

Proposed research project for Fulbright Scholar Award

**Indigenous entrepreneurship, innovation and enterprise:
Designing support that works for indigenous entrepreneurs**

Dr Jason Paul Mika, Massey University, New Zealand

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*Tūhoe moumou kai, moumou tāonga, moumou tāngata ki te pō. Tūhoe wasteful of food,
wasteful of treasures, wasteful of people to death.*

A proverb that speaks of my people's generosity, their willingness
to give all that they have for the sake of others in need.

Introduction

This project is about discovering what works for indigenous entrepreneurship, innovation and enterprise within the United States of America and Aotearoa New Zealand. By 'work,' what is meant is assistance that satisfies the firm level business needs of indigenous entrepreneurs, builds indigenous entrepreneurial capabilities and enables indigenous enterprises to develop *as* indigenous enterprises (Mika, 2015). Enterprise assistance is inclusive of all forms of business support (information, advice, facilitation, training, grants and finance) available over the lifecycle of an enterprise. As well as forms of assistance, the research explores the rationale, architecture, infrastructure and context (that is, entrepreneurial ecosystems) of such support. Indigenous entrepreneurship refers to the process of establishing, managing and developing enterprises for the benefit of indigenous peoples and others (Hindle & Moroz, 2009), acknowledging distinct cultural and contextual variations among indigenous peoples (Dana & Anderson, 2007; Foley & O'Connor, 2013; Mika, Warren, Foley, & Palmer, 2018).

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of the proposed study is to understand the characteristics of indigenous entrepreneurship in the United States and the efficacy of enterprise assistance that has been instituted to support this activity. The emphasis is on publicly funded enterprise assistance because indigenous economic development is heavily influenced by relations between tribes and governments. The overarching research question is: what constitutes entrepreneurial ecosystem efficacy for indigenous entrepreneurs? In other words, how do indigenous entrepreneurs and providers assess the value and impact of enterprise assistance within the context of entrepreneurial ecosystems?

Rationale

While inherently pragmatic and evaluative, such questions are located within the emerging theoretical and empirical study of indigenous entrepreneurship, innovation and enterprise (Mika, Warren, Foley, & Palmer, 2018). Policy makers, tribal leaders, entrepreneurs and researchers are concerned with how best to support indigenous entrepreneurs to develop and grow enterprises in ways that accord with indigenous knowledge and contribute to fulfilment of indigenous aspirations for self-determination and sustainable development. What indigenous entrepreneurs expect of their enterprises may differ markedly from the purposes

providers, policy makers and tribal leaders ascribe to such enterprises, or how non-indigenous people view them. The study seeks to understand, therefore, both the entrepreneurs' and providers' perspectives as to the efficacy of enterprise assistance.

Background

The proposed study is consistent with my doctoral research on Māori entrepreneurship (Mika, 2015), subsequent research on entrepreneurial ecosystem efficacy for indigenous entrepreneurs (Mika, Warren, Palmer, & Jacob, 2018) and practice as an indigenous management consultant (Mika, 2018). Stanford University was approached as a host because of its pioneering work on entrepreneurial ecosystems and the Woods Institute's First Nations programme led by Professor Christopher Field, which is inclusive of tribal entrepreneurs from Aotearoa. University of Arizona's Native Nations Institute has been at the forefront of research on American Indian economic development under the leadership of Professors Joe Kalt and Stephen Cornell. It would be a privilege to learn from and contribute to indigenous entrepreneurship research at these institutions.

My intention is to attend the First Nations programme at the Woods Institute late October 2019, and investigate entrepreneurial ecosystems affiliated with Stanford and indigenous entrepreneurs' participation in these systems. From December 2019 to February 2020, the study shifts to working with the Native Nations Institute, participating in their indigenous governance programme in January 2020, and investigating indigenous entrepreneurs' experiences in enterprise assistance, including indigenous-centred and generic mainstream programmes. Additionally, the aim is to participate in and contribute to related research underway within the Woods Institute and the Native Nations Institute.

Methodology

The research is indigenous-centred, incorporating indigenous methodologies, ensuring indigenous peoples benefit from the research, are engaged in the design, data collection, analysis and reporting of results. Reviewing literature, interviews with key informants, practitioners and policy makers, and observation are the primary research methods to be employed. A human ethics application will be submitted to ensure research is conducted in accordance with Massey University guidelines. The research will be conducted in five stages as follows:

Stage 1: Project planning (Aug – Sep 2019)

- Develop a research plan in consultation with the Woods Institute and Native Nations Institute.

Apply for human research ethics approval from Massey University.

Develop and confirm itinerary, schedule of visits, interviews, programme participation and speaking engagements.

Review relevant literature from the Woods Institute and Native Nations Institute.

Meet with management at Massey for sign-off on research programme.

Stage 2: Entrepreneurial ecosystem efficacy (Oct – Dec 2019)

Participate in the First Nations Institute late October, early November 2019. Interview participants from Aotearoa and the United States about indigenous entrepreneurship. Conduct interviews with providers, indigenous entrepreneurs and policy makers involved in entrepreneurial ecosystems affiliated with Stanford.

Review relevant literature about entrepreneurial ecosystem efficacy and indigenous participation and outcomes.

