

Indigenous entrepreneurship? Setting the record straight

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ABSTRACT

We provide an historical essay synthesising the macro societal processes that affected Indigenous peoples' entrepreneurial and trade activities in Canada from pre-contact to 1920. Adopting Indigenous entrepreneurship and institutional theory lenses, we find that the evolution of legal, political, and socio-economic forces converged to undermine Indigenous peoples' entrepreneurial activity and well-being in Canada. Our narrative suggests a dynamic view of the relationship between entrepreneurship and institutions and the role of power. Whereas Baumol's view is that institutions shape entrepreneurship by determining the relative payoffs to productive or unproductive entrepreneurship, our narrative shows the ways in which unequal benefits to various entrepreneurs change institutions over time. This advances the field of entrepreneurship by historically situating entrepreneurial processes in settler society and exposing the role of power in the relationship between entrepreneurship and institutions in society over time.

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Introduction

The disadvantaged circumstances of present-day Indigenous communities in Canada, including their economic marginalisation, are widely recognised by the public as well as scholars. What is less present in the public consciousness, and perhaps even in scholarly opinion, is awareness of a 'once-vibrant' economic relationship (Gladu, 2016) between Indigenous peoples and the rest of the population in Canada. In this paper, we wish to consider the historical contours of that relationship, and how it went from vibrancy to marginalisation. At the centre of the story are the interrelated dimensions of power and colonisation across time, as they affected the socio-economic relationships between Indigenous peoples and settler society in Canada's early history. Specifically, we ask (1) how did Indigenous peoples' socio-economic status change with the imposition of 'Canada' onto Indigenous peoples' traditional territories over time and (2) how did colonial legal and socio-economic forces converge to facilitate and/or constrain Indigenous peoples' economic development, entrepreneurial activity, and well-being in settler-Canada. To achieve this, we engage in the historical periodisation of Indigenous entrepreneurship through the 'analysis and interpretation of past event(s), in relationship to their time and place, in ways that address a question or problem that arises

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in the present' (Wadhvani, 2016a, p. 66; 2016b). Our purpose is, in part, to counter mainstream narratives and assumptions about the 'lack' of Indigenous participation in the economic life of Canada (cf. McDonald et al., 2019; NACCA, 2021; NIEDB, 2020; OECD, 2020). In doing this, we demonstrate how the unfolding dynamic of settler colonialisation came to undermine and delegitimise complex Indigenous trade protocols and entrepreneurial activities that were widespread both pre- and post-contact. Ironically, it was precisely the varied and flexible entrepreneurial support offered by Indigenous peoples to settler society that enabled settler society to displace and marginalise them.

We draw on contributions from scholars in economics, history, anthropology, and political science who, for decades, have examined the role of Indigenous peoples in the economic life of Canada. We aim to synthesise their insights and bring them to the attention of entrepreneurship scholars in order to deepen our understanding of contemporary Indigenous entrepreneurial activities. In so doing, we advance entrepreneurship theory itself (Maclean et al., 2016). Our paper analyzes Indigenous and non-Indigenous entrepreneurial interactions and processes from the period prior to contact through to 1920. We consider '... the links between entrepreneurship and (societal and market) transformations over time' (Lubinski et al., 2020), and draw on the burgeoning field of Indigenous entrepreneurship, where its distinctive features have been studied. We consider historical developments in terms of evolving power relationships and draw on institutional theory to identify formal and informal institutional processes that fostered or inhibited Indigenous entrepreneurial activity.

Four main contributions emerge from our paper. First, we provide an Indigenous-centric counter-narrative to established settler colonial narratives concerning Indigenous entrepreneurship. With this, we aim to set the record straight concerning both the nature of Indigenous entrepreneurship and its place in Canadian history in the hope that, among other things, this will shift the frames of policy makers, academics, management educators, Indigenous business practitioners, and NGOs to recognise the long tradition and legacy of Indigenous entrepreneurial and trade activity in Canada. Second, we cast a spotlight on a seriously neglected factor in understanding entrepreneurial activity: the role of power relationships in shaping the place and character of entrepreneurship in societies as a whole and, even more significantly, in the relations among economic agents in a society. Third, we illustrate how over time, the complexities of entrepreneurial interaction and their power dynamics can in fact foster systemic disadvantage. Lastly, we challenge the general inclination in the public view and in scholarly work that uncritically celebrates entrepreneurship's potential for empowerment and economic gain without attending to its possibilities for disempowering and impoverishing.

In the following sections, we offer an overview of our theoretical approach, then outline our method, followed by sections that provide a chronological view of the emergent power dynamics in the legal, political, and socio-economic processes that marginalised Indigenous peoples and increasingly restricted their ability to participate in entrepreneurial activities and in the Canadian economy in general.

Institutional theory and Indigenous entrepreneurship

Institutions are social structures constituted by regulative, normative, and cognitive dimensions that create meaning and facilitate political, economic, and social interactions that assist exchange by promoting order and stability (Battilana & D'Aunno, 2009; North, 1991; Scott

1995:33 cited in Veciana & Urbano, 2008). North distinguishes between institutions and organisations, asserting that institutions set the rules of the game while organisations and their entrepreneurs are the players (North, 1993 cited in Veciana & Urbano, 2008, p. 369). Consequently, institutional theory focuses on relationships among organisations. It highlights both formal/regulative mechanisms (constitutions, government policies, laws, regulations, rules, property rights, etc.) and informal/normative mechanisms (social norms, values, beliefs, sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, etc.) that function to create order and stability (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Veciana & Urbano, 2008, p. 367). This facilitates exchange through (i) promoting certain behaviours and interactions and restricting others, and (ii) constituting acceptable goals and objectives and the appropriate means to achieve them.

Prevailing institutions are viewed as creating order that is 'embedded in a particular historical time and place ... which may consider and legitimate futures beyond that order' contingent on 'temporality or historicity of experience' (Wadhvani & Lubinski, 2016, p. 25). It is important to recognise that entrepreneurship takes place in a cultural context of values, standard practices, and expectations, as well as formal and informal regulations (Baker & Welter, 2020). Therefore, addressing the concept of power is central to understanding institutions and how entrepreneurial actors shape institutions across time. According to Clegg (2010, p. 8), 'in contested social systems, which all systems to a greater or lesser extent are, the powerful try to maintain their power by ensuring predictability, whereas the less powerful have an interest in counterhegemonic, destructural practices'. They draw attention to the rules of the game and the roles that entrepreneurship can play in an economy and argue that the established value system, coupled with regulation, has the effect of channelling entrepreneurial undertakings in a variety of directions, some of net benefit to society and others not (Clegg, 2010).

