

Indigenous Entrepreneurship 11 & 12

Case Studies – Teachers Notes

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Indigenous Entrepreneurship 11 & 12: Case Studies – Teachers Notes

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This is the most recent version of the current curriculum materials as used by teachers in Nova Scotia.

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Table of Contents

About the Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies	1
Indigenous Entrepreneurship 11	
Case Study: Oakleaves Native Creations	2
Case Study: BNC Design	5
Case Study: Muin Clothing.....	7
Case Study: Googoo Design	9
Indigenous Entrepreneurship 12	
Case Study: Indigevisor	11
Case Study: Maskwiomin.....	16
Appendix: Cases and Concepts.....	24

About the Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies

The Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies was established at Cape Breton University in 2010 in response to Aboriginal community leaders' expression of the need for entrepreneurship, business investment, and corporate skills training for the purpose of creating a model of self-reliance. Named in honour of Canadian lawyer and corporate boardroom leader, the late Mr. Purdy Crawford, the Chair aims to promote interest among Canada's Aboriginal people in the study of business at the post-secondary level.

The Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies focuses its work in four areas:

- Research on what "drives" success in Aboriginal Business
- National student recruitment in the area of post-secondary Aboriginal business education
- Enhancement of the post-secondary Aboriginal business curriculum
- Mentorship at high school and post-secondary levels

Mary Beth Doucette currently holds the position of Purdy Crawford Chair and Associate Professor, Aboriginal Business Studies in the Shannon School of Business at Cape Breton University.

The Chair is an independently funded, partially endowed research Chair.

About the Entrepreneurship 11 & 12 Course Pack

The following concepts were organized with the financial support of the Province of Nova Scotia. They were formatted to complement the existing curriculum for Indigenous Entrepreneurship 11 and 12 Courses by providing locally relevant and subject specific concepts that were not covered elsewhere. The concepts highlight L'nu words, teachings, and context of Mi'kmaw in Nova Scotia, however given the political relationships that exist between L'nu and the Federal Government, they also describe influences of broad reaching Indigenous -Canada discourses.

Six case stories that feature L'nu identifying entrepreneurs were also developed to accompany the concept papers. Each of the case stories was produced with permission of the Entrepreneurs profiled. They cannot be changed without the permission of the Entrepreneur. Teaching notes were also developed to accompany each case. They provide additional contextual background and recommendations for instructors who are using the cases in their classes. The teaching notes are guidelines and can and should be altered for the context.

All of the materials for this project were developed with support of Dr. Tasha Richard (Dal, Agricultural Campus), and students Victoria Dimmek, MSc., Ester Alu, BBA, Nicole Cammeart, BA, and Mairi Denny, BA.

Indigenous Entrepreneurship 11 Case Study: Oakleaves Native Creations

Author(s): Esther Alu, and Dr. Mary Beth Doucette

Brief Synopsis of Case

Nancy Oakley is a Mi'kmaw (Nova Scotia) and Mashpee Wampanoag (Massachusetts) identifying artist, living in Eskasoni. She is best known for her pottery, which she has been making and selling for decades, under the brand Oakleaves Native Creations.

The cornerstone of Oakleaves Native Creations is the stunning indigenous pottery crafted by Nancy Oakley. She thinks of herself as an artist first, and not a small business owner. However, as Nancy transitions from an artist into an entrepreneur, she needs to discover a strategy that allows her to bring an entrepreneurial approach into art. She must decide what the implications of expanding to global markets would mean for her brand.

This case study aims to introduce students to the concept of entrepreneurship while exploring how Nancy's identity as a Mi'kmaw and Mashpee Wampanoag artist influences her entrepreneurial journey, particularly how it intersects with concepts such as Two-Eyed Seeing, systemic barriers, and L'nu identity. Students are encouraged to consider their own skills and passions and how these could be transformed into business opportunities.

Key Challenges

1. Deciding whether to expand
2. How to expand and scale production
3. Navigating tax laws and regulations
4. Updating the business plan

Suggested Discussion Questions

- How do Nancy's personal identity and connections to the community shape her business practices, from product authenticity to pricing strategies?
- How did Nancy acquire the skills to run her business, and how has she used her network to expand opportunities?
- How does Nancy's location influence her business model and the tax challenges she faces with international expansion?
- What considerations influence Nancy's pricing strategy for her art pieces?

NOTE: As of August 2023, Nancy decided to expand her business by continuing to participate in art competitions and has recently developed a website to showcase her works.

Suggested Reading

Powwows

- Aicinena, S. J., & Ziyank, S. (2021). Contest Powwow: Sport and Native American Culture. Qualitative Report, 26(1), 27–51. <https://doi-org.cbu.idm.oclc.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4517>
- Scales, C. (2007). Powwows, Intertribalism, and the Value of Competition. Ethnomusicology, 51(1), 1–29. <https://doi-org.cbu.idm.oclc.org/10.2307/20174500>

- CBC Kids Team (2018). Do You Know What a Powwow Is? <https://www.cbc.ca/kids/articles/do-you-know-what-a-powwow-is>

Aboriginal Art

- Whitelaw, A. (2006). Placing Aboriginal Art at the National Gallery of Canada. Canadian Journal of Communication, 31(1), 197–214. <https://doi-org.cbu.idm.oclc.org/10.22230/cjc.2006v31n1a1775>
- Sharma, B. R. (1999). Cultural Preservation Reconsidered: The case of Canadian aboriginal art. Critique of Anthropology, 19(1), 53. <https://doi-org.cbu.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/0308275X9901900103>