Write up and present a paper on preliminary findings to the Woods Institute on entrepreneurial ecosystem efficacy for indigenous entrepreneurs in the United States.

Stage 3: Indigenous entrepreneurship (Dec 2019 – Jan 2020)

Participate in the Native Nations Institute indigenous governance programme.

Interview participants about the nature and character of indigenous entrepreneurship and enterprise assistance for indigenous entrepreneurs.

Review relevant literature about indigenous entrepreneurship, innovation and enterprise from the Native Nations Institute.

Participate on an existing research project with the Native Nations Institute to learn about indigenous methodologies and indigenous entrepreneurship research in this context.

Stage 4: Indigenous economic development (Jan – Feb 2020)

- Site visit to Harvard University to meet with colleagues of the Native Nations Institute involved in the Harvard Project for American Indian economic development.
- Interview scholars, providers and policy makers involved in supporting indigenous entrepreneurs with enterprise assistance affiliated with Harvard University.
- Review relevant literature about indigenous entrepreneurship, innovation and enterprise policy, assistance and efficacy of such assistance.

Stage 5: Final report and presentation (Feb 2020)

- Research and write a report on the Fulbright Scholar study.
- Write an article on what constitutes entrepreneurial ecosystem efficacy for indigenous entrepreneurs in the United States and Aotearoa.
- Deliver a presentation to Native Nations and Woods Institute and others on the study. Finalise the paper, incorporating feedback and submit for publication as an article.

Significance

Substantial public funding is invested into supporting entrepreneurs, but little research exists to explain indigenous entrepreneurs' participation and outcomes from enterprise assistance. The research has potential significance for indigenous entrepreneurs, providers of enterprise assistance, and policy makers. The significance relates to insights about the distinctive nature of indigenous entrepreneurship and design of entrepreneurial ecosystems for indigenous entrepreneurs. Beyond this are insights about how indigenous entrepreneurs contribute to aspirations for indigenous self-determination and sustainable development.

Sustainability is now unequivocally vital to commercial endeavour, but it is invariably constituted as a trade-off between social, economic and environmental ends, which rely on

arbitrary managerial decisions to resolve. Utilitarianism serves as an unrivaled principle to coordinate markets, but is inadequate as a principle for entrepreneurs to enact sustainability. An indigenous view of sustainable development characterises business in an holistic and multidimensional way, rejecting the ‘mainstream’ customary-commercial binary in favour of duality, adaptation and hybridity. Social, cultural, economic, environmental and spiritual ends are understood as part of an integrated whole and pursued simultaneously. It is not as if trade-offs do not exist, but they are likely understood and enacted in distinct ways from the norm.

A learned elder and scholar of Maori business shared his retort to a question he is often asked by his business school colleagues, “what’s so significant about the Maori economy?” In between that exchange and his meeting with me and others he conceptualised it in this way: We’re the inheritors of a 1,000 year old economy, that is the Maori economy; we had production systems, terms of trade, and indigenous ways of doing business. Now we are the ancestors to be and it’s incumbent upon us to enhance this economy using a combination of old ways and new. The implication is that within the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples is an ancient wisdom with unrealised potential to contribute to more sustainable economies, not just for indigenous peoples, but non-indigenous too. Yet, at the same time, Maori, like other indigenous peoples, are beset by power imbalances, inequities and injustices, and capability and capacity deficiencies. At the same time, Maori are in the throws of a long term process of cultural, language and resource revitalisation aided by treaty settlements. As one tribal executive remarked, however, achieving settlement is the easy part, it’s what we do with it that is the challenge. Within this context, entrepreneurship offers one means for Maori to achieve self-determination and sustainable development.

Evaluation and dissemination

The research on the Fulbright Scholar study is intended to benefit indigenous peoples in Aotearoa and the United States through better public policy, enterprise assistance and indigenous participation and success in economic development. The research is best evaluated by indigenous entrepreneurs and indigenous business owners in terms of how well the research delivers such benefits. The results of the research will be shared with Māori entrepreneurs, providers and policy makers in Aotearoa in seminars and presentations through Te Au Rangahau, the Māori Business and Leadership Research Centre and Māori academic and Māori business networks. Accessible summaries of the research will also be shared with the media. One of the possibilities is to develop guidelines on enterprise assistance design, delivery and evaluation for indigenous entrepreneurs and test these through application with providers in Aotearoa, the United States and other countries.

Justification for residence in the United States for the proposed project

Three main reasons justify residence in the United States. First, the United States has a long history of support for small business through the Small Business Administration, and with this, likely substantial institutional memory and literature about what works in terms of enterprise assistance for entrepreneurs. The residence provides scope to assess the extent to which such institutions and programmes engage with and benefit indigenous entrepreneurs. Second, the residence provides scope to study the extent to which entrepreneurship features within the economic development work of Native American tribes, and how tribes are supporting this activity. Third, Stanford’s association with entrepreneurial ecosystems and

University of Arizona's research with indigenous economic development present a great opportunity to see first hand how the two institutes intersect.

Duration

The research will commence in Aotearoa in August 2019 prior to departure to the United States in October 2019, and end February 2020.

English proficiency

Excellent.

References

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