Indigenous entrepreneurship provides an excellent opportunity to explore how power affects the relationship between institutions and Indigenous entrepreneurs. Indigenous entrepreneurship is a process of drawing value from community-based resources (people, land, capabilities, culture, etc.) and contributing value back that is responsive to a community's particular set of socio-economic conditions (Colbourne, 2017; Jack & Anderson, 2002; Kenney & Goe, 2004; Peredo & Anderson, 2006). The field of Indigenous entrepreneurship is a nascent and rapidly growing one in which early researchers focused on exploring the dynamics of economic development in Indigenous communities and identified the tensions, issues and challenges confronting Indigenous economic development as a distinctive activity that operates at the intersection of social and economic development (cf. Anderson, 1997, 1999; Anderson et al., 2004, 2006; Anderson & Giberson, 2003; Newhouse, 2001). There is little historical research in the entrepreneurship and management field exploring the role of power in transforming the long tradition of Indigenous trade and entrepreneurship by colonising institutions.

While institutional theory has provided useful findings and insights for entrepreneurship research, examinations of power within dominating, colonising, or oppressive institutions are limited (cf. Bruton et al., 2010; Clegg, 2010; Levy & Scully, 2007; Martí & Fernández, 2013; Munir, 2015; Suddaby, 2010; Willmott, 2011, 2015). This is a particularly serious gap when it comes to studying the history of Indigenous entrepreneurship in the context of settler society. Entrepreneurial history addresses the 'complex interplay between entrepreneurship and institutional and contextual change' (Wadhvani & Lubinski, 2016). To generate insights into the macro-historical dynamics of colonisation and Indigenous entrepreneurship, it is

essential to focus on how the rules of the game transform over long periods of history. We leverage institutional theory and Indigenous entrepreneurship to probe how the power relationships that emerged in the process of colonisation came to oppress Indigenous people and constrain entrepreneurship through the establishment and maintenance of dominating institutions and organisations. More specifically, we provide a historical narrative of how institutions and organisations (The Hudson's Bay Company [HBC], the British/French/Canadian states and the Church) oppressed Indigenous peoples by enforcing their assimilation and restricting their ability to participate in entrepreneurial activities and in the Canadian economy in general.

Methods

Our analysis is guided by the following research questions: (1) How did Indigenous peoples' socio-economic status change with the development of 'Canada' over time? and (2) How did legal and socio-economic forces converge to facilitate and/or constrain Indigenous peoples' economic development, entrepreneurial activity, and well-being in Canada? To address our research questions, we produce a historical synthesis (Berkhofer, 2008; Cronon, 2012) from high-quality secondary historical sources first and foremost and support this with primary sources as illustrative examples. In particular, we rely on the growing literature on Indigenous history in Canada seeking to 'engage with critical Indigenous historical scholarship' (Anastakis et al., 2017, p. 136; Leddy, 2017; Logan McCallum, 2017; Macdougall, 2017). We seek to examine the causes of the relative economic and social decline of Indigenous peoples in Canada to provide a more dynamic view of the relationship between entrepreneurship and institutions as well as assess the different forms of 'value' that Indigenous peoples considered when engaging with settlers. We describe the long-run strategic interactions—from contact to 1920—that played out amongst firms (e.g. HBC, Northwest Company), governments (French, British, Canadian), the Church and settlers affecting Indigenous peoples' livelihoods and entrepreneurial activities.

The search for primary sources focused on witness accounts (Smith & Johns, 2020), such as missionary or settler narratives, Indigenous stories, colonial communications, corporate letters and communications from HBC employees, legal documents such as the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the Constitution Act of 1867 and the Indian Act of 1876, various Treaties and Government minutes, orders and bills from which we sought illustrative examples. Table 1 provides selected examples of the primary sources employed.

We began our historiography by identifying the following keywords: 'Indigenous', 'First Nations' in combination with 'socio-economic conditions', 'trade history', 'economic history', 'Indigenous economies', 'traditional economy(ies)'. As the search progressed, we included the term 'modifical economy' coined by Lutz (2009) to refer to the hybrid economy combining features of Indigenous and 'modern, capitalist' economies. Next, we undertook a keyword search using Google, Google scholar, Web of Science, Academic Premier and JSTOR. We formulated search statements in databases by identifying main concepts: Indigenous/First nations/Canada and economy(ies) and combined these with other keywords using the Boolean operators AND/OR. The search statements were applied to titles and abstracts of sources. Secondary sources included journal articles such as the Canadian Historical Review, books, book chapters, reports and white papers. After screening data for inclusion and assessing the quality of the source, we analysed and synthesised the data and selected a few 'deep

Table 1. Examples of historical sources consulted.

Sources	Type of data	Selected examples		
Primary sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Missionary accounts – Indigenous account – Colonial communications – Corporate letters and communications – Legal accounts – Treaties – Government minutes 	<p>Rand, S. T. 1893. <i>Legends of the Micmacs</i>. New York: Longmans, Green, and co.</p> <p>Copway (Kah-Ge-Ga-Gah-Bowh), G. 1858. <i>Indian Life and Indian History by an Indian Author: Embracing the traditions of the North American Indians regarding themselves, particularly of that most important of all tribes the Ojibways</i> Boston, United States: Albert Colby and Company.</p> <p>De Champlain, S. 1911. <i>The Voyages and Explorations of Samuel De Champlain (1604–1616) together with the Voyage of 1603 Reprinted from Purchas his Pilgrimes</i>(A. Bourne, Trans.). Toronto, Canada: The Courier Press.</p> <p>HBC Servants' contracts and Northern Department servants' engagement registers (See https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/name_indexes/index.html#hbc)</p> <p>Canadian Constitution Act, 1867 to 1982 See https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/</p> <p>Royal Proclamation of 1763, King George III</p> <p>Indian Act—1876</p> <p>Treaties of Peace and Neutrality (1710–1760). For a summary see https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1360866174787/1544619566736</p> <p>Peace and Friendship Treaties (1725–1779). For a summary see https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1360937048903/1544619681681</p> <p>Upper Canada Land Surrenders and the Williams Treaties (1764–1862/1923). For a summary see https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1360941656761/1544619778887#uc</p> <p>Robinson Treaties and Douglas Treaties (1850–1854). For a summary see https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1360945974712/1544619909155#rt</p> <p>The Numbered Treaties (1871–1921). For a summary see https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1360948213124/1544620003549</p> <p>Canada, House of Commons Debates (from 1867 to 1970)</p>		
		Secondary Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Journal articles – Books & book chapters – Reports and white papers 	<p>Brandão, J. A., & Starna, W. A. 1996. The treaties of 1701: A triumph of Iroquois Diplomacy. <i>Ethnohistory</i>, 43(2): 209–244.</p> <p>Brownlie, J. 2017. “Our fathers fought for the British”: Racial Discourses and Indigenous Allies in Upper Canada. <i>Histoire sociale/Social History</i>, 50(102): 259–284.</p> <p>Carlos, A. M., & Lewis, F. D. 1993. Indians, the beaver, and the Bay: The economics of depletion in the lands of the HBC 1700–1763. <i>The Journal of Economic History</i> 55: 465–494.</p> <p>Allen, R. S. 1993. <i>His Majesty's Indian Allies: British Indian Policy in the Defence of Canada, 1774–1815</i>. Toronto, Canada: Dundurn Press.</p> <p>Belshaw, J. D. 2015. <i>Canadian History: Pre-Confederation</i>, Vol. 2020. Victoria, Canada: BCampus.</p> <p>Lutz, J. S. 2009. <i>Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations</i> (1st Edition ed.). Vancouver: UBC Press.</p> <p>Borrows, J. 2005. <i>Crown and Aboriginal Occupations of Land: A History and Comparison</i>. Toronto, On: Ministry of the Attorney General</p> <p>Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015. <i>Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada</i>. Canada: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.</p> <p>OTC, 2020. Treaty Timeline, Vol. 2020. Saskatoon, Canada: Office of the Treaty Commissioner.</p> <p>Jacobs, B. 2000. <i>International Law/The great Law of Peace</i>. University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada.</p>