Possible Teaching Aides

- Oakleaves Native Creations – <https://www.oakleavesnativecreations.com/>
- Craft Alliance Atlantic Association - <https://craftalliance.ca/>
- Cape Breton Centre for Craft and Design - <https://capebretoncraft.com/>
- Craft Nova Scotia - [Board - https://craftnovascotia.ca/](https://craftnovascotia.ca/)
- Murray Arts - <https://murrayarts.org.au/>
- Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council - <https://creative.novascotia.ca/>
- Canada Council for the Arts - <https://canadacouncil.ca/>
- Eskasoni Economic Development - <http://www.eskasoni.ca/departments/6/>



- Cb Care with Mussel Shell (Photo Source: <https://www.oakleavesnativecreations.com/traditional-pottery>)



- Wall Hangings (Photo Source: <https://www.oakleavesnativecreations.com/production-collection>)



- Sweet Swirl (Photo Source: <https://www.oakleavesnativecreations.com/production-collection>)

Media Mentions/Stories/News About Nancy Oakley

- <https://www.saltwire.com/cape-breton/business/indigenous-businesses-in-cape-breton-offer-products-online-530240/>
- <https://shopagns.ca/products/oakleaves-native-creations>
- <https://www.cbisland.com/businesses/oakleaves-native-creations/>
- <https://capebretoncraft.com/artisans/nancyoakley/>
- <https://www.sisterness.com/oakleaves-native-creations>
- <https://indigenousartscollective.org/nancy-oakley/>

Indigenous Entrepreneurship 11 Case Study: BNC Design

Author(s): Dr. Tasha Richard, Victoria Dimick

Brief Synopsis Of Case

Cassandra Hillier is a dedicated social worker with a passion for interior design. While Cassandra excels in her social work role, she envisions a future where interior design becomes her full-time entrepreneurial pursuit. Her unique vision includes integrating her Indigenous culture into her design work under the name BNC Design.

Cassandra's journey involves transitioning from social work to entrepreneurship, striving to develop a solid business plan and integrating her cultural heritage into her designs. She has successfully completed several projects and is now planning to take her business to the next level, while also seeking funding opportunities and navigating the transition from offering free advice to charging for her services.

Students will explore the challenges and rewards of transforming a passion into a profession, particularly the balance between personal values and business demands. The case study encourages students to consider how they can weave their personal backgrounds into entrepreneurial ventures, highlighting strategic planning and the importance of cultural authenticity.

Key Challenges

1. Transitioning from a vision to a new business
2. Securing necessary resources to start a business (training, financing etc.)
3. Finding the right clientele to meet her interior design business goals
4. Transitioning out of a full-time job into an entrepreneurial venture
5. Financial planning and understanding the risks of self-employment

Suggested Discussion Questions

- What steps must Cassandra take to transition BNC Design from a side venture to a full-time business, considering her need for formal training and her commitment to her social work position?
- How can Cassandra ensure that Indigenous teachings are authentically and accurately represented in her interior design projects?
- What unique challenges do Indigenous entrepreneurs like Cassandra face when starting businesses, especially outside their communities, and how can these challenges be addressed?
- How can Cassandra ensure she earns enough money for the work she provides to her interior design clients, while honouring her commitment to her community?

Suggested Reading

- L'nuey: Moving Towards a Better Tomorrow. "The Concepts of Netukulimk and Two-Eyed Seeing." https://lnuey.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CONCEPTS-FactSheet_2021.pdf
- Bartlett, C., Marshall, M., & Marshall, A. (2012). Two-Eyed Seeing and other lessons learned within a co-learning journey of bringing together indigenous and mainstream knowledges and ways of knowing. *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences*, 2(4), 331–340. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13412-012-0086-8>
- Iwama, M., Marshall, M., Marshall, A., & Bartlett, C. (2009). Two-Eyed Seeing and the Language of Healing in Community-Based Research. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*; Edmonton, 32(2), 3-23,117.

Possible Teaching Aides

- Invite someone from the Credit Counselling or Debt Counselling to speak about good and bad credit, credit card debt, and budgeting.

Indigenous Entrepreneurship 11 Case Study: Muin Clothing

Author(s): Victoria Dimick, Dr. Tasha Richard

Brief Synopsis of Case

Derek Lewis, a proud Mi'kmaq man, is the founder and owner of Muin Clothing Co., a certified Indigenous clothing company founded in 2018. His dream is to make Muin Clothing Canada's premier heritage brand, owned and produced by Indigenous people but worn and appreciated by everyone. However, as Muin Clothing dreams of scaling its business, it faces a challenge. How can Derek Lewis expand his company while ensuring that Indigenous businesses remain a vital part of its supply chain, all while maintaining the brand's competitive edge in the market?

In this case study, students will explore how Derek's Mi'kmaw heritage shapes his business. They will learn about blending culture with entrepreneurship, tackling marketing challenges, staying true to one's identity, and thinking strategically about business growth.

Key Challenges

1. Meeting the growing demands of the business
2. Ensuring an Indigenous supply chain
3. Scaling the business for growth and expansion
4. Managing the relationship between Indigenous identity and business connections

Suggested Discussion Questions

- How does entrepreneurship play a role in promoting cultural preservation and economic growth in Indigenous communities?
- How does the concept of Etuaptmumk influence Derek's personal and professional life, and what impact does this have on the values and direction of Muin Clothing?
- What strategies should Derek consider to effectively scale Muin Clothing while maintaining an Indigenous supply chain and positioning it as a heritage brand?
- What systemic barriers has Derek faced as an Indigenous entrepreneur, and how has he overcome them to grow Muin Clothing Co.?

