'Hearing the Journeys: The Factors that Impact Female Indigenous Entrepreneurship in Victoria'

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Figure 1: 'The Cross'

Robyn Davis has seen God at the centre of everything that she has endured

and achieved in her life journey.

Here her picture describes how God radiates in everything.

Source: Robyn Davis (undated)

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

Except where reference is made in the text, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a work presented by me for another degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any tertiary institution.

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Signed   Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly I want to acknowledge my Savior, The Lord Jesus Christ, without whom, I would not have lived to complete such a work. It is with His mercy and grace that I present this thesis.

I would like to extend my gratitude to my supervisor Adela McMurray for being a sounding board to all my weird and wonderful ideas and for providing me with unswerving direction to complete this dissertation. Thank you.

To my husband Shane Francis: Thank you for your unending support in my life journey. Your support drives my tenacity to "never say die". I love you. To my children Joshua, Aleesha, Hannah and Shayla: I hope that my efforts in life act to always encourage you to follow your dreams. I pray that God will always guide your steps. I love you.

Lastly I want to express my gratitude and special thank you to the participants (co-researchers) in this study: If you had not been prepared to share your journeys, this dissertation would not have come to fruition. My hope is that these words are heard by the ears that can effect policy change for the betterment of Indigenous lives. Thank you.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is presented in dedication to a lady, a Taungurung Clans Elder

from my mob, who made a huge impact on my life over the years without really

ever knowing how much.

AUNTY GLENYS ELIZABETH MERRY

Her dedication and commitment to Indigenous rights, our people and the Australian

way all without bells and whistles, has been my inspiration.

May this also inspire others...

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These 'yarns' are used with the expressed permission of the individual concerned. These 'yarns' may not be used again without the due acknowledgement of copyright of the person who shared and owns them. These are their stories to tell.

ACRONYMS

ABS: Australian Bureau of Statistics

AIHW: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

AKA: Also Known As

ARC: Australian Research Council

ATSI: Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander

ATSIC: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

AWBA: Afghan's Women Business Association

BWCCI: Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry

CDEP: Community Development Employment Projects

CIPE: Centre for International Private Enterprise

COAG: Council of Australian Government

DEEWR: Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations

DETYA: Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs

DHS: Department of Human Services

DIIRD: Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development

ERC: Executive Review Committee

HREOC: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

IBA: Indigenous Business Australia

KBN: Koori Business Network

OIDF: Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Framework

PAR: Participatory Action Research

RMIT: Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology

SBV: Small Business Victoria

UNIFEM: United Nations Development Fund for Women

USA: United States of America

VKHRCDU: VicHealth Koori Health Research & Community Development

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Aboriginal Peoples: Refers to the Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islanders of Australia.

Aborigine: A person who is of Aboriginal descent, who identifies as an Aborigine and is accepted in the community as such. This was a threefold European method of identification that has been adopted by Indigenous peoples of Australia. This word is often interchangeable with 'Aboriginal', which is however, an adjective.

Clan: Group of families with a common ancestor.

Conundrum: Riddle.

Co-researcher/Participant: These terms may be used throughout the study and are connected, to identify all those who contributed. I am writing the final paper but those who give their stories are also contributing to the study in a significant way and should at least be recognised for their input.

Country: Nation, nation's territory or nation's people.

Culture: Ideas, customs and art of a particular society.

Discourse: Is conversation or formal treatment of a subject in speech or writing.

Displacement: Person forced from his or her home or country, especially by war.

Entrepreneur: A business person who attempts to make a profit by risk and initiative.

Entrepreneurship: The practice of starting new organisations or revitalizing mature organisations particularly new businesses generally in response to identified opportunities.

Extant: Still in existence (i.e. There are three copies of the extant document).

First Australians: Those that inhabited Australia before European discovery and settlement.

Hegemony: Control or dominating influence by one person or group, especially by one political group over society or one nation over others

Heritage: Anything from the past, considered as the inheritance of present-day society.

Indigeneity: Somebody or something that is native to a place.

Indigenous Australians: For the purpose of this thesis, this term refers to the Australian Indigenous people and is interchangeable with 'Aborigine'. It will be utilised more as it has better.

Kinship: Person's relatives collectively.

Nascent entrepreneur: Emerging, promising.

Paradigm: Example, model, pattern, standard.

Polity: The aspect of society that is oriented to politics and government.

Totem: Tribal badge or emblem.

All glossary terms are from the *Collins English Dictionary (2006)* unless otherwise individually identified.

ABSTRACT

This research explored the life journeys of Indigenous Australian business women residing in Victoria, Australia. In addition, Indigenous community views were explored to uncover the factors that may impact on business women from their relationships with the Indigenous community. The findings add insight into the relationship interplay between the Indigenous community and Victorian Indigenous business women. The research involved the exploration of knowledge and experience of participants using a base feminist theory with Participatory Action Research (PAR) that had concepts adopted from co-operative inquiry utilising cycles of action and reflection. The action cycles were the sharing of stories in both focus groups and individual sessions. The interview sessions were unstructured where the thoughts and emotive processes of participants generated in action cycles, defined the direction of the reflection cycles. The reflective cycle action was achieved by presenting the 21 participants with an opportunity to verify the information that was disclosed during interview and to provide additional information such as stories, poetry or pictures to express their journey thereby providing richness to their data. All participants were considered to be co-researchers and the author being an Indigenous person, facilitated in open, trusting communication exchange. The research uncovered four main themes of family; business; government and culture/community that affected both community and business women and highlighted the critical areas of concern, including the importance of education, family connectedness and adequate support. It is often accepted that the Indigenous community has a connectedness to culture that is specific to Indigenous Australians. The research had significant findings that inform business, government, community, women and Indigenous people, as well as contribute to academe. Finally, recommendations for government agencies such as the Koori Business Network to help support current Indigenous business women and to help increase the numbers of Indigenous business women in Victoria are presented.

Figure 2: 'The Journey'

This is the story of Robyn's Journey through her life and how the various animals have played a part in her walk.

Source: Robyn Davis (2008)

1. INTRODUCTION: Painting the Context Picture

1.1   Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the historical implications of the arrival of European Settlement to Australia and the current implications for Indigenous employment, business and undertaking research with Indigenous peoples.

1.2.   The significance of this study

Taking a snippet of time from the last 30 years it is important to note the concerns still in society for the Indigenous Australian. As the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs reported in 1980:

> While it would be difficult to suggest that in 1980 Aboriginals are still being subjected to the level of overt oppression and persecution that they have suffered during the past 200 years, the disadvantaged position which Aboriginals hold in society reflects this historical pattern. As a group, Aboriginals still cannot participate fully, effectively and equally in the day-to-day life of a community, notwithstanding the fact that changes in the law and social attitudes have occurred. The recent history of Aboriginal people is one of hostile dealings with non-Aboriginals and with policies of governments which have had an extraordinary impact on the Aboriginal people's consciousness. This has helped separate Aboriginals as a group within Australian society. It is reinforced by a common resentment by Aborigines of past treatment and control by non-Aborigines and by a lack of trust of authorities including the courts, the police and the welfare (para. 25).

These concerns were validated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census (ABS 2006) and supported by other current literature (Canberra Journey of Healing Network 2000 & 2002; Foley 2003; Ord & Mazzarol 2007).

Aboriginal peoples of Australia have a life expectancy 18 years lower than their non-Indigenous counterparts (ABS 2009; HREOC 1997; HREOC 1999). Indigenous Australians make up 2.5% of the country's population. Thirty four percent of Indigenous households in 2006 were either mortgaged or owned, compared to 69% for non-Indigenous Australians. Tertiary education institutions had enrolments of 4% for Indigenous students with only one in five completing their field of study. In addition, 26% completed some form of post-secondary qualification while 56% of their non-Indigenous counterparts completed the same (ABS 2010). The majority of the Indigenous population lives in urban areas with 25% still living in remote areas as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (AIHW 2008) (see Appendix 1). Indigenous peoples were overrepresented in the justice system with 24% of those incarcerated being Indigenous, representing 13 times the non-Indigenous rate (ABS 2009).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that Indigenous Australians were three times less likely to be self-employed than their non-Indigenous countrymen (ABS 2006). Furthermore, in 2006, employment statistics revealed there was a decrease in Indigenous unemployment between 2001 and 2006, falling from 20% unemployment to 16%, which was still 11% higher than for other Australians. Incomes of Indigenous Australians also increased, but still fell well below the non-Indigenous community with 56% of Indigenous Australians having income of $362 per week compared to $642. Indigenous Australians comprise 2.5% of the national population, recording an estimated increase of 13% between 2001 and 2006, while those living in Victoria during the same period

constituted 0.6% of the national population and just 6% of the state's population (ABS 2010).

These figures clearly show that Indigenous Australians are disproportionately represented in every area of socio-economic status and well being, compared with Australia's non-Indigenous population (Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2008; McClure 2000). It must be recognised that the intergenerational effects of the *Stolen Generations* continue to impact negatively on Indigenous families, with effects that include aspects of welfare dependence, drug dependence, violence, poor mental health, further child protection issues and disproportionate representation in the justice system (HREOC 1997; Jolly 2000).

'Employment is commonly linked with better outcomes in areas of health and housing', and is generally a direct result of better education with flow-on effects for Indigenous Australians that include a better psychological outlook, increased finances and therefore a higher socioeconomic standing (ABS 2008 4704.0). Self-employment is a branch of employment that has excellent prospects for addressing some of the socio-economic deficits. Altman et al. (2009) supported this, saying 'one of the main benefits of employment is a higher income or improved access to economic resources…' (p. 233).

It has become increasingly apparent around the world that Indigenous enterprise (Indigenous peoples entering the entrepreneurship arena) can provide multi-faceted benefits for the entrepreneur, their families, the Indigenous community and the wider economic system (Lindsay 2005).

Indigenous entrepreneurship provides the possibility to unlock economic wealth thereby empowering a disadvantaged population group (Lindsay 2005) yet there is little research addressing Indigenous entrepreneurship in Australia (Frederick & Foley 2006; Hindle et

al. 2007). Understanding the intrinsic value of Indigenous entrepreneurship and applying that value to Indigenous entrepreneurs in Victoria, research is important in identifying and explaining the key role that various community-based factors play in the success of Indigenous enterprise, if any. Investigating this area is significant, particularly as a unique construct from mainstream entrepreneurship (Lindsay 2005), where it is reported that Indigenous entrepreneurship has been on the decline since 1994 (Hindle & Rushworth 2002).

1.3. Indigenous Australians: Who they are, where they fit and the classification of their heritage

Indigenous Australians may not fit the typical stereotype that some people might conjure up in their imaginations. They are not all dark skinned and do not all have traditional homes in outback Australia, living a hunter-gatherer lifestyle. While there are still Indigenous Australians living a traditional lifestyle in various parts of outback Australia, the majority (75%) of Indigenous Australians reside in urban, metropolitan or regional areas. These differing conditions are a result of the evolving world in which Aboriginal peoples of Australia live. It is also an evolving result of the European settlement that occurred in this great land some 200 years ago, along with their introduction of various "new" cultures and ways (see Appendix 4).

While this research looks forward, there is a pivotal need to be clear about the terminology of the Indigenous Australian: How they are known; how these definitions came about; and more importantly, why?

There is no universal definition for 'Indigenous people'. Most definitions encapsulate the understanding of 'cultural groups that have a historical continuity with a region before its

colonization and who lived largely independent or isolated from the influence of the larger nation-state' (Frederick & Foley 2006, p. 34).

For the purposes of this thesis and to be culturally sensitive, the terms 'Aborigine', 'Aboriginal people' or 'Indigenous' will refer to Australians who are of Aboriginal descent, who identify as an Indigenous Australians and who are accepted as such in the community in which they live. This threefold definition has been upheld by the High Court of Australia in *Commonwealth vs. Tasmania* (1983 46 ALR 625) *and Gibbs vs. Capewell & Ors* (Lofgren 1995). While there are various debates involving the need for such a definition, this has been the commonplace accepted model of identification for Indigenous Australians.

As evidence of this, it is now a standard requirement that Indigenous Australians produce a paper validating their 'Aboriginality', in order to access specifically-targeted programs for the Indigenous. This paper presents a conundrum to many Indigenous Australians: while it provides security to ensure only those entitled to utilise these programs gain access to do so, the requirement also acts to reinforce the underlying humiliation of having to justify one's heritage in such a way.

The use of the term 'Indigenous' will be utilised significantly in this study, as it has less 'attachment' to the historical displacement of the first Australians as the words *Aborigine* and *Aboriginal People* had been significantly used in previous decades. Over time, 'Indigenous' has been embraced by both non-Indigenous and Indigenous people, as an acceptable identifying word. Indigenous Australians have moved again, though, in their development and with the multicultural outlook that Australia embraces. The term 'Indigenous' does not accurately pertain to Aborigines of Australia and the terminology

being used at present is currently being re-evaluated in many circles to distinguish Australian Indigenous peoples from those of other countries.

1.4 Understanding the differences between entrepreneurship and Indigenous entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is difficult to define with exactness, given its interwoven compatibility with various disciplines (Lee-Ross & Mitchell 2007). From a general context it is associated with the three economic aspirations of growth, innovation and flexibility (Foley 2003), and may be categorised into the two broad concepts of personality and behavioural characteristics. However, neither of these polarised perspectives (Lee-Ross & Mitchell 2007) should be adopted exclusively as there is a possible overlap between the two concepts.

Hindle et al. (2005) identify entrepreneurship as: '…unmet or under-satisfied needs and related opportunities, and the creation of enterprises, products and services in response to these opportunities' (p. 8). *Collins English Dictionary* (2006) defines an entrepreneur as: 'A business person who attempts to make a profit by risk and initiative'. These two definitions are similar in that they both identify approaches that require a new idea or implementation of a new venture for profit or gain.

Mapunda (2007) pinpoints a significant difference between Western economic systems and the Indigenous system in that the latter requires a holistic approach to entrepreneurship, since its primary focus is on people, not objects.

Indigenous entrepreneurship has been given various meanings relative to the researcher identifying it. Cahn (2008) states: 'In Indigenous societies throughout the world "business" and economic activities are embedded in cultural and social aspects, creating

unique styles of entrepreneurship, which are often community orientated and with diverse livelihood outcomes' (p. 1).

Foley (2003) argues that the Indigenous entrepreneur definition must acknowledge their social and economic conditions. He further highlights the disruption of the stereotypical welfare dependency in the transformation to making individuals independent (Foley 2003) and that success is hinged on 'empowerment' through business ability, knowledge, skills and access to resources.

In defining an 'Indigenous entrepreneur' Foley clearly states (2003): 'the Indigenous Australian Entrepreneur alters traditional patterns of behaviour, by utilising resources in the pursuit of self-determination and economic stability via entry into self-employment, forcing social change in the pursuit of opportunity beyond the cultural norms of initial economic resources' (p. 136).

Lee-Ross (2007) disagrees, stating that this definition is actually more indicative of the 'Urban Indigenous Entrepreneur (2007, p. 136). His research of Torres Strait Islander entrepreneurs found that Indigenous land-owning entrepreneurs in the Torres Strait Islands do not actually change traditional patterns of behaviour, 'but rather optimise them within a modern economic environment' (Lee-Ross & Mitchell 2007, p. 202).

In addition, in the *Open for Business Report* by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (2008), a submission had been made by the Koori Business Network (KBN) that the interpretation of the Indigenous entrepreneur was one 'based on individuals, families or partnerships', while community enterprise was seen as 'based on land, living on the land or the community and all the profits going back into the community' (p. 10).

It is these contradictory findings related to definitions that reinforce the difficulty of adequately defining 'entrepreneurship' and ascribing a universal definition to 'Indigenous entrepreneurship'. It is the writer's contention that it may be better to determine an adequate definition of 'Indigenous entrepreneurship' within the specific research area or topic and group.

In the context of this challenge, there still needs to be some clarity in understanding the general terms that may provide a backdrop for the specific focus of this research. In order to do that, relevant definitions provide the reader with information on key terminology entwined within the exploration of the topic. This shows separateness, if any, of Indigenous entrepreneurship from that of mainstream enterprise.

Mapunda (2007) informs us that: 'Indigenous business… entrepreneurship is potentially a powerful tool that can be used to promote economic independence, self-determination and cultural preservation within Indigenous Societies' (p. 10).

Entrepreneurship in and of itself appears to be a broad concept for development of business. The difference that has been explored between the general term 'entrepreneurship' and the specifically termed 'Indigenous entrepreneurship' must include knowledge of relationship to culture and non-economic assets.

1.5   The research: What Indigenous entrepreneurs are looking for and how it will be found

This section identifies what the research is designed to uncover.

After an extensive literature review and search, two research questions underpinning this study were developed. They addressed the concepts of what works for Indigenous

business women to facilitate an accurate picture of the journeys of ten successful Indigenous female entrepreneurs in Victoria, Australia. The two research questions are as follows:

1. What are the significant factors in the success of female Indigenous entrepreneurship in Victoria, Australia?

2. How do Indigenous female entrepreneurs retain and enhance key Indigenous community values, practices and aspirations?

There are many benefits of improving the access, participation and success rates of Indigenous female entrepreneurs, as well as providing an insight into the views of Indigenous community regarding entrepreneurship. This insight can further the connectedness of individual to community within an Indigenous context. This research is designed to explore perceptions from both the Indigenous communities of Victoria, and female Indigenous entrepreneurs.

The intention of the study is to generate insights into what factors and pathways have been employed by Indigenous women entrepreneurs to attain success in their chosen business venture. It will also provide insight into how, or if, they managed to retain and develop key values, practices and aspirations of the Indigenous community and which of these are seen as being distinct from mainstream enterprise. While the focus of research is on the 'what works', it will consider the 'what doesn't work'. This is to differentiate the findings even though the included businesses are currently running and, therefore, could be deemed successful by default. This may be considered study-limiting. For example, we cannot capture information as to the barriers that prevented a business from continuing, or what support may have prevented a business from success.

As an Indigenous person, this researcher may utilise feminist Action Research (AR) theory with co-operative enquiry paradigm as a base with regard to approach and compilation. Indigenous people are often more community and family orientated and this is seen to be more from a maternalistic feminine standpoint. Therefore it would seem reasonable that this research uses a theory base that embraces a feminine approach to research.

Indigenous people share stories and hand them on as part of their heritage. The researcher has included some participant's personal stories written with word, song or picture to add a depth of richness to the research. These are presented verbatim throughout the research as 'yarn', and/or 'picture stories' and are included throughout the thesis to create rich data impressions on readers. They are also copyrighted to the original author and cannot be used in any publication or reference without the author's explicit consent.

This thesis includes an introduction, literature review, a methodology chapter, a presentation of analysis and findings, a discussion of those findings and a conclusion chapter. Following the reference list are appendices related to the study. The Chapter layout is:

Chapter One: Introduction – An Introduction to the research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review – In-depth analysis of the past and existing literature addressing Indigenous Entrepreneurship.

Chapter Three: Research Method – Documents the systematic approach undertaken to conduct this research.

Chapter Four: Analysis – Information as to what the research uncovered as well as a dialogue of main themes.

Chapter Five: Findings and Discussion – Unpacks the information uncovered in the context of the conversations held with participants.

Chapter Six: Conclusion – This chapter presents core direction and value of the research.

The participants were included as co-researchers in this research where the researcher acknowledges that as soon as she takes their words and attempts to explore their meaning, she assumes the power to present them through her eyes and therefore reduces the co-researcher's power. While the researcher understands the authenticity of the research belongs to her, the experiences shared by those who have helped make this research belong to us collectively. The researcher will not claim the co-researchers' words as hers to own. Researchers need to be 'accountable to the people they research, not just the people who pay for the research' (Alston & Bowles 1998, p. 21).

This research examines Victorian small businesses owned and operated by Indigenous women entrepreneurs located in the non-remote areas of the state. For the purpose of this research non-remote is defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as an area that has a population base of more than 1000. Further details are included in Appendix 1. In the 'Open for Business' Report (HOR SCATSIA 2008) small business is defined as: 'Businesses employing less than twenty people with 95.6 percent of businesses in Australia considered small businesses under this category' (p 7).

Limitations – The limitations of the research are intricate to the thesis. It is gender based and included women who currently resided in Victoria. It may also be perceived to be limited by the involvement of the Koori Business Network (KBN) in that they have a

vested interest in the findings. While this may be true, it must be stated clearly that the research and the presentation of findings was conducted without prejudice. While the initial sample group was obtained by the KBN, the sample did have a snowball quality that developed after participants were approached outside of KBN's database. Initially some people were approached purely from the KBN database of affiliated registered businesses with the KBN. However during interactions with the database participants, other Indigenous business women were identified and offered an opportunity to be part of this research via 'word of mouth' and these women were not necessarily connected to the KBN.

The pictures and stories are presented throughout the thesis as specific to the participants and provide a different view of how their lives have transpired. They provide a different way of telling. They are placed intermittently throughout the thesis to provide a visual flavour that brings a sense of Aboriginal culture and ways of telling. They provide a personal layer to the thesis that cannot be told or retold. They just are.

Figure 3: 'Christine'

This is just one story of one journey of a little Indigenous girl who grew up and followed her destiny. It provides a richness and depth that should not be coloured with additional information and allows the reader to go on that journey with her. It also gives a foundation for chapter four of this research which involves the analysis of the data.

Christine

Well she never knew her papa.
She only ever met her mama
in a cell in the Melbourne jail when she was fully grown.
She'd been looking for a lady,
one who held her as a baby.
Till a turn of events found her living in a better home.

Ain't it funny how the road bends, ain't it funny how the story ends.
Born of one blood, raised of another
by the will of the state she was taken from her mother
Christine, Sweet Christine
She knows where she's going, knows where she's been
Christine, Sweet Christine

And when she didn't finish Uni,
her mother must have thought her loony.
With a song in her heart and head full of foolish dreams
She took to music for a living
and sang of loss and love's forgiving.
Till her songs found her living out the life of her foolish dreams

Ain't it funny how the wind blows, ain't it funny how the story goes.
She couldn't get a break in the radio game
But now she's got a spot in the Hands of Fame
Christine, Sweet Christine
She knows where she's going, knows where she's been
Christine, Sweet Christine

Source: Jack Pledge (2008)

2. LITERATURE REVIEW: Studies that Paint a Scholarly Picture

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide information on the availability of other literature on the topic that this research is trying to inform. It will also provide information to highlight gaps of knowledge with regard to research definitions for Indigenous Australians and provides solid foundation for further investigation.

2.2 Indigenous researchers with Indigenous issues

In the first instance, it is appropriate to note the place of the Indigenous researcher within the current research context, including the constraints and successes that they encounter in their pursuits to enlighten their wider community. It is the very dedications and dilemmas they encounter that this thesis will address.

In many cases, Indigenous researchers often find themselves in an arena that is imposing and hostile (Foley 2000) Academia is a frontier that was created, for the most part, by those who played a role in the fluent use of terminology and language derived from a distinctly European culture that acts to enforce separateness from other minority cultures. Academia in itself demands rigorous explanation of thoughts that test the boundaries of understanding to the average lay person and therefore research may act to further alienate the very people that it is designed to help. To illustrate, Foley (2000) states, 'In effect, Indigenous researchers, through our culturally complex backgrounds, are often outsiders within an insider methodology' (p. 21).

Indigenous researchers are continually required to adjust thinking processes to meet the imposed protocols and accepted academic requirements to achieve collective goals: those

of the institution and the researcher. It must become accepted that Indigenous researchers have relevant insight and validation, which others may find difficult in conducting research projects with other Indigenous people, and that this is valuable.

In addition, inclusion and ownership are extremely valued aspects of Indigenous research within Indigenous communities (VicHealth Koori Health Research & Community Development Unit (VKHRCDU) 2000). University protocols structured through Western thinking provide ownership to those who conduct the research, or those who finance it. However Indigenous people posit that this type of research should, at the very least, be co-owned (VKHRCDU 2000; Alston & Bowles 1998). The thoughts, feelings and experiences belong to Indigenous peoples individually and collectively and should be recognised as valuable. Accepted research protocols refer to intellectual property as something of worth in the academic and research worlds. But with Indigenous research the information required to be provided by Indigenous peoples are their Indigenous stories to tell. They have power through their ownership of something like intellectual property rights. This understanding of ownership is echoed by Smith and Armstrong (1999).

Studies addressing Indigenous health and inclusive programming and research completed by the VicHealth Koori Health Research & Community Development Unit (VKHRCDU 2000) at Rumbalara in Shepparton, Victoria, found that good research should be culturally appropriate, respectful at all times, and include attainable goals and strategies related to Indigenous community participation. This ideal is reinforced by Humphery (2000) who suggests there should be substantial Indigenous involvement in the research process including control and feedback mechanisms so as to keep Indigenous communities aware of the research progress, findings and outcomes. In addition, so as to lessen the gap between those who claim to be able to effect change and those who have

no power to, due acknowledgment should be identified in cases where the Indigenous have provided their inputs and recommendations into the research process.

This approach facilitates the fostering of trust relationships between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, as well as instilling the understanding that the communities are providing information that makes the research possible, thereby showing respect.

Indigenous researchers have the unique opportunity to bridge the chasm between Western thinking of how Indigenous research should 'look' and the rhetoric that is valued within the 'Western' research domain.

Pearson's (2001a) work underpins this idealism as he expands on the welfare dependency circumstances relevant to Cape York Peninsula Indigenous communities, yet it is apparent that his idealism may be applied to other aspects of Indigenous influence or lack thereof. Pearson advocates that Indigenous peoples need to become integrated in groups driving the reality of who they are and what they may offer, rather than being passive passengers in academic research that has the potential to impact on policy. There is consensus in the literature (Hindle et al. 2007; Pearson 2001a; Smith 2005) supporting this view and it is illustrated by Hindle (2007) as follows, 'Indigenous scholars need to take ownership of the field so that the empathy that can only come from being an Indigenous person can be conveyed effectively to a body of scholars currently comprised overwhelmingly of privileged members of mainstream hegemonies' (p. 7).

2.3   Definitions

In order to adequately address the research question underpinning this research it is necessary to identify any previously reported differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous entrepreneurship. The literature shows that there has been and continues to be,

difficulty in providing definitions that are universally applicable to Indigenous females and those geographically located in Victoria, especially with reference to the definition of Indigenous entrepreneurship.

Various authors within the field of entrepreneurship including Johnson (1990); Davidsson (2004); Lee-Ross and Mitchell (2007); Hindle et al. (2007); Hindle (2010); and Anderson and Starnawska (2008) have identified the difficulty in providing a universal definition of the 'entrepreneur' or 'entrepreneurship'. This dilemma and the relevant consequences of different applications of definitions have hampered the transferability of research findings so as to provide consensus in the field. It is apparent that these definitions are so widely constructed using other disciplines that they cannot be universally applied (Lee-Ross & Mitchell 2007).

