

INDIGENOUS PROCUREMENT AS A CATALYST FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING

by

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Abstract

From 2018 to 2021, a series of Indigenous Procurement Engagement sessions (IPE-sessions) took place in-person and virtually in Ottawa and Toronto to explore the modernization of Indigenous procurement in Canada. Stakeholders from regional and national Indigenous organizations, Indigenous and non-Indigenous business leaders in the private sector, as well as federal government officials, participated in the engagement sessions. In total, there were 98¹ participants (n = 98) for all the engagement sessions (28 in 2018; 49 in 2020; and 21 in 2021).

This research re-analyzes data collected from 2018 to 2021 and aims to answer the question—can Indigenous procurement be a catalyst for community building? The research re-analyzes the data through the exploration of 4 main chapters: 1) Building Strong First Nations Economies: Economic Development, Community Building, and Procurement; 2) Social Procurement Policy and the Inclusion of Diverse Supply Chains. Is Indigenous Procurement ‘Social Procurement’? 3) Challenges and Wise Practices for First Nations Procurement in Canada; and 4) Should Indigenous Procurement be Legislated? Federal Indigenous Procurement Policy Versus Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement.

The research findings indicate that procurement is a catalyst for First Nations community building as local procurement contributes to community prosperity through business development and growth, job creation, and community wealth building, as well as other social outcomes, which are defined by First Nations communities, organizations, and businesses.

Keywords: Indigenous, Business, Procurement, Supply Chain, Policy, Economic Reconciliation

¹ Note: 98 represents the total number of participants in *each* engagement session. It is important to note that some participants participated in more than one engagement session between 2018, 2020, and in 2021. I estimate that between 6-12 participants participated in more than one session.

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List of Abbreviations

AAEDIRP	Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program
ABCD	Asset-based Community Development
AFI	Aboriginal Financial Institution
AFN	Assembly of First Nations
ANEB	Anishinabek Nation Economic Blueprint
APCFNC	Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat
CAB	Certified Aboriginal Business
CANDO	Canadian Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers
CBNRM	Community-based Natural Resource Management
CCAB	Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business
CCP	Comprehensive Community Plan
CIRNAC	Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada
ESDC	Employment and Social Development Canada
FNED	First Nations Economic Development
GC	Government of Canada
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GETS	Government Electronic Tendering Services
GN	Government of Nunavut
IBA	Indigenous Benefit Agreement
IBD	Indigenous Business Directory
IBP	Indigenous Benefit Plans
IED	Indigenous Economic Development

IFR	Inuit Firm Registry
IGF	Investment Growth Fund
IPC	Indigenous Participation Components
IRP	Investment Readiness Program
ISC	Indigenous Services Canada
ITK	Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
JV	Joint Venture
LGBTQ2S	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, and two-spirit
MIPDP	Modernization of Indigenous Participation in Procurement Discussion Paper
NACCA	National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association
NAEDB	National Aboriginal Economic Development Board
NAICS	North American Industry Classification System
NCCAH	National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health
NCCIH	National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health
NGO	Non-government Organization
NIEDB	National Indigenous Economic Development Board
NIES	National Indigenous Economic Strategy
NIO	National Indigenous Organization
NLCA	Nunavut Land Claims Agreement
NMC	New Millennium Capital Corporation
NNI	Nunavumii Nangminiqagtunik Ikajuuti
NNK	Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach
NTI	Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.

PSAB	Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business
PSCC	Public Service Commission of Canada
PSIB	Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business
PSPC	Public Services and Procurement Canada
RFP	Request for Proposal
SBS	Social Benefit Supplier
SPO	Social Purpose Organization
SROI	Social Return on Investment
TEK	Traditional Ecological Knowledge
TBCS	Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
UN	United Nations
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Current Economic Landscape in First Nations Communities in Canada

In the academic literature, it is well known that First Nations communities in Canada suffer from higher rates of unemployment, poorer health, lower levels of education, higher levels of incarceration, and higher rates of suicide (Courchene, 2018; Long & Dickason, 2011; Statistics Canada, 2017b). Due to a history of colonialism (and ongoing colonialism) in Canada, First Nations communities today are still struggling to obtain the basic living conditions that are enjoyed by the rest of Canada, such as clean drinking water and sanitation and adequate housing (Courchene, 2018; Frideres, 2011; Long & Dickason, 2011). Due to these numerous issues, many First Nations communities are dependent on government funding to provide their basic needs (Frideres, 2011; Long & Dickason, 2011).

Although some First Nations communities have been able to transform their economic situations through the land claims process, modern treaties, and/or through economic development, many First Nations communities in Canada still struggle (Hamilton et al., 2021). Northern and remote First Nations communities especially have unique challenges due to their geography, which makes it difficult for them to generate sustainable economic development at the community level (i.e., to create jobs for all community members) (National Aboriginal Economic Development Board [NAEDB], 2016; Wutunee, 1992).

To solve the economic crisis, initiatives to support First Nations entrepreneurship and economic development have become a matter of public policy and priority (Anderson, 2002a; Brown et al., 2016; National Indigenous Economic Strategy [NIES], 2022b).

Although supporting First Nations entrepreneurship and economic development has worked for some First Nations communities (e.g., Membertou First Nation [see Johnstone, 2008] and Osoyoos Indian Band [see MacDonald, 2014]), there is still a long journey ahead before all First Nations communities develop the capacity to create sustainable economies (Anderson, 2002a; Brown et al., 2016; NIES, 2022b).

Since 2018, there have been national and regional initiatives to support First Nations procurement, social innovation, and social finance through the public and private sectors (i.e., for example, see Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada [CIRNAC], 2022a, and Employment and Social Development Canada [ESDC], 2022). I argue that supporting (and creating) strong First Nations supply chains provides the *most significant* opportunity for First Nations communities to build their economies as it provides greater opportunities to build and/or support business at the regional level and to build community wealth and prosperity. For example, one large economic development contract in a remote First Nations community can provide numerous jobs, and procurement contracts (i.e., for products or services) for local First Nations entrepreneurs (Wutunee, 1992). I further argue that First Nations economic development at the community level can pull First Nations communities out of poverty and into prosperity and provide opportunities, through wealth generation, to re-invest in the community (e.g., through cultural programs, infrastructure, and capacity development) (Anderson et al., 2006a).

By comparing and contrasting the data collected from the Indigenous Procurement Engagement Sessions (IPE-sessions) from 2018 to 2021 to the existing literature on Indigenous procurement and by triangulating the data with other complementary research and literature (i.e., community economic development and community development

literature), I aim to create a new body of knowledge, which explores procurement as a catalyst for First Nations community building.

1.2 Indigenous Procurement in Canada

Meredith and Shafer (2016) define procurement as “the responsibility for acquiring the goods and services the organization needs, by any means” (p. 177). The Government of Canada (GC) defines procurement policies as the “[p]olicies and processes that govern the way the government buys goods and services” (Government of Canada [GC], 2018, para. 1). The public and private sectors procure services or products from small to large size corporations, ranging from small sole-source contracts to large multi-million-dollar contracts.

In federal procurement, the GC has different levels for contracting (Public Services and Procurement Canada [PSPC], 2022c). They include Tier 1 requirements up to and including \$3.75 million, and Tier 2 requirements greater than \$3.75 million (PSPC, 2022e). Tier 1 includes sole-source contracts (under \$40,000 and does not require additional bids), *ProServices* contracts (under \$100,000 and requires a minimum of two suppliers to bid), and contracts over \$100,000, up to \$3.75 million (with a minimum of 15 suppliers to bid) (PSPC, 2022e). Tier 2 is a different contracting process: through a Government Electronic Tendering Services (GETS), *all* qualified Tier 2 suppliers receive an invitation to submit a proposal in response to a bid solicitation, and suppliers have up to 20 calendar days to submit a proposal (PSPC, 2022e).

In the context of Indigenous businesses, procurement provides opportunities to do business with public and private sector clients. For First Nations communities, a large economic development contract can lead to job creation, infrastructure development, and

procurement contracts for local suppliers (e.g., First Nations owned enterprises and First Nations independently owned businesses) (Jorgensen, 2007). According to the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) (2021),

Indigenous procurement is an important driver of economic reconciliation and development for Indigenous communities due to the revenue procurement generates for Indigenous businesses as well as the relationships formed through corporations and governments establishing procurement agreements with Indigenous businesses. (p. 46)

With the focus on reconciliation in Canada, Indigenous procurement has become an important topic for Indigenous businesses and communities, as well as in the Canadian political landscape (CIRNAC, 2022a). CCAB (2021) research indicates that Indigenous businesses have the capacity to supply 24 per cent of federal procurement in Canada. Due to these findings, the federal government has mandated a minimum of 5% Indigenous procurement (CCAB, 2021). According to Tabatha Bull, President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the CCAB (2021), “By increasing Indigenous procurement to 5 per cent, we estimate that \$1-billion (sic) would be added to the Indigenous economy, which will in turn improve employment rates, housing and health of Indigenous people—and that’s what economic reconciliation looks like” (p. 1).

1.3 Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business (PSIB)

Currently, the federal government has the Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business (PSIB),² which is “Canada’s policy to support Indigenous businesses with

² The Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business (PSAB) was renamed the Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business (PSIB) in 2021. For consistency, I will use the acronym ‘PSIB’ throughout this thesis,

procurement opportunities” (Indigenous Services Canada [ISC], 2021c, para. 1). According to the ISC (2021c) *Indigenous Business and Federal Procurement* web page,

Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) advocates for Indigenous businesses so they can: compete for federal contracts, work on major Crown projects, have access to tools to increase their visibility to federal procurement officers, explore partnerships and joint ventures, and enter new supply chains including links to corporate Canada. (Para. 2)

According to ISC (2019), the PSIB was first launched in 1996 “to address the under-representation of Indigenous businesses in federal procurement processes” (Current Approach to Indigenous Participation in Procurement section, para. 1). Further, the federal government aims to contribute to the success and sustainability of Indigenous businesses by providing increased support to bid (and win) federal procurement contracts, and to provide opportunities for Indigenous businesses to deliver services or products needed by the GC through the PSIB (ISC, 2019).

In the *Procurement in Canada: Possible Actions to Increase First Nations Opportunities and Benefits* discussion paper, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) (2019) reported that in 2016, the GC “awarded over 340,000 contracts for goods, services and construction valued at over \$18 billion; however, as of 2018, targeted Indigenous procurements under the Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business (PSAB) totaled \$93.5 million in 2015, representing less than 1% of all federal procurements” (p. 1; see also Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat [TBCS], 2018). The AFN (2019) argues that procurement offers a significant growth opportunity for Indigenous businesses as it is

unless ‘PSAB’ is mentioned in a direct quote.

estimated that Indigenous businesses have the “capacity to supply 24.2% of the goods and services purchased by the Federal Government annually” (p. 1).

According to the CCAB (2016) *Promise and Prosperity – The Aboriginal Business Survey*, one in five (20%) Indigenous business owners in Canada have bid or considered bidding on a PSIB set aside, and larger incorporated businesses with revenues exceeding \$100,000 are most likely to have bid on a federal contract. However, the CCAB (2016) report indicates that *most* Indigenous businesses are small, with three quarters (73%) unincorporated, with more than six in ten (64%) having no employees; thus, the percentage of Indigenous businesses that are ‘procurement ready’ are few compared to the total number of Indigenous businesses in Canada, which is estimated to be up to 54,244³ as of 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2018).

My doctoral research provides an in-depth analysis of the current state of Indigenous procurement in Canada (as well as known issues and challenges) based on the data collected from the IPE-sessions from 2018 to 2021. This data will be cross analysed with existing literature on Indigenous/First Nations procurement, as well as data on First Nations economic development.

1.4 Main Chapters and Research Questions

Through the lens of human geography and the sub-disciplines of economic geography (i.e., community economic development) and Indigenous geographies, my doctoral research first and foremost explores whether Indigenous procurement can be a catalyst for community building. This doctoral thesis includes four main chapters (chapters

³ I mention ‘estimated’ here as the 2016 Census conducted by Statistics Canada only indicates the number of self-employed Indigenous individuals and does not indicate size of business or revenues.

3 to 7), which address and incorporate my research questions, research goals, and desired research contributions. The topics of the main chapters are listed below, including the research question(s), which each chapter addresses.

1.4.1 Chapter 3 Research Questions

Chapter 3, titled “Building Strong First Nations Economies: Economic Development, Community Building, and Procurement,” mainly addresses the research question: Can procurement be a catalyst for community building and economic development in First Nations communities? In addition, all main chapters (i.e., chapters 3-6) weave together important concepts, which help to answer this prominent research question, which is the focus of my thesis.

1.4.2 Chapter 4 Research Questions

Chapter 4 is titled “Social Procurement Policy and the Inclusion of Diverse Supply Chains. Is Indigenous Procurement ‘Social Procurement’?” This chapter addresses the following research questions:

1. Can Indigenous/social procurement contribute to positive social, environmental, cultural, and/or economic outcomes in First Nations communities?
2. From First Nations business, public sector, and private sector perspectives, how is successful First Nations procurement measured (e.g., percentage of set asides, job creation, social impact)?
 - a. Do the perspectives differ between First Nations and non-Indigenous Peoples?
3. How do the proposed changes to Indigenous procurement (i.e., new public sector policies) compare to Australia’s Indigenous procurement programs and policies?

1.4.3 Chapter 5 Research Questions

Chapter 5 is titled “Challenges and Wise Practices for First Nations Procurement in Canada.” In my thesis, I refer to the concept of ‘wise practices’ instead of ‘best practices’ as “best practices tend to present a corporate, neo-liberal model of what is best or what success means” (Calliou, 2021, p. 34). I argue that the concept of ‘wise practices’ is more in line with Indigenous research than ‘best practices’ as “wise practices allows [sic] for Indigenous experience and knowledge to play a prominent role in community economic development” (Calliou, 2021, p. 34). Chapter 5 addresses the following research questions:

1. Do First Nations community perspectives of procurement differ from individual First Nations firm perspectives?
2. From First Nations business, public sector, and private sector perspectives:
 - a. What are the current challenges and obstacles to First Nations procurement in Canada?
 - b. What are some potential solutions to the current challenges and obstacles?
3. What are current wise practices for First Nations procurement in Canada?
4. From First Nations business, public sector, and private sector perspectives, how is successful First Nations procurement measured (e.g., percentage of set asides, job creation, social impact)?
 - a. Do the perspectives differ between First Nations and non-Indigenous Peoples? (Note: Questions 4 and 4.a are also addressed in Chapter 4 from a social procurement perspective—see Section 1.4.2, research questions 2 and 2.a).

1.4.4 Chapter 6 Research Questions

Chapter 6 is titled “Should Indigenous Procurement Policy Be Legislated? Federal Indigenous Procurement Policy Versus Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement.” This chapter addresses the following research questions:

1. How are the Inuit in Nunavut currently changing the landscape for Indigenous procurement in Canada through Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement?
 - a. Is this an effective mechanism for increasing Indigenous procurement (e.g., forcing the public sector to fulfill a certain percentage of procurement set asides versus having an optional/mandated procurement set aside percentage)?
 - b. Should this type of mechanism be considered for federal Indigenous procurement to ensure that the public sector is inclusive of Indigenous procurement?
 - i. Can a 5% minimum mandatory set aside still be an effective policy if it is optional, with no consequences if public procurement officers do not fulfill the minimum?

1.5 Research Contributions

My doctoral research aims to:

1. Contribute to the community development and procurement literature in a meaningful way by providing First Nations perspectives of procurement and community building (i.e., First Nations perspectives are currently missing from the literature).
2. Inform policy and program development in the public and private sectors by

providing timely research on First Nations procurement and by developing potential models for Canada.

3. Contribute to the human geography literature by examining First Nations procurement through the lens of Indigenous/First Nations and economic geographies, which to the best of my knowledge, has not previously been done.

1.6 Language and Terminology in this Thesis – Indigenous vs. First Nations, etc.

In Canada, the term ‘Indigenous’ is used to represent First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples and communities. This terminology is in line with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which recognizes “the need to respect and promote the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples which derive from their political, economic and social structures and from their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies, especially their rights to their lands, territories and resources” (United Nations, 2007, p. 3). The UNDRIP also recognizes the “urgent need to respect and promote the rights of Indigenous peoples affirmed in treaties, agreements and other constructive agreements” (United Nations, 2007, p. 4).

In academic research and government policy, the term Indigenous is used frequently, even when discussing First Nations Peoples and communities specifically. This can be problematic as (for example) the terminology of ‘Indigenous communities’ can create confusion on whether the discussion is regarding First Nations communities, or whether it also includes Inuit communities and Métis settlements.

In this thesis, I aim to remove this confusion by referring directly to First Nations Peoples and communities when speaking specifically about First Nations groups (i.e., instead of just referring to them as ‘Indigenous communities’). However, as my doctoral

research examines national policies and existing academic terminology and frameworks, I will still refer to ‘Indigenous Peoples’ when referring to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples and communities (including Métis settlements) as a whole. I will also use the term ‘Indigenous’ when it has been used by federal, provincial, and territorial governments for policy (which is inclusive of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples), and when referring to academic disciplines that use the term Indigenous (e.g., Indigenous geographies).

CHAPTER 2

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Positionality Statement

According to Smith (2012), Kovach (2009), and Wilson (2008), it is important for a researcher to share their positionality, including cultural affiliation(s) and identity, as it helps those reading to situate the researcher in the research. On my maternal side, I am Algonquin (*Anishinaabe*). I am a registered member of Kebaowek First Nation in Kipawa, Quebec, which is a federally recognized First Nations community. On my paternal side, I am French. I was adopted as a baby and was raised in a non-Indigenous home. I grew up mostly in the suburbs of southwestern and southeastern Ontario. I did not connect to my Anishinaabe roots until meeting my birth mother at the age of 21. Over the past 20 years (I am in my 40s now), I have been on a learning journey to understand what it means to be an *Anishinaabe-kwe* (Anishinaabe woman). In 2004, I received my spirit name, *O'Demin Kwe* (“Strawberry Woman”), after participating in a sweat lodge ceremony and pipe ceremony with Algonquin Elder Peter Migwans.

From 2011 to 2015, I completed my undergraduate studies at Western University in First Nations Studies so I could learn more about the history of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. In 2013, I met and married my (now) husband, Ryan “Rye” Barberstock, a *Rotinonhsyón:ni* and member of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, located in Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, Ontario.

In terms of positionality and research on procurement, this research was based on a national dialogue on the modernization of Indigenous procurement in Canada. Thus, this research is not situated in any one particular Indigenous culture or worldview. As an

Anishinaabe-kwe, I kept an open mind and heart while participating in, and facilitating, the engagement sessions. The data collected represents the perspectives and expertise from Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants from across Canada.

2.2 Indigenous Procurement Engagement Sessions (2018 to 2021)

From 2018 to 2021, my company, *Okwaho Equal Source*, was contracted by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and the National Aboriginal Corporations Association (NACCA) to facilitate a series of Indigenous Procurement Engagement sessions (IPE-sessions). The sessions took place in Ottawa, Toronto, and virtually (i.e., on Zoom), and the participants included public sector officials (involved in Indigenous procurement), private sector and industry procurement leaders, as well as Indigenous businesses leaders (i.e., who had been successful in procurement).

The IPE-sessions were designed to gather insights and information on what had been working well with the Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business (PSIB) and what had not worked. In addition, the engagement sessions provided opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous procurement leaders to offer solutions and provide recommendations for how Indigenous procurement in Canada could be improved and modernized.

Indigenous business leaders, and National Indigenous Organizations (NIOs), including NACCA and the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB), actively participated in the IPE-sessions, and recommendations provided by the participants and NIOs have influenced federal procurement policy recommendations. One significant impact from the engagement workshops was a recommendation by Indigenous participants and NIOs to create a 5% mandatory minimum spend (representative of a 5% Indigenous

population in Canada) across all federal government departments.

In June 2020, Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) (2020b) formally announced a mandate commitment for a 5% target on Indigenous procurement:

The Government of Canada is committed to increasing the participation of Indigenous businesses in federal procurement, to do so, we are working with Indigenous Services Canada and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat to create a new target to have 5% of federal contracts awarded to businesses managed and led by Indigenous Peoples. (Key Messages section, para. 1)

The PSPC (2020b) mandate commitment promises to “create more opportunities for Indigenous businesses to succeed and grow by creating a new target to have at least 5 percent of federal contracts awarded to businesses managed and led by Indigenous Peoples” (Background section, para. 1). This is a major commitment as the Government of Canada (GC) currently spends approximately 1 percent annually on Indigenous procurement (Indigenous Services Canada [ISC], 2021a). In a report titled *Industry and Inclusion: An Analysis of Indigenous Potential in Federal Supply Chains*, the CCAB (2019) made the following recommendation:

The federal government should set an Indigenous procurement target of 5 percent within five years, through a 1 percentage point increase annually. Each federal department and agency should lay out a strategy to achieve this target and report annually on progress. (p. 3)

The CCAB (2019) report also indicated that Indigenous businesses in Canada have the capacity to fulfill the 5% procurement target. However, as federal Indigenous

procurement is only at 1%, it is evident that there is still much work to be done to have better Indigenous inclusion in the federal procurement process (ISC, 2021a).

In the next section, I will provide greater detail on the consulting contracts that made up the IPE-sessions from 2018 to 2021, and I will also provide information how I accessed the data sets for my doctoral research. For clarity, when referring to the IPE-sessions in this thesis, I am *only* referring to engagement sessions that were facilitated by my company from 2018 to 2021.

2.3 Obtaining Permission to Use the Raw Data from the Indigenous Procurement Engagement Sessions for my Doctoral Research

Three sets of data were collected during four consulting contracts that Okwaho Equal Source completed from 2018 to 2021 for ISC and NACCA. Collectively, I will refer to the work completed in all four of the consulting contracts as the IPE-sessions. The consulting contracts and data collection methods will be described in greater detail later in this chapter.

In 2018, data were collected as part of the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada project with ISC. The data were collected from three design thinking workshops facilitated by Okwaho Equal Source in Toronto and Ottawa (I will describe the design thinking process in greater detail later in this chapter, including the importance of taking regional approaches to design thinking). In total, 28 (n=28) people participated in the design thinking sessions. (See ‘Appendix B’ for a copy of the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada Workshop Agenda).

In 2020, data were collected as part of the National Procurement Roundtable, hosted by NACCA, and facilitated by Okwaho Equal Source in Ottawa. In total, 49 (n=49) people participated in the National Procurement Roundtable event. (See ‘Appendix C’ for

a copy of the National Procurement Roundtable Agenda).

In 2021, data were collected as part of two research based Okwaho Equal Source consulting contracts for NACCA: 1) Defining and Implementing an Indigenous 5% Public Sector Procurement Target, and 2) Transforming the Federal Indigenous Procurement Process. Data were collected from small group and one-on-one sessions (conducted online using Zoom). Although these were two separate consulting contracts, the subject matter was interrelated and the questions for the small group and one-on-one sessions were combined, to create one data set (which was used for both contracts). In total, 21 (n=21) people participated in the small group and one-on-one sessions. For simplicity, I will refer to these two consulting contracts collectively as the Federal Procurement Research Project, as there is only one data set. (See ‘Appendix D’ for copy of Federal Procurement Research Project—Small Group and One-on-one Session Questions).

The raw data collected from the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada project in 2018 is owned by the ISC. The raw data collected from the National Procurement Roundtable in 2020 is owned by NACCA. In addition, the data collected in 2021 from the Federal Procurement Research Project is owned by NACCA. As the ISC and NACCA consulting contracts were funded with public dollars, the raw data are considered ‘public domain’ and I accessed the data through this right. Based on a thorough discussion among the examining committee of my original thesis proposal, it was agreed that I did not need to pursue General Research Ethics Board (GREB) approval at Queen's University for my research.

Out of professional courtesy to my clients, I also sought and received permission from ISC to use the data collected from the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in

Canada project in 2018, and I received permission from NACCA to use the data collected from the National Procurement Roundtable in 2020 and the Federal Procurement Research Project in 2021 for my doctoral research (see ‘Appendix A’ for copies of emails with permission).

In addition, my contacts at ISC and NACCA were supportive of my doctoral research, as Indigenous procurement is an important and timely topic for Indigenous businesses, Indigenous community economic development, and for public policy. It is my hope that this timely research will provide a significant contribution to the (currently limited) literature on Indigenous procurement and to the ongoing work being carried out by NIOs and the GC.

As the data sets were collected because of my consulting contracts with ISC and NACCA, I maintain anonymity for the participants that participated in the IPE-sessions by using pseudonyms in my thesis and by removing any identifying information. As my thesis aims to prioritize Indigenous Voices, when using direct quotations, I identify whether the participant being quoted was Indigenous or non-Indigenous. The research for this PhD thesis did not begin until after my consulting contracts were finished and after I received permission to use the data.

2.4 How I Conducted my Doctoral Research

For my doctoral research, I re-analyzed the raw data from the IPE-sessions from 2018 to 2021, in four unique ways (not previously explored in my consulting contracts):

1. Re-analyzed the data from a human geography lens, specifically through the geography sub-disciplines of economic geography (i.e., community economic development, and community building/development), and Indigenous geographies.

2. Compared and contrasted the data to current literature on Indigenous economic development, entrepreneurship, and procurement (including social procurement) in Canada, to explore whether Indigenous procurement can be a catalyst for community building and economic development.
3. Compared and contrasted the data on proposed Indigenous procurement policies and practices in Canada to the literature on current procurement policies and practices in Australia (i.e., as Australia is seen as being more advanced than Canada in this regard). As the literature on Indigenous procurement in Australia is well established and extensive, this comparative piece included a document analysis of studies, reports, and legislation.
4. Examined Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement in Canada, which mandates the Government of Canada (GC) (by law) to provide preferential procurement opportunities to the Inuit in Nunavut (Government of Nunavut [GN], 2017). In addition, I compared and contrasted the effectiveness of Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement to the new federal procurement mandate, which is a target “to have 5% of federal contracts awarded to businesses managed and led by Indigenous Peoples” (Public Services and Procurement Canada [PSPC], 2020b, Key Messages section, para. 1). (NOTE: The 5% is mandated, but optional, and without consequences if the 5% is not achieved).

2.5 Methods and Data Collection – A Summary of the IPE-sessions

In this section, I summarize each of the four consulting contracts, including methodologies and data analysis. As described in section 2.4, “How I Conducted my Doctoral Research,” my PhD research is *not* a summary of consulting work already

completed; rather, my doctoral research aims to fill the gaps by exploring new avenues and by re-analyzing the data in a way it has not been previously analyzed.

This section first provides an overview of design thinking and Asset-based Community Development (ABCD) as methodologies, followed by a description of the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement workshops in 2018 (i.e., which used design thinking and ABCD as the main methodologies). Second, I provide an overview of the National Procurement Roundtable in 2020. Third, I provide an overview of the Federal Procurement Research Project completed in 2021.

2.5.1 Design Thinking as a Methodology

In preparation for my consulting contract for the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada project, I was formally trained in design thinking by the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto. In April 2018, I completed the Design Thinking: Connecting Innovation and Strategy Rotman executive program; in June 2019, I completed the Advanced Business Design Facilitation Rotman executive program. The executive programs at the Rotman School of Management taught me how to facilitate the design thinking process in an effective way, and it also provided me with a ‘toolbox’ of design thinking activities.

Design thinking is an emerging field that has gained popularity because of its interdisciplinary and creative approaches to problem solving and innovation (Davis et al., 2016). According to Chen and Huang (2017), “Design thinking is considered a creative, human-centered, participatory, exploratory, problem-solving process that values different perspectives of a problem” (p. 139). The concept of design thinking has been in existence since the 1980s when Rowe first published his book on *Design Thinking* in 1987 (Dorst,

2011). Design thinking has its roots in architecture and engineering and has evolved from these disciplines into an interdisciplinary ‘way of thinking’ and a methodology for creative problem solving (Davis et al., 2016; Schram & Mistry, 2018). Today, design thinking is employed in several fields and disciplines, including engineering, business, health care, and education (Beckman & Barry, 2007; Dorst, 2011; Johnson, 2016).

To date, there are several design thinking ‘methods,’ which have become popularized by some of the leaders in design thinking, including the Rotman School of Management, the Stanford d.School and IDEO (a prominent and influential design firm), among others. Although all the ‘schools’ of design thinking have unique elements, Schram and Mistry (2018) assert that the underlying principles of the design process follow three common steps in the design process:

1. Empathy and need finding—Connecting with stakeholders to find out what the issues are and understanding their needs.
2. Ideation and prototyping— Blue sky thinking; seeing new possibilities and creating innovative processes/products/services to solve problems.
3. Strategy—Testing and determining the strategy to make sure the innovation is successful and sustainable.

Although design thinking is a Western-based methodology, I argue that the principles of design thinking are synergistic with Indigenous ways of knowing and being because the ‘spirit’ of design thinking is community building and inclusion. The concepts of design thinking and community building are echoed by Greg Van Alstyne, the director of research and co-founder of the Strategic Innovation Lab, or sLab, at OCAD University. In Johnson’s (2016) online article, “‘Design thinking’ is changing the way we approach

problems,” the author writes:

Design thinkers often speak of “human-centred design” and “social innovation,” concepts that flow from DT’s [design thinking’s] assertion that no single person has the answer to a complex problem. Instead, it focuses on collective goals and places a premium on sustainability, community, culture and the empowerment of people. . . It means you go about your problem-solving in a more holistic way. We can say ‘human-centred,’ but it’s actually ‘life centred’. . . [D]esign thinking is amenable to working within social systems and improving the lot of communities. (Para. 13)

One of the critiques of design thinking is that it is Western-centric, and it is mostly centred on generating innovation (i.e., innovation of a new product, service, or process) (Tunstall, 2013). For Indigenous Peoples, this means that design thinking may not consider important cultural elements such as Traditional Knowledge as part of the innovation process. There has been some movement in academia to ‘decolonize design’ (e.g., Schultz et al., 2018; Tunstall, 2013); however, there is not much literature on how to (specifically) decolonize design when working with Indigenous Peoples. As Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) suggests in her book, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, the process of decolonization does not necessarily mean avoiding all Western-based concepts, rather it is the inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. As design thinking has become a popular methodology for social innovation and business, I argue there are opportunities to ‘Indigenize’ this method so that it is more inclusive of Indigenous Peoples and methodologies.

When using design thinking as a methodology for the Re-envisioning Indigenous

Procurement in Canada sessions, Okwaho Equal Source Indigenized the process in three distinct ways: 1) the inclusion of sharing circles (to start and end each day), storytelling (i.e., through interactive group activities and presentations), and through Asset-based Community Development (ABCD) (i.e., asset-mapping—taking an asset-based approach instead of a deficit-based approach).

Each Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada session lasted one full day (from 9:00am to 4:00pm) and each day started with a sharing circle. In the sharing circle, the Okwaho Equal Source co-facilitators (Rye Barberstock and I) did introductions, an overview of the agenda, and a brief introduction to the concept of design thinking. Next, the participants had an opportunity to introduce themselves in the sharing circle and to talk about what they wanted to get out of the day. Indigenous Protocols for the sharing circle were shared with the group. The Indigenous Protocols come from Anishinaabe/Haudenosaunee Traditional Knowledge, which was passed down through the Oral Tradition to Rye and I through our Anishinaabe/Haudenosaunee family members, and/or Elders or Knowledge Keepers.

Our sharing circle protocols include:

- Only one person speaking at a time and having as much time as they need to express themselves.
- To listen first, then speak from the heart—A practice that encourages participants to not mentally prepare what they are going to say, but rather to truly listen to what others in the circle have to share; and to speak from the heart when it is their turn to speak.
- What is shared in the circle, stays in the circle. Sometimes in sharing circles,

participants will share personal stories and emotions will emerge. Therefore, one of the Protocols is to keep everything that is shared in a sharing circle confidential.

Through my facilitation work with Okwaho Equal Source over the past 8 years, I have learned that sharing circles can be an effective methodology for working with Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants alike. As a methodology, it allows facilitators to get a sense of what people are thinking about the topic/theme to be explored for the day, and it brings attention to other important matters that might not have been considered (i.e., unexpected important topics that emerge during the sharing circle). It also helps to break the ice and creates a comfortable space for people to express how they are feeling. This can be helpful for facilitators as it is helpful to know where there are tension points and where participants are feeling positively about the theme/topic(s) for the day.

Through my design thinking training at the Rotman School of Management, I learned that design thinking is an intuitive process. For example, each design thinking session goes through the same steps—empathy and need finding, ideation, and prototyping—but flexibility must be used when creating an agenda because it is unpredictable how long groups will need for each step. Sometimes certain design thinking steps (e.g., empathy and need finding) will take longer than others, and sometimes groups will reach clarity and consensus quickly and the group will be ready to move on to the next step.

I also learned a series of design thinking tools that are complementary to the main steps of design thinking, and I use some of these extra tools/exercises when facilitating if I believe it will help each group achieve their goals/vision. Often, these extra design thinking tools/exercises are not planned; they are used when needed. This is the advantage

of having formal training in design thinking: I have a large toolbox of exercises to draw from.

A complementary methodology to design thinking is ABCD. In the next section, I describe what ABCD is and how it was used in the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada sessions. ABCD was not listed on the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada Workshop Agenda (see 'Appendix B'); however, it was added as a complement to the design thinking process.

2.5.2 Asset-based Community Development (ABCD) as a Methodology

I was formally trained in ABCD by the Coady International Institute at St. Francis Xavier University in 2014 when I was a participant in the Indigenous Women in Community Leadership (IWCL) program. I have used ABCD in many of my Okwaho Equal Source design thinking workshops because it is complementary to design thinking, and it is synergistic to Indigenous ways of knowing and being. According to Mathie et al. (2017),

Asset-based Community Development (ABCD) (or asset-based and citizen-led development as it is also called) is an approach to community and economic development that starts with a community's existing assets. Whether these assets are tangible (such as land and physical buildings) or intangible (such as people's knowledge, interests and skills) they are the raw materials that community members can harness and build on. This is in distinct contrast to those community and economic development approaches that start by identifying the needs of a community and how these needs can best be addressed. (p. 55)

I argue that ABCD is synergistic with Indigenous ways of knowing and being because it

takes an asset-based approach instead of a deficit-based approach. For example, non-Indigenous researchers and organizations often take a deficit-based approach when working with First Nations communities (i.e., trying to work with a First Nations community based on what is ‘wrong’ with it), which “has the potential to contribute to stereotyping and marginalization of Indigenous Peoples in wider society” (Hyett et al., 2019, p. 102). However, ABCD takes the opposite approach. Through ABCD, facilitators work with communities to map their assets and resources, rather than focusing on their needs and deficits (Mathie et al., 2017). Mathie et al. (2017) suggest that by “making often undervalued assets more visible, it helps to encourage people [communities] to combine their strengths and resources, however few, as the starting point for development” (pp. 55-56).

