake Chief & Council wanted to 12 homes with alternative heating options (eg. solar); this transitioned to development of the Indigenous Building Code. However, the community required funding, and the expansive criteria of the IIDF aligned with actual need within the project. A goal is to develop Cross Lake building code as a “pilot” that can be adapted by other First Nations (scalability).

Victoria Native Friendship Centre – Siem Lelum Housing

Siem Lelum (Coast Salish for “respected house”) is developed by the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC) to provide safe and affordable residential housing for Indigenous single young adults (19-25) who are working and/or in school, who are at-risk of becoming homeless, and/or young families and grandparents raising grandchildren, The primary purpose is housing offered as a holistic "urban village” where life long skills and a healthy life style will be modeled, and the necessary resources provided to encourage healthy choices.

Phase One of Siem Lelum has been completed with the acquisition and remodeling of an old hotel in downtown Victoria; this revision provides 26 housing units total in the following order: 10 studio apartments for Indigenous youth who are transitioning out of care (child welfare system), and 16 units for small families (2 children maximum). Phase Two of the project is currently under construction and is due for completion in Spring 2017. This new building will have a total of 15 units of 3-bedroom, 2-bedroom, and 1 bedrooms in 3-storeys.

The VNFC partnered with B.C. Housing and the City of Victoria for a total cost of $4.3 million. The City sees this partnership as a way to achieve its goal of eliminating homelessness in the region. Additional to this is the construction of a Community building—a centre-piece construction that is not yet funded—that will provide a continuum of cultural and social supports. Because Siem Lelum works with essentially high-risk individuals, the intent is to keep tenants housed as much as possible by providing identified supports and services. The community building will be an interactive centre that promotes relationships between children, adults, and grandparents; integrates the Indigenous history of the region; provides a community garden; space for traditional & contemporary performances; and a recreation area for basketball & other activities.

Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre – Indigenous Family Reunification Centre

Indigenous Family Reunification The Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre (SSSC): Indigenous Family Reunification Centre (IFRC) short-term residential program that seeks to keep Indigenous families-in-crisis together rather than separating members into institutions and systems. The intent is not to remove the child(ren) from the home environment and into the child welfare system; rather, the goal is to work with the caregiver(s) by offering them the opportunity to participate in a land-based residential program that provides the necessary supports—cultural, spiritual, clinical, social—that enables them successfully reintegrate back to their family and community.

The IFRC will reduce the number of Indigenous children in care and keep them at the centre of a healthy family system, thus mitigating the effects of intergenerational and unresolved trauma. Demonstrating the effectiveness of keeping families together rather than child apprehension has the potential to "Indigenize" the entire child welfare system. The project has connections and Board members from First Nations across Canada, with partners who represent more than thirty (30) First Nations in Manitoba.

The project was conceptualized through a research agreement with the University of Victoria, who assisted in developing the initial proposal (reaching outward). Using a charrette planning model, planners and partners were asked this question: "how do you fit within this plan?" It forced potential partners to articulate their understanding, contribution, and commitment before coming on board. It also assists in focusing on "what is essential" (during, after) as the process moves along. A primary partner involved in this process is the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, engineers, architects, and consultants with experience in fundraising, programming, and infrastructure.

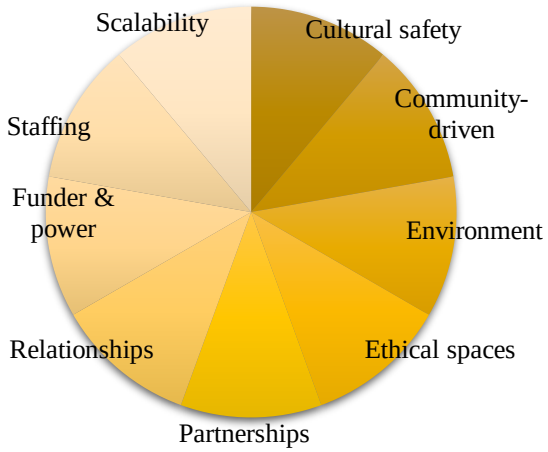
Key themes that emerged from the Innovation Projects

The discussion with the various Innovation projects highlighted the prominence of culture, protocol, and traditional approaches to inform development, relationship, practice, cultural safety, ethics, environment, and power dynamics.

Significant is the self awareness and validation that is apparent among the Innovation projects: that is, Indigenous people know their communities the best, and programs and services delivered to the community, in whatever capacity and scope, must be developed by 1) Identifying actual need; 2) By developing existing and new relationships, and; 3) By placing the foundations for success within the realms of culture, traditional approaches, ethical spaces, and a reordering of the funder-power dynamic.

Innovation Projects

The following nine (9) Themes emerged from the Innovation projects reviewed:



Themes

Community-driven

- Social innovation is next step in work of Wachiay Multimedia—the goal is to demonstrate need so Wachiay can apply to government (Ministry of Social Innovation) & foundation funding to hire instructors to train Indigenous youth. Primary focus is creating opportunities for youth to become involved in new technologies and careers they may not have ever been exposed to before. This is filling a gap not currently available at the local college. Project is also supporting local arts councils, the Art Gallery and individual artists to be self-empowering. Much of the programming has grown out of previous work.
- Good food box project teaches Indigenous youth & families how to grow their own food; individuals who are doing the garden are Indigenous people who have ties to the land; they share their skills around traditional hunting
- Indigenous youth indicated they wanted a community garden to learn about safety in the kitchen; that's where the idea started
- Indigenous Building Code part of larger Cross Lake Sustainability Strategy to build technical infrastructure, training opportunities, employment, capacity, and sustainability
- Community-drive & directed: Cross Lake Band Council contacted AKI Energy to work in partnership with community to develop on-reserve building code to meet actual housing needs:
  - Increased square footage & more rooms to meet overcrowding
  - Proper ventilation that discourages mould
  - Building materials that promotes safety from fire & overall maintenance
- Issue on Cross Lake: minimal building codes (Nat'l Building Code Canada) followed by INAC & CMHC not working on-reserve;

Context

Understanding

Social innovation is driven from the ground up—from within the community—by individuals who are compelled to make a difference. Each of the projects reviewed shared a common experience: projects were developed after seeing a need, or identifying a gap (large or small).