However, many researchers have still developed definitions as to what entrepreneurs are, and what entrepreneurship is, and some more specifically to Indigenous entrepreneurship which is valuable and can be enhanced for specific use in other studies. It should be clearly understood that while the emergence of the entrepreneurship field as a research area is evolving quickly, it is fragmented as it is difficult to gather strands of themes that may be unified in meaning to propose a universally accepted construct. This may not be the best approach due to Indigenous people wanting to have locally specific identification of needs and approaches rather than generalised ones that can be applied without local inclusion. Information sharing is pertinent to those that reside in that particular area.

Two schools of thought relating to entrepreneurship classifications are put forward by Lee-Ross and Mitchell (2007). They suggest that people who are entrepreneurs have personality traits and behavioural characteristics of entrepreneurs and the environment for entrepreneurs to develop and grow in. According to Hindle (2010), there are two

approaches to defining entrepreneurship. The first is 'the emergence perspective', where the focus is placed on the new venture creation and the second approach is 'opportunity perspective', which focuses on the discovery, evaluation and development of new relationships regardless of being a new venture or developing a new idea within a venture.

Davidsson (2004) shares that the research regarding this field of entrepreneurship within multi-disciplines, should assign reality specific to that particular topic. Davidsson disputed that one could apply a contextual definition from one discipline to another. This is supported by Anderson and Starnawska (2008). Accordingly, in this context, research was conducted on the available literature containing definitions of what the entrepreneur is and what entrepreneurship means.

'Entrepreneurship' comes from the base word 'entrepreneur'. Davidsson (2004) expresses a definition of entrepreneurship (relevant to small business and this research as '…anything that concerns independently owned (and often small) firms and their owner-managers' (p. 4). However, he prefers to adopt a short version of what should be considered as '…the competitive behaviours that drive the market process' (p. 6).

This incorporates the theories put forward by Johnson (1990), Lindsay (2005), and Keelan and Woods (2006), who discuss the concepts of entrepreneurship as being personality or attitude driven, and include at least the individual role since it is at this juncture that any idea or drive to develop an enterprise must start (Johnson 1990).

2.4   Entrepreneurship and the evolving theories in an Indigenous world

Entrepreneurs have existed since the beginning of time. Traditional stories having great social wealth are passed down through generations and form role models for Indigenous

enterprises (Keelan & Woods 2006). The difference of how Indigenous enterprise is perceived and has been pursued from the 'Western ways' is identified throughout literature (Hindle et al. 2005; Hindle & Lansdowne 2007; Lee-Ross & Mitchell 2007). Of note is the focus on the inherent value of the social capital worth of Indigenous entrepreneurship, which is considered highly valuable by Indigenous people who are acutely family focused.

Entrepreneurship should include the social element of life that incorporates the economic as well as the non-economic income of entrepreneurs as commodities of worth (Swedberg 2006). It is the non-economic aspect of entrepreneurship that appears to be rapidly evolving in the Indigenous business literature with distinctions identifying the impracticality of using Western scales of reference. This is due to the increased understanding of Indigenous entrepreneurship as needing more holistic measures, as Indigenous motivation for enterprise is not primarily for economic gain (Linsday 2005). This branch of entrepreneurship is enhanced with studies completed by Furneaux and Brown (2007; 2008) and Foley (2008), with particular reference to Australian Indigenous entrepreneurship and the value of various capital aspects such as those that are non-material based. This will be discussed later in the chapter.

2.5   Challenges of an Indigenous entrepreneurship definition

The prolific work of Foley (2000; 2003; 2008) articulates the factors and constraints that have plagued Indigenous Australians with regard to entrepreneurship, and his work has provided a solid base for this research. But it must be noted that there is no definition available at the time of this research that adequately addresses the Indigenous Australian female entrepreneur and this provides a clear foundation of the value of this research. This also requires that researchers must look to other Indigenous countries for their

general definition to ensure that there is no better fit, or more appropriate definition for use in Victoria, Australia.

2.6   The global picture

After examining the complexities of definition in the entrepreneurship literature, it follows that defining Indigenous entrepreneurship also proves to be challenging. According to Hindle and Lansdowne (2002; 2005; 2007) and the Micro-Economic Policy Analysis Branch (1999), Canada is the leading country in the world that is addressing Indigenous enterprise development and research. America and New Zealand (Keelan & Woods 2006) have also progressed in similar areas including the development of an adequate Indigenous entrepreneurship definition. However, one must question whether Indigenous entrepreneurship definitions developed in a particular country are representative to all countries and particularly to the Australian context. The author asserts this is not the case as Australia is unique in its culture and history.

Therefore, it is appropriate that the definition of Indigenous entrepreneurship Australian literature is examined. Hindle and Lansdowne (2007) propose the following definition that states:

> Indigenous Entrepreneurship is the creation, management and development of new ventures by Indigenous people for the benefit of Indigenous people. The organizations thus created can pertain to either the private, public, or non-profit sectors. The desired and achieved benefits of venturing can range from the narrow view of economic profit for a single individual to the broad view of multiple, social and economic advantage for entire communities. Outcomes and

entitlements derived from Indigenous Entrepreneurship may extend to enterprise partners and stakeholders who may be Non-Indigenous (p. 9).

Following are the three elements that were proposed by Hindle et al. (2005) and expanded in Lindsay's (2005) work as essential to distinguish Indigenous entrepreneurship from mainstream entrepreneurship. They include:

Heritage influence as being an important aspect with regard to Indigenous culture must be part of the growth and management of the enterprise; autonomy and to whom the stakeholders must be accountable to is quite different from mainstream enterprise; and for significant participants to possess a mixture of technical and cultural skills as cultural variables other than capitalist drives (p. 8).

It is the researcher's contention that these elements have some merit, include the autonomy acknowledgement and recognise the cultural and social variables as important. But they require clarification as to the meaning of cultural skills and the need for heritage influence aspects.

Furthermore, while this review highlights the breadth of available literature understanding the complexities of both Indigenous identity and the ability to adequately define terms involving the Indigenous entrepreneur, the author hopes to be able to provide a basis for one definition that may be applied specifically to Indigenous women entrepreneurs in this research. This enhances the reality that Indigenous Australian women are different depending on their community and kinship connections relative to geographical origin, as well as their Indigenous uniqueness from other countries and their community and kinship connections.

In its report titled *Aboriginal Entrepreneurs in Canada: progress and prospects* (Micro-Economic Policy Analysis Branch 1999) Canada has identified a significant growth in Indigenous enterprise. It grew 2.5 times faster than the non-Indigenous populous between 1981 to 1996 in all disciplines and areas of the country, with the quickest growth amongst women. This is in addition to the actual increase of identifying Indigenous people, including women. The figures show there is still a marked difference in profit rates, business size (firms employing more than 20 people) and those less involved in the knowledge-based skills areas of entrepreneurship.

The report also identifies those priorities for improvement of successful Indigenous businesses to include management skills, productivity, innovation, finance, employee training, and the expansion of markets. Finance and management skills have been highlighted by Furneaux and Brown (2007) as having a negative effect on success rates of small Indigenous enterprises in Australia.

Future directions for growth include better education, increased connectedness to the world utilising the Internet and other media, 'driving their own bus' and drawing from government and other businesses' experiences. However the report closes with the statement that the keys to success for these enterprises will be quite similar to mainstream Canada and perhaps this is accurate (Micro-Economic Policy Analysis Branch 1999). Pearson (2001b) would concur with the view that Indigenous people need to be able to 'cut it' in the mainstream with self- determination as the precursor.

In New Zealand, there have been studies completed that highlight the importance of challenging a Government's objectives and changing their policy directions from a protectionist, welfare state to a more liberal market system (Sullivan & Margaritis 2000, p. 265).

One way has been in their efforts to address issues of necessary compensation to the Maori people for resources that had been taken during the last 150 years. This is now providing a valuable economic base on which to build for the Maori people, and includes both corporate and entrepreneurial ventures (Sullivan & Margaritis 2000). These authors highlight the value of Labour Government initiatives that saw community or tribal delivery of services rather than delivery of services from the State. One initiative that has had great rewards is that of the 'Treelords' Central North Island Forestry agreement that recently passed into law and represents the interests of more than 100,000 Maori people. This agreement allows the traditional landowners to be more effective in their destinies (Smale 2008 cited in the Koori Business Newsletter, KBN 2010).

Although there is some way to go in efforts to have the settlement of claims actuated, as outlined by Erueti (2005), the creation of a Treaty settlement tribunal who make recommendations to the Crown has been a step forward. It has also been noted that difficulties arising from lack of managerial skills and other necessary qualifications, as identified in the Canadian research, need to be addressed. This raises significant concerns for successful outcomes of self-determination of the Maori people in their efforts to self-manage infrastructure (Sullivan & Margaritis 2000, p. 271).

Another initiative that has been widely discussed is that of Parliamentary seats being designated to Indigenous representatives. This system was expressed well by Iorns-Magallanes (2005) in her research of Maori Parliamentary seats in New Zealand in comparison to Indigenous delegate seats in Maine, USA. This discussion acutely highlights the various branches that may be positively influenced by such representation. It includes accurate protection of rights and self-determination utilising the democratic state and how these have worked for the two countries compared.

The negative effects include how representation was gained and what groups were being represented. The questions rose as to the adequacy of just having an allocation of a few seats, and whether they were tokenistic, given the proportion to mainstream population in New Zealand (Iorns-Magallanes 2005). This may not be so if we were talking about Senate seats and the majority of seats were not overwhelmingly held by Government with independent representatives actually having an enforceable voice (as seen with the recent 2009 Economic Stimulus package being rejected by one vote from a Family First Senator in the Australian Parliament).

The concept of some Parliamentary seats being identified for Indigenous representatives has also been argued in Australia at both Federal and State levels. Federally this has been rejected, but the NSW State Government Legislative Council Inquiry in 1998 made recommendations, including a detailed proposal to be developed and put to the public for a vote through a referendum (Iorns-Magallanes 2005, p. 106). The desire to have Indigenous representation at all levels of the negotiation table is echoed eloquently here (this has yet to be implemented and shows again how the fragmented mismatch of valuable information and Government action continues to void the value of research in changing government policy).

The notion of 'one size fits all' is not appropriate here either. It has been the approach of past governments, as articulated by Fournier (2005), the former Canadian High Commissioner to Australia from July 2000 to July 2004. Models of self-government or those entwined with the larger governments need to be specific and relevant with self-determination requirements varying significantly across communities and social networks.

2.7   Indigenous women entrepreneurs

Women have held a subservient position in most economies until the rise of the feminist movement of the 1950s. This continues today, as witnessed in various countries around the world. It is increasingly accepted that women have a great deal to offer the economy but still have many obstacles to overcome related to the male dominance in both their professional and personal lives.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2007) provides this overview:

> The intersection of ethnic and gender identities means that Indigenous women often face multiple discriminations. Frequently excluded from decision making at all levels, Indigenous women number among the world's most disadvantaged people. Even those in Indigenous societies where women were historically empowered, drastic changes in economic and political structures in recent decades have eroded women's traditional opportunities for financial independence (para. 2).

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), begun in 1996 through a United Nations resolution, acts to support actions to eliminate violence against women. One of the outcomes provided in Strategic plan 2008-2011 is to ensure: '…the most marginalized women (including ...indigenous women) have increased resources, capacities and voice to ensure that their priorities are included in relevant policies, programmes and budget' (UNIFEM 2007, p. 2). This emphasis on developing measures to be more inclusive of Indigenous women in all aspects of society has implications for Australian governments as well.

While there is research that investigates various aspects of the women's roles and value in the workforce and beyond, there is little research with regard to Indigenous women and particularly those in entrepreneurship. While there is noted information as to reported cases of success in other countries, there is limited research regarding the Indigenous Australian woman entrepreneur.

In countries such as Bangladesh in the South Asian continent there has been significant growth in Indigenous Women's entrepreneurship. In 2001, 24 women founded the Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BWCCI), which acts to support female entrepreneurs. With outreached support from both international and local partners this organisation had a membership at the end of 2008 of 1500 members. Some of the key influences this group has include policy changes whereby 10 percent of funding must be dedicated to small to medium sized businesses owned by women and at lower rates with no collateral. The organisation also provides services training and implementation of feedback to help empower these women and effect relevant policy changes (Centre for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) 2009).

Afghanistan is another country where Indigenous women are stepping into the economic arena with more support and confidence because of that support. The Afghan Women's Business Association (AWBA) encourages women in business to voice their concerns and ideas through media, and to government officials as well as helping develop international trade links to enhance their market audiences and enabling access to funding credit to expand their ventures. This Association is funded by the Afghan Government and acts to provide services including training and research facilities, as well as start-up packages and support forums.

These two South Asian countries show how, compared with Australia, there are some valuable ideas regarding funding and specifically targeting forums whereby giving voice to Indigenous women acts to empower them as active participants in their own journeys with valuable input for government direction in policy development. This can be constructive for Australian government direction, specific to changes as outlined by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) (Center for International Private Enterprise - CIPE - 2009).

Ghosh and Cheruvalath (2007) provide another work, which identifies that Indigenous women entrepreneurs should be considered important instruments in the Indian economy. The paper looks at the challenges and successes that are encountered, as defined by their level of education and within the constraint of socio-cultural dimensions.

These authors highlight the growth of female entrepreneurs around the world, providing estimates that 25% to 33% of all businesses are owned by women. Here too, employment rates of America's women-owned enterprises that employ more than 100 workers are growing six times faster than all other enterprises in the USA. In addition, the growth of women-owned firms outpaced overall business growth by 2:1 in countries such as Canada and the USA. They also conclude that there are similar findings across parts of Asia as highlighted by the CIPE (2009), and Australasia with more women setting up new small businesses than men, and is supported by the Micro-Economic Policy Analysis Branch (1999). According to Ghosh and Cheruvalath (2007), the peak ages are 25 to 35 for both men and women and this appears to concur with other researchers.

2.8 Culture, community and social capital

In many non-Indigenous entrepreneurial research circles, it is widely accepted that economic gain is the primary goal for business enterprise as discussed by Foley (2008), Furneaux and Brown (2008), and Lee-Ross and Mitchell (2007). It is also apparent in the literature that the Indigenous enterprise researching fraternity does not subscribe to this theory. They also don't embrace the philosophy that this is the way Indigenous peoples operate a business. Such non-Indigenous business ideas are put forward by writers including Lindsay (2005), Foley (2003), and Lee-Ross and Mitchell (2007) who argue that there are distinct differences between the drives for enterprise within the two groups despite there being some 'economic incentive motivation action [including entrepreneurship] in all cultures' (p. 200). Lindsay (2005) is succinct when he encapsulates the theory in his statement, 'Thus, Indigenous entrepreneurship is more holistic than non-Indigenous entrepreneurship; it focuses on both economic and non-economic objectives'.

Lee-Ross and Mitchell (2007) hold the view that this trend, where authors considered culture as a fundamental aspect of providing a more holistic understanding of entrepreneurship, began in the mid-1980s.

The available research shows that there are important connections between, culture, community and non-economic capital for Indigenous entrepreneurs. Furneaux and Brown (2008) provide a foundation to support the difficulties faced that mirrors the direction of this study with various concepts of what capital can mean including: '… financial, human, social, physical, organizational, and technological' (p. 133).

Culture may mean different things to different people and the significance of its value will be explored in this review. Culture is something that gives meaning to what we do,

why we do it and how it gets done. Geertz (1973) states: '…it is in essence the fabric of meaning in terms which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action' (p. 173). This quote is cited by several authors including McGrath (1995).

Simply put, it can be referred to as the lifestyle of a people. The term 'culture', can refer to a wide range of areas though, like the culture of a home environment, the workplace, and the local school. Here it is referring to the belief systems of Indigenous groups of people. Lindsay (2005) acknowledges that these differences permeate across nations and communities and that many cultures can and do exist in a nation. He identifies Australia as having at least 573 distinct Indigenous cultures with other countries also having many cultures within its nation.

Lindsay (2005) provides a definition for culture, in part, to be '… the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one category of people from another… Culture influences attitudes and behaviour, varies within and across nations and within and across ethnicities and is strongly embedded in Indigenous communities' (p. 1).

This definition has evolved somewhat from those put forward several decades ago like that from Kluckhohn (1961) who stated: 'By culture we mean those historically created definitions of the situation which individuals acquire by virtue of participation in or contact with groups that tend to share ways of life that are in particular respect and in their total configuration distinctive' (p. 52).

Lindsay (2005) identifies that, while there are approximately 500 million Indigenous people in the world, there is little literature available regarding entrepreneurial attitudes of this group, including the reasons and drives for entering into business. There is an intrinsic importance of culture to the Indigenous population as concurred by Schaper

(1999), Foley (2003) and Hindle and Lansdowne (2005; 2007). This importance to culture has also not been linked in research to entrepreneurship for Indigenous Australians. Peredo and Chrisman-James (2006) are precise in identifying that the gaps of understanding of entrepreneurship in different cultural settings were detrimental to the Indigenous entrepreneur. They sharpen the concept that 'social networks and community issues may be important aspects in comprehending enterprise among disadvantaged groups, including Indigenous people' (p. 331). Fuller et al. (2005) point out the difficulties in the 'one size fits all' approach while expressing that there is further research required into the imbalance of principles of entrepreneurship with collective well-being in communities, and within the context of that community (p. 15).

Hindle and Lansdowne's (2007) interpretative definition of Indigenous entrepreneurship provides an initial guide for this study with Lindsay's (2005) definition being a shorter version of the same, but this may need further refining. Foley (2000) is more specific. As previously stated, he defines the Indigenous entrepreneur as one who '…alters traditional patterns of behaviour, by utilising their resources in the pursuit of self-determination and economic sustainability via their entry into self-employment, forcing social change in the pursuit of opportunity beyond the cultural norms of their initial economic resources' (p. 25)

His definition should be weighted highly, given Foley's Indigenous heritage and knowledge base. Additionally, his research is prominently within the Australian Indigenous context of entrepreneurship, and is directed towards the urban Indigenous entrepreneur (Lee-Ross & Mitchell 2007).

Fuller and Gleeson (2007) define the Indigenous community relative to remote communities as one which is '…bounded by physical or (legal) boundaries, and inhabited

or intended to be inhabited predominantly (i.e. greater than 50 per cent of usual residents) by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples' (p. 3). But 'community' can also refer to other aspects of social connectedness. Hindle (2010) provides a definition of 'community' within an entrepreneurship paradigm as being: '...any context where a self-defined group of people see their mutual belonging to the community as distinguishing them (but not excluding them) from all other members of society at large and where continued membership of the community is valued highly enough to impose some constraints on behaviour' (p. 610).

While this definition is valuable to provide a basic premise, the author is not sure she subscribes to the development of a definition that has the key term within it.   This definition does not address the context of the Indigenous community with regard to entrepreneurship, but does provide a foundation for a definition of community.

An appropriate definition of an Indigenous community cannot be sourced through the available literature, aside from the one provided that is specific to remote geographical areas and does not factor anything other than habitation. This will have to be further investigated with regard to the research topic.

Social capital and community is an element of entrepreneurship that is being discussed with enthusiasm as expressed by Peredo and Chrisman-James (2006) and is particularly entwined with Indigenous enterprises. Furneaux and Brown (2007) highlight the delicate balance for Indigenous entrepreneurs who generally have access to a rich source of social capital, but are also hindered by the expectations associated with supporting others. They discuss the 'costs' of not sharing that may result in alienation from their people. Foley (2003; 2008) concurs.

These authors provide a base that extends from the previously stated concept that there has been Indigenous business trade since time began, with an idea that such sharing is not segregated to just Australia's Indigenous populous. Historical evidence of other countries' social reciprocal systems, demonstrates that the Western 'normal' way of enterprise is in fact comparatively new, yet it is apparent that the 'Western' ways have dominated. This may be grounded in how the governments of these countries and, in particular Australian governments, have impacted on the female generally and more specifically the Indigenous way of life, which has been likened to a feministic social order of kinship and family connectedness.

Women have a difficult time in the employment arena and this imbalance is no more highlighted than in the statistics as displayed in the *Good Weekend* magazine *The Age* (May 1, 2010, pp. 13-15) which states:

- Women do not form the majority in any category of senior job position in any industry in Australia.

- Not a single industry in Australia pays women more than they do men and most pay them less, despite women's higher educational qualifications and their dominance in three major industries.

- The overall pay gap between full-time male and female workers, (based on average weekly earnings), has risen to 17 percent. (The gap gets higher as you go up − women in lower paid or blue collar jobs are more likely to be protected by awards).

- In 2008, there were four female CEOs in the top ASX200 companies in Australia. That's two percent…Among ASX200 top earners, only seven

percent were women. At that level, the overall median pay gap between men and women was 42 percent.

- Female chief financial officers and chief operating officers earner half the salary of their male equivalents, while female CEOs earned two thirds the salary of male CEOs. Even the senior human resources positions, where women are more common, the pay gap is 43 percent.

- Out of a total of 1474 board directorship positions on ASX200 companies at the end of 2009, 128 were filled by women. One hundred and six ASX200 companies had not a single woman on their boards.

- Australia has one of the lowest participation rates among OECD and even non OEDC countries.

- The number of female executive managers has declined by 18 percent since 2006. In the same period the number of male executives – already a significant majority – declined by only seven percent.

- Women make up 27 percent of lower house MPs and 35 percent in the Senate, which puts Australia on a par with Afghanistan, behind Rwanda (56 percent) and Sweden (46 percent) but ahead of the US (16 percent of congress) and Britain (close to 20 percent).

- Overall sex discrimination complaints lodged with the Human Rights Commission increased by 25 percent from 2008 to 2009 including 33 percent rise in sexual harassment complaints

With all this information it is little wonder that women, as a group collective, see themselves as the underdog in the employment arena and this is the ground floor for attempting to go into business.

2.9   Impact of government on Indigenous issues

Governments of different countries have adopted different ways of governance. Most fall under the democratic umbrella in that they are elected by the people to work for the people and be the people's voice collectively. Australian history has been fraught with paternalistic polices that have acted to disintegrate the abilities of Indigenous Australians to be self-determining and productive members of the wider community, in general. Despite that some Indigenous Australians are successful in their personal, educational and business lives, the numbers are still disappointing. Today there are volumes of literature that echo the inequalities between the non-Indigenous population and the Indigenous population. This can be identified in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011) figures that show higher unemployment rates, lower health outcomes, higher incarnation rates and lower education rates. This social imbalance is echoed in Indigenous communities in other countries.

It is extremely disheartening that in 2011, the comparative figures of Indigenous disadvantage as addressed by COAG (2011a) are still high. The Indigenous citizen base represents such disadvantage in all facets of society with a 17-year gap in life expectancies compared to the non-Indigenous population related to health outcomes, housing, educational outcomes, and employment (Banks 2003; 2005; 2007; COAG 2011a). The COAG (2011a) have developed six targeted areas to improve those figures.

They are:

- To close the gap in life expectancy within a generation.

- To ensure all Indigenous four-year olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years.

- To halve the gap for Indigenous students in year 12 equivalent attainment by 2020.

- To halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.

- To halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade.

- To halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for Indigenous children within a decade.

The Indigenous Australian Timeline (Appendix 2) shows the marked effect that the policies of past governments have had on Indigenous Australians, regardless of stated and perceived intentions. It is apparent today that there are significant political, moral and ethical consequences for governments in their accountability not only for past wrongs but for the movement forward for all Australians, especially 'the firsts' in this country (as made apparent in February 2008 when the federal parliament made an apology to Indigenous Australia).

The Chairman of the Productivity Commission, Mr. Gary Banks (2003; 2005; 2007) in his various speeches has provided concise overviews of the economic circumstances for the Indigenous population of Australia. He explores the reasons for the imbalance between the two groups as non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians and he highlights

the complexities of institutions, policies and programs that have governed Indigenous affairs in Australia (2007, p. 9).

Banks (2007) explains how the fragmented mix of services specifically targeted towards Indigenous Australians, being shared by the federal and state governments has not been productive, and how while there is a copious amount of literature informing the inherent need to acknowledge Indigenous cultural viewpoints in policy implementation, this is yet to occur. These papers show how even within the last decade there has been little change for the Indigenous Australian outlook and in fact at the recent COAG (2011) gathering it was determined that some figures had actually gotten worse. An example of this could be seen in the incarceration rates that have increased in the past decade. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (2011) states, 'Indigenous juveniles are 28 times more likely than non-Indigenous juveniles to be incarcerated, despite Indigenous peoples representing only 2.5 percent of the Australian population'.

In contrast it is encouraging to see that census figures show an increase in employment rates for Indigenous women The ABS (2011) advised that 'For Indigenous females living in Major cities the employment to population ratio increased from 43% in 2009 to 49% in 2010'. The Government needs to ensure that this shift continues while acting swiftly to decrease those aspects that have stayed the same or increased to the detriment of the Australian Indigenous person (SGRGSP 2009).

Former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has been identified by Banks (2007) in COAG reports on Indigenous disadvantage as being optimistic in his approach on what can be achieved collectively by a unified effort, in 'closing the gap' for Indigenous Australians. This aspect has, and will continue to be, a thorn in the side of the Indigenous

reconciliation process as both the main political parties have very different views on how to adequately address the Indigenous disadvantage. The available literature provides different insights into where to go from here (Banks 2007).

Rudd spoke at the 2009 COAG meeting in Darwin, regarding the outlook for Indigenous Australians and the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* (OID) framework that is being used as a reporting mechanism, where he acknowledged that the data for COAG targets must be accurate to ensure clear direction and pledged $46.4 million dollars over four years to upgrade the data collection systems to ensure that this occurs. He also acknowledged it was the first time in Australian history that all of the States and Territories were committed to incorporate their reporting targets with the Commonwealth to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

To understand the current climate of these gaps one should firstly look at what has gone before and where the employment trends are for Indigenous peoples with the understanding that according to Keane (1988) '…it is an established fact that the best route out of poverty and dependence is employment' (p. 5).

Schaper (1999) advised that 62 percent of the Indigenous workforce was in the public sector. This is supported by findings in Furneaux and Brown (2007). In addition, ATSIC reported in 1998 that there were 30,000 recipients of Development Employment Projects (CDEP) – recipients who are considered employed. These figures can show a false positive in real terms. In 2010 CDEP was dismantled as a government program. The figures showing 30,000 people were employed highlight a gap and create the question: Where are those people now and what are they doing?