Okwaho Equal Source has Indigenized ABCD through the inclusion of Traditional Knowledge (i.e., from the participants) in the ABCD process and by following the lead of Indigenous Peoples to determine what their community’s ‘assets’ are (i.e., Knowledge Keepers, grassroots active youth, infrastructure in the community, sacred land, etc.). In the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada project, ABCD was used as a complement to design thinking, to map the assets of each group that were engaged. In this way, a foundation of assets was established, which could (potentially) assist in further improving Indigenous procurement in Canada (i.e., listing Indigenous business support organizations, assets, and resources in federal departments, etc.).

2.6 Data Collection and Methods for the IPE-sessions (2018 to 2021)

In this section, I provide a detailed summary of the consulting contracts that made up the IPE-sessions between 2018 to 2021. These include:

- The Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada project in 2018.
- The National Indigenous Procurement Roundtable in 2020.
- The Federal Procurement Research Project in 2021, which included the following topics and themes: 1) Defining and implementing an Indigenous 5% public sector procurement target, and 2) Transforming the federal Indigenous procurement process.

This information is relevant to my doctoral research as it provides information on how the data were originally collected, and the deliverables of the consulting contract (i.e., to differentiate it from my doctoral research). The data from the IPE-sessions were re-analyzed for my doctoral research and have been used most prominently in Chapters 5 (Challenges and Wise Practices for First Nations Procurement in Canada) and in Chapter 6 (Should Indigenous Procurement be Legislated? Federal Indigenous Procurement Policy Versus Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement).

2.6.1 Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada (2018)

In 2018, Okwaho Equal Source facilitated three Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada design thinking workshops for our client, ISC. The workshops were Indigenous-led (by Okwaho Equal Source) and were conducted on November 28, 2018, in Ottawa, Ontario (for the public sector), and on December 12, 2018 (for the private sector), and December 13, 2018, in Toronto, Ontario (for Indigenous business leaders). The intent of the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada design thinking sessions was to gather feedback on the current PSIB and to provide opportunities for participants to provide potential solutions to the current issues (as determined by the participants) with the PSIB.

In total, there were 28 participants (n = 28) for the three workshops, representing Indigenous business (i.e., privately owned Indigenous businesses and NIOs), the public sector (i.e., procurement officers across several government departments) and private sector (i.e., Indigenous, and non-Indigenous private sector leaders). All participants were recruited based on their experience and/or expertise with Indigenous procurement and were from across Canada.

My role for the three workshops was lead workshop designer and facilitator. The workshops were designed using Indigenous and Western-based methods, including sharing circles, design thinking (human-centred design), ABCD, and group presentations (see ‘Appendix B’ for copy of workshop agenda).

During the workshops, participants were seated in small groups (5-7 people) for the design thinking exercises. The products (or artifacts) from these group sessions were flip chart paper and post-it notes, capturing key group themes and ideas. In addition, for each group, one person volunteered to be an ‘insight keeper’ and their role was to write/type notes from group discussions, which they felt were important/relevant (which may or may not have been summarized on the group flip chart paper or post-it notes). My company also provided a notetaker, who took detailed typed notes during group presentations.

After each workshop was completed, all the artifacts and notes were collected. I gathered all the flipcharts and post-it notes and typed the notes into a MS Word document, so that the raw data could be reviewed and analysed. I printed the notes and coded the data by hand using thematic analysis. My company provided a final report to ISC, which included key themes from the workshop and high-level policy recommendations. The final report for the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement project is private; however, some of

the key themes can be found in the online GC report, *Modernization of Indigenous participation in procurement discussion paper* (ISC, 2019).

During my consulting contract with ISC for the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada project, my experience as a design thinking facilitator resulted in a ‘methods finding’ for my doctoral research, which I believe is significant for my contribution to research in geography, especially the sub-disciplines of human geographies and Indigenous geographies. I found that design thinking was an effective method for data collection and research, and that it was effective as a community building tool with Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants. In section 2.8, I will share these findings in greater detail.

2.6.2 National Indigenous Procurement Roundtable (2020)

In 2020, Okwaho Equal Source was approached by NACCA to facilitate the final procurement engagement session for ISC. The National Indigenous Procurement Roundtable was held on February 4, 2020, in Ottawa and provided an opportunity for participants to provide any additional feedback prior to policy recommendations being officially submitted to the GC.

Prior to attending the National Indigenous Procurement Roundtable, registered participants were provided with the URL to the *Modernization of Indigenous participation in procurement: discussion paper* (ISC, 2019) so they could review the recommendations and make any additional comments or recommendations for changes. In total, 49 (n = 49) people participated in the National Indigenous Procurement Roundtable, representing Indigenous business, the public sector, and private sector.

For the 2020 National Indigenous Procurement Roundtable, participants were

seated in groups of 6-8 people. Unlike the design thinking format of the 2018 design thinking workshops, which allowed the participants to design their own questions, the 2020 National Indigenous Procurement Roundtable questions were structured and determined ahead of time (by NACCA and Okwaho Equal Source) (see ‘Appendix C’ for National Indigenous Procurement Roundtable agenda, including discussion questions).

Key themes from group discussions were captured on flip chart paper and groups were provided an opportunity to present their key themes and ideas to all the participants. In each group, one person volunteered to be an ‘insight keeper’ and write/type notes from their group discussions, and these notes were handed in to the facilitators (Okwaho Equal Source) at the end of the workshop. In addition, an associate from my company typed detailed notes during group presentations.

As my company had conducted the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada workshops in 2018, I could compare the key themes and findings to the 2020 National Indigenous Procurement Roundtable workshop and found that many of the group findings and ideas were similar to the findings in 2018. As a researcher, I concluded that saturation was achieved in this session as there were no new notable findings that emerged from the group discussions in comparison to the previous workshops held in 2018.

My company provided a final report to NACCA, which outlined the key themes from the 2020 National Procurement Roundtable and outlined some potential recommendations to support Indigenous procurement, as NACCA supports Indigenous entrepreneurs across Canada. As this report was completed as part of an Okwaho Equal Source consulting contract, the recommendations provided to NACCA for the final report are private.

2.6.3 Federal Procurement Research Project - Indigenous Procurement Small Group and One-on-One Sessions in July 2021

In July 2021, key stakeholders were engaged to discuss their views on Indigenous procurement. Stakeholders were individuals identified as having Indigenous procurement expertise by NIOs: NACCA, Assembly of First Nations (AFN), Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB), National Indigenous Economic Development Board (NIEDB), and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK). The engagement sessions consisted of small focus group or one-on-one discussions, and included representation from national and regional Indigenous organizations, the private sector (Indigenous and non-Indigenous), and the public sector.

Invitation emails were sent to potential participants in early-to-mid July 2021, and all potential participants received two emails (the initial invitation and a reminder email). If the dates/times proposed did not work for potential participants, or if they were not comfortable sharing their thoughts in a group setting, a link to an online survey was provided. The virtual engagement sessions occurred in July and August 2021 (based on participant availability).

The virtual focus group and one-on-one discussions were Indigenous-led and were facilitated by Okwaho Equal Source. My company consulted with NACCA and CCAB (a collaborator with NACCA on this project) prior to contacting potential participants and a co-creative process was used to devise the research questions. The one-on-one and virtual focus group sessions provided an opportunity for participants to share their thoughts and ideas on how to increase and improve procurement opportunities for Indigenous businesses. The sessions focused on two main topics: 1) Strategy to transform an Indigenous inclusive federal procurement process, and 2) Defining and implementing an

Indigenous 5% public sector procurement target. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, all sessions were held virtually using Zoom.

A total of 65 people received invitations to participate in a one-on-one session, virtual round table, and/or to fill out an online survey. Of the 65 people invited, 21 individuals (30.7%, n = 21) participated: 7 participated in one-on-one sessions, 13 participated in the group engagement sessions, and 1 completed an online survey. Reasons for non-participation included out-of-office (vacation/office closed), medical leave, and unknown (non-reply or no-show). For the one-on-one sessions, 4 were representatives from NIOs, and 3 were representatives from the federal government (PSPC and ISC).

The group sessions were held on pre-determined dates. The list below provides a summary of virtual engagements completed and number of participants from each stakeholder group.

- Indigenous Business – 5 invited, 1 participated, 1 survey received. (Engagement session: Monday, July 26, 2021, 9:30am to 12:00pm).
 - *Note: One individual from the Indigenous Regional and National Organizations engagement group (July 27, 2021) was also a business owner and provided responses to the Indigenous business and industry questions.
- Indigenous Regional and National Organizations – 19 invited, 15 participated, 0 surveys received. (Engagement session: Tuesday, July 27, 2021, 9:30am to 12:00pm).
- Federal Government – 10 invited, 3 participated, 0 surveys received. (Engagement session: Wednesday, July 28, 2021, 1:00pm to 3:30pm).
- Private Sector (Non-Indigenous) – 8 invited, 3 participated, 0 surveys received.

(Engagement session: Thursday, July 29, 2021, 9:30am to 12:00pm).

- Inuit Regional and National Organizations – 11 invited, 3 participated, 0 surveys received. (Engagement session: Friday, July 30, 2021, 1:00pm to 3:30pm).

Upon the completion of this contract, Okwaho Equal Source provided a final report to NACCA titled *Transforming the Indigenous Procurement Process in Canada: A Literature Review, Qualitative Analysis, and Recommendations* (Okwaho Equal Source, 2021). The document combined the topics from the two consulting contracts into one 90-page final report. The topics include: 1) Strategy to transform an Indigenous inclusive federal procurement process, and 2) Defining and implementing an Indigenous 5% public sector procurement target. The final report is public and is available on NACCA's website (see Okwaho Equal Source, 2021). Some of the key findings shared in the Okwaho Equal Source report have also been shared in my PhD thesis as they provide context for some of the themes in the main chapters (i.e., identifying the obstacles and challenges for Indigenous procurement).

2.7 Research Gaps and Opportunities

The IPE-sessions that took place between 2018 to 2021 provided an opportunity to be included in the national discussions on Indigenous procurement modernization in Canada. The data collected during the workshops and engagement sessions contributed to high level policy recommendations for the GC and NACCA. However, there are research gaps and opportunities, which were not addressed through my consulting contracts, which are explored in my doctoral research in the following chapters. First, the data collected at the engagement workshops were analyzed for the sole purpose of creating high level policy recommendations relating to government-wide implementation of a new 5% Indigenous

procurement mandate. Secondly, the Indigenous participants consisted mainly of privately-owned businesses and the leaders of National Indigenous Organizations (NIOs). What was missing from the engagement sessions and research papers was the First Nations/Indigenous community lens, specifically, examining how Indigenous procurement could contribute to community building and economic development.

2.8 Methods Findings – Design Thinking for Community Building

As described above in section 2.6.1, all Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada sessions were Indigenous-led, using design thinking tools and practices. What is innovative and novel about using design thinking for this research is that it was used first for community and relationship building, and second, as a data collection method. In the field of human geography and Indigenous geographies, participatory research models are common (e.g., see Chilisa, 2012; Ferreira & Gendron, 2001; Koster et al., 2012); however, using design thinking as a method for engagement and data collection is not. This section explores how design thinking methods have applications for the fields and sub-fields of geography, including (but not limited to) human geography and Indigenous geographies—including participatory based research methods with First Nations communities. In addition, this section also describes how design thinking can be adopted as a tool for working with First Nations communities for community building, relationship building, with applications for researchers, community practitioners, and policy makers.

2.8.1 Design Thinking vs. Focus Groups vs. One-on-one Sessions—for Data Collection and Research

To provide context for design thinking as an engagement, data collection, and research method, it is helpful to compare it with the other methods that were used in the

IPE-sessions. The IPE-sessions conducted between 2018 to 2021 had several different formats for engagement and data collection and each method had advantages and disadvantages, which I explore below.

Design Thinking – Advantages and Disadvantages

Design Thinking has a lot of advantages for working with Indigenous Peoples and First Nations communities because it is first and foremost a method for co-design. I argue that this is synergistic with Indigenous ways of knowing and being because Indigenous Peoples and First Nations communities have been co-designing since time immemorial. A historical/contemporary example of this is Haudenosaunee cultures and longhouses where clans and families come together to co-design solutions to problems in the community (Wilcox, 2007). Perhaps the best visualization of design thinking is the thought of Nations coming together at the same table to co-design solutions to problems, whether it is a Nation-to-Nation relationship between Indigenous Peoples and the GC, or First Nations communities coming together with other First Nations communities.

With design thinking, the magic is in putting the ‘right people’ at the same table to co-design solutions to problems. The ‘right people’ are often referred to as stakeholders in engagement; however, I am hesitant to use these words as they can be seen as contentious with some Indigenous Peoples and First Nations communities (see Joseph, 2022). Bob Joseph (2022), founder of Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. and Gwawaenuk Nation member asserts that “Stakeholder is a commonly used business term that should be avoided at all costs when working with [First Nations] communities” as “First Nations people are not merely stakeholders—they have constitutionally protected rights and are used to dealing with Canada, provinces and territories on a Nation-to-Nation basis” (p. 8). Instead,

Bob Joseph (2022) suggests that we should refer to “rights holder” (for Indigenous Peoples) or “Indigenous Peoples and stakeholders” when doing engagement (p. 8).

When considering design thinking as a method for co-design when working with Indigenous Peoples and First Nations communities, I refer to Lockwood and Papke’s (2018) concept of the *collective imagination*, which I argue perfectly captures the idea of community building through design thinking. In the book *Innovation by Design*, Lockwood and Papke (2018) identify the “motivational drivers” and “pillars of the collective imagination: participation, the pursuit of knowledge, and free expression” (p. 36). In addition, Lockwood and Papke (2018) describe the collective imagination as:

The behaviours of involvement, collaboration, and cooperation that result in sharing of ideas, people paying attention to each other, and the subsequent sharing and leveraging of differing viewpoints, inferences, and opinions. The underlying influence that opens the door to the successful collaboration among the members of an organization or team is the human need for inclusion. (p. 36)

When using design thinking for the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada sessions, groups were first tasked with discussing the biggest challenges/issues for Indigenous procurement (based on their own experiences and expertise). In design thinking, this is the ‘empathy and need finding’ phase (Rauth et al., 2010). Groups comprised of four to eight people (on average). From my experience as a design thinking facilitator, I have found that smaller groups (under 10) ensure that even the most quiet/shy person at the table will feel comfortable sharing, and to ensure that each person at the table can share, without running out of time.

After discussing the biggest issues, groups were tasked with choosing one major problem to work on as a group and to phrase the problem as a question and to provide potential solutions to the problem they have selected. This is the ‘ideation’ phase in design thinking (Rauth et al., 2010). For example, below are some of the questions that were generated at the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement sessions in 2018.

Questions generated by Indigenous business groups:

- How can we build an Indigenous culture across federal government?
- How can we improve Indigenous procurement?

Questions generated by public sector groups:

- What could the GC do to increase the number and value of contracts for Indigenous business?
- What are the tools government departments need across the various stages of the procurement process to support cultural change and improve Indigenous procurement?
- How do we make “Indigenous” (considerations) integral to the procurement system?
- How do we best embody policy and processes in consideration of Indigenous procurement?

Question generated by private sector group:

- How can Indigenous procurement in Canada be improved?

One of the main strengths of design thinking for human-based research is that the research questions are generated by the participants, not by the researcher or facilitator. Design thinking starts with a general theme or purpose (in this case it was Indigenous

procurement), but it is the participants that determine which problem(s) are the most important, and the question(s) co-designed by each group help to focus the direction of the solutions-finding exercise(s) ('ideation') (Lockwood & Papke, 2018). For working with First Nations communities, this can be a very effective method because instead of an external researcher/facilitator coming in with pre-determined questions (or unconscious biases), it empowers the community to determine which problems are the most important and to determine what question(s) (or problems) they most want to tackle.

More importantly, it is the community/group that will come up with potential solutions to the problems. This is also empowering as a community building tool because it moves community past discussing the problem into a process of co-creation/co-design and (potentially) innovation (Plattner et al., 2012). The empowerment comes from communities generating their own solutions based on their combined knowledge, instead of having an external entity or 'expert' (i.e., consulting company or researcher) generate solutions, which might not work for the community (Lockwood & Papke, 2018).

One of the products of design thinking was the curation of a large list of solutions to the problem questions posed (by participants) in the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement sessions. Although it might not be possible to fulfill each solution/idea, it creates a list which can be shared and saved so that (in this case) policy makers, leaders of Indigenous organizations, and Indigenous communities and businesses, can use the list for future prototypes (i.e., solutions, policy improvements, operational improvements, tools creation, etc.).

During the design thinking sessions, positive feedback was received on the methods being used. Some of the positive feedback included:

- “I wish we had done the design thinking first” (non-Indigenous participant, GC) (because it had generated so many ideas and because the focus questions had set a direction).
- Design thinking brought together different departments (i.e., in the public sector) that didn’t necessarily communicate; sharing ideas/feedback/experience on Indigenous procurement was valuable. One person commented that they wished there could be “more opportunities to do this” (to bring the different departments together for knowledge sharing) (non-Indigenous participant, GC).

I am sharing the positive feedback⁴ not to tout the design thinking methods employed by my company, but in the context of sharing the strengths of design thinking—that it is a powerful method for community, relationship, team, and knowledge building, as well as a powerful problem-solving tool.

One of the things that made the design thinking process unique is that it was 100% Indigenous-led. Each session was led by two Indigenous facilitators. I was the lead facilitator and my partner, Rye Barberstock, (co-founder of Okwaho Equal Source) was a co-facilitator. As the lead facilitator, I ensured that all of the exercises ran smoothly (and on-time), and I observed the interactions between groups to see if additional design thinking exercises needed to be employed (or whether to remove/change exercises).⁵ Rye, the co-facilitator, walked around the room and checked-in with the groups and when needed, helped the groups to ask deeper questions (or to stay focused if the group discussions were going off topic).

⁴ My company did not receive any negative feedback regarding the design thinking methods employed.

⁵ Design thinking is part planning and part intuition. A good facilitator will observe group interactions and determine whether to add/remove design thinking exercises to help follow the momentum and direction co-created by the groups.

As Indigenous facilitators, my partner and I Indigenized the design thinking process by including Indigenous methods. For example, we started and closed each day with an Indigenous-led sharing circle. This allowed people (whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous) to share freely how they were feeling. From a cultural perspective, this allows the group to start out (and end) the day in a good way—with a good mind and a good heart (Lavallée, 2009).

From the perspective of facilitators/practitioners, sharing circles allow facilitators to set a theme (i.e., to ask a question to start the circle) and it allows participants the opportunity to be unscripted (Lavallée, 2009). Sometimes very valuable information is shared in sharing circles, which might not come out in group discussions (Lavallée, 2009). For example, some of the initial challenges/problems to be addressed are sometimes shared in a sharing circle (which can help facilitators/practitioners to set the tone for the day) and sharing circles can help to break the ice and create a comfortable space so that the group sessions will run smoothly (Lavallée, 2009).

I argue that Indigenous-led is also important when incorporating Indigenous cultural Protocols and methods into design thinking. The importance of Indigenous-led initiatives, research, and evaluation have been explored by researchers such as Colbourne et al. (2020), Wehipeihana (2019), and Peters et al. (2018). In an article titled “‘Participation is not enough’—Towards Indigenous-led co-design,” Peters et al. (2018) introduce Angie Abdilla, a “Tralwoolway Aboriginal woman and social enterprise CEO” who

challenged designers to go beyond participation design: ‘We have to get beyond participation. It immediately implies you’re not leading and that’s my biggest

problem. . . It has to be Indigenous-led to ensure Indigenous knowledge is respected the whole way. . . Indigenous services have to be driven by Indigenous people.’ (p. 97)

Peters et al. (2018) further describe feedback from members from Indigenous communities regarding Indigenous engagement and participation design: “We don’t want to be consulted; we want to be at the table” (p. 97). Wehipeihana (2019) describes a similar sentiment when describing Indigenous evaluation: “It is about evaluation by Indigenous, for Indigenous, with Indigenous, and as Indigenous; and where there is no assumed role for non-Indigenous people, unless by invitation” (p. 370). Thus, Indigenous-led is important for Indigenous engagement as it ensures that Indigenous Peoples have a seat at the table (Wehipeihana, 2019), and in addition, design and research can draw from Indigenous ways of knowing and being to influence policy, and to build trust and capacity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers and stakeholders (Colbourne et al., 2020).

As previously mentioned, design thinking can be a great start for research because it helps to set the path for research (as co-designed by participants). After facilitating the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada design thinking sessions in 2018, I was better prepared to lead the focus groups and one-on-one engagement sessions for the Federal Procurement Research Project in 2021. The Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada design thinking sessions in 2018 had created empathy for me as a facilitator and researcher and informed me on the different perspectives from Indigenous businesses and organizations, public sector officials, and private sector leaders. It had also turned me into a subject matter expert on Indigenous procurement because I had learned

directly from participants about what is most important, the greatest challenges of Indigenous procurement, and what solutions needed to be explored. Later, this knowledge guided me as a researcher so I would know what to read and explore to build up my knowledge on Indigenous procurement (i.e., knowing *which* topics to research in books and academic literature).

The small group and one-on-one engagement sessions for the Federal Procurement Research Project provided the in-depth information and narratives that were missing from the design thinking sessions.⁶ With the knowledge I had acquired from the previous design thinking sessions in 2018, and the follow-up reading and research, I was better positioned to ask effective research questions for the Federal Procurement Research Project in 2021. In addition, with the strong relationships built with GC contacts and NIOs, I was able to co-design questions with stakeholders to ensure that I was gathering information that was important (to the clients/stakeholders).

In terms of disadvantages for design thinking (versus other research methods such as focus groups and one-on-one interviews), design thinking is a wonderful co-design process, but it can sometimes scratch the surface if there is not enough time to prototype (i.e., to create a full solution to a problem that can be tested and implemented—usually several times until a final model is created). This was the case in our Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada sessions because we only had one day to do the design thinking. However, on the positive side, one of the greatest benefits of the design thinking

⁶ It is important to note that some in-depth discussions may have occurred naturally in the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada design thinking sessions (i.e., in small groups), but as a facilitator/researcher I would only have had access to notes from the notetakers in the groups. Not audio recording the group sessions was a decision I made as a researcher to create a comfortable space so that frank discussions could be shared in groups without the concern of having an external listener (N.B. This was important as some confidential/sensitive topics might have been discussed among colleagues in the group discussions).

during the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada sessions was the ability to empower participants to co-design together—to determine what the greatest problems are for Indigenous procurement and to suggest multiple solutions to those problems. The problem statements and lists of potential solutions (captured on post-it notes and flip chart paper) were shared with all participants, with the hope that the solutions would be further developed by the participants in the future. These solutions can act as a starting point for influencing policy and improving and/or creating new programs and resources.

2.9 Design Thinking – Importance of Regional Approaches

Another finding of my research is the importance of regional approaches. As the design thinking sessions took place on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee (and as my partner and I are Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee), we were in a good position to lead the design thinking sessions because we could follow the cultural Protocols of our traditional lands.

As southern-based business owners, we understand the realities of working in this region. However, had the design thinking sessions been focused on the north, or had they been focused on the Inuit or the Métis specifically, we would have been hesitant to lead the sessions (i.e., we would have recommended an Inuit or Métis facilitator). A regional approach is important because those who are locally situated will know the local populations, appropriate cultural Protocols, and the realities of living in that region.

During the small group sessions for the Federal Procurement Research Project (see section 6.6.1 for more information), it was made clear by Inuit participants that Inuit initiatives should be Inuit-led (I am in full agreement); it was also made clear that the situation in the north is very different from the south and that only those that are northern-

based will understand these contexts. For example, in one of the focus group sessions, an Inuk participant shared that in the north many products need to be shipped in by barge, and planning needs to occur one year in advance (as a First Nations southern-based business, this is not something that I would think about). Thus, it is important that for the application of design thinking, regional based approaches should be considered. If it is for the north, it should be north-led; if it is Inuit, it should be Inuit-led; if it is Métis, it should be Métis-led, etc.

2.10 Design Thinking—Summing Up and Potential Applications for Community Building

In this chapter, I have spoken at length about design thinking and how it was used in the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement sessions. I contend that the findings of this research are highly relevant to the intended topic of this chapter because one of the unexpected results of my research is that design thinking contributed to community and relationship building, and that it was synergistic with Indigenous ways of knowing and being. As a contribution to the academic body of knowledge (including Indigenous methods), I have observed (and experienced) that design thinking is an effective method for co-design and community building. Thus, if First Nations communities can invest in training local/regional First Nations design thinking facilitators, I hypothesize that this will help them to build a stronger First Nations business ecosystem.

Through design thinking practices, First Nations businesses and First Nations communities can work together to co-design solutions to community challenges and to ensure that all voices are heard. Through my research and experiences as an entrepreneur, I have observed that there can sometimes be a disconnect between what a First Nations community wants/needs, and what local First Nations businesses want/need. By using

design thinking, First Nations businesses and communities can work together to build capacity, and to build stronger First Nations supply chains, capable of taking on future (and current) economic development and procurement opportunities.

In addition, with local/regional based Indigenous-led design thinking, First Nations communities (and/or the First Nations business community) can use design thinking tools to co-design projects with external parties (such as public sector or private sector executives), to ensure that all parties have been heard. Co-design is a practice that has been part of First Nations communities since time immemorial; they did not call it ‘design thinking’ but design thinking can provide the necessary tools to empower communities to co-design the solutions for their own communities, and it can help to build capacity, community, and deeper relationships with the business community and with potential partners in in the public and private sectors.

2.11 Data Analysis – How Data Were Re-Analysed for My Doctoral Research

As described above, the data were analysed for key themes only, and specifically for the purpose of creating high level policy recommendations for ISC and NACCA. This section focuses on how the data collected were *not* analysed at the time, and how this gave me the opportunity to re-analyse the data from 2018 to 2021 for my doctoral research.

Below, I outline some of the gaps from the initial data analysis—these gaps are areas that were not previously explored by my initial data analysis and from reports provided to ISC and NACCA. These gaps lay the foundation for how I have focused my doctoral research.

- The report(s) provided to ISC and NACCA had a summary of key themes, which included Indigenous and non-Indigenous procurement perspectives from the public

and private sectors. The data analysis and reports *did not* include a differentiation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous views. My doctoral research takes a decolonizing approach, which prioritizes and centres the research from Indigenous perspectives.

- The initial data analysis and reports focused mainly on high level policy recommendations and individual businesses; my doctoral research focuses on how Indigenous procurement contributes to community building in First Nations communities across Canada. This moves the focus of the research away from policy and individual business enterprises and refocuses it on how Indigenous procurement can potentially benefit First Nations communities.
- My doctoral research provides an opportunity to explore Indigenous procurement in greater depth, and to compare and contrast the data to existing literature on Indigenous procurement, economic development and community building.
- To date, as far as I am aware, Indigenous procurement has never been analysed through the lens of human geography and the sub-disciplines of economic geography and Indigenous geographies. In addition, I have discovered from my initial literature search that Indigenous procurement in Canada (in general) does not have a large body of literature. Most of the current literature on Indigenous procurement is about Australia's Indigenous procurement, or the literature is from public sector perspectives and Indigenous Voices are missing.

As described above, although some data analysis occurred as part of my previous consulting contracts, there are still *several* large research gaps, which have not been explored. In addition, I have shared these research gaps with ISC and NACCA, and both

agree that my doctoral research is timely and needed, and both parties played a supportive role in my doctoral research.

2.12 Methodology

My doctoral research employed a mixed-methodologies approach for data analysis and was informed by both Indigenous and Western methodologies. Indigenous methodologies, including post-colonial and decolonizing methodologies, informed my work by ensuring that Indigenous Voices, Traditional Knowledge, and worldview(s) were prioritized (Rigney, 1999). This is important in Indigenous based research as Western knowledge systems, epistemologies and social theories are often privileged; whereas Indigenous knowledge systems are often analysed and compared to Western knowledge systems in a politics of recognition (Denzin, 2010; Mutua & Swadner, 2004; Semaili & Kincheloe, 1999). This ongoing comparison contributes to colonialism, which places Western-based knowledge systems as superior and Indigenous knowledge systems as secondary to Western-based knowledge systems (Denzin, 2010; Mutua & Swadner, 2004; Semaili & Kincheloe, 1999).

Research indicates that Indigenous peoples have lived in Turtle Island (North America) for 14,000 years or more; European settlers have only inhabited Canada for 400 years (Shore, 2017; “The First Americans,” 2012). Without Traditional Knowledge and deep community and familial connections, Indigenous Peoples and communities would not exist today. Today, Indigenous Peoples and communities continue to grow and prosper, and Indigenous scholars continue to join academic institutions, providing a wealth of Indigenous Knowledge, which has been passed down through Indigenous families and communities for thousands of years. Thus, I argue that Indigenous Knowledge should be

accepted by the academic community without requiring comparison to Western knowledge systems; it is strong and established enough to stand on its own.

Thus, by prioritizing Indigenous Voices and perspectives in my doctoral research, I aim to contribute Indigenous narratives to the literature on Indigenous business, economic development, and procurement. As an Indigenous scholar and business owner, I also provide Indigenous perspectives to my research through reflexivity and my own professional and lived experience.

The use of Indigenous methodologies is also important for my research as much of the current literature on Indigenous procurement is centred on non-Indigenous perspectives from the public and private sectors; Indigenous Voices are absent in the current literature. My research aims to rectify this by providing Indigenous perspectives of Indigenous procurement. In addition, my research includes some reflexivity as an Indigenous research methodology—I am not just a researcher, but I am also a research subject as my Indigenous-owned company has contracted regularly with the federal government since 2018. As a business owner, I have also worked closely with First Nations communities and with the private sector and I can speak as an ‘insider.’ I argue that this lived experience is an asset for my research, as it provides a 360-degree view of the challenges for Indigenous procurement (i.e., not just theoretical knowledge, but from lived and professional experience).

For the analysis of data, my research is influenced and informed by the constant comparison method and thematic analysis (Kolb, 2012). As my research is cross-cultural, my research includes Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives, which creates complexity. For example, Indigenous perspectives of procurement may favour social

procurement models (i.e., procurement for community social impact), whereas the non-Indigenous perspectives of procurement may favour contemporary procurement models (i.e., without consideration for social or community impact).

In my doctoral research, I have taken care to ensure the anonymity of all participants from the IPE-sessions. I have done this by removing identifying information and using pseudonyms for all participants when using direct quotations in my thesis.

My research also uses abductive reasoning in the discovery of research findings. Abductive reasoning (instead of inductive or deductive reasoning) provides an opportunity to move forward and backwards with the data, to allow research findings to be revealed and to allow that to guide the next steps (Charmaz, 2008; Charmaz, 2017; Charmaz & Belgrave, 2015). With abductive reasoning, I started with my research goals and questions as a guide but was open to following new paths that were revealed through the coding and the abductive reasoning process (Charmaz, 2008; Charmaz, 2017).

CHAPTER 3

BUILDING STRONG FIRST NATIONS ECONOMIES: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, AND PROCUREMENT

Traditionally, economic geography focuses on economic activities, including commercialization and the exploitation of natural resources for profit (Malecki, 2001). Economic geography examines where economic activities are located and the impacts that economic activities have on the place(s) where they occur (Malecki, 2001). Economic geography also explores entrepreneurship and economic development: incorporating cultural, political, and institutional influences, at the local, regional, national, and global levels (Malecki, 2001).

As my research incorporates First Nations perspectives, I refer to the concept of the ‘new economic geography,’ which incorporates geography, sociology, economics, and cultural studies (Barnes, 2001; Nayak & Jeffrey, 2013). Nayak and Jeffrey (2013) define the ‘new economic geography’ as being characterised by an interest in

- Consumption as well as production.
- Social relationships and networks.
- The cultural practices particular to specific firms and industries.
- Ideas of performance and embodied difference.
- New theories emerging in other disciplines.
- Rethinking economy through culture. (p. 118)

In this chapter, I will examine First Nations Economic Development (FNED) through the lens of Indigenous geographies. Although economic geography and Indigenous geographies are different subdisciplines of geography, I argue that they intersect in a

significant way when it comes to FNED. First, the history of geography is steeped in colonialism: the first European explorers mapped areas of North America, (re) naming and claiming land for colonial expansion (Beck, 2021; Krotz, 2018; Nayak & Jeffrey, 2013). Indigenous geographers acknowledge the history of colonialism and land dispossession in Canada and the intergenerational harm it has had on First Nations Peoples and communities in Canada (Coombes et al., 2012, 2014; Louis, 2007).

Indigenous geographies employ various Indigenous, post-colonial and decolonial research methodologies (Coombes et al., 2012, 2014; Louis, 2007). In addition, Indigenous geographies incorporate First Nations histories and ways of knowing and being and are grounded in the traditional lands and territories where First Nations culture(s) are situated (Louis & Grossman, 2020). Second, what makes Indigenous geographies unique from other disciplines is the strong connection to land and place (Louis & Grossman, 2020).

In a Policy Opinions article entitled *How Canadian Policies Can Enable Indigenous Economic Development*, Krawchenko and Madahbee-Leach (2020) describe how Canadian public policy should “focus on improving governance and policies for place-based Indigenous economic development—an approach that focuses on the characteristics and meaning of places” (para. 13). Krawchenko and Madahbee-Leach (2020) further describe that

A place-based approach to Indigenous economic development succeeds where there is a strong vision for community economic development with mechanisms to prioritize investment that matters for day to-day-life and wellbeing—from infrastructure and services to skills development, mentorship and access to capital. From the public service—federal,

provincial, territorial—it means real investment in understanding communities’ ambitions and needs and building meaningful relations.

This is boots-on-the-ground work. It can’t be done from capital cities.