Projects that are developed by the community, or are community-driven, become inherently more sustainable as the investments of time, resources, expertise, decision-making, and people are made more meaningful in human terms.

Community-driven projects are advantaged by the following:

- Become part of the social fabric of the community more quickly
- Have greater acceptance among Elders, participants, and

only deals with design & construction; minimum set of requirements
  - Federal jurisdiction on-reserve
  - Provincial standards don't apply
  - "Archetype" house design not relevant to First Nation communities
- VNFC saw that the high-risk Indigenous youth & families required affordable, safe housing; this contributed to the vision & development of Siem Lelum housing.
- The "charrette" planning format is a community-driven process as it involves stakeholders and experts from the community, SSSC staff, Board of Directors, Elders, organizations, and specialized consultants (eg. engineer, architect). A "Spiritual Care Person" from the region participates at every stage of the process.

Cultural safety

- Many Indigenous youth have family, social, and health issues; we want to challenge them and still be able to help them if they get triggered. Because of this, our program is more than just training; this is to what social innovation & cultural safety speaks to.
- Listen to the Elders in developing innovation projects; they tell us it is our right as Indigenous people to take back stewardship (care) of our the land
- AKI Energy was invited into the community, and is developing project in full partnership and consultation with Chief & Council; this contributes to the progress (limited issues) encountered thus far
- A "welcome pole" has been erected to welcome all Indigenous people to the city. This was completed with the involvement of local FN communities, Elders, and knowledge keepers; three totem poles are planned to be built by youth and teachers. This helps to build the relationship within the urban environment and surrounding areas (3 groups on Vancouver Island: Nuu-chah-nulth, Coast Salish, Kwakwaka'wakw).
- Planning process began with a Pipe Ceremony, lead by the Elders, to receive the blessing and spiritual direction of the Creator, ancestors, and spirits. The foundation of the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre is culture, spirituality, faith, and belief. The vision is to have permanent, on-site Elders.

Environment

- Comox Valley has a population base of 32,000 people with the necessary infrastructure to support the nature of the project
- Organization started in an old radio/television station ideal for needs of printing (high voltage, good ventilation); contributed to opportunity to expand
- Town is very small; the community garden is 3 miles from town with no public transit, however, it's easily accessible for signage
- Urban environment can be challenging for First Nations people moving to the city; FC was able to act in advocate and educator to mainstream funders to understand the unique needs that enabled necessary financial and political support

community members
- Empowers the community through ownership
- Can act as a catalyst or model for other ideas to be developed

Empowerment & community participation are recognized as a means and outcome for successful social innovation

Understanding

Cultural safety is when a participant feels respected and comfortable in expressing worldviews and beliefs within the context of a project. It is the nurturing and acceptance of language, protocol, ceremony, and processes.

Foundational to the Innovation projects reviewed is the recognition and integration of culture and protocol as core components. For those projects who are non-Indigenous partners within the community, it is the respect and dignity given, and followed, to leadership, Elders, and community members (eg. obtaining permission)

Understanding

The "environment" in which a social innovation project is delivered is critical to success. This includes the physical, social, cultural, ethical, and emotional context that supports a project. The ideal environment is one that:

- Respects the Indigenous person

- The physical environment is critical in the delivery of the Reunification program. Caregiver participants will live at the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre in designated cabins (currently being developed for construction) for a period of 3-6 months, becoming fully immersed in the cultural, clinical, and social curriculum that, at its heart, addresses the effects of intergenerational trauma on the individual, family, and community. A trauma-informed comprehensive residential program is also being developed. Once completed, Caregivers will be reintegrated back to their communities and families, transitions that are developed with the community as the individual moves through the program.
- Land-based teachings, centered in Indigenous culture & language, is delivered by being physically on-the-land, in the bush, in the sweat lodge, along the river, etc. A community garden, along with medicines, ceremony, and language will be offered in conjunction with clinical supports and assessments.

(Ethical space)
- Supports the delivery of culture, language, and protocol (Cultural safety)
- Is recognized, accepted, and attended by the community (Community-driven)
- Is supported by reciprocal and respectful relationships (Relationships)
- Developed in equal partnerships to the benefit of all parties (Partnerships)

It is important to consider the capacity and limitations of each environment, in order to maximize potential impact, and to be flexible in programming to respond to changes in the environment.

Ethical spaces

- Ensure that partners' and funders' (existing & potential) goals & intentions align with your work
- Funder's ethics, morals, and values match that of the FC and the Elders
- Group planning (charrette) ensures ethical and cultural integrity by giving Elders and knowledge keepers equal weight with technical, government, and organizational partners.

Understanding

Ethical spaces are created when mainstream approaches engage with Indigenous approaches in an atmosphere of respect and awareness. It is acknowledging that Indigenous people, culture, attitudes, ways of doing, and expectations are different than conventional Western applications.

Because partnerships drive social innovation, new rules of engagement become necessary to move projects forward, and the creation of ethical spaces is where this can occur.

Funder & power dynamics

- Funder requested a more elaborate description; we provided a very intensive overview that broke down all the areas that project would address, and why
- The B.C. Intergovernmental grant criteria does not recognize printing as a "trade"; therefore doesn't meet funding criteria for small business
  - Small business development is key employment for First

Understanding

New rules of engagement (ways of communicating) developed through the ethical space re-orders archaic ways of interaction between Indigenous people and mainstream institutions. The funder-power