As depicted in Fuller et al. (2005) the Indigenous self-employed had an average $6000 more total income per annum than other workers (excluding CDEP) and worked an

average of 14 hours more than CDEP recipients. These authors also indicate that, according to the 1996 census figures, only 2.5% of Indigenous peoples were self-employed compared to 9% of total population with 25% of those being under 30 years of age. This is in contrast to 10.9% of the non-Indigenous population being under 30. In addition the largest age group for Indigenous self-employed was 45%, aged 25-40, while their non-Indigenous counterparts aged 25-40 comprised 34%, with the majority, 62%, being aged 40-64. More information provided by Fuller et al. (2005) from this census showed a higher rate of employment of older males in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons than rates for either group in younger age brackets. This may prove to be problematic with the Indigenous population growing particularly in the youth age bracket (which may be a result of better reporting). Details revealed that 32% of Indigenous self-employed people lived in a major urban area. In comparison, the proportion of Indigenous self-employed was higher than for Indigenous wage and salary earners in rural areas.

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (2008) report *Open for Business – Developing Indigenous enterprise in Australia* provides figures that are worse than the 1996 census figures in that:

> Non Indigenous people are three times more likely to own and run their own business than Indigenous people and, for Indigenous people this factor is further influenced by remoteness. In 2006, six percent of employed Indigenous people indicated that they worked in their own business. This compares to 17 percent of employed non-Indigenous people. The proportion of employed Indigenous people who worked in their own business was highest in major cities (seven per cent) and lowest in very remote areas (two percent). The rate of non Indigenous people who worked in their own business was similar regardless of remoteness (p. 2).

Borland and Hunter (1997) thoroughly investigated the determinants of the employment status of Indigenous Australians, and the links to criminal activity. Since Indigenous Australians have a disproportionately high incarceration rate and significantly lower employment rates than the non-Indigenous population, the importance of their findings are fruitful for understanding why programs such as CDEP were taken up. They show that there are links to whether an Indigenous person being previously incarcerated, and inhibited by prospective employment, is more likely to have taken up a CDEP project. This begs the question: was the CDEP program helping Indigenous Australians become part of society through employment, or was it acting as a hindrance? Pearson (2001a) dares to propose that dependency and passivity are to be avoided. He is adamant in his belief that Indigenous Australians do not have a right to be dependent but have an unquestionable right to a 'fair place in the real economy' (p. 135). This attitude shows how Indigenous Australians are desperate to take their rightful place alongside the 'whitefella' and just be.

The difficulty as described by Pearson (2001a); Fuller and Gleeson (2007); Banks (2003; 2005; 2007); and SGRGSP (2009) is changing the culture of bureaucracies to be co-operative consultants rather than the paternalistic drivers, applying the top down approach that has not worked as evidenced by SCRGSP (2009): 'We heard about related Programs [Housing] that were delivered in parallel without any apparent coordination between those involved' (p. 17).

In order for COAG (2011) to adequately address the key areas of concern for Indigenous Australians, it has developed seven building blocks that include: Early childhood; Economic participation; Governance and leadership; Health; Healthy homes; Safe communities; and Schooling. These seven working areas within the targets for 'closing

the gap' are non gender specific. There are gender specific policies globally, that do address targeted areas of concern for women.

As previously noted, The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) acts to support actions to eliminate violence against women. A new Act of the Victorian Parliament, brought into effect in January 2008, is the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.* It protects the rights and freedoms of Individual Victorians, using civil and political rights revived from *The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. The charter requires state and local government to take human rights into consideration when making laws. Therefore it has 'Important implications for the fundamental rights to non-discrimination, equality before the law, the right to privacy, liberty and security of person for women' (Healey et al. 2008, p. 38).

As noted by McGlade (2000), an Indigenous lawyer who analysed the Federal Government response to the Mabo decision made by the Australian High Court, the decision failed to address social justice measures for Indigenous women. In considering possible forms of recourse through the International Human Rights Law which identifies the rights of Indigenous women to self-determination, Ms. McGlade concludes that the Australian government hasn't acknowledged their obligation to Indigenous women under this charter and instead maintains the patriarchal viewpoint regarding Indigenous women.

The McClure Report (2000) investigated fundamental changes in ideology, principles and practice to induce a new directive for Australian Indigenous peoples. The report adds weight to the knowledge that, with a patriarchal governance style as well as systemic discrimination, there are increased barriers to Indigenous entrepreneurship, particularity for women. The report detailed the very real need to adequately: '…address the systemic

discrimination, by businesses towards Indigenous People, including strategies to increase Indigenous employment in Small Business' (p. 57).

Schaper (1999) agrees. He asserts that there is a noticeable absence from the private business sector in any large scale involvement, and that this sector is ignoring Indigenous businesses. Schaper goes on to contrast this phenomenon with other developed nations including Canada.

According to Schaper (1999) the 1991 census held that 6% of the Indigenous population was listed as self-employed compared with 17% of the non-Indigenous population. In 1994 this had fallen to 5%. This shows that there was no growth in this area during the decade of the 1990s, and that the figures released in 2009 by SCRGSP report on *Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage – key indicators* (2009, p. 33) support figures put forward by researchers such as Furneaux and Brown (2007), Hindle et al. (2005; 2002), Frederick and Foley (2006), and Lee-Ross and Mitchell (2007) as true. The fact is that Australian Indigenous entrepreneurs are on the decline.

With regard to Indigenous employment, it is widely regarded as fundamentally important to have the Indigenous population engage in self employment as a way to self-determination. This is resounded in studies carried out by Hindle and Lansdowne (2005; 2007), Lee-Ross and Mitchell (2007), and Frederick and Foley (2006).

It is accepted that there is a significant challenge for both Indigenous communities and the policymakers from the government hierarchy, the standing committees, various councils and other bodies, in addressing the issue of Indigenous disadvantage and more precisely the employment divide by unearthing sustainable development (Bennett & Gordon 2007). However, this should not mean that nothing is done or that good money is wasted providing innumerable amounts of information that goes nowhere and helps no

one. Australia has other successful countries to model, adding its own relevant ingredients. Whatever the challenges, policy changes must include initiatives through innovative ideas that benefit the Indigenous Australian. As Dr Mick Dodd stated in 1995, 'The time has come for the fundamental shift in public policy in respect for Australia's Indigenous people…At the basis of this shift must be the transition, too little understood, from the administration of Indigenous welfare to the recognition of Indigenous rights' (HREOC: Social Justice Commissioner 1999, p. 6).

This research will add to the current valuable evidence for innovations to be implemented at all levels for enterprising Indigenous women of Victoria and may provide some transfer value.

2.10   The Koori Business Network

The Koori Business Network (KBN) is the Victorian government's front running agency for growth and promotion of economic development for Indigenous Australians residing in Victoria. It should be firstly noted that while it is named Koori, this government agency is not restricted to the Koori community (as known to be those from Victoria and the Coastal NSW region) but for Indigenous Australians who reside in Victoria yet may originate or have heritage from another part of Australia (KBN 2008).

The KBN was established in 1999 when the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development (DIIRD) determined its necessity under the Small Business Victoria umbrella. It is directed by the need for Indigenous Australians to be encouraged to self-determination through business venture; it is funded after submissions to the Executive Review Committee (ERC) based on their view of the relative importance relative of those submissions; it was not born from Victorian Parliamentary legislation,

but simply acts as an arm of DIIRD and a branch of Small Business Victoria to meet the needs of Indigenous Businesses. One of the agency's fundamental roles is to provide specifically relevant support to businesses owned and/or operated by Indigenous people. Another key role of the organisation is to identify and utilise opportunities to access and increase the capacity of Indigenous business (KBN 2008).

The KBN continues in its endeavours to meet both their objectives and has seen growth in both number and diversity since its inception. Their staff seeks out new avenues to support Indigenous Business. The KBN currently does not have any specific programs directed at the Indigenous female entrepreneur.

2.11 Areas of enterprise and what research has been done for Indigenous entrepreneurs in these areas

The broad areas of enterprise include: Agriculture Forestry and Fishing; Manufacturing; Construction; Retail Trade; Accommodation and Food Services; Information Media and Telecommunications; Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services; Professional Scientific and Technical services; Administration Services; Education and Training; Health Care and Social Assistance; Arts and Recreational Services. Other areas of enterprise that cannot be placed within these areas are simply known as 'Other' (KBN, p. 3).

There has been little research completed with regard to specific industries for Indigenous Australians, with the exception of Tourism and Fishing (mainly with the Torres Strait Islanders).

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), a federal arm of the Australian Government has produced a paper called *Building the Future through Enterprise: Stories of Successful Indigenous Enterprises and Entrepreneurs* (2005) which

highlighted 24 different business ventures that span the 13 areas as listed above but it covered all of Australia, so the details gathered from these stories were not specific to Victoria or to females.

2.12 Australian Indigenous women's entrepreneurship

Although Foley's (2000; 2003; 2008) work provides a sound base, in that his findings are relevant to urban Australian Indigenous entrepreneurs, his work does not investigate Indigenous women entrepreneurs, nor does it specifically look at those in Victoria. There is strictly limited information regarding the Indigenous female entrepreneur and this adds to the significance of this project.

Schaper (1999), using information from the 1991 census, advised that only 3.8% of Indigenous females were self employed compared to 11.8% of the national average (p. 89). According to figures released in the COAG report (2009) there has been a decrease in both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous self employment rates from 2001 to 2006. The 'gap' is still unacceptable with the number of Indigenous entrepreneurs dropping from 6.0% to 5.4% for the period, while the Non-Indigenous entrepreneurs' figures decreased from 16.6% to 16.0% – still a 10% difference with no breakdown of male to female as the ABS does not provide further breakdowns of the information. This deficit shows the real need and importance of such research being available to inform policy makers and other related fields.

This research is unique in that the information gathered from the project data will specifically identify the contributing factors and processes that support the success of the Indigenous female entrepreneur (within the urban, regional environment). While it will use a target group initially derived from the KBN database, it is envisaged through

purposive snowball sampling that the results and findings will provide a previously uncharted sea of knowledge for stakeholders, including but not limited to, Indigenous communities, the research fraternity, government entities, the KBN, and the entrepreneurs themselves.

2.13   Summary

Women in all areas of the world have been the understated driving force of the family dynamic, social cohesiveness and economic participation rates. They have achieved this by reproduction of the human race, as well as nurturing all types of people for all types of roles. Roles from the future kings and queens to elected officials, motivational speakers, process workers and stay at home parents and tuck shop volunteers.

Women are unique in what they can bring to the world. By their very gender women have the capacity for future generations by their child bearing capacity and their nurturing foundations. It is hardly surprising that rippled throughout the literature over the centuries are examples of women kept in a supporting role and that it has taken until the 1950s in the 'Western world' to evolve, albeit slowly in some areas. Women's perspectives are worthwhile but not necessarily accepted. One of the key assumptions of feminist research relates to the difference in perspectives of men to women depending on their position in society (Alston & Bowles 1998), and while it is broadly defined as being done by women, about women and for women, it is paramount in its commitment to effect societal change for the lives of women and therefore the dynamic of society as we know it (Alston & Bowles 1998).

However it is also apparent that the Indigenous woman has these barriers and more to contend with when seeking to create a level playing field with regard to self-

determination and economic equity. Indigenous women around the world have had to overcome cultural disadvantage as well as gender disadvantage to become successful drivers of their own destiny. O'Reilly et al. (2005) state: '…Indigenous women and women of colour are particularly aware of the limits and boundaries that surround our world. How our mothers have fought the struggle that subjugated them primarily but there is something to be commended…' (p. 135).

It is also evident that Indigenous Australian women have their own set of unique circumstances relevant to their specific cultural identity and community connections. This has acted to impact on their livelihood, and more specifically their entrepreneurial adventures. This study has implications for the self-determination of Indigenous women under the umbrella of social justice. It will encourage more participation in the self-employment arena by Indigenous Australians by contributing to the body of knowledge for women, Indigenous Australians, future generations, and academia by providing recommendations to relevant government bodies for diligent consideration.

It is these journeys of discovery and growth that this research is endeavouring to unearth. It is these journeys that will enrich us with the insight, encouragement and dedication that separates and identifies the Indigenous woman entrepreneur from her counterparts: journeys that will be of significant value.

Figure 4: 'The Mission'
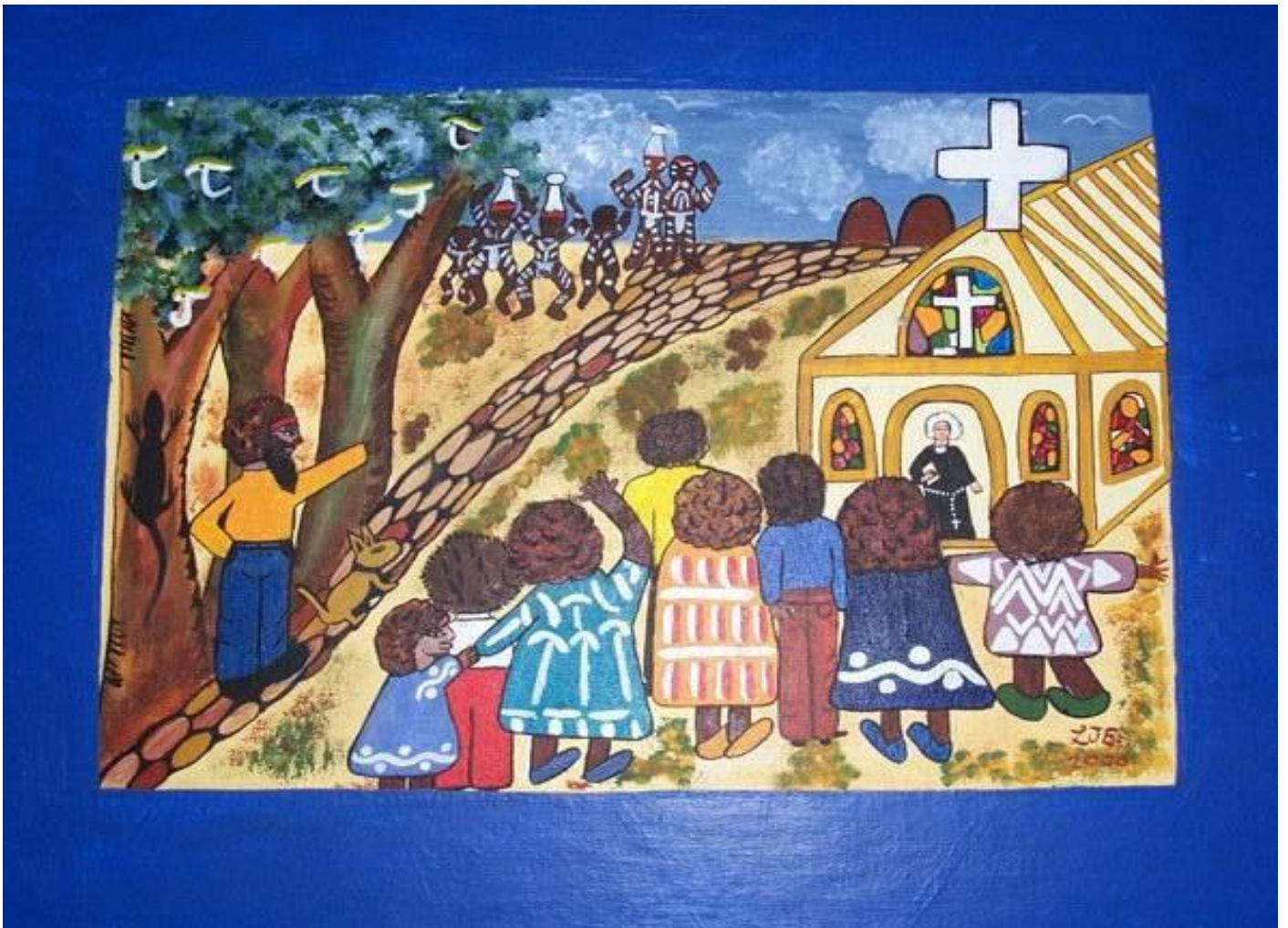
This painting provides a picture story of memories

of Leann's ancestors as they told their story to her...

Source: Leanne Jean Edwards (2000)

3. RESEARCH METHOD: The 'How' in the Telling of this Story

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a sound understanding of the research methods: How the research was conducted and how the information that was gathered provides a thorough presentation by the way in which it was 'unpacked'.

3.2 Identifying the data collection picture: The information sharing canvas

Qualitative research is an expansive paradigm that in the past has been considered by many to have less validity and merit (Alston & Bowles 1998). However in recent decades qualitative research has earned its respect within the research community by demonstrating its ability to provide rich insights into relationships.

Qualitative action research considers the mixing pot of human dynamic and the way in which individual views are distinct from one another. It allows researchers to increase situational knowledge bases when examining social realities (Alston & Bowles 1998). These dynamics are explored and presented, not just transcribed and interpreted, but with clear provision of in-depth colour pictures of journeys and experiences that shape our lives and destinies. They are pictures that can change policies through the power of the written word. Denzin and Lincoln's work (1994) suggest that interpretive styles of research such as:

> qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview; artifacts; cultural texts and productions; observational historical, interactional and visual texts- that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals lives (p. 3).

In developing the 'how' of this research topic, it was determined that a qualitative approach would best present the stories of Indigenous business women's journeys and all that these journeys might include. In particular, their essence, emotion and expression need to be encapsulated and laid bare in order to provide the depth and insight required of such a study. Otherwise who will read it? Who will sit up and take notice? Who will 'effect' the recommended changes? We see many papers written that fail in their endeavour to capture the lives of those that research was intended to help. The author wants to avoid this being regarded as 'that type of research'. Instead she wants the stories of her co-researchers to be heard, noticed and, particularly, to assist those for whom the paper is intended. Reid and Frisby (2008) tell us: '...FPAR (Feminist Participatory Action Research) is an approach in producing knowledge through democratic interactive relationships that are committed to making diverse women's voices more audible by facilitating their empowerment through ordinary talk' (p. 96).

Feminism and Action Research (AR) are interwoven constructs that 'share underlying ethical and political commitments to democracy and social justice' (Greenwood & Levin 1998, p. 163). The feminist approach involves dealing with oppression and silencing, taking a stand of power to 'hearing the voices of the silences, and to bringing these voices to the table' (Greenwood & Levin 1998, p. 212) with an appreciation dynamic of diversity. The feminist approach focuses on the notion that there is a social theory root that revolves around the 'white middle class male' and therefore acts to repress the fair representation of women (Greenwood & Levin 1998).

Scholars from this field emphasise that 'a researcher cannot be content to merely record another's life story for scholarly publication', but must 'return the research...to empower the informant and his or her community' (Blee 1998, p. 15). This type of collaborative co-

researcher influence is highly regarded with Indigenous people who desire inclusiveness to be packaged in the research method (Alston & Bowles 1998).

Indigenous Peoples are becoming more vocal in their call for recognition within the research arena. They are no longer just 'happy' to allow their lives to be researched without some of their input (Baum 1992). Their rights to self-determination and consultation when researching their people, their culture, and their way of life are becoming significantly more socially relevant to the wider Australian community.

The core design of this thesis is one where the rawness and the integrity of the data are kept within the shell of the story itself and all that is held there. By this the author means the range of emotion and lived experience has within it a diversely rich array of learnings and language that is mixed with tones and pauses and silences. The author wants to depict these stories as images or pictures that may be developed in one's mind as the stories are presented and read so that they come to life and are real and interactive. It is paramount that the stories are accurately presented in their wholeness so that they maximise their messages and impact on the very people in positions of authority locally and nationally in order to make a difference. Duhl and Hancock (1988) succinctly articulate: 'Unless data are turned into stories that can be understood by all, they are not effective in any process of change either political or administrative' (p. 7).

After assessing the literature and the various qualitative techniques available, the author chose a feminist approach adopting aspects of co-operative inquiry as being the most suitable for the thesis research design. Bray (2000) asserts: 'One of the tenets of co-operative inquiry is that, although there are parameters that define practice, there is no dogmatic way to conduct co-operative inquiry' (p. 5).

This thesis applies the approach that under the umbrella of the feminist research paradigm, within the PAR parameters and with a huge input from the co-operative inquiry focus the interviews sessions were not over a period of time within a structured cycle of action and reflection but utilised the concept so that the collaboration and reflective cycles came using the ongoing development of the thesis and constantly asking for perusal and feedback of those involved which in and of itself provides a foundation for reflection and action. Co-operative inquiry provided a base for the writer to embrace the female entrepreneur stories and still meet the requirement of academic rigour and rhetoric that is the author's reality.

The human race, also known as 'man', has much to offer including an intricate set of values in society relative to various macro environments. Thus, it must be recognised that men have advantages over women in many aspects of life and this acts to impinge, override or totally deny women's rights (Reeves-Ellington & Anderson 1997). Here women's voices are silenced by patriarchal dominance and the expressed power exerted over them (O'Reilly at al. 2005).

Co-operative Inquiry is a branch of Participatory Action Research (PAR), a form of action research that was broadly founded within the feminist paradigm.

> One of the strengths of action research is that it accepts the diverse perspective of different stakeholders – the 'theory' each will hold to explain how and why events occur as they do – and finds ways of incorporating them into mutually acceptable ways of understanding events that enable them to work toward a resolution of the problem investigated (Stringer 2007, p. 188).

Co-operative Inquiry is a research technique that facilitates the equality and appreciation aspects that Indigenous people desire. Reason (1998) accurately defines co-operative

inquiry as empowering autonomy and co-operation of people in the face of authoritarian social control, stating it: '...values the people's knowledge...helps them appropriate knowledge produced by the dominant knowledge industry for their own interests and purposes [and] allows problems to be explored from their perspective...' (p. 271).

There are a number of variations of co-operative inquiry (Reason, 1988). However, from the outset the topic for discussion is determined by all of the participants, where everyone is valued and considered equal and with the author taking the role of facilitator. If there are cycles of action and reflection then participants are encouraged to explore their growth in perceptions and experiences in terms of what they uncovered as part of their journey. In information sharing sessions it is up to all participants and facilitator to be self- aware and conscious of possible dynamic changes in direction of conversation and how reflection may be more intense and thus impact on action: hence the term 'action reflection cycles'.

The author chose co-operative inquiry as the base research design for this thesis because she believes it embraces Indigenous ways of doing. In it, researchers and researched are more inclined to open their hearts to readers who are known to them, without restricting their journey stories. In everyday life people compromise what they should and should not say. People determine when to say something and when to remain silent, constantly assessing their environment. In these sessions the participants are going to journey through their memories which may prove to be difficult or happy, sad or funny. The expectation is that memories are shared as they interpret them to be. The aim is to accurately capture that intensity as unreserved and untainted as much as possible.

Within the co-operative inquiry paradigm, and in the pursuit to capture the essence of truth, the author incorporated a life-story telling component in this thesis so as to provide

the ingredients rich in language and meaning content, appropriate to this study. This approach is illustrated by Reason (1994) in his defence of 'good stories' being foundational in participatory research. We must endeavour to understand the 'real logic of human situations lived and participated in', so we can then look at the 'larger underlying issues and causes that help us account for them' (Greenwood & Levin 1998, p. 126).

3.3 Strategies: How the author made the research idea a reality

The study required that one component of the invited participants (also known as co-researchers) be practising Australian Indigenous business women, in Victoria, who owned at least 50% of their business and who saw themselves as business entrepreneurs. In this study in-depth interviews and focus groups based on a co-operative inquiry action research paradigm with a Feminist theory base were used to explore the life journeys of successful (as defined by themselves) Indigenous Australian business women. It is a feminist-based approach that is underpinned by 'ethical and political commitments to democracy and social justice' (Greenwood & Levin 1998, p. 118).

This is supported by Calas, Smircich and Bourne (2009) who state'...all feminist theorizing is about social change. It is premised on the assumption that gender is fundamental in the structuring of society with women being historically disadvantaged and it seeks to end this condition...' (p. 552). The other component of the study was from the Indigenous communities of various geographical areas of Victoria to gather their views of Indigenous businesses.

This study investigated journeys of 10 Indigenous Australian business women from across Victoria, and the factors that contributed to their achievements as Indigenous women entrepreneurs. It was not required that the business women had an Australian

Business Number, although a large percentage did. Four different geographically located Indigenous community members were also co-researchers in this study. A total of 11 people were consulted from Indigenous communities across Victoria and included two focus groups – one consisted of five women and the other consisted of four women aside from the researcher; the additional two were individual discussions. The Indigenous Research Ethics Committee from RMIT University, Victoria, provided ethics approval for this study. The ethics approval number is A31/09.

The sample for this research was purposive. Given the dismal figures of Indigenous women in business in Victoria, it was determined that it would be valuable to get as many interested parties to participate as possible. The Koori Business Network (KBN) provided the initial data base of participants approached for the research study. However, as time transpired it was deemed beneficial to broaden the sample base, and more participants were invited to be co-researchers using the 'word of mouth' approach. An example of this would be an Indigenous business woman advising she knew other Indigenous business women who might wish to share their story with the author; she offered to let them know and they contacted the author. The same difficulties were not apparent for the Indigenous community members' participation.

The Koori Business Network (KBN) provided support via administrative and financial means toward the successful completion of the project along with Australian Research Council (ARC) funding through the ARC Linkage Project scheme, with the author being an APAI (Australian Post Graduate Award [Industry]) stipend holder. RMIT is the host University with Deakin University being a partner in the project and providing administrative and placement support to this project.

In the pre-test stage the author approached two women with her initial springboard question that allowed an open-ended discussion to develop. These two interviews were rich in content and gave an unhindered foundation to the depth of disclosure. It was deemed to be a successful way to engage in the process of data gathering.

Information-gathering sessions were arranged through various media such as general mail, email, personal contact, telephone calls and text messaging. Participants were provided with an Information Sheet (Appendix 3) and Consent Form (Appendix 4) for their perusal.

Meeting dates, places and times were arranged according to suitability for all concerned. All participants sighted the Information Sheet and Consent Form. It was also made clear to the participants that the forms did not require signing if they preferred to make a verbal agreement with the author. This can be part of the Indigenous way. All participants chose to sign the consent forms and required little guidance with understanding the wording of these forms.

Participants for the Indigenous business women component comprised 10 females. The ages of the participants have not been provided. The gender was a pre-determinant to be a part of the study. The participants from the Indigenous community attended two individual information sessions with one male and one female. There were also two focus groups, one with four females and the other with five females (not including the author). The gender of these participants was not a pre-determinant of the study.