(Para. 13)

I argue that the perspectives of Krawchenko and Madahbee-Leach (2020) are also relevant to my research on First Nations procurement as any policies or First Nations community development models will need to take a place-based, community-building approach to ensure that procurement is fulfilling the unique needs of each First Nations community in Canada. In addition, as there are 634 First Nations communities in Canada, each with diverse cultural, economic, and social backgrounds: a one-size-fits-all approach will not work. This is a major challenge for federal, provincial, and territorial governments that are used to creating national/provincial/territorial policies.

Another challenge in current Indigenous geography literature on economic/community development is that much of the literature is *not* created by First Nations Peoples. For example, the most prominent scholar (i.e., the most publications and most widely cited) on FNED in Canada is Dr. Robert Anderson, a non-Indigenous professor from the University of Regina (see Anderson & Bone, 1995; Anderson, 1997; Anderson, 1999; Anderson & Bone, 1999; Anderson, 2001, 2002a, 2002b; Anderson & Giberson, 2003; Anderson et al., 2004; Anderson et al., 2005; Anderson et al., 2006a; Anderson et al., 2006b; Anderson et al., 2006c; Anderson et al., 2007; Anderson, 2014). Arguably, what is missing from First Nations research led by non-Indigenous scholars, is the *lived* experience of First Nations Peoples, including the connection to place (e.g., traditional territories), which is arguably one of the most important elements of Indigenous

geographies. One of the unique aspects of my research is that as an Anishinaabe scholar, I can contribute First Nations based research, from First Nations perspectives. In addition, I can take a decolonizing approach to ensure that First Nations Voices are privileged in my research.

When conducting an online library and internet search on ‘Indigenous procurement’ and when filtering specifically for geography-based journals and databases (e.g., the Canadian Geographer), the resulting research articles on Indigenous (or First Nations) procurement were quite scarce. Based on an exhaustive search, I contend that my research topic is unique within the field of human geography, including the sub-disciplines of economic geography and Indigenous geographies. Furthermore, I aim to uniquely contribute to the literature by taking a place-based approach—by considering First Nations perspectives when re-analysing the data and literature on First Nations procurement.

3.1 Procurement and First Nations Community Building and Development

According to Begay et al. (2007),

Contemporary Indigenous nations face at least three major economic tasks. One is to create conditions in which citizens can meet their economic needs and support their families. Another is to find ways to support the shared social and cultural relationships, values, and activities that their citizens wish to maintain, from ceremony to language, from kinship ties to land title, from environmental protection to physical health. Yet another is to develop ways to support genuine self-governance and escape unwanted dependency on external decision makers and sources of funding that have characterized the last century for many Native nations

and that have limited their freedom to *self-determine* (sic) their paths. (pp. 34-35)

As First Nations communities work towards self-determination, it is evident that entrepreneurship, economic development, and procurement all play a key role in building capacity and infrastructure, creating jobs, and overall, building stronger First Nations economies (Anderson, 2002a; Cornell & Kalt, 2006; National Indigenous Economic Strategy [NIES], 2022b). Currently, most of the economic literature on First Nations communities explores entrepreneurship and economic development. There is a large body of literature on FNED, including a plethora of examples of wise practices, challenges and obstacles, joint ventures (JVs), and economic, social, and/or environmental impacts of development (for example, see Anderson, 1995, 1999, 2001, 2002b, 2004, 2006a; Boyd & Trospen, 2009; Cornell & Kalt, 2006). However, literature on First Nations procurement and the potential effects on First Nations communities and/or community development/building is scarce. Thus, literature on First Nations entrepreneurship and economic development help to inform a foundational framework for examining First Nations procurement in the context of community building and community economic development (Anderson, 2002a; NIES, 2002b).

In addition, literature on rural economic development ties in with concepts in economic geography and holds relevance to FNED, as a high percentage of the First Nations population lives in rural areas. According to Statistics Canada (2016b), approximately 38.9% of First Nations Peoples live in rural areas and 20% live in small population centres. Thus, literature on rural economic development provides helpful insights in relation to First Nations community building.

3.2 First Nations Economic Development

On average, First Nations communities experience lower socioeconomic conditions than mainstream Canadian society and this can have a direct impact on the health and well-being of First Nations Peoples (Anderson, 2001; Trospen et al., 2008). There is significant research that FNED may be one solution to the economic disparities experienced by First Nations Peoples today as it contributes to community self-determination and economic sustainability (Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program [AAEDIRP], 2010; Boyd & Trospen, 2009; White et. al., 2012).

By extension, I posit that First Nations procurement and supply chains also contribute to community self-determination and economic sustainability as procurement and supply chain management are an integral part of FNED. Literature on First Nations community development provides a foundation to examine whether First Nations procurement can be a catalyst for First Nations community building and economic development (e.g., AAEDIRP, 2010; Anderson, 2002a; Begay et al., 2007; Boyd & Trospen, 2009; Cornell & Kalt, 2006). This literature helps to inform my perspectives on how First Nations procurement can potentially play a role in First Nations self-determination. This also ties in with Indigenous geographies, economic geographies, and cultural geographies, in relation to First Nations self-determination and economic sustainability. Community development and planning also take into consideration urban and rural contexts (Hodge & Gordon, 2014).

In this section, I explore the aspects that make First Nations communities successful in economic development pursuits, including an examination of existing frameworks and case studies. The concept of ‘adaptive capacity’ is also explored in this section as I argue that adaptive capacity building is the key to economic sustainability and self-determination

in First Nations communities today.

Community capacity building is also a concept that surfaced frequently in the Federal Procurement Research Project group and one-on-one sessions as capacity development is a tool for preparing for First Nations communities for economic development and procurement opportunities (see Chapter 5). This is especially relevant for situations where industry works closely with First Nations communities for upcoming economic development projects.

3.2.1 Defining First Nations Economic Development (FNED)

Research indicates that First Nations perspectives differ greatly from non-Indigenous perspectives, especially on definitions of ‘success’ in business and economic development (Barberstock, 2015; Denny-Smith & Loosemore, 2018). FNED is a community-based initiative that incorporates First Nations values and encourages community involvement (Boyd & Trospen, 2009). FNED has many potential benefits for Indigenous communities, including improved service delivery, wealth sharing, and employment creation, improved education, and skills acquisition (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health [NCCA], 2010; Wright & White, 2012). In addition, FNED can contribute to economic self-sufficiency and the improvement of socioeconomic conditions in First Nations communities, resulting in greater health for First Nations Peoples (Anderson, 2001; NCCA, 2010). Wealth generation from economic pursuits can also be invested in community initiatives to preserve traditional culture and languages (Anderson, 2001; Barberstock 2015).

As all First Nations communities in Canada differ in culture, geography, languages, and histories, their goals for FNED are also unique. While one First Nations community

might seek to work with a non-Indigenous corporation in a JV to provide employment opportunities, another First Nations community might take a more grassroots approach to entrepreneurship within the community. Thus, it is important that a First Nations community have a shared ‘vision’ for the future development of their community and a shared interest in the end result (Mountjoy et al., 2013).

It is also important to have a strong, committed First Nations community leadership (i.e., Chief and Council, economic development officers, etc.), with the ability to adapt and innovate (Mountjoy et al, 2013). According to McCarthy et al. (2012), an important dimension of adaptive capacity is “the ability of a community to create opportunities for innovation” (p. 313). McCarthy et al. (2012) defines innovation in social systems as “an initiative, product, process or program that profoundly changes the basic routines, resource and authority flows or beliefs of any social system” (p. 313). Thus, the uncertainty of change can become a catalyst for First Nations community innovation, which can lead to transformation in community planning, processes, and programs. In the context of FNED and entrepreneurship, community innovation can lead to new businesses, and the development and growth of local First Nations supply chains.

In the book *Aboriginal Entrepreneurship and Business Development*, Anderson (2002a) outlines “The Characteristics of [First Nations] Economic Development,” which can act as a guideline for successful economic development practices within First Nations communities. These characteristics include a First Nations community collective approach for the purpose of:

1. Attaining economic self-sufficiency as a necessary condition for the realization of self-government.

2. Controlling activities on traditional lands.
3. Improving the socioeconomic circumstances of [Indigenous] people.
4. Preserving and strengthening traditional culture and values. (Anderson, 2002a, p. 12)

According to Anderson (2002a), the Characteristics of [First Nations] Economic Development also involve the following processes:

1. Creating and operating businesses that can compete profitably over the long run in the global economy, to build the economy necessary to support self-government and improve socioeconomic conditions.
2. Creating and operating businesses to exercise the control over the economic development process.
3. Building capacity for economic development through: (i) education, training and institution building and (ii) the realization of the treaty and Indigenous rights to land and resources.
4. Forming alliances among themselves and with non-Indigenous partners to create businesses that can compete profitably in the global economy. (p. 12)

Boyd and Trosper (2009) define similar components to economic development, including the preservation of traditional culture, values, and language through economic development and initiatives. In addition, Boyd and Trosper (2009) also examine First Nations capacity building through education and training, work experience, and financial capacity. However, Boyd and Trosper (2009) also acknowledge that community support, business structure, profitability and employment are important elements to economic development in First Nations communities. By examining the economic development

elements outlined by Anderson (2002a), and Boyd and Trosper (2009), it is evident that there are similar goals (i.e., preservation of culture) for FNED projects and that improving all facets of First Nations community life (i.e., socioeconomic conditions, culture, wealth distribution) are desired.

3.2.2 Similar/Complementary Concepts to First Nations Economic Development

A complementary concept to FNED is Community-based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM). According to Armitage (2005), CBNRM

seeks to encourage better resource management outcomes with the full participation of communities and resource users in decision making activities, and the incorporation of local institutions, customary practices, and knowledge systems in management, regulatory, and enforcement processes. (p. 703; see also Barrett et al., 2001; Borrini-Feyerabend, 1996; Pomeroy 1996).

This can include the management and/or development of forested areas, water resources, fisheries, coastal areas, and protected/sacred areas (Armitage, 2005). CBNRM is relevant and complementary to FNED because it encourages community involvement and incorporates both Traditional Knowledge and Western knowledge systems. Furthermore, resource development can contribute to wealth distribution within First Nations communities (i.e., logging enterprises, oil extraction, mining, etc.), which can be invested into cultural initiatives and infrastructure (Anderson, 2001; Boyd & Trosper, 2009; Hamilton et al, 2021).

In contrast, Loomis (2000) argues that “holistic development” is a more appropriate concept for economic development initiatives within First Nations communities because it

acknowledges First Nations ways of knowing and being. “Sustainable development” is another commonly used term; however, Loomis (2000) observes that “holistic development” is a more appropriate concept as it better represents First Nations perspectives of self-determination and development. Loomis (2000) further argues that current literature fails to acknowledge First Nations Peoples’ perspectives and approaches to their own sustainable development.

The concepts of FNED, CBNRM, holistic development, and sustainable development prove that there are different, yet similar, perspectives of economic development in First Nations communities. However, it also brings to light that language and terminology have power because they define and conceptualize the everyday realities of First Nations Peoples in regard to their initiatives to improve socioeconomic conditions through economic development (Loomis, 2000; Smith, 2012). With the Canadian legacy and history of colonialism (i.e., residential schools, sixties scoop, etc.), it is important for the academic community to acknowledge that there is power in “naming” Indigenous processes (Smith, 2012). Scholars such as Loomis (2000) and Smith (2012) remind the academic community that new terminology may need to be created that better represents First Nations perspectives of their own situations and processes.

Building on Loomis (2000) and Smith (2012), I contend that it should be First Nations Peoples and communities that create the terminology as they are best situated to describe their own processes. In addition, a decolonizing approach might also consider that the language built around First Nations processes might utilize words and concepts in traditional First Nations languages (i.e., Cree, *Anishinaabemowin*, etc.), instead of Western concepts in the English language (e.g., see Chiblow, 2020).

First Nations communities in Canada have experienced both positive and negative impacts from economic development projects (Cornell & Kalt, 2006). For example, the health of the Ojibway peoples of Grassy Narrows First Nation in Northwestern Ontario was negatively impacted by the spilling of methylmercury into a local river by a nearby chemical plant (NCCAH, 2010). The methylmercury pollution resulted in many members of the Grassy Narrows First Nation suffering from Minamata Disease, which attacks vital organs, and the nervous system and often results in premature death (Philibert et al., 2020). In addition, the long-term pollution resulted in both indirect and direct impacts for the community, including the contamination of the water and local food supply, affecting their cultural and economic way of life (NCCAH, 2010; Philibert et al., 2020). As Grassy Narrows First Nation was dependent on the fishing industry, the methylmercury spill resulted in a loss of business, which led to increased violence and boredom within the First Nation community (NCCAH, 2010; Wheatley, 1998).

In contrast, other First Nations communities, such as Membertou First Nation (Nova Scotia), Osoyoos Indian Band (British Columbia), and the Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach (Québec) have enjoyed relative economic sustainability as a result of economic development projects (Anderson et al., 2006a; Johnstone, 2008; Paduada, 2005).

3.2.3 Adaptive Capacity Building

Armitage (2005) and McCarthy et al. (2012) explore the concept of *adaptive capacity* to address environment/resource management and policy change within First Nations communities. Armitage (2005) defines adaptive capacity as the “ability to experiment and foster innovative solutions in complex social and ecological circumstances” (p. 703). This can include collecting and managing data collaboratively

while incorporating both Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Western science, resulting in the subsequent creation of opportunities for innovative community development, especially in the case of natural resource development and management (McCarthy et al., 2012).

Adaptive capacity is an important concept for FNED because it acknowledges the complex socioeconomic circumstances and political situations within First Nations communities and it seeks to address these challenges through adaptability and innovation (Armitage, 2005; McCarthy et al., 2012). Capacity building within First Nations communities includes the utilization and examination of deficits in physical, social, and human capital (White et al., 2012). According to White et al. (2012), “a lack of the physical, social, and human capital undermines community cohesion and leads to sustainability problems” (p. 13). As community-based FNED (or CBNRM) increases in popularity, the question of capacity of First Nations groups to successfully manage natural resources and economic development projects becomes increasingly relevant (Mountjoy et al., 2013).

In a research study of the Mushkegowuk Cree First Nation, McCarthy et al. (2012) outline the four dimensions of adaptive capacity. They include:

1. Learning to live with uncertainty and change (i.e., learning from crisis, expecting the unexpected).
2. Nurturing diversity for reorganization and renewal (i.e., nurturing ecological memory and enhancing socio-ecological memory).
3. Combining different types of knowledge for learning (i.e., combining experiential/experimental knowledge incorporating different knowledge systems).

4. Creating opportunities for innovation (i.e., recognizing the relationship between diversity and disturbance, dealing with cross-scale dynamics, and matching scales of ecosystems and governance). (McCarthy et al., 2012, p. 309)

The McCarthy et al. (2012) study is important because it acknowledges that adaptive capacity building is complex and that First Nations communities should expect the unexpected and learn from crisis; in this way, resilience is fostered. According to Folke et al. (2003), resilience can be defined as “[t]he ability of human communities to withstand external shocks to their social infrastructure, such as environmental variability or social, economic, and political upheaval” (p. 354). In other words, FNED processes and initiatives may result in complex dynamics (including short-term crisis); however, these processes also result in opportunities for growth and innovation.

For JV opportunities (usually involving First Nations and non-Indigenous business partners), the Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program (AAEDIRP) 2010 report entitled *Examining Partnership Arrangements Between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Businesses* suggests that to be successful, partnerships must share four attributes. These attributes include:

1. Mutual benefit—where each party benefits from the relationship.
2. Shared responsibility—where each partner contributes something to the relationship and shares the risks (e.g., experience, business know-how, technical skills and expertise, labour, assets, financing, access to resources, etc.).
3. Compatible goals—where each party has goals that are in line with one another, though not necessarily identical.

4. Increased capacity—where each party can do more together than they can alone. (AAEDIRP, 2020, p. 17)

An example of this is illustrated by the precedent-setting First Nations partnership between the Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach (NNK) and the New Millennium Capital Corporation (NMC) with the creation of an Iron Ore Company through a JV (Paduada, 2005). Before the JV, NNK suffered from poor socio-economic conditions. However, after the JV was established, NNK enjoyed sustainable economic growth through a 20% stake in the corporation, resulting in residual income for the community, and employment and contracting opportunities for members of the NNK (Paduada, 2005). One of the keys to the success of the NMC JV was community capacity building and support through mining-related employment and training (Paduada, 2005). Thus, it is evident that JVs and subsequent profit-sharing models need to be grounded in capacity building initiatives and activities (i.e., relevant training and education).

Boyd and Trosper (2009) divide First Nations capacity into education and training, work experience, and financial capacity. As a subcomponent of First Nations capacity, education and training may be measured by the educational and training opportunities that are provided by businesses through apprenticeships, mentorship programs and scholarships (Boyd & Trosper, 2009). Work experience and expertise can only be developed through employment, and it is important for capacity building, especially in the case of skilled trades and labour jobs that require a ‘learning by doing’ approach (Boyd & Trosper, 2009). Financial capacity refers to the ability of a First Nations community to contribute to business start-up costs, and/or “the financial capacity of the joint venture to pay for capacity-building initiatives within the joint venture itself” (Boyd & Trosper, 2009, p. 39).

First Nations capacity is important for building sustainable economic development in First Nations communities and it also contributes to self-government and self-determination (Boyd & Trosper, 2009; RCAP, 1996).

In other academic literature, First Nations capacity is broken down by different forms of capital. For example, White et al. (2012) present a conceptual *Model for Creating Adaptive Sustainability*, which examines three forms of capital, including human, social, and physical. The three forms of capital interact with each other, influencing the development of community capacity development, which in turn leads to changes in adaptive sustainability (White et al., 2012). White et al. (2012) define adaptive sustainability as “a state where the [First Nations] peoples themselves control their affairs, have sustainable development based on their evolved cultures, and reap the rewards of Canada’s advanced development through economic development that serves them” (p. 13). There is also a synergistic relationship between human, social, and physical capital. For instance, increasing levels of social capital within a First Nations community may enhance educational achievement of community members through the production of human capital (Coleman, 1988; White et al., 2012).

In addition, Berkes and Folke (1992, 1994), and Loomis (2000) argue for a separate “cultural capital,” which Loomis (2000) defines as “factors that provide human societies with the means to interact with each other, and adapt to and modify the natural environment (e.g., traditional ecological knowledge)” (p. 895). This definition includes “shared world views, values, ethics, and [cultural] codes” (Loomis, 2000, p. 895) for First Nations communities (see also Berkes & Folke, 1992, 1994; George et al., 1996). Loomis (2000) observes that the concept of cultural capital overlaps with concepts of social capital. I argue

that cultural capital is important to acknowledge because it acts as a reminder that First Nations cultural values play an important role in capacity building within First Nations communities.

In comparison to the breakdown of the different forms of capital outlined by White et al. (2012), Loomis (2000) suggests that sustainable development can be broken down by

- Human-Made Capital—produced goods and services, finance.
- Natural Capital—renewable and non-renewable resources.
- Human Capital—acquired education, skills, health, research and knowledge.
- Social/Cultural Capital—institutions, legal codes, governance, networks, and values, etc. (p. 895)

Although different terminology may be found within academic literature for different forms of capital, there appears to be a general consensus among academics that effective capacity building must involve an examination of available capital within First Nations communities, including understanding the deficits in capital (e.g., human, physical, social capital) so that strategic planning can take place (White et al., 2012).

3.2.4 First Nations Economic Development – Challenges

Although FNED may provide opportunities for First Nations communities, there are different challenges that may arise. For example, political instability within a First Nations community may slow down or hinder progress. One of the greatest challenges of FNED can be found within the ‘assumptions’ of community-based management (Armitage, 2005). Within the framework of “community-based” initiatives includes the assumption that a First Nations community may be viewed as a homogenous group that shares a common vision for the future of the community, including shared goals and values

(Armitage, 2005). However, just as every First Nations community in Canada is unique, the perspectives of First Nations Peoples within each community may also differ. For example, the Chief and Council may have a political agenda that does not resonate with some community members. Certain community members may be opposed to economic development projects if it affects their traditional hunting grounds.

This type of situation can be further illustrated by a study on First Nations forestry. According to Boyd and Trosper (2009),

A 2004 study on Aboriginal forestry commissioned by the Institute on Governance found that Aboriginal participants had different opinions on the value of JVs. Some believed they were good for building an economic base for their Aboriginal community while others felt the forestry JV was too much of a financial risk and not conducive to capacity building within the Aboriginal community. (p. 38; see also Graham & Wilson, 2004)

Although this example is specific to First Nations forestry and JVs, differing opinions within one community is a reality that First Nations leaders must contend with when promoting economic development opportunities. Thus, strong leadership, vision, transparency, and strong communication are important factors when working with First Nations communities that want to participate in economic development initiatives.

According to a 2010 report by the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health⁷ (NCCAHA) entitled *Economic Development as a Social Determinant of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Health*, “legacies of colonization such as poverty, cultural

⁷ The National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (NCCAHA) is now called The National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health (NCCIH); however, the original name has been used here to maintain the integrity of the original reference.

destruction, socio-economic marginalization, and poor educational attainment can prevent individuals and communities from building the human and financial capacity required to initiate and sustain economic development opportunities” (p. 2). In other words, the intergenerational effect of colonialism is at the root of poor socioeconomic conditions for many First Nations communities, resulting in vulnerability, inequality, and inequity within the context of economic development (NCCAH, 2010). For example, if a First Nations community suffers from rampant poverty, an opportunity to harvest trees on their land for a logging business may appeal to the community to help improve deplorable socioeconomic conditions if it provides needed employment opportunities for community members and/or capital for necessary infrastructure improvements. When First Nations communities have poor socioeconomic conditions, the need for community funding and revenues may overpower cultural values for resource/land preservation.

In economic development projects that include internal and external relationships, differences in cultural values, beliefs, and worldviews may also create challenges (Armitage, 2005). For example, First Nations communities value long-term relationship building whereas Western society is traditionally accustomed to short-term relationship building and ‘quick’ business deals (i.e., capitalist society) (Cornell & Kalt, 2006). Hypothetically, if non-Indigenous businesses were to adopt the First Nations principle of long-term relationship building, business partnerships could be redefined and would take on a very different form. For example, if a non-Indigenous business approached a First Nations community with an opportunity for a JV, they may offer to provide training and mentorship year(s) in advance before development takes place so that the First Nations community members may acquire the skills and expertise needed to successfully

participate in the venture when it is first launched (i.e., as managers, employees, or business partners) (e.g., see Boyd & Trosper, 2009).

However, if conventional Western business practices are followed, a non-Indigenous business may attempt to create a partnership with a First Nations community without first developing the trust of the community. This type of situation may result in the scepticism of community members and distrust of the non-Indigenous business. Or, if community capacity building and infrastructure are not properly supported by the business partnership, First Nations Peoples may not be able to participate in economic development projects at an influential level (e.g., participating in a new business venture as a senior manager or on the board of directors). Boyd and Trosper (2009) assert, “management positions allow [First Nations] people[s] to be more involved in strategic business decisions, empowering everyone involved” (p. 45).

Community capacity building is an ongoing process and having First Nations Peoples in influential positions within an economic development venture is important for the self-determination of a First Nations community (Boyd & Trosper, 2009; Hamilton et al., 2021). If First Nations community members do not have the necessary skills to fill influential positions, education and mentorship may help to alleviate this problem (Boyd & Trosper, 2009; Hamilton et al., 2021). For example, for the Ecolink JV⁸ in Alkali Lake, British Columbia, there were originally no First Nations people fulfilling management positions; however, managerial capacity was supported through mentorship and experience, resulting in two First Nations peoples moving to management positions (Boyd

⁸ The Ecolink JV refers to a joint venture partnership between Esk’etemc First Nation (EFN) and Lignum for a sawmill operation. Ecolink Forest Services Ltd. (“Ecolink”) is the JV corporation that was created. The EFN reside in Alkali Lake, in the Cariboo-Chilcotin region in the central interior of British Columbia. Ecolink has remained in business since 1990 (Boyd & Trosper, 2009).

& Troster, 2009).

In the AAEDIRP (2010) *Examining Partnership Arrangements Between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Businesses* report, it was observed that although First Nations and non-Indigenous business partnerships share many of the same elements that other business partnerships share, there remain specific factors that are unique to First Nations entrepreneurship, including a strong cultural element. According to AAEDIRP (2010), First Nations approaches to business extend beyond the individual, to benefit the First Nations community, so that future generations may benefit. The AAEDIRP (2010) report further argues that business partnerships between First Nations and non-Indigenous Peoples and organizations should incorporate the “[First Nations] tenets of cultural respect, cultural sensitivity, and trust” (p. 5). The AAEDIRP (2010) report reveals that there are opportunities for policy creation and re-examination of current business practices so that First Nations perspectives of business may be incorporated and honoured when forging new relationships between First Nations Peoples and non-Indigenous organizations for the purpose of economic development.

Another factor that can pose challenges to First Nations Peoples is the ‘language’ of business. Specifically, the terminology of business is grounded in Western (non-Indigenous) perspectives and values (McCarthy et al., 2012). The language of business may differ for First Nations Peoples and non-Indigenous organizations that are involved in economic development projects together (McCarthy et al., 2012). Consequently, First Nations Peoples and communities are subjected to “bureaucratic structures” imposed by Western society that encourage them to think of land as “property” and animals and wildlife as “numbers” (McCarthy et al., 2012). This is in direct contrast to First Nations

cultural values, which view traditional lands as sacred and as places that should be protected and preserved (Martin, 2012; Thompson et al., 2019).

3.2.5 First Nations Economic Development – Terminology

As it has been explored in this chapter, it is important to re-examine current terminology and concepts surrounding FNED to ensure that they truly reflect First Nations cultural values. For example, Loomis (2000) suggests that the terminology “holistic development” is more culturally appropriate than terms such as “sustainable development” or “economic development” as the words “holistic development” better represent First Nations cultural belief systems and values.

The academic community can offer First Nations Peoples and communities many insights and expertise through research studies surrounding FNED, including strategies for capacity building and sustainable development. However, there may be a disconnection between the belief systems of First Nations communities and the (non-Indigenous) academic communities that explore and define economic development issues within First Nations communities (McCarthy et al., 2012). Thus, it is important that First Nations communities play an active role in (co)creating their own visions and framework for economic development in their communities (for example, see Union of Ontario Indians, 2008).

First Nations communities experience lower socioeconomic conditions and experience lower education rates than the rest of Canada (Waldram et al., 2006), which raises the question—how many First Nations Peoples and communities are familiar with the current academic literature and academic jargon surrounding economic development? For example, a First Nations person with a grade 8 literacy level may not be familiar with

the concepts of “capacity building” or “social, human, and physical capital.” On the other hand, the situations surrounding economic development within First Nations communities are complex and should not be oversimplified.

In her seminal book, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (2012), Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues that an act of decolonization may include Indigenous Peoples becoming academics, so that they may help to redefine academia on their own terms, incorporating their Indigenous Knowledge and worldview(s). From this perspective, First Nations Peoples may be able to redefine and re-examine terminology and concepts surrounding FNED to determine if it is culturally appropriate and/or written in an accessible language for First Nations Peoples and communities. It may also be beneficial for First Nations Peoples to work closely with Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics, to foster long-term, mutually beneficial relationships that help to foster a deeper understanding and respect for First Nations cultural values and belief systems so that First Nations perspectives may be taken into consideration when terminology and concepts surrounding FNED are being created. For First Nations Peoples and communities to fully benefit from economic development research, I argue that education and resources should be made readily (and freely) available and shared in a language that is accessible to all community members.

3.3 First Nations Procurement and Supply Chains – What Can Be Learned from the First Nations Economic Development Literature?

In the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) (2010) *Annual Statistical Report on Procurement Supplement: Procurement from developing countries and economies in transition*, Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon suggested that “The procurement of vital goods and services provides an essential building

block” for encouraging development (p 9). However, Ban Ki-moon stated that procurement can and should be more than this. It should be a crucial tool in the development process itself. It should stimulate local markets and drive innovation. By providing business opportunities to a wider range of companies in all countries, procurement can help build strong economies and well-functioning communities. (United Nations Office for Project Services [UNOPS], 2010, p. 9).

I argue that Ban Ki-moon’s comments capture the power of procurement in First Nations communities. Simply stated, by purchasing products and services from First Nations businesses and communities, public and private sectors can contribute to the economic growth of First Nations communities. In economics, this is the principle of supply and demand: where there is demand (i.e., for a product or service), supply “must be in place to meet demand” (Coe et al., 2020, p. 51).

Thus, with demand created through procurement, First Nations businesses and communities have the opportunity to build strong economies to meet the demand through supply. I argue that capacity development, training, and entrepreneurial support (e.g., through business programs and mentorship) are all important tools for assisting First Nations businesses and communities to create strong business ecosystems. First Nations business ecosystems include Indigenous and non-Indigenous business support services and organizations, including local small business centres, chambers of commerce, local colleges, and universities with business support services (e.g., mentorship, workshops, programs), National Indigenous Organizations (NIOs), regional Aboriginal Financial Institutions (AFIs), and independently owned (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) business

support organizations. First Nations business ecosystems also include local First Nations-owned businesses and band-owned enterprises (e.g., companies owned by a First Nations community economic development corporation).

The United Nations provides a valuable case study for the power of procurement as the United Nations utilizes procurement and its buying power to re-establish developing or recovering countries through procuring products and services from developing countries (UNOPS, 2010). Although First Nations communities are not considered ‘developing countries,’ the idea of using procurement and economic development to build First Nations economies is relevant.

When conceptualizing First Nations economies and community development, I argue that it is important to decolonize economic geography by conceptualizing concepts of economy through the lens of First Nations economics. I further argue that to decolonize geography, it is important to situate Indigenous geographies in the lived experiences of First Nations Peoples and scholars, and it is also important to incorporate First Nations worldviews into theory development. In the next section, I will explore this in more depth.

3.3.1 The First Nations Economy

At the heart of First Nations entrepreneurship, economic development, and procurement is building the First Nations economy. In her book, *Indigenomics: Taking a Seat at the Economic Table*, First Nations (Nuu-chah-nulth) economist and thought leader, Carol Ann Hilton (2021), outlines the “Characteristics of an Indigenous Economy,” which stems from an “Indigenous worldview” (p. 92). Although Hilton (2021) refers to the ‘Indigenous economy,’ all 10 characteristics relate to First Nations Peoples and communities. These characteristics include:

1. An Indigenous economy is an economic system that is place-based. It recognizes and values origin as the relationship to space and people through the deep and lasting connection to place. It is this continuity that forms the sense of responsibility to place and time.
2. An Indigenous economy forms the basis of relational accountability. It is centred in an inherent sacred sense of responsibility and long-term impact for inter-relational decision-making.
3. An Indigenous economy is future-based. It is framed in multigenerational thinking. It focuses on long-term thinking and decision making for the seventh generation and beyond. Decision-making is focused on long-term impact.
4. An Indigenous economy focuses on equality in all universal relationships. It focuses on the inter-relationship of species and respect for life as a core value. The quality and nature of ‘exchange’ encompasses the protocols of life, the agreements of place and responsibility.
5. An Indigenous economy works to connect and value both the natural and supernatural world—all of the physical, spiritual, and tangible and intangible components.
6. An Indigenous economy is based on the concept of reciprocity. It focuses on giving and receiving as core structures for wealth production and distribution that forms the basis of exchange and the future value of wealth.
7. An Indigenous economy is restorative or regenerative in nature. It focuses on economic process as a parallel process to responsibility for lands, resource management, conservation, and long-term conservation of resources.

8. An Indigenous economy focuses on the core value and teaching of ‘only taking what is needed.’ This is a core premise of governance and decision-making—that future generations require this of us today. Management systems are established from this concept. Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of knowing form relational decision-making.
9. An Indigenous economy both focuses on economic inter-dependence and builds economic sovereignty (right to an economy) as a mechanism of modernity. Economic sovereignty works to facilitate and uplift the retention of cultural and spiritual identity and the continuity of connection and interdependence.
10. An Indigenous economy measures wealth through relationship and community across time. Prosperity is confirmed through recognition, protocol, ceremony, the exchange of gifting, and distribution. The future value of wealth is based on giving and wealth distribution. (Hilton, 2021, pp. 92-93)

Hilton’s (2021) “Characteristics of an Indigenous Economy” provides an important contribution to literature on First Nations entrepreneurship, economic development, and procurement because she provides First Nations perspectives and contexts on conceptualizing the First Nations economy. From Hilton’s (2021) ten “Characteristics of an Indigenous Economy,” it is evident that First Nations Peoples and communities hold a holistic view of economy and economy-building in their communities, which goes beyond wealth generation—it also includes how the economy will impact the community (i.e., for seven generations), land (e.g., land stewardship and impacts), and how wealth generation will be shared so that it benefits the whole community and not just individual(s).

In contrast, Western-based concepts of business view ‘the economy’ as being a

distinct part of society, which is commonly measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP), “which seeks to calculate the total output of a particular economy over a given time period (usually a year)” (Coe et al., 2020, p. 39). Coe et al. (2020) explain that the GDP “gives us a means of describing the economy as a whole” and that it reflects a popular notion of what economy is, which is “a territorially bounded entity that consists of a complex set of wealth-generating processes” (p. 39).

This concept of economy as described by Coe et al. (2020) is Western-based and is void of First Nations concepts of community-building, reciprocity, land stewardship, wealth-sharing, ceremony, etc. Although successful First Nations business and economic development will contribute to a country’s GDP, Hilton’s (2021) “Characteristics of an Indigenous Economy” demonstrate that the First Nations economy values community above all else. Thus, to decolonize economic geography, it is important for the academic community to recognize that First Nations perspectives of the economy and economics differ greatly from the Western notions of economy, which are mostly based on GDP and a country’s combined wealth (Coe et al., 2020; Hilton, 2021). Finally, Hilton’s (2021) book *Indigenomics: Taking a Seat at the Economic Table* is a testament to the importance of having the ‘language’ of First Nations economics created *by* First Nations Peoples *for* First Nations Peoples, as First Nations worldview(s) and perspectives are at the heart of the First Nations economy.

CHAPTER 4

SOCIAL PROCUREMENT POLICY AND DIVERSE SUPPLY CHAINS: IS INDIGENOUS PROCUREMENT ‘SOCIAL PROCUREMENT’?