Nations people in remote towns & reserves; established government criteria limits development & doesn't meet needs of local community
- Funder criteria forces us to narrow our focus
- Wait time for funding decisions doesn't always match speed of business
  - Want to hire summer students but have to wait for decision; use cost recovery options—borrow from one program to cover cost of another until confirmation is received.
- Accessed funding from McConnell Foundation; they promote projects that benefit people so relationship is good
- No funding available for a fundraising position, even though organization is largely dependent on grants
- NAFC IIDF overall open criteria was impressive; "social innovation" concept closely aligns with actual need of community
  - Entire process with relatively simple
  - Criteria of openness; perfect fit for mandate of IBC
- NAFC to consider alternative promotional options of the IIDF; internet access frequently sporadic in remote communities
- VNFC and the Siem Lelum housing project was approached by the City of Victoria to assist in addressing the large homeless population in the city (60%-70% of Indigenous people live off-reserve on Vancouver Island); however, they still had to nurture the relationship and find strategic partners to fully fund construction and implementation of phase 1 & 2 (pursing further community building funding).
- It was beneficial to fully understand the bureaucracy and requirements when working with City of Victoria, and BC Housing. This included understanding the "larger picture" of the department & Government initiative; that way, VNFC was able to tap into the pillars that met the goals of the funder while meeting the needs of the community (foundation of the "social innovation" concept)
- SSSC has experienced significant challenges in convincing funders of the need for a "charrette" process—a community-driven intensive process that brings together relevant stakeholders. The flexibility of the social innovation $$ offered by the IIDF understood the need for community-based planning, and the relevance of language, culture, and spirituality that works alongside the clinical components. Funder "criteria" must become more expansive in order to address the inter-related effects of intergenerational trauma among Indigenous people.
- Smaller charrettes are planned, with information brought back to the larger community circle; this process reflects the traditional "council" planning, a democratic process that shares knowledge through transparency, validation, consultation, and consensus.

Partnerships

- Have built multiple partnerships within the local Art gallery and artistic communities (music, artists, pottery, mask-making, landscapers, poles) who help to deliver programs; have established corporate partnerships that provide internships to Wachiay students, including Shaw Communications; currently pursuing agreements with University of Victoria, Emily Carr Institutes, and

dynamic needs to change in order to catch up with this reality.

Significant among the projects reviewed is the attitude that "we know our communities the best." Social innovation responds to actual need, that in turn, re-animates development from the community outward. However, participation, empowerment, and development is limited by relational, structural, and cultural barriers between funders and projects.

Asymmetrical and unbalanced power creates barriers to progress. Changes must occur at the systemic and political levels in order to promote real progress, co-creation, and use of social innovation initiatives.

Project developers cannot carry this burden themselves; systemic changes (eg. funding criteria & governance applications) require the participation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous leadership at the highest levels of the political, cultural, and social spectrum. As such, social innovation has the potential to influence policy and senior-level decision-makers who affect social conditions in the Indigenous community.

Understanding

Partnerships are at the core of the social innovation concept. Key to building successful partnerships for social change (innovation) is:

other school districts; various Ministries and Foundations identified as partners
- Received title of land from a major partner; partnership still existing
- Partners with Shell and NAIT Boreal Forest Research Centre to re-introduce & cultivate native plants; we extend it by introducing sacred medicines
- Health Inspector is assisting with health & safety workshops; canning & how to deal with harvest
- Working with University of Manitoba, Faculty of Medicine (Indigenous Health Program) & Faculty of Architecture to develop culturally appropriate housing
- Technical expertise partners include: U of M, CMHC, MB Hydro, NWT/Nunavut/Yukon, Red River College, design engineers, financial firm (residential/commercial audit)
- AKI Energy has worked with 8 other First Nation communities in Manitoba; also has established networks with technical organizations
  - Technical and social capacity is better

Relationships

- Had a good relationship already established with Art Gallery that allowed us to build more networks; Gallery made space available for Indigenous youth to start program
- Working with University of Manitoba, Faculty of Medicine (Indigenous Health Program) & Faculty of Architecture to develop culturally appropriate housing
- Technical expertise partners include: U of M, CMHC, MB Hydro, NWT/Nunavut/Yukon, Red River College, design engineers, financial firm (residential/commercial audit)
- VNFC built relationships with the local First Nation communities, and with local municipalities and government; this fostered an atmosphere of understanding, common goals, and acceptance between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community. This has contributed to a new Aboriginal Advisory Group implemented at the City level.
- The charrette, by its very nature, functions through the development of relationships and participation of multiple partners. However, it was necessary for SSSC to identify relevant partners, funders, stakeholders, and experts at the very early planning stages, and to nurture those relationships in order to move the project forward.

- Ensuring all parties understand what the partnership is for
- Having the same goal
- Constant communication
- Monitoring, revising, and adjusting terms of the partnership, as required

Understanding

Social innovation speaks to the need for reciprocal relationships in order to be successful. Each of the Innovation projects reviewed had purposefully built relationships with potential partners, in order to support their project. This included Indigenous and non-Indigenous parties, at all levels of leadership, administration, agencies, and institutions.

Staffing

- Whenever possible, hire the employee that best fits the project & has necessary skills; this moves project ahead exponentially that, in turn, ultimately benefits the larger community

Understanding

Staff and volunteers are at the heart of any project; those involved in social innovation are typically invested through personal interest or experience, or motivated by wanting to make a difference. Utilize the knowledge, experience, and passion of an individual to be successful.

Scalability

- Project can be scaled & adapted to any size of community; program can be introduced into school curriculum, anywhere
  - For example, a local FN school took the training & now introducing the print trade to the youth at their community school
- Once the trade skill (printing) is learned, by using multimedia marketing & communications (internet, online), tangible products can be produced anywhere from remote reserve location/urban environments, etc
- Training can also occur through online & internet
- Project idea (multimedia) can be adapted anywhere
- Indigenous Building Code is being developed broad enough so its fundamental standards can be adapted by other First Nation communities
- This project can be scaled to any community, as long as the appropriate political & financial mechanisms are in place. This is why it is so important to identify strategic players & build those relationships.
- The concept of the charrette, as a planning mechanism, can be scaled to any community or project. Critical is the proper articulation of an idea, along with the practicalities of a proper proposal that outlines the overall vision. As individuals/technicians are brought on-board, they can contribute further support as the project moves along.
- The model of removing the caregiver, not the child, from the home environment in order to teach various skills and supports, can be scaled to any community.

Understanding

Social innovation projects typically start small; a need is identified from within, a solution may be tried; if successful, it becomes a way to do things (however small); and if really successful, it becomes "scaled up" as projects begin to seek funding based on what was learned. Often, support is obtained outside of traditional government structures, or if lucky, an organization or project may find sponsorship through philanthropy, cost sharing, endowments, or self-generating revenue.

The approaches used in an innovation projects must be flexible, creative, and responsive to actual need identified as the project grows and expands.