history' vignettes (Lubinski et al., 2020). Table 1 provides a sample of the historical sources consulted.

Historical periodisation

Historical periodisation involves 'establishing the relationship between events in the past and their time and place' and this requires that decisions be made to organise events and developments in the past into coherent periods (Wadhvani, 2016a, pp. 68–69). Periodisation allows us to organise historical phenomena into 'coherent periods so that patterns of continuity, discontinuity, and historical causation are understandable' (Smith & Johns, 2020, p. 280). We apply a sequential or contingent historical logic that focuses on moments of 'confluence of actions and developments' (Sewell, 2005 cited in Wadhvani et al., 2020) to examine how institutions shaped Indigenous entrepreneurship over time. We examine the complex relationships that emerged between Indigenous peoples, the French and British colonising governments, concession corporations (e.g. HBC, Northwest Company, etc.), and the Church that constituted the formation of Canada and the provinces. Our examination of the socio-economic history of Indigenous entrepreneurship in Canada begins with a consideration of Indigenous economic arrangements whereby we consider power relationships through the informal/normative and formal/regulative mechanisms that functioned to create order and stability, and how these were transformed by the historical evolution of the fur trade's entrepreneurial ecosystem. We focus on the formal and informal relations between Indigenous entrepreneurs and traders, French and British merchant entrepreneurs, and French and British home and colonial governments. This historical synthesis begins prior to first contact and covers the period to 1920. Table 2 summarises our system of periodisation for understanding Indigenous peoples' entrepreneurial and trade activities.

We divide our historical survey into three main periods, pre-contact, contact and post-contact. Since we are interested in the evolving socio-economic and power dynamics that affected Indigenous peoples' entrepreneurial and trade activities, the post-contact periods call for more detailed and nuanced consideration. We identify five major historical phases following first contact and explore the dynamic view of the relationship between entrepreneurship and institutions and the role of power across time. Each temporal period begins with short descriptions or vignettes designed to capture the Indigenous socio-economic, political, and legal realities emerging within each period.

Findings

Pre-contact-1492: the vibrant Indigenous inter-community economy

Pre-contact, Turtle Island (North America) was actively inhabited by Indigenous communities with a strong connection to their land base and characterised by diverse languages, religions, trading practices and cultures. Indigenous peoples lived for centuries in vibrant communities governed by sophisticated governance practices, trade and diplomacy with other Indigenous communities (Morellato, 2008). While subject to economic cycles in the forces that impinge on any society, they often enjoyed a level of prosperity and fulfilment expressed in abundant rituals of thanksgiving and reciprocity. There was a rich diversity of Indigenous traditions, laws and customs that were the practical application of Indigenous values grounded in their

Table 2. Our system of periodisation for understanding Indigenous peoples' entrepreneurial and trade activities.

Historical period	Key features	Socio-economic and/or legal impact
Pre-contact to 1492	Rich diversity of Indigenous communities with a strong connection to their land base and characterised by diverse languages, religions, trading practices and cultures.	The vibrant Indigenous inter-community economy
Contact 1492–1610	As settlers arrived, they recognised Indigenous land and resource use and participated in Indigenous institutions but as more settlers arrived European powers asserted settler-colonial rule by deeming North American land legally vacant.	The new arrivals
Post-contact phase one: 1610–1680	Settlers, HBC and the Company of One Hundred Associated realised the importance of Indigenous peoples to the economic and social survival of early colonial settlements in Canada.	Indigenous peoples as allies in survival
Post-contact phase two 1680–1762	Indigenous peoples were critical allies in the fur trade.	Indigenous peoples as allies in trade
Post-contact phase three: 1763–1812	Wars between the British and French necessitated the development of alliances with Indigenous peoples and the recruitment of Indigenous warriors.	Indigenous peoples as military allies
Post-contact phase four 1812–1860	As waves of settlers arrived with the end of the War of 1812 and Indigenous peoples were no longer needed to meet colonial military and trading needs, settlers' perceptions and government policy vis-à-vis Indigenous peoples moved from being considered allies to being seen as obstacles to settlement.	From allies to obstacles
Post-contact phase five 1860–1920	The signing of 66 treaties with Indigenous peoples sought to extinguish Indigenous rights and title and asset ownership of Canada's land mass. The passing of the Indian Act was designed to facilitate the opening of lands for settler-colonial expansion.	Government sponsored dispossession and control

particular land, experience and worldview (Little Bear, 2000). Trading networks covered the continent for at least one thousand years, as evidenced by finding mother-of-pearl from the Gulf of Mexico in Manitoba and copper from Lake Superior in Louisiana amongst many other examples (Mann, 2011). There were an estimated 54 million Indigenous people, representing 500 Nations and 50 language groups in North America, with 10–15 million in what is now known as Canada (Belshaw, 2015; Daschuk, 2013; Mann, 2011; OTC, 2020). Consequently, expressions of identity and culture reflected a vibrant intercommunity and intercultural life that informed Indigenous communities' social, political, legal, and economic values (Belshaw,

2015; Kuokkanen, 2011; Wuttunee, 2004). It is important to recognise the diversity of Indigenous groups and traditions in North America. Canadian Indigenous peoples formed six cultural groups, divided along linguistic lines (Parrott 2023). Those divisions were rough and permeable, with traditions mixing and evolving across cultural divides. This diversity is borne out in the history of entrepreneurial activity and engagement with settler-colonists.