4.1 Introduction

In the literature and public policy documentation, Indigenous procurement can be complex to conceptualize as it can be considered distinct (i.e., Indigenous procurement set asides or the Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business [PSIB]) or a part of social procurement policies and programs. In this chapter, I will explore the difference between Indigenous procurement and social procurement policies. I will examine current social procurement policy from federal, provincial, and territorial governments to determine whether Indigenous procurement is best classified as social procurement, or whether Indigenous procurement should be considered distinct. I will also cross-reference my findings with policy documentation from Australia (the Australian government has had their social procurement policies longer than Canada) to explore what lessons and wise practices Canada can learn from Australia. In addition, I will also explore considerations for calculating social impact and social outcomes for Indigenous procurement projects, from an Indigenous lens.

4.2 Defining Social Procurement and Supply Chain Diversity

In the report *Social Procurement—State of Practice*, Lupick (2017) defines social procurement as the “clear choice by an organization to support social goals through their purchasing of goods and services. This can be done by embedding the delivery of social and sustainable outcomes within tenders and processes” (p. 13). Similarly, the City of Toronto (2020) *Social Procurement Program* web page defines social procurement as “the

achievement of strategic social, economic and workforce development goals using an organization's process of purchasing goods and services" (Understanding Social Procurement—What is Social Procurement section, para. 1). The City of Toronto (2020) achieves social procurement by focusing on supply chain diversity and workforce development.

The City of Toronto (2020) defines supply chain diversity as "a business strategy that promotes a diverse supply chain in the procurement of goods and services for any business, not-for-profit, government or private organization" (Understanding Social Procurement—What is Supply Chain Diversity section, para. 1). The City of Toronto (2020) defines diverse suppliers as businesses that are

at least 51 percent owned, managed and controlled by an equity-seeking community or social purpose enterprise. These communities include, but are not limited to, women, Aboriginal people, racial minorities, persons with disabilities, newcomers and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Two-spirit (LGBTQ2S) community. (Understanding Social Procurement—Who are Diverse Suppliers section, para. 1)

The public sectors use their purchasing power through social procurement to fulfill social, environmental, and cultural policy objectives and to increase supplier diversity (Barraket et al., 2016; Public Services and Procurement Canada [PSPC], 2022a; Queensland Government, 2020). Social procurement in the private sector is still at the early stage; however, the private sector also uses their purchasing power through minority supplier initiatives, to fulfill their social corporate responsibility, and/or to create social impacts (Barraket et al., 2016; McCrudden, 2004). By default, Indigenous businesses are

included within social procurement policies because they are considered an equity-seeking group. The Canadian Council for the Arts (2022) online glossary defines equity-seeking groups as

[C]ommunities that face significant collective challenges in participating in society. This marginalization could be created by attitudinal, historic, social and environmental barriers to equal access, opportunities and resource due to disadvantage and discrimination and actively seek social justice and reparation. (Equity-seeking Groups section, para. 1)

The terminology of ‘equity-seeking groups’ is popular among federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments in Canada; however, over the past few years, there has been a shift in mindset on the terminology and many groups/organizations, etc. are switching to the terminology of *equity-deserving groups*. On February 25, 2019, Professor Wisdom Tettey, the vice-president of the University of Toronto and the principal of the University of Toronto Scarborough, gave an installation address where he challenged the audience to start thinking of the marginalized as equity-deserving groups instead of equity-seeking groups (Tettey, 2019). In his address, Tettey (2019) asserted:

I challenge all of you to start thinking of, and relating to, those who are marginalized or are constrained by existing structures and practices as “equity-deserving groups,” and not “equity-seeking groups”—a concept which, while well-intentioned, perpetuates a perception of these groups as interlopers. (Para. 38)

Those on the margins of our community, who feel or are made to feel that they do not belong, deserve equity as a right. They should not be given the

burden of seeking it and they should not be made to feel that they get it as a privilege from the generosity of those who have the power to give it, and hence the power to take it back. (Para. 39)

Tetty (2019) further challenged the academic community to “lead the way by changing the rhetoric, the narrative, the language and their unintended negative connotations with the use of empowering, inclusive language” (para. 40). I agree with Tetty and find his argument compelling—that as the academic community, we should consider using the terminology equity-deserving instead of equity-seeking. For this reason, I choose to use the terminology equity-deserving in my thesis, unless providing a direct quotation where the term equity-seeking has been used.

4.3 Social Procurement – Contexts and Considerations

The concept of social procurement was first introduced in the nineteenth century when governments in the United Kingdom, France, and the United States “started to use their purchasing power to address the under-representation of marginalized groups in the workforce” (Halloran, 2016, p. 40; see also McCrudden, 2004). Historically, the primary objective of procurement was to obtain goods or services at the lowest price, and social or environmental benefits were seen as secondary (or not considered) (Lupick, 2017). However, today federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, and organizations, are more readily prioritizing and considering social procurement to fulfill social impacts goals, including social or environmental impacts, workforce development, or supplier diversity (Halloran, 2016).

For example, in the *Social Procurement—State of Practice* report, Lupick (2017) shared the City of Vancouver’s framework for social procurement, which had seven main

goals and priorities identified:

1. Provide opportunities for people with barriers to employment.
2. Support social enterprises and social value businesses.
3. Promote Aboriginal opportunities.
4. Increase local supplier participation.
5. Promote diversity in the supply chain.
6. Support small and medium businesses.
7. Support social innovation in 2018. (p. 4)

Beyond services and/or products rendered, or financial gain, social procurement considers other aspects such as: supplier diversity, social impact, job creation, capacity development, and social and/or environmental benefits (PSPC, 2022c). As many of these aspects are relevant to First Nations community development, social procurement is an important, relevant topic in relation to First Nations procurement and community building.

During the Indigenous Procurement Engagement Sessions (IPE-sessions) from 2018 to 2021, I met Indigenous business owners that had been successful in bidding competitively for federal procurement, without using the PSIB or social procurement set asides. However, historically total federal procurement spending has not been representative of the 5% Indigenous population in Canada (i.e., federal procurement has been less than 1%) (Indigenous Services Canada [ISC], 2021a). In addition, the IPE-sessions from 2018 to 2021 revealed prejudice, bias, and stereotypes as obstacles for Indigenous procurement (i.e., the belief that Indigenous businesses are ‘high risk’ or ‘lack capacity’). Prejudice and bias towards Indigenous businesses were also reported in a *Windspeaker* news article entitled “Racism and Bias ‘Alive and Well’ in Federal

Procurement Dealings, Indigenous Panelists Agree” (Laskaris, 2020). The obstacles shared in the IPE-sessions are explored further in Chapter 5.

4.4 Types of Social Procurement

In the book *Social Procurement and New Public Governance*, Barraket et al. (2016) identify four different types of social procurement. They include:

1. Procurement of social programs, *from* third sector [i.e., not-for-profit or social enterprises] *with* a public good. Uses competitive tendering of social goods/services.
2. Procurement *of* public works *with* an additional social benefit where multiple outcomes (both hard and soft) are achieved in a single contract.
3. Procurement *of* traditional goods/services *from* diverse suppliers. This shifts away from competitive tendering to positive discrimination.
4. Procurement *of* goods and services *from* social benefit suppliers, with a focus on social value chain. (Barraket et al., 2016, p. 6)

Type 1, “procurement of social programs,” (Barraket et al., 2016) relates to Indigenous procurement as the Government of Canada (GC) will often contract Indigenous businesses, social enterprises, and/or organizations to develop and manage social programs when they are for the benefit of Indigenous Peoples or communities. For example, if the GC would like to fund a cultural-based program that brings together Indigenous youth and Indigenous Elders/Knowledge Keepers in an urban area, the GC will generate a contracting opportunity and create a procurement set aside for an Indigenous business/organization to lead the program. This ensures that the program is Indigenous-led and culturally appropriate.

At the federal level, if a procurement is Indigenous specific, the GC is likely to create the procurement as an Indigenous set aside or set aside under the PSIB. If the contract is under \$40,000, federal departments can contract an Indigenous business/organization as a sole-source contract (PSPC, 2022e). If it is over \$40,000, the contract might need to go to bid (PSPC, 2022e). For larger procurements and/or when there are not enough Indigenous businesses/organizations to bid, the GC may create procurements with Indigenous Participation Components (IPC) or Indigenous Benefit Plans (IBP) to ensure that there is Indigenous participation for Indigenous-specific programs and projects (Indigenous Services Canada [ISC], 2019). Indigenous Benefit Agreement (IBA) clauses ensure that even if a non-Indigenous business/organization takes the lead, there will still be Indigenous participation (e.g., through employment, training, grants, etc.) (ISC, 2019; PSPC, 2020a). ISC (2019) describes IPCs or IBPs:

In tendering large and complex contracts, the government may set-aside a portion of the value of a contract for Indigenous participation which can be direct or indirect. Direct IPC refers to Indigenous sub-contracting and employment, while indirect IPC refers to scholarships, training and bursaries. (Current Approach to Indigenous Participation in Procurement section, Indigenous Participation Components (IPC) or Indigenous Benefit Plans, para. 1)

Where the procurement of social programs becomes less relevant to Indigenous procurement is when social programs are for the benefit of Canadian society and is not specific to Indigenous Peoples or communities. In this situation, the GC might create a set aside for social programs through the tool of social procurement to increase supplier

diversity. This would create an opportunity for equity-deserving groups and social enterprises to competitively bid for a procurement. Indigenous businesses/organizations would be eligible to apply as an equity-deserving group (or perhaps a social enterprise), but they would be competing along with other (Indigenous or non-Indigenous) equity-deserving groups or social enterprises.

Type 3, “procurement of traditional goods/services from diverse suppliers,” (Barraket et al., 2016) relates to Indigenous procurement when traditional goods/services are being purchased for the benefit of Indigenous Peoples and/or communities. For example, in 2018 my company coordinated and facilitated a gathering for Indigenous climate change leaders across Canada in Gatineau, Québec. Gifts were purchased from Indigenous artisans and businesses for all delegates of the climate change gathering.

Where the procurement of traditional goods/services becomes less relevant to Indigenous procurement, is when it is for the benefit of Canadian society (not for the benefit of Indigenous Peoples or communities). For example, if the GC needs to purchase office furniture, and they want to use social procurement to increase supplier diversity, the GC could choose to use social procurement as a tool to limit the bids to equity-deserving groups or social enterprises. However, because the GC has made a commitment to have a minimum spend of 5% Indigenous procurement across all federal departments (PSPC, 2020b), the GC might choose to create an Indigenous set aside if there are enough Indigenous businesses to bid for the procurement (i.e., in this case, it would become an Indigenous procurement opportunity, instead of a social procurement opportunity).

Type 4 describes the “procurement of goods and services from social benefit suppliers” (Barraket et al., 2016). The Queensland Government (2018) defines Social

Benefit Suppliers (SBSs) as organizations “which have a social purpose or mission at the core of their operations, they are often owned or managed by disadvantaged groups” (Who are Social Benefit Suppliers section, para. 1). The procurement of goods and services from SBSs relates to Indigenous procurement as Indigenous businesses are identified as a type of SBS (Queensland Government, 2018; Denny-Smith & Loosemore, 2017). Social enterprises and Social Purpose Organizations (SPOs) are also considered SBSs. Similar to the concept of SBSs, the GC (PSPC, 2022a) defines SPOs as:

[O]rganizations that seek to advance a social, cultural or environmental mission. Social-purpose organizations straddle the not-for-profit sector (such as registered charities, incorporated non-profit organizations and co-operatives), the private sector and hybrid entities such as community contribution companies and community interest corporations. (Appendix A: Definitions—Social-purpose Organizations section, para. 1)

The Queensland Government (2018) website describes social benefits as “the positive impacts on people, places or communities generated through procurement practices” (What is a Social Benefit [or Social Value] section, para. 1). According to the Queensland government (2018),

Social benefits might include:

- Promoting more diverse and inclusive workforces.
- Creating training and employment opportunities.
- Addressing complex local challenges, such as intergenerational unemployment, crime, vandalism and economic decline in local communities or amongst disengaged groups.

- Encouraging local economic development and growth.
- Helping people to participate in the community and the economy.
- Engaging small-to-medium enterprises and social benefit suppliers, providing them with the same opportunities as other businesses. (What is a Social Benefit [or Social Value] section, para. 2)

An example of Type 4 “procurement of goods and services from social benefit suppliers” (Barraket et al., 2016) for Indigenous procurement is sourcing goods or services from an Indigenous social enterprise (for profit or not-for-profit). For example, if the GC wanted to provide services to a First Nation community to assist with food security, they might procure goods or services from an Indigenous social enterprise or not-for-profit that specializes in programming for food security. Where Type 4 does not apply specifically to Indigenous procurement is if the procurement is open to *any* SBSs. Then Indigenous businesses would not only be competing with (potentially) other Indigenous businesses, but also with non-Indigenous SBSs suppliers.

Barraket et al. (2016) identifies Type 2 “Procurement of public works with an additional social benefit where multiple outcomes (both hard and soft) are achieved in a single contract” (p. 6). Type 2 could apply to Indigenous procurement if, for example, an Indigenous business is hired to provide public works services (e.g., garbage collection or construction for public infrastructure). Whether these services are provided for municipalities or First Nations communities, it will provide jobs for Indigenous workers and it will help Indigenous businesses to remain sustainable through ongoing contracts.

4.5 Indigenous Procurement as Distinct from Social Procurement

In many ways, Indigenous procurement can be described as a subset of social procurement, as Indigenous procurement is used by the GC to fulfill their socio-economic (social, environmental, and cultural) policy goals (PSPC, 2022c). However, Indigenous procurement is also distinct because the contexts for *why* Indigenous procurement set asides are created and used differs from social procurement (PSPC, 2022c). The *GC Policy on Social Procurement* web page asserts:

The context of Indigenous procurement is markedly distinct from social procurement more generally, due to the unique historical and legal context underlying the relationship between the Crown and Indigenous Peoples. While social procurement can be used in relation to Indigenous suppliers, persons, or communities, it is separate from initiatives specifically related to Indigenous Peoples, which will be carried out separately. (PSPC, 2022c, Application section, para. 5)

A review of federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal government websites in Canada demonstrated a trend where Indigenous procurement and procurement policies are created and used when goods and services are being purchased for the benefit of First Nations Peoples and communities. By default, social procurement set asides are still relevant and inclusive to Indigenous businesses because Indigenous businesses are considered equity-seeking (Public Service Commission of Canada [PSCC], 2007). Indigenous social enterprises that provide social or environmental based goods or services are also relevant for social procurement opportunities (PSPC, 2022c).

When I conducted research on Indigenous social innovation for my Master's thesis

in 2015 and 2016, one of my research findings was that most of the Indigenous business owners that I interviewed (at that time) were not familiar with the terms ‘social innovation’ or ‘social enterprise’ (see Barberstock, 2017). Today, Indigenous social innovation and social enterprise have become popular terms, especially with the increase in funding for Indigenous social innovation initiatives in Canada (for example, see “Indigenous Innovation Initiative” – <https://indigenoussinnovate.org>).

With social procurement, one concern is that although it might offer another gateway for Indigenous businesses to bid on procurement opportunities, how many Indigenous businesses are familiar with the term ‘social procurement’? Further, if an opportunity to bid for a social procurement set aside arises, how many Indigenous businesses will know they can apply? For this reason, I argue that it could be beneficial for the public and private sectors, as well as national and regional Indigenous organizations, and (Indigenous/non-Indigenous) business support organizations, to provide education and/or resources for Indigenous businesses to ensure that they understand what social procurement is, and how to bid for social procurement opportunities. This will help to increase Indigenous participation in social procurement opportunities.

Regional and national Indigenous organizations (and other Indigenous and non-Indigenous business support organizations) play an important role when providing support for Indigenous businesses. First, to ensure that Indigenous businesses understand how to access federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments procurement processes (e.g., the Ontario government shares tender opportunities on the *Ontario Tenders Portal* [Jaggaer] website [<https://ontariotenders.app.jaggaer.com>], whereas the federal

government shares tender opportunities on the *CanadaBuys*⁹ [SAP Ariba] website [<https://canadabuys.canada.ca>]. Second, to ensure that Indigenous businesses understand the bidding process and how to create a bid.

Indigenous procurement has become prominent in the Indigenous business community across Canada because procurement has become a priority for federal, provincial, and territorial policy (i.e., it contributes to economic reconciliation). NIOs such as the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA), the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB), and the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (CANDO) have also been actively engaged in supporting Indigenous procurement, through advocacy and/or programming.

Social procurement is still relatively new in Canada. PSPC (2022a) only announced their plan to diversify federal government suppliers on January 26, 2022, in an online News Release. In the News Release, PSPC (2022a) stated

As a cornerstone of the [Supplier Diversity Action] Plan, PSPC has developed a Policy on Social Procurement, which articulates how the department will use procurement as a vehicle to reduce barriers, increase supplier diversity and enhance economic and social opportunities for underrepresented groups. (Para. 3)

The PSPC (2022a) News Release further articulated:

The Action Plan stems from extensive engagement with suppliers from underrepresented groups to identify expectations, challenges and measures of success for social procurement. This input will continue to guide PSPC's efforts, notably the development of a Program on Social Procurement. (Para. 5)

⁹ The federal government previously used the buyandsell.gc.ca website to post tender (procurement) opportunities.

What is interesting about the PSPC (2022a) Press Release is the report of “extensive engagement with suppliers from underrepresented groups” to identify “measures of success” (para. 5). The concept of social outcomes and success (from Indigenous perspectives) will be explored further in this chapter.

4.6 Measuring Social Outcomes and Social Impact in Indigenous Procurement

In the article “Assessing the Impact of Australia’s Indigenous Procurement Policy Using Strain Theory,” Denny-Smith and Loosemore (2017) found that “current methods of social impact assessment fail to adequately articulate the social impact of Indigenous procurement policies, presenting an overly optimistic and westernized view of success which does not align with Indigenous perspectives of social value” (p. 652). Similar to the GC, the Australian Government uses two key performance indicators for success: “an increase in the number of Indigenous enterprises contracted” and “an increase in the number and value of contracts awarded to Indigenous enterprises” (Australian Government, 2015, in Denny-Smith & Loosemore, 2017, pp. 652-653). Arguably, this approach could be viewed as quantity over quality.

Denny-Smith and Loosemore (2017) dismiss popular Western-based social performance measures as not being reflective of Indigenous value systems. For example, Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a popular way to measure social impact; SROI attaches a “monetary value to social, economic, and environmental impacts” in order to create a single ratio “which reflects the relative costs and benefits of a social program, policy or intervention” (Nicholls et al., 2012, in Denny-Smith & Loosemore, 2017, p. 654). Using SROI as a measurement tool for social procurement can be contentious as there are no universally agreed upon measurements of SROI (Ryan & Lyne, 2008).

In addition, Indigenous perspectives of ‘success’ and measurements of SROI (or measurements of social impact or social outcomes) may also differ from non-Indigenous perspectives and measurements (Barberstock, 2015; Denny-Smith & Loosemore, 2018). For example, if a procurement or economic development opportunity results in employment for several youth in a First Nation community, this might be seen as a positive success marker for the GC; however, if the procurement or economic opportunity results in the youth needing to leave their First Nations community for employment in an urban centre, it might be perceived by the First Nations community as a negative situation because their youth had to leave the community to find work. For example, in my BA thesis, “First Nations Views of Economic Development in their Communities,” my research found that First Nations leadership (i.e., Chiefs, councillors, senior administrators, etc.) were concerned about First Nations youth leaving their communities for work as youth are seen as the future of the community, and many youths that leave the reserve (i.e., for academic institutions or employment) never move back (Barberstock, 2015).

Denny-Smith and Loosemore (2017) make a case for adapting existing social impact measurements for Indigenous procurement policy to “take into account Indigenous Peoples’ perceptions of social value” (p. 656). I argue that regional and national Indigenous organizations have an important role to play in helping to (co)create measurements and frameworks for success and social impacts, which reflect Indigenous Knowledge, values, and worldviews.

One potential starting point for exploring framework and measurements for social procurement and Indigenous procurement is the National Indigenous Economic Strategy (NIES) (2022b), titled the *National Indigenous Economic Strategy for Canada 2022:*

Pathways to Socioeconomic Parity for Indigenous Peoples. The NIES (2022a) was developed by a coalition of over twenty-five NIOs in Canada and is

[b]uilt on the four strategic pathways of People, Lands, Infrastructure and Finance, with 107 Calls to Economic Prosperity. . . The Strategy builds on the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s report with a focus on the economic aspects of reconciliation. (Para. 1)

The NIES (2022b) demonstrates that Indigenous thought leaders, scholars, and organizations are actively creating new frameworks and measurements for economic reconciliation in Canada. I argue that the NIES (2022b) is highly relevant to Indigenous procurement and social procurement as it provides vision, recommendations, and specific steps and “Calls to Economic Prosperity” to improve Indigenous procurement in Canada.

In the NIES (2022b), there is a section entitled “How You Can Help Implement This [NIES] Strategy” (p. 35). It includes specific recommendations for how to implement procurement goals as part of the NIES’s (2022b) “Calls to Economic Prosperity.” The recommendations include:

- Understand the business case for meaningful procurement from Indigenous businesses and communities. Engage with Indigenous supply chains and labour pools. Invest in education and training for mutual benefit.
- Invest and build capacity in Indigenous businesses and local community economies. Enhance their ability to provide the goods and services you require, thus providing mutually beneficial economic opportunities.
- Establish and measure targets for procurement from Indigenous suppliers.

Indigenous Peoples make up 5% of the population so use that as a starting target for procurement. Hold all levels of the organization accountable.

- Support Indigenous entrepreneurs. Utilize innovative approaches in providing equity through loans, guarantees, or favourable payment terms.
- Align sources of financing with community needs. Use innovative approaches to link Indigenous businesses with banks, private lenders, NGOs, or other sources of financing. (NIES, 2022b, p. 36)

In the NIES (2022b), the “Calls to Economic Prosperity” for procurement falls under the ‘Finance’ strategic pathway in the NIES. The NIES (2022b) vision for Finance is: “Indigenous Peoples and communities have the financial capital to achieve economic and social prosperity on their own terms” (p. 31). Within the NIES (2022b), the Finance strategic pathway is demonstrated through the NIES “Strategic Statement” and eight (#94 – 101) “Calls to Economic Prosperity” for procurement (p. 33). The NIES (2022b) Strategic Statement and Calls to Economic Prosperity for procurement are summarized below.

Strategic Statement - Procurement

- Industry’s social licence to operate in Canada’s resource sector is linked to Indigenous participation and economic inclusion in corporate procurement.
- Indigenous institutions work with governments and corporations on procurement processes.
- All levels of government and industry have mandatory Indigenous procurement targets.
- Indigenous Peoples control the definition of “Indigenous business.”

- Corporations adopt the principles of Environmental, Social, Governance, and Indigenous (ESGI). (NIES, 2022b, p. 33)

Calls to Economic Prosperity (#94 – 101) - Procurement

94. All levels of government provide funding to establish and maintain Indigenous procurement institution(s).
95. Devolve government procurement processes to Indigenous institutions—a “Supply Nation-type” organization, including controlling centralized databases of Indigenous businesses.
96. Require that all public servants receive mandatory training on Indigenous businesses and Indigenous procurement mandates.
97. Create active strategies for all public servants on Indigenous procurement.
98. Link government procurement targets to departmental and personal performance measures.
99. All levels of government and corporate Canada are mandated to publicly report on Indigenous procurement.
100. Build a national database of verified Indigenous businesses for utilization by all levels of government and by industry to procure goods and services.
101. Securities Commissions mandate publicly traded corporations to report on Indigenous employment and contracting. (NIES, 2022b, p. 33)

The NIES (2022b) for Canada was created as a resource for Indigenous organizations and communities, the public sector, and the private sector (Indigenous and non-Indigenous). In addition, the NIES (2022b) is an example of the capability and ingenuity of Indigenous Peoples and NIOs to create strategies and frameworks for economic prosperity across

Canada.

4.6.1 Regional and Culturally Specific Frameworks for Measurement and Evaluation

While the NIES (2022b) provides a national framework for economic prosperity, there are examples of Indigenous regional and culturally specific frameworks for economic development and business. One example is the Union of Ontario Indians (2008) *Anishinabek Nation Economy—Our Economic Blueprint* (“Anishinabek Nation Economic Blueprint” [ANEB]). The ANEB was created for the 42 Anishinabek First Nations communities in Ontario (approximately 30% of the First Nations population in Ontario), including the Odawa, Ojibway, Pottawatomi, Delaware, Chippewa, Algonquin, and Mississauga peoples (Union of Ontario Indians, 2008). The ANEB includes a vision, mission, an overview of the Anishinabek Nation (including organizations, workforce, economic capacity, and a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats [SWOT] analysis), as well as several recommendations for strengthening the Anishinabek economy (Union of Ontario Indians, 2008).

The ANEB also has a section on ‘Measuring Progress (Monitoring and Evaluation)’ to ensure that targets can be assessed and measured (Union of Ontario Indians, 2008). The Union of Ontario Indians (2008) state that the ANEB “economic development process consists of four phases: strategic planning, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring” (p. 55). The monitoring framework utilized in the ANEB includes “a series of key indicators and targets that reflect the ongoing monitoring through the use of the Community Economic Scorecard” (Union of Ontario Indians, 2008, p. 56). Although the Community Economic Scorecard mentioned in the ANEB is specific to economic development, it is an example of how metrics can be designed and developed by First Nations for the purposes

of monitoring and evaluation. I argue that for First Nations procurement (and social procurement), these types of metrics and monitoring tools can be developed by First Nations organizations and communities (whether at the national or regional levels) to ensure that what is being monitored and evaluated is relevant/important to the First Nations where the economic development is taking place.

The ANEB was written in 2008 and has limited information on procurement. However, some of the suggestions on procurement include encouraging Anishinabek businesses to take advantage of the PSIB¹⁰, and for non-Indigenous companies to develop stronger relationships with local Anishinabek owned businesses (i.e., through partnerships and joint ventures [JVs]). The ANEB also suggests that the “Anishinabek First Nations should develop a strategy for how they and businesses in their communities can use the federal Aboriginal [Indigenous] Procurement Strategy to increase their participation in business opportunities with the federal public service” (Union of Ontario Indians, 2008, p. 38).

One recommendation in the ANEB is for corporations and companies working within Anishinabek territories to adopt Anishinabek procurement policies relating to employment and the purchase of goods and services from Anishinabek businesses (Union of Ontario Indians, 2008). However, there was no specific Anishinabek procurement policy found in the report. What is significant about this recommendation is the idea of an Anishinabek culturally/regionally specific procurement policy. For example, if the Anishinabek Nation were to create an official Anishinabek procurement policy for use (and optional adoption/adaptation) by Anishinabek Nations in Ontario, it could act as a

¹⁰ The Anishinabek Economic Blueprint (Union of Ontario Indians) acknowledges that not many First Nations businesses (at that time in 2008) had taken advantage of the PSIB or had been successful.

foundation for Anishinabek procurement policies.

Similar to the concept of the ANEB, individual First Nations communities could also create their own procurement policies based on their collective vision for the community and their social, economic, environmental, and cultural goals. This could also give First Nations more control when they are approached by external parties for economic development and procurement opportunities. For example, a First Nations procurement policy could indicate targets for procurement, employment, and policies for use of land, for economic development projects. If First Nations communities do not have their own procurement policies, it is important that they are consulted and engaged at all levels of the procurement process, including in the (co)design of measurement and monitoring tools for social outcomes and social impacts with procurement.

4.6.2 Reconciliation

One of the most important goals right now in Canada is reconciliation. According to Dawn Madahbee Leach, Interim Chairperson of the National Indigenous Economic Development Board (NIEDB),

Full reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples will not happen without economic reconciliation. It is not only the fair and right thing to do, but there is a strong and compelling business case for all Canadians. (NIES, 2022b, p. 9)

With the GC's responsibility for reconciliation and committing to implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (GC, 2021a), as well as fulfilling their federal mandate for a 5% minimum procurement spend across federal departments, Indigenous procurement is an important priority at the federal

level (PSPC, 2020b). Contributing to economic reconciliation through supporting Indigenous businesses and communities, whether it is through the PSIB, Indigenous set asides, IBAs, or social procurement, contributes to strengthening the Indigenous economy, which in turn contributes to the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Canada (CCAB, 2019).

4.7 Relationship and Community Building

Relationship building between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples, as well as community building, is important as First Nations communities, national and regional Indigenous organizations, and/or Indigenous businesses need to be consulted and engaged when it comes to procurement policy and (co)designing social outcomes. According to Borrows (2021), good relationship building between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples “requires levelling the playing field between the parties by constraining Crown and corporate power and enhancing Indigenous authority and responsibility” (p. 238). The examples of the NIES (2022b) and the ANEB (Union of Ontario Indians, 2008) demonstrate that Indigenous Peoples and organizations are effective and active in creating frameworks for economic prosperity for Indigenous businesses and First Nations communities. There is still more work that needs to be done in terms of (co)developing measurements and monitoring tools for Indigenous (social) procurement, as research demonstrates that current Western-based methods are not effective (Denny-Smith & Loosemore, 2017).

In the Queensland Government (2020) Department of Housing and Public Works *Social Procurement Guide: Adding Social Value When buying from Government*, it states that “[s]ocial procurement begins as soon as a need to buy a good or service is identified”

(p. 7). Examples from Australia have demonstrated that relationship building, and engagement must occur during all stages of procurement (i.e., during planning, tender and contracting, managing the contract, and learning), as well as the measuring and monitoring of results (Queensland Government, 2020).

4.8 Summary

This chapter examined whether Indigenous procurement is ‘social procurement’ or whether it should be considered distinct from social procurement. The findings of this chapter are that Indigenous procurement is *both* a form of social procurement and distinct. Indigenous procurement is distinct because of the historical and cultural contexts, including Canada’s responsibility to honour treaties (historical and/or modern treaties) and nation-to-nation relationships (PSPC, 2022c). Indigenous procurement is also a form of social procurement because Indigenous businesses are considered equity-deserving groups, which qualifies them for social procurement set asides (PSCC, 2007). Social procurement is also used by government(s) to fulfill socio-economic (social, environmental, cultural) goals (PSPC, 2022c).

CHAPTER 5
CHALLENGES AND WISE PRACTICES FOR FIRST NATIONS
PROCUREMENT IN CANADA

As described earlier in this thesis, First Nations communities are distinct and diverse; thus, each community might have different perspectives on what ‘success’ means when it comes to community planning for economic development and procurement (Barberstock, 2015; Denny-Smith & Loosemore, 2018). First Nations communities also have community members that are independent business owners and their ideas of success and/or social impact may or may not be in line with the overall community vision (Barberstock, 2015; Denny-Smith & Loosemore, 2018).

One example that clearly captures the tensions between First Nations communities, business owners, and community members is the emerging cannabis industry in Canada (GC, 2022). The Government of Canada (GC) (2021b) legalized cannabis on October 17, 2018. The changes in legislation which legalized the sale of cannabis in Canada has created opportunities for independent First Nations business owners to participate in the cannabis industry as cannabis retailers, growers, and/or suppliers, which also creates much needed jobs in First Nations communities (see “Cannabis industry already creating jobs for First Nations,” 2018; Fontaine, 2017; Kilawna, 2021).

For example, *Sugar Cane Cannabis* is a new enterprise in Williams Lake First Nation, which will be the first “farm-to-gate cannabis facility in B.C. and the first of its kind on Indigenous land in Canada,” according to Williams Lake First Nation (McSheffrey & Agahi, 2022, para. 5). Early sales projections for Sugar Cane Cannabis are between \$2 million and \$6 million annually, and revenues from the business will be reinvested back

into Williams Lake First Nation to contribute to “funding university tuition, trades programs, the recreation department, elders’ supports and more” (McSheffrey & Agahi, 2022, paras. 7-8).

While the initial outlook for Sugar Cane Cannabis looks promising for Williams Lake First Nation, not all First Nations communities in Canada are optimistic about the legalization of cannabis (Forrest, 2018). According to Forrest (2018), some First Nations “leaders are ringing alarm bells about the impact legal cannabis could have in under-resourced communities struggling with poverty and substance abuse” (para. 5). Research by Wennberg et al. (2021) indicates that First Nations Peoples in Canada “may be at an increased risk of non-medical cannabis use” (p. 1). Carol Hopkins, executive director of the National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation, indicates that “89 per cent of Indigenous youth entering substance abuse treatment centres in Canada list cannabis as the number one substance used” (Forrest, 2018, para. 11).

While the Indigenous Procurement Engagement Sessions (IPE-sessions) from 2018 to 2021 did not specifically explore the cannabis industry, the example of the cannabis industry clearly demonstrates that there can be polarizing perspectives on business and economic development within First Nations communities and that ongoing consultation—at the political, administrative, and community level—is important (GC, 2022).

The data collected from the IPE-sessions provides insights on the viewpoints of individual firms versus First Nations communities on procurement and economic development. For example, First Nations communities may want to take advantage of the job creation opportunities that local procurement and supply chains can provide, whereas privately owned companies may be hesitant to hire local First Nations members if they do

not have the necessary skills. In addition, a privately owned company may not want the additional cost, risk, and time involved to support community capacity development or training to get community members ready for procurement/economic development opportunities.

Existing literature on First Nations community economic development provides additional context and insights on the successes and challenges of community economic development and entrepreneurship in this chapter.

5.1 Research Findings – Current Challenges and Obstacles for Indigenous Procurement in Canada

In the following section, current challenges, and obstacles for Indigenous procurement in Canada will be explored from the perspectives of Indigenous businesses (5.1.1), the public sector (5.1.2), and the private sector (non-Indigenous) (5.1.3). The data for section 5.1 is from the IPE-Sessions from 2018 to 2021, which includes the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada sessions that took place on November 28, 2018 (public sector), December 12, 2018 (private sector—non-Indigenous), and December 13, 2018 (Indigenous businesses), the National Procurement Roundtable (February 4, 2020), and the small group and one-on-one sessions for the Federal Procurement Research Project (July 7, 2021 to July 30, 2021).

5.1.1 Indigenous Business Perspectives of Procurement – Challenges

During the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada Indigenous business session, Indigenous businesses reported that “systemic racism” and “tokenism” (Group A—Key Challenges, Flip Chart notes) towards Indigenous Peoples were a challenge for them and that it affected their ability to contract with federal, provincial, and territorial

governments. In addition, Indigenous businesses were concerned about public/private sector “perceptions of Indigenous businesses,” including perceptions that Indigenous businesses “lack capacity” and “ability to deliver” on procurement contracts (i.e., “high-risk perception”) (Group A—Key Challenges, Flip Chart notes).