Successes & Challenges Identified

Successes

- Program reach is now extending throughout British Columbia. School Districts 71 and 72 bring in Grade 1-12 students; graduates receive school credit when completing the program
- Corporate partners provide graduates from our program with internships upon completion
- Project (good food box and garden) is well received in the community; people volunteer to help when they become aware of the project

- As a result of the partnerships built with the City government, of which the social innovation project was a part, a new Aboriginal Advisory Committee has been formed as a separate entity
- There is a greater recognition amongst specific child welfare agencies that working with the whole family is a better approach than simply removing the child(ren); we hope it translates to change in policy

Challenges

- Primary issue is to let other First Nations and friendship centers know about our project
- Getting skilled help is a constant challenge (during development, implementation, currently)
- People tend to feel that if you are treaty, you have more than others; we have to demonstrate that, because our organization does not have a lot of money, everyone has to chip in
- Small, inconsistent grants limit what we can actually do with the project
- Distance: Our First Nation is a remote location; it is very expensive to bring in resources consistently
- Funding for appropriate and enough staff to support development of such a large project is a challenge

Recommendations for development

In terms of the practical elements and applications necessary in developing a social innovation initiative, the following Recommendations were identified by the five projects:

Indigenous-driven

1. Look to traditional practices and principles to develop innovation projects.
2. Development to occur with the involvement of community and Elders.
3. If your project is outside of the community, but for the community: Ask permission, and get consensus and validation, from Elders and/or community,
4. Recognize that every person has something to contribute.
5. A full understanding of the impact of intergenerational trauma is critical when developing programming, curriculum, facilities, and funding criteria for the Indigenous community.

Cultural Foundations

6. Integrate culture, language, ceremony, and traditional approaches through the stages of development, delivery, and expansion; ensure culture is at the core of overall project.
7. Acknowledge the traditional territory in which the project occurs, and follow local protocols and processes.

Research and Planning

8. Do your research; your research cannot be anecdotal. You need statistics and references (think about it as a thesis).
9. Be organized; develop a 4-6 prospectus that outlines your project; use it as a marketing tool to send out to funders, partners, community, etc.
10. Know your project, process, strengths, and potential, inside and out.
11. Create a business case ahead of time to have ready to sent to potential funders/partners; highlight your strengths and unique vision.
12. Fully understand the bureaucracy of the system to which you are applying.
13. Develop a comprehensive planning process that draws on the expertise and support of multiple partners, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

Implementation

14. As best you can, employ people with the most relevant skills required for the job.
15. Establish a strategy and process of work, and follow it; this will gain you success.

16. Follow your strategy but be flexible enough to modify key elements, in response to actual participation, progress, and unanticipated need.
17. Do not give up; there is an entrepreneur class of people who want to create an economy. If one project/business fails, start another one.

Communication

18. Network, network; participate in conventions/conferences and meet with as many people as possible to let them know what your project is.
19. Involve and keep informed local Boards, Chief & Councils of your project.

Partnerships

20. Identify potential partners and/or funders whose goals align with yours. Be selective with who you involve (there is no need to involve absolutely everyone)
21. Draw on the expertise and experiences of other entrepreneurs.
22. Seek out mainstream support for Indigenous social innovations.
23. Do not be afraid to ask people for help; innovation is all about trading knowledge.
24. Having partners expands access to a greater base of funding.
25. Be strategic: reach outward to find partners who are relevant to your project "who play that game"
26. Become part of the business community to move things forward.

Funding & Resources

27. Local organizations are best positioned to know what its members need; funding criteria must be expansive enough to allow social innovation to occur.
28. First Nation organizations must build relationships with municipalities and government to create opportunity and support.
29. Advocate for funding that understands the inter-related nature of the effects of intergenerational trauma; greater funder flexibility (akin to social innovation).
30. Do not rely on single-source funding; broaden your resource base to ensure project continues if support is discontinued.

Friendship Centres

31. NAFC to better promote and inform First Nations of the IIDF opportunities; target hard-to-reach and remote communities through alternative methods (online, technological, and internet communication not reliable in remote areas)
32. Friendship Centre to more fully engage and work towards social innovation projects that provide integration into broader society.
33. Because innovation requires partnership, Friendship Centers across Canada to dismantle the "territorial thinking" that currently exists

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Wise & emerging practices for social innovation

Drawing on their overall experience as to process, the following Wise & Emerging Practices were identified by the five projects:

- Draw on culture, language, and traditional approaches as the foundation for innovation.
- A full understanding of the impact of intergenerational trauma is critical when developing projects for Indigenous people.
- Recognizing the unique history of Indigenous people in Canada is requisite; one approach does not work equally for mainstream society and the Indigenous community.
- Recognize that initiatives such as green-energy reflect traditional concepts practiced for generations; draw on traditional knowledge to develop innovation projects.

- Everyone has something to contribute to a project; focus on strengths and experience.
- Reach outward; innovation works best when the partnerships and relationships are nurtured.
- Align yourself with funders and advocates who share with you common goals, principles, and ethics.
- When expanding, obtain permission from the First Nation you are currently working with to work with other communities, when required
- Conduct comprehensive research, statistics, and references when developing a program or project, in order to be successful in accessing relevant resources.
- Invites Board of Director(s) and Chief & Council to project meetings; conduct consultations with community and stakeholders to inform and collect input
- Recognize when your project scope requires multiple partnerships and expertise of Indigenous & non-Indigenous professionals who can contribute to a successful completion.
- Develop a comprehensive strategy at the beginning of the project, follow and revise it as required.
- Develop a comprehensive planning process that draws on the expertise and support of multiple partners, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

Social Innovation in Indigenous Communities: Community, Power, Ethics and Cultural Safety – A Literature Review

Although social innovation has become part of ongoing national dialogue as a practice, innovation has always been an integral part of healthy Indigenous communities. Consider the 1993 Gwaii Haanas Marine Agreement[2]. The Agreement operates as a mutually beneficial agreement between the Council of Haida Nations, and the Government of Canada with respect to the management of the Gwaii Haanas National Reserve. In recognition of other similar projects that underscore Indigenous innovation and resilience, May 20, 2016 was declared as British Columbia's third Aboriginal Social Enterprise Day. The day was set aside to celebrate the accomplishments of Indigenous social enterprises and their contributions to the vitality of British Columbia (BC), and the strength and resilience of Indigenous communities overall[3].