Suggested Reading

- Province of Nova Scotia. "Mi'kmaw Ways of Being and Knowing." May 2022. Accessed on June 20, 2023 at <https://www.ednet.ns.ca/docs/mikmawwaysofbeingandknowingen.pdf>
- NWAC toolkits on Intersectionality: <https://www.nwac.ca/assets-knowledge-centre/SPARK-NWAC-CRGBA-TOOLKIT-2022-EN1-3-Feb-15-2022.pdf>
- Mi'kmaw'we'l Tan Teli Kina'muemk (Mi'kmaw'wey Debert Cultural Centre 2015)
- L'nuey: Moving Towards a Better Tomorrow. "The Concepts of Netukulimk and Two-Eyed Seeing." https://lnuey.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CONCEPTS-FactSheet_2021.pdf
- Bartlett, C., Marshall, M., & Marshall, A. (2012). Two-Eyed Seeing and other lessons learned within a co-learning journey of bringing together indigenous and mainstream knowledges and ways of knowing. *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences*, 2(4), 331–340. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13412-012-0086-8>
- Iwama, M., Marshall, M., Marshall, A., & Bartlett, C. (2009). Two-Eyed Seeing and the Language of Healing in Community-Based Research. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*; Edmonton, 32(2), 3-23, 117.

- Kayseas, B., Hindle, K. and Anderson, R. "Fostering Indigenous Entrepreneurship: A Case Study of the Membertou First Nation, Nova Scotia, Canada." Retrieved from Canada [https://researchbank.swinburne.edu.au/file/1e5bc4bb-88fc-437b-8ffb-ee9041ac06ef/1/PDF%20\(Published%20version\).pdf](https://researchbank.swinburne.edu.au/file/1e5bc4bb-88fc-437b-8ffb-ee9041ac06ef/1/PDF%20(Published%20version).pdf)
- Readiness and Resilience Mapping the Contours of the Indigenous Skills and Employment Ecosystem in Canada. June 2022. Retrieved from: https://www.ccab.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Readiness-and-Resilience_Mapping-the-Contours.pdf

Possible Teaching Aides



Media Mentions Muin Clothing Co.

- <https://www.muinclothing.com/>
- <https://www.stanfields.com/pages/orange-shirt>
- <https://www.cp24.com/video?clipId=2528938>
- <https://www.saltwire.com/atlantic-canada/sports/honouring-every-child-matters-thunderbirds-home-game-friday-part-of-nlls-three-week-awareness-campaign-100818398/>
- <https://www.digitaljournal.com/pr/muin-x-stanfields-give-back-to-national-day-for-truth-and-reconciliation>

Indigenous Entrepreneurship 11 Case Study: Googoo Design

Author(s): Dr. Tasha Richard, Victoria Dimick

Brief Synopsis of Case

Aaron Googoo, a young Mi'kmaq entrepreneur, is the sole proprietor of Googoo Design, a multidisciplinary design studio based in Nova Scotia. Trained in visual art and graphic design, Aaron's passion for art fuels his creation of unique logos and captivating visuals for his clients, with a particular focus on celebrating Mi'kmaq culture. He is driven by his love for creativity and storytelling through design. As Aaron gains recognition as a talented graphic designer, and has decided to operate Googoo Design full-time, he is presented with a set of unique challenges. Aaron needs to figure out how to align his business growth with his deeply rooted values and Mi'kmaq identity, all while maintaining a business that keeps him financially stable and allows him to enjoy life.

In this case study, students will examine how Aaron's Mi'kmaw heritage and personal values influence his approach to business and design. Students are encouraged to consider how they can align their own values with their entrepreneurial ventures. It also looks at Aaron's methods for maintaining work-life balance, advocating for himself, and preserving authenticity in his work.

Key Challenges

1. Meeting the growing demands of the business and addressing the impact of not being able to meet these demands
2. Deciding which business projects to take on to ensure alignment with values
3. Maintaining an ideal work-life balance without compromising growth of company
4. Aligning business practices with Mi'kmaq identity

Suggested Discussion Questions

- How can Aaron meet the growing demands of his business, including increased projects, administrative tasks, and securing financing, while maintaining his ideal work-life balance?
- Why is integrating his Mi'kmaq identity and values into his design work important to Aaron, and how does this impact Googoo Design?
- How can Aaron ensure that the projects he takes on align with his values?
- How does the concept of "Etuaptmumk" (two-eyed seeing) influence Aaron's approach to design and business?

Suggested Reading

- Bartlett, C., Marshall, M., & Marshall, A. (2012). Two-Eyed Seeing and other lessons learned within a co-learning journey of bringing together indigenous and mainstream knowledges and ways of knowing. *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences*, 2(4), 331–340.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13412-012-0086-8>
- Iwama, M., Marshall, M., Marshall, A., & Bartlett, C. (2009). Two-Eyed Seeing and the Language of Healing in Community-Based Research. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*; Edmonton, 32(2), 3-23, 117.