Indigenous peoples used both formal/regulative and informal/normative mechanisms and practices through councils, ceremonies and protocols designed to manage conflicts and maintain peaceful relations. These included activities as diverse as ‘smoking the peace pipe, feasting, holding a potlatch, exchanging ceremonial objects and engaging in long orations, discussions and negotiations’ (Borrows, 2005, p. 5). Indigenous peoples had their own institutions that imposed coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures on their communities based on kinship, negotiation, and consensus. The Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), for example, developed a Great Law of Peace that bound the Cayuga, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Seneca and the Tuscarora nations into a single confederacy that was governed by a Grand Council whose Elders and Chiefs made decisions through consensus (Dickason & McNab, 2009 and McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004 cited in Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 50).

Indigenous trade or exchange was constituted by economic, political and social relationships or markets as social institutions facilitating economic interaction (Le Dressay et al., 2010; Ray & Freeman, 1978). Voluntary exchanges functioned to enable individuals and communities to willingly transfer technologies, goods and skills (Le Dressay et al., 2010) while non-voluntary exchanges occurred through war and raiding activities across the continent (Turner & Loewen, 1998). Some Indigenous communities specialised in particular exchanges based on (i) having achieved significant technological expertise in craft goods (e.g. canoes, baskets, pemmican, clothing, hides, bows, etc.), (ii) being adept in the use of land-based resources (e.g. agriculture, horticulture, foraging, hunting and fishing etc.), (iii) having access to raw materials (e.g. furs, maize, flint, wampum, copper, iron, etc.) and other natural resources (e.g. fishing, whaling and hunting, etc.) or (iv) occupying strategic geographical locations through which traders had to pass (Belshaw, 2015; Le Dressay et al., 2010). In many communities, trade or exchange functioned through gifts or aiding those in need with the expectation of future reciprocity and sustained through kinship ties, intermarriage, and ceremonial exchange activities. This demonstrated that pre-contact Indigenous peoples actively participated in complex Indigenous-based market economies as Indigenous entrepreneurs and traders (Le Dressay et al., 2010; Trospen, 2009; Turner & Loewen, 1998). Finally, prior to colonisation, Indigenous women played a vital role in governing and managing the complex socio-economic dynamics of their nations and communities. Jacobs (2000) notes that many Indigenous nations/communities were matrilineal, positioning women at the centre of politics and trading decisions.

Contact 1492–1610: the new arrivals

Before the coming of the white man, a Mi'kmaq girl dreamed that a small island floated in toward the land. On the island were bare trees and men—one dressed in garments of white rabbit skins. She told her dream to the wise men, but they could not explain the meaning. The next day at dawn, the Mi'kmaq saw a small island near the shore, just as the girl had dreamed. There were trees on the island and bears climbing among their bare branches. The people seized their bows and arrows to shoot the bears. To their amazement, the bears were men.

Some of them lowered into the water a strange canoe, into which they jumped and paddled ashore. Among the men was one dressed in a white robe who came toward them making signs of peace and goodwill. Raising his hand, he pointed toward the heavens. (Retold by Stephen Augustine from Rand, 1893)

When settlers arrived on Turtle Island (North America), they encountered communities and nations with well-developed governance structures constituted by laws and duties related to land and resource use, trading and exchange relations, diplomatic relations and other protocols and practices (Borrows, 2005). Initially settlers recognised Indigenous land and resource use and participated in Indigenous institutions such as 'councils, feasts, ceremonies, orations, discussion, treaties, intermarriage, adoption, games, contest, dances, spiritual sharing, boundaries, buffer zones, occupations and war' (Williams, 1997 cited in Borrows, 2005, p. 9). As contact progressed, European powers established trading colonies, gaining title to North American land by deeming it legally vacant (*terra nullius*—no man's land) and importing their conceptions of trade, commerce and sovereignty and imposing these onto Indigenous peoples (Reid & Peace, 2016, p. 80). The purpose was to extract natural resources and Indigenous peoples labour—a form of extractive colonialism (McBroom, 2018).

Trading colonies were the basis upon which entrepreneurial and trade relationships were developed by colonists with Indigenous peoples to facilitate exchange, trade and resource extraction (Reid & Peace, 2016). Early European contact with Turtle Island's Indigenous peoples, for example, can be traced back to Norse settlements that were established in the eleventh century at L'Anse aux Meadows on the northern peninsula of Newfoundland (McGhee, 1984) and continued through to contact with European sailors (Basque, British, French and others) in search of natural resources such as timber, fish, furs, whale, walrus and polar bear that could be commercialised. By the advent of the sixteenth century, Indigenous peoples experienced increased contact with European explorers, traders, missionaries and colonists resulting in widespread population declines among Indigenous peoples in North America due to the combined effects of disease, epidemics, warfare, enslavement, and famines (De Champlain, 1911; O'Fallon & Fehren-Schmitz, 2011). From early contact and into the next phase of development, French and British colonial and military leaders relied heavily on Indigenous allies to facilitate and grow the value of trade and to aid in addressing conflicts caused by their expansion into new territories. In 1609, for example, Champlain made a treaty with the Huron 'to aid him in his wars with the Iroquois' (Copway (Kah-Ge-Ga-Gah-Bowh), 1858). Ultimately, the development of trade alliances with Indigenous peoples was used to fund European colonial expansion and finance the conversion of Indigenous peoples to Christianity (Eccles, 1983).

Post-contact phase one 1610–1680: Indigenous peoples as allies in survival

In winter, when there is a great deal of snow, they [Indigenous women] make a sort of racquets, which are three or four times as large as those in France, which they attach to their feet, and in this way, they can go in the snow without sinking in; without them they could not hunt or go in many places. Samuel De Champlain (1911, p. 178)

In the early seventeenth century, Indigenous peoples were important allies that contributed to the survival of early colonial settlements in Canada, with each learning and benefiting from the other's technologies and ways of knowing (Allen, 1993; Frideres, 2020).