The NAFC Indigenous Innovation Summits describe Indigenous social innovation as "a unique type of innovation which are continually informed by the application of Indigenous knowledge and practices" and grounded in the following principles:[1]

- **Relationship**—both within and between individuals, communities, partners, and stakeholders
- **Respect**—for communities, individuals, and culture
- **Cooperation**—a focus on rebuilding and healing communities
- **Generosity and reciprocity**—enabling Indigenous innovators to make meaningful contributions to community
- **Harmony**—support and engage disparate Indigenous innovation networks to work together to maximize impact

The resilience of Indigenous communities in the face of historic, and present day colonial influences must be recognized. Prior to Canada's colonial onslaught, Indigenous people across Canada used a mix of traditional knowledge, environmental awareness, and guidance from Elders and knowledge keepers to employ innovative leadership, and resource management strategies to provide for their communities. While colonial practices have, in part, disrupted community visioning within natural laws,

[2] Gwaii Haanas Marine Agreement (2010) p.1.
[3] Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation, Press Release, May 2016.

Indigenous people are purposefully returning to traditional ways to move forward the needs of their communities.

Definition

Most definitions of social innovation are embedded with the values of the dominant Western culture and while it is growing, there is a scarcity of literature that defines social innovation from an Indigenous len(s). Conrad[4] defines western social innovation as,

> Stirring the imaginations of community organizations, governments, and the academy in exciting ways. In the field of education, *social innovation* emerges as part of an effort for reimagining education for the public good.

In the same paper, the Government of Canada described western social innovation as, [5]

> Responding to [social] challenges that are not being addressed through conventional approaches…often requiring new forms of collaboration… [and] including 'co-creation' and 'co-production' among citizens and institutional actors.

Similarly, in her report *Social Innovation and Aboriginal Communities,* prepared for the Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network (UAKN) Secretariat, Volynets details many national and international western definitions of social innovation but lands on the definition prepared by the Centre for Social Innovation at Stanford University[6] to frame her discussion as:

> A novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals. A social innovation can be a product, production process, or technology (much like in novation in general), but it can also be a principal, an idea, a piece of legislation, a social movement, an intervention, or some combination of them.

Overall, common elements of Social Innovation that appear to support Indigenous approaches are:

- Community based strategies that create impact
- Skills training at a community level
- For-profit activities focused on social objectives
- Activities that are directed to a social or environmental goals
- Reimagining of a social issue towards a positive and sustainable outcome
- Collaboration and co-creation of solutions
- Responding to social challenges through unique and new partnerships
- Developing novel solutions to a social problems at a community level

Social innovation is a new name for a very old concept that benefited community and family, and had strong roots in Indigenous tradition and

Considering these qualities, it can be said that Indigenous communities have historically embraced notions of social innovation without defining them as such

[4] Conrad, D. (2015) Education and Social Innovation: The Youth Uncensored Project – A Case Study of Youth Participatory Research and Cultural Democracy in Action. *Canadian Journal of Education*. 38:1. p. 3.
[5] Conrad, D. (2015) Government of Canada Policy Research Initiative presentation to a 2010 International Roundtable. p. 4.
[6] Volynets, I. (2015). Social Innovation and Aboriginal Communities. *Institute for the Study of International Development. Research to Practice Policy Brief. UAKN National Secretariat*. p.7.

culture. Indigenous communities across Canada have suffered economic, political and social deprivations at unfathomable levels in comparison to "settlers and the colonial regime."[7] Social innovation considered from an Indigenous worldview is one way to respond to environmentally based social challenges that reinforce and develop individual and community agency, self-governance, healing, and Indigenous social capital. In her report *Education and Social Innovation: The Youth Uncensored Project*, Conrad [8]speaks to the colonial history of Canada, referring social innovation partnerships as potential acts of reconciliation and "an ethical project(s)."

> Of intrinsic value in this work is the promotion of human and non-human flourishing (Heron & Reason, 1997), which entails attention to personal responsibility, relationality, connections to other living beings and specific places, the land, and spirituality, consistent with Indigenous sensibilities (Bourriaud, 2002; Weber-Pillwax, 2004; Wilson, 2008). Working toward social innovation takes vision, courage, and commitment. It is not without struggle and risk, and there is always so much more to do. As Westley, Zimmerman, and Patton (2007) describe, social innovation is "a juxtaposition of despair and possibility" (p. 189) through its inevitable successes and failures.

Indigenous social innovation also has the potential to dismantle existing paradigms that typically focus on Western ideology such as individualistic measurements of health, success, wealth, relationship, and reconciliation. Indigenous innovation that is a grounded in relationship, respect, cooperation, generosity, reciprocity, and harmony provide the philosophical and ethical framework from which all social innovation projects may be built. Indigenous people know that the answers to community concerns are held within traditional cultures, Elders or knowledge keepers, stories, narratives, songs and ceremonies but care must be taken around the distribution of power, ethical space & cultural safety and the role of community. These areas will be expanded upon in the next section of this report.

The Role of Power and Ethical Space in Indigenous Social Innovation Projects

It is imperative that socially innovative work takes into account the role of power and ethical space. When working with Indigenous communities, partners must understand that their role is that of an ally. There are many sources of literature defining the role of the ally in relation to Indigenous people, marginalized groups and social justice. Overall, the key points are:

- Being an ally requires a critical lens where "normal" practices and process are redefined and changed to suit the needs of the people being supported
- Being an ally is an ongoing practice where the ally may experience many failures as they learn how to shift previous roles and power relationships
- Ultimately the process and answers come not from the mandate of the ally but that of the "other"

This new form of integrity can only be created if both parties understand the concept of ethical space, and how this space both challenges, and scaffolds the elevation of community mandates as well as defines the places where allies can assist instead of lead. Per Willie Ermine,[9]

> Ethical space is formed when two societies, with disparate worldviews, are poised to engage each other. This includes conversations that evolve opportunities to live, plan and manage ourselves, and our process from an Indigenous perspective and ultimately from the environment.