Possible Teaching Aides

- Googoo Design (2023). Googoo Design Company Website: *Graphic Design, Brand Identity & Illustration. Artful Storytelling.* <https://googoodesign.ca>
- Nova Scotia Museum (2021). Maritime Museum of the Atlantic Exhibit: *Ta'n mej' Tel-keknuo'ltiek (Da'n mej Del-geg-new-ol-tee-egg): How Unique We Still Are.* <https://maritimemuseum.novascotia.ca/what-see-do/tan-mej-tel-keknuo'ltiek>

Indigenous Entrepreneurship 12 Case Study: Indigevisor

Author(s): Esther Alu, Dr. Mary Beth Doucette

Brief Synopsis of Case

Nadine Bernard is a Mi'kmaw entrepreneur. She is the sole proprietor of Indigevisor, a construction consultancy that helps large corporations develop Indigenous engagement strategies. However, her career path as an entrepreneur, and small business owner, was years in the making. How has her lifetime of experiences in various workplaces led to the creation of Indigevisor?

The case is presented in three parts. The first part shares Nadine's entrepreneurial journey. It outlines a 20-year path of Personal Career Development (PCD) that culminated in her current decision point. The second part is where Nadine identifies an opportunity and plans to create a business. Until 2021, she ran the business part-time while working at a full-time job elsewhere. However, the demand for her services required a full-time commitment and in Part three, Nadine assesses the long-term viability of her business strategy.

Students will examine concepts like intercultural communication and Etuaptmumk, while also exploring bias, systemic barriers, and their effects on resilience and adaptability. The study encourages students to reflect on their responses to unexpected challenges.

Key Challenges

1. Addressing the underrepresentation of Indigenous people in workplaces.
2. Identifying market gaps related to businesses and organizations lack of awareness of Indigenous communities and cultures.
3. Developing strategies for business planning and incremental growth.
4. Presented in the second and third parts of the case:
5. Deciding whether or not to expand.
6. If Nadine expands, what steps must she take and what factors must she consider in adapting her business plan?
7. Addressing the implications, risks, and opportunities of quitting her day job to focus on expanding her business?

Suggested Discussion Questions

- What setbacks did Nadine Bernard encounter in her life and at work, and how did she respond to these challenges?
- How did Nadine's Mi'kmaw identity and teachings influence the challenges and opportunities she faced in her various workplaces?
- What evidence of core values such as respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and relationship can be seen in different moments throughout Nadine's career?
- How did Nadine's awareness of her strengths, skills, and gifts contribute to her entrepreneurial mindset?

NOTE: Nadine had an opportunity to expand her operations and decided to quit her job and commit to running Indigevisor full-time. She found office space, hired additional staff, and developed promotional material.

Suggested Readings

This case was developed to highlight concepts from the Indigenous Entrepreneurship 11 and 12 curriculum guides. The two concepts highlighted in this case are: a) *Concept 1 - The Relationship between Mi'kmaq Identity, Being and Knowing, and Business* and b) *Concept 8 – Systemic Barriers & Readiness*.

Additional links to companies and events mentioned in the case are listed below.

Possible Teaching Aids

- About the Workplace Equity program: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/portfolio/labour/programs/employment-equity.html>
- Banking sector report 2020: *Significant employment barriers remain for Indigenous people in banking and financial sector* (chrc-ccdp.gc.ca)
- Government of Nova Scotia. (2021). *Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program*. Nova Scotia. Retrieved July 12, 2024, from <https://novascotia.ca/just/rj/>
- Indigevisor Website: <https://indigevisor.ca/>

Links To Companies/Events Mentioned

- Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. (n.d). *Home*. Indigevisor. Retrieved July 12, 2024, from [https://indigevisor.ca/Police Commission: https://www.cbrps.ca/board-of-police-commissioners.html](https://indigevisor.ca/Police%20Commission:https://www.cbrps.ca/board-of-police-commissioners.html)
- Camp Canoe. (n.d). *About Us*. Retrieved July 12, 2024, from <https://campcanoe.co.za/about-us/>
- Cape Breton Food Hub. (n.d). *Home*. Retrieved July 12, 2024, from <https://www.capebretonfoodhub.com/>
- Cape Breton Regional Police. (2024). *Leadership and Governance*. Retrieved July 12, 2024, from <https://www.cbrps.ca/who-we-are/leadership-and-governance>
- Community Sector Council of Nova Scotia. * See Impact Organizations of Nova Scotia
- Every Woman's Centre. (2024). *Vision*. Retrieved July 12, 2024, from <https://www.everywomenscentre.com/vision>
- Government of Canada. (2024). *Public Service Commission of Canada*. Retrieved July 12, 2024, from <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-service-commission.html>
- Government of Canada. (2024). *Indigenous Business and Federal Procurement*. Retrieved July 12, 2024, from <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1100100032802/1610723869356>
- Impact Organizations of Nova Scotia. (2024). *About IONS*. Retrieved July 26, 2024, from <https://ions.ca/about-ions/>
- Labourers International Union of North America Local 615. (2023). *Home*. Retrieved July 12, 2024, from <https://liuna615.com/>
- New Dawn Enterprises. (n.d). *About*. Retrieved July 12, 2024, from <https://newdawn.ca/home/>
- Slow Cooked Dreams. (2017). *Home* [Facebook page]. Facebook. Retrieved July 12, 2024, from <https://www.facebook.com/slowcookeddreams/>
- Transition House Foundation. (2024). *About Us*. Retrieved July 12, 2024, from <https://transitionhousefoundation.com/about-us/>
- United Way Cape Breton. (2024). *About*. Retrieved July 12, 2024, from <https://www.unitedwaycapebreton.com/about/>