It was discussed with all of the co-researchers that pseudonyms would be used as much as possible to protect their identity. It was highlighted though that some information may act to identify them. It was also understood that, due to the structure of the focus groups, it may be difficult to adopt total anonymity.

The option of providing further life stories by way of picture, painting, poetry, song or other ways was provided to all participants with the author expressing her understanding that they be copyrighted to the participant; they were placed in the thesis as an addition to the work to add dimension. Two participants provided paintings with their stories; one participant provided song lyrics like poetry that are her life; and one participant provided a poem with an unknown author that depicts her outlook on life. These forms enrich the participant stories and, as Reason (1988) suggests, comprise the co-operative inquiry process which is:

> …not limited to propositional statements: the validating experience and competencies of participants are also forms of knowing... and the findings of an inquiry may be expressed as poetry, drama and art as well as (or instead of) propositional statements. All these forms and expressions of knowing have their own validity (p. 37).

The session durations varied from 32 minutes to 2 hours 41 minutes. Wherever possible the author allowed the conversation to continue until saturation point was reached. The meeting places included private homes, eateries, Aboriginal co-ops and workplaces.

The author gave an undertaking to provide all participants with copies of their transcripts before any were forwarded to any other party including the author's supervisor. This was deemed part of the process of co-researcher and of being inclusive. It was agreed that if any changes needed to be made to their transcript, it would be altered to reflect this and that would become the original version for the purpose of this study. All of the transcripts that were developed from the conversations were provided to the participants for review and additions after their time of reflection. This allowed them to personally revisit the intent of the words they had spoken in both one-on-one conversation and group sessions.

3.4   Information gathering

The information gathering (data collection) was achieved through personal meetings between the author and the co-researchers either individually or in groups at homes, cafes or workplaces at the choosing of the participants. There was no formal structure to the information-gathering sessions and no questions set, other than the springboard question: 'Just tell me about your journey as you see it and how it unfolded to where you are today?' Although before every session started there was a general timeframe from one hour and 90 minutes provided as a guide, there was also no time limit set. It must be understood that it was the author's intention to gather every ounce of valuable information as determined by the co-researcher as their journey. To try and impede the direction of those conversations could well impinge on the outcome and therefore the richness and validity of data.

There was active verbal and non-verbal engagement between the participant and the author as facilitator, through the exchange of words and body gestures. The rapport became evident quickly in the conversations as narratives. While there were times of expressed pain and frustration in some interviews, there were also times of joy and happiness. This wide range of emotion is expected in a co-operative inquiry story telling which explores valuable, rich and in-depth insights.

The author's role as facilitator was valuable in the beginning with regard to steering certain aspects of the story sessions, which took their own paths with the co-researchers conversing about their journeys from past to present and even what they hoped for the future. Their stories flowed without any hesitation and this can only be achieved when there is open unfettered conversing in a safe, environment.

The insider-outsider conundrum is discussed by Foley (2008). Although he too was Indigenous (an 'insider') he acknowledged that he had an 'outsider' role. Being an 'insider' to the research project provided both advantages and disadvantages. For example, being Indigenous and female, she was able to understand the challenges her participants experienced in their stories. However, the author found it challenging to have to balance the integrity of the research process. Her integrity as an Indigenous person holding other Indigenous people's stories in her hands was a major responsibility, and university requirements with regard to academic standards needed a constant effort that was consistently monitored and upheld.

While the author is an insider she also became an outsider too. In writing a thesis and engaging in academic recourse she submitted her freethinking informal writing style to a more formal contrived pattern of acceptability. Academic rhetoric that demands a certain type of 'fit the box' formal writing forces the author to decide where to direct her passion. Should she become one of the many scholars that preceded her that yield to the unrelenting protocols of academic writing and expectations of how it's done? Or does her desired outcomes pressure change within the academic fraternity? In any case, it has been her intention from the outset to provide an understanding of these stories as they are, more than trying to have some academic dialogue. Therefore, while several thesis chapters present a more formal and conventional approach to thesis writing, the chapters reporting the participants' stories incorporates verbatim the beauty and richness of unconventional writing approaches that are acceptable and highly desirable in the story-telling process.

The dilemma of this author's thesis journey is substantial and as Reason (1994) asserts: 'In some ways to write "about" these people's [minority group] experiences in coming to

understand their own words is to repossess it as an academic subject that can be studied from outside' (p. 5).

The author's difficulty has been complex in trying to integrate academic requirements while respecting the value of a person's life-story and upholding the author's own integrity, which originated from real life experiences and truths. This complexity is part of the challenging journey and, in and of itself, offers even more significance to this thesis and its findings.

3.5   Approaches to data analysis

The 21 information-gathering sessions were audio taped using a digital recorder. The author then transferred the transcripts onto her computer hard drive, which is password protected and transcribed six of the 21 session dialogues. The remaining 15 sessions were sent to a professional transcription agency that is highly regarded by many researchers for transcription. Before this was achieved a Confidentiality Agreement was sighted and signed by the parties involved to ensure all written transcript dialogues were confidential and to be returned to the author only for distribution to the thesis participants for their personal perusal and approval for appropriate circulation (i.e. to the author's principal supervisor). Ample space was allowed in the transcriptions for editing and notes. Once all of the co-researching participants had approved their transcripts as being an accurate account of our conversations, with any addition or deletion of information having occurred, the word count was tallied. This detailed process adds weight to the validity of the research (Alston & Bowles 1998). The word count of the 14 transcripts totalled 148,775 words.

The transcripts were unpacked using brackets to explore tone changes and aspects of the conversation, including background noises, interruptions and clarity of words. These bracket indicators add to the depth of meaning in the conversation to help enhance the implied expressions of intent throughout the text. An example of this would be, if a participant was interrupted in their train of thought by an outside influence, the author would have 'interrupted' in brackets at that point in the transcript.

The transcripts were then read, re-read and examined to expose and gather the best thematic aspects of the stories that this research project and process was developed to explore. This examination obligated the writer to decide what content was rich and what was not needed. This process was time consuming given the word counts of all of the interviews but was necessary in allowing the writer to be totally immersed in the theme-based discovery of experiences. Each theme that emerged was identified to the co-researcher through initials so that the author was able to identify themes appropriately and each was then assigned a numeric code to provide anonymity to the participant.

The themes were derived according to Reason (1988) by unearthing 'categories within the experience' after being cut down to 'bare essentials' and catalogued into manageable 'chunks of meaning' (p. 36). The author identified diverse emerging themes of these stories that both supported and contradicted the literature, and included how Indigenous women entrepreneurs were impacted upon by their culture, social justice and diversity issues.

Table 1. How themes were derived

COMMUNITY THEMES			BUSINESS WOMEN THEMES		
Main Themes (4)	**Core themes (9)**	**Sub-themes (19)**	**Main themes (4)**	**Core Themes (17)**	**Sub Themes (38)**
Family	1. Family history	1. History 2. Connectedness	**Family**	1. Family – History, expectations, stolen generation, needs connectedness, 2. Childhood business and work ethics exposure	1. History 2. Expectations 3. Stolen Generation impacts 4. Needs 5. Connectedness 6. Childhood business and work ethic exposure
Business	2. Employ-ment Vs Business 3. Finance	3. What's better? 4. Finance	**Business**	3. Building Business: name development, Five year plan, turning point, drive, passion, partnerships, What is entrepreneurship, exposure. 4. Finance 5. Mentors, role models and Inspirations 6. Tools. What they do? 7. Overseas involvement and markets 8. Success and the fruits 9. Accountants, business smarts and finance skills 10. Building business relationships	7. Building business 8. Name development 9. Five year plan 10. Turning point 11. Drive 12. Passion 13. Partnerships 14. What is Entrepreneurship? 15. Exposure 16. Finance 17. Mentors, role models and inspirations 18. Tools 19. Overseas involvement and markets 20. Success 21. Fruits of business 22. Accountants 23. Business Smarts 24. Finance Skills 25. Hole in the market 26. Importance of Business relationships

COMMUNITY THEMES			BUSINESS WOMEN THEMES		
Main Themes	**Core Themes**	**Sub-Themes**	**Main Themes**	**Core Themes**	**Sub-Themes**
Government	4. All things KBN 5. Building relationships with govt. 6. Government programs 7. Education	5. Education 6. Future generation 7. Keeping kids in school 8. All things KBN 9. Advice 10. NEIS 11. IBA 12. Other agencies 13. CDEP 14. Improvement suggestions 15. Close the Gap	**Government**	11. All things KBN 12. Government programs and approaches	27. All things KBN 28. Close the Gap 29. IBA 30. Building relationships
Culture and Community	8. Community Issues 9. Confidence	16. Relationship building 17. Confidence 18. Justice records 19. The doing	**Culture and Community**	13. Community Issues 14. Work life prior to business 15. Mental health Issues 16. Other ways of telling 17. Education importance	31. Discrimination 32. Identity process importance 33. Information provision 34. Work life prior to business 35. Mental Health 36. Other ways of telling 37. Educational Importance 38. Perceptions and views

Source: Author

3.6   Thesis strengths

In covering the ethical principles to be followed in the gathering and analysis of fieldwork data, Spradley (1980) offers a simple definition of ethnographic fieldwork: 'learning from people' (p. 20).

The author chose to manually process the interview transcripts to ensure that the human element of the stories was not lost in the translational environment of a program-based analysis that still requires manual input anyway. The author sees this as strength to the study because it required an immersion into the data and allowed her to revisit the intent of the conversations held with the participants for richer interpretation. It also proved to be trustworthy as all changes were made by the participants in their transcripts and included in the data processing phase.

3.7   Thesis limitations

While there are limitations of the research, these do not affect the integrity of the study but should be provided nonetheless.

Indigenous Australians make up 2% of the total population for this country (ABS 2008a). In Victoria the Indigenous population base is among the lowest for individual states (ABS 2008a; 2008b). Of this relatively small number there is a smaller constituent that is involved in business as an entrepreneur and an even smaller number who are female. In addition to this there is a portion of these people who are available to participate in a research project such as this one. It is common acceptance that both qualitative and quantitative research is validated according to participant numbers as a measure. This concept disregards the potential and value of the minority group as highlighted in this thesis. It raises significant questions that the author pondered previously including, 'What

does this mean for Indigenous research? Does this somehow impair the truthfulness of findings relative to such a group of people?' These questions are food for thought, but not within the scope of this thesis.

Only two of the 21 participants knew the author personally. The author did not disclose to them that she was involved somewhat in business as she wanted to hear their stories without influence. Because the author and participants share the Indigenous background, the author was both the 'insider' and the 'outsider' to them on many levels. With every meeting there was an ice-breaking aspect, as trust and rapport was established with each person, but this did not take long and once the initial conversation concluded, the stories that transpired were honest, deep and free. In support of this, Oakley (1981) states:

> So I am studying a world of which I myself am part, with all the emotional involvement and accusations of subjectivity that this creates. I do not attempt to keep my surveyors at arm's length and do research 'on' them as my subjects whilst maintaining a dominant position, as is common in much traditional 'objective' research (p. 145).

As with any study there are positives and negatives but in each instance the lack of personal knowledge was not a hindrance to this study.

The number of participants, who were Indigenous business women (10) in this research, was less than was anticipated. Initially names were gathered from the industry partner (KBN) data base. Additional participants were gathered from a 'snowball' sample- where in talking with other participants, names were provided that were not on the KBN database. This method of recruiting different Indigenous business women was approved by KBN and helped to alleviate the issue of low participant numbers.

From the base list of those who met the required criteria, some reasons provided for non -participation included: expressed non interest in the study for various reasons including lack of time available; illness; disillusionment with the industry partner and therefore my connection with them tainted the view of impartiality; and a mismatch of time available within time constraint available to conduct the interviews.

Any type of research with Indigenous people is fraught with challenges. It is widely known, but not really understood by the larger community, that Indigenous people have generally developed a mistrust that rippled through the generations from the colony days. Information digging sessions where Indigenous Australians are expected to basically hand over their stories has in the past been often one sided and non-inclusive. Even in feminist research the 'voices of marginalised group' have not been heard (Alston & Bowles 1998, p. 17). This perception of the *white man's way of doing things* has presented problems for co- researcher recruitment in this study.

There were also significant aspects of meeting schedules that impinged on the information gathering process. Indigenous people do not like to be rushed, especially when they are being asked to open their lives and their stories. This proved to be difficult where interviews were taking place across the state during road trips that had to fit within an extremely tight time. However the information that has been gathered is rich in content and meaning and ample to provide a sound base for further research and learning with regard to proper protocols when doing research with Indigenous Australian people.

There are many views about Indigenous business in various countries around the world including Canada, New Zealand and America. There is limited information regarding Indigenous business women though as the information available is more targeted at the

general Indigenous population that is involved in business ventures but does not specify women.

It was reassuring to find that Indigenous Australian business women are unique in their approach to enterprise, but there is a level of accepted transferability that really cannot be applied here. This is an aspect that appears to permeate the literature that is available: it attempts to apply a 'one size fits all' or 'one size should be able to fit'. This is not so. There is extremely limited information regarding Indigenous Australian business women and more specifically those residing in Victoria. While there are basic fundamentals that may be transferred to other areas, states, countries, it must be accepted that this study cannot claim to be transferable in its entirety because it is state and gender specific and while all of the participants were Indigenous most of them had actually not originated from the area in which they now resided. This then has impacts on the generalisation ability of the research because it is not specific to Victorian Indigenous people but Indigenous people geographically located in Victoria.

A great strength of this study is the willingness, honesty and depth of expression of all of the participants in their sharing. They all showed resilience and desire to succeed in the perception of what success was with an outlook that was determined and passionate. Their courage to make a life, make it count has developed a beacon to others that participants had possibly not noticed before they shared their story. This light can be far reaching as this paper is able to cross the paths of academia, industry and Government to inform, enlighten and empower all. It is anticipated that the findings of this research will be of great value to DIIRD, Small Business Victoria and the KBN (KBN 2008).

The Feministic, qualitative approach with Co-operative Inquiry aspects has provided the author with the palette to draw the essence of the participant's stories and to provide them

in a full picture that is easy to read. These stories are presented in the next chapter as 'Findings'. This part will show how these findings were unearthed and gives the reader a canvas of what those finding mean. This chapter is branched into groups of identified themes.

Figure 5: Song – 'Looking for a Lady'

This was a song written about Anne trying to find her birth mother,

and to learn more about her Indigenous Ancestry.

It is significant in that many Indigenous babes were taken from their mothers

or given over as part of white assimilation in this country

LOOKING FOR A LADY

IT'S WINTER AGAIN AND THERE'S A CHILL IN THE AIR

AND IT'S BLOWING RIGHT THROUGH MY HEART

AS I SIT HERE TONIGHT AND I TRY TO MAKE SENSE

OF THIS LITTLE GIRLS LIFE FROM THE START

IT'S NOT THAT I'M UNHAPPY

YOU KNOW I REALLY HAVE A GOOD TIME

BUT THERE'S A MYSTERY THAT'S HAUNTING ME

AND I THINK IT'S TAKING OVER MY MIND

MY MOTHER AND FATHER ALWAYS TREATED ME WELL

THEY DID WHAT THEY THOUGHT TO BE RIGHT

AND I LISTENED IN AWE TO THE STORIES THEY TOLD

AS THEY PUT ME TO BED EVERY NIGHT

IT'S NOT THAT I DIDN'T LOVE THEM

BUT AT TIMES I FELT I DIDN'T BELONG

AND WHEN THE QUESTIONS I ASKED WERE QUICKLY PASSED

I KNEW THAT SOMETHING WAS WRONG

Chorus

SO I'M LOOKING FOR A LADY

WHO LEFT ME LONG AGO

THERE'S SO MUCH TO TELL HER

SO MUCH I NEED TO KNOW

YES I'M LOOKING FOR A LADY

THAT I HAVE NEVER SEEN

I WONDER WHAT SHE'S DOING

I WONDER WHERE SHE'S BEEN

I'VE TRAVELLED ALL OVER THE COUNTRYSIDE

I'VE BEEN TO EVERY CITY AND TOWN

AND I CARRY WITH ME THIS PAIN INSIDE

YOU KNOW IT'S REALLY GETTING ME DOWN

I ONLY WANT TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED

I WISH SHE WAS HERE TO EXPLAIN

AND ONCE I KNOW I'D BE HAPPY TO GO

AND GET ON WITH MY LIFE ONCE AGAIN

I TRY TO IMAGINE THE DAY I WAS BORN

AND WHAT WENT ON IN THAT ROOM

WAS IT A PLACE FILLED WITH HAPPINESS

OR WAS IT A PICTURE OF GLOOM

I SEE A YOUNG WOMAN SO HELPLESS

BUT THERE WAS NOT A WORD SHE COULD SAY

WHEN THEY SMILED AND SAID AS THEY SHOOK THEIR HEADS

WE'VE COME TO TAKE YOUR BABY AWAY

Chorus

SO I'M LOOKING FOR A LADY

WHO LEFT ME LONG AGO

THERE'S SO MUCH TO TELL HER

SO MUCH I NEED TO KNOW

YES I'M LOOKING FOR A LADY

THAT I HAVE NEVER SEEN

I WONDER WHAT SHE'S DOING

I WONDER WHERE SHE'S BEEN

YES I WONDER WHAT SHE'S DOING

IS SHE LOOKING FOR ………….ME?

Source: John Howie/Anne Conway (undated)

4. ANALYSIS: The Foundational Canvas Colours

4.1   Introduction

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to present the analysis conducted on the thesis data. A manual theme category analysis of the interviews was conducted which uncovered four core themes for the business women and four core themes for the community members which include Family, Business, Government and Culture/Community. The themes have been unpacked to reveal related issues including the effect of past injustices, understanding business learnings and the importance of relevant information provision.

4.2   Approach for demographics

All business participants were women as the research is targeting that gender group. The age range for the participants ranged from 20 years to 62 years across both groups of business women and community members. All participants were Indigenous Australians with a portion being unmarried, and without children. All participants lived in Victoria although the majority of them did not reside in their original birthplace. Some participants were raised by people other than their biological parents.

Participants were actively employed across the range of economic categories including: travel/tourism, agriculture forestry, retail/arts, manufacturing, education and training, professional services, information, media and telecommunications.

All of the respondents from both groups had their demographical and other relevant information coded to ensure anonymity, as well as being able to provide a basis of analysis for the research. A legend of the code was developed and is listed in Table 1.

Table 2: Coded Respondents

Business Type	Victorian Region	Years in Business	Age Bracket	Respondent Identifier	Married/Single/supporting children
S – Services M – Manufacturing F – Forestry, Agriculture & Fishing R– Retail trade/Arts I – Information, Media & Telecommunications P – Professional, Scientific and Technical Services T –Travel and Tourism E – Education and Training O – Community Member (not in business)	A – Melbourne Metro B – within 100Km of Melbourne C – more than 100 Km from Melbourne	X – more than five years in any business including previous ones Y – less than five years in business including previously operated ones	# < 25 * ≥ 25 but ≤ 63	Coded 1 to 10 for Business Women Respondents Coded a to k for Indigenous Community Members	Md – Married Si – Single Ch – Supporting Children N – Not Supporting Child U – Unknown UCh – Unknown Marital Status Supporting Children

Source: Author

4.3 Sample: Indigenous business women demographics

The ten Indigenous business women were involved in differing aspects of business as outlined in the table above. Nine of the respondents were currently married. Five of the respondents were supporting children. Eight of the respondents lived and worked more than 100 km from the Melbourne Metro area, with one living in Melbourne Metro and another living within 100 km of the Melbourne Metro area. Nine of the ten respondents had been in business for more than 10 years. All 10 of the respondents were aged between

25 and 63. Nine of the respondents were involved with more than one business type with five of them being involved in three business types; four being involved with two business types; and one being involved solely with one business type – during their journeys and not at the same time. Five respondents were involved with Services (S); five with Education and Training (E); five with Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (P); four within the Retail sector (R); two within the Travel and Tourism sector (T); and one in both the Manufacturing (M) and Forestry sector (F).

4.4   Indigenous community member demographics

The eleven Community members were involved in differing aspects of the community in which they lived. Ten of the respondents were female and one was male. Eight of the participants were aged between 25 and 63 years with the majority aged 35 to 60. All eleven respondents resided more than 100 km from the Melbourne Metro area. Ten of the respondents were not involved in business. Seven of the respondents had an unknown supporting children/marital status. Two had an unknown marital status with children, and one respondent was single, and one was married. The participants were not directly asked these questions and information that was gathered during the 'conversations' was provided in conversation so if the information was not divulged voluntarily then it was not gained.

4.5   Data analysis

The transcripts were coded using brackets to explore tone changes and aspects of the conversation including background noises, interruptions and clarity of words. These bracket indicators add to the depth of meaning in the conversation to help enhance the implied expressions of intent throughout the text. An example of this would be if a

participant was interrupted in their train of thought by an outside influence. The researcher would have written 'interrupted' in brackets at that point in the transcript.

Ample space was designed into the transcriptions for analysis and notes. The total word count of the 21 transcripts was 148,775 words.

The 21 transcripts were read and re-read, then examined to expose and gather the best thematic aspects of the stories that this research project and process was developed to explore. This examination generated key words and phrases that guided the author in documenting and recording the key content that generated the rich themes. This process was time consuming, given the word count of all of the interviews, but was necessary in allowing the writer to be totally immersed in the thematically-based discovery of experiences. Each theme that emerged was identified to the participant through initials so that the author was able to identify them appropriately and each was then assigned a numeric code to provide anonymity to the participant. This process further enhances the content/thematical approach to the analysis.

The themes were derived by unearthing 'categories within the experience' after being cut down to 'bare essentials' and catalogued into manageable 'chunks of meaning' (Reason, 1988, p. 36). This was accomplished using a descriptive identification of the quotations used and separated depending on theme. An example of this would be where the researcher categorised themes from a content-specific approach. This was not achieved by weighting word counts of quotes to support creating such categories but instead was achieved by allowing themes to emerge as subject matter. In this the author identified diversely emerging themes of these stories that both support the literature in part as depicted by Alston and Bowles (1998); Schaper (1999); Foley (2000; 2003; 2008); Swedberg (2006); Lee-Ross and Mitchell (2007); and Cahn (2008) along with Furneaux

and Brown (2007; 2008) but also contradict the literature in part as depicted by Hindle (2010) and Lee Ross and Mitchell (2007) particularly with regard to available definitions and their transferability to Victorian based Indigenous business women and include how Indigenous women entrepreneurs are impacted by their culture, social justice and diversity issues. The emerging themes provided answers to the research questions of what are the factors that contribute to their success (as valued by themselves) and what, if anything makes them different from mainstream enterprises? And how, if at all, is this accomplished while embracing Indigenous community values and desires?

4.6   Unpacking the categories

Two groups of themes were developed using the thematical approach for both the Indigenous community and the Indigenous business women. Initially the researcher found 38 sub-themes within the business women transcripts and 19 sub-themes within the community transcripts. The researcher numbered the sub-themes as they emerged until there were no new themes developed and then categorised these themes into nine core categories for the community members and 17 core themes for the business women. These core categories were then condensed into four main themes.

Seven of the themes have connecting concepts between the community and the business women. The overarching theme that permeated throughout the transcripts was Social Justice. This Social Justice paradigm permeates throughout many aspects of research and this thesis is no exception. The thesis was set on an idea to help provide insight and value into the real and experienced life journeys of Indigenous Business women and has been presented in a format that allows the reader to become part of their journey on purpose. These works are designed to stretch the academic fraternity mindset that the information is trying to influence. The difficulty as described in the preceding literature review by

other writers and that has been surfaced here, is keeping the balance between expression and presentation. The concept of how these people have measured their perceptions of their world is influenced by who they are and their experiences as Indigenous Australians with all that this entails, which is already well documented.   This research thesis has been presented to hold their stories intact as best as possible as well as provide a valuable expression of ideas that their journeys depict.

Social Justice has underpinned the drivers behind the thesis development and the aims of the research in addressing the questions:

1. What are the significant factors in the success of female Indigenous entrepreneurship in Victoria, Australia?

2. How do Indigenous female entrepreneurs retain and enhance key Indigenous community values, practices and aspirations?

These questions are surrounded by historical and current impacting factors of how they live their lives.

4.7   The main themes uncovered with Indigenous community members in Victoria

4.7.1   Family

Issues surrounding family history and the *Stolen Generation* era and the flow-on effects of that are still fresh today. This is testament to the actual ongoing influences that have filtered from those times, as seen in the current figures of COAG reports and other various ABS statistics. The dynamic between the notional 'welfare dependency' of Indigenous peoples, the paternalist approach of governmental policy, and the life

expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is evident. In a country that is relatively young in comparison to other developed countries, Australia is only now beginning to develop an appreciation for more inclusive policy.

Most Indigenous families have life examples of the reality of the ramifications of the *Stolen Generation* era. These are difficult to measure because it requires a quantitative approach and how do you measure social relationships? However the COAG has addressed a strategic approach to closing the gap that can be measured by better figures for Indigenous Australians. The seven building blocks that have been presented as: Early childhood; Economic participation; Governance and leadership; Health; Healthy homes; Safe communities; and Schooling are echoed in the data that this research uncovered. Firstly, family is a foundational component on interactions of Indigenous Australians with kin and the wider community that all people live in. Where there is known dysfunction and disharmony, links can be made in how that family has dealt with historical implications – there is a common thread with five of the business women respondents with regard to clearly connecting the influence of the *Stolen Generation* era to their current lives. Additionally two respondents were adopted and therefore unable to attribute whether that circumstance was related to government policy at that time:

Respondent K [0/c/*/K/nCh] shared this:

> ...They still took the children, they said we're [were] there to look after [us]: ...and ...we were always at the health inspector's room ...and I said well why aren't they taken from their family [reference to white people]. My mother said that they had food and bread in the cupboard.

This passage shows how something that happened to her mother and her as a small child still has a strong connection to where the participant is today by her power of recollection.

The effects of Government policy have filtered through generations and have acted to help drive her for a better life as an adult.

Respondent J [o/C*/J/UCh] said this in exploring her connections to family: 'I was adopted. I'm originally from Ballarat and came here and I've met back up with all my family so I've known 'em for as long as I didn't know 'em...'

Family is highlighted as being both an inspiration and a hindrance to Indigenous Business Women in maintaining and enhancing Indigenous values in the face of adversity. As described, on one level, there is the reason for the drive behind the business women, but then there is also the difficulty of past adversities providing negative positions from some family members who cannot embrace the change these business women are making for themselves and for future generations. The analysis exposes how the research questions are addressed. It also exposes the polarities in the significance of the successful journeys of these women and what they have had to factor in through the process.