It was confirmed in the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada public sector session that “institutional racism” towards Indigenous Peoples and businesses exists and that there are assumptions and stereotypes regarding Indigenous businesses—namely that Indigenous businesses are considered “high risk,” that many “lack capacity,” and perceptions that Indigenous businesses “provide substandard/lower quality work” (i.e., due to lack of capacity) (Group A, B, C—Key Challenges, Flip Chart Notes).

In the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada Indigenous session, these types of assumptions/stereotypes were acknowledged and well known by Indigenous business owners. Bernard, an Indigenous business owner shared: “It is frustrating for Indigenous businesses that are well established because we have to jump through extra hoops to gain business [more so than non-Indigenous businesses].”

During the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada session for public sector workers on November 28, 2018, Catherine shared:

In our group [of public service workers], we talked about systemic racism within government. . . We [GC] must stop perpetuating paternalistic approaches to Indigenous peoples. The idea of co-developing a national procurement strategy with Indigenous peoples in the room is the right thing to do.

During one of the one-on-one sessions for the Federal Procurement Research Project, Jocelyn, a public service worker suggested that every public servant should have to take

cultural competency training “to learn more about Indigenous Peoples, the three groups [First Nations, Inuit, and Métis], the stereotypes. . .” Regarding stereotypes towards Indigenous Peoples and businesses, Jocelyn observed: “Some people don’t know [that there are stereotypes]; it’s a perpetuation; there are myths; it has to be tackled too.”

During the Federal Procurement Research Project, Indigenous business owners shared that they found it difficult to create strong relationships with the federal government because government workers often change positions and departments. In addition, Indigenous business owners also shared that in some cases, there was a lack of awareness of the Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business (PSIB) and Indigenous set asides in certain federal, provincial, or territorial departments. This was discovered when Indigenous business owners directly contacted federal departments to let them know about their products/services (i.e., for contracting opportunities). For example, when Indigenous business owners asked if the federal department(s) were aware of the PSIB, in some cases, Indigenous business owners felt they had to play the role of educator because of the lack of awareness of the PSIB by public sector workers.

Daniel, an Indigenous business owner from Manitoba shared that it would take him awhile to develop a good relationship with a contact in a federal department and then once the relationship was established, the contact would move on to another job or department and then the business owner would have to start all over again:

This is what has happened to me in these last 16 years. . . . I’m in Manitoba. . . . I go to a procurement officer, introduce my company, and ask the officer, ‘do you know the benefits of PSAB?’ The procurement officer says, ‘What is PSAB?’ I end up having to educate them about PSAB because no one from the federal

government is teaching them, even though they are federal employees. . . . By the time you get it and there are set asides, those people leave; they are at a new department, and I have to start all over again. The government is not teaching across all departments about PSAB. If they are going to do something about the 5%, it will get attention, but it's almost like it's the secondary service that the federal government should be doing.

At the National Procurement Roundtable on February 4, 2020, Bernard (an Indigenous business owner) shared that it was difficult for Indigenous businesses to get procurement contracts with the federal government unless they were in the "Ottawa bubble" (i.e., lived/worked in Ottawa). He further explained: "I had to move my company to Ottawa because I wasn't successful with federal procurement while I was outside the region. Once I moved my company to Ottawa, I started to get the procurement contracts."

As the owner of an Indigenous consulting company that does a lot of work with the federal government, I do not believe that my company would have had the success that we have enjoyed without having the benefit of being within driving distance of Ottawa. I partially attribute my company's success to having a strong presence in Ottawa through being present in-person for networking opportunities, public speaking, and having multiple meetings in Ottawa with potential clients.

Another challenge for Indigenous business owners is that the bidding process for the federal government can be an arduous, complicated, and time-consuming process, and there is no guarantee that there will be a return on investment of time because with the competitive bidding process, only one business can win. In addition, some Indigenous businesses found it difficult to prepare a bid within the time frame (i.e., the time frame was

not enough to create a strong bid).

The challenges of contracting with the federal government was a detriment for many Indigenous businesses, and in some cases, Indigenous businesses made decisions *not* to contract with the federal government. In the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada session for Indigenous businesses, Jerry, an Indigenous business owner shared that “he had prepared several bids for procurement contracts with the federal government,” but had “never been successful,” so he had “given up.” Although I cannot speculate on why an Indigenous business owner might have been unsuccessful in bidding for a tender, the impression that I received was that the bidding and procurement process with the federal government was a negative experience for some Indigenous businesses and that it had caused them to give up.

Another challenge for Indigenous business owners is the lack of available education and training on procurement and exporting. Indigenous businesses often learn as their businesses grow, without having the benefit of mentorship or training. Currently, national, and regional Indigenous organizations in Canada are exploring how they can support Indigenous procurement through training and mentorship.

Issues of Indigenous identity surfaced during the research. For example, how should an ‘Indigenous business’ be defined? Currently, an Indigenous business is defined as being (at a minimum) 51% owned, operated, and led by Indigenous Peoples (Indigenous Services Canada [ISC], 2021d). This can include First Nations (status or non-status), Métis, or Inuit Peoples. Although on the surface, the definition of an Indigenous business might seem straight forward; it is complicated. At the core of the problem is the question ‘who is, and who is not, considered Indigenous?’ The answer to this question is highly political

and contentious among Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples alike (Forte, 2013; Leach et al., 2021).

It is outside of the scope of my research to answer the question of Indigenous identity and the definition of an Indigenous business; however, through my work and research, I understand that National Indigenous Organizations (NIOs) in Canada are currently engaging with Indigenous Peoples and businesses to (re)define what an Indigenous business is. For example, in 2021, the National Aboriginal Corporations Association (NACCA) commissioned Leach et al. (2021), to create a report to explore this issue. The report entitled “Defining Indigenous Businesses in Canada,” defines an Indigenous business using three elements:

1. The requirement for Indigenous business owners, directors of Indigenous companies, and in the case of cooperatives—voting members, to provide evidence of Indigenous identity as demonstrated through a legitimate Indigenous identity-issuing organization or entity.
2. Entrepreneurs and small business owners should also demonstrate that they possess the relevant expertise and credentials to own the business and the capacity to actively engage in operating the business.
3. A minimum of 51% Indigenous ownership. (Leach et al., 2021, p. 1)

One of the major findings of my doctoral research is that shell companies (or ‘contrived companies’) are seen by Indigenous businesses as being a major challenge for Indigenous procurement. Shell companies are generally partnerships between large multi-million-dollar non-Indigenous corporations and Indigenous businesses, to take advantage of lucrative procurement opportunities. During the Federal Procurement Research Project,

Bernard (an Indigenous business owner) shared his thoughts and concerns on shell companies and JVs:

In 6-months time, they [GC] might say they've given millions to Indigenous firms. How many will be joint ventures [JVs]? They will be 98% shell companies. These are fronts for non-Indigenous ventures. . . PSIB will show they awarded 40 million to Indigenous companies—no they didn't; they awarded to JVs; it's shell companies.

In addition, during the Federal Procurement Research Project, Dana, an Indigenous entrepreneur and advisor, shared her thoughts on shell companies and JVs, only she referred to the shell companies as “contrived businesses”:

A contrived business is a business that has been designed to take advantage of the programs that are available. They try to structure it in a way that would allow them to access PSIB or AFI [Aboriginal Financial Institution] financing. It's a loophole; they designed it in a way, but it's falsely designed. . . . Some businesses have received contracts and they are contrived businesses; this is taking away opportunities that real Indigenous businesses have. A lot of time they [contrived businesses] are large companies so they have the financial supports of corporate Canada.

On the positive side of JVs and partnerships, when both Indigenous and non-Indigenous companies meaningfully contribute to a contract (i.e., for products or services), a JV can generate opportunities for capacity development, business growth (especially for the Indigenous partner), and it can provide additional assets and skills for the Indigenous business that they would otherwise not have if it were not for the JV (Boyd & Trosper,

2009).

On the negative side of JVs and partnerships, Indigenous business owners shared that they felt that shell companies ‘stacked the deck’ and that there was no way they could compete with the shell companies because they were backed by non-Indigenous multi-million-dollar corporations. Bernard (an Indigenous business owner) shared his frustrations: “Some of these Indigenous businesses are not contributing anything [in the JV], they are being paid \$50,000 per year to sit on the couch” (i.e., so the non-Indigenous company can financially benefit from a large PSIB procurement contract). In addition, Bernard shared that he felt that *most* of the procurement contracts were being awarded to shell companies, which were really “non-Indigenous corporations wanting to win big with PSAB [PSIB]. . . Because it is a big opportunity right now and they [non-Indigenous businesses] want a piece of the pie.” On the positive side, Bernard shared that he felt there were no issues when two Indigenous companies created a JV to bid on a procurement opportunity; however, he shared that “unfortunately, most shell companies are contrived: it’s non-Indigenous corporations that are benefiting the most” (instead of Indigenous businesses).

Interestingly, one of the PSIB loopholes is that either of the partners in a shell company can provide the references for a procurement bid (i.e., a multi-million-dollar non-Indigenous corporation can create a JV with a very small Indigenous corporation (1-2 founders/staff) and the shell company can win the bid because the non-Indigenous corporation provides all the references and capacity. According to some of the Indigenous business owners interviewed for this research, this creates a situation that “stacks the deck,” where Indigenous companies “have no incentive to grow or scale up” (i.e., because now

they have had the experience of making “easy money” through JVs). One solution to this issue is to ensure that *both* partners provide references (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) to eliminate this loophole. Another potential solution to this issue is contained within the third recommendation for the definition of an Indigenous business by Leach et al., (2021), which indicates that Indigenous “[e]ntrepreneurs and small business owners should also demonstrate that they possess the relevant expertise and credentials to own the business and the capacity to actively engage in operating the business” (p. 1). This recommendation would ensure that an Indigenous company has not been created or utilized just for the sake of a JV, when the Indigenous business does not have the capacity or credentials to pursue a large contract.

Another major challenge for Indigenous procurement identified in the IPE-sessions is that Indigenous companies with over 6 employees must have a minimum of 33% Indigenous staff to bid on a PSIB procurement (GC, 2019b). In the Federal Procurement Research Project, Bernard shared that he had over 35 staff and that he could not always reach the 33% Indigenous staffing requirement. As a result, he could not bid on PSIB procurement opportunities.

It is interesting to contrast this with the shell company issue—that a larger Indigenous-owned company cannot bid on a PSIB opportunity unless 33% of their staff are Indigenous; however, a non-Indigenous multi-million-dollar corporation with no Indigenous staff can partner with a small Indigenous company and bid on a PSIB contract. The good news is that this issue was shared with the public sector during the engagement sessions, and it led to change. As of September 2021, the GC (ISC, 2021b) *Eligibility for Indigenous Procurement Set Aside* web page now states: “Changes to eligibility

requirements. . . One of the new eligibility criteria allows registered businesses to grow without the 33% Indigenous employee criteria” (Changes to Eligibility Requirements section, para. 1).

Finally, another challenge reported in the research is fraudulent non-Indigenous businesses claiming Indigenous identity to take advantage of Indigenous procurement and Indigenous set asides. It was reported by Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants that some non-Indigenous business owners had false Indian Status Cards, ‘checked off the Indigenous box’ (even though they were non-Indigenous companies) for tender opportunities, and/or that non-Indigenous business owners had memberships with non-federally recognized so-called Indigenous organizations and communities (i.e., that would allow non-Indigenous members).

During the Federal Procurement Research Project, Dana (an Indigenous entrepreneur and advisor) shared a story about how she had previously attended a conference and had witnessed a non-Indigenous man using a fake Indian Status Card:

At the PDAC mining conference, a non-Indigenous man had one fake card [Indian Status] and he was going around and getting contracts from mining companies because they thought he was Indigenous. . . I said [to the man], ‘I know where you got this card’ and he ran away. He was in his 70s.

Dana also shared that there are false organizations that hand out so-called ‘Indigenous’ memberships or status cards for a nominal fee:

There are false Métis organizations, not recognized by the Métis Nation of Ontario. . . . Also the Woodland Métis Association of New Brunswick, also false. You can buy a Métis card for \$100; there is no checking into it. . . . It’s not a valid card or a

valid organization. . . . Most of the time they'll walk away and say nothing; usually they will not fight about that. . . . There is also the First Nations of North America card—you can buy it in North Bay.

Unfortunately, the issue of false Indigenous identity is not just unique to Indigenous business; it also exists in other areas such as academia. In a report titled *Indigenous Identity Fraud: A Report for the University of Saskatchewan*, researcher Jean Teillet (2022) observes that

personal gain and material advantage are the most obvious answers to the question of why individuals falsely assume Indigenous identity. They gain an education, funding, access to professional programs, jobs, prestige, and money, and there are a lot more of these opportunities available now than in the past. (p. 15)

Another motivation for assuming a false Indigenous identity is what Tuck and Yang (2012) refer to as “settler moves to innocence” (p. 1). In other words, by assuming an Indigenous identity “colonizers position themselves as Indigenous and thereby absolve themselves of any complicity in colonialism’s relentless march” (Teillet, 2022, p. 15; see also Tuck & Yang, 2012).

5.1.2 Public Sector Perspectives of Indigenous Procurement – Challenges

During the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada session (Public Sector), it was acknowledged that there are issues with “institutional racism” (Group A—Key Challenges, flip chart notes) towards Indigenous Peoples and businesses. Three of the main stereotypes shared include: 1) the belief that Indigenous businesses are considered “high risk,” 2) the concern that Indigenous businesses “lack capacity,” and 3) concerns on the “reliability” of Indigenous businesses (Groups A, B, C—Key Challenges, flip chart

notes). On a few occasions, public sector participants commented that it was “difficult to find out if Indigenous businesses have capacity” (i.e., to fulfill a contract) and that it was “difficult to find qualified Indigenous businesses.”

To provide context to the stereotypes, some public sector workers experienced these issues when working with Indigenous businesses (i.e., lack of capacity and/or reliability issues). However, during the Federal Procurement Research Project, Jim, a public sector worker, commented that he had coworkers that might not have ever met, worked with, or spoken to anyone Indigenous; sometimes stereotypes were passed along through conversations between colleagues, even if public sector workers had not had these experiences directly. Thus, unconscious bias¹¹ can be a challenge for Indigenous procurement—even if Indigenous businesses are successful and provide exceptional products or services, they are still screened as if they are high risk and lacking in capacity and reliability.

With the 5% mandate for Indigenous procurement (PSPC, 2020b), some public sector workers expressed concern about whether there would be enough supply to fulfill demand. Currently, it is unknown how many Indigenous businesses in Canada are procurement ready, and how many of these businesses would be willing to contract with the federal government.

In a Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) (2019) report entitled *Industry and Inclusion: An Analysis of Indigenous Potential in Federal Supply Chain*, the CCAB (2019) observes:

¹¹ According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) (2022), unconscious bias is “any personal preference, attitude, or expectation that unconsciously affects a person’s outlook or behaviour” (para. 1). On the negative side, unconscious bias results in “prejudice against people of a particular race, gender, or group,” which “influences one’s actions or perceptions” (OED, 2022, para. 1).

Despite the large sum spent by the federal government and policies promoting fairness in competition, Indigenous businesses are underrepresented in federal supply chains. . . [T]he most commonly heard explanation for limited procurement from Indigenous businesses is that there are not enough firms working in enough areas to provide high quality, cost effective service and supply. . . . Regardless of whether the assumptions that Indigenous businesses lack the capacity to meet federal government procurement demand. . . it does not hold in 2019. . . . The CCAB has produced estimates which confirm that a 5 percent Indigenous procurement target is realistic. (p. 1)

To date, it is uncertain how many Indigenous businesses have the skilled labour, expertise, and capacity to fulfill large procurement contracts at the federal, provincial, and territorial levels; however, the estimates in the CCAB report are promising. With an estimated 43,000+ First Nations, Inuit, and Métis business owners in Canada (CCAB, 2016), there is great potential for sole-source contracts (under \$40,000) and ProServices contracts (under \$100,000) with the federal government (PSPC, 2022e). With investment, training, and mentorship, there is also a potential to help existing Indigenous businesses to scale up to fulfill the increased procurement demand.

Similar to Indigenous perspectives, public sector workers acknowledged that one of the challenges to Indigenous procurement is the complexity of defining an ‘Indigenous business.’ Issues with non-Indigenous companies trying to fraudulently claim Indigenous identity was also acknowledged by the public sector (i.e., to take advantage of the PSIB or Indigenous set asides). False Indian Status Cards, or membership to non-federally recognized organizations are known issues for claiming false Indigeneity (see Section

5.1.1).

One major challenge for Indigenous procurement and fulfilling the 5% mandate at the federal level (PSPC, 2020b) is substandard data collection methods and reporting. During the Federal Procurement Research Project, Larry, a senior public sector worker, commented that his federal department was “just using Microsoft Excel” to track Indigenous procurement and he said “it was embarrassing” that the GC did not have a better method or solution for tracking Indigenous procurement.

I can attest to the difficulty of finding good statistics on Indigenous procurement. After 2 to 3 hours of searching on GC web pages, I could not find one comprehensive report, which lists all the Indigenous contracts awarded to suppliers in one year to GC federal departments. The GC (2023) currently has a webpage, which allows one to search for government contracts over \$10,000 (see <https://search.open.canada.ca/contracts>). On this webpage it is possible to filter by ‘Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business’ and ‘Indigenous Business excluding PSIB’; however, the listings are *not* comprehensive (i.e., only lists contracts awarded to Indigenous businesses that *self-identify*; it does not include number of contracts awarded to Indigenous companies that do not self-identify as Indigenous) (GC, 2023). One big issue with this listing is that it is still in the process of being updated. The GC (2023) *Search Government Contracts over \$10,000* web page states

The Search Government Contracts over \$10,000 content has recently been updated.

At this time, there are a number of records that have not been migrated from the archived site. Refer to the Contracts over \$10,000—Legacy Data for more information on these records.¹² (About This Information section, para. 3)

¹² The legacy data is available on <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/d8f85d91-7dec-4fd1-8055-483b77225d8b>.

This creates some confusion for those seeking a full report for total contract spend for Indigenous (or non-Indigenous) companies across federal departments as the searcher cannot be certain whether accurate data appears in a search on the GC (2023) *Search Government Contracts over \$10,000* web page or whether the data are only available in the Legacy Data. In addition, there is no tool to calculate total spend by department (or across all departments). This type of tool would be helpful for researchers or for NIOs that would like to do their own assessment on how much progress the GC is making towards the mandate for 5% Indigenous procurement across all federal departments.

It is evident that with the 5% Indigenous procurement mandate (PSPC, 2020b) in place, the GC will need to improve data collection methods and work on providing transparent public reporting on how much Indigenous procurement is completed each year.

5.1.3 Private Sector (Non-Indigenous) Perspectives of Indigenous Procurement – Challenges

I remember attending a business event in Ontario a few years ago and meeting an executive from a major industry.¹³ She shared that one of the biggest challenges was finding Indigenous businesses to contract. She also shared that their company had an internal database of Indigenous suppliers, but that they often had to resort to internet searches to find the suppliers that they needed. She shared that sometimes it was difficult to find the Indigenous businesses because they did not always identify as Indigenous on their corporate websites. She wanted to know my perspective on why these businesses might have chosen not to self-identify as Indigenous on their websites, as she thought it was counterintuitive (after all, had the Indigenous business self-identified, they might have

¹³ As this conversation took place outside of the scope of this research project, the location, industry, and individual's name has not been included to maintain anonymity.

had some great contracting opportunities presented to them!). I shared that based on my discussions with Indigenous business owners, and based on my research on entrepreneurship, economic development, and procurement, some Indigenous businesses choose not to self-identify as Indigenous because of the known prejudice, stigma, and stereotypes (i.e., by non-Indigenous people) that can be associated with Indigenous business (e.g., see Laskaris, 2020). For example, some Indigenous businesses in my network have chosen not to self-identify as an Indigenous business, except in situations where it is beneficial (i.e., when bidding for an Indigenous procurement opportunity). By not self-identifying as an ‘Indigenous business’ on their website, this allows the Indigenous business to conduct business in the mainstream without having to deal with the prejudice of being an Indigenous business (NB, this was more common in businesses that had products and/or services that were not culturally based).

As the founder of a 100% Indigenous-owned and operated corporation, I choose to self-identify as an Indigenous company on my corporate website; however, as my company’s corporate services are all culturally based (i.e., consulting, facilitation, and research—for Indigenous initiatives), it is most beneficial to self-identify. If my company sold office furniture or any other non-Indigenous-related products or services, I might also consider not self-identifying as an Indigenous business, because as with the other Indigenous business owners I have spoken with, (and with the findings of my research), the prejudice and stereotypes have been an extra hurdle to overcome when trying to work with new clients in the public or private sector.¹⁴

¹⁴ Note: It should be acknowledged that there are some very pro-Indigenous executives in the public and private sectors that proudly champion Indigenous business and procurement projects. There are some wonderful examples of strong relationships that have been built between Indigenous businesses and the public and private sectors. However, this section addresses challenges to Indigenous procurement, and

Talking with private sector industry leaders for this research was an interesting experience because their relationships with Indigenous businesses were in some ways similar to the public sector and in other ways very different. For example, like the public sector, the private sector was also concerned about whether Indigenous businesses had capacity to fulfill contracting opportunities. Like the public sector, the private sector had challenges finding qualified Indigenous businesses and they also experienced uncertainty on how many Indigenous businesses were procurement ready.

What made the private sector unique is that they had more resources available to build stronger relationships with First Nations communities for economic development. In addition, the private sector had the ability to work with First Nations communities well in advance of economic development opportunities to ensure there was training, apprenticeship, and contracting opportunities for First Nations community members. For example, local First Nations contractors and businesses might be contracted for a major economic development project in a First Nations community.

One of the challenges of large economic development opportunities is that it can ‘make then break’ a community (Wuttunee, 1992). For example, one large economic development opportunity can create jobs, new businesses, and support existing businesses through contracting opportunities; however, once a large economic development project is finished, the economic loss to the community can be profound (Mainprize et al., 2021; Wuttunee, 1992). In her book *In Business for Ourselves—Northern Entrepreneurs*, Wanda Wuttunee (1992) shares her observations regarding economic development and northern communities:

stereotypes and prejudice towards Indigenous businesses are common themes that were shared in the IPE-sessions.

To date, a major factor in northern economic development has been megaprojects directed at development of non-renewable resources such as oil, gas, and minerals. Many communities have experienced the highs and lows associated with the boom-bust cycles that are inextricably linked to this type of development: for example, increased job and business opportunities and cashflow into communities when projects start, loss of jobs and associated social problems when projects close down.

(p 4)

This was a concern that some of the industry leaders had—they were proud of the work that they had done with First Nations communities, but they understood the danger of building up a community through one large project and the potential devastating impacts of pulling the large project out of the community once it was finished. Therefore, it is important to build strong business ecosystems in First Nations communities that are not reliant on one large project. For example, Mackenzie, a non-Indigenous industry leader shared:

For example, some construction projects are large, but what happens when we leave? What about long term? This business has been built up for this project, then doesn't have anything to sustain it going forward. We need to be cognisant and need to think about long term growth.

5.2 Research Findings – Wise Practices for Indigenous Procurement in Canada

In the this section, wise practices for Indigenous procurement in Canada are explored, from the perspectives of Indigenous businesses (5.2.1), the public sector (5.2.2), and the private sector (non-Indigenous) (5.2.3).

5.2.1 Indigenous Perspectives – Wise Practices for Indigenous Procurement in Canada

The importance of relationship building was one of the most important themes to emerge from the IPE-sessions for Indigenous procurement. Indigenous business owners shared that these engagement sessions should not just take place to update policies and to ‘modernize Indigenous federal procurement,’ but engagement should be ongoing. Indigenous business owners can provide ongoing feedback on what is working well (or not working) with Indigenous procurement processes and policies at the federal, provincial, and territorial levels. Thus, changes to federal policy can be informed by practical on-the-ground knowledge; Indigenous business owners are best positioned to share how improvements can be made to the procurement process.

In 2018 during the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement sessions, we had a dedicated engagement session just for Indigenous business owners. Dale, an Indigenous business owner, asked: “Where is the government? Where is industry? Why are we not all in this room together?” As this was one of the very first engagement sessions conducted by my company, the initial thinking was that Indigenous businesses should be in a dedicated session to create a comfortable space, so that they could speak freely without worrying about the consequences of sharing potentially negative information in the presence of the public sector and/or the private sector (i.e., some of the public/private sector participants could have been clients of the Indigenous business owners). However, from the perspective of the Indigenous business owner that spoke up, how could change occur if the decision makers were not in the room when they were sharing their knowledge? This was a good lesson in relationship building: strong relationships are created when *all* stakeholders can sit in the room together to discuss what is working and not working, so

they can co-design solutions together. In 2020, my company facilitated the National Procurement Roundtable, which brought *all* stakeholders together—Indigenous businesses, the public sector, and the private sector.

There is also an interesting contradiction that occurred during the IPE-sessions between 2018 and 2021. Although feedback from some Indigenous participants indicated the importance of ongoing engagement, other Indigenous participants shared their frustration that they were “still being engaged” or that research was still occurring—their perspective was that they had “shared enough” and “why are we still discussing this?” (i.e., after a few years of engagement). Some Indigenous participants felt that they had shared a lot and that the GC was “aware of the issues” but some of the Indigenous participants felt they were not seeing action on the side of the federal government. Thus, strong relationship building between Indigenous businesses and the public sector is not just listening (on both sides), action is also incredibly important—Indigenous businesses do not just want to be engaged, they want to see their recommendations turned into meaningful action.

The importance of relationship building also came up as a theme when it came to working directly with departments for sole-source contracts. Some of the Indigenous business owners shared that when they wanted to work with certain federal, provincial, or territorial departments, they would take the time to find out who to speak with and they would introduce themselves to the department and share what services and/or products they could offer (i.e., for sole-source contracts), and this worked well for the business owners. Based on the engagement sessions with the public sector and the observation that it was difficult for the GC to find qualified Indigenous businesses to work with, this practice makes sense. By Indigenous businesses taking the initiative to learn which federal,

provincial, or territorial departments could benefit from their products/services and making introductions, they can potentially open new channels of opportunity.

Another success story shared by Indigenous participants and the public and private sectors was the effectiveness of business matchmaking events and tradeshow. Several Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants had participated in these types of events and had made good connections, which led to new opportunities (i.e., for business and working together). These types of events allowed for in-person interaction and introductions, which helped to create meaningful new connections.¹⁵

Procurement readiness training came up as a potential solution (from all engagement groups) to help increase the amount of procurement-ready Indigenous businesses. Whether Indigenous businesses would like to participate in sole-source contracts (under \$40,000), ProServices contracts (under \$100,000), or larger Tier 1 and Tier 2 procurement opportunities (PSPC, 2022e), procurement readiness training could provide Indigenous business with helpful information on how to create an effective bid and could provide tools on how to build capacity and scale up (if applicable) to take advantage of contracting opportunities with the public and private sectors.

5.2.2 Public Sector Perspectives – Wise Practices for Indigenous Procurement in Canada

In the Re-imagining Indigenous Procurement public sector engagement sessions, the term ‘reconciliation’ came up regularly. Helping to build stronger Indigenous business economies through entrepreneurship, economic development, and procurement was seen

¹⁵ With the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2021, many of these types of events moved to online formats. It is unknown how effective online networking events were for relationship building and is outside the scope of my research.

as contributing to reconciliation. Some public sector workers acknowledged that one strength is the current “pro-Indigenous” government, which “has a reconciliation agenda.” Thus, the importance of improving Indigenous procurement was top of mind for those attending the engagement sessions.

Indigenous cultural awareness training for public sector procurement officers, supervisors, and managers was a suggestion that arose in several groups as a suggestion and/or wise practice for improving Indigenous procurement in Canada. It was shared that the cultural awareness training would help to dispel current myths, stereotypes, and prejudice towards Indigenous Peoples and businesses and that it would help to bring a better understanding of Indigenous cultures so that public sector workers feel better positioned (and more comfortable) when working with Indigenous Peoples and businesses.

It was identified in the ‘challenges’ section of this thesis that the public sector struggles with finding qualified Indigenous businesses that have capacity to fulfill procurement opportunities. One wise practice shared to assist with this challenge is the online Indigenous Business Directory (IBD), currently managed by ISC (2022). According to ISC (2022), the IBD is “An online directory that allows procurement officers and the private sector to identify Indigenous businesses” (para. 1). According to ISC (2022), the IBD is

designed to assist and support Indigenous businesses in the pursuit of business opportunities, including federal procurement. This is a public directory and available for use by all levels of government, as well as the private sector to identify Indigenous businesses. (About the Directory section, para. 1)

Indigenous businesses can currently register with the IBD if they fulfill the eligibility

requirements, which includes a minimum of 51% Indigenous ownership and control (ISC, 2022).

Another wise practice for Indigenous procurement shared by public sector participants in the Re-imagining Indigenous Procurement session was business matchmaking events and trade shows. Public sector workers shared that they had attended these types of events and found them helpful for learning about Indigenous businesses and for creating business relationships with Indigenous businesses that they could potentially work with in the future. Similar sentiments and experiences were also shared in the engagement sessions with the private sector. By attending trade shows and business matchmaking events, the public sector (or private sector) can meet with Indigenous businesses (e.g., speed dating format) and ask important questions about their products, services, and capacity.

A wise practice that is unique to the GC is the devolution of services by ISC to First Nations communities or organizations (ISC, 2020b). One of the mandates of the current government is to over time support the devolution of ISC services so that First Nations communities and organizations can provide First Nations-based services to their own communities. The ISC (2020b) *Departmental Plan 2020-2021* web page states:

Effective governance is key to the socio-economic progress and the overall well-being of every community, and supports the devolution of services to communities. ISC supports First Nations communities in implementing and developing strong, effective, sustainable governments in support of Canada's constitutional and statutory obligations. At the same time, ISC recognizes the need to break away from colonial

approaches and do things in a new way: where First Nations communities lead the way and Indigenous-led institutions facilitate the capacity development of First Nations governments, institutions, and leadership. (Governance and Community Development Services section, Indigenous Communities Advance Their Governance Capacity, para. 1)

In addition, the ISC (2020b) *Departmental Plan 2021-2021* states: “ISC will also build capacity within Indigenous partner organizations to effectively support the devolution of services to First Nations” (Planning Highlights section, Land and Resources in Indigenous Communities are Sustainably Managed, para. 2). The process of devolution provides potential opportunities for First Nations communities and partner organizations to receive funding and support to lead and deliver the programs and services currently being provided by ISC (ISC, 2020b). It is evident that even newer First Nations organizations have the opportunity to grow and fulfill the growing demand as ISC continues to devolve their services to First Nations communities and organizations (ISC, 2020b). However, ISC (2020b) also acknowledges the potential risks of devolution:

As ISC evolves its processes and cultural, organizational and governance frameworks in support of reconciliation and devolution, there is a risk that the priorities and directions of ISC and those of its partners will not be adequately aligned. This risk is being managed by a range of practices including communication and coordination practices aimed at establishing and sustaining strong relationships and partnerships, as well as direction-setting practices aimed at charting a new course in the spirit of co-development. Monitoring mechanisms exist to ensure that misalignment

and other concerns are detected in support of early and constructive management of common priorities. (Risk section, para 1.)

For ISC (2020b), this is a very innovative approach, and with innovation there can be risk and reward. There is an intriguing footnote on the bottom of the ISC (2020b) *Departmental Plan 2020-2021* regarding innovation and experimentation:

The Treasury Board Secretariat uses the term ‘experimentation’ when requesting that departments test new approaches and measure impact to instill a culture of measurement, evaluation and innovation in program and policy design and delivery and to improve outcomes by learning what does and doesn't work. However, ISC refers to experimentation as ‘results-based innovation’ given that the term ‘experimentation’ has negative connotations and is not appropriate in the Indigenous services context because of Canada's colonial history, including the impact of residential schools. Evidence-based decision making will continue to be achieved at ISC through recognized tools such as innovation challenges, demonstration and systems transformation projects, and recognized methods including: user-centered design; behavioural insights; data analytics and modelling; and, open policy making. (Footnote 1)

The quotation above is relevant to the discussions on Indigenous procurement and public sector and First Nations relationship building because to make changes to the current Indigenous procurement policies, innovation must occur and this includes “results-based innovation,” co-design (referred to as “user-centered design” in the quote) and the analysis of data (to see what is working and not working) (ISC, 2020b). Interestingly, the topic of

being ‘risk-adverse’ came up as a challenge in the public sector engagement sessions (which is the opposite of being innovative); however, public sector officials shared that a potential wise practice could be to encourage and reward innovation and to be more forgiving for failures due to innovation (i.e., ‘learning experiences’).

5.2.3 Private Sector (non-Indigenous) Perspectives – Wise Practices for Indigenous Procurement in Canada

The private sector (non-Indigenous businesses) had several wise practices to share during the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement sessions in 2018. Whereas the GC was mainly focused on working with individual businesses, the private sector worked closely with First Nations communities. There was also an effort made to engage local and regional First Nations supply chains for larger economic development projects. One of the challenges experienced by the private sector, similar to the GC, was the lack of information regarding local and regional First Nations businesses.

One wise practice shared by an industry leader was the creation of an interactive map titled “Aboriginal Vendors by Service,”¹⁶ which showed local First Nations businesses in the province. This map allowed the industry to find local First Nations businesses they could contract for larger scale economic development projects.

Some industry leaders also shared that their companies had created internal Indigenous business directories, which were helpful for finding reputable Indigenous companies to work with. It was acknowledged that other than the GC Indigenous business directory and the CCAB business directory, there is no central database for *all* Indigenous

¹⁶ Website URL for virtual map:
<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1o5wi62MTKhmnPWbeN7xU8KAHnAs&ll=54.54555263750062%2C-105.96642825&z=5>.

businesses in Canada. This creates a situation where the private sector needs to access several databases to find Indigenous businesses they can work with.

Another wise practice for finding Indigenous businesses included business matchmaking events and trade shows. Private sector leaders spoke positively about this experience because it gave them the opportunity to meet Indigenous business owners face-to-face and they could ask questions about products, services, and capacity for taking on larger projects.