Media Mentions/Stories/News About Nadine Bernard

- Bernard, N. (2017, September 20). *TRC Symposium: Heeding the Calls to Action*. *The Cape Breton Spectator*. <https://capebretonspectator.com/2017/09/20/trc-symposium-membertou/>
- Googoo, M. (2021, July 17). Mi'kmaw woman hopes to make history in Nova Scotia election. *Ku'ku'kwes News*. <http://kukukwes.com/2021/07/17/mikmaw-woman-hopes-to-make-history-in-nova-scotia-election/>
- Halifax Chamber of Commerce. (2024). *Indigevisor Ltd*. Retrieved July 12, 2024, from <https://business.halifaxchamber.com/members/member/indigevisor-ltd-halifax-180959>
- International Association of Business Communicators Canada. (2023). *How to Build Your First Nations Communications & Engagement Strategy*. Maritime Canada. Retrieved July 12, 2024, from <https://www.maritime.iabc.com/single-post/how-to-build-your-first-nations-communications-engagement-strategy>
- Pottie, E. (2021, June 22). Mi'kmaw woman makes provincial Liberal Party history. *CBC News*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/nadine-bernard-1.6074232>
- Reynolds, A. (2021, February 17). Cape Breton entrepreneur plans to expand Slow Cooked Dreams across Canada, targets Indigenous communities. *Saltwire*. <https://www.saltwire.com/nova-scotia/news/cape-breton-entrepreneur-plans-to-expand-slow-cooked-dreams-across-canada-targets-indigenous-communities-552650/>

Approximate Timeline Of Events

Event	Timeline	Quote
Attending university	1990s -?	
Worked in the banking industry	2013 – 2015	<p>"Our culture does not come from a punitive, our culture comes from a restorative"</p> <p>"I do not think the staff understands why employment equity exists. I do not think the staff understands what indigenous inclusion means"</p> <p>"The only indigenous inclusion or any type of cultural competency taking place is a half-hour, online, 20-question survey..."</p>
Volunteered at several boards	2015	"I needed to know everybody. I wanted to know...cause all of them did not have any indigenous representation"
Worked at the community sector council as indigenous liaison	3 months	"We talked about...decolonizing the business environment and organizational environments to understand really what it means for indigenous inclusion..."
Worked at labours union as organizer and indigenous liaison (LAUNA?)	ended in Jan 2019	<p>"...that is when I first became aware of all the infrastructure projects that are currently happening. I knew it was coming but it had not been awarded yet"</p> <p>"I went to LiUNA, was developing their engagement strategy, and started to do some info sessions in communities and organizations about the union and all the benefits of joining."</p>

Event	Timeline	Quote
Indigevisor created as a sole proprietorship	February 2019	"So, I recognized then that there was a gap and a need, and I knew a demand was coming. So, I said, 'you know what? I am going to create a company that does this for all unions, all in the construction sector and helping in training, recruitment retention, cultural competency, cultural awareness and policy review and recommendation, strategic plan. Just indigenizing and decolonizing.'"
1st project – New Dawn – Historical Restoration Project	2018	<p>"...They had already gutted it, they had already put up the tender rewards, and they were asking how they could indigenize it"</p> <p>"I said 'you are making us be an afterthought instead of a preliminary thought. We should have been included in those tender packages that we had labour force and indigenous agreements to be able to do something with that work'"</p> <p>"You're missing the boat, but you could be a good example of what other businesses can learn from creating a space that acknowledges that they live work and play in Mi'kmaki."</p>
2nd project - Indigenous Liaison for the Cape Breton Redevelopment Health Projects (3 expansion projects)	June 2018	<p>"Because I was so new to this and... talk about barriers, I did not know of anywhere that could help you build a consultancy and be competitive and have your pricing to be like a profit model..."</p> <p>"It was slow, a lot of meetings with senior management and senior government officials as to what's going to happen with it..."</p>
Worked as Indigenous Liaison for HRM	Oct 2019 – April 2020	"In that time, I was working with their architects and engineers and advising them on some development projects..."
Worked with Construction Files at Camp Canoe	June 2020 – October 2020	"...I never really understood camp canoe and its role and what consultation meant, what that governmental...meant. So, it gave me an opportunity to understand that..."
Worked as senior consultant for public service commission, HRM department (Nova Scotia Govt)	October 2020 – March 2022	"I got major client files. I got Department of agriculture, justice, Halifax regional police, and office of equity and Anti-racism Initiatives."

Event	Timeline	Quote
Decides to make Indigevisor a full-time business Rented/leased a space	March 2022	
First office in Halifax	June 2022	
Incorporated Indigevisor	November 2022	
First office in Sydney. Second office	Feb 2023	
First office in Dartmouth with her name	November 2023	

Indigenous Entrepreneurship 12 Case Study: Maskwiomin

Author(s): Dr. Mary Beth Doucette, Esther Alu, Mairi Denny

Brief Synopsis of Case

Tuma Young is a Mi'kmaw knowledge holder, lawyer, and ethnobotanist¹ who has been collecting stories of plant medicines for years. He has also been teaching others about Mi'kmaw medicines and harvesting as an instructor at Cape Breton University. In 2013, Tuma began working with Dr Matthias Bierenstiel, a Chemistry Professor at CBU, to study the chemical medicinal properties of *maskwio'mi* (birch bark oil). Eventually they successfully launched Maskwiomin, a brand of skincare products (creams and soaps) that are infused with the healing properties of *maskwio'mi*. The case highlights the challenges associated with growing the business sustainably and ethically in ways that balances the expectations and goal of the owners.