Innovations such as snowshoes, canoes, clothing, and moccasins, preserving foods for winter months made mainly by women were fundamental for newcomers to cope with harsh environmental conditions, as illustrated by De Champlain. Early settlers relied on Indigenous innovations and trade, and by 1634 Indigenous entrepreneurs and traders were regularly transporting furs to Quebec to exchange for European goods (Copway (Kah-Ge-Ga-Gah-Bowh), 1858). The pemmican market expanded during this period as Indigenous and Métis women made and traded pemmican with Europeans, where access to pemmican during winters was essential for fur traders to survive in the north-west. Settler communities were established, trade routes and trading practices developed in concert with Indigenous practices, laws and protocols providing the basis for establishing social and economic relations (Borrows, 2006; Frideres, 2020).

Concession companies, such as the Company of One Hundred Associates (Compagnie de la Nouvelle-France or Compagnie des Cent-Associés) chartered by the French in 1627 and the HBC chartered by the British in 1670, were established to assert power and control and reduce the costs of direct administration of unceded Indigenous territories in North America. Concession companies were granted exclusive rights over territories and resources with the expectation that they would perform government services such as tax collection, the creation of military and police forces and the enforcement of laws (Gardner & Roy, 2020; Ray & Freeman, 1978).

The Company of One Hundred Associates ceased operations in 1663 due to a glut in the market (Eccles, 1983). This resulted in an unstable market for furs, but France decided that in order to maintain alliances and relations with Indigenous peoples, they would continue to trade in furs (Eccles, 1983). Whenever the French expanded the fur trade into new territories, they did so at the invitation or with the consent of the Indigenous peoples on whose territories they were encroaching (Eccles, 1983). Nevertheless, the companies' development of trade relations and alliances with Indigenous peoples funded the European colonial expansion through fur exports and other trade goods. While the creation of settlements and trading posts by the French and British were designed to interfere with and constrict the trading activities of their rivals (Eccles, 1983), no land was ceded by Indigenous peoples. French and British traders, explorers, missionaries and others settled with the agreement of Indigenous peoples, and the right of passage to trading posts was granted by Indigenous peoples to ensure access to European trading goods (Eccles, 1983; Frideres, 2020). Finally, Indigenous women played a significant role as trappers, traders, and entrepreneurs or in supporting Indigenous and non-Indigenous entrepreneurs and traders. They were language interpreters, cultural intermediaries and entrepreneurs who made and sold snowshoes, canoes, clothing and moccasins and preserved foods for survival during winter months (Van Kirk, 1977, 1984; Wright, 1981). During this phase, power functioned through the colonial assertion of formal/regulative mechanisms and informal/normative mechanisms that sought to facilitate peace and cooperation with Indigenous peoples to ensure settler/settlement survival.

Post-contact phase two 1680–1762: Indigenous peoples as allies in trade

This period was characterised by an ongoing conflict between the French and the British and the formation of alliances with Indigenous peoples who were viewed as central to each country's colonial agenda of expansion and growth of trade. While the French dominated

the fur trade in North America for much of the seventeenth century, Eccles (1983) and Frideres (2020) conclude that by the 1750s fur trade expansion served economic and political purposes for both French and British settler-colonists. Politics and trade for Indigenous peoples, the French and the British were interwoven during this time. Kinship obligations, political alliances and linkages that were features of Indigenous diplomacy prior to contact—traditional rivalries between Huron and their allies and the Iroquois, for example—were carried over into trade and political alliances with the French and the British (Ray & Freeman, 1978). This also meant that traditional Indigenous trade and exchange practices such as the ceremonial exchange of gifts became integral to the Hudson Bay Company's trading operations and later treaty negotiations. From 1693 to 1779, the British Crown entered into peace and friendship treaties with the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, and Passamaquoddy grounded in Indigenous practices, processes and protocols (Isaac, 2001; Wicken, 2018).

Relations with Indigenous entrepreneurs and traders varied by region during this time. The Hurons, for example, dominated the fur trade acting as intermediaries between Indigenous and non-Indigenous entrepreneurs and worked to protect this role by impeding French exploration (Carlos & Lewis, 1993). Indigenous peoples explicitly rejected the notion that they were either French or British subjects and actively asserted sovereignty and right of granting passage over the land on which trading posts were built to manage trading relations and ensure access to European trading goods (Eccles, 1983). When the French moved to extend fur trading activities into new territories, for example, they did so with the consent of the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee), who gave them permission to establish a post at Niagara and granted free passage through Lake Ontario (Eccles, 1983), as did the British.

We have conducted the English to our Lakes, in order to traffick with the Outaouas [Ottawa], and the Hurons; just as the Algonkins conducted the French to our five Cantons, in order to carry on a Commerce that the English lay claim to as their Right. We are born Freemen and have no dependence either upon the Onnontio [the French governor] or the Corlar [the New York governor]. We have a power to go where we please, to conduct who we will to the places we resort to, and to buy and sell where we think fit. If your Allies are your Slaves or Children, you may even treat them as such, and rob 'em of the liberty of entertaining any other Nation but your own. (Lahontan, 1905, pp. 81–82)

In all aspects of their commercial and military relationships, Indigenous peoples asserted sovereignty over their territories to challenge encroachment by the French, the British, and competing Indigenous claims of sovereignty over territories valued for fur on which trading posts acted as satellite centres of trade and commerce with Montreal.

In 1701, after experiencing the loss of hunting lands and having no security from the British military to French encroachment, the Iroquois Confederacy used their diplomatic influence to maintain good relations with the British while maintaining neutrality with the French. They developed diplomatic ties with other Indigenous allies to safeguard their hunting territories north and west of Lakes Erie and Ontario (Brandão & Starna, 1996). The depletion of resources and appropriation of Indigenous land brought a need for peace that culminated in the 1710 treaties at Montreal and Albany (Brandão & Starna, 1996). After the Treaty of Utrecht was signed in 1713 and the drainage basin of Hudson Bay was declared British, the immediate risk of military conquest by the French ended, but their economic rivalry continued (Carlos & Lewis, 2002). The British created the Indian Department in 1755 to strengthen alliances with the Iroquois Confederacy, formalise

military alliances in their conflicts with British colonies and manage and regulate relations between settler-colonists and Indigenous peoples. The British recognised the continued need for the cooperation of Indigenous peoples in military and trade relations to aid in territorial expansion through securing land for forts and securing access to trade, fur, and other goods. Consequently, they participated in yearly ceremonial gift-giving with Indigenous leaders and in peace conferences to manage Indigenous relations and protect British commercial interests (INAC, 2010).