[7] Alfred, T. (2009). Colonialism and State Dependency. *Journal of Aboriginal Health*. November, Vol 5 Issue 2. p. 57.
[8] Conrad (2015) p. 6.
[9] Ermine, W. (2007) The Ethical Space of Engagement. *Indigenous Law Journal*. Vol. 6 (1), p. 193.

The work of the ally is not easy, nor is it accepted in all realms of Indigenous de-colonization work as it will require a significant shift in power and resources from historically dominant systems, to Indigenous communities. Dr. Taiaiake Alfred, founding Director of the Indigenous Governance Program at the University of Victoria, summed up this struggle to transitioning influence in an authentic way by saying,[10]

> The enemy is not the white man in racial terms; it is a certain way of thinking with an imperialists mind. The enemy of our struggle is the noxious mix of monotheistic religiosity, liberal political theory, neo-capitalist economics and their supportive theories of racial superiority, and the false assumption of Euro American cultural superiority.

To return pride and empowerment to Indigenous communities, the subjective realm of "colonization" must be the target of strategic transformation as an essential part of the innovation project. This entails a massive philosophical and systemic shift in the paradigm of power roles and a turning away from systems and approaches that have consistently failed Indigenous people, families, and communities. Successful social projects must work to rebuild a system that is learned, supported and endorsed through generations of cultural paradigms, approaches, and language. This is an act not so much of reconciliation but of resurgent social innovation.

Indigenous Social Innovation as a Living Post-colonial Theory

We are not so different from our ancestors. The concepts of "social innovation" have been long used by Indigenous communities as expansive multi-disciplinary approaches that integrate all aspects of human existence—physical, mental, emotional, spiritual—to meet the economic, political, social, basic, and religious needs of people throughout the ages. In order to survive colonization, it was necessary for Indigenous people to adapt and integrate foreign structures while not losing the integrity of original culture. This "marriage" of two cultures—Indigenous and Western—is the contextual space in which Canada's First Nations, Inuit, and Métis have existed since the introduction of the Indian Act in 1876. Western cultural theory has given a name to this phenomenon: the "third space,"[11] or "contact zone."[12] Indigenous resiliency rests on the foundations of tradition and culture manifested through the principles of social innovation. ***It is in this space that the creativity and ingenuity of social innovation occurs,*** in both a contemporary and historic context.

The Role of Cultural Safety in Indigenous Social Innovation Projects

The term *cultural safety* is used widely in Indigenous contexts. While there are many definitions, cultural safety[13] is the experience of feeling safe in "systems settings" (health or education) or western spaces. Often, safety is created by integrating Indigenous culture (communications, process' or staffing) into the system or location. The integration and respect for cultural safety – by the ally partner – is essential to success, as offering space for alternatives that are culturally valid, authentic and healing to Indigenous people, families, and communities are empowering. The practice of employing translation, parallel meanings and the use of natural laws and creation stories are examples of cultural integration that have been shown to assist in the creation of safety.

[10] Alfred, T. (2005) *Was se: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom.* University of Toronto Press. p. 102.
[11] Homi Bhabha, Location of Culture.
[12] Mary Louise Pratt Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation
[13] Nguyen, HT. (2008) Patient centered care: cultural safety in indigenous health. *Australian Family Physician.* Volume 37, Issue 12. p. 990.

As a practical example of a social innovation that draws upon traditional knowledge practice, Sarah Deer[14] suggests that the best way for communities to respond to widespread community issues may be through, the revisiting of (pre-contact) stories and beliefs. Deer also describes how Indigenous women traditionally passed on information concerning community perceptions and sanctions through stories, ceremonies and songs. In the absence of fully understanding of the value of Indigenous approaches, Deer suggests that communities in trauma have no other option than to continue to rely on patriarchal and colonial structures. Consequently, the "mis-information" created by externally imposed definitions of Indigenous people, their role in post colonial Indigenous communities, and the "source" of community problems is internalized, and continually reproduced with no end in sight. Dr. Glen Sean Coulthard[15] describes this process of internalizing "mis-information" by Indigenous people as one of the greatest tools of continued colonization.

One example of a social innovation project that was successful in achieving cultural safety is of that of the Wunambal Gaanbera people of Australia. Through thoughtful and respectful conversations, the project could integrate both western project goals, and the cultural understandings of environment and natural governance around bio-diversity. Supported by Indigenous community leadership, the eventual management plan "is one of the few known strategies directed at managing the traditional owners use of wildlife."[16] The plan is also one of very few that incorporates at a core level the integration of:

- Indigenous governance
- Indigenous wildlife management
- Wildlife management (western) science
- Land and land tenure
- Community based planning
- Traditional land ownership
- Use of traditional ceremony, oral and visual planning and control

Although this innovative approach is still in its infancy, clearly the use and respect of traditional worldviews around the land, meaningful icons, planning process and the respect for local governance systems have created an environment that does not threaten the Indigenous population but incorporates *ways of being* that resonate. By adopting and adjusting projects to community settings, western partners involved in Indigenous social innovation projects can still achieve their goals while at the same time elevating the resurgence of intergenerational knowledge, practices, planning, sense of ownership, and agency for Indigenous people within their own communities.

The Role of Community Leadership in Indigenous Social Innovation Projects

Community led work in Indigenous communities necessitates an ongoing analysis of power, privilege, historical oppression, and as addressed above – the role of the ally partner. Constant mediation of power differentials and a questioning of the breadth and depth of support needed to sustain collaboration in terms of ownership, inclusion, accountability, and responsibility can make or break an innovative project. In her article *Social Innovation and Resilience: How One Enhances the Other*,

[14] Deer, S. (2015) *The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America*. University of Minnesota Press.
[15] Coulthard, G.S. (2014) *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. University of Minnesota Press.
[16] Davis, J, R. Hill, F.J. Walsh, M. Sandford, D. Smyth, and M.C. Holmes (2013) Innovation in management plans for community conserved areas: Experiences from Australian Indigenous Protected areas. *Ecology and Society* 18(2): 14. p.7.

Westley[17]discusses how resiliency theory has many lessons to teach people involved in social innovation work.

> As a theory, it is deeply interdisciplinary, representing the intersection of psychology, ecology, organizational theory, community studies and economics. It is a whole systems approach.