In this case, students are introduced to Tuma Young and his business partner Dr Matthias Bierenstiel, a Chemistry Professor. Both teach at Cape Breton University and in 2013 they began working together to study the chemical medicinal properties of *maskwio'mi* (birch bark oil). Eventually they successfully launched Maskwiomin, a brand of skincare products (creams and soaps) that are infused with the healing properties of *maskwio'mi*.

The case highlights the challenges associated with growing the business sustainably and ethically in ways that balances the potentially conflicting expectations of the owners especially related to Traditional Indigenous Knowledges.

It aims to engage students in discussions about ethics, intellectual property, and communal rights. It also encourages students to explore the business phases that follow a successful product launch, delving into the ethics of growth and expansion, and how these impact sustainable business practices.

Part 1: Idea hunting and embracing an entrepreneurial mindset;

Part 2: Business Start-up phase, product development, and the ethics of commercialization

Key Challenges

1. The case is presented in multiple parts to highlight the different issues that will arise during the product/business development process.
2. Deciding if and how to commodify traditional Indigenous knowledge.
3. Determining the impact of establishing a business partnership between indigenous and non-indigenous owners.
4. Assessing whether to expand the business and identifying the conditions under which expansion should occur.
5. Navigating careers and motivation through L'nu knowledge and idea hunting.

¹ Ethnobotany is the systematic study of the botanical (plant) knowledge of a social group and its use of locally available plants in foods, medicines, clothing, or religious rituals. Rudimentary drugs derived from plants used in folk medicines have been found to be beneficial in the treatment of many illnesses, both physical and mental. Ethnobotanists often live for periods of time in the society they are studying, to observe all phases of their lives, including mythology, religious practices, and language, in order to determine the specific plants used and the methods involved in their preparation. They often use archival documents, stories, and legends as sources of information about agricultural methods and folk remedies of the past.

6. Initiating a business startup and planning business partnerships.
7. Developing and innovating products.
8. Establishing a brand identity, conducting market research, and performing product testing.
9. Deciding between cosmetics and pharmaceutical products.

Suggested Discussion Questions

Part 1 of the case presents Tuma Young and Matthias Bierenstiel as potential business partners. Students can be encouraged to discuss the intersectional identities of each and ways they embraced an entrepreneurial mindset.

- How did the backgrounds and knowledge of Tuma and Matthias contribute to a successful partnership?
- What entrepreneurial traits did they have in common?
- What challenges exist in entrepreneurial ventures between Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners? How can these best be navigated? What are the benefits that can result from these partnerships?
- What responsibility does each partner have toward the Mi'kmaw community and the Elders who shared their stories with them?

Part 1 Conclusion: Both partners thought it was important to proceed as a partnership in the product development process. They shared a common goal to develop a product and a viable business. They agreed to proceed for varied reasons and with different concerns about future success.

Part 2 of the case presents two issues that the pair were working to address.

Organizational governance and ownership. First they were discussing whether they need consent from the community to produce and sell the product? And if so, how would they ensure that knowledge holders were consulted and included throughout the business development process?

Intellectual Property Rights. They also were discussing how to protect the intellectual property rights associated with the equipment Matthias designed (the process that makes the process commercially viable on a large scale)?

The answers to these questions would inform their decisions about whether to proceed with a business? But also, how big did they want the business to grow? And if the business did grow, how would the community benefit or be harmed?

Part 2 b focuses on the development of a basic business plan to consider the viability of the product.

Although they are presented as two separate items, the two processes may have been happening simultaneously. Tuma had formal and informal conversations with Elders about the pros and cons of proceeding. He asked them for advice about whether to proceed. He asked how they felt the community should be involved.

Part 2a: Creating a Company: From Maskwio'mi to Maskwiomin

The Maskwiomin Case Part 1 ends at a critical decision point, when Matthias asked Tuma if they could partner to proceed with product development. This first part of the story can be thought of as Phase 1 of the Entrepreneurship Life Cycle – Idea Hunting. Part 2 of the case moves to the next phases of the Entrepreneurship Life Cycle - Business Planning and Product Development.

At this point in the case, students are encouraged to think about the *Ethics of Commercialization*. Students are prompted to reflect on factors of ethical decision making, identities, Indigenous knowledge, Netukulimk, and Etuaptmumk, and authenticity. (See Concepts 1 – 6)

The case also presents issues that were central to the discussion the partners were having and continue to have: Indigenous Traditional Knowledge and the standards of Canadian Business Law (e.g. ownership, intellectual property, individual and collective rights). (See Concept 8)

Additional Information not included in the case

- Tuma discussed the expansion of the business with Elders from Membertou, after they had been taught the traditional process.
 - They wanted the traditional knowledge to be shared so that it wouldn't be lost.
 - They wanted the traditional knowledge about the process, and that was shared with anyone who was interested.
 - The consensus was that they supported the development of the product.
 - The medicine can be free, but the service of gathering and processing is what you pay for.
 - They wanted some of the profits to go back to the community.
 - They hoped there would be local youth involved in the business as it grew (jobs).
- The partners were also considering other legal and procedural considerations that are specific to the pharmaceutical industry. They were having trouble getting approval from health Canada to label Maskwiomin a medicine. The combination of chemical compounds is not patentable so it is hard to find the exact compound that would be considered a medicinal ingredient, and thus it could not be controlled.
- They opted not to patent for the machine design. Instead, they are reliant on the "trade secret" route to protect the knowledge. Essentially, there is a secret machine, its stored in a secure location where access to use it is controlled. Because the machine is small and the batch yield of the oil is small and does not need much space to store it, the risk of someone stealing the technology is low.
- Additional protections are offered because the entire process (processing the extract, preparing it to be mixed with other carrier oils and soaps, and actual formulation product (recipes for the creams and the soaps) are separately protected.
- Filed trademarks on the name Maskwiomin and the logo, in both Canada and the US. It is a numbered Company in Canada. The lawyer advised. When negotiating with Membertou. Trademarked in 2022.