4.7.2   Business

Business can mean different things for different people and this research was designed to explore the life experiences and aspirations in many ways for Indigenous women in business. The research was not strict in its defining of what constituted a business as one might expect to find in the Australian Taxation Office definition of business. An example of this is where there is one respondent, who is yet to have an ABN number as she sells products at markets. There was a general consensus with the researcher that there would be a very different view of business from the business women themselves and the Indigenous community members. This was partly an assumption that the researcher held

with regard to priorities of various factions within a local Indigenous community and the general population where a varied view of business ventures could be sourced as well.

It was hoped that the research would provide some insight into Indigenous stories of success that could positively influence future programs and development of support for the betterment of Indigenous business through better engagement processes. Its value is limitless. The value is in knowing that, like many things in life, failing can be instrumental…"

This research did want to capture businesses that had not progressed (were no longer operating) but there was not the scope for it. The concept of failure as part of the process was explained best by Respondent A, who articulated:

> Small business is what keeps Australia afloat... I think the way to a successful business is to fail on a lot of things, if you risk your own worth and it fails, you're going to learn from it and keep going. …I think that when government looks at business proposals they've got to look at it under an economic rationale not a political rationale.... Don't make political decisions because there are other vested overlaps or interests in regards to Indigenous stuff. Make it an economic decision. If you want to start Indigenous business, you start an Indigenous business based on the viability of that business not because you've got three over-laps of native title interest groups, don't make it a political decision.

Small business has incurred a spiked increase of failure rates after the Global Financial Crisis in 2010 (Dunn & Bradstreet 2011). The learning that can be achieved in trying to succeed yet failing, does not necessarily constitute a failure; it can be just part of the journey. However, the research discovered that there were areas where there wasn't any information to provide or understanding of where to send a person who asked for help in

setting up a business from scratch, let alone being able to provide support for current business people in helping entrepreneurs achieve goals and stay in business.

There were identified times where people had been turned away from community hubs as there was little or no available information or help to provide them with setting up their business. This was concerning for those who were interviewed as that lack of available support was seen to be detrimental to the outcome as outlined in her conversation

As a worker at the Indigenous co-operative, Respondent J explained cases that were known where lack of knowledge and available information hindered a prospective Indigenous woman business entrepreneur (see Appendix 5, #1):

> PJ: … the only thing I would know to setting up a business is?[thinking] No we wouldn't know where we could send someone would we? [Asking others]

And Respondent A shares his view in this dialogue: (See Appendix 5, #2):

> ...So he needs someone to sit down and plan it all out for him because it can be done and I think there are a lot of businesses like that. Even with he needs an ABN then. He hasn't got an ABN …

> There should be facilities there for those fellas that are entrepreneurs, that are out there having a go but they're denied the opportunity... I think that instead of printing brochures all the time (KBN), it would be easier to have twenty thousand dollars sitting in each region that can be drawn down – managed by someone down in a regional office, that can have basic ideas presented to them, that they can make an assessment on of maybe two or three thousand micro credit to kick off and yes, let me take you out and let's go buy you a spray-on tan gun. This is the rule, if you do not pay me back at point zero one percent within one year it

will be repossessed. If it is not repossessed charges will be laid like any other loan...

These passages highlight the difficulty that can be faced in understanding what is involved in setting up a small business and how real support can make a huge difference. It also highlights the positive ideas that can be implemented to support start up of small business with due consideration. It shows that Indigenous people do not expect a hand out but a hand up. This concept concurs with Pearson's (2001) views generally and can be beneficial in the economic participation building block outlined in the COAG's target for closing the gap strategy. (2011a)

4.7.3   Government

Participants discussed education as being of paramount importance to the Indigenous communities and their concerns are founded according to research figures which show that Indigenous people are less educated than their non-Indigenous counterparts. While the COAG targets include education levels attained to year 12 to be increased (2011a), this is also an area of concern for Indigenous parents. Some of the participants disclosed that the interaction of preschoolers was important and then went on to the primary and secondary level. However, it was acknowledged that funding constraints still hampered the reality of meeting the 'closing the gap' targets. These constraints were presented with vigour more so in the community member's dialogues than for the business women with all of the community members identifying education as very valuable. Within the business women group there was two who referred to the interaction value at preschool age and a further seven identifying completion of high school as not only a challenge for many Indigenous children but a support in their employability and therefore their socio-economic outlook.

Participant I [o/c/*/I/Uch] comments on her concern that many schools do not receive funding for the first three years, of a children's educational journey where they may need additional support with the basic learning tools of reading writing and math. Her comments are concerning that by the time a child receives such support that they have already been in the educational system for three years and that this is too late. Let us suppose that a child begins school aged five with little or no understanding of the alphabet or numbers. While the rest of the class moved forward in standard progress that child has no additional support to stay in touch with the other and the learning requirements. Let us suppose that this child is in a classroom of 25 other children with varying degrees of need. Let us suppose that the home that this child comes from has ongoing support needs in various areas of socio-economical imbalance. Let us suppose that this child then hits high school with the same concerns that need addressing but that funding again is not available until year 10. It is easy then to comprehend the story below from Participant I [o/c/*/I/Uch]:

> ... a lot of the schools…don't get funded...until grade three for example and then they get help… well by then they've already lost the first three years and ..they get into high school [and] it's not until …year ten [thinking] …that they're entitled to help within the school …so then they've missed the first three years in high school, like how? I don't understand how …I don't see how it works when you can only get it once they're in grade three and year 9 because they are already lost...

Respondent K [o/c/*/K/Unch] adds that the regional and rural outlook for young Indigenous people impacts on them. It is the level of information that is put forward so that all of the Indigenous Australians are adequately equipped and informed of what is available to them. It may be so that in the regional and rural areas due to geographical

location and proximity of relevant workers that the programs designed to help this group are not taken up as much because they are not aware of it. Additionally, people residing in regional and rural areas have less access to services including those of public transport. This is common for many groups' not just Indigenous people.

> PI:...Yeah we see a lot of our kids …leaving school… early, not enough of them completing school you know even year 10 and year 9 some sort of incentive or some sort of program to help them kids [to] push through to finish off their studies...

> PK: ...Two issues there, there's not enough going through the school system, completion and all that and the other thing is transport… a lot of them don't go for licences and have their own vehicles so that's a little [big] hiccup with those things...

Respondent J [o/c/*/J/Uch] adds that reward and recognition could be valuable in encouraging effort as one way to keep Indigenous youth engaged with education. This reward or recognition should be accessible and local, she says: 'We've done some little incentives her ummm and that I've seen for teenagers if they finish this or did this they got to go to a camp …It would be nice to see some of our kids finish'.

And then there are the issues surrounding the availability of funding for Indigenous students to act as incentives in raising the numbers of young people engaging in social activities: Respondents indicated to the researcher that they were concerned at the way in which incentives are administered. It was highlighted that some of the application forms and processes intimidated prospective applicants and that this made the provision of the incentive void. The wording of the questions on some forms was perceived as too generic and often misguiding. This type of hurdle placed in front of a young person and their

family has missed the mark of what the incentive was designed to achieve. The COAG targets need to be very clear and specific in outlining the ways in which the conceptual ideas can be achievable in the local school setting. An example of this may be the 'Wannik Program'. It is a relatively new program to encourage Indigenous students to complete their study however it is targeted at high achievers. Are these the students who would likely disengage? Programs such as these were described as being either not appropriate or not meeting the reality of Indigenous youth.

Respondent I provides another example of how certain form content can be daunting and not taken up:

> ...well if I'm gunna apply for a scholarship for the quiet one well he doesn't stand up and do things for the community [which is a prerequisite question in the forms and excludes by assuming all studying Indigenous students are happy to be made available for promotion and public speaking events] and that VicRoads one is the one I'm talking about. I was thinking about putting him for that but when they said, "Well what does he do for his community?" Well, he really doesn't do... a lot, but I think they'd be proud if an Indigenous kid completes year 12. I think that'll be an achievement in itself.

There may be dynamics of mistrust of educated people that therefore act as a deterrent within that family for young people to achieve. There may be health concerns that impact on social participation and motivation. It reveals that continuing the way that it's always been done is not the best approach, especially if the target audience are those who are most marginalised and vulnerable. This highlights the figures that show we have a low education retention rate for Indigenous youth in Australia and higher incarceration rates that can be connected to lack of social standing. That is, lower socioeconomic groups are

well represented in the jail system and while the Indigenous populous makes up 2.5% of the national population, there is an incarceration rate 28 times higher in Indigenous youth population compared with non –Indigenous youth (House of Representatives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs 2011).

Other Government programs that have been identified as impacting the communities include New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS), (Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) and issues around closing the gap and job network agencies, as Respondent E [o/c/*/E/U] reported: 'I'm 27 and I've had at least ten jobs and none of them I see as a lifelong career, although I enjoyed some more than others or I stayed in some longer than others'.

Respondent F said he thought it was better when the CDEP was in place:

> I think it was better too when we had the CDEP, because we had a lot more community members having a go at you know, working around here...whether it was in the garden or helping out in reception or doing some work down the day care and it gave them a bit more confidence in themselves and then they get to know the people and then work around here and they feel more comfortable talking about their backgrounds and history and all that stuff and how'd they go, go about applying for one of our jobs or doing further placements or whatever... Since CDEP stopped I think...we haven't had any ummm community members coming in looking for work and that sort of stuff.

And Respondent K described how CDEP helped her:

> I'm the medical receptionist here; started in 2004. Before that I spent about 16 to 18 years in [emphasis] CDEP where I done all different [courses] in horticulture…

screen printing, sewing …then I got on full time here in the position that I'm in now, …I'd been on CDEP for a lota, lota years and lucky I got into this before it fell over...

Respondent A shares this view, as a male community member who has worked with job network providers for some years and has extensive experience with CDEP and other government program processing. His view is somewhat typical of other community members with regard to the haphazard approach of non-government entities that are running alongside government programs; Programs that include government income support payment streams (e.g. New Start, Youth Allowance, Parenting Payment Single):

It depends on their consultant, And like anything, like a business, there are some really good people that work out in job networks that will really work hard to find people jobs or point them in the right direction. And they'll say, "go do NEIS, start up your business, I'll help you pay". They'll be imaginative and say "look, we'll draw it down...on your tax file number or whatever". But for every one of those good fellas, there are four or five people that are just there to do their job and just their job and nothing else... really the Job network is like, as they say, its run on services, not placement... it means that they will get financial reward if they find people jobs but it doesn't matter if they don't because they'll get service fees...

Respondents I, J and K (see Appendix 5, #3) discussed how one woman from a job network provider actually thought outside the square after she had done a course to learn about Indigenous people and had travelled up North. They talked about how this lady went out of her way to engage Indigenous job seekers to get them to employment and how her efforts meant that her support encouraged ongoing employment.

With regard to the 'close the gap' government policy, Respondent F felt that there was not enough information about the policy, 'Apart from the sticker on the back of my car [everyone laughed]…

Most of the respondents had little to no knowledge of KBN and what the organisation provided as an arm of Small Business Victoria. Typical of their comments was: 'Who's that…never heard of em'. And, 'We get publications from them and we're in their business directory, but other than that, we don't have a lot of contact with KBN'.

Respondent C exposed the gap in the actual contact and what this may produce against the current knowledge gap of business venture information provision when she stated:

> I s'pose with KBN if they had more contact with coming in here; like letting us know what they do and where they can help so that we can feed that out through the community [emphasis]...cause like I said I don't have a lot of information for someone if they come in. I wouldn't know where to turn to or where to direct them, so if we had places like KBN come in and give us more info then we can feed it out...But it's the not [emphasis] knowing I s'pose.

And this from Respondent A who does have an insight into what KBN provide and that this level of knowledge was also hindering in the sense that the information she had meant that the person was still unable to gain support as it was more of a financial request. This highlights the pot holes of policy. Program development and information sharing that is held by some of the government agencies that are designed and funded to provide such a service, whether it be informative or practical. This is not exclusive to KBN. It may be the way that DIIRD and small business Victoria and IBA also do their business and this may impede approaches by Indigenous Australians who are looking to

start a business entrepreneurship or who require support for an already established enterprise.

Respondent A noted: 'I refer people to KBN but I'm a bit resistant because I know what they're requesting is for more capital ideas and KBN don't do that sort of stuff, my understanding is , so I can't waste their time with that'.

This point is important to understand in the context of where Indigenous people sit. On one hand we have a paternalistic approach that says Indigenous people need additional support to even the playing field of social standing. An example of this is the project adopted where in 2011, if Indigenous children do not attend school, their parents Income support payments (that are not related to the child) are suspended until that child attends school. Then we also have the side (like that proposed by Pearson, where Indigenous people need to be self- regulating – the notion that Indigenous people need to function in the general population). Both of these polarised views have merit, but somewhere in the middle is this example – here an intelligent, employed Indigenous woman is dissuaded from utilising 'mainstream 'services (which may be more suitable) because of her background. It is the premise of this thesis that Indigenous people do need to be able to function in the wider community as well as in their own and to do this, processes need to change. Respondent 9 comments:

> …it doesn't mean that because we're doing Indigenous things that we have to be seen to be going through that part of the bureaucracy...like where you talk about an idea or a premise and they'll put you back to the Indigenous unit ...then you go back… you're not satisfied with the process and you want to go through the normal [non-Indigenous specific] unit. And that's nothing against the Indigenous unit but …it can become spread too thin …

Indigenous Business Australia was developed as a newer improved entity after the dismantling of ATSIC (The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission). This came about after several damming reports regarding the administration processes of ATSIC and the outcomes for Indigenous Australians using the services it provided, including aspects of Business support and funding. Respondent A shares concerns regarding programs administered by IBA, Indigenous Business Australia:

> I know they've got quite a large portfolio and access to a lot of resources but a lot of the ideas probably don't fall into that larger scale enterprise for your normal sort of micro business, I guess; chopping wood, mowing lawns or whatever, stuff like that I guess and I don't think there's any real referral points.

Government and agencies that deliver programs such as KBN are at a cross road. Historical ownership of atrocities has continued to impact on relationships between community and government agencies - particularly regarding trust and confidence – and on current policy initiatives such as Closing the Gap. Since the referendum of 1967, which allowed Indigenous people to vote, there has been a continuum of progress. This was further enhanced with Kevin Rudd's apology to the Stolen Generation in Federal Parliament and has enabled further progress, albeit slow. Various aspects of government programs have been viewed as positive significant factors affecting Indigenous business women, namely educational opportunities. The conundrum for these women in the analysis process of dissecting their stories has been the constant and negative impact of some individual relationships within key government agency staff that has impounded the notion of imbalance between those Indigenous and non-Indigenous, who are in government positions, and those who are not. In analysing this theme it was apparent to the researcher that the business women who were part of this research were

predominantly strong resilient, talented and educated individuals and did not represent a true section of the Indigenous community, if we were to consider the statistics. However, the analysis showed how they endured racism, both internally from community and externally from the wider community. The analysis explored how they maintained their identity and maintained their Indigenous integrity in the face of failure, adversity and developing a new way - a new path. The relevance of this theme to the questions that are posed in the dissertation is in uncovering how Government policy and programs are still a large component of whether success is possible for Indigenous Australian business women; more importantly they remain a major entity in supporting those who chose to change their world.

4.7.4   Culture/Community

This thesis had an underpinning of what culture and community involved with regard to the Australian Indigenous person. This underpinning was designed from a project submission developed by the two universities, (RMIT and Swinburne) and the Industry partner, (KBN) before the research candidates were recruited. This premise had to be tested in its concepts. Initially it was thought that there would be an intense connection to community for the participants as a tangible one. Early on in the research it was clear that community connectedness of the participants was relative and there needed to be an acceptance that connection to community was something that was more entwined with culture and history and the immense sense that Indigenous people have with 'who' they are and 'where they come from' as opposed to where they are now. Community and culture still played an immeasurable role in the 'bread and butter 'of the thesis but acts as basic ingredient of (like sugar is assumed in lollies – one that is assumed as important to Indigenous research).

There was also the idea that community members would be interested in Indigenous business. It was not surprising to note that while there was comment made regarding business, this was not the priority of community members in general as highlighted below!

Participant E shares:

> …because we have a high number of drug and alcohol issues … so we've got the higher crime rate and …that's stopping people… they just automatically feel that they don't have a chance anyways, and… because now we've got the 'working with children' check and there's a new type of police check and all sort of stuff, it just turns people off straight away...

And then there is the tension in communities themselves, according to Respondent C:

> … Families that are fighting with other families still come here and still access these services so I think they all just are able to put it aside at certain places. I mean...if they seen each other down the street it might be different as to when they seen each other here or another place.

The wider community still plays their part. Respondent B shares:

> Yeah and I thought it was lovely, I had a big operation and I was in Hamilton and this dear old lady she was white and anyway she crocheted – she's blind but she could crochet and I said hi Nan. She said how are you today? **** I said what are you doing today? Oh she goes; I'm making little clothes for the Aboriginal children. I said they will really enjoy that, Nan. Poor old darl, you're ... a blind person and working.

Respondent A also maintains that Indigenous people need the most appropriate resources to tap into and those resources may not be ones specifically targeted to Indigenous people. An example would be Indigenous mentors. Indigenous mentors would be a great idea, but looking at the current figures as outlined in the literature review we have a 2.5 % population base of the total national population (House of Representatives Standing Committee 2011). The figures are impacted further when looking for people who have achieved various things, who have the capacity to help others and who have the inclination to help, as well. In some cases it is more beneficial for Indigenous people to tap into resources that are 'mainstream'.

This is evident in Respondent A who commented that mentors need to be skilled, appropriate and knowledgeable as well as able to interact and be accessible:

> Just because they're Indigenous doesn't mean that they make a good mentor either …if you're using something and people are putting it on their skin, is there any repercussions. Do you have to be licensed to do that? What's the go? Those sorts of things where you have to see a lawyer because it's no good having a chat with someone that you've just met from the government and he says nah, nah, you'll be right to do that because then you're sued and you're in trouble, I guess.

In analysing the importance of community for an Indigenous Australian Business Woman, it became obvious to the researcher there would always be issues around connection to heritage communities. Understanding the historical movement for Indigenous families from their land, the continued segregation for many years, as well as the removal of children from their families has acted to ripple throughout time. It is still rippling. How this is relevant, some may ask? The relevance lies in the answers, in the transcripts of these women, in their reflections of implications of such actions on their

past, immediate and likely their future generations. The majority of the business women did not reside in their birth place. These kinds of changes can create problems for Indigenous people living in another area belonging to other Indigenous people. It can act to impede their growth in being accepted, being welcomed and being supported. This, in turn, can have dramatic effects on the success of their business. In analysing the transcripts, the notion of these women having to expressly engage with other communities they were then residing in, was significant to their success. By this effort they would be able to personally enhance their heritage through supporting their immediate families, but often community involvement can help retain values as well. Many of the participants spoke of the adversity encountered within Indigenous factions in addition to the wider community. Community is acknowledged as an extension of self in these transcripts. However, there was a strong sense of self-assurance too, which the researcher believes provided the resilience of this group.

4.8 The main themes uncovered with Indigenous business women in Victoria

The main themes uncovered are:

1. Family

2. Business

3. Government

4. Culture/Community

4.8.1 Family

4.8.1.1 Childhood business and work ethic exposure

The Family relationships of all of the participants had some impact on their perceptions of what life was like, and could be like, for them in the personal and working lives. The aspects of family included history (both generational and immediate); connectedness to family; and expectations that came from family. These relationships included those with non-biological immediate families for two participants who grew up in adoptive family surrounds before searching for their birth families. Nine of the respondents currently reside in communities that are not their origin (where they were born). Some of them even had been moved around a bit and were originally from interstate areas. Respondent 3 (PE-X-A-*-MdNch) typifies the concept: 'We moved around a bit when I was younger because of Dad's job…' and Respondent 5 (SRT-X-C-*-MdNch) provides a candid account: 'we were always transient'.

Some of the respondents were exposed to business ventures during their childhood and general ethical concepts that they believe introduced them to the idea of business. Respondent 6 talked about her family being involved with business:

> We moved to the home behind the shop and became like shopkeepers. So my dad stopped being a plumber and they ran a drapery and footwear business that my grandfather [mother's fraternal side] became too old to manage. So I sort of grew up with people doing business I suppose, if you call that business, not that I thought of it like that.

Respondent 6 (REP-X-C-*-MdCh) discusses her younger years growing up: 'I grew up in a very small town up near the Murray River, near Echuca called Lockington, so there were about three hundred people there and we were the only Aboriginal family in town'.

4.8.1.2 Family history and dynamics of influence

Respondent 9 (PSE-X-B-*-Mdch) discusses the difficulty of her father's early life with racism. Her presentation also provides clarity of the experiences and the impacts of experiences on Indigenous families:

> Warrnambool is sort of renowned for being a ...quite racist community. My dad wasn't raised by his [birth] family. He didn't know who his mother was. That started a whole snowball of effects and he went through a lot of challenges...and finding out who his family was and he started drinking and becomes a ward of the state... He's a very strong advocate …he's strong on rights for Aboriginal people...but we always knew who we were, we always knew what family was ...we always knew we were Aboriginal.

Most of the respondents talked about relationships that had some influence on their journey both positive and negative. Respondent 2 (SI-X-C-*-MdNch) recounted how she had to make her life basically on her own, '…because I didn't get any support from my adopted family'.

When she finally found her birth mother, the outcome proved difficult:

> It was very difficult to find my mother... she would not admit [slow and sure in speech and tone to emphasise importance]...that she was my mother, but she was...I obtained information under Freedom of Information and she had been in jail for a lot of her life and she was in when I was born, so of course there was a record of me so...You know later I found she was dead ...and I found where she was buried...it turns out this organisation called Bereavement Assistance League...help organise funerals for people that have no families and have means...they had her cremated...they don't know what happened after that because what they do if the remains are not collected within a certain time frame they advertise in 'The Age' and probably a stupid paper to advertise in but that's what they do and...give people a chance to come forward and if they don't they take a group of peoples remains out to Port Phillip Bay and do a ceremony and scatter them...and there's no record of anyone collecting them [mothers ashes] but I think that someone probably did...and the paperwork wasn't done but once again she was lost! [sombre] and she's still lost [sad], and so yeah...that's the story of my mother.

Respondent 5 talks about how hard her parents worked and this is echoed in her words:

> My father is of Aboriginal descent...My father was a very hard working man. My mother worked equally as hard. She was more like a man that a woman [in that

way] half the time. They both worked really hard and umm apparently there were four of us then...so we go from picking [fruit] to... emptying toilet cans [laughs] to a barman to up to the saw mills and we basically stay[ed] up in that area for a long time.

Respondent 4 (PES-X-C-*-MdCh) expresses the positive nature of her upbringing:

I was taught a lot of my culture by my white grandmother...[she] used to take me down to the mission all the time …she taught me stacks and stacks of things about my culture...I kept up that connection with my friends on the mission, and do you know, I didn't know until I was an adult that they were actually my cousins...just had that connection together, we always had that closeness and that bond...They knew that I was their cousin but I didn't know...My grandmother who was Aboriginal would never speak about her aboriginality and when my mother asked her when she was a teenager, she was always told she was Indian...She got up every morning and put her white face powder on an her pearls and right up to the day she died... My mum is a very well respected Aboriginal elder [now] and does a lot of work for all sorts of different organisations.

These themes had overlapping areas that included history within the history and how the impacts of the *Stolen Generation* era could still be felt in this generation. What the stories provide though is an insight into the spirited lives of these brave and tenacious women who were able to take a hold of any positives and utilise them for the benefit of their futures. They now look back reflectively to account that part of their life as foundational to molding them.

Respondent 5 talked about being aged four and a half, 'sitting out on the road [side] selling daffodils and ...for the Springvale crematorium cemetery...not sure if the crematorium was there then [maybe just the cemetery] every Sunday.'

The respondents discussed work ethics in various forms. Respondent 1 (PTE-X-C-*-SiCh) reveals her heart when she discloses, 'I come from a family that had…really strong social justice values, the family that I grew up in, adopted into …all of my siblings had businesses of some sort'; while Respondent 8 (R-X-C-*-MdCh) noticed how her mother's work ethic impacted her life, 'she never sat still [my mother], she never wanted welfare so she instilled that in us not to depend of welfare: …working in the pea paddocks and in the grapevines and everything like that gave me the work ethic. Yes it did!'

History always plays a part and this has affected the notion of social justice that permeates the study. Social Justice that has been the supporting structure of government policies 'designed' to support Indigenous people over the years and social justice that has been the structure of why we continue to ask the questions ? What can be done to improve the lives of Indigenous people and how do we do it? As with the community members the connections to the history of the Indigenous culture and impacts of the *Stolen Generations* are ingrained in the psyche of Indigenous business women. This may seem obvious as the shared realities are not unique to sub groups within the Indigenous community.

Respondent 9 who now has an established business that allows employment of several Indigenous people, speaks of the way in which the general community has not got the insight or perhaps the inclination to understand or appreciate the level of adversity that most Indigenous people in this country have to overcome. It may be that education or cultural awareness needs to be more forthright in school education that encompasses

historical events with a current emphasis. Her views are shared by the other participants with differing expressions that link with hers. However her matter of fact approach is succinct in summing up the general consensus: 'I think sometimes they can't understand how things of the past are still affecting today...' and adds, 'I honestly think that there isn't a true understanding of history and what's really gone on and been done and just being aware of what has taken place over the last two hundred years.'

Yet there is a firm and clear direction that all of the respondents shared; A direction that was empowering by way of determination, tenacity and sheer desire to succeed in life. This tenacity provided a sense of drive for achievement and vision that was inspiring. Respondent 5 provided an insight that could have been provided by any of the other respondents but was spoken with more conviction and clarity: 'something inside of you… that you know that you'll be determined that… this is negative and positive [seeing both ways] …that ya wanna have a better life, you want to umm be better; you want to do better'.

Work ethic, business and the childhood dream within family dynamics are all entwined here in this quote. Respondent 8 states:

> '…Because I set goals for myself as a young child. I just said I want to be somebody. I don't want to be just an insignificant nobody that's been overlooked….Being successful and black is ok [emphasis] you know. That's where we should be aspiring too: you don't lose ya blackness when you become successful! And I think that that the Asian people do that really well and they utilise stuff with their culture and this to use their hands to learn...blah blah, why is it asking so much? And they should want our business and we shouldn't have to

completely lose our blackness to become...so if you want to be successful, but to be successful we shouldn't have to deal with all the racist crap.

We all can learn from other cultures as well in developing better ways of doing things: with the understanding that being black has its difficulties too in trying to marry a Western approach to life with a reality of who a person is by their culture, connectedness to family and general disposition. It shows how the constant racism can be from both within the Indigenous community through fear and through the wider community through fear as well.