With the waning power of the French during the late 1750s and early 1760s, the HBC came to enjoy a near monopoly over fur trading. In the 1770s, however, to cope with decreased profits and increased debts, Montreal traders began to form partnerships, leading to foundation of the Northwest Company (NWC), which became a significant competitor to the HBC until their eventual merger in 1821 (Carlos & Lewis, 2001, 2002). Between 1763 and 1805 approximately 4200 fur trade contracts were issued from Montreal for voyageurs bound for Illinois Country, Detroit and Michilimackinac (Englebert, 2008). This created a dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem comprised of the French and British governments, missionaries, merchant entrepreneurs, the HBC, the NWC, voyageurs, *coureur des bois* and Indigenous traders. It was common practice during this time for British merchant entrepreneurs to practice informal/normative mechanisms of power by marrying into French families to 'gain access to a continental trade network built on kinship and commercial ties to Indigenous peoples' (Englebert, 2008, p. 73).

Due to declining animal stocks, competition between the HBC and the NWC resulted in Indigenous trappers demanding more monetary value for their furs. At the same time, their heightened trade with these companies made Indigenous peoples more dependent on a wide variety of trade goods (Carlos & Lewis, 1993, 2001). This created a vibrant market for high quality British trading goods that were preferred over inferior French trading goods. This increased competition resulted in the use of alcohol as a trade good by less scrupulous traders (Stevens, 1916). Alcohol was deliberately used by colonial government representatives at treaty discussions and official negotiations to realise economic and political benefits, territorial expansion (Frank et al., 2000) and domination over Indigenous peoples. French missionaries lobbied to have alcohol barred from trade and threatened to excommunicate traders if it was used in trading activities (Eccles, 1983).

Up to the late 1760s, the fur trade ecosystem was comprised of small French and British merchant entrepreneurs that engaged with Indigenous entrepreneurs and traders. However, with increased demand for high quality furs from Europe and the subsequent expansion of the fur trade north and westwards, only wealthy Montreal entrepreneurs and companies supported by the labour of Indigenous entrepreneurs and French-Canadians had access to the capital and credit required to mitigate trading risks (Innis, 1930). The closing of this period was characterised by increased competition between French and British merchant entrepreneurs and colonial institutions for greater access to lands, fur and Indigenous alliances (Stevens, 1916). French merchant entrepreneurs struggled to compete effectively with their British counterparts because the French fur trade was organised around a system of corporate monopolies and privileged merchants approved by the Crown and because British trade goods were cheaper than those sourced from France. As British merchant entrepreneurs from southern seaboard colonies encroached on French territories, increasing tensions and competition created the North American theatre of the global Seven Years' War (1756–1763).

Post-contact phase three 1763–1812: Indigenous peoples as military allies

... And we do, by the Advice of Our Privy Council, declare and enjoin, that the Trade with the said *Indians* shall be free and open to all Our Subjects whatever; provided that every Person who may incline to trade with the said Indians, do take out a Licence for carrying on such Trade from the Governor or Commander in Chief of any of Our Colonies respectively, where such Person shall reside; and also give Security to observe such Regulations as We shall at any Time think fit, by Ourselves, by Our Commissioners to be appointed for this Purpose, to direct and appoint for the benefit of such Trade; and We do hereby authorize, enjoin, and require the Governors and Commanders in Chief of all Our Colonies respectively, as well as Those Our immediate government of Those under the Government and Direction of Proprietaries, to grant Licences without Fee or Reward, taking especial Care to insert therein a Condition, that such Licence shall be void, and the Security forfeited, in case the Person, to whom the same is granted, shall refuse or neglect to observe such Regulations as We shall think proper to prescribe as aforesaid. (The Royal Proclamation of 1763: King George III, 1763)

In Canada, the Seven Years' War represented a struggle for control of the sixteenth-century fur trade market and lands established through war and formal and informal military alliances with Indigenous leaders and commercial relationships with Indigenous entrepreneur traders with access to greater quantities of high quality furs (Stevens, 1916). The war culminated in the victory of the British and was formalised in the Treaty of Paris in 1763 by which the French ceded their Canadian territories to the British. Increasingly, Indigenous people were used as military allies to enforce settler institutions and institutional aims. The Royal Proclamation of October 7, 1763, a formal/regulative expression of power, not only defined the boundaries and constitutions of British colonies in North America but went on to include provisions detailing relations with Indigenous peoples and their lands (establishing territories for the exclusive use of Indigenous peoples and sanctioning a change in the market structure of the fur trade) (Slattery, 2015; Stevens, 1916). Of particular importance to French and British merchant entrepreneurs and Indigenous entrepreneurs and traders was the provision that French merchant entrepreneurs lost their monopolies and trade would be opened up to all persons through acquiring a licence from the Governor or Commander-in-Chief of the colony (see quotation above) and providing assurances that they would abide by rules and laws established for regulation of the fur industry (Stevens, 1916). Consequently, all trade goods destined for exchange with Indigenous entrepreneurs would be imported from the British and all furs would be shipped to London instead of Paris (Stevens, 1916), thus establishing the colonies as markets for British goods and supplies of raw materials for British merchants.

Most importantly for our purposes, the Proclamation ceded to the British Crown the sole right of acquiring land from Indigenous peoples and barred Indigenous nations/communities from transferring, selling or leasing their interest in land to a third party unless the land was transferred to the Crown and the Crown acted on behalf of the Indigenous nation/community. The main office for implementing policy related to Indigenous peoples became the British Indian Department, a forerunner of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (now Indigenous Services Canada).

From 1774 to the end of the War of 1812, Indigenous peoples were viewed as critical military allies of the Crown in North America that ensured the defence and survival of Canada (Allen, 1993). After 1763, and particularly after the recognition of the United States in the Treaty of Paris in 1783, however, treaties between the Indigenous nations and the Crown evolved from treaties of peace and friendship into treaties for the acquisition of lands by the Crown. As a response to the influx of United Empire Loyalists into Canada, for example, these

treaties initiated a process of marginalising and displacing Indigenous allies in favour of settler-colonists (INAC, 2010; McNeil, 2007).

With the advent of the War of 1812, trading and transportation routes were disrupted through the Great Lakes and Indigenous peoples became key military allies in the fight against the United States. On the economic front, the HBC and the NWC deployed a strategic face of power (Clegg, 2010) through adopting predatory practices that manipulated Indigenous entrepreneurs and traders. Each company hired ‘bully-boys’ to disrupt rival trading posts to undermine relations with local Indigenous traders or persuade them that the other company was weak and would not protect them (Carlos, 1982).