Suggested Discussion Questions

- How was ownership of the knowledge or the right to share knowledge about maskwio'mi handled?
- How are the elders and community considered when looking at expansion of the business?

Q: Who owns the knowledge or has the right to share knowledge about A: Some of the factors that can be discussed with students are:

- The traditional process of harvesting maskwio'mi is a campfire process. It's low yield and scaling up that process isn't feasible.
- Matthias made use of his knowledge of chemistry to create a new technology that would replicate the process in a controlled environment. His process is high yield and consistent. He

legally owns the IP which was created on top of the traditional knowledge which makes it possible to scale. The rights for the IP will be owned by the company that is formed.

A Partnership – Incorporated Federally.

In the interview, the owners of the company explained that they chose to be *Federally Incorporated* which means they created a new legal entity called a corporation. A corporation has the same legal rights as a person. (See Concept 8 - Why Location Matters: Government rules and regulations) <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/corporations-canada/en/benefits-incorporating>

Because the business is 50% owned by Tuma and Matthias, it may not be considered an Indigenous business. For some government agencies, 50% ownership is enough for it to qualify for Indigenous focused affirmative action programs (e.g. Mitacs funding).

For others, like the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business and programs offered by Indigenous Affairs or Indigenous Services Canada, they would not qualify because businesses are only considered Indigenous owned if an Indigenous person or community owns 50%+1 share of the company.

What is the reason for federal incorporation?

- Incorporation limits the liability of any partners to the investment that was put into the business.
- Eventually they would like to attract business investors, and want to be able to offer them shares in the company. Investors could be individuals or other companies, like Membertou Inc.

Part 2b: Selling Maskwio'mi: A basic business plan

Students can be encouraged to use standardized business planning tools that were provided in their course or program. This part of the case is written to highlight element of a standard business plan including a description of the product, a problem that the business aims to address, the unique value proposition.

They may use a business model canvas or an Indigenous business canvas to consider relevant aspects of the business plan (See attached Business Model Canvas and Indigenous Business Canvas).

Use the business model canvas	Use and Indigenous business canvas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Problem ▪ Solution ▪ Unique Value Proposition ▪ Unfair Advantage ▪ Customer Segments ▪ Key Metrics ▪ Channels ▪ Cost Structure ▪ Revenue Streams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Governance – Community, Corporate, Indigeneity and Cultural Values, Socio-economic objectives. ▪ Ventures ▪ Embeddedness ▪ Venture Type, integrated vs. Differentiated ▪ Resources - Extracted, Contributed ▪ Key Partners ▪ Financing ▪ Government – Federal, Provincial, Other

Students can be encouraged to compare the implications of the two business canvases, where you might assume that if Tuma and Matthias were going to both learn more about business and entrepreneurship they would be given mainstream advice.

By contrasting considerations students can be encouraged to discuss ethics (including personal, cultural, and business), intellectual property and communal rights, and potentially conflicting values Traditional Indigenous Knowledges. Students can also incorporate Etuaptmumk and its role in business into their discussions.

Students can be encouraged to consider the role of brand in marketing. Consider for example that originally Maskwio'mi was branded as "birch-bark oil" and the original packaging included a medicine wheel.



Image: Left original packaging, source: <https://cbregionalchamber.ca/blog/maskwiomin/> ; Right new re-branded packaging, source <https://maskwiomin.com/>

Brand and Marketing considerations:

- Maskwio'mi is a Mi'kmaw word meaning birchbark oil (will it be recognized in the market).
- Do you market it as a pharmaceutical medicine or a cosmetic product?
- Where and how will they distribute it? Big pharmacies require big quantities of product. Smaller batch sizes would not be as profitable. How much birch bark is required, can it be harvested sustainably?
- They were concerned about the smoky odour that may not be appealing, so they added other scent ingredients and proceeded to do product testing.
- They hired a marketing agency to help with sales. They told them to re-brand.

Students can be encouraged to think about price points, and discuss what they would be willing to pay for this type of product as well as the target market.

- Students will likely highlight the need for:
 - Market analysis.
 - SWOT analysis.
 - Feasibility study.
 - Business plan.
 - Marketing plan.

- Students will likely identify several possible directions for either Tuma or Matthias, depending on the outcome of the market research:
 - Produce and distribute small batches of maskwio'mi at farmers markets or online. This would require high investment of personal time (harvesting birch bark, building and monitoring the fire, harvesting the oil) but minimal monetary investment (start-up costs related to mixing, bottling, packaging, and distributing creams and oils).
 - Produce and distribute maskwio'mi products in collaboration with other community members. This would require community consultation and buy-in, but the community would then contribute some of the significant investment required.
 - Partner with other scientists or manufactures to produce the products and charge fee to them for the harvested oil.
 - Decide not to act on the opportunity because the market is not large enough to be viable or the start-up costs are too high.