Some of the private sector leaders that I spoke with proudly acknowledged that they were doing over 5% Indigenous procurement, especially in areas with high First Nations/Indigenous populations (i.e., in comparison to the GC target of a minimum 5% Indigenous procurement spend). In addition, industry leaders also shared that prior to large scale economic development projects, they would engage First Nations communities to ensure they were ready for the projects, and they would do their best to hire local First Nations businesses.

Emmanuel, an industry leader, shared that in preparation for a large-scale project, his company had created a training and apprenticeship program for First Nations workers so that they could be hired for the project before it was launched. Emmanuel shared:

We did a training program for a major project, and we partnered with a college.

There was training for 84 people. . . . We provided support to the [First Nation] community for funding and the college was training people to get them going. . .

These are the investments you make.”

On the positive side, large scale economic development projects from industry partners resulted in First Nations procurement and the use of local First Nations supply chains. From

the examples shared by industry leaders, it is evident that one large economic development project has the potential to create employment, entrepreneurship opportunities, and to generate wealth for First Nations communities and to infuse investment into local First Nations businesses. On the negative side, some of the large-scale economic development projects are limited to a certain number of years, and once the project is finished, it can leave a First Nations community in a situation of economic collapse if the community and local businesses become completely dependent on the one large scale project (Wutunee, 1992). Thus, it is important for First Nations communities and local/regional businesses to plan long-term and to diversify the business ventures that they pursue.

5.3 Research Findings – Should Indigenous Procurement be Legislated? (Federal Procurement)

During the Federal Procurement Research Project, the concept of legislation versus policy for federal procurement was discussed. Participants were asked whether they believed that future Indigenous procurement in Canada should be enshrined in legislation or regulation to enforce Indigenous procurement targets (i.e., 5% procurement total spend) across government. There were opposing views between Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders. Most Indigenous stakeholders believed that the 5% procurement target should be legislated for it to be achieved, while most government stakeholders believed that it should *not* be legislated due to the extra bureaucracy it would create. Below is a summary of Indigenous versus non-Indigenous perspectives on legislation.

5.3.1 Indigenous Perspectives on Procurement Legislation and/or Regulation

Overall, the perspective held by Indigenous participants was that the 5% minimum procurement target needs to be legislated and/or regulated. The perception was that a

mechanism needs to be put in place to enforce the 5%. This should include accountability and transparent reporting by the GC to ensure the 5% spend has been achieved. In addition, participants shared that there should be both incentives and penalties for government procurement officers to achieve the 5%. For example, whether the 5% has been achieved could be connected to job/departmental performance—with incentives/rewards for achieving the target or penalties for not achieving the target (i.e., penalties at the individual and/or department level).

In addition to procurement legislation, Indigenous regional and national organizations believed they had an important role to play in co-creating (and co-managing) with the GC the necessary Indigenous procurement standards, principles, and procedures that must be adhered to, to ensure GC compliance. An Indigenous-led approach was identified as being important—Indigenous Peoples and organizations know best when it comes to creating policy that will directly benefit Indigenous Peoples, businesses, and communities. For example, Indigenous regional and national organizations can provide wise practices and can help to inform policy recommendations on Indigenous procurement. Indigenous regional and national organizations could also receive funding from the GC for policy-based research to ensure the GC is creating policies and practices that will benefit Indigenous Peoples, businesses, and communities.

It was identified that long term investments are required for Indigenous regional and national organizations to participate, including long term core funding and investment. For example, some National Indigenous Organizations (NIOs) and Indigenous regional organizations are already providing services to support Indigenous procurement with limited support; this can be enhanced with increased funding and resources for existing

programs and services related to procurement. In addition to a co-creative relationship between the Indigenous regional/national organizations and the GC, it was identified that a co-creative relationship must also exist among the NIOs and that they will need to work together.

5.3.2 Public Sector Perspectives on Indigenous Procurement Policy versus Legislation

During the Federal Procurement Research Project, public sector officials were asked “Do you believe an Indigenous procurement policy update or enhancement(s) to the PSIB is enough to enact the necessary behavioural change within the Government of Canada? Do you believe it needs to go further to ensure government system-wide compliance? I.e., Making Indigenous procurement policy targets into law/regulation? If yes/no, why?” (See ‘Appendix D,’ Questions for Federal Government section, question 1).

GC participants indicated that policy enhancements to the PSIB are an important step, but it will not be enough to change behaviour; it will take more than just changes to the PSIB for Indigenous procurement to take off. Some government officials suggested that the PSIB should be replaced with a new Indigenous procurement strategy. To change behaviours in the GC regarding Indigenous procurement, it was suggested by participants:

- The 5% procurement target should be made mandatory and the 5% should be mandated through public policy, across all government departments.
- More resources, training, guidance, tools for those who are doing the procurement and for those who are providing the information to procurement officers (i.e., program managers) on what they will buy.
- Mandatory cultural competency and awareness training.

- A comprehensive approach is needed, including good communications, which should be ongoing, well supported, and reinforced.

During the Federal Procurement Research Project, Eamon, a public service worker, suggested that there should be “a systems change” at the GC:

Has the system around you made it easier for you to make a decision and get a desired outcome? It’s not policy; it’s administration and operational, or tools. . . .

We need to look at the full ecosystem to see if it is facilitating the outcome and we need to see if there are incentives and mechanisms to support the change.

Interestingly, all (except one) of the public sector officials that participated in the Federal Procurement Research Project indicated that legislation is *not* the best mechanism to ensure the 5% procurement mandate is met. In contrast, during the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada public sector session in 2018, Group C indicated that a “culture shift” was needed at the GC, that “[GC] departments have indicated they won’t act unless legislated,” and that there is a “resistance to change/why do we need to do this” (Key Challenges, flip chart notes).

Similar to the discussions with Indigenous participants during the Federal Procurement Research Project, public sector officials also believed there should be a good balance of structures/incentives and consequences if targets are met/not met. Below are suggestions on how to improve Indigenous procurement at the federal level, which were shared by public sector participants (from group flip chart notes) from the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada session:

- Structures and incentives—Increase sole-source contract values to make it easier to contract with Indigenous business (without having to create a Request for Proposal

[RFP]); make the process of procuring with Indigenous businesses easier and more streamlined. Could provide more opportunities to negotiate contracts (larger than \$25,000+) with Indigenous companies (sole-source) or to limit bids to three (i.e., to make it easier for Indigenous procurement officers and for Indigenous businesses).

- Consequences—If departments do not fulfill their targets for Indigenous procurement, impact their budgets. For example, if departments do not implement the 5%, they will lose 5% of their budget.

GC participants shared that the best mechanism for compliance is public reporting:

- Internal compliance is useful, but the external scrutiny of public reporting helps to motivate people to take the mandate seriously and to make the needed changes. For example, if targets are not met, multiple stakeholders would raise questions on why target(s) were not met.
- There should be straight forward public reporting mechanisms and they should be easily found (i.e., not buried on government websites). This reporting should have metrics that are easy to understand (e.g., total values of contracts, how many went to Indigenous businesses). Reporting should also include summaries of how targets are progressing over two to three fiscal years, to ensure targets are headed in the right direction.

Most government representatives suggested that law/regulation is *not* the most effective way to enact change.¹⁷ During the Federal Procurement Research Project, Larry, a senior

¹⁷ Note: Only *one* GC official suggested that the procurement targets should be legislated during the Federal Procurement Research Project, and he specifically indicated that Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement would be an interesting model to explore for comparison.

public sector worker seemed open to having Indigenous procurement become law or regulation, but he shared a few concerns:

Making Indigenous policy law or regulation—it's good because it's firm; but there are disadvantages because it is hard to establish. Once established, it is difficult to change. There may be a need to adjust targets as we go forward (adjusting up or down). We don't know what will happen with the economy and Indigenous economy. The Indigenous population is younger but more entrepreneurial. Five percent might not work five years from now. . . . If a law, making changes to law/regulations is difficult. I'm open to a regulation or law, but the pros and cons would need to be weighed if it is more efficient to work (sic).

In addition, Larry also shared the potential negative consequences for creating a law or regulation for Indigenous procurement (i.e., instead of using policy or mandates):

Regulations are very prescriptive, and wording has to be precise; there is little to no flexibility, but it requires some flexibility. For that reason, I don't think making these policies into law/regulation is necessarily the first way. It is one approach. Until we are able to achieve a level of success or face enough barriers through policy and guidance. . . It affords that level of flexibility to reach certain targets. Plus, the unintended consequences of following a law/regulation. . . It might actually slow down the process or have negative consequences because the pace and speed on which work gets done would have so much scrutiny, because no one wants to break the law. It would slow down procurements and the processing and would require more scrutiny of each procurement. Going that approach might have a negative impact on what they are trying to achieve.

Eamon, a public service worker, also shared his concerns about using legislation for Indigenous procurement and his preference for policy to enact change:

Policy takes years; legislation takes decades. That would be a difficult path to go down. Better to focus on tangible activities to make this a reality. The problem with legislation is once enacted, it is hard to change if it doesn't work. Policy is more nimble; it can be more adaptable to realities and learnings of experiences. [Legislation] might not be the right tool to achieve the outcome.

Eamon further described that if the GC did not achieve what it wanted, it would not be because of "lack of legislation or policy" but it "could be lack of understanding or awareness, or system [sic]." In that case, Eamon suggested "tools, or there might be other things; they may be less exciting but actually produce better results."

On the supplier side (i.e., Indigenous businesses), it was indicated by GC participants that systems will need to be put in place to ensure that the increased demand for Indigenous procurement can be fulfilled (to meet the 5% target). To find the Indigenous businesses, it was suggested by GC participants that an up-to-date Indigenous business database is important, and it should have an Indigenous verification and certification process to ensure all Indigenous businesses are verified Indigenous.¹⁸

To ensure there are enough procurement-ready Indigenous businesses available to fulfill the increased demand, below are some suggestions that were shared by GC participants on support that could potentially be provided by the GC or by NIOs:

¹⁸ The context of 'verified Indigenous' is that there have been known accounts of fraud where non-Indigenous businesses indicate they are Indigenous to take advantage of the PSIB, or there have also been accounts of non-Indigenous business owners obtaining false 'Indigenous' memberships to bogus organizations claiming to be Indigenous organizations (which are not Indigenous and/or not federally recognized) or obtaining fake Indigenous status cards (see section 5.1.1).

- Capacity development and procurement-ready training for Indigenous businesses.
- Startup funds, and capital for Indigenous businesses.
- Business matchmaking—for example, if one Indigenous company cannot fulfill a procurement contract on their own, they could be matched with another Indigenous company so they can bid together.

During the Federal Procurement Research Project, GC participants shared their concerns about risk management. For example, Eamon shared his concerns about supply and demand and achieving the 5% procurement target:

There is a question of supply and demand in terms of the 5% target. . . . If the government did everything they did to achieve a 5%, would the supply be available in [Indigenous] industry to meet that? And, if yes. . . then great. . . . If no, then I would be interested to understand what are the things needed to support the greater supply of [Indigenous] industry to meet the 5% expectation and outcome. . . . It's a risk if the supply isn't there. If government departments do the 5% but the supply isn't there, it is seen as unsuccessful due to lack of supply; then it is a disincentive to do this, even if it is mandatory.

The point on risk management by the GC was significant as it demonstrates that hesitation for legislation could stem from a concern that there might not be enough procurement-ready Indigenous businesses to fulfill an increased demand due to the 5% mandate. Notably, there are no statistics to confirm how many Indigenous businesses in Canada are procurement-ready (or near to procurement-ready¹⁹), and further, there are no statistics to confirm how many procurement-ready Indigenous businesses would be willing to do

¹⁹ Near to procurement ready Indigenous businesses are those that could become procurement-ready if they received some training, support, capacity development, and/or investment to scale-up.

business with the GC.²⁰

GC participants indicated that for the 5% mandate to be successful, and to mitigate risk, it is important to invest in the supply side. For example, Jocelyn, a public service worker observed:

It's important [for the GC] to think about the demand side and the supply side—internal and external. If there is investment only on the demand side, there might not be enough business on the supply side to bid. There needs to be investment on the supply side.

Some of the suggestions made by GC participants to ensure the success of the 5% mandate included:

- Providing support to Indigenous organizations (so they can support Indigenous businesses in the bidding process).
- Opportunities to bring Indigenous businesses to GC departments.
- Help to build capacity for Indigenous businesses (e.g., associations that can provide assistance to Indigenous businesses).

It was also suggested by GC participants that having a higher volume of smaller contracts available (i.e., sole-source contracts under \$40,000) might be helpful as it would allow more Indigenous businesses to bid. In addition, it was suggested that the contracting process should be simplified (i.e., contracting with the GC can be a lengthy and complicated process).

Finally, it was suggested by GC participants that a concierge service could be helpful in providing support to Indigenous businesses that are new to the federal bidding

²⁰ Research (from the IPE-sessions, 2018 to 2021) indicate there are Indigenous businesses in Canada that choose not to do business with the GC for various reasons (e.g., past negative experiences, etc.).

process.²¹ Currently, Procurement Assistance Canada has initiatives to help increase Indigenous participation in federal procurement (PSPC, 2022b, 2022d). These initiatives include working directly with Indigenous businesses to supply them with resources and support, and a new coaching service to assist business owners “who have had limited success in competing for federal contracts” (PSPC, 2022b, Increasing Indigenous Participation in Federal Procurement section, para. 5).

Between the public sector and Indigenous business participants, what greatly differed in their perspectives is strategy. While Indigenous participants believed that legislation would be the most effective way to make the GC comply with the 5% minimum target, the public sector participants indicated that systems change, leadership (i.e., buy-in and leadership from the top-down), communications, and policy, were the most important mechanisms to ensure the success of the 5% procurement mandate. In addition, as previously described, the main concern by public sector participants was that there would not be enough Indigenous supply to fulfill the increased demand due to the 5% procurement mandate.

5.4 Research Findings – How to Measure Successful Procurement

When engaging with Indigenous businesses, Indigenous national and regional organizations, the public sector, and the (non-Indigenous) private sector during the IPE-sessions, all agreed that successful federal procurement was measured based on the percentage of procurement completed with Indigenous businesses. Based on the IPE-sessions, the focus has been on achieving a 5% Indigenous procurement minimum, which reflects the 5% Indigenous population in Canada. As of the writing of this PhD thesis,

²¹ Note: This was a suggestion only, it does not indicate that the GC has such a concierge service.

discussions were still happening at the GC level to determine how the 5% should be calculated (i.e., percentage of procurement with Indigenous businesses, percentage of set asides, job creation, etc.). In this section, I examine some considerations for measurement and potential opportunities to support successful Indigenous procurement based on the data collected from the IPE-sessions.

5.4.1 Considerations for the Measurement of Successful Procurement: The Importance of Data Collection and Transparent Reporting

During the Federal Procurement Research Project, it was acknowledged by public service workers that the data collection and reporting methods needed to be improved and modernized, as some departments were still working off Microsoft Excel Workbooks. To calculate successful procurement, strong data sets must be created and there must be a public reporting mechanism that is transparent, user friendly, and easy to find²² on the GC website. For example, Larry, a public service worker, suggested that for the GC to be accountable for the 5% minimum procurement target, it is important to have transparency in reporting:

To be honest, the best mechanism for compliance is public reporting. Having federal government organizations to report against the target is the best way to get compliance. Internal compliance is useful, but the external scrutiny when things are public helps either motivate or force people to take this seriously and make changes. If not meeting targets, multiple stakeholders will raise questions. . . For example, media, academics, stakeholders. . . People will ask why [i.e., if the targets were not met]. That would be helpful to ensure system wide compliance [i.e., federal—all

²² As of the writing of this thesis, it was challenging to find clear data on the total percentage of Indigenous procurement (i.e., for federal departments) and the GC website was not user friendly.

departments and agencies].

To improve the Indigenous procurement process, it is also important to keep lines of communication open with NIOs and with Indigenous businesses. Through this ongoing engagement, and through the co-design processes, metrics and targets can be co-developed by the public sector and private sector, with NIOs and Indigenous businesses. GC procurement reports and data can be used to find gaps and opportunities. For example, data and reporting can help GC procurement officers to assess which targets were hit (or not hit) and why. Reporting and data can also be used to identify future opportunities to improve the Indigenous procurement process.

Percentage of Indigenous Procurement

One of the simplest ways to calculate Indigenous procurement is by percentage of Indigenous procurement. Through the IPE-sessions that took place from 2018 to 2020, it was determined that on federal procurement, a 5% minimum Indigenous procurement target should be achieved. However, in some of the small focus group sessions and one-on-one sessions during the 2021 Federal Procurement Research Project, some participants acknowledged that on provincial, territorial, regional, and municipal levels, this percentage should be reconsidered based on Indigenous populations in different regions where the Indigenous percentage is greater than 5%.

For example, in the 2016 Census, 12.7% (15,075) of Thunder Bay residents reported their identity as Indigenous (Statistics Canada, 2017a). If the percentage of the Indigenous population is used as a determining factor for setting minimum federal procurement targets, I argue that this should also be considered at the provincial, territorial, regional, and municipal levels as well. For example, the 12.7% estimated Indigenous

population in Thunder Bay should be considered for setting a municipal procurement target of 12.7%. I argue that a *minimum* of 5% Indigenous procurement should be considered at the provincial, territorial, regional, and municipal levels to reflect the mandate set at the federal level; however, in regions where the Indigenous population is higher than 5% (such as the example of Thunder Bay), I further argue that the minimum procurement targets should be raised to reflect the Indigenous population in that region.

Percentage of Indigenous Procurement Set Asides

In one of the Federal Procurement Research Project sessions, Isaac, a public service worker suggested: “When a procurement project involves First Nations populations or communities, all effort should be made to procure from First nations-owned companies first.” I agree with this assertion as First Nations-based projects provide an opportunity for First Nations companies to provide products, service, and (cultural) knowledge. It also contributes to the reconciliation (and economic reconciliation) agenda, which is about empowering First Nations Peoples and communities and to build strong economies.

When an economic development project is being done in a First Nations community (on-reserve), I argue that the procurement set aside should be 100% to reflect the First Nations population. If there is a deficit of skilled labour for a specific project (including workers, contractors, and local businesses), I further argue that every effort should be made to build the capacity of a First Nations community so the community can take advantage of the contracting and employment opportunities. This includes early engagement with the community at the political levels (i.e., elected Chief and Council and/or traditional Chief and Council) and among local business owners (if there are local First Nations businesses).

Capacity development considerations should include training and educational

programs to build the needed skills for an economic development opportunity. Capacity development might also include investment in local First Nations businesses to scale up their businesses to meet the demand for large-scale economic development projects. For example, if there is a local First Nations-owned construction company and a large-scale economic development opportunity is presented, investment could be made so that a First Nations construction company can hire additional contractors or employees to meet the needs of the project. Or, if it is not possible for local First Nations businesses to scale up to meet the needs of a project, a JV partnership might be appropriate. If the JV partnership is with a non-Indigenous partner, it is important that the First Nations partner plays a meaningful role in the project and that the non-Indigenous partner commits to supporting capacity development (and leadership development) for the First Nations partner.

During this time of economic reconciliation, I argue that investment in building strong First Nations supply chains is crucial to building the economies of First Nations communities. Strong, thriving First Nations communities will contribute to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Canada. In addition, community wealth building will allow First Nations communities to rely less on government funding and empower communities to invest in infrastructure and development of important programs, such as cultural and language revitalization efforts (Anderson, 2001; Anderson et al., 2006a; Barberstock, 2015).

Number of Indigenous Jobs Created

Another way to measure Indigenous procurement is in the creation of Indigenous jobs, which are associated with procurement projects. To build strong Indigenous business supply chains, I argue that the best scenario is when an Indigenous-owned company works

on a procurement project and can hire (or contract) Indigenous workers for the project. However, in situations where it is not possible to contract an Indigenous company (privately owned or band-owned enterprise), a non-Indigenous company should be required to hire (or contract) as many Indigenous workers for the project as possible. For large-scale procurement and economic development projects, capacity can be built by providing training and education programs to ensure local Indigenous Peoples can be hired/contracted.

Social Impact (or Social Return on Investment)

Social impact and/or Social Return on Investment (SROI) are other factors that can be considered for successful Indigenous procurement. When procurement results in positive change in a First Nations community and contributes to solving a pressing social and/or environmental issue, this can contribute to success factors in procurement. To date, there is no single agreed upon measure of social impact or SROI (Ryan & Lyne, 2008); however, this could be an opportunity for further research and development. (NB: the calculation of social impact or SROI on Indigenous procurement projects is beyond the scope of my PhD research).

Other Considerations – Sole-source Contracts

While facilitating the IPE-sessions, much of the focus was on larger scale multi-million-dollar procurement projects (i.e., Tier 1, Tier 2). Based on my research, few Indigenous firms are participating in large scale procurement (i.e., construction companies, office furniture companies, etc.). Most of the large-scale procurement is currently conducted by Indigenous firms in JVs with larger multi-million-dollar non-Indigenous corporations. Based on my engagement with Indigenous businesses, it was shared that in

many of these JVs, the Indigenous firms are not contributing much, other than “checking off a box” for being the Indigenous partner (this was described in detail in the ‘Challenges’ section of this chapter—see section 5.1.1).

As most Indigenous businesses are small in scale (i.e., 1-2 employees and under \$100,000 in revenues) (CCAB, 2016), where I can see some excellent opportunities for Indigenous businesses is in sole-source contracting with the GC at the federal, provincial, and territorial levels. For example, Indigenous businesses can pursue up to \$40,000 sole-source contracts with the GC without needing to go to bid. For smaller firms, this provides opportunities to create relationships with different departments in the GC and to provide products and services. Sole-source contracts are also an excellent way for Indigenous firms to grow in experience and capacity, so they can position themselves to bid on larger contracts in the future. If more Indigenous businesses participate in sole-source contracts, this could contribute to the 5% minimum procurement target.

One critique of sole-source contracting is that it can result in accusations of favouritism or cronyism among (Indigenous or non-Indigenous) businesses in dealing with governments at all levels (i.e., because sole-source contracts do not have to go to bid) (Last, 2020; Office of the Procurement Ombudsman, 2021). However, as mentioned above, sole-source contracts are an accessible form of contracting for many small Indigenous businesses, and I argue there are more benefits to pursuing sole-source contracts than not.

5.5 Tensions Between First Nations Community Perspectives and First Nations Firm Perspectives

In the IPE-sessions, I observed that larger First Nations firm perspectives were being heard, but smaller First Nations businesses, and First Nations community voices were missing. National and regional Indigenous organizations that work closely with First

Nations communities have valuable perspectives to share based on their community engagement; however, missing from our IPE-sessions were the voices of First Nations economic development officers, Chiefs and/or Councillors with economic development portfolios, and/or smaller First Nations member (on-reserve) owned businesses. In terms of larger scale procurement, large First Nations firms that have been successful in procurement bring important perspectives; however, I argue that the voices of smaller First Nations firms and First Nations communities are also important as they represent the on-reserve First Nations supply chain and represent future opportunities to scale-up for larger projects.

Based on my professional experiences as a First Nations consultant over the past nine years, and based on my research on First Nations economic development (Barberstock, 2015) and Indigenous social innovation and entrepreneurship (Barberstock, 2017), I posit that the following situations can cause tension between First Nations communities and privately owned First Nations firms:

- When economic development or business opportunities are presented to a First Nations community, politics can play a role in who gets (or does not get) the opportunity. For example, in my Master's research in 2016, one business owner shared his frustration that his First Nation community was aware of his business but that they still contracted people outside of the community instead of giving the work to his company (Barberstock, 2017).
- First Nations communities might have different goals than individual businesses. For example, Comprehensive Community Plans (CCP) summarize the goals of a community, including economic goals, but individual businesses might have

different values, goals, and plans entirely. This can create tension when external businesses or organizations present opportunities to the community via the political level (i.e., Chief and Council) versus presenting opportunities directly to the local First Nations business community (i.e., views and perspectives within a First Nations community are not homogenous) (Barberstock, 2015; Barberstock, 2017).

- In a First Nations community where there is a blend of band-owned and privately-owned enterprises, there might be situations where band-owned enterprises and privately-owned enterprises are in competition for the same procurement/economic development opportunities. For example, if there is a band-owned construction company and a privately owned construction company, and an economic development opportunity for construction is presented to the community, they would be in competition (Barberstock, 2017).
- “Crabs in a bucket”²³, lateral violence, and jealousy in First Nations communities can also create tension for local First Nations businesses. Based on my Master’s research on Indigenous social innovation and entrepreneurship (Barberstock, 2017), these were common issues experienced by First Nations businesses that were located on-reserve.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter provided insights from Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives on the current challenges and obstacles to Indigenous procurement in Canada. Second, it provided insights on potential solutions and wise practices. Third, this chapter provided

²³ “Crabs in a bucket” is an analogy to describe how people can sabotage the success of others. In the analogy, as the crab is about to climb out of the bucket, the other crabs pull it back down.

potential considerations for measuring ‘successful Indigenous procurement.’ Finally, the tensions between First Nations community perspectives of procurement in contrast to individual firm perspectives were explored. In the next chapter, I will explore whether Indigenous procurement should be federally legislated by examining Indigenous procurement policy in comparison to the mandate employed by Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement.

CHAPTER 6

SHOULD INDIGENOUS PROCURMENT BE LEGISLATED? FEDERAL INDIGENOUS PROCUREMENT POLICY VERSUS ARTICLE 24 OF THE NUNAVUT AGREEMENT

6.1 Introduction – Nunavut and Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement

In 1993, Inuit negotiated the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* (*Nunavut Agreement*). In the agreement, Inuit agreed to ‘surrender’ their “Aboriginal land rights in exchange for money, title to smaller tracts of land, specified rights and political development. Most famously, the agreement divided the Northwest Territories to create the new Nunavut Territory” (Hicks & White, 2015, as cited in Bernauer, 2019, p. 408). In 2006, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) filed a lawsuit against the Government of Canada (GC) for breach of contract. The lawsuit was filed in the Nunavut Court of Justice in Iqaluit after it was identified by Inuit that the GC had not lived up to its responsibilities and therefore the GC had violated the Nunavut Agreement (Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated [NTI], 2006).

In an NTI (2006) Press Release, *NTI Launches Lawsuit Against Government of Canada for Breach of Contract*, NTI President Paul Kaludjak stated,

The Government of Canada keeps Inuit dependent and in a state of financial and emotional despair despite promises made when the NLCA [Nunavut Land Claims Agreement] was signed in 1993. The Government of Canada is not holding up its end of the bargain. Canada got everything it wanted immediately upon signing the NLCA. Inuit are still waiting for full implementation of the Agreement. (Para. 3)

Suing the government eventually led to the GC (2019a) *Directive on Government Contracts, Including Real Property Leases, in the Nunavut Settlement Area*. In this policy, Inuit firms receive preferential treatment for government contracts in the Nunavut Settlement Area, as it is now mandated by law (GC, 2019a; NTI, 2022a; PSPC, 2019a).

In contrast, as part of the Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business (PSIB), a minimum target of 5% has been set for Indigenous procurement with the federal government; however, this is mandated but not legislated, which means there are no consequences if they do not fulfill the 5% target. For this reason, the main purpose of this chapter is to examine the differences between how Indigenous procurement is being handled nationally (i.e., through federal procurement policy) versus Inuit procurement in Nunavut.

I will compare and contrast which underlying factors influenced the decisions for both of these policies and will also explore the effectiveness of both solutions. I will do this by examining the current PSIB policies and the data from the Indigenous Procurement Engagement sessions (IPE-sessions). For the Inuit procurement policy, I will examine secondary data sets (i.e., annual reports) to explore how the procurement occurs and whether the policy has been successful in its mandate. Further, I will evaluate current Nunavut procurement policy and legislation by assessing policy reviews, which provide background information on what was used to evaluate policy.

In this chapter, I will first examine the geography and demographics of Inuit in Nunavut to provide context for procurement policy in Nunavut. Then, I will provide a brief overview of the Inuit business economy. Finally, I will examine Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement to explore whether there are lessons that can be learned and applied to

Indigenous procurement in Canada.

6.2 Nunavut – Geography and Demographics

According to the 2021 census,²⁴ there are approximately 70,545 Inuit living in Canada, with over two-thirds (69%) living in Inuit Nunangat—the homeland of Inuit in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Inuit Nunangat is composed of four Inuit regions: “Nunatsiavut (Northern coastal Labrador), Nunavik (Northern Quebec), the territory of Nunavut, and the Inuvialuit region (Northwest Territories)” (Arriagada & Bleakney, 2019, para. 1; Statistics Canada, 2022e). The territory of Nunavut (“Our Land” in Inuktitut) (GC, 2017) encompasses a land mass of 1,836,993.78 km² and has an Inuit population of 30,865 residents, which represents 43.7% of the Inuit population in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022b, 2022c, 2022e). Nunavut is also home to approximately 180 First Nations Peoples, and 120 Métis Peoples (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

Research demonstrates that Inuit experience unique challenges due to their geography and socioeconomic factors, including housing issues and lower levels of education (Statistics Canada, 2022d). In 2021, two in five Inuit (40.1%, or 28,260 people) in Nunavut lived in crowded homes, compared to the national average of 9.4% for the non-Indigenous population in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022d). Based on data from the National Household Survey, 2011, three in ten Inuit (29%) aged 25 to 64 in Nunavut had postsecondary qualifications (i.e., certificate, diploma or degree from a trade school, college, or university), compared to 80% of the non-Indigenous population (Arriagada, 2016; Statistics Canada 2016d). Among Inuit with a postsecondary education, Inuit were

²⁴ At the time of writing this thesis, only some parts of the 2021 Census were available. Statistics from 2011 and 2016 were used where 2021 statistics were not available.

more likely than non-Indigenous graduates to have completed trades or college programs (Arriagada, 2016). In 2011, 60% of Inuit aged 25 to 65 did not have a certificate, diploma, or degree, compared to 5% of the non-Indigenous population (Arriagada, 2016; Statistics Canada, 2016d).

According to Statistics Canada, in 2017, six in ten (61%) working age Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat were employed. Research demonstrates that there is a significant number of Inuit that do not participate in the wage economy: 30% of Inuit (ages 25-54) in Inuit Nunangat were not part of the labour force (Arriagada & Bleakney, 2019). The unemployment rates were highest in Nunatsiavut (33%), Nunavut (31%), Inuvialuit (29%), and Nunavik (27%) (Arriagada & Bleakney, 2019). Statistics Canada indicates that the main reason for unemployment was the belief by Inuit job seekers that there was no work available (Arriagada & Bleakney, 2019). In addition, Inuit men were most likely to be discouraged as job seekers (42% Inuit men versus 14% Inuit women) (Arriagada & Bleakney, 2019).

The Inuit economy is complex compared to the non-Indigenous population as a high proportion (eight-in-ten, 85%) of working age (25-54) Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat participate in traditional land-based activities such as hunting, fishing, and gathering (Arriagada & Bleakney, 2019). Up to 27% of working age Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat reported participating in land-based activities to make money or to supplement their existing income (Kumar et al., 2019, as cited in Arriagada & Bleakney, 2019). The barriers to participation in land-based economies include climate change, loss of traditional knowledge, lack of resources and financial supports for equipment and supplies, and changes in government policies regarding hunting and harvesting (Kumar et al., 2019, as

cited in Arriagada & Bleakney, 2019).

Some major strengths of Inuit in Nunavut include a strong connection to culture and language and a large working-class population. In 2021, 19,370 Inuit (63%) reported the ability to speak an *Inuktitut* (Inuit) language in Nunavut (Statistics Canada, 2022b). Indigenous languages most spoken by Inuit in Nunavut include *Inuktitut* (19,130 speakers), *Inuinnaqtun* (Inuvialuktun) (230 speakers), *Inuinnaqtun* (215 speakers), and *Inuvialuktun* (10 speakers) and other Inuktitut (Inuit) languages (10 speakers) (Statistics Canada, 2022b). In 2021, the Inuit population was younger than the non-Indigenous population in Nunavut, with 26.5 years as the average age of Inuit, compared with the average of 37.9 years for the non-Indigenous population (Statistics Canada, 2022a).

6.3 Federal Procurement Policy for Inuit Nunangat

The Inuit Nunangat Policy applies to:

all [GC] federal departments and agencies, guiding them in the design, development and delivery of all new or renewed federal policies, programs, services, and initiatives that apply in Inuit Nunangat and/or benefit Inuit, including programs of general application, and to support Inuit self-determination. (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada [CIRNAC], 2022b, para. 1)

The purpose of the policy is to “promote prosperity” and to provide “socio-economic and cultural equity between Inuit and other Canadians” (CIRNAC, 2022b, para. 1). The CIRNAC (2022b) procurement policy is part of the larger Inuit Nunangat Policy, and it provides guidelines for how the GC supports Inuit procurement in Canada. Below is a summary of the CIRNAC (2022b) *Inuit Nunangat Policy—Guidance for Specific Program and Policy Areas—Federal Procurement*.

1. Fair and equitable access to federal procurement activity in Inuit Nunangat will strengthen economic development and support new and existing Inuit-owned businesses across Inuit Nunangat. Fulfilment of existing modern treaty obligations and support for joint ventures between Inuit-owned businesses across Inuit Nunangat are essential to this effort. To achieve these outcomes, the federal government will, subject to applicable modern treaty and legal obligations, including the *Government Contracts Regulations*, work with Inuit to:

- Develop tools, guidance and policies to address implementation challenges and ensure federal procurement officers are better equipped and trained to meet all procurement obligations set out in Inuit-Crown treaties;
- Build and invest in Inuit business capacity to compete for government contracts by prioritizing Inuit access to federal procurement, drawing upon existing measures such as those outlined in the Nunavut-specific procurement policy directive, and co-developing guidance on fulfilling Inuit-Crown treaty procurement obligations; and,
- Identify and address barriers that Inuit face in accessing procurement opportunities, enhance the readiness of Inuit businesses to compete, and promote equity of access to procurement in and amongst Inuit regions. (CIRNAC, 2022b, Guidance for Specific Program and Policy Areas section, Federal Procurement, paras. 1-4)

Government procurement in the Nunavut Settlement Area follows the Nunavut Directive for contracting (including real property leases). According to the Canada School of Public Service (CSPS) (2021) *Introduction to Procurement Obligations in the Nunavut*

Settlement Area, government procurement officers should check the Inuit Firm Registry (IFR) to determine if they need to limit bids to Inuit firms. The Nunavut Directive *only* recognizes a firm as an Inuit firm if it is registered in the Inuit Firm Registry (IFR), which is maintained by NTI (Canada School of Public Service [CSPS], 2021). The Nunavut Directive applies to GC procurement of goods, services, construction, or leasing real property for Nunavut (CSPS, 2021). According to the CSPS (2021), the procurement policy for Nunavut specifies:

- For real property leases of \$1K or less and contract tenders of \$5-25K, bids must be limited if there is at least one Inuit Firm on the IFR.
- For real property leases over \$100K and contract tenders over \$25K, bids must be limited if there are at least two Inuit Firms on the IFR.
- Otherwise, open bidding is permitted. (Step Three: Check the Inuit Firm Registry and Determine if You Need to Limit Bids to Inuit Firms section, paras. 4-6)

Depending on the estimated value of the contract or lease, the bid criteria may require Inuit or Nunavut Benefits Criteria (CSPS, 2021). Inuit Benefits Criteria “rate bidders on whether they have included training, employment, and subcontracting opportunities for Inuit. The Nunavut Benefit Criterion rates bidders on whether the business or part of the business is in the Nunavut Settlement Area” (CSPS, 2021, Step Four: Ask Firms to Include Inuit and Nunavut Benefits Criteria section, paras. 3-4).