Post-contact phase four 1812–1860: from allies to obstacles

The War of 1812 proved to be a turning point in the relation of Indigenous peoples to their former allies in the Eastern part of what became Canada. After many years of fighting and decimation by disease and the shift from an exclusive focus on trade to one of settler colonisation, Indigenous peoples were no longer valued as military or economic (trade) allies, and British promises of land, technology, and other goods were ignored, rejected or qualified. This period witnessed an increasing reliance on formal/regulative power mechanisms that constrained Indigenous entrepreneurial efforts whereby Indigenous peoples’ access to land and water resources were removed via the appropriation of land and fishing rights in favour of settlers.

The period from 1820 to 1860 saw massive waves of immigration from Britain (Brownlie, 2017). With a new focus on settler expansion and colonial development, there was a significant shift away from using the fur trade to fund colonisation towards creating resource-based economy (e.g. lumber) centred on trade relations between North America, Britain, and its colonies. As a result, settler-colonial institutions saw no need to negotiate and maintain fair and equitable treaties (Frideres, 2020) with Indigenous peoples, whose position transitioned from being trade partners and allies to being viewed as impediments to settlement. Consequently, the management of Indigenous relations was moved from military institutions to colonial institutions that leveraged racial discourses to assert power in legally, economically and socially disparaging and marginalising Indigenous peoples (Brownlie, 2017; Frideres, 2020).

The Indian Department extended the work of missionaries in previous centuries to launch a renewed effort to ‘civilize’ Indigenous peoples through applying oppressive laws and practices designed to force communities to abandon traditional social, cultural and trade practices in favour of agrarian lifestyles (INAC, 2010). After 1820, Indigenous peoples were subject to the severe impacts of colonisation as settlers and settler governments took control of large tracts of Indigenous territories via treaties, manipulation, cheating or forcibly removing communities off desirable lands and onto less desirable non-arid land. Rapid colonisation and settler colonial government actions simply appropriated the basis of Indigenous entrepreneurship, eroding community and family connections, traditional forms of governance and dismantled traditional entrepreneurial trade practices and relationships. Finally, diseases (measles, typhoid, smallpox, etc.) transmitted by waves of settler colonisers decimated Indigenous families and communities (Frideres, 2020).

In 1821, HBC and the NWC merged. While HBC gained a monopoly in the fur trade with Indigenous peoples in Canada, beaver and other fur bearing populations had severely

declined due to the competition between the two companies. HBC, consequently, began exerting more control over the supply chain by reducing trading posts, transportation routes, and employment whereby Indigenous participation was deemed non-essential (Carlos, 1982; Frideres, 2020). The HBC maintained a racially-informed, two-class hierarchical organisational system that became even more rigid, exploiting seasonal/temporary Indigenous workers who were paid lower wages and performed more onerous tasks than settler workers (Judd, 1980). While this seemed a peaceful and stable period between settlers and Indigenous peoples, Indigenous peoples' social, political and economic institutions were further eroded by increased reliance on settler goods, politics and technologies (Frideres, 2020). Interestingly, the HBC Charter never extinguished Indigenous peoples' title to their lands, with the exception of a treaty between Indigenous inhabitants and the founder/proprietor of the Red River colony in 1817 (Daugherty, 1983).

Reflecting the change in status and the diminished importance of Indigenous peoples in trade and military alliances, the British transferred responsibility for 'Indian Affairs' from military to colonial authorities in 1830 thereby asserting formal/regulative mechanisms that imposed settler control over decisions on Indigenous peoples, land and resources (Brownlie, 2017). The year of 1830 also marked the launch of the first residential schools in Eastern Canada by Roman Catholic, Anglican and Methodist missionaries to provide colonial schooling for Indigenous children in what was then New France and Upper Canada (OTC, 2020). These schools were colonial precursors to increased laws, policies and practices designed to oppress, diminish and assimilate Indigenous peoples through actively delegitimizing their values, beliefs, traditions, culture and autonomy (Milloy, 2008).

Post-contact phase five 1860–1920: Government sponsored dispossession and control

We told them that whether they wished it or not, immigrants would come in and fill up the country, that every year from this one twice as many in number as their whole people there assembled would pour into the Province, and in a little while would spread all over it, and that now was the time for them to come to an arrangement that would secure homes and annuities for themselves and their children. Lieutenant Governor Archibald, Department of Indian Affairs, 1871. (Daugherty, 1983)

During this period, the colonial government signed 66 major treaties with Indigenous peoples, designed to embed colonisation by (i) extinguishing Indigenous rights and title, (ii) asserting ownership over Canada's land mass, (iii) legislating greater control over all aspects of the lives of Indigenous peoples and, (iv) facilitating the expansion of settler colonisation across Canada (Frideres, 2020, p. 13).

This assimilation process would only accelerate over time. The Mississauga Anishinabek around Lake Ontario, for example, agreed to a series of treaties to share land but were then confronted by settlers that fenced off lands and constrained access to and the supply of traditional Indigenous foods (Brownlie, 2017). In 1857, the Canada Fisheries Act was established to manage the settler commercial fisheries by enacting regulations to protect fish stocks and restrict Indigenous communities' fishing activities. It did not recognise Indigenous fishing rights and Indigenous peoples were subject to licencing requirements and closed seasons. They were restricted from commercial fishing activities and could only participate in subsistence-based activities (Lowitt et al., 2019).

The British North America Act, 1867 (Constitution Act, 1867) created the Dominion of Canada and Section 91(24) gave the Parliament of Canada exclusive jurisdiction over 'Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians' (McNeil, 2007, p. 12). One result was the allocation of reserve lands to Indigenous peoples that were held by the federal Crown for the collective use and benefit of the entire band (Wright & White, 2012). By 1867, when Canada was founded on Indigenous lands, more than 100 treaties and land surrenders had been negotiated by colonial powers (Frideres, 2020) that gave settlers access to Indigenous lands for settlement and trade, often expressed in deliberately obtuse legalistic contract language that favoured Canadian settler society (Miller, 2009) and embodied European conceptions of land as property (Bryan, 2000). Indian affairs were assigned to the Indian Branch and placed under the control of the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada in 1868 (Carter, 1999). The Department, which was initially constituted by men with military experience who had direct, personal contact with Indigenous peoples, evolved into a vast impersonal bureaucracy whose initial narrow authority was broadened to control almost all aspects of Indigenous peoples' lives. When settler Canadians took control of Indian Affairs from the British in 1860, Indigenous peoples were not engaged or consulted (Dickason, 1992; Miller, 1996).