Indigenous communities have at their disposal both resilience, and a natural alignment to a systems approach to life that pre-dates social innovation, as we know it today. Combined, *bricolage*,[18] defined as "making creative and resourceful use of whatever materials at hand "and a return to environmentally regulated natural laws, can juxtapose the old with the new to build community driven social innovations that are resilient, while at the same time beginning to solve at a local level, daunting social problems. This approach only works though, when old patterns of dominance (usually by the ally) are unpacked and addressed at ever step of the project otherwise, "a serious loss of system resilience happens when the system gets trapped at some point in the cycle…. "[19]

Residential schools are a particularly devastating example of how unchecked dominant systems can implement, socially innovative solutions to community problems. At the time, both the Canadian government, most systems, and non-Indigenous Canadians were led to believe that the residential school system and most colonial practice (Sixties Scoop, Reserves) were innovative solutions to the problems being faced by Indigenous people. MacLeod et al. [20] argue that still today many disadvantaged Indigenous groups across the word fall victim to "innovation "for their communities when they have not even been involved in the programming, planning or policies. They suggest instead that an social innovation approach that invests in building a *knowledge economy* that direct the resources for a successful project can have a better chance at the social, political and economic cultural survival and re-generation of the region in question.

Without examining the true systems origin of the problem attempting to be resolved or reconciled, partners run the risk of continuing to exert dominant paradigms while at the same time not recognizing the resilient nature, and communal strengths of Indigenous communities. Imagine where we might be today if Indigenous communities had been recognized for their local knowledge, resources, systems infrastructure and governance mechanism, skills, and ability to engage in locally beneficial social programs instead of being continually thrust into colonial "solutions." One way to move in this direction is to recognize the traditional leadership (both elected and traditional such as Elders or knowledge keepers), and their roles as teachers and custodians of the land, resources, stories and songs.

Positive practices that succeed in empowering Indigenous communities involved in social innovation projects are those that:

- *Focus on customary governance institutions*
- *Respond to, and acknowledge the interlinkages between people, place, plants and animals and the necessary local stewardship and natural laws that support this lens*
- *Bridge the scales and expectations of success of both partners by considering and elevating the values and issues – as related to the specific environment hosting the program*
- *Use different communication models including written, visual, and spatial modes. In certain communities, oral communication and ceremonial practices may be also critical.*
  (Davis 2013, p.1)

Davies et al, speak at great length about the evolving and necessary recognition of Indigenous leadership and community interests overall with respect

[17] Westley, F. (2013). Social Innovation and Resilience: How One Enhances the Other. *Stanford Social Innovation Review. Summer*. p. 7.
[18] Westley, F. (2013). p.6.
[19] Westley, F. (2013). p.7.
[20] MacLeod, B; McFarlane & Davis, C (1997). The Knowledge Economy and the Social Economy: University support for community enterprise development as a strategy for economic regeneration in distressed regions in Canada and Mexico. *International Journal of Social Economics 24, 11, p.1302.*

to innovative projects on traditional territories.[21] They describe several best practices that describe how the construction of *novel encounters* should be used, and how the nature of the relationship can have a deep influence on either the empowerment or disempowerment outcomes of the Indigenous community involved.

Intentional and consistent engagement and respect of Indigenous communities as partners in social innovation projects are essential for positive, and empowering outcomes. Plans that are not congruent with local Indigenous epistemologies or worldviews will not only fail but will continue albeit perhaps not intentionally, a colonial approach to development "in the best interests "of Indigenous communities and will certainly not bring us any closer to establishing a positive link between social innovation and reconciliation as a practice.

The following fifteen (15) practices of social innovation that resonate with Indigenous communities to provide guidance: [22]

1. Stimulate self-determination
2. Harness entrepreneurship towards social and economic ends
3. Recognize the collective nature of indigenous worldviews in project development and implementation
4. Acknowledge the benefit of local agency and social capital to generate social benefit
5. Acknowledge collective social benefit as a core value of social enterprise
6. Utilize cultural values and worldviews in project development and implementation
7. Prioritize social over economic benefits
8. Respond to the challenges of each unique community and don't use a one-size fits all approach
9. Harness the local social capital – especially the large youth population
10. Recognize community resilience
11. Address and mitigate systemic blockages to success
12. Recognize that capital support may be necessary at the onset of the work
13. Increase opportunities to education and training for residents
14. Increase employment and training for residents
15. Identifies and regulates the role of the ally or partner, and attend to the distribution of power and ethical space during the life of the innovation

Reconciliation: Moving Forward

In May 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Report (TRC),[23] with a highlighted re-focus on the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP), was released. The TRC presented a comprehensive historical record on the policies and operations of Canada's residential schools, along with 94 Recommendations targeted to the Government of Canada and other levels of government and institutions that have, or had, relationships with Indigenous communities. According to the Commission, "reconciliation" is defined as,[24]

[21] Davis, J, R. Hill, F.J. Walsh, M. Sandford, D. Smyth, and M.C. Holmes (2013) Innovation in management plans for community conserved areas: Experiences from Australian Indigenous Protected areas. *Ecology and Society* 18(2): 14. p.3.
[22] Volynets (2015) p. 42-52.
[23] Truth and Reconciliation Canada. (2015). *Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.
[24] Truth and Reconciliation Report (2015) p. 16.

> An ongoing individual and collective process that will require participation from all those affected by the Indian Residential School (IRS) experience. This includes activities such as public education and engagement, commemoration and recommendations for action to the parties.

In 2010, Canada signed the *U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. While the document is not legally binding, it should be a guidepost to move in directions that support positive change in Indigenous communities. The social innovation concept moves this agenda forward.

In her report *Urgent Need, Serious Opportunity,* Abele describes how, despite a certain degree of progress in some areas, the depth and breadth of problems encountered by Indigenous communities in Canada, and in-fact across the globe, require "a new social architecture" outside of existing federal wardship, arrangements, social granting and other colonial relationships.