Based on this policy, some of the challenges that can occur include not procuring products or services from Inuit Firms if there are no applicable Inuit Firms (or not enough Inuit Firms based on bidding requirements) listed in the IFR. For non-Inuit firms, it is possible that this policy could have a negative effect for business if the non-Inuit firms

previously relied on government contracts (and if they are now losing contracts to Inuit Firms due to the policy). However, data from the *Government of Nunavut Contract Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20* demonstrates that the majority of contracts are still being won by ‘other’ (non-Inuit) firms (Government of Nunavut [GN], 2020).

6.4 Business Databases and Available Inuit Firms

In Nunavut, the IFR is managed by NTI. According to the NTI (2022b) website their mandate is to: “Maintain and promote the Inuit firm registry, assert Inuit economic rights and benefits, and support Inuit developing the Nunavut economy” (para. 1). As of April 20, 2022, the NTI (2022c) Inuit Firm Registry had a listing of 432 Inuit Firms. NTI (2022b) defines an “Inuit Firm” as:

An entity which complies with the legal requirements to carry on business in the Nunavut Settlement Area, and which is:

- a) A limited company with at least 51% of the company’s voting shares beneficially owned by Inuit, or
- b) A cooperative controlled by Inuit, or
- c) An Inuk sole proprietorship or partnership. (Para. 3)

On the NTI (2022c) Inuit Firm Registry, a search can be conducted based on company name, keyword search, by region (Kivalliq, Kitikmeot, Baffin, or Out of Territory), or by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) (i.e., some NAICS categories include: Accommodation/Restaurant Services, Air Transportation Services, Communication Services, Construction Services, etc.). Once a search has been completed on the NTI (2022c) Inuit Firm Registry, a table summarizes the number of Inuit firms available (based on search criteria), name of company, a brief summary of the of

business, location, and a Class Number. The NTI (2022c) website indicates there are three different classes of Inuit ownership within the Inuit Firm Registry, including:

- Class 1: 51% – 75% Inuit Ownership.
- Class 2: 76% – 99% Inuit Ownership.
- Class 3: 100% Inuit Ownership. (Para. 4)

Once an Inuit Firm is selected from the NTI (2022c) Inuit Firm Registry Search page, a summary of the company provides a full listing of services and/or products, contact information, and applicable NAICS codes. What is missing from the Inuit Firm Registry is an indication of capacity and available workforce for each company. This is relevant as it is important for buyers in the public and private sectors to have an indication of workforce and capacity. They want to understand whether they are dealing with a company that has one full-time employee, or a whole complement of staff; and they want to know what the capacity of the company is to fulfill contracts, especially large procurement contracts.

6.5 Is Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement an Effective Mechanism for Increasing Inuit Procurement? Why or Why Not? Are There Obstacles to Success?

The *Government of Nunavut Contract Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20*, provides an annual report to “measure the GN’s [Government of Nunavut’s] progress towards achieving the objectives of Article 24 of the *Nunavut Agreement*” (GN, 2020, p.3). In this section, key themes from the report will be shared to assess the success of Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement, and to observe whether it has resulted in increased Inuit procurement in Nunavut. It is important to note that although statistics have been provided in the *Government of Nunavut Contracting Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20*, the report does not provide a qualitative data analysis (GN, 2020). Although total contract values and volumes are helpful to assess how much procurement has occurred, what is

missing from the report is the stories and perspectives of Inuit and Inuit communities. For example, if Inuit contracts have decreased one year (or increased), there is no qualitative data to indicate why this has occurred.

6.5.1 Multi-Year Trends - Government of Nunavut Contracting Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20

Below are some highlights from the *Government of Nunavut Contracting Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20* (focusing solely on Inuit participation) (GN, 2020).

- Over the last fourteen (14) years, since 2006/07, the volume of contracts to Inuit has increased by 53%.
- Over the last twelve (12) years, since 2006/07 to 2017/18, generally the value and volume of contracts for Inuit has been increasing.
- Over the last twelve (12) years, Inuit Firms have been most successful at winning contracts for Major and Minor Construction and Air Charters, with Air Charter and Minor Construction contracts in the >\$25,000 and <\$100,000 categories being the most successful. Inuit Firms have been less successful in contracts in the categories of Architectural and Engineering, Consulting Services and Services Contracts—most contracts in these areas are awarded to Other (non-Inuit or Nunavut) Firms.
- Inuit Firms win more contracts with a value of less than \$25,000. As the value of contracts increases, the proportionate number of contracts Inuit Firms win declines. This trend has been consistent over the past nine (9) years. (Note: This is due to Procurement Policies of the GN, which specify that goods and services purchases with a value less than \$25,000 are sourced locally, within Nunavut, where there are 3 or more vendors available to bid and provide the good or services).

- In 2019/20, 20% of the bids received were from Inuit Firms. Historically, these numbers have remained consistent. The overall volume of contracts has increased; however, the share of Inuit bids has remained between 25-30%. In 2018/19, this trend ended, and the percent share dropped to 19% in 2018/19 and to 20% in 2019/20.
- Inuit Firms win a greater percentage share of contracts when goods are included in the contracting statistics. Inuit Firms are more successful for goods contracts rather than service contracts. This is an eleven (11 year) trend.
- The number of Inuit Firms responding to Tender calls for Major Works Constructions remains high between 2016 – 2019. This indicates a consistent level of participation by Inuit Firms in this area.
- Over the last fourteen (14) years, it can be generally stated that Inuit Firms win 30% volume of contracts, Nunavut Firms 5%, and Other Firms 65%. This indicates that although Inuit Firms are most successful as local bidders, ‘Other Firms’ (which can include non-registered Nunavut businesses or businesses outside of Nunavut) win most contracts with the NG. (GN, 2020, pp. 5-6)

Based on the data from the *Government of Nunavut Contracting Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20*, it is evident that GN contracts with Inuit firms have been increasing over the past decade; however, Inuit firms are only winning 30% of the contracts, and the contracts are mainly for small contracts (\$25,000 or less) (GN, 2020). In addition, ‘Other Firms’ (including non-registered Nunavut businesses or businesses outside of Nunavut) are winning most of the contracts (65%) (GN, 2020). In 2016, a *Nunatsiaq News* article titled “Disgruntled Firms Heap Scorn on Nunavut Government Contracting Policies,” described

the frustration by Inuit on how they were losing contracts to southern companies that were not headquartered in the north and did not provide employment for Inuit (Ducharme, 2016). Although Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement resulted in preferential treatment in contracting with Inuit firms (GC, 2019a), it is evident that there is still a long way to go for more Inuit firms to benefit from this policy through increased contracting.

6.5.2 Revised NNI Policy (Regulations) – April 1, 2017

According to the GN (2017) *Plain Language Guide to the NNI*, the NNI is a “set of rules providing for preferential treatment in public procurement of Inuit Firms, Nunavut businesses and contractors employing Inuit, local or Nunavut labour as set out in the Nunavummi Nangminiqagtunik Ikajuuti Regulation, R-023-2017” (p. 1). On April 1, 2017, the NNI Implementation Act and its Regulation came into force, which increased the total possible bid adjustments²⁵ from 21% to 25%, and an increase from 7% to 15% for 100% owned Inuit Firms (GN, 2020).

In the *Government of Nunavut Contract Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20*, the number of contracts awarded due to the NNI Bid Adjustments remained low at 3.4% (GN, 2020). In 2019/20, there were 77 contracts that were affected by the NNI Regulations, which means these contracts “would have been awarded to different contractors if not for the NNI Regulations” (GN, 2020, p. 6). Over an eleven (11) year period, on average, only 3% of contract awards were a direct result of the NNI Regulations, and most of the contracts won due to the NNI application were overwhelmingly (83-96%) Purchase Orders—Goods (GN, 2020).

²⁵ A Bid Adjustment is “the amount by which a bid’s face value, or total price, in a procurement process is reduced based on Inuit Firm status and Nunavut business registration” (GN, 2017, p. 2).

Based on the statistics shared in the *Government of Nunavut Contract Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20*, it is evident that although the NNI Regulations resulted in increased contracts for Inuit firms, it was low (at 3.4%) and did *not* result in a significant increase in contracting (GN, 2020).

6.5.3 Sole Source Contracts – Inuit Firms

The *Government of Nunavut Contract Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20*, indicates that for sole-source contracts over \$25,000, most contracts are service contracts, and they are “overwhelmingly awarded to Other (non-Inuit and non-Nunavut) companies,” which provide specialized services (i.e., consulting services and service contracts) not available in Nunavut (GN, 2020, p. 8). On average, over a 3-year period (2017 – 2020), only 4% of the volume for sole-source contracts were awarded to Inuit Firms, while 96% were awarded to Other Firms (GN, 2020).

Some of the general categories of goods and services needed by the GN (2020) include: “Informatics and Systems, Software, Education Books, Training Aids, Engineering and Architectural Service Firms and Specialized Training and Consulting” (p. 10). The GN (2020) observes that the local marketplace often cannot satisfy these needs, so these types of contracts are normally sole-sourced. Other specialized services needed by the GN (2020) include: “open custody contracts for the Department of Justice, mental health care, specialized residential care, dental care, for the Departments of Health and Family Services and information technology services for Community & Government Services” (p. 14). Most of these services contracts are awarded to non-Inuit and non-Nunavut firms (GN, 2020). The overall trend for the past 14 years has been that over 90% of the value of contracts sole-sourced in the \$25,000 to \$100,000 contract range are

awarded to non-Inuit and non-Nunavut firms (GN, 2020).

According to the GN (2020), “the Criteria for a Sole Sourcing a Contract are set out in Section 4.3. (c) and Section 21 of the Regulations to the NNI Implementation Act” (p. 36). However, the GN (2020) specifies that there are situations when the NNI does not apply to a sole-sourced contract for the supply of goods, services, real property or construction where the Contract Authority reasonably believes:

- i. that the supply thereof is urgently required, and a delay would be injurious to the public interest,²⁶
- ii. only one party is available and capable of performing the Contract; or
- iii. the value of the Contract will not exceed \$25,000 in the case of a Contract for architectural or engineering services, or \$5,000 in the case of any other type of Contract. (p. 36)

When the GN (2020) is pursuing a sole-source contract under section 21.1 of the Regulations of the NNI Implementation Act, the following factors are taken into account:

- a) the need to build capacity for Inuit Firms in the region where the Contract will be performed;
- b) the extent to which a Sole-source Contract will contribute to community and regional economic development;
- c) the nature and value of the goods or services or construction; and
- d) the potential cost implications associated with awarding a Contract without administering a competitive Procurement Process. (p. 36)

In general, the 14-year trend is that most sole-source contracts over \$100,000 are awarded

²⁶ For example, emergency situations, such as flooding, a bridge collapse, or COVID-19 resources needed in a short period of time (GN, 2020).

to ‘Other’ (non-Inuit and non-Nunavut) contractors (GN, 2020). In 2019/20, only 5% of sole-source contracts of value over \$100,000 were awarded to Inuit Firms; in 2018/19, only 11% were awarded to Inuit Firms; and in 2017/18, only 2% were awarded to Inuit Firms (GN, 2020). Sole-source contracts are primarily composed of service contracts (GN, 2020) (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1

Sole-Source Contracts Over \$100,000 Awarded to Inuit Firms Between Fiscal Years 2017 to 2020

Fiscal Year	Percentage of Sole Sourced Contracts Over \$100,000 Awarded to Inuit Firms (%)
2017/18	2
2018/19	11
2019/20	5

Source: GN, 2020

Based on the key insights and trends from the *Government of Nunavut Contract Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20*, it is evident that the level of sole-source contracts over \$100,000 for Inuit is low (5%), while non-Inuit and non-Nunavut based firms are winning most of the contracts (GN, 2020). In the next section, I will explore some of the challenges and strengths for Inuit in the Nunavut business sector.

6.5.4 Challenges and Strengths for Inuit in the Nunavut Business Sector

In *The Government of Nunavut 2019/20 Contract Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20*, the GN (2020) observes that in some cases, the Nunavut economy “has insufficient volume to develop and maintain a successful business sector or industry” (p. 9). In addition,

Challenges to successful entry and growth in some [Nunavut] business sectors include the limited local market demand in Nunavut for a relatively small and widely distributed population, transportation costs in this vast geography, sufficient critical mass in skilled labour, trades and professionals and infrastructure, delivery and/or sale volumes relative to initialization, and set up costs coupled with high operating costs of business operations. Such an operating environment and market conditions can, in certain business sectors, create significant challenges for Nunavut’s entrepreneurs. (GN, 2020, p. 9)

This observation helps to explain why Inuit and Nunavut businesses fall short in winning contracts compared to ‘Other’²⁷ businesses—even despite a preference by the GN for Inuit and Nunavut-based businesses. For example, in 2019/20, out of \$558,254²⁸ contracts awarded, Inuit won \$122,003 in contracts (22%), while Nunavut (non-Inuit) businesses won \$10,333 (2%) in contracts, and ‘Other’ businesses won \$425,918 (76%) in contracts.

When examining the distribution of contracts awarded by type (based on value) in 2019/20, Inuit were the most successful in winning contracts for Construction (\$60,241, or 97%), Air Charter (\$5,948 or 75%), Minor Construction or Maintenance Services (\$12,804 or 59%), and Purchase Orders for goods (\$14,859 or 33%). Inuit were the least successful in obtaining contracts in Architectural Engineering (0%), Consulting Services (\$2,613 or

²⁷ ‘Other’ businesses may include non-Inuit or non-Nunavut businesses, or they can also represent “business sectors in the Nunavut economy which are at a competitive disadvantage, or are otherwise underdeveloped” (GN, 2020, p. 9).

²⁸ These statistics are based on Government of Nunavut Distribution of All Contracts Award by Status Category, Based on Value for 2019/20—they have excluded contracts awarded to sole proprietorships/individuals, residential care and treatment facilities and health care providers, hamlets, municipal corporations, and related entities (GN, 2020).

6%), and Service Contracts (\$25,542 or 7%) (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2

Contracts Awarded by Type (Based on Dollar Value) in 2019/20 to Inuit Firms by the Government of Nunavut

Type	Inuit Firm Success (\$)	Inuit Firm Success (%)
Construction	60,241	97
Air Charter	5,948	75
Minor Construction or Maintenance Services	12,804	59
Purchase Orders for Goods	14,859	33
Architectural Engineering	0	0
Consulting Services	2,613	6
Service Contracts	25,542	7

Source: GN, 2020

When examining the same statistics for 2018/19 and 2017/18, Inuit consistently are the most successful with Air Charter (64% in 2018/19; 94% in 2017/18), Construction (99% in 2018/19; 94% in 2017/18), and Minor Construction or Maintenance Services contracts (61% in 2018/19; 52% in 2017/19) (GN, 2020).

For the greater than \$100,000 category (excluding goods), Service Contracts represent the largest portion of contracts in this category (this has been consistent for the past 8 years) (GN, 2020). For the fiscal year 2019/20, Inuit firms were awarded 6% of the total Service Contracts (versus 5% in 2018/19, and 8% in 2017/18) (GN, 2020). The overall pattern identified by the GN (2020) for total volume of contracts in the greater than \$100,000 (excluding goods) category (including Air Charter, Architectural Engineering, Construction, Consulting Services, Minor Construction or Maintenance Services, and Service Contracts) is that “Inuit firms win an average of 18% of these contracts, Nunavut

firms win 5% of these contracts and Other firms win 77% of the volume of these contracts” (GN, 2020, p. 32).

Although these data indicate that Inuit are most successful in winning contracts for Construction, Air Charters, and Purchase Orders for goods, overall, ‘Other’ firms (non-Inuit and non-Nunavut based firms) are most successful in winning the greatest volume of contracts with the GN (GN, 2020). According to the GN (2020), potential challenges include the geography of Nunavut (i.e., lack of business volume to have a sustainable business in the region) and the need for specialized services, which are only available from other non-Inuit and non-Nunavut based firms.

6.5.5 Contracts Awarded to Inuit Firms When Locally Based

According to *The Government of Nunavut 2019/20 Contract Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20*, when contracts valued between \$25,000 and \$100,000 (excluding goods) for 2019/20 took place in the same community where the work was required, Inuit Firms won most of the contracts (GN, 2020). In 2019/20, \$3,348,000 (100%) of total contracts were awarded to local Inuit and Nunavut businesses (GN, 2020). Of the total contracts, \$2,332,000 (or 70%) were awarded to Local Inuit Firms, while \$1,016,000 (or 30%) were awarded to Local Nunavut Firms (GN, 2020). In the previous two years, the percentage of Inuit contracts was higher: \$4,230,000 (83%) in 2018/19, and \$3,655,000 (85%) in 2017/18 (GN, 2020). In general, the three (3) year trend indicates that Local Inuit Firms win most of the local awarded contracts more so than Local Nunavut (non-Inuit) Firms (GN, 2020) (see Table 6.3).

Table 6.3

Contracts Under \$100,000 (Excluding Goods) Awarded to Inuit Firms When Locally Based (Between Fiscal Years 2017 to 2020)

Fiscal Year	Inuit Firm Success (\$)	Inuit Firm Success (%)
2017/18	3,655,000	85
2018/19	4,230,000	83
2019/20	2,332,000	70

Source: GN, 2020

6.5.6 Submissions Received Between Inuit and Non-Inuit Firms

In the *Government of Nunavut Contract Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20*, the GN (2020) reports that the 3-year trend for submissions includes (on average) 78% of submissions from non-Inuit firms and 22% from Inuit Firms. In 2019/20, the total number of submissions from Inuit Firms decreased by 12%, and the volume of Inuit Firms decreased by 16% (GN, 2020). In 2018/19, there was also a reported significant decrease in submissions from Inuit Firms (a 36% decline) (GN, 2020). In 2016/18, there was an increase in volume of submissions from Inuit Firms (increase of 29%) (GN, 2020). From 2016/17 to 2017/18, there was a further 7% increase (GN, 2020).

Thus, the volume of submissions from Inuit firms has fluctuated over the past 3 years; however, the GN (2020) does not provide any potential reasons for why the fluctuations have been occurring, except that sometimes fluctuations are based on external factors such as “annual variations in operating budgets or capital budgets, policy revisions and one time initiatives” (GN, 2020, p. 3). It is also possible that successful Inuit Firms might be skipping years, or the number of Inuit Firms might be changing (i.e., going in and out of business) in addition to what GN decisions are being made. Although the GN (2020)

only indicates a 3-year trend, what is evident is that non-Inuit firms bid more often (78% average) than Inuit Firms (22% average).

6.5.7 Inuit Labour for Minor Construction or Maintenance Contracts

According to the *Government of Nunavut Contract Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20*:

The required minimum Inuit labour rates for construction and maintenance service contracts are determined by the project officers. In determining the applicable rate, they consider factors such as the availability of labour in the community and what other projects are ongoing within the community competing for the same skilled labour. The Inuit labour rates are designed to provide employment and experience for Inuit labour and incentivise the construction companies to maximize the levels of Inuit labour. (GN, 2020, p. 52)

To create incentives and penalties for companies to consider Inuit labour rates, contractors can receive bonuses for exceeding Inuit Labour requirements, or they can receive penalties when they do not achieve the contracted Inuit Labour requirement (GN, 2020). For Minor Construction or Maintenance, an analysis of Inuit Labour indicates that average required Inuit labour ranged from 18% (Baffin) to as high as 50% (Kivalliq) (GN, 2020). The GN (2020) reports that in the last 3 fiscal years, contractors on average were able to exceed the minimum Inuit labour requirements, both in bids, and throughout the contract. However, in 2019/20, the rate achieved was short by 4% for the Kitikmeot Region (GN, 2020).

For Major Construction projects in 2017/18 and 2019/20, contractors on average

exceeded the minimum requirements (across Nunavut, Baffin, and Kitikmeot) (GN, 2020). In 2018/19 the Kivalliq Region fell short by 1% and in 2019/20, the labour rate was short by 4% in the Kitikmeot Region (GN, 2020). In general, from 2017 to 2020, the average required Inuit labour rates ranged from 29% (across Nunavut) to as high as 33% (Kitikmeot) (GN, 2020).

The results of the *Government of Nunavut Contract Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20* demonstrate that contractors leading minor or major construction projects, whether they are led by Inuit or non-Inuit companies, are (for the most part) meeting or exceeding the Inuit labour requirements for the contracts (GN, 2020). This suggests that having minimum Inuit labour requirements for minor/major construction projects and having rewards (when labour requirements are met) or penalties (when labour requirements are not met) is a successful mechanism for ensuring Inuit participation in construction projects.

6.5.8 Government of Nunavut Distribution of NNI Awarded Contracts (2019/20)

The *Government of Nunavut Contract Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20* indicates that the total value of NNI Awarded Contracts (excluding goods and sole-sourced contracts) was \$5,135,323 for Inuit Firms (GN, 2020). This total value represented 17 contracts: 7 for Air Charters, 5 for Maintenance contracts, 3 for Major Works Construction contracts, and 2 for Janitorial Services (GN, 2020) (see Table 6.3).

Table 6.4

Contracts Awarded by Type (Based on Total Contracts, Excluding Goods and Sole-sourced Contracts) in 2019/2020 to Inuit Firms by the Government of Nunavut

Type	Total Contracts Awarded to Inuit Firms
Air Charters	7
Maintenance Contracts	5
Major Works Construction	3
Janitorial Services	2
Total Contracts	17

Source: GN, 2020

In 2018/19, a total of \$4,984,298 total value contracts were affected by the NNI Regulations Application (GN, 2020). This total value represented 17 contracts: 6 for Construction, and 11 for Air Charters (GN, 2020). In 2017/19, a total value of \$1,589,408 were affected by the NNI Regulations Application; this total value represented 17 contracts (GN, 2020). Of the 17 contracts, 11 were for Air Charters (note: the GN did not indicate what the other 6 contracts were for) (GN, 2020).

According to the GN (2020), “a contract awarded ‘due to NNI Adjustments’ is a contract that would have been awarded to another company, but the application of the NNI adjustments changed the lowest price tender, or highest rated proposal” (p. 53). In general, an 11 year trend analysis indicates that Inuit Firms “are awarded a greater volume of contracts than are Nunavut Firms” (GN, 2020, p. 53).

Non-registered (Other) firms can also receive NNI pricing adjustments if they “maximize Inuit and Nunavut Content in their bids by using registered Inuit, Nunavut and Local subcontractors and suppliers, and hiring Inuit and Nunavut labour” (GN, 2020, p. 54). Overall, the GN (2020) observes that “The number of contracts that have been awarded

due to NNI Bid Adjustments remains low” (p. 54); however, the GN also observes this overview does not include Goods Contracts, which is a category that Inuit Firms are more successful at winning.

6.5.9 Government of Nunavut Contract Activity Report (2019/20) - Total Value and Volume of Contracts for Inuit Firms in Comparison to Previous Year

In the *Government of Nunavut Contract Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20*, the GN (2020) did a comparison between 2018/19 and 2019/20 based on contract values and it was observed:

- The value of all contracts increased by 1.6% for the 2019/20 fiscal year.
- The value of contracts to Inuit [firms] decreased by 54%;
- The value of contracts to [non-Inuit] Nunavut [firms] increased by 35%; and
- The value of contracts to Other [firms] increased by 55%. (p. 55)

For the fluctuation, the GN (2020) explained that Inuit and Nunavut companies need to maintain their status every 2 years. Failure to re-apply results in loss of status or denial of bid adjustments (GN, 2020). The NNI and Inuit Firms registries are updated daily, and the contractor status is reported on the date of competition close (GN, 2020). The GN (2020) observed that “this is a contributing factor of awards to Inuit and Nunavut [firms] fluctuating from year to year” (p. 55).

In the *Government of Nunavut Contract Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20*, the GN (2020) did a comparison between 2018/19 and 2019/20 based on contract volumes. According to the GN (2020):

- The overall volume of contracts decreased by 18% in 2019/20.
- The volume of contracts to Inuit [firms] decreased by 21%;

- The volume of contracts to Nunavut [firms] increased by 22%;
- The volume of contracts to Other [firms] decreased by 19%. (p. 56)

6.5.10 Discussion - Government of Nunavut Contract Activity Report (2019/20)

This section focused on the GN (2020) *Government of Nunavut Contract Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20*. The purpose of the review was to indicate whether Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement was successful in increasing Inuit procurement. After completing the review, it is evident that Inuit procurement is complicated. The GN (2020) report indicated that Inuit Firms were most successful with contracts under \$25,000, and the most successful contracts were based on Air Charters, Construction, and Minor Construction for Maintenance Services. However, the report also indicated that most procurement contracts were won by ‘Other’ firms (non-Inuit and non-Nunavut Firms). Further, most of the procurement needs for the GN (2020) are service based, and many of the services needed are specialized and cannot be sourced in Nunavut. Thus, this represents a great loss for the Inuit and Nunavut business economy.

Although Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement provides a mechanism to limit certain contracts to Inuit Firms in locally based situations, if there are no Inuit Firms to bid (or not enough Inuit Firms for competitive bids that require more than one Inuit Firm) on a project, opportunities are lost. Thus, the biggest challenge for Inuit procurement is not the implementation of Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement; the biggest issue is the Inuit Firm supply chain and not having enough Inuit Firms to fulfill the demand of the GN, which is largely service based. It is uncertain whether Inuit Firms would benefit from specializing in the specific service-based industries that are needed for the GN, as the total value of contracts for certain services might not be worth the specialization (i.e., for

contracts that are between \$5,000 and \$25,000 per year) (GN, 2020). However, it might be helpful for Inuit Firms to develop boutique service-based consulting companies that can service both Nunavut and other provinces.

It is important to note that this section has only focused on GN procurement; this section has not provided an overview of Inuit Firm procurement and supply chain success/challenges for the private sector or industry. That is beyond the scope of my PhD research. The GN (2020) *Government of Nunavut Contract Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20* provides statistics based on reported spending; it does not provide a complete narrative of Inuit perspectives of the Inuit supply chain. In the next section (6.6), I provide a narrative on Inuit perspectives of procurement and supply chain, provided by Inuk²⁹ procurement specialists.

6.6 Research Findings – What are the Current Challenges for Inuit Procurement? (From Inuit Perspectives)

This next section examines the current challenges for Inuit procurement, from Inuk (Inuit) perspectives. The key themes summarized below are from qualitative data collected during the one-on-one and small group sessions during the Federal Procurement Research Project in 2021, completed as part of a consulting contract with the National Capital Corporations Association (NACCA) (see Chapter 2, ‘Methods and Methodology’ section for more information). It is important to note that none of the Inuk participants that participated in the Federal Procurement Research Project were from Nunavut; however, I argue that their perspectives are still relevant to this research as the challenges experienced by Inuit are similar in nature.

²⁹ Inuk means a member of the Inuit Peoples (singular); Inuit refers to the Inuit Peoples as a whole (plural).

Based on the data collected from the Federal Procurement Research Project, the four key challenges for Inuit procurement includes: 1) Inuit business databases and availability of available Inuit Firms, 2) Inuit procurement is unique and should not be grouped in with ‘Indigenous’ procurement, 3) Fulfillment demands—number of procurement-ready Inuit Firms, and 4) Accountability for Inuit procurement. As the first key challenge (Inuit business databases and availability of Inuit Firms) was previously summarized in Section 6.4, I will summarize key challenges 2 to 4 below.

6.6.1 Inuit Procurement is Unique: It Should Not Be Grouped with ‘Indigenous’ Procurement

There were two major points that came out in the Federal Procurement Research Project small group and one-on-one sessions—the importance of Inuit-led when it came to procurement policies for Inuit, and how problematic it was for Inuit procurement to be grouped in with a one-size-fits-all national approach for ‘Indigenous’ procurement in Canada. It was very evident by the small group and one-on-one sessions that the contexts, geographies, and living/cultural experiences of Inuit are very different from First Nations and Métis, and therefore any procurement policies for Inuit should have unique consideration. For example, Bailey, an Inuk participant, shared:

I like when things are Inuit led. [Inuit] logistics, and economy are so different than southern Canada so when you put something together that is common or all Indigenous, it won’t reflect our struggles that we have up here.

Kayleigh, another Inuk participant, said, “It’s tough to group Inuit with Indigenous in the same strategy because you’re dealing with a lot of different obstacles you might not have down south.” For example, Kayleigh shared that Inuit communities in the far north must plan far in advance for infrastructure projects due to geography:

You have to plan a year out on what you will need in the next year because it has to come up on the barge. So, if you are building a building and need the materials, you have to plan one year in advance. Everyone up north knows that, but people in the south don't know.

In addition to having unique culture(s), geographies, and challenges, Inuit communities greatly differ depending on region (i.e., the Inuit in Québec are different from the northern Inuit, etc.). For example, Kayleigh shared that each Inuit group “is in a different phase of self-government; some are advanced, some are comfortable with negotiations and talking with the feds [federal government]; some are just starting the conversation.” Thus, Inuit procurement policies are best designed taking a regional approach, in co-creation and consultation with local Inuit communities.

6.6.2 Fulfilling Demand – Number of Procurement-Ready Inuit Firms

With increased mandates for Inuit procurement, there needs to be enough procurement-ready Inuit Firms (with enough capacity and an available workforce) to fulfill the needs of public and private sector buyers. When there are not enough available Inuit Firms to fulfill a procurement opportunity, the opportunity will go to non-Inuit Firms. Thus, in order to fulfill demand, it is evident that the Inuit business community needs to grow. For example, during the Federal Procurement Research Project, Bailey asserted that new Inuit Firms will require support to learn “where to bid, how to bid, where to look for contracts. . . . And as [Inuit Firms] gain momentum [Inuit Firms] learn and get more contracts.” The importance of training and mentorship for Inuit start-up companies was also stressed. Bailey shared: “They [Inuit Firms] are out there; I am not sure if people [business owners] have the [procurement] knowledge; or they [Inuit Firms] will bid on a

job and they will be triple the price.”

6.6.3 Accountability for Inuit Procurement

With Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement, Inuit Firms must receive priority for regional procurement opportunities in Nunavut (GC, 2019a). However, as this chapter has indicated, there are challenges, including having enough suppliers (Inuit Firms), available, a skilled Inuit workforce, and Inuit capacity to fulfill the need for procurement contracts in Nunavut. To be accountable, total Inuit procurement contracts (and total value of contracts) need to be transparently reported to ensure that Inuit Firms are truly receiving the priority for procurement in Nunavut.

From my research, it is evident that the challenges for fulfilling a greater procurement demand is also a challenge for First Nations businesses and communities. With the increased demand for Indigenous procurement (i.e., the mandated 5% minimum Indigenous procurement spend for the federal government), there will need to be enough First Nations procurement-ready businesses to fulfill demand. If demand cannot be met (due to not having enough First Nations suppliers), the Indigenous procurement mandate will fail. Thus, similar to the Inuit example, the First Nations business community will need to grow, and First Nations businesses will require support to learn the necessary skills to scale their businesses and workforce, to build capacity, and to learn how to successfully bid (and win) procurement contracts. Joint Ventures (JVs) with larger Indigenous firms and/or non-Indigenous firms might provide one solution for Indigenous businesses to build capacity and scale-up for contracting opportunities with the GC. Another option is to include mandatory requirements for non-Indigenous businesses to hire available/qualified First Nations workers for procurement contracts that involve doing work in (or with) a First

Nations community.

6.7 Discussion – Should Indigenous Procurement be Legislated Federally? What Lessons Can Be Learned from Nunavut and Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement?

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, for GC federal procurement, a minimum of 5% total Indigenous procurement across all GC departments is mandated (Public Services and Procurement Canada [PSPC], 2020b). However, with a mandate, it is more aspirational than it would be if it were legislated and made into law (see Chapter 5, section 5.3, ‘Research Findings – Should Indigenous Procurement be Legislated? [Federal Procurement]’ for a full discussion on this topic). GC departments can be encouraged to aim for the 5% Indigenous procurement target, but there will be no consequences if they do not achieve the minimum. What makes Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement effective is that there are specific protocols and rules that are put into place through the Nunavut Directive. For example, for any services or products that need to be procured for Nunavut, bids are limited to Inuit Firms (see section 6.3. ‘Federal Procurement Policy for Inuit Nunangat’ for a summary of the Nunavut Directive). This is very different than if Nunavut had committed to a certain percentage of Inuit procurement (as it has been done federally for Indigenous procurement).

Although different contexts, I argue that similar principles and protocols as the Nunavut Directive could be put into practice for federal, provincial, and territorial procurement policies for First Nations procurement. Where I argue this type of directive is relevant is for the following situations:

- Procurement of products and/or services for First Nations communities.
- Procurement of products and/or services for First Nations initiatives or projects.

For Métis peoples and settlements, I also argue that this type of directive would work and

would be relevant for the following situations:

- Procurement of products and/or services for Métis settlements.
- Procurement of products and/or services for Métis initiatives or projects.

It should be noted that I have purposely separated First Nations from Métis in these examples as culturally, historically, and geographically, First Nations and Métis are distinct groups. At this time the GC has grouped First Nations, Inuit, and Métis together in one 'Indigenous' federal procurement policy. On one hand, this one 'Indigenous' grouping could be effective for simplifying the 5% minimum Indigenous procurement target across federal departments. Where this one-size-fits-all approach does not work, is when procurement of products and/or services occurs specifically in First Nations communities (i.e., where it is most appropriate to procure services/products from only First Nations businesses), Inuit communities (i.e., where services/products should be limited to Inuit Firms), and/or, when procurement of products/services occurs in Métis settlements (i.e., where services/products should be limited to Métis businesses).