4.8.2   Business

4.8.2.1   All things business

None of the respondents actually started a business fresh from leaving school. All found their way through life's various twists and turns to the point where they are today. Employment varied between respondents and included Government employment and executive employment. Respondent 9 speaks eloquently about one of her experiences:

> ...there is this whole level of scrutiny in Aboriginal affairs and this high level of accountability...I didn't know it was possible to earn $450,000 a year and all I'd done was work at the co-op earning $20,000 a year ...and having my quota of pens and what I had for lunch being scrutinised every day. But at this place [large firm] they'd take you to lunch and give you wine [emphasis] and imagine if that happened in a black organisation?...and it made me realise…there was a whole lot of opportunities and why can't we [Indigenous people] have our businesses.

In discussing her earlier experience Respondent 5 said, 'we were only in town a week and my mother was driving me around to get a job in a...what do you call it? Just a processing place'.

Respondent 4 expressed her experiences before venturing into business:

> So I left school when I was sixteen and got married and had four kids. I didn't do very much when the kids were growing up, just brought up the kids. I did various little bits and pieces for jobs, like normal picking things: Picking oranges, picking beans – that was the worst thing I ever did, pick beans. I mean who could pick beans...really? [Tongue in cheek]...That's something else I did I was a cook, a shearer's cook for eight years.

This respondent shows the differences in approaches from the top end of town to having one's parent drive her around to get a job in a processing plant or picking in fields. It also provides some interesting view of how the general employment opportunity is quite different from those in Aboriginal-specific positions.

With Respondent 3 presenting a different experience where a Jewish firm was more like a family entity than that experienced by either Respondent 5 or 9 as outlined above:

> I was actually head-hunted to a ...company called ROSCH which is a Jewish business and so I was really excited about going to work for a Jewish business because a really good friend of mine had worked for the Reject Shop and they're all South African Jews and she said that, you know it's funny working in Jewish businesses no matter how big it is, it always feels like a family business.

It shows that the level of interaction may be culturally specific; an example to show the contrasting variables here are the scrutiny of Indigenous agencies opposed to high-end

firms who use Tax boundaries (business lunches) to engage employees and other entities that simply show appreciation of workers in more personable ways. The question that this contrast raises is why is the Indigenous Agency under so much scrutiny and is this somehow related to historical Government mismanagement of funding arrangements for Indigenous people that has now acted to impinge on reasonable functionality of these places? This research has unearthed that some Government programs that are specifically targeted to Indigenous people are not able to achieve their goals due to funding inadequacies, gaps in information provision and accessibility.

Since all of the respondents had journeys through life that included a working life before they actually commenced their own business, whether for profit or not, there was a consensus. They had entrepreneurial drive, to some degree, along with passion, and exposure to the idea of being in business. Respondent 3 spoke of passion being a required aspect, 'if you're sort of passionate about those areas, then you do go that extra mile you know'.

The aspects that are valued by this respondent are identified by other respondents in various ways. And it shows that there is some level of entrepreneurial drive that has been uncovered in general literature regarding Western entrepreneurs. The main difference that has been unpacked in this thesis is the indelible impressions that the historical life journeys of Indigenous families have created pathways for the business women to travel.

Respondent 10 (SR-X-C-*-MdCh) concurred:

> Yeah, I love work. People, say that I'm mad but you know, we had… a conference here once and ya had to go round and say… what do you enjoy doing and I said well I'm addicted to work and they said ohh don't be stupid but look, that's me and I try and set goals for myself and I try and achieve 'em.

Involvement with various types of partnerships and valuing each person's abilities was identified too by Respondent 1: 'I've been very lucky to have identified the skills that I know I lack and be fairly critical about that and really look at those and I've been very lucky that I've found them in [partner] and he has all of those tools and probably more that I'm lacking'.

All had some turning point, or a defining opportunity, where a door opened and they took that opportunity. Respondent 10 shows her true entrepreneurial nature, 'I'm always looking for something different to do and ...you know once I achieve something I...I sort of look for another'.

She had been involved in various enterprises including a catering business, cosmetics, clothing, and children's parties. Her eyes would light up when she spoke of her desire to make her business something she could do fulltime.

Three respondents spoke of their development of the business name and its importance to them in developing a sense of what it was that they wanted to portray.

Respondent 3 spoke of her business name: 'It's Spanish for progressive because the hardest thing in setting up a business without doubt is getting the name right'.

Respondent 10 was more informal in her approach, saying, 'well I always wanted it to be Aunty [name] shop ...because I'd love kids to say let's go to Aunty [name] shop...you know'.

Respondent 6 spoke of being commissioned for the Commonwealth Games with some other Indigenous artists to make the possum skinned cloaks to represent the 38 language groups and made 37 cloaks.

Some respondents spoke of where they saw themselves in five years and provided a range of ideas from retired [from actively being in the coalface of their business] to being fulltime in their business and not having to work in employment to sustain their living outlook. Some were winding down, some winding up, with Respondent 5 declaring, 'I don't wanna slow down...I think I will write more books'.

One respondent spoke of completing further training in her endeavours to become a qualified carpenter with another suggesting she wants to complete her Masters. Respondent 4 talked about wanting to, 'empower Aboriginal people in the church...to bring them together and empower them to come together in groups...to have some fellowship together'.

Another respondent highlighted the difficulty in juggling work-family commitments while trying to build up a business:

> If I could get to the point where I could open a shop today and make five hundred, three hundred dollars a day I would be outa there. I'd be in the shop, but you know you've got to sensible about these things. What's the use of me opening a shop if I can only do two days a week? I can't afford to pay anyone to go in...You know.

Respondents generally defined entrepreneurship as 'being a leader in that field'. However, many respondents acknowledged the value of mentors. There was a process of conversation that highlighted the concept that when one first starts out in business a mentor is highly desired for support and feedback. This is achieved with a clear goal for future direction that allows for the business woman (once established) to then become a leader and to pass on her experience and knowledge to others. There was suggestion that there needs to be more Indigenous people in support roles for various groups. However,

there was a solid grounding for the need for the most appropriate person to be supporting the business woman.

The Community members generally preferred Indigenous people in key roles within community, but were very open to wider community people who took the time and showed respect for Indigenous people to act in those roles as displayed by quote where the Job network provider (non-Indigenous) was viewed as valuable.   Respondent 10 highlights the need for someone who was:

> …willing to take you aboard and show you the ropes and that sort of stuff...or someone that keeps an eye on you all the time… even just to say look how to display stuff you know,… to [book] keep, I mean I know a little bit about bookwork but it would be good. I was just saying the other day that ohhh I need a mentor [emphasise].

While Respondent 9 emphasised the importance of having business professionals to consult:

> I can pick up the phone from [parent company] and I can say what do you think about ...[whatever] and I was talking to him for a good hour and how it works and I can just ring him up..Ya wanna have those business professionals to hook into and I think that this is what the Chamber of Commerce is about.

These two excerpts show very different experiences regarding mentors and the impact they can bring to the working relationship. One respondent has no mentor and really needs support in practical ways and the other has a mentor who is skilled, professional and accessible. The latter shows why a good mentoring relationship can be invaluable.

And the impact that different people have had on their journey inspired them, as Respondent 8 expresses beautifully: '…then I discovered that I had something: My teacher... my teachers were a great help, they really were'.

The business women identified the people who had been positively impacting on their journeys. They did not seem to place any weight on those who may have impacted on them negatively, but embraced even the lessons that were difficult to learn in the travels of their journeys. This may be attributed to wisdom that some may say comes with age, but the respondents transcended age brackets. Life experience must be counted here as having a notable influence. This influence of life provides good foundation for tenacity and an inventive approach to get the job done. These women refused to stop in the face of varied and difficult adversities. They refused to quit when times were tough and actually used the inspiration of those they admired, to inspire them further as depicted below.

Respondent 3 and 5 respectively, speak justly with this advice that concurs with the concept of social capital and non economic drivers (Peredo and Chrisman 2006; Furneaux and Brown 2007):

> Go and talk to people about it. And don't talk to people who have no clue like I read once from this guy who said, "I never buy from a rich salesman but I always take advice from a rich lawyer" Just in the sense that you need to talk to the right people. And whereas I look at a lot of people who are out there are kind of dream stealers...so you find the people who have been there and done that.

Respondent 5 spoke of the inner mentor and then reflected back to those who initially inspired her:

Sometimes ya have to inspire yaself... a pastor often said to me "I believe in you", and I used to say "thank you for believing in me". They were responsible for inspiring me...to push me into the ministry... I never really had a mentor...I was too much on my own.

On reflection, though, this respondent then goes on to add that her Aunty Wynn was an influence in her life, as was her grandfather on her father's [Indigenous] side: 'My grandfather… he was fabulous. He used to fascinate me with the things he used to make. I used to think, "Gees he's really smart this guy, you know".'

Another respondent speaks of also being alone but then seeing how others have been there along the way too:

Yeah I haven't got anyone that can mentor me because nobody has made the steps before me, so it's really hard to go back. That's why my connection with God, why my complete faith in him is so important... He's the one that directs me... I can see the hand of God in it all…I can see...John Smith where he was, in the God Squad …to help me to cope with Jamie's [son] illness and afterwards the things that happened to him [Jamie] and the God squad came down and did his funeral. And the support I've had with Christian people all my life, my grandmother who just about brought me up was a wonderful Christian woman.

Respondent 1 shares her absolute joy at being inspired while at a Koori Business Network Conference by an international elder Chief Willie Clarence:

He was so inspiring and he was saying all this stuff...that I was thinking …he was professional...sooo very inspiring and he basically said to us, said to most of us mobs there 'that youse wanna get off ya arses and really make a go at this' and

he's saying don't rely on Government funding, of course all the funding bodies are in the room...don't ,don't, don't, you know just have a look at the last hundred and fifty years and look where it's got ya. Nowhere! He took it to the bone and I was sitting there laughing...we have to step up an' be able and in control of our business... I got inspired…we went home....and I couldn't sleep...and I rang [partner] and I said I can't sleep...we gotta do this ...

That business idea was born that night and has not looked back.

Respondent 8 emphasises the reality that 'it takes a long time…you've got to push it uphill before people realise that you have something [to offer]'. Her efforts to succeed took a long time of building relationships and getting herself known as a respected expert in her field and this can take years, and generally requires opportunity as well as talent.

Respondents were asked about how they saw their success and what they thought might be fruits from their being in business or from the success of their business. Several of the respondents described what it meant to be successful from their own perspective. Respondent 3 commented on what she would see as a measure of success. This was not echoed in other responses but has merit in its content. It shows the level of insight of the pros and cons for being in business and the differing views of what business is and can provide. Some people are self employed for that very reason 'like buying a job' but others are more proactive in their endeavours to employ others and provide opportunities as well:

If I was retired, I think I'll know that I'm really successful when...I have a good business that can run independently of me...and I kind of am now to a point but I think you get it to a point where you have enough people in the business where it

will sort of kick over and what not. So to me that...is like a successful business otherwise it like just buying a job.

To Respondent 10, her perspective on what it takes to succeed is: 'Success is just...you know....Doing it! And I say if I fail, at least I've had a go. And if I've had a go at something I've always wanted to do and then it's not going to fail because [thinking] I've had the go.

Respondents described their success factors including family support, recognition, passion, persistence, honesty and integrity, identity, freedom, and enjoying what you do, as important elements of their success.

Respondent 7 spoke of family support:

Family support is a big thing. That's why we've done it. That why the family is in it. It's because you've got this support situation. But we grew that support in our family; it didn't come from [husband's] side of the family, [His] family is [are] not supportive at all. It's all come out of self determination for this family...our kids grew up in our business. I took them in and laid tem on beanbags as I helped [husband] count coils and wind motors and sort electrical stuff and do his books and stuff in the early days. They've grown up in the business...Success comes in-success is for us, if I was to measure it because it's the three kids are now doing well, right? They're on an income that isn't as high as in Melbourne but they've got a lifestyle to offset it...That's what we've achieved.

To Respondent 6, success comes from enjoying what you do:

I think you're successful if you enjoy what you do. You're creative with what you do and you have a community component to what you do as well as your own

individual components of satisfaction or whatever. Like I've had a lot of opportunities that I've been able to take and I mean some of them I've made because I've got a certain skill base I suppose and knowledge and information or something...I think you have to be passionate about it and for me, it has to be creative and it gives me flexibility...I like the fact that I can wake up and go, I don't feel like working today, I think I'll put that off and do it on the weekend.

To Respondent 1, success means she is able to sponsor a community event through her business:

[Business name] is going to sponsor, or we're donating a Christmas tree and decorations for the Indigenous community Christmas party to be held at *** [uni]. It's just a tiny thing for the kids but to me...it hasn't come out of my wallet, it's come out of the business and that from the profits that's a part of reality that makes me more happy than anything else. Right!? That's what makes me feel like a business woman. You know and it might only be fifty bucks or whatever. Sh** last year I was struggling to pay it out of my own purse...ya know?

She continued, discussing how being in business had directly changing her economic position:

The great thing was the fact that I had my own car...I'm driving something I own and it's got power windows and a Cd [player] and it's got a fuel gauge that works…

Several respondents spoke of the importance of having good accountants and taking their advice. They reflected on the importance of good counsel that could be positively

influential or detrimental to the functionality of a business and therefore its level of success:

> The accountant is really important. I think people need that. I think a lot of people spend all of the money they earn and then they have no money to buy new arts materials or to pay for their accountant...I've got a really shit hot accountant...''
> (Respondent 6)

> If there's one thing I reckon any business person should do is get a fantastic accountant! Because they can just make or break your life …you need those proactive kind of accountants that say, look girls do you really realise that if you do it this way, whatever and that's what you need, and I'm happy to learn enough about it so I get a bit of an idea but I don't want to be the expert on everything.

Respondent 9 suggested that discovering holes in the market provided a good business catalyst, a concept quite simple yet brilliant in its unpacking. Thinking about the application of an idea, 'First thing would be to ascertain what is out there already in the market place providing that particular product or service.' It may follow that a business plan and analysis of the current trends be fruitful in determining the way forward in filling that gap in the market. '...there is a different way of working with Aboriginal people that you need to earn that trusted relationship and a look at what the challenges are'.

Respondents shared ideas regarding reasons for going into business and exploring markets, as Respondent 7 reported:

> There's a lot of things out there, holes with no one doing because there's hard work in it. That's where you've got to be looking. That's where you'll make the

money. People tend to think like everyone else, a cafe, a shop, unless you've got something extra that the others haven't got then you're not going to achieve anything much because all you are is another number. Right! You've got to find that thing outside it all and that's where you'll succeed, especially with something that you know. Anyone can sell their vision and do something else but you've got to find something in your field...You've got to have that determination and will.

Meanwhile advice offered by Respondent 6 suggested:

I would always advise people to have separate home accounts to your business accounts and keep it all separate. Or if I move money across from my business stuff to my home, I have to go into a bank to do it and it keeps me honest. I don't do telephone banking. That's too hard for me but I have to go into and so I have to really think, "oh God do I really want to do that", "can I afford to do that".

4.8.2.2 Overseas markets and involvement

Some of the respondents have dealt with overseas markets and social cultures in operating their business. In understanding that Australian business is becoming more of a global player with regard to markets, it is wise to understand how those international markets interplay and what can be provided as unique to those markets. The following business women experiences show how their exposure to foreign entities have helped shape their direction and furthered their scope of business.

Respondent 8 explained her introduction to overseas markets: 'I was in America and I rang up [a gallery I passed] and said, "Look I'm an Aboriginal artist – is it possible to meet with you?" And then after two hours of talking with her she said, "Okay I want ten pieces from you".'

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Another respondent identified an important process of working with other overseas governments and places to build relationships since discovering they have historical artifacts belonging to Indigenous Australians. Having been removed some time ago, and given that they are not likely to be returned, there are negotiations that allowing design transcriptions to be completed so replicas can be made here in Australia for the community of origin:

> For instance the Hunter Valley cloak, they've tried for twelve years to get theirs back. …It went to the Federal government; they just aren't going to get it out...in Washington, no way! So now I've got a really good line drawing of it and we can make it…it is small enough to travel with... I am really committed though to going overseas with the International Possum Cloak Exhibition and to have dialogue with those overseas institutions that collected our most sacred objects. Like our cloaks are one of our most sacred objects and they have no understanding that back here how much we think about and we draw them, we make them, how attached we are to them and they are locked up in cupboards overseas where some of them don't even see the light of day…I've spent some time with Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)…I'm trying to get some funding from DFAT so that we can go.

> … We've tracked down more cloaks. We've found another one in Linden in Amsterdam so that will be the sixth one we've found overseas. These are cloaks from the 1800s.

This respondent also shared the issues that arose with using possum skins from Australia and how this has fostered international relations with New Zealand.

We've been invited by [name withheld] to start there because we got our skins from New Zealand, the Maoris want us to go there so we're looking at the whole process of working with their national Museum... they're [possums] protected and there are 65 million [possums] in new Zealand …here it's a whole process in itself, challenging the law…so that you're allowed to hunt possums... we want to honour the Maoris and acknowledge that our possum skin come from there, from overseas.

Respondent 7 spoke of their business importing from overseas: 'We're importing machinery out of Papua New Guinea and over in Thailand and America and all over the place because dollar wise then we could do it'.

4.8.2.3   Tools: What the business women do

All of the respondents have varied working interests and talents and all of the respondents have utilised their experiences in life to make their business ventures what they are today.

Two of the respondents are involved in Missionary work that is basically non-profit and self-funded. Both have a central Christian ethos that permeates throughout their vision for helping others.

Respondent 4 has been ordained as a pioneer Minister:

…now this is the first time this program's ever been done in Australia. We have a very forward thinking bishop here, and me being the first Aboriginal person to be ordained in this Diocese enables Aboriginal people to be able to marry on the river bank without having a celebrant that doesn't know them. Having an Aboriginal person who understands the culture and the needs of the people... to have

somebody who can baptize their children in the river if they want to… looking at the church as a way to empower Indigenous people, but…developing Walkabout Ministry...by going out and speaking to people... And that's the cultural aspect of meeting people outside a building... I mean Jesus walked among the people. He didn't say…I'm going to build this little square box here and everyone has to come to me. He walked among the people and sat on the river bank and he sat under the trees, you know, that's what [our] ministry is about... The whole aim of the Walkabout Ministry is to bring Aboriginal people forward, to let them have a voice… to encourage them.

Respondent 5 shares her ministry and business ventures:

…We now Pastor a church, we have a worldwide ministry... I've just started another business...and it's a travel business [name]. It's a registered business … it's been a life of many turns I s'pose, many uphill climbs [laughs]. I've had many downhill runs too... I wrote a book...it's out there and it's done and that's amazing. I'm the author of ...19 training manuals now [Biblical]. I always used to like literature at school…I can interact with a lot of people on all types of levels around the world.

Other respondents explored their business ventures.

Respondent 9 speaks clearly about the importance of cultural awareness training that they provide. Cultural awareness training can provide a bridging platform between some of the misconceptions between the Indigenous and non Indigenous communities and it can act to actually increase positive relationship development:

..every year we have cultural awareness training [here] and I've got a role in that quality assurance and the quality management stuff ...so my job now is more of that business support...I don't know any Aboriginal family that hasn't got somebody having to deal with social value issues at different times...it's having that support, not even from the community side, I'm just trying to support those guys [too].

Respondent 3 spoke of her business venture:

So what it is...is like…they'll say well this is the sort of person that I need, and they will investigate where those people are and go and tap them on the shoulder so they might not be actually interested and so you're getting sort of a hidden job market, it's much more proactive than reactive.

Respondent 7 spoke of the primary industry in which she works:

We are very diversified. We've got the saw mill, we've got an electrical business we've got an earth moving business and we do cartage... We've always been forest orientated so that's where we've stayed...We know what the requirements are involved without even studying anything, it just comes naturally. They know how and where to put a road line in and to build a road and all the rest of it because you grow up in the know.

Sharing the same view regarding the need to have confidence to provide a good product was Respondent 1:

...and the thing is our product, umm we like to do it as good as we can...it's about a way of doing business. It's a way I wanna do business...and I wanna do business right. Give me a day of your time and we'll try [emphasis] and raise your empathy

levels in terms of the last 70 odd thousand years of history....so don't say to me you've only got two hours....we need to be connected to the rest of the world...hello [laughs] and that's what [partner] and I say. Right we're a global business umm I'm not saying that we're like Microsoft and we're gunna go on the stock exchange yeah, but we are open to the world!

Respondent 6 and 8 shared their art working ventures too:

I do...Basket weaving, possum skin cloak making, artifact making, sometimes painting pastel drawings, jewellery a range of stuff between traditional and contemporary stuff or I might have traditional designs that they've done in contemporary colours or design, then it's all put together...Then I do community art or teaching so I go to kinders, schools, sometimes adult ed around the co-op teaching different things. It might be art business; it might be straight art.

My paintings tell a story of …through a child's eye what I create…I can hear a conversation between my elders and I ask permission to write things down and they go, why do ya want to write it down girl? And then I'll go back to them maybe six months or twelve months later and show them the painting and they'll go, oooohhhh, I remember this: …so many people have produced books on Aboriginal People and I thought Mmm, a different way of going about it.

Respondent 10 utilises her skill for the retail industry:

...now I had my own clothes... I had all sizes and all tags still on em, new clothes, old clothes wannabe clothes so I thought ohh they're too good to give away so I'll sell them as preloved clothing over the past year and a half I guess…so now I sell clothes on commission for people …and I was selling from here and since

December…in [place] they started off a weekly market, like a weekend market and so now I'm part of that so I've got my own little area which I rent and set it all up…

4.8.3   Government

4.8.3.1   Building relationships

Building relationships between government sectors and the local community at the local community level is an area where there appears to be a great need. The disjointed interplay with how the three-tiered government system of local (council) state and federal levels relate (see Appendix 6) could be fostered to better intergovernmental conversations and cohesiveness of government departments and agencies. If this can be improved then locally specific programs can include wider government policy. The frustration of the current model is well outlined in the explanation below by Respondent 1:

> There are hundreds of departmental committees, right. And that's Government talking to government, so it goes around in circles, so even though at that level if appointed onto a ministerial committee, me as an individual, ummm I found that really frustrating and we were actually disbanded because we were considered to be...umm [pause] agitators right and so [pause] that was another slap in the face. Just think of it well we can't even say what we have to say [emphasis] to Government without being told we're agitators and it's supposed to be a committee set up for us.

An example of the need for relationship building is the local job network centre and their contact management with possible employers in the local area. While this aspect might seem removed from the notion of being in business, it is not. Some of these people need

training and mentoring before they can take the leap into self-employment. Respondent 7 explains:

> But they've [reference to govt] made it too easy for them all [reference to job network places] If you can do it that way and run it so that you're running the numbers and you're getting the benefits out of it, that's what you're going to do, the Workways of this world. So when the incentives come through they'll push them though [Indigenous customers], when the money runs out they're dragged back in and sat in situ and then there'll be some other scheme and they'll run another lot out. It's just a big game...They're all collecting as much funds as they can...They ring every so often when they've got someone that's really pushing them for work but other than that. They're not proactive at all…

Respondent 3 tried to build relationships with TAFEs and other working institutions to help Indigenous young people, venting her frustrations:

> I think in, you know indigenous kids are gunna get more out of going to a smaller business because they tend to be exposed to more things because with a smaller business there is much more to do... there is so many people who will do that and they all put their hands up but you know if the people who are providing the introductory so whether it's the university or whether it's the network or whatever is that they're not on top of their game it just stuffs the whole thing from day one.

Respondent 7 agrees with the fact that barriers are faced:

> We've totally rehabilitated about fifteen to eighteen people around the town that had been written off. You know when you go into town and you say I'm looking for someone, well Workways push the ones that they can get money out off onto

you right? And we went in and said "ohh, we want this one". "Oh what do you want them for, they're written off". And I go, "what do you mean they're written off?" Oh, they're just a waste of time, why would you bother? And then when we went around and knocked on their door and spoke to them and got them all interested in coming back to work...There was money in it [for Workways – Job network] see, in the end and so they kept ringing us up and they sent baskets of fruit and pens and cups and all this crap.

Respondent 1 spoke of simple things such as linking co-ops in regional areas to local councils. Almost every area has an Indigenous co operative that is there to provide some support services (generally) to local Indigenous people. These co-ops have a history of issues that related to family connections within that Indigenous community and these links can be greatly beneficial if information is made more publically and therefore accessible to more of the population. If the local councils (the third tier of government) were to take on a more proactive approach to supporting local Indigenous services then the service provision and information sharing is likely to increase as well:

Why isn't the co-op on when you go to the greater city of Bendigo website, you know under whatever heading...like they have a great medical service running out of here now, it's really terrific ummm it's got an electronic newsletter, ummm I think they might have the website up, ummm so I often go into the... the Central Victorian Business network has a website and to true local and all these are free websites, business websites where you can go in and upload your information about your business...free photo whatever and your online you're out there, they're just berserk [good]. I get on everything.

4.8.3.2   All things KBN

The Koori Business Network (KBN) has been described in terms of its part in this study and its role in some Indigenous Business ventures in Victoria. The KBN has historically provided as a service, business promotion through what is commonly known as the KBN directory. This has recently been made accessible through the KBN internet site. In addition to this the KBN provides a biannual conference where Indigenous business people have been able to showcase their business ventures to targeted audiences; and this conference has grown in the time it has been functioning. The KBN provides some awards and limited scholarships for flourishing businesses.

As an arm of DIIRD and Small Business Victoria the KBN has a limited budget that has made it difficult to implement and maintain various programs that had been servicing the wider community in those communities. The KBN has had limited scope to provide ongoing support to various business through courses other than some that have been presented in the Melbourne CBD where people would have to travel to attend (KBN staff interviews 2010). There has been a mixed response to aspects of how KBN has done their business in supporting Indigenous Business Women. While there was some positive feedback from the people interviewed, the majority of feedback was a critique of KBN's on the ground involvement and there were a lot of ideas offered for doing it better.

Three of the respondents had very little or no involvement with KBN and, of those, there was limited knowledge of KBN's existence and what they offered.

Respondent 1 spoke of the benefits of KBN having a distinct presence in the regions, with an on the ground approach:

Yeah. Hell, why can't they be mobile? Why can't they spend three months [here] and three months [there] or something and help people and get them going and then move back to the city…and get out there and start doing instead of talking about it...I mean they've got to get out. Get out to where the industry is and where these people are...Be in their world. They can't afford to travel to Melbourne constantly and do all the paper infrastructure… they can't afford two or three days out down there learning something that in the end is worth nothing.