Key themes that emerged from the Literature review

The key themes that emerged from the Innovation project reviews align with the context and information presented within the Literature review, including the following key elements:

- Expansive concept of "social innovation" more closely reflects actual need within Indigenous communities
- Relationships and partnerships are key elements to success in any innovation project
- Projects must be driven by the community
- Cultural safety and integrity a necessary component
- Indigenous communities often see business differently than non-Indigenous communities (small business development critical)
- Public policy must embrace Indigenous approaches to remove laws and regulations that block enterprise from flourishing
- Post-secondary institutions should better reflect Indigenous culture through its physical spaces and its programs
- There is a need to continue to identify and highlight stories of Indigenous entrepreneurial success

Youth and Elders: Youth and Elders are vital to Indigenous innovations. They ground us in both the past and the future as each has unique views about the world around them. With these views comes valuable expertise about how to ensure the sustainability of Indigenous communities well into the future. The inclusion of youth in social innovation provides key opportunities to develop and support their capacity, as current and future leaders.

Communities must lead the way: It cannot be said enough that Indigenous people and communities must lead the way when doing the work of Indigenous innovation. Indigenous people and communities are experts in understanding their needs and how to best address them. Often, all that is needed to make successful innovations happen is partnerships that elevate Indigenous voices and communities in a way that supports them to implement their own solutions. Moreover, it is important to remember that everyone has something to contribute regardless of their background. Everyone has a voice and space should be made for them to be heard in a way that matters to them. As one participant said, "good ideas can come from anywhere."

Indigenous knowledge is key: Many of the speakers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, spoke to the interconnectedness of the head and the heart in making change, and the critical role of ceremony in social innovation. In recognizing and respecting the value and contributions of Indigenous ways of knowing, a belief system is one of the things that sets Indigenous innovations apart from other types of social innovation. Indigenous innovation does not always mean creating something new; rather, it often means bringing something old back to life. Doing so not only honours the voices of Indigenous ancestors by looking back and reflecting on their valuable teachings, but also ensures that future generations do not lose sight of the teachings that make them who they are as Indigenous peoples.

Credibility, participation, and retention within the community is made greater when Elder and traditional knowledge is given equal weight to mainstream and non-Indigenous approaches and planning.

Real partnerships lead to successful innovation: Achieving sustainable systems change requires patience, time, and commitment from many actors. Successful innovation is grounded in respectful and reciprocal relationships that are grounded not in power but in a willingness to listen openly. It is important to take the time to develop relationships so partners can establish trust and a true understanding and respect for the contributions of others. As Steven Huddard stated, "collaboration moves at the speed of trust."

Nurture relationships in order to be successful: Time and again, the innovation projects stated that the nurturing of relationships was a key component of their success. A relationship is inherently different than a partnership: a relationship conveys the emotional, social, and human element of a project. Consensus points to the fact that, as good as an idea is, it takes the combined knowledge of multiple partners working together to realize a goal, and for partners to work together, a positive relationship must be nurtured.

Power dynamics between community and funder: It is acknowledged that many projects are developed according to criteria established by external funding agencies and governments. As one project stated "the funding criteria forces us to narrow our program." The merits of the IIDF rests in the fact that the funding model allows the Indigenous community the flexibility to define and respond to actual need, from the inside out (versus conventional funding streams). Pillars and criteria that fulfill the goals of the funder while meeting the needs of the community must be developed in full partnership, underscoring the need for reciprocal relationships and common understanding.

Re-ordering the Power-dynamic through Community-driven innovation, Ethical spaces and Cultural safety

Since 2015, many different governments, systems, and institutions have taken on the challenge of reviewing their practices to find places to either include Indigenous people in their work, or to build out entirely new practices that integrate the concepts discussed above. This includes Community-driven innovation, conversations that address the funder-Power dynamic, and integration of Ethical space and Cultural safety at the systemic levels

Social innovation is considered to be a valuable approach to Reconciliation, Resurgence, and alleviation of social realities facing Indigenous communities.

Concluding remarks

It was a great honour to speak to the leaders and planners involved in the five Innovation projects contacted for this report. Their passion, hope and profound commitment to not only their own project, but to the future of Indigenous people across Canada, is inspiring. An intimate understanding of what constitutes "community" at a core level – knowledge that is gained only through direct and genuine involvement with Indigenous people — propels the work through the multitude of challenges encountered along the way. Each project stated the requirement that development must be Community-driven, from the ground up, and delivered within the context of Cultural safety and ethical spaces in order to have real impact among Indigenous people. The confidence demonstrated as to the relevance of culture and traditional approaches as a way to mitigate the effects of intergenerational trauma is a critical piece in any social innovation enterprise.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that Social Innovation requires partnerships and commitment from all levels of society, including funders, leadership, governments, business, and local community. Unequal dynamics that prevail within the Funder-power relationship creates barriers and limitations to innovation, and negatively affects real change in social conditions. The impacts of residential schools and the colonial process that have affected Indigenous people must be defined as a Canadian problem. We must learn how to share power and resources for the benefit of all Canadians.

A Note to the NAFC: Challenges with the Project and Areas for Future Consideration

A number of challenges occurred in preparing this document:

1. Many of the social innovation projects had just begin operations and so it was often difficult to get "final" thoughts on the questions that were being asked. Some were in mid-cycle and indicated that it was too early in the process to measure impact.
   Recommendation: Should this model be replicated, it is recommended that the projects be at least one year in past receiving confirmation of funding, and in operation.

2. It was a challenge to speak to clients or recipients of the projects for the same reasons outlined in #1.
   Recommendation: Should this model be replicated, it is recommended that the projects be at least one year in past receiving confirmation of funding. This will give clients, and possibly Elders some time to process their experiences. The discussion would be very relevant and impactful and would contribute greatly to the understanding of community involvement with Social Innovation projects.

3. The turnaround of time allocated to contact and speak with participants in the projects was very short. Within the Indigenous community, projects, consultations, interviews, etc are more successful when the time is taken to building trust and relationship. This equates to better and more thoughtful information. This is particularly true of Elders and Knowledge Keepers.
   Recommendation: Should this model be replicated, it is recommended that time and resources be available to build a relationship with specific community leaders or innovation leads who would in turn bridge the consultants to the Elders in traditional ways (tea, personal visits, feats, ceremony).

4. Due to the long-term nature of many of the innovations that participated, the funder may consider a longitudinal approach to this type of information gathering. This would provide a broader and deeper source of information.

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