What are some of the challenges that Matthias and Tuma might face if they decide to produce and sell maskwio'mi infused products? How might these challenges be mitigated?

- Students may suggest a variety of challenges, including the following:
 - The start-up costs for producing oil (e.g., building and operating a commercial production line, bottling plant, storage facility and shipping dock, etc.) are a significant barrier to market entry. They might be able to mitigate this challenge by partnering with others in the area.
 - Neither of the two has any experience operating a business that sells merchandise. Tuma runs a legal consulting business, but that does not involve manufacture of goods. This may impact their success but could be mitigated by hiring or partnering with someone with expertise.
 - If they do not conduct market research for the unique product or prepare a business plan, they may be setting themselves up to fail. It will be important to study the market, and in particular other similar products, and then analyze financial information (break even analysis, for example).
 - Suggest other challenges and how they might be mitigated.

What is the potential size of the market? Who are their key sales demographics? Identify them.

- Students may suggest a variety of options, including:
 - Selling wholesale at less than retail price, to stores and specialty shops for resale to consumers.
 - Bulk selling, in larger containers or individual portions, to establishments like pharmacies.
 - Ensuring the products are featured at Mi'kmaw establishments throughout the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq (which includes Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, PEI, and Quebec). For example, at Membertou Heritage Park.

If you were advising the owners, what criteria would you use to decide what to do?

- Students may suggest the following considerations:
 - The cost.
 - The time.
 - Potential for production issues.
 - Availability of partners.
 - Generate other alternatives.

Selling Maskwio'mi: Growth, Expansion, And Sustainability

Over the years, Maskwiomin has received significant attention from both consumers and the media, with its unique approach to skincare. In 2019 they received a five-year grant from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, which, in Tuma's words, would be a "huge step in recognizing Indigenous knowledge and supporting research on it." (Kelloway, 2019)

One of the strategies being implemented is sourcing birch bark from sustainable forests, where trees can be harvested without causing harm to the ecosystem. Additionally, Maskwiomin

As Maskwiomin continues to grow in popularity, Tuma and Matthias must consider sustainability in their operations. They are determined not to repeat history by extracting more than is sustainable.

What are the benefits of growth? Who benefits from growth? What is your profit model? What is your motivation? What are the risks? How risk averse are you?

- They were not originally looking at potential commercialization. At first it was a research project and Tuma and Matthias were both interested in the grants that would be available to support future academic research.
- The funding agencies wanted to see a commercialization plan. For example, the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR) have a mandate to bring health to Canadians. It didn't seem like there was a way to leverage the knowledge without financial benefit.
- The funders wanted commercialization. A consumeristic mindset drives the system. Not just capitalistic. There could be a list of provincial products that can be covered by health.
- They are in the cosmetic category. It is not categorized as natural health product; therefore, not a medicine or a medication. Also, not necessary to produce in a controlled environment.

Suggested Reading

Fundamental Concept Backgrounders

- Etuaptmumk/Two-Eyed Seeing
- Etuaptmumk and Business
- Netukulimk
- Ethics and authenticity
- Why Location Matters: Government rules and regulations

Possible Teaching Aids

- Photos of Birch Trees.
- Website page: <https://maskwiomin.com/>
- Stories and interviews with business partners
- Photos of products

References

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- Kelloway, B. (2019, December 13). Traditional Mi'kmaw medicine could become modern skin therapy. CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/traditional-mi-kmaq-medicine-modern-skin-therapy-1.5394340>
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Appendix: Cases and Concepts

Case Study, Entrepreneur	Concepts	Gr: 11/12
<i>Oakleaves, N. Oakley;</i> Eskasoni based, artist.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concept 4 – Etuaptmumk / Two-Eyed Seeing, ▪ Concept 5 – Etuaptmumk and Entrepreneurship, ▪ Concept 7 – Systemic Barriers & Readiness for Economic Development , ▪ Concept 2 – Indigenous Identity and L'nu Identity , ▪ Concept 10: Integrated Indigenous Economies and Fostering Relationality 	11
<i>BNC, C. Hillier</i> Home design, start-up.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concept 4 – Etuaptmumk / Two-Eyed Seeing, ▪ Concept 6 – Authenticity and Teachings ▪ Concept 9 – Financial Literacy – Understanding credit and borrowing 	11
<i>Muin Clothing, D. Lewis</i> Developing an Indigenous Heritage Brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concept 4 – Etuaptmumk / Two-Eyed Seeing, ▪ Concept 2 – Indigenous Identity and L'nu Identity ▪ Concept 7 – Systemic Barriers & Readiness for Economic Development 	11
<i>Googoo Designs, A. Googoo</i> Design Studio; branding and marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concept 4 – Etuaptmumk / Two-Eyed Seeing ▪ Concept 2 – Indigenous Identity and L'nu Identity 	11
<i>Indigevisor, N. Bernard</i> Entrepreneurship, partnership development, consulting services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concept 2 – Indigenous Identity and L'nu Identity ▪ Concept 7 – Systemic Barriers & Readiness for Economic Development 	12
<i>Maskwiomin, T. Young; M. Beirensteil</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concept 1 - A Relationship between Mi'kmaw Identity, Being and Knowing, and Business ▪ Concept 3 - Netukulimk and Entrepreneurship ▪ Concept 5 – Etuaptmumk and Entrepreneurship ▪ Concept 6 – Authenticity and Teachings ▪ Concept 4 – Etuaptmumk / Two-Eyed Seeing, 	12