Respondent 6 concurred:

I think it would be good to have more local workshops, information days and a local presence; like a person in an office that you can go to. There's stuff that I've wanted to know before and I've gone ohhh there's a workshop on it in Melbourne but it just doesn't fit the rest of my schedule to get there...I think KBN should have a regional presence….I just think KBN should decentralize: expand, decentralize and have offices in Gippsland, Probably Echuca, Shepp, Mildura, and Bendigo like in the big regional centres.

Respondent 1 provided insight on a different level of suggestion for the KBN to interact locally:

KBN should look at themselves and say well how culturally appropriate are you? Well they're not. They're never on country. You know and they'll wanna do it between 9 and 5 on a Monday to Friday. Well that's no good either. We're like come up here and camp for the weekend. KBN goes bush. Camp on the river, run a few workshops, the mob'll com and they'll come with their goods and the stuff and they want you to do.

And then there are the positives of what the KBN has developed and provided in terms of opportunity, general support and learning:

> One thing that KBN did which was awesome in the Commonwealth Games time gave really top notch professionals like marketing people and gave people time with them so that you could spend time with them and develop your logo or get marketing material but they had really specific skills like specialist skills.

Respondent 9 said, '...the good thing about KBN is that it starts people thinking about business'; while another responded added, 'Everybody doesn't realise that they give us an opportunity, a big opportunity. Like those show case, mate, we couldn't afford to pay for those things and to have access to those sorts of people...we get spin offs from those things'.

The ideas for improvements came from respondents in a varied way.

Respondent 8 suggested, 'It might be better through a local Indigenous Network (LIN). The LIN [s] that you've got, that are operating right across Victoria. That might be a better avenue to find people through that'.

Respondent 9 suggested:

> I always rather a little bit of money going to a lot of people...Like I don't like it when they do things like one person goes to Harvard for a year. It's sort of like, only benefits one person like I'd rather have you know five people or have twenty people going to this conference like something locally...make your money go a long way. Those are the sorts of things that people don't do, because money is tight; like it's an extravagance.

4.8.3.3 Programs

Various programs that have been rolled out do not appear to have been as influential as they were intended. This can only be measured by information that is provided to the KBN from those who are registered businesses on the KBN's database. Since there is no real way of gathering data of Indigenous business in Victoria comparative to those listed with the KBN, it is difficult to ascertain at this time what the greater Indigenous community women who are in business see as important in their journey of success. The KBN has limited budget and constraints around how to manage the programs that it can run under the main platform of DIRRD and Small Business Victoria. It has been highlighted by the respondents that the main issue is with any programs being run from the Melbourne CBD that requires attendance and time away from work/business to attend which costs more money, as well as little community based exercises. It would seem that there is still a significant way to go in addressing the gap between white and black Australia and that it actually doesn't have to be that hard...just at grass roots in every individual community. If the KBN is to be what it stands for, The Koori Business Network, then it's role by title should be to engage and develop and support Indigenous business that operate in Victoria. To achieve this end they may need to be apportioned more funding, have newer innovative ideas to address needs and to initiate more dialogue from those that it is meant to service.

Respondent 8 expresses her concerns with how some programs are actually conducted to the detriment of Indigenous people:

> Like at Rumiyuk there was a CDEP program...The women were working fine until [name] said you don't own the design...Ohh did they spit the dummies...And they came to me and I said, I'm sorry Aunties but I can't do nothing for you, you

have been suckered by this so you need to get out of the CDEP program because the government money is a co-op and you're working under that umbrella, so they own your design[of your work]..."

Respondent 6 explored it well:

What they should be doing is asking the people on the ground what they want and if the community has got a different answer, a different response to that and as a community worker that's what I would say, forget gaps, go and ask or talk to the people...

Everyone's issues are different and everyone's solutions are different too... Bureaucrats particularly have the real difficulty getting that concept themselves because they're always coming down with a top down approach rather than a bottom up approach. History has told us time and time again in our communities, that if you don't do it that way its doomed to fail, you may as well just stand there and rip up a million dollars into tiny little bits and throw it all out to the wind as hand money and stuff to a program that's been designed without proper consultation because it won't work.

…Anyway it's just all about generating your own solution and each community is different and each set of issues is different. The history is different. It's like someone the other day was there with their child health check list. I mean it's all written as if you're living in a remote community in the Northern Territory, that's what it was generated for: Of absolutely no bearing at all in here in Gippsland.

She also provides an example of how programs delivered without real support are not good on the ground:

There are lots of good ideas that were out there years ago but nobody's instigated any of them...we had about ninety young men and women train in tour guiding and how to set up a company tour... It never happened…Nobody got a job and nobody set up a company... I think they needed someone to support them through every step and that didn't happen... I mean ninety people trained and as far as I know nobody works.

Respondent 1 explains:

Yeah but what are they doing to close the gap, hey. They're just words. Words are easy, they're cheap, they're quick!

Well, they were saying for a while there that the gap had narrowed because they can't redefine the stats on how it was defined. So I suspect that it may just become a bit of a bureaucratic exercise in people trying to show with statistics they are spending government funding to close the gap. Whether there's actually a change on the ground I don't know... I think too there are a lot of things being rushed through really quickly without sort of proper consultation and without asking people on the ground in the real world.

This respondent also spoke of the need to keep it within the actual community:

Forget the ABS, you know, forget the COAG trials...you know forget everything else you've heard...you know this is where we're at. And basically have an information exchange right cause...[ohh sigh of frustration] I'm quite sure that if we could umm work with council to ..to really within five years have some absolutely fantastic results because we, the will is there because we can...because the mechanisms are there, they're all there.

4.8.3.4   Education

Education proved to be an important concern and often a springboard for many of the respondents, especially educational courses which were completed post-secondary school level. Some respondents finished high school and went on to university, which exposed them to unexpected racism, as Respondent 9 points out:

> Like I remember when I was there [uni] in my first time looking at names on the wall of a list and someone had written 'ABO' next to my name …like they were numbers not names so it had to be someone that knew me pretty well..ummm I think that people thought that I got an easy ride into the unit and that because I went through the Aboriginal Entry scheme and they knew that...what's she doing here...so I finished my commerce degree and got distinctions and high distinctions and yeah...then I realised I had a whole lot of opportunity ...and I realised that education was the key.

Others chose courses that were specific to a learning area that they felt was required to realise their business dream. An example of this was Respondent 8 who said, 'I'm doing a course at the moment; certificate I in carpentry, making cabinets and stuff.

Some were offered scholarships and awards that helped make the way for them to continue on in their efforts for a better life. A comment from Respondent 8 shows how this experience acted to propel her forward:

> The Director of the college saw my determination [after 5 years of p/time study] and said give that girl an award for the time she puts in. So she made me feel like a million dollars, you know getting an outstanding student award from the actual [emphasise] director ... and in the meantime I did a business course with Koori

women being in business, in Melbourne: Enterprise Management...they gave me a little bit more incentive to keep pushing forward ...I am now an established artist, I am now an international artist!

Respondents 3 and 6 sum up those scholarship opportunities well with Respondent 3 commenting: 'I ended up getting a scholarship to go to Bond University ...it was a private university and you've got to pay a lot of money and so ummm...and they were pretty excited to have another Koori student'; and from Respondent 6: 'I got a scholarship to go to La Trobe to begin with so I went to La Trobe Uni. No one had ever gone to Uni before [my family] so that was a really big step. That was a bit scary'.

Respondent 8 had strong views about what could be done to further the education prospects of our generations:

If teachers were trained up – so say I want to be a teacher and I go to Uni if they actually had a subject that was Indige[nous] cultural awareness, you know like a full six months semester and then when they get into the school then, if they've got Indige kids in primary school or whatever. That's it and I'd love to be able to one day say to take on a Koori traineeship you know for anyone who's interested in business, a young person you so that...That's also my aim. I'd love to see that sort of thing too.

4.8.4 Culture/Community

4.8.4.1 Building relationships

Respondent 8 is using a hands-on approach to bridging the gap at the local level:

> Well I teach in the kindergarten. I plant the seeds now...That's a way for me breaking down barriers between non Indigenous and Indigenous and those children now will approach Aboriginal people: Before they would never have ever thought about it. And they just see somebody else and they go, oh she's like black, we can approach those people.

Respondent 1 provided this commentary with regard to the building relationships and the benefits of having a proactive approach:

> There's a real… under the radar racism... I do believe it is institutionalised type racism. It's not always in ya face but it's definitely there...and just an example of trying to break into that level of conservatism- [names withheld] made an approach to [council], …requesting the council to fly the Aboriginal flag on the town hall which it's a prominent place in town, ummm like permanently fly it okay. Like they used to fly it on NAIDOC Week, it would go up and come down, umm, to cut a long story short, we made these real personal relationships within council…it took two years [emphasis] and it took a change in council… I said to the whole chamber at a meeting. "What is your worst case scenario, what is your worst nightmare, what is it about this, [emphasis] that is fearful for you and that scares you?"…And to one guy's credit he said, "I'm gunna tell ya, by the way I'm all for it", he said, "but these others are too scared to tell ya what the fear is, ok"…. He said "the fear is what the rest of [area] gunna say is. What the rest of

non-Indigenous conservative [area] gunna say, you know what about the diggers, you know – whata they gunna think?" Sooo, immediately we said "well... well hang on, our fellas, our mob fought in the trenches with your mob and yeah we weren't recognised for our job years later …and these fellas fought for our country too, you know" And it made a huge difference…to their comfort levels their comfortability factor and... it wasn't long after that that the flag went up...and from that time on, once they'd voted on it got their fears out in the open , so that was a bit of cross cultural stuff happening right... all we've ever had is really great feedback and council have received fantastic feedback about the fact that as a council that they are leaders in this, they've flown the flag now and people are really happy to see it flown.

Respondent 4 spoke about her connecting to community:

People have been asking us for a while – people come and ask us now as we're recognised elders in the community and we don't have sort of affiliations with any group, the co-op or any other place. But people ask us always to do things with them, to have programs to help out with certain things, but look; we really are absolutely stretched to the limit... So we're mentoring a young fellow now who has been through the courts and he's on his last leg.

And Respondent 1 shares this:

…most of my work is done on [name of country] country because my land, my cultural learnings have been on this country…so I'm thinking of him [elder] and what his aspirations are and how I know… he's just wants country to be cared for…

Then there are the respondent's connections to their heritage and culture. The quotes below show that being in a community and the connectedness to culture, do not always have anything to do with the geographical location in which one lives. They show the link between the inaudible connection that is difficult to explain with words and is often felt as a connection to nature that Indigenous people try to explain but cannot:

Respondent 5:

> I think there's something spiritual there. I really do believe that. Even when we go down to the ocean, I always feel closer to God at the water, and I can't explain that to people and I know that part of our clan is rivers and mountain people...I used to think one of my sister's she kinda of got involved in Indigenous side of things and she walked away from a very good marriage to do that and I often wondered why would she do that…to trace her roots… I think I understand bit more now… recently I had the privilege of standing at Coranderrk [mission] in Healesville and it was just, oohhh I can't even begin to… tell you what it feels like..I remember my mother and , and my father and I think my grandfather ...so you know fifty years have gone by and here's me standing on this piece of property that has so much heritage to it and...it was just overwhelming.

Respondent 4:

> So I absolutely loved it there. I found my connection to the earth and to myself. I found my spirituality. I would have my own time early in the morning and at any other time just walking around the bush... I found a spot that for me was a healing place and I knew that if I laid in the dirt I could be healed. And I still go back there and lay down in the dirt when I'm having any sort of a real problem. More emotional and spiritual than physical problems and I really found myself and my

spirituality back there and it was a time that was just – I don't know, I find it really hard to explain. But it was a growing time for me, emotionally and spiritually, a real growing time, a finding myself time.

4.8.4.2 Issues

Issues within and outside the *community,* as it is often referred to by Indigenous people in various geographical locations, are quite varied. This has posed some interesting questions more so than answers, in terms of the research questions and literature available. This will be discussed later in the discussion chapter, but first the researcher must unpack what respondents had to say.

There is the notion that all Indigenous people should have dark skin and this is not the case. This is no more highlighted than in the words of Respondent 3:

> I had a girl like that I was in foreign affairs [with me] you would pick and I would pick but 99 percent of the population wouldn't pick it...very very fair reddish coloured hair… I think it's quite funny in terms of the colouring that it can come [not that it can count for shit but] through really strong...like my mum's quite fair but her sister is black [emphasis] and my brother is black and there are kids in Tweed heads from the same parents where one is blonde and blue eyed and one is black and an afro.

Respondent 5 shared the difficulty of having a non-Indigenous mother and an Indigenous father that brought its own issues with identity and connectedness aspects of being Indigenous:

Charlie and Herbert came from Yea and when I looked at these men that come into our house and they were black and I remember thinking who were these black men you know they're black [dark skinned], because my mum...she tried to keep Dad isolated from his family and obviously isolated from his Indigenous family side and maybe that's part of the thing because at that time it was the only time I can remember seeing Indigenous black people. [Father was fairer in skin colour]...My pop was not…not dark like these guys were. He was different. He was not white like my mother was …wait 'til all [these] years later that you find out some of this stuff and it wasn't until later in life that you [I] find out that you belong to this, this and this tribe that tribe that clan and they they're all ancestors.

Respondent 9 spoke of similar difficulties:

If someone had of asked in year 6 or year 8 what that meant I probably couldn't have told them what that was and in fact many times I was really embarrassed because we didn't know what that meant, like a shame job, like you know...I'm Aboriginal I haven't even got my Aboriginal Dad here and I don't know what that means. I can't even have a conversation about it...but you know, you've got this sense of, a feeling you know it's part of you and who you are but you also have that educated, you now.

Community Issues have been divided into three broad categories: discrimination from the outsider: non Indigenous people; the Indigenous dynamic: inside the black way; the importance of the accepted identity process. Respondent 9 spoke of the real dilemma:

They did have an Indigenous unit [this workplace] and their whole culture was really positive and so then at interview, I said something about being Indigenous

and he was like ...what you're Indigenous and I was like yeah and then the whole interview went really bad [emphasis].

At foreign affairs it was just terrible and like I …only had one really bad incident...he said "I don't understand why [my name] is so popular if she's so dumb"…and she said to him, "I don't think that you could say anyone who has got into this program is dumb you know, they've all, they're all university graduates and they've all had to study very hard and whatever". And he said "Ohh you know every year one or two slips through the nets and you... you know the EO [equal opportunity] you know". I was sooooo shocked…I couldn't even be upset…I looked at all these people like black, and whatever else and I was just like I got an Honours degree in Law.

Respondent 9 also talks about her perspective of issues faced by Indigenous Australians going into business related to finance and this is supported in the literature that shows Indigenous Australians are less educated, less employed and paid less when employed as well as having fewer Indigenous people being able to enter into the housing market. She also identifies the aspect that some Indigenous people are self employed as entrepreneurs for benefits other than financial ones. The research is supported by scholars who state that Indigenous families have more of an investment in the non economic gains than those that are economic:

…that you need to earn that trusted relationship and a look at what the challenges are … the difference of business and saying to whatever whether black or white... There might a difficulty for Aboriginal businesses to get the finance because they're parents don't own their home or they don't make, they kinda don't have $20 grand, so it's hard to get that working capital...They might not have a home

themselves because home ownership is like 30% or like having a loan of 75% or something so where do they get the equity to get into business and when I found a lot is...Aboriginal people like there's no research, but anecdotally, Aboriginal people have higher...often have credit issues, so they might have had a AVC or a phone bill or another bill of 2 or 3 or 400 dollars that went bad and they are paying it for two or three years and they can never got a loan because of it and in my work experience , the amount of Aboriginal that had, that were held up from going into business because of credit stuff... sometimes they're in business to do it not to make money, are doing it for their healing or to support their families, and for that reason it's good, some people were in business, because they found a lot of other ..in small towns, a lot of racism …if you have skilled Aboriginal people working with you..and my intention was to get a few people that I could learn lots from so I could be just as good as they are without and have an appreciation..."

With Respondent 9 giving this view:

I have a 20/60/20 rule. There's 20% of the population that are our strongest advocates; there's 60% of the population depending on what the need and their views and exposure are – like where they grew up sways what they think; and there's 20% that you're never gunna change their minds regardless of what you say. There's been a time when we had that walk on the bridge that was really positive and there have been times like when ATSIC closed and you have people say it's their own fault. We shouldn't give them money.

Respondent 10 who is a nurse now and has had several successful business ventures, spoke of her lack of confidence:

Ya know you spent more of ya bloody time fighting and in primary school and that defending ya self and for being black…now I can walk up the street and everyone will say hello to ya and that makes me feel good you know...like even within yaself ya don't think ya going to achieve, you know and it's because ya black you know, people call ya black and people... I think I was eight when I wanted to be a nurse so I've always had that in my mind to be a nurse so even like you know...you wouldn't think you'd achieve anything because you were always defending yourself and that sort of thing.

Respondent 2 spoke of her experiences having discovered her Indigenous background later in life and how it then impacted her relationships with some community people, but also her own view of her position:

I was volunteering at a bbq and she walked up to me and said "have ya found ya family yet?" And I thought that the tone was quite offensive and umm I said ahh now and this was before I knew my mother was dead. I said "I know who my mother is and I've met her but you know", and she says, "I find you totally...[pausing searching for right words] totally unacceptable and you and you have no right to be here". And that was at the uni and it was NAIDOC and it absolutely devastated me. But that is the only time it was ever happened to me...but you know I exist and ...and people don't seem to have a problem with me and yet...I've seen the same people have huge problems with other people…

And there are always the in house issues that arise within the Indigenous communities themselves:

I also became very unpopular with the local Aboriginal community because I reorganised the housing list...There were some people who had been waiting for

housing for a long time and certain families were coming in and getting on top of this list. So I rearranged the housing list and became very unpopular.

Mental Health issues have also been an undercurrent of the other aspects of these women's lives and for some their journeys through have been extremely difficult.

Respondent 2 depicts it well:

I think …because of the breakdown and everything, I think I was a bit nervous to work for anybody although mind you there were...it's not easy playing inside of clubs and things like that trying to convince them that you might be alright and then of course you get the job and you know it's strange that I could do that. But that's how it was...but I think people sort of thought well you know, she's cruising round the country side and she's doing this and she's doing that. It was, it was ...umm a manic thing you know?... Anyway I just gradually, I come better but the remnants are always still there today.

And Respondent 1 shares her insight:

I actually had a nervous breakdown over the whole thing...when I saw community people, elders traditional land owners not coping with the [pause searching for right words] protracted Government processes and bloody promises and this only lasts for a [f***] one financial year and it then changes… I was conflicted…in a cultural sense, to my obligations to the traditional land owners here. I felt like I wasn't doing my job. I found that the processes and procedures that we've had in place weren't culturally appropriate and they set a lot of mobs [Indigenous groups] up for failure…

The importance of the accepted Indigenous identification process as outlined through the court system is displayed here in this respondent's conversation: 'There's quite a few men out there that say they're Indigenous but they're actually not. I know up here they've had a bit of a cleanup...and there are quite a few that actually had Indian background'.

And finally from a community and cultural perspective we as Indigenous people have to rise above what has happened historically, to move forward and this is shared by the respondents:

Respondent 5 says it well:

> We are a race of people, unique from all other races, and we have a right to be here!... we can live our lives as under dogs…and think well we're second class... or this in only meant for someone else and that's meant for someone else or they can have that business [but I couldn't do that]… why can't Indigenous people have businesses …look I lived through rape, sexual molestation, domestic violence, drug and alcohol addiction fractured childhood dysfunction I mean whatever you want to call... I mean we've been dysfunctional since Adam and Eve so what's new under the sun: but the thing is that we can rise above that, with a bit of... determination and probably sheer will…We're a stolen generation this was stolen from me that was stolen from me, and umm they're taken our land and this is right and what they've done is the injustice but.. It's about time we danced on injustice and… time we stood up.. we can rise above this …like a phoenix out of the ashes… and become something and instead of being what do you call it, like a blot... on the nation … well some people might wish they could erase that blot but then that's never gunna erase who we are…we were here a long time ago ...it's not the will of God that the Aboriginal communities in the outback... live out there

like dogs…I believe ...change starts with you and me... it starts with the individual...[pause] and you know and something's gotta change in us personally and then that change will be like a fire..And see what happens when one clan tries to fight on their own, but when the clans unite see the difference in what happens…

4.8.4.3   Other ways of telling

Indigenous ways are often other ways compared to the mainstream. This has been the thorn in the side of proving ownership of land and connection to land since it was never recorded according to mainstream laws. The written word was not always the way for the story telling of Indigenous people, so in this thesis there are pictures and song provided as other ways of telling. These different stories have written explanations, but if you compare the written version with the visual or auditory version there are other ways of listening and seeing. So Respondent 8 explains:

I have a painting that depicts me sitting on the fence as a seven or eight year old, looking across the road. You know just watching the people come down in horse drawn wagons and then all pile out of it because they had just got married, right? So they'd all pile but of it at the Exhibition buildings and they'd wander around there and get their photos and that taken there and I'd be sitting on the fence across the road, looking and watching, just thinking ahhh, will I ever achieve that, you know.

The next chapter outlines the findings and discussion, which includes snapshots of the depth in understanding both from the perspectives of Indigenous Business women and Indigenous community members. This will be unpacked into sub headings: all things

business, the importance of family, learning and education, and understanding the Indigenous way for Indigenous business women and understanding the impacts of government programs, family and community concerns for the perspectives of Indigenous community members.

Figure 6: 'History'
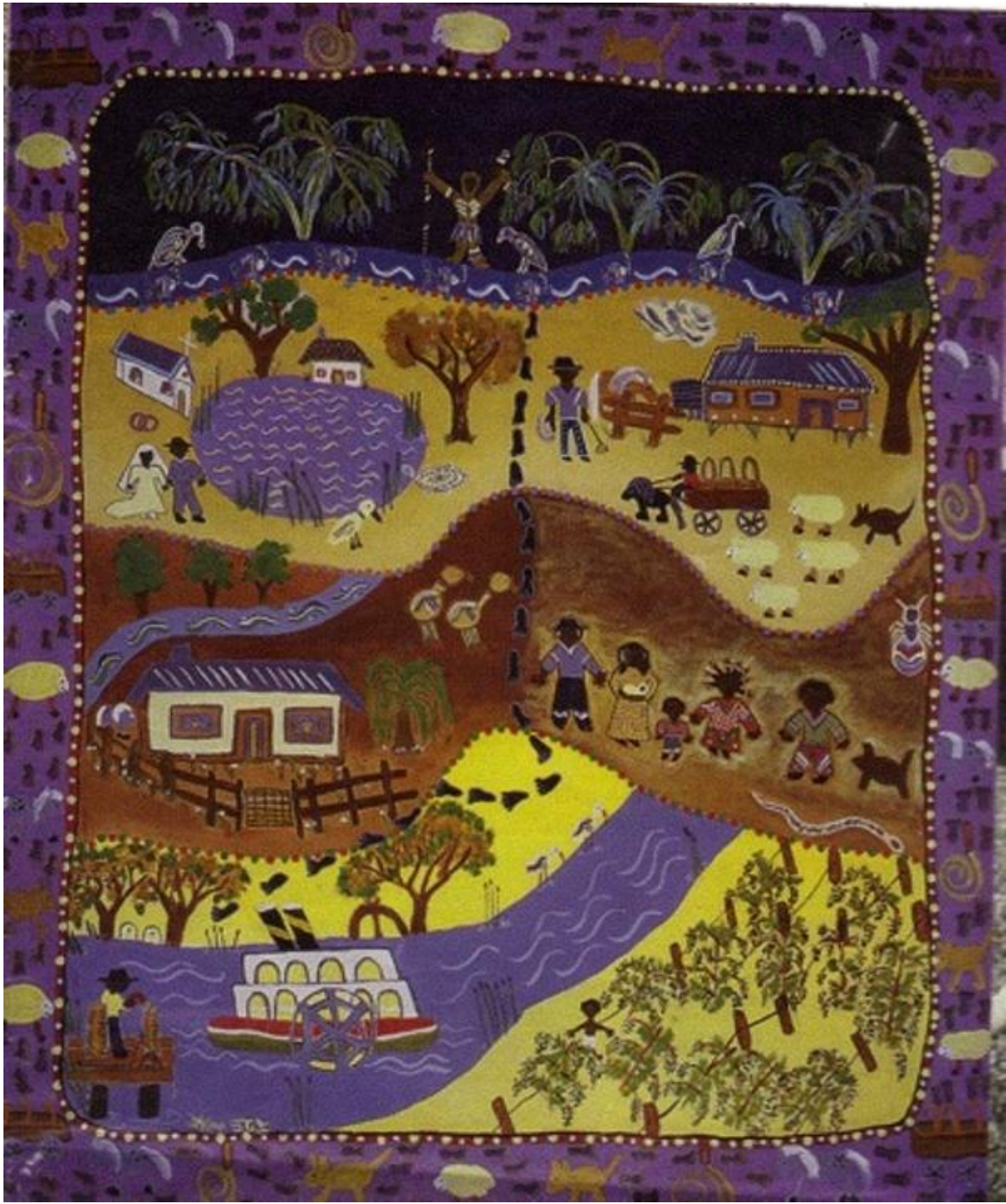
This is the history story of Leann's granddad Ned's family

and his travels to Victoria from Northern Australia.

He had left as a young initiated male and never returned.

Source: Leann Jean Edwards (undated)

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:
Let's Listen Some More to the Canvas of Colours

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides discussion of the snapshots of the journeys for Indigenous business women.

5.2 Indigenous business women journeys

The two research questions underpinning this thesis were:

1. What factors are significant in the success of female Indigenous entrepreneurship in Victoria, Australia as determined by themselves?

2. How do they retain and enhance key Indigenous community values, practices and aspirations, which distinguish them from mainstream enterprise, if at all?

The findings chapter presents the rich experiences of the participants in a wide-ranging way. It also provided several areas of potential innovation with regard to ideas for further investigation and implementation. This chapter provides discussion of the major findings that have emerged from those journeys. These are:

1. Learning and education

2. All things business

3. The importance of family

4. Understanding the Indigenous community

Table 2. Main themes concluded by this study – what works, what doesn't.