The Parliament of Canada began to enact legislation relating to Indian affairs in 1869 and in 1876 this legislation was consolidated and expanded into the Indian Act, which gave the Canadian government legal authority to replace traditional forms of Indigenous governance with legally sanctioned elected Chiefs and Band councils with limited powers as set out in the Act. Traditional Indigenous forms of governance, however, were not abolished and continued to exercise the inherent right of self-government in many communities (McNeil, 2007). Thus, the institution charged with serving Indigenous people instead sought to assimilate and impose settler Canadian governance structures and constraints. The ultimate goal of the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) was to eliminate the distinct cultures of Indigenous people through forced assimilation into settler Canadian society (Carter, 1999; Dickason, 1992). The creation of the Indian Act in 1876 was the central formal/regulative mechanism for asserting hegemonic control over Indigenous peoples, facilitating oppression and colonisation through the expansion and opening of lands to settlers and designating lands to build a national transportation system (railways). Treaty One, for example, was signed in 1871 whereby Indigenous community members were allotted 'one hundred and sixty acres for each family of five, or in that proportion; that they might have their land where they chose, not interfering with existing occupants; that we [govt] should allow an annuity of twelve dollars for every family of five, or in that proportion per head' (Daugherty, 1983, p. 9). As Canada appropriated vast amounts of land to drive a transcontinental railway and transplant thousands of agricultural settlers, the government sought to mitigate financial liabilities by refusing to make more treaties unless non-Indigenous economic interests gained access to lands and resources not yet covered by treaty (Miller, 2009). Between 1899 and 1921, four treaties were signed, motivated by non-Indigenous interests in gold, mineral, hydro and forest resources (Miller, 2009). This was followed by a 50-year hiatus in treaty-making during which some of the most patently anti-Indigenous legislation and policies were enacted to oppress Indigenous peoples and constrain and restrict Indigenous participation in entrepreneurial activities.

During this period, the HBC shifted its focus from outfitting fur traders and buying furs to purchasing increasing quantities of Indigenous-made products and, later in the early

twentieth century, supplying cottagers (Nation-Knapper, 2016). While Indigenous peoples were constituted by the HBC into a dependent and manipulable labour pool that supplied them with not only furs but other goods, it also represented a shift and diversification of Indigenous peoples' entrepreneurial focus. It signalled their adaptation to Canada's changing economy and to the overwhelming pace of settler colonisation. Power during this period was characterised by the imposition of formal/regulative mechanisms through the constitution of colonial government policies, laws, regulations, rules and the imposition of settler property rights designed to oppress and constrain Indigenous participation in colonial social, economic and political life. Informal/normative mechanisms emerged that facilitated the dissemination of racist anti-Indigenous social norms, values, and beliefs designed to silence, marginalise and assimilate Indigenous peoples.

Discussion

Our historical examination of Indigenous peoples' entrepreneurial and trade activities within settler society in Canada from pre-contact to 1920 demonstrates the ways in which power was activated through informal/normative and formal/regulative mechanisms that conferred unequal benefits on settler entrepreneurs over time. The literature on institutions and entrepreneurship (Bruton et al., 2010) has tended to concentrate on how institutions shape entrepreneurship, most notably whether institutions shape productive, unproductive, or destructive entrepreneurship and economic growth (Baumol, 1990). The institutional entrepreneurship literature (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006), on the other hand, focuses on how actors shape institutions. We contend that there is a missing element, namely, the dynamic co-evolution of entrepreneurship and institutions in societies over time and the role power plays in this process. Our periodic narrative reveals how the existing entrepreneurship literature fails to consider how unequal entrepreneurial gains shape who gets to establish institutions and rules in following periods. By looking at the interplay of entrepreneurship and institutions over a long period of time vis-à-vis Indigenous and settler entrepreneurship, we identify not only how institutions shape entrepreneurship but how (unequal) gains from entrepreneurship shape institutions. This highlights the role of power (Clegg, 2010) in the process of entrepreneurial change.

We find that Indigenous entrepreneurship was vibrant pre-contact and during early colonisation. In fact, informal/normative and formal/regulative mechanisms functioned to harness Indigenous entrepreneurship and trade to ensure the survival and growth of settler communities in the face of significant environmental, social, and political challenges. As conditions changed over time and as settler colonial institutions became established and stronger, they exerted power to change the rules of the game in their favour, thereby marginalising Indigenous peoples from mainstream socio-economic activities and subjecting them to formal and informal assimilative forces through the imposition of reserves, residential schools, and legislation which limited and, in many cases, banned Indigenous participation in the economic activities in their regions. Ironically, however, by supporting settler colonial entrepreneurial activities that enabled settler society to thrive and their institutions to succeed, grow stronger, and exert increasing power over the lives of Indigenous peoples—Indigenous entrepreneurship laid the basis for its own demise.

Consequently, this paper makes several contributions. First, we highlight how power was operationalised in the relationship between Indigenous entrepreneurship and settler society

over time through the activation of informal/normative and formal/regulative mechanisms. We demonstrate not only how institutions shape entrepreneurship but how unequal gains to entrepreneurship allowed settler-colonial entrepreneurs to set the rules of the game in the next phase. Second, we address a significant gap in the entrepreneurship literature by explaining the role of entrepreneurship in the production of inequality, something that Baumol and most institutionalists examining entrepreneurs have largely ignored. Although the literature acknowledges that there are losers in the entrepreneurial process, previous scholarship has generally posited that there is mobility and that losses are widely distributed or even good for the economy (cf. Jenkins & McKelvie, 2016; Knott & Posen, 2005). We show that this is not always the case. When unequally distributed, losses constitute structural inequalities that oppress and marginalise particular groups and societies and increasingly constrain their participation in mainstream socio-economic activities over time. Third, by looking at entrepreneurship and change from the perspective of Indigenous entrepreneurs, we challenge the triumphalist narrative that entrepreneurship leads to empowerment and economic gain. In a review of economic inequality and entrepreneurship, Bruton et al. (2021) call on scholars to build a better understanding of how entrepreneurship and institutions jointly influence economic inequality. We demonstrate that through the activation of power by institutions employing informal/normative and formal/regulative mechanisms, entrepreneurship can in fact disempower certain entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial cultures over time resulting in and reinforcing structural and systemic inequalities.

Conclusion

By providing an historical primer in the field of Indigenous entrepreneurship, this research counters colonial perspectives and discourses regarding entrepreneurial activity in Indigenous settings. Stereotypes of Indigenous economic outlooks as deficient in entrepreneurial capacities and inclinations are challenged by analysing a detailed synthesis of the history of Indigenous economic activity over the course of an evolving relationship with colonising powers. The impact of this should not end with setting the record straight but extend to informing policy aimed at economic reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous peoples on their own terms. As stated by Gladu (2016), we face a unique opportunity to remake the once-vibrant relationship between Indigenous peoples, businesses and the rest of Canada—understanding how we got here is necessary to moving forward in a good way.

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