What are the significant factors in the success of female Indigenous entrepreneurship in Victoria, Australia?		How do Indigenous female entrepreneurs retain and enhance key Indigenous community values, practices and aspirations?	
Factors that work	What doesn't work	Factors that work	What doesn't work
Self-esteem, believing in oneself regardless of the outlook	Lack of intestinal fortitude: all of the entrepreneurs had the desire to do something more with their life and further their initial economic disposition. (Foley 2003) identifies this in his definition of Indigenous entrepreneur	Respect of community, regardless of local heritage connections (ties)	The same factor can also act as a hindrance due to lack of heritage ties in community where one lives. Requires long term relationships to be fostered.
Tenacious ability to move past arising/historical barriers	Lack of some support was identified as a negative impact on the success of Indigenous Business Women	Acting to enhance Indigenous reputation in attitude and leading by example	Having a nice home or other assets can be seen as a following 'white ways' and moving away from Indigenous people
Mentorship/supportive business brains	Lack of educational and learning opportunities including life experiences and exposure that are drawn on by these entrepreneurs.	Learning and education helps to close the gap, provides aspirations and encourages others to move forward in their lives.	Education can also be seen to further separate Indigenous people
Family commitment and responsibility - connectedness	These women showed personal drive beyond financial gain and rested on their desire to be role models for their family. Their goal was to provide	Building relationship with appropriate Eldership in local community to promote understanding	Communities have individual historical issues that impact on functionality. These relationships can take many years to form and can impede developing

	hope and also build a new foundation for future generations.		businesses due to the intricacies of these relationships. An example might be where a business might want a land report and the sub contractor required Elder approval to commence. If that relationship has not been developed well, the prospect of any work being achieved on Indigenous country is minimal.
Ability to use negative influences for positive results (racism)	Racism can be crippling. In arenas where one is isolated, uninspired and unmotivated racism can be like a poison. Without inner strength this could be a debilitating factor in failure in business.	By standing in the face of internal and external racism these women set an example of integrity and achievement that cannot be stated more passionately than to simply stand and do.	Denial of connection to Indigenous heritage acts to cut between the journeys of history to future and cannot be seen as influential upon other Indigenous people. This does not allow measurement of success for Indigenous individuals.

The two key components of this thesis are the life stories of Indigenous business women, in which they share their perceptions of what was important in balancing their personal and professional lives; the other was to listen to Indigenous community members and their perceptions of the interplay of issues relevant to Indigenous employment and business that they considered important.

The business women shared their triumphs and their struggles. Their shared stories in this project support findings in research as highlighted by Mapunda (2007) that explores the differences between Western economic systems and the more holistic Indigenous approach. The definition, as depicted by Foley (2003), is well supported within the findings of this research whereby the business women are altering their outlook by effectively forcing a change within their social status, further than their initial economic standing predisposed them to. All of the respondents came from non-wealthy families and resided in metro, regional and rural areas. No one lived in a remote area as defined by ABS Victorian remoteness map (2006) (see Appendix 1) and this also supports findings (AIHW 2007)

Social Justice and the historical lack of it has permeated throughout the research and supports various inadequacies that still affect Indigenous families today, such as those outlined by the ABS figures (2006; 2008); COAG information (2002); along with papers written or presented by the chairman G. Banks (2003; 2005; 2007) and the SCRGSP (2009) with regard to socio-economic imbalances. The notion of social justice has been explored within the economic backdrop of the importance of education, family and understanding the Indigenous way, as well as what the aspects of business meant to those who provided insight for this study. This is supported by research completed by Lindsay (2005) with regard to the impact that can provide beneficial outcomes for the entrepreneur and their families. However the research undertaken in this study has also supported Hindle and Rushworth (2002) and Frederick and Foley (2006) in that there is little research involving Indigenous Australian Entrepreneurs and there is none involving women in Victoria

This thesis was originally designed to fit within a structured outline that had been part of a funding grant developed between two universities and an industry partner to investigate

the declining numbers of Indigenous businesses (ABS 2006; Lee-Ross & Mitchell 2007; House of Representatives Standing Committee on ATSI Affairs 2008). As the research evolved however, with various changes and developments, the research has been allowed to realign its purpose to meet both the requirements of the initial project guide as well as the realistic input from relevant stakeholders. Stakeholders who included the Indigenous people who have courageously participated in yet another study about Indigenous 'issues', and the engaged researcher. As an Indigenous Masters Candidate, there are immeasurable extra responsibilities to ensure that work such as this is valuable, worthwhile and completed. Those responsibilities are supported by Foley (2000), Hindle et al. (2007), Smith (2005) and Pearson (2001a).

5.3   Learning and education

The Indigenous women and community shared their desire to fulfil their destiny as business women and their determination to succeed, often in spite of hurdles that had to be overcome to achieve this. Some of these hurdles are underpinned by paternalistic policy drivers such as the federal government failing to address their obligations to ensure the rights of Indigenous women to self-determination (Commonwealth of Australia: Women's Health Report 2007). McClure concurs in his report in 2000.   Others were directly related to their Indigenous heritage and this was partially supported in the literature by Hindle (2004) and Lindsay (2005). All of them spoke about different doors being offered and taken in directing those dreams through various educational opportunities including scholarships, secondary, tertiary and vocational training. The available literature does not provide information about the connections between education and business opportunity in this country. There are statistics that show some correlation between education and employment in overseas research articles (Micro-Economic Policy

Analysis Branch 1999). Some participants even shared how they learnt from life exposure and experiences that influenced the paths they took. All of them displayed an energy and will power that seemed to propel them forward in their efforts. Many spoke of their indirect ability to regather their sense of self in the face of adversity including blatant racism in those learning arenas. It was expressed that the general racism that all had experienced throughout their life had acted to toughen them to the understanding that this aspect is a part of their journey and is supported by the International Labour Organization's (ILO) (2007) view of how Indigenous women face multiple aspects of discrimination.

5.4   All things business

Participants both from businesses and community provided insight into how they viewed business – theirs and others. They spoke of how they were influenced and shaped by others who may have been good or bad role models. In describing how they were directed towards business, participants provided clarity in exploring what worked for them, how they achieved and where they may have been better supported, including practical and financial support. Participants spoke of mentors who had directly or indirectly impacted their direction and that those role models or mentors could be family members or others who had been in a part of their lives: teachers and business people.

Participants also valued the importance of good business brains that specialised in areas such as accountancy. Since the Industry partner KBN wanted to better understand its supportive role for Indigenous business, their role was raised and explored. Discussion ensued as to how their role has been measured in providing adequate and appropriate support. The KBN's role is to ensure growth and promotion of economic development for Indigenous Australians residing in Victoria (2008). The KBN was identified as the major

supportive agency available to Indigenous business women but was somewhat 'out of touch' with the business people it is designed to assist. The funding of this agency was considered to be tokenistic and unrealistic in addressing the needs of Indigenous business people. It was also identified as having no programs specifically designed to support Indigenous business women. The KBN was commended for the biannual conferences it presented and for its business directory and there was encouragement for this to continue. There is intrinsic value for Government and non government support agency roles, and these have been highlighted in research in other areas and countries and provide generally to the findings of this study (Banks 2003; 2005; 2007; CIPE 2009; DEWR 2005; Ghosh & Cheruvalath 2007; SGRGSP 2009; UNIFEM 2007).

5.5   The importance of family

Family was the driving foundation for the participants: Family dynamic, family connections, family responsibilities, family heritage and love of family. These concepts were all shared as extremely important reasons why these business women stayed motivated in their efforts to succeed and how they didn't really differentiate between their business lives and their personal lives. They all had a clear understanding that one could not be separated from the other. They were Indigenous women in business with all that this brought to their individual lives. This aspect of the findings is duplicated in other studies such as those depicted by Alston and Bowles (1998), O'Reilly et al. (2005), and ILO (2007). While women are the centre of the human race being able to procreate, women are having their financial independence opportunities thwarted by changes in economic and political structures. However there is no research that directly addresses the importance of family to the Indigenous Australian Business woman and this may require further investigation.

5.6   Understanding the Indigenous community

As Indigenous Australian women living in Victoria, all but one of the women resided in a community that was not their birth heritage. As with other races, there is the belonging to a race (in this case Indigenous Australian) and then there are distinctions within our race that are unique to our country with different nations (tribal groups) that, in turn, have different groups (clans) within those broader collectives. In each of these different groups there is also often a different language and dialect that had ensured the separateness of each clan or nation group, as is shared in Lindsay's research (2005).

As is well reported throughout the literature, the colonisation of Australia from the 18th Century to today, and the effects of that colonisation, has impacted significantly on the ability of each clan and tribe to retain fundamental connections to their birth heritage. The disintegration of cultural connections could be inferred from the stories of these women who have faced adversity, who have faced racism, and criticism from some corners of their own broader race and who have moved forward anyway. Women who have overcome negative histories, to adjust to the ever-evolving world that we all have to be able to function in – one that for the most part is defined by European influence and shaped by concepts of a developed country (even though Australia is the youngest). The position that was presented by the findings of this research that Indigenous Australians do need to function in the world as it currently is, is well documented in Pearson (2001a), is supported by the McClure report (2000) and enhanced by the words of Keane (1988) who relates a clear connection of employment to moving out of poverty and dependence.

The participants shared how the current position in their lives was where they wanted to be. They were aware of how their relationships with geographically close Indigenous

community members and their relationships with the broader community also needed to be fostered. They had a clear appreciation of the difficulties of living in a community that is not of their own kin. The participants were also clear that they were 'Indigenous Women who just were'. They did not have to be an outwardly activist to make their lives worthwhile. In their 'doing' and 'being', the participants saw a way for them to be successful, to move forward from the historical intergenerational impacts of government paternalism.

5.6.1   A snapshot of insight of Indigenous community members

The community members shared their views on issues considered important that were related more to supporting Indigenous people to be positive active participants in general society, rather than being involved in business ventures only. Community members who were a significantly contributing part of this research were very concerned that this research was not really something that was 'on the radar' for the community.

It was clear that the history of what had gone before was still prominent in the day-to-day reality of Indigenous life. This allowed the community members to speak of the consequences of policy such as the progressive closure of the CDEP program, on co-ops and other Indigenous supporting agencies that had obviously affected the employment and engagement rates of Indigenous people in those communities. It was very discouraging to note that only a few of the community members who were participants in this study knew much about or understood the KBN and its role.

Poor educational support for Indigenous children was a significant issue raised by community members who saw this as more damaging than the declining rate of Indigenous business people (in terms of having kids educated before addressing other

related consequences). It was presented that children should be well-supported before they get to levels at school that are deemed 'too late' to help (grade three and then year nine). It was concerning that, for some children, by the time learning issues arose in grade three (by way of gaining extra classroom support) the child had missed the significant learning blocks of numbers and letters. This severely impacted their further learning and, again, this was not then flagged until year nine by which time a student who is struggling in areas of numeracy and literacy are more likely to be already disengaged from learning.

Scholarships that may have been developed to encourage Indigenous students to stay at school had been derived for those who would take on a role model and these disadvantages those who may benefit but who do not wish to take on such a role. It means that those who may benefit from attaining such a scholarship are excluded from application because they may not see themselves as 'banner' material. Participants shared that future development of these incentives and their presentation required a different approach that incorporated true consideration of Indigenous culture and dynamic. This is pertinent in addressing the gap that is constantly portrayed in our media and political debate arena, as presented by Banks (2003; 2005; 2007), SCRGSP (2009), and Fuller and Gleeson (2007).

5.6.2 Impacts of government programs

Community members were expressive about the impact of Government policies and programs that had failed, been cut or were severely under resourced in addressing the 'Close the Gap' principles developed by COAG. They cited: Government policy that hasn't addressed employment problems; Government programs that haven't addressed holes in education retention rates for Indigenous youth; and a society that still has an arrogant ignorance to the intergenerational effects and heartache of historical,

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paternalistic approaches to Indigenous Australians. Community members highlighted the impacts of the closure of the CDEP that left many Indigenous people disengaged. One geographical location was reduced from having several full-time, part-time and apprentice positions to having only four part-time positions. The findings showed that follow-up with those who were left with no employment opportunity was also difficult as gender differences impacted on abilities to approach opposite sexes (within the Indigenous community context relating to possible misunderstandings). Other community members shared that once people disengaged they just seemed to 'disappear'. It was expressed that CDEP was an extremely valuable part of engaging Indigenous people from regional and rural areas as their prospects were already limited. This was similar to findings of Borland and Hunter (1997) that showed that there was a direct reason why CDEP was taken up and that it was related to incarceration rates of Indigenous people. People who had been incarcerated appeared to want to take on CDEP programs rather than try and engage in mainstream employment.

There was the view that people should disclose their criminal/police record but that there could be a better process that allowed CDEP applicants a 'second chance'. One of the items discussed by one group was the ability for incarcerated people to gain certain qualifications; however, the qualification generally had some clearly identifiable information that it was gained while incarcerated. Given that figures show 62% of the Indigenous people are employed by Government (Schaper 1999) this may be a significant hindrance.

Another issue of concern was the 'one size fits all' approach with regard to health checks for Indigenous children. As this program was rolled out, it was not adapted to be locally specific, and this then created difficulties in the way the program was managed and understood by both community and Health Services alike.

The KBN was not discussed on a broader scale as most of the community members were unaware of its existence and/or role or had little contact with the KBN staff. This lack of communication impacted the provision of information to those who may require assistance for business ventures. The discussion that ensued involved suggestions of better engagement by staff at the KBN to regional areas as well as provision of information packs (perhaps like show bags) that could be disbursed as the regional co-op or relevant agency required. It was also suggested that regular visits from the KBN to regional areas and schools could promote the availability of its assistance.

5.7   Community concerns

Indigenous community members did not have issue or concern with whether or not an Indigenous woman wanted to have a business venture. An example of this is where a participant who has a 'big' house because she is in business was perceived to be wealthy to which that participant replies "yeah, but I've got a f***ing filthy mortgage to go with it". So the perceptions of others regarding the business woman may be more involved at a business associate level rather than at community level. Put simply, those connected to the business woman know that she lives in a nice home but are not close enough to her to know she has pressures from the debt attached to owning that home.

5.8   Family

Family has been described as an important dynamic for the Indigenous community. Family communication does not simply comprise the standard nucleus with Indigenous Australians. It is made up of extended family members that include Uncles and Aunts and cousins over the generational span. Community members were astutely aware that, in efforts to hold any connection to country and kinship, the family network was important.

Some members also reflected on the impact of family rivalry in the communities where some may try to dominate support structures for their own kin at the expense of others and how this is detrimental to the overall benefit for Indigenous people. Some of these relationship problems have permeated through the years and act as a method of self-preservation for some who have had everything taken from them.

Kinship, and the sense of belonging that this created, were deemed to be significant in being able to integrate with one's heritage and the current social structure. This concept is reinforced by the concepts portrayed in research completed by Furneaux and Brown (2007; 2008) and Foley (2005), with reference specifically to the value of various types of capital (social and non-economic) for the Indigenous entrepreneur. Cahn (2008) expresses it well and his view is endorsed by this research where he states that there is a distinct connection between economic activities and cultural and social relationships that provide for unique entrepreneurship styles.

Figure 7: 'Watching and Waiting'

This painting is a story of Leann's young life when she would come to Melbourne
with friends on trips and stay at Fitzroy. She would watch people she saw pass by
and wish that she was grown so that she could do all the things that she
had seen other people doing. Leann did this with wonder.

Source: Leann Jean Edwards (undated)

6. CONCLUSION: Where to Hang the Canvas

6.1   Introduction

This chapter is to provide a succinct overview of the research and its value.

6.2   Contributions and recommendations

This thesis made contributions to the Indigenous literature and has provided strong connections with Indigenous business people by exploring the personal journeys of Indigenous women and how they have managed to commence and maintain successful Victorian business ventures. In addition, the thesis explored the views of Victorian Indigenous community members who, with a wealth of knowledge, have lived through their own experiences and imparted that knowledge in an effort to help future generations of Indigenous people. Whilst the thesis uncovered a knowledge gap involving Indigenous business women in Australia and in Victoria, Indigenous business women have a heightened sense of the need to succeed as role models to their children, family and community. There is no current research that addresses the knowledge gap for Indigenous Australian women operating Victorian businesses.

It is with these things firmly in focus that the stories of Indigenous business women were sought and, in an attempt to keep their words as they were expressed, have been presented in the clear context of the conversations that were had. This thesis was never going to be able to provide an all-encompassing insight into why Indigenous business women have made their ventures a success. It is ground breaking though in providing significant insight. What it has been able to provide is a view that brings others into the reality of the world of Indigenous Australians to provide a picture with distinct colour that can encapsulate the essence that this type of investigation can bring. It does not simply

uncover some things; it also provides more areas to uncover. This research was compiled in two parts, working with Indigenous Australian women and Indigenous community members from all over Victoria. However, those Indigenous Australians might not have been Victorian born and bred and therefore may have other related issues in working within other 'Indigenous Communities'. This was not really considered at the planning part of this research, but has provided insight into a dilemma in working with Indigenous people in a research paradigm.

Whether there is the consideration that these Indigenous business women act like those of the wider entrepreneur group or not, this research has certainly shown that there is no clear ability to define Indigenous entrepreneurship purely from a female entrepreneur perspective. While Foley (2008) provides a well-defined general definition it does not specify context of gender or geographical location, and these aspects need to be further investigated in order to be adequately addressed. The complexities of the thesis' findings indicate that one of the direct constraints of a transferable definition of Indigenous women's entrepreneurship is that it cannot be applied without due consideration of where a person's kin are from, comparative to the current community in which one lives. Additionally, there is a constant affirmation that the historical impacts have rippled through the generations to those who are participants now in 2011: a history that is unique to Australia and to the original inhabitants of this country; a history that still sees Indigenous mothers concerned about listing their children on their birth certificates; a history that has created a welfare dependence in Indigenous communities that is crippling our youth; a history that needs to be overcome.

The KBN is a government-funded body, part of DIIRD under Small Business Victoria that is funded to support Indigenous business in Victoria. Generally, the KBN was considered to be a basic provider of information such as training and workshop

opportunities although these were always identified as occurring in the city. Therefore respondents required travel and often overnight stays – which impinged on businesses. There was a lot more concern expressed about the capacity of the KBN to provide valuable ongoing support for women who wished to pursue a business venture and those already in business. This was especially due to KBN's Melbourne city location and lack of regional networking. It was understood that the KBN was restricted in its support capacity through funding constraints but this was viewed as a lack of vision on KBN's part rather than a funding issue. There was a consensus that the KBN had no specific programs tailored towards Indigenous women.

As an organisation, the KBN's role is meant to help bridge the divide between Indigenous business innovators and the larger business sector by whatever assistance is required. It was evident that the vast majority of participants (both community members and business women) were disappointed that there was not more support from the KBN, given its role and function.

This mismatch provides clarity. It reinforces the arguments in literature that suggest a 'one size fits all' government approach is neither appropriate, nor relevant, in addressing the 'gap' from either federal, state or local governments. If an organisation, such as the KBN, which is funded to provide support for Victorian-based Indigenous business, is unable to adequately provide such a service, then how are other government structures going to manage the targets that are put before them? This is one of the main reasons that the KBN decided to be involved in the research as an industry partner. The KBN has a strong desire to take the findings from such research to develop specific programs to meet the untapped requirements for Indigenous business.

This thesis has a provision to highlight that new, innovative and appropriate measures need to be adopted, implemented and evolved. Indigenous people of this state and this country are desperate to see change that is long term, for the betterment of current and future generations.

Here we are in 2011, and still 'talking' about what needs to be done. While this is a good thing to do sometimes, there is also a real need to do something! Indigenous people have waited long for things to actually get done, for relationships to be built, for locally specific programs to be implemented. The challenge is, and may have always been, to move from that 'talk about it' to the 'do it' phase. The KBN is in the perfect position to step out of a previous developmental comfort zone and meet the needs of the businesses that they are funded to support, with a pioneering outlook. A new inventive approach from the KBN can make it a best-practice model and a forerunner in ground-breaking program development. This research can be displayed in the public arena for debate and consideration, for appreciation and to impact positively on the inroads for change.

The author has contemplated the value of this research and whether she was doing justice to the people who opened their lives and their hearts to her to share their journey. She has contemplated the value of this research in the research fraternity itself and how she can make a real difference, if at all, in that arena. And here are her conclusions. The author is an Indigenous Australian woman who has a contribution to make to the knowledge base of humanity. Her articulation may be imperfect but her words are real. Her work has gathered the voices from Indigenous women and brought them together onto one canvas – this thesis. It is with these things firmly placed in the author's focus that she makes any recommendations.

It took some time to process the concept that there can be no general definition for an indigenous business woman, because to do so would further alienate that woman from her connections to her kin – and this acts to sever an implicit tie that binds. By this the author means that all definitions associated to specific Indigenous groups should consider the connections to kin. It must. Whenever we explore an Indigenous person's existence it is expressed in context of their lived experience as an Indigenous Australia. However as the author has grown in her own journey through this research it has evolved too that the Indigenous women who shared their journeys had some similarity in their outlook, yet they came from different areas of the country and had different levels of connections to kinship relationships. It was also noted that these women's personal lives crossed the boundaries of age, marital status, industry, and educational level. Deliberations occurred about whether it was appropriate for a definition to be derived that was not locally specific. Again the same conclusion was made. Indigenous Australians have a unique position in this life and it is that that cannot and should not be transferred.

This research was simply about hearing the lived reality of Indigenous business women in Victoria. It was about hearing the views of Indigenous community members who have provided their wisdom, too, in the transactions of living that have been impacted on our people from the social structure as a whole: A vision that is encased around Indigenous business ventures.

With future research utilising the Feminist paradigm of Participatory Action Research, these dynamics may yield more in-depth richness of experiences in the action and reflection course. This study was accomplished using an unstructured format of qualitative research and the researcher achieved a high level of interaction that provided thick 'chunks' of description that may not have been able to be gathered had attempts

been made to structure the sessions. However future research may employ a more formal approach to questions to encourage more defined responses.

A major recommendation from the research identified the need for the KBN to have an ongoing presence and development of relationships within regional areas, including: physical presence by either office staff or continual visits to all regional areas; specifically target training for women; relevant teaching programs to be delivered locally and with adequate advertisement; printed/digital collateral and information sessions to be provided to LINS and Co-ops so as to reach the Indigenous population of that area; travelling expo instead of city-only events; better broader scholarship provisions; and better tailored support for businesses.

Another recommendation involved better intergovernmental communication that fostered a united approach to 'addressing the notion of closing the gap' between the outcomes for Indigenous Australians and the wider community. It included a concept that there be one website that could house all of the links to various available program supports or other business related networks for people to go to, along with other relevant information and a continued roll-out of co-op website development so that links can also be developed there.

All of the community members sought better educational outcomes for the youth that would, in turn, foster a better employment outcome. The focus for them all was not just business, but education to succeed at whatever a young Indigenous person wanted to achieve in their working life, as opposed to leaving school. One of the biggest issues raised was a real lack of support in the young development years for those children, who struggled with basic learning skills, were then further disadvantaged in high school and ultimately alienated from mainstream learning. This results in the early school leaver with

limited skills. If the child's idea of what they want to 'be' when they grow up is fostered and supported practically at that early age, then the confidence can grow so that during the later years the individual perceives that their 'dream' can eventuate. Another idea that was presented was a form of personality testing with regard to employment disposition so that the student can have their skill set enhanced for the area of employment that they may be more inclined to. These things can be directly related to business ventures but more so, they are fundamental in addressing the gap and provide sound direction to ensure that those who wish to pursue business ventures are able and equipped to do so. These are recommendations from basic areas that may enhance the opportunity for Indigenous people with business ideas to pursue them. They are areas that have been identified in the literature.

6.3   The author's note

I once believed that all it took was a person with a will and desire to change the world. As time has gone by I have discovered that we are better served to simply change the world around us and in turn that will ripple outwardly. I have studied hard and approached this research with the same vigour and enthusiasm that I have in other aspects of my life. I have been stretched in my capacity to endure the tedious and arduous task of developing skills to meet the requirements of this thesis submission, battled health and family issues and my own inner struggle that comes with being an educated black woman. However as I close this letter I realise that I am also closing another important chapter in my life: one which has taken me to a new level of understanding and compassion, for the things that matter most are not in the people that we meet, but the relationships that we build from meeting them. Hopefully, we can all continue to learn from each other regardless of our

heritage: regardless of where we come from and with an open mind to get to where we want to go.

Figure 8: 'The Platypus'

The platypus is Robyn's totem

Source: Robyn Davis (undated)

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(Anne Conway with Indigenous Elders)

INTRO

MANY YEARS AGO BEFORE TIME BEGAN…..…..

BUNJIL THE EAGLE SOARED OVER THIS LAND

NOTHING FLEW OR WALKED OR TALKED………….

 NO MOUNTAINS STREAMS OR LAKES

IT WAS JUST…………….. A BARREN SPACE

WHEN BUNJIL CREATED THIS BEAUTIFUL PLACE

THE ANIMALS AND PEOPLE LIVED WITHOUT FEAR

 THE BAT AND THE CROW WERE SACRED TO US

BUNJIL'S JAARA PEOPLE

THE DJA DJA WRUNG….THE DJA DJA WRUNG

CHORUS

    BUNJIL, BUNJIL SOARING HIGH

    THE CREATOR OF OUR EARTH AND SKY

    MADE A LAND JUST FOR US

    GAVE US LAWS AND SAID WE MUST

     LOOK AFTER OUR LAND…………… FOR ALL TIME

WHEN WHITE MEN FIRST WALKED ON THIS LAND

 WE WELCOMED THEM INTO OUR CLANS

WITH SKIN SO PALE THEY MUST HAVE BEEN

 OUR ANCESTORS SO LONG UNSEEN

 YES, THAT'S WHAT THEY WERE……….. OUR KIN

STRANGE FELLAS THESE GUBBAS WERE

THEY PREACHED A RELIGION THAT SEEMED SO CRUEL

TOOK OUR CHILDREN, LAND, AND FOOD

MOVED US TO FRANKLINFORD FOR OUR OWN GOOD

AND THOSE WHO SURVIVED………… ON TO CORANDERK

REPEAT CHORUS

BUT SHEEP AND CATTLE AND LUST FOR GOLD

SOON PUT AN END TO OUR WAYS OF OLD

THE CREEKS WERE POISONED, WE HAD NOWHERE TO HIDE

GUNS AND DISEASE…………. IT WAS GENOCIDE

REPEAT CHORUS

BUNJIL, THE OLD PEOPLE NOW GONE

BUT THEIR SPIRITS STILL LIVE ON

IN THE STORIES AND THE PEOPLE WHO NOW WALK THIS LAND

THEY WON'T FORGET THE DJA DJA WRUNG

WON'T FORGET THE DJA DJA WRUNG

WE MUST NEVER FORGET……………… OUR DJA DJA WRUNG