To continue with the example of what it would look like if a similar model to the Nunavut Directive were adopted by First Nations, the below policy could be put in place for First Nations businesses.³⁰

Where procurement of products and/or services for First Nations communities, or First Nations initiatives of projects:

- For contract tenders of \$5,000.00 to \$25,000.00, bids must be limited to First Nations businesses if there is at least one First Nations business on the Indigenous

³⁰ This proposed model is based on the Nunavut Benefits Criteria (<https://www.cspcs-efpc.gc.ca/video/intro-procurement-obligations-eng.aspx>).

Business Directory.³¹

- For contract tenders over \$25,000.00, bids must be limited to First Nations businesses if there are at least two First Nations businesses on the Indigenous Business Directory.
- Otherwise, open bidding is permitted.

Similar to the Nunavut Directive, if there are not enough First Nations businesses available to limit bids to First Nations businesses, other Indigenous (Inuit or Métis) or non-Indigenous businesses could be required to provide First Nations Benefits Criteria, which would provide extra points on bids that include training, employment, and subcontracting opportunities for First Nations peoples and businesses.

The same model above could be used for Métis. Where procurement of products and/or services for Métis settlements, or Métis initiatives of projects:

- For contract tenders of \$5,000.00 to \$25,000.00, bids must be limited to Métis businesses if there is at least one Métis business on the Indigenous Business Directory.
- For contract tenders over \$25,000.00, bids must be limited to Métis businesses if there are at least two Métis businesses on the Indigenous Business Directory.
- Otherwise, open bidding is permitted.

Similar to the Nunavut Directive, if there are not enough Métis businesses available to limit bids to Métis businesses, other Indigenous (First Nations or Inuit) or non-Indigenous businesses could be required to provide Métis Benefits Criteria, which would provide extra

³¹ The Indigenous Business Directory is currently hosted with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). (<https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1100100033057/1610797769658#c3>).

points on bids that include training, employment, and subcontracting opportunities for Métis peoples and settlements.

As research indicates that most Indigenous businesses in Canada are small (CCAB, 2016), where possible, federal, provincial, and territorial procurement officers could also consider breaking down larger contracts into smaller contracts so that more Indigenous businesses can bid. A similar model has worked for the Nunavut Directive. For example, in the *Introduction to Procurement Obligations in the Nunavut Settlement Area*, the CSPS (2021) describes that “special obligations” may apply to contracts with Inuit firms: procurement officers “may need to unbundle [their] contract by commodity groupings to allow smaller and more specialized Inuit firms to bid” (Transcript section, Step two: Make Sure You Consider Any Special Obligations That May Apply, para. 2).

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, federal procurement is mandated at a 5% minimum Indigenous procurement spend across all departments (PSPC, 2020b). This is based on the 5% Indigenous population of Canada. However, for provinces with a higher Indigenous population, I argue that the 5% minimum should be increased to match the Indigenous population percentage. For example, the following Canadian provinces have a higher-than-5% Indigenous population: Nunavut (86%), Northwest Territories (51%), Yukon (23%), Saskatchewan (16%), Manitoba (18%), Newfoundland and Labrador (9%), Alberta (7%), Nova Scotia (6%), and British Columbia (6%) (Indigenous Services Canada [ISC], 2020c).

In the Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) (2019) *Modernization of Indigenous Participation in Procurement: Discussion Paper* (MIPDP), it is suggested that mandatory set asides could be created when the procurement “is in an area where the local population

is at least 51% Indigenous” (Transforming the Federal Process section, Consideration 18, para. 1). By default, this would include all First Nations communities, and it would also include cities/towns, and provinces and territories with higher than 51% Indigenous populations (i.e., Nunavut and Northwest Territories). The ISC (2019) MIPDP further suggests that

[m]andatory set-asides could be applied to all contracts on or near treaty lands, urban reserves and Indigenous communities. They could also be applied to all contracts for which Indigenous peoples, communities and organizations are the primary client group and to all contracts between certain dollar thresholds (for example, between \$5,000 and \$500,000).

(Transforming the Federal Process section, Consideration 18, para. 2)

In addition, the ISC (2019) MIPDP, suggests that for all procurements, the GC could include an “Indigenous benefit plan requirement to address socio-economic benefits to Indigenous people in the community. The plan could include sub-contracting, employment or training components” (Transforming the Federal Procurement Process section, Consideration 19, para. 1). This is similar to the Nunavut Directive, which also favours a benefit plan to ensure that procurements demonstrate benefits for Inuit communities.

The above considerations reflect the recommendations made at the IPE-sessions, but do not reflect a commitment from the GC; rather, they are suggestions made ‘for consideration.’ Based on my research and participation in IPE-sessions as a facilitator, I argue that the recommendations for consideration would help to strengthen current federal procurement policies. I posit that it is not enough to set minimum federal procurement targets at 5% as a one-size-fits all approach; other factors should be taken into

consideration, such as whether the procurement is for First Nations communities, Inuit communities, Métis Settlements, Indigenous organizations and/or for other Indigenous projects or initiatives.

6.7.1 Other Considerations – Procurement and Modern Treaties

Another consideration for procurement, although beyond the scope of my doctoral research, is the modern treaty process. In modern treaties, First Nations communities can negotiate with the GC for procurement rights. According to the GC, if a First Nations community negotiates a procurement clause in their modern treaty, it will supersede the PSIB (i.e., procurement would either be listed as a treaty benefit, or as PSIB, but cannot be listed as both) (PSPC, 2019b). The modern treaty process provides valuable opportunities for First Nations communities to consider benefits for revenue sharing for resources, economic development, and procurement.

To date, few First Nations communities have negotiated for procurement rights in the modern treaty process. I hypothesize that the reason that some First Nations communities have not included a procurement clause in their modern treaty is because they did not know they could negotiate a procurement clause. From my experience working with First Nations communities and businesses as a consultant, the topic of ‘procurement’ can be unknown or intimidating. Thus, it would be highly beneficial for all First Nations communities and businesses to receive training and education on procurement and economic development so that they are fully aware of the opportunities that can be created, especially through the modern treaty process.

6.7.2 Final Discussion – Is Policy Enough or Should Indigenous Procurement be Legislated?

Based on the workshops and discussions with Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants during the IPE-sessions, it is evident that most Indigenous participants felt that Indigenous procurement should be legislated to ensure that the GC remains accountable for promises made (i.e., to ensure the 5% Indigenous procurement minimum target is met). In contrast, most public sector participants felt that Indigenous procurement targets should *not* be legislated because it creates an extra layer of bureaucracy, and it creates a long, slow process for change, which is counterintuitive to innovation (i.e., changes cannot be made easily in legislation). In addition, most public sector officials felt that policy, mandated procurement targets, top-down leadership, strong communications, and transparent reporting, were the best mechanisms to create change.

During the IPE-sessions, public sector officials shared that the greatest challenges for federal Indigenous procurement were lack of capacity (i.e., of Indigenous businesses) and lack of suppliers for Indigenous procurement set asides (i.e., not enough Indigenous businesses to supply the increased demand for Indigenous procurement). To meet the increased demand for Indigenous suppliers, I argue that it is important for national and regional Indigenous organizations, as well as other (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) business support organizations, to provide increased support to Indigenous businesses in Canada so that they have the needed skills and capacity to participate in procurement at the federal, provincial, and territorial levels.

The creation of a ‘Capacity Index,’³² could be a one solution and tool for the GC to

³² Note: ‘Capacity Index’ is a concept that I came up with during the National Indigenous Roundtable on Indigenous Entrepreneurship on March 7, 2019, in Ottawa, hosted by the GC (where I was an invited participant, not a facilitator).

quickly determine which Indigenous businesses have capacity for certain bids. A Capacity Index could be a rating system based on how many employees a company has or size of contracts that they can manage. A Capacity Index could also take into consideration Indigenous businesses that could take on larger contracts through sub-contracting, or with some support with capacity building, or through partnerships, or joint ventures (JVs).

Other opportunities to increase Indigenous procurement include mapping local Indigenous business ecosystems, to examine which Indigenous businesses could potentially be scaled up to participate in procurement opportunities. On the GC side, reports could be released, which map the procurement opportunities that were unsuccessful in getting enough Indigenous bids (especially in departments where they have fallen short in the 5% minimum target). By releasing reports on these deficits and sharing the reports with regional and national Indigenous organizations, and First Nations communities, Indigenous businesses would be made aware of the opportunities. In addition, support, and incentives (i.e., grants, training, etc.) could be provided to new/existing Indigenous businesses that could be scaled-up to meet these needs. For example, if the GC required office furniture and there were not enough Indigenous bids, and if office furniture was an important product, new/existing Indigenous business owners could learn about this opportunity through the reporting and consider starting a new business (or scaling up an existing business) to provide office furniture (or a First Nations community could learn of this opportunity and set up a band-owned enterprise).

Since the IPE-sessions from 2018 to 2021, the GC has committed to funding NIOs and other initiatives aimed at supporting Indigenous entrepreneurs. In 2019, the National Aboriginal Capitals Association (NACCA) received a \$3.1 million investment from the

federal government's Investment Readiness Program (IRP), which is “an initiative aimed to help social purpose organizations become investment ready” (Kirkwood, 2019). In March 2022, NACCA became an Indigenous Growth Fund (IGF) portfolio holder (see NACCA, 2022, for official press release). The IGF is a \$150 million fund, which will be delivered by Aboriginal Financial Institutions (AFIs) across Canada. The IGF will provide loans to Indigenous small and medium sized businesses (NACCA, 2022).

The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) is supporting Indigenous entrepreneurs and procurement through their CCAB Supply Change™ program, which includes a Marketplace, the ‘Certified Aboriginal Business’ (CAB) designation, procurement champions, wise practices, and a national campaign to encourage engagement in Indigenous procurement (CCAB, 2022).

As the examples with NACCA and CCAB demonstrate, NIOs are actively supporting Indigenous businesses and are receiving financial support to do so. However, to meet the increased demand for procurement, more long-term investment will be needed. In addition, entrepreneurship will also need to be promoted at the First Nations community level. By creating supportive business ecosystems within First Nations communities, new businesses can emerge and grow and take advantage of the increased opportunities for Indigenous procurement in Canada.

In terms of policy or legislation for federal procurement, it is not my place as a researcher to make a recommendation. This recommendation should come from Indigenous business leaders, including the leaders of regional and national Indigenous organizations, and political leadership from First Nations communities across Canada. Based on my research to-date, it is evident that success will be dependent on the ability of

supply to meet demand (i.e., having enough Indigenous businesses, and capacity, to procure products and services), as well as clear policy (or legislation) so that it is 100% clear to federal, provincial, and territorial procurement officers on when they should use Indigenous set asides, especially in the case of procuring products and/or services for First Nations communities, Inuit communities, Métis settlements, and/or for other Indigenous projects and initiatives.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION – INDIGENOUS PROCUREMENT AS A CATALYST FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING

In my doctoral thesis, my goal was to examine whether Indigenous procurement could be a catalyst for community building. I did this by re-evaluating the qualitative data collected from a series of Indigenous Procurement Engagement sessions (IPE-sessions) from 2018 to 2021. The data were re-evaluated through the lens of Indigenous and economic geographies. In my four thematic chapters, I explored Indigenous procurement as it relates to: First Nations economic development, community building, and procurement (Chapter 3), social procurement (Chapter 4), challenges and wise practices for First Nations procurement (Chapter 5), and federal Indigenous procurement policy versus Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement (Chapter 6).

My research findings confirm that Indigenous procurement is a catalyst for First Nations community building because it contributes to the growth of new and existing businesses in First Nations communities (band owned or privately owned enterprises), contributes to jobs and a stronger economy and workforce, and it creates wealth for First Nations communities, which can be reinvested into community infrastructure, building capacity, and cultural and language programming (Anderson, 2001; Anderson et al., 2006a; Barberstock, 2015).

Through policy, strategic funding, and program development, the public and private sectors can further support economic growth for Indigenous Peoples and First Nations communities. Funding for Indigenous businesses can include seed funding for start-ups and funding to increase capacity (i.e., to assist Indigenous businesses in scaling

up). Funding and investment can also help support First Nations communities to create stronger business ecosystems, by supporting the development of community business development centres and business parks. Funding can also help to support business research or economic leakage studies so that First Nations communities can map their workforce and/or their economic spending so they can identify where business growth could occur in their communities.

Supporting the development of Indigenous business and procurement contributes to economic reconciliation in Canada because it helps to create equity and opportunity for Indigenous Peoples and First Nations communities. This contributes to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Canada, which is beneficial for the national economy, and will benefit all Canadians. According to the CCAB (2019),

The Indigenous economy contributes \$32 billion dollars to Canada's GDP annually, a figure that has been growing quickly in recent years. While this economic activity is significant, more work is needed to ensure Indigenous peoples in Canada enjoy the same prosperity as the rest of our country. (p. 1)

During the IPE-sessions, it was identified that some of the barriers to success include systemic racism towards Indigenous Peoples, including harmful stereotypes that hinder Indigenous companies from being successful with procurement. In a *Toronto Star* article entitled "Reconciliation isn't a Spectator Sport,' Speakers Tell Business Leaders," the Honourable Murray Sinclair shared his perspectives on racism and bias practices:

The worst kind of racism in Canada is not the racism where people deliberately set up to harm someone, the worst kind of racism is unconscious racism where you are doing something and don't even know you are doing it, because you are following

a policy based on western society's ways of thinking and doing. (Baxter, 2022, para. 8)

To change the colonial narrative in Canada, it is important for the public and private sectors to receive cultural awareness training. The *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* include recommendations for cultural competency and anti-racism training for public servants (see "Professional Development and Training for Public Servants," #57), and for the corporate sector (see "Business and Reconciliation," #92) (Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC], 2015). Sharing success stories of Indigenous businesses can also help to reshape the narrative in Canada, to demonstrate that there are many Indigenous businesses that deliver exceptional products and services.

Research demonstrates that most Indigenous businesses in Canada are small (revenues under \$100,000 per year) (CCAB, 2016); thus, to build capacity, there will need to be investment from the public and private sectors, as well as Indigenous organizations and communities, to help build a strong Indigenous business ecosystem that can help to fulfill the demand for a minimum 5% procurement spend at the federal level. To date, there is no definite statistics on how many Indigenous businesses in Canada are procurement-ready (or near to procurement-ready). As a researcher I recommend that the Government of Canada (GC) and/or National Indigenous Organizations (NIOs) invest in research to answer this question. Further, I recommend that the GC and/or NIOs further invest in research to map the procurement needs that could be fulfilled by Indigenous businesses through procurement. This study could work similar to an economic leakage study, where the gaps are clearly identified (by department and total spend) and shared with NIOs so that they can help to support the growth of the Indigenous business and economic

development corporations to fulfill this need.

The IPE-sessions that took place from 2018 to 2021 demonstrate the importance of bringing together Indigenous and non-Indigenous procurement leaders—Indigenous business owners, representatives from NIOs, the private sector (non-Indigenous), and public sector officials. As a facilitator and observer, it was evident that open respectful dialogue can effectively identify challenges and needs from Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives. In addition, Indigenous methodologies (e.g., sharing circles), design thinking, and Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) can assist in creating a comfortable space for co-design so that *all* participants have a voice and can contribute to solutions.

7.1 Research Findings From Four Main Chapters – Final Discussion

In this section, I will examine the key insights and findings from my four main chapters (i.e., chapters 3 to 6), and I will explore the implications of my research on Indigenous procurement. After exploring the key insights and findings, I will discuss research limitations, and will end the chapter with some final thoughts for the future of Indigenous procurement in Canada.

7.1.1 Chapter 3 – Building Strong First Nations Economies: Economic Development, Community Building, and Procurement – Key Insights and Findings

In Chapter 3, titled “Building Strong First Nations Economies: Economic Development, Community Building, and Procurement,” I examined First Nations Economic Development (FNED) through the lens of economic and Indigenous geographies and incorporated both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives. In addition, Chapter 3 answered the prominent research question of this thesis (see Chapter 1, section 1.4.1),

which is whether Indigenous procurement can be a catalyst for community building and economic development in First Nations communities.

As described in Chapter 3, First Nations communities suffer from lower socioeconomic situations than the rest of Canada, and FNED is one possible solution to improving economic conditions for First Nations Peoples (Anderson, 2001; Trospen et al., 2008; White et al., 2012). FNED contributes to First Nations self-determination and self-governance through the development and business practices that reflect the cultural values and perspectives of First Nations communities.

Furthermore, it is evident through the literature that a key to success in FNED is adaptive capacity building, which incorporates different forms of capital, including human capital, social capital, physical capital, and cultural capital (Berkes & Folke, 1992, 1994; Loomis, 2000; White et al., 2012). One of the goals of adaptive capacity building in First Nations communities is the attainment of adaptive sustainability, which is a state where First Nations have the capacity (and human/social/physical/cultural capital) to lead their own affairs and to pursue economic development opportunities that are lucrative and sustainable for the community (White et al., 2012).

One of the biggest obstacles to relationship building, capacity development, and adaptive capacity is the legacy of colonization in Canada, which has resulted in “poverty, cultural destruction, socio-economic marginalization, and poor education attainment, [which can] prevent individuals and communities from building the human and financial capacity required to initiate and sustain economic development opportunities” (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health [NCCA], 2010, p. 2).

At the heart of adaptive capacity building and adaptive sustainability is relationship

building and reciprocity. The Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program (AAEDIRP) (2010) acknowledges that four key attributes are important for relationship building, including mutual benefit, shared responsibility, compatible goals, and increased capacity through partnership and collaboration.

In the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) (2010) *Annual Statistical Report on Procurement Supplement: Procurement from development countries and economies in transition*, Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon observes that “procurement can help build strong economies and well-functioning communities” (p. 9) as procurement can be a catalyst in stimulating markets and driving innovation. For First Nations communities in Canada, I argue that entrepreneurship and economic development are crucial as economic drivers to generate wealth for First Nations communities. I further argue that it is through entrepreneurship and economic development that First Nations communities will make the shift from surviving, to thriving. This is evident through economic success stories as demonstrated by Membertou First Nation (see Johnstone, 2008) and Osoyoos Indian Band (see MacDonald, 2014).

Finally, it is important that the perspectives and worldview(s) of First Nations communities are incorporated when creating terminology, policies, and practices for FNED (for example, see Union of Ontario Indians, 2008). First Nations (*Nuu-chah-nulth*) thought leader and economist Carol Ann Hilton’s (2021) conceptualization of the “Characteristics of an Indigenous Economy” (pp. 92-93) provides a powerful example of the potential of First Nations Peoples and communities to articulate their vision for a strong economy, while incorporating cultural tenants and values.

7.1.2 Chapter 4 – Social Procurement Policy and Diverse Supply Chains: Is Indigenous Procurement ‘Social Procurement’? – Key Insights and Findings

In Chapter 4, I explored the differences between Indigenous procurement and social procurement policy to determine whether Indigenous procurement should be considered social procurement or whether Indigenous procurement should be considered distinct from social procurement. In addition, I explored whether Indigenous/social procurement contributes to positive social, environmental, cultural, and/or economic outcomes in First Nations communities (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4.2, research question 1). Next, I examined how successful First Nations procurement is measured, including an exploration on whether perspectives differ between First Nations and non-Indigenous Peoples (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4.2, research question 2 and 2.a). I further cross-referenced my findings with policy documentation from Australia to examine how the proposed changes to Indigenous procurement (i.e., new public sector policies) compared to Australia’s Indigenous procurement programs and policies, as the Australian government has had their social procurement policies longer than Canada (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4.2, research question 3).

The findings of this research indicate that by default, Indigenous businesses are included within social procurement policies because they are considered an equity-deserving group and a diverse supplier, which are integral components of social procurement (see City of Toronto, 2020, for example). When procurement relates specifically to First Nations Peoples and communities (e.g., procurement of social programs), the Government of Canada (GC) has the option to generate a contracting opportunity through the Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business (PSIB) or as an Indigenous set aside (Indigenous Services Canada [ISC], 2021b). When there are no

available (or qualified) Indigenous businesses to lead an Indigenous-specific project, the GC can also consider using tools such as Indigenous Participation Components (IPC) or Indigenous Benefit Plans (IBP) to ensure there is Indigenous participation through Indigenous employment or sub-contracting local/regional Indigenous businesses as part of a larger contract (ISC, 2019).

In Australia, the Queensland Government (2018) conceptualizes the social benefits from social procurement as “the positive impacts on people, places or communities generated through procurement practices” (What is a Social Benefit [or Social Value], section, para. 1). In the context of First Nations communities in Canada, positive impacts can result from procurement opportunities because they result in community economic development, entrepreneurship, employment and/or contracting opportunities for local First nations businesses (Mainprize et al., 2021; Wuttunee, 1992).

Indigenous procurement can be described as a subset of social procurement, as the GC uses Indigenous procurement to fulfill their social, environmental, and cultural policy goals (PSPC, 2022c). However, Indigenous procurement is also distinct because of the historical and contemporary contexts for *why* Indigenous procurement set asides are used, which is distinct from social procurement (PSPC, 2022c). The *Government of Canada Policy on Social Procurement* (PSPC, 2022c) observes that Indigenous procurement is “distinct from social procurement. . . due to the unique historical and legal context underlying the relationship between the Crown and Indigenous Peoples” (Application section, para. 5). Thus, procurement opportunities that are “specifically related to Indigenous Peoples” are “carried out separately” (i.e., as Indigenous set asides) (PSPC, 2022c, Application section, para. 5).

In Indigenous procurement policy, Western-based social performance measures such as Social Return on Investment (SROI) are often used to measure social impact. Research by Denny-Smith and Loosemore (2017) indicates that these types of methods fail to fully articulate “Indigenous perspectives of social value” and that measures such as SROI provide an “overly optimistic and westernized view of success” (p. 652). Research also indicates that Indigenous perspectives of success and Indigenous measures of social outcomes may also differ from non-Indigenous perspectives and measurements (Barberstock, 2015; Denny-Smith & Loosemore, 2018). Thus, it is important for the perspectives of Indigenous Peoples to be incorporated in policies where social impacts are being measured. The National Indigenous Economic Strategy (NIES) (2022b) is a prime example of Indigenous thought leaders and Indigenous organizations coming together to create a national strategy to provide vision, recommendations, and specific steps and “Calls to Economic Prosperity” to improve the Indigenous economy in Canada.

Overall, the findings of Chapter 4 indicate that Indigenous procurement is both a form of social procurement and distinct because of the historical and cultural contexts, including Canada’s responsibility to honour treaties and nation-to-nation relationships (PSPC, 2022c). In the context of Indigenous procurement, the results of these findings indicate that Indigenous businesses have the opportunity to participate in Indigenous procurement set asides and the PSIB, as well as social procurement opportunities, as by default, Indigenous businesses are considered equity-deserving groups (Public Service Commission of Canada [PSCC], 2007).

7.1.3 Chapter 5 – Challenges and Wise Practices for First Nations Procurement in Canada – Key Findings and Insights

In Chapter 5, I examined challenges and wise practices for First Nations procurement in Canada. In addition, I explored whether First Nations community perspectives of procurement differ from First Nations firm perspectives (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4.3, research question 1). I also explored First Nations business, public sector, and private sector perspectives of the current challenges and obstacles, as well as possible solutions to challenges/obstacles for First Nations procurement in Canada (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4.3, research questions 2 and 2.a). In addition, wise practices for First Nations procurement in Canada were explored (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4.3, research question 3). Finally, I considered how successful First Nations procurement might be measured from First Nations business, public sector, and private sector perspectives, including how these perspectives might differ between First Nations and non-Indigenous Peoples (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4.3, research questions 4 and 4.a).

The data collected from the IPE-sessions provided insights on the viewpoints of individual First Nations businesses on procurement and economic development. I triangulated the findings from the IPE-sessions to existing literature on First Nations Economic Development (FNED). Through the research, it was evident that individual First Nations firm perspectives can differ from First Nations community perspectives. For example, the emerging cannabis industry in Canada demonstrates that individual First Nations businesses are generating millions of dollars and creating jobs in their First Nations communities (see McSheffrey & Agahi, 2022). However, not all First Nations communities are optimistic about the legalization of cannabis and the explosion of cannabis shops in their communities especially where there is existing “poverty and substance abuse”

(Forrest, 2018, para. 5).

Chapter 5 also provided an overview of challenges and obstacles for Indigenous procurement in Canada from the perspectives of Indigenous businesses, the public sector, and the private sector (non-Indigenous). According to data collected from the IPE-sessions between 2018 to 2021, some of the most common challenges and obstacles for Indigenous procurement (from Indigenous perspectives) include systemic racism and prejudice towards Indigenous Peoples (including stereotypes and assumptions regarding Indigenous businesses), difficulty competing in federal procurement when an Indigenous business is not headquartered in Ottawa, the bidding process itself (i.e., arduous, complicated, and time consuming), lack of knowledge and/or education on procurement, Indigenous identity issues (i.e., non-Indigenous companies claiming Indigenous identity to take advantage of the PSIB and Indigenous set asides), and contrived/shell companies (covered in great detail in Chapter 5, Section 5.1.1).

During the IPE-sessions, public sector workers shared concerns on whether there would be enough supply to fulfill the demand of the 5% minimum procurement mandate (PSPC, 2020b) across all federal departments. Currently the GC is only doing 1% Indigenous procurement (Indigenous Services Canada [ISC], 2021a); this will be a large gap to fill. To fulfill this mandate, the GC will also need to improve their data collection and reporting methods to ensure transparency and accountability.

In the IPE-sessions, the private and public sectors shared some similar perspectives of Indigenous procurement. For example, the public and private sectors shared concerns on whether Indigenous businesses had capacity to fulfill contracting opportunities and they shared challenges finding qualified Indigenous businesses, and uncertainty on how many

Indigenous businesses were procurement ready. What set the private sector apart from the public sector is that they tended to have more resources available to build stronger relationships with First Nations communities for economic development. For example, industry leaders had the ability to work with First Nations communities in advance of economic development opportunities to ensure there was training, apprenticeship, and contracting opportunities for First Nations community members (see Chapter 5, Section 5.1.3).

In Chapter 5, I also examined wise practices for First Nations procurement in Canada from the perspectives of First Nations businesses, the public sector, and the (non-Indigenous) private sector. One of the most significant themes from the IPE-sessions is the importance of relationship building. Indigenous businesses and NIOs stressed the importance of ongoing engagement with the GC, especially to provide feedback on Indigenous procurement processes and policies at the federal, provincial, and territorial levels. In addition, Indigenous business owners also indicated that good relationship building should occur between Indigenous businesses and the GC departments that procure from Indigenous businesses. During the IPE-sessions, the private sector participants also shared wise practices for relationship building with First Nations communities, which included pre-project and ongoing engagement during economic development projects.

The research on challenges and wise practices for First Nations procurement helped to provide insights on the tensions between First Nations community perspectives and individual firm perspectives. As a First Nations business owner, I can appreciate that participating in federal procurement can be challenging, and the priority as a business owner is to ensure success (i.e., in the bidding process) and to deliver the products and/or

services for a contract. First Nations community dynamics may or may not be relevant for individual First Nations firms. However, when a larger economic development project presents an opportunity for several First Nations firms to be contracted in a First Nations community (e.g., a large construction project), I argue that both First Nations firms and First Nations communities can benefit if they work together.

7.1.4 Chapter 6 – Should Indigenous Procurement be Legislated? Federal Indigenous Procurement Policy Versus Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement – Key Findings and Insights

In Chapter 6, I examined the differences between how Inuit procurement is being handled through Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement in contrast to how Indigenous procurement is being handled nationally through federal procurement policy. Through my research, I examined whether legislation is an effective mechanism for increasing Indigenous procurement (e.g., forcing the public sector to fulfill a certain percentage of procurement set asides versus having an optional/mandated procurement set aside percentage) (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4.4, research questions 1 and 1.a). In addition, I explored whether this type of mechanism should be considered for federal Indigenous procurement to ensure that the public sector is inclusive of Indigenous procurement (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4.4, research question 1.b). Finally, I considered whether a 5% minimum mandatory set aside can still be an effective policy if it is optional, with no consequences if public procurement officers do not fulfill the minimum (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4.4, research question 1.b.i).

As a precursor to the topic of Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement in Chapter 6, Chapter 5, Section 5.3 (“Research Findings – Should Indigenous Procurement be Legislated? [Federal Procurement]”) explored participant views from the Federal

Procurement Research Project on whether Indigenous procurement should be legislated. Interestingly, most Indigenous participants felt that Indigenous procurement should be legislated, while all but one of the participants from the public sector felt it should *not* be legislated. The perception shared by most of the Indigenous participants is that the 5% minimum federal Indigenous procurement target should be legislated and/or regulated to enforce the 5% and to create accountability to ensure that the 5% minimum spend is achieved. In contrast, public sector participants shared that legislation creates an extra layer of bureaucracy and that using policy enhancements (or a new Indigenous procurement strategy) would be more effective. Both the Indigenous and public sector participants felt there should be a good balance of incentives and consequences for federal public service workers and departments if the procurement targets are not met.

In Chapter 6, I focused mainly on Nunavut and Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement in contrast to federal Indigenous procurement policy in Canada. What makes Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement effective is that when products or services need to be procured for Nunavut, Inuit firms receive priority. In contrast, with the 5% federal Indigenous procurement mandate, it is more aspirational, but there are no consequences if the 5% minimum Indigenous procurement targets are not met. To date, the GC has confirmed a 1% Indigenous procurement spend for federal procurement (Indigenous Services Canada [ISC], 2021a). By 2024, the GC aims to increase this to a 5% minimum Indigenous procurement spend across all federal departments (PSPC, 2021).

According to the *Government of Nunavut Contract Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20*, the total value of NNI Awarded Contracts (excluding goods and sole-sourced contracts) was \$5,135,323 for Inuit Firms (Government of Nunavut [GN], 2020). The GN

(2020) also reported that Inuit Firms were most successful with contracts under \$25,000. One potential solution to increasing Inuit firm participation in procurement is to break larger procurement contracts into smaller contracts so that smaller Inuit firms can participate (Meis-Mason et al., 2012).

The *Government of Nunavut Contract Activity Report—Fiscal Year 2019/20* report also indicated that *most* procurement contracts were won by ‘Other’ firms (non-Inuit and non-Nunavut firms). For some contracts, the GN required specialized services, which were only available from businesses outside of the Nunavut region (GN, 2020). Although the GN is required to prioritize bids from Inuit firms for GN procurement, if there are no qualified Inuit firms available for a bid (or not enough Inuit firms to bid), the GN can procure services/products from non-Inuit firms.

Article 24 of the Nunavut Agreement has demonstrated that it is an effective mechanism for ensuring that the GN prioritizes Inuit bids for GN procurement. However, it does *not* guarantee that most procurement will go to Inuit firms as it is dependent on whether there are enough qualified Inuit firms to bid.

In contrast, the 5% federal Indigenous procurement mandate does not ensure that the federal government will prioritize Indigenous procurement; it is aspirational and has no consequences if the 5% minimum Indigenous procurement target is not fulfilled. Thus, it is evident that Indigenous procurement is complicated: success (as demonstrated by increased Indigenous procurement) can only be achieved if there are policies (or legislation) in place to prioritize Indigenous procurement. In addition, there needs to be enough Indigenous firms to fulfill the increased procurement demand at the federal, provincial, or territorial levels.

7.2 Limitations of Research

One of the strengths of this research is also one of its limitations. As a result of my private consulting contracts and involvement as a facilitator and researcher for the IPE-sessions between 2018 to 2021, I had the opportunity to be in the field as an insider. In a way, I was also a participant in the IPE-sessions because I brought my own professional experience and perspectives as a First Nations business owner. Being an insider and consultant is also a limitation of this research, as my work was mainly guided by the needs and interests of my clients (Indigenous Services Canada [ISC] and the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association [NACCA]). However, considering my clients (ISC and NACCA) were major stakeholders in the modernization of Indigenous procurement, I see this as a major asset as my clients were responsible for bringing together NIOs, Indigenous business owners, as well as the public and private sectors, to co-design the future of Indigenous procurement in Canada. I would not have been able to do this work, on the scale that it was achieved, without the support of ISC and NACCA.

Another limitation of this research is that for Indigenous participants, the IPE-sessions mainly included NIOs and Indigenous business owners that had successfully won procurement opportunities with the GC. What was missing in the IPE-sessions was the voices of First Nations community leadership (i.e., Chiefs, Councillors with economic development portfolios, economic development corporations, etc.). This means that the IPE-sessions were mainly focused on individual Indigenous businesses, without examining First Nations community perspectives. I feel that this presents an opportunity for future research—to engage First Nations communities to learn more about how they envision creating and/or strengthening First Nations supply chains within their communities and to learn more about the support and resources needed (i.e., from the GC or NIOs) to

create/support their local business ecosystem within their First Nations communities.

Because my research was based on GC funded consulting projects, another limitation of my research is that it is mainly focused on federal procurement. It is beyond the scope of my doctoral research to examine private sector and industry procurement. However, I argue this presents a future research opportunity as the private sector provides significant opportunities for procurement to Indigenous businesses in Canada. In the IPE-sessions, I had the opportunity to talk to private sector leaders (see Chapter 5) and I observed an interest in increasing Indigenous procurement because of Canada's reconciliation agenda, and I also witnessed pride in the private sector's current Indigenous procurement practices.

As acknowledged in Chapter 5, there can be tension between First Nations community perspectives and individual firm perspectives when it comes to procurement and economic development within First Nations communities. For example, First Nations entrepreneurs may want to profit individually, whereas First Nations leadership might want to see profits from business being reinvested in their communities. This can create a limitation in the research as there can be conflicting First Nations perspectives on what 'success' is in business in a First Nations community (i.e., profit, number of jobs created, reinvestment in community programs and infrastructure, etc.).

First Nations businesses and communities are also diverse, which makes it challenging to develop a one-size-fits-all approach for economic development and supply chain management within a First Nations community. Thus, I posit that it is up to *each* First Nations community in Canada to create its own policies and practices for economic development and supply chain development/management in their communities. This will

ensure that the policies and practices created incorporate a First Nations community's cultural protocols, practices, and ways of knowing and being. On the national and regional scale, financial support and resources will need to be made available to First Nations communities to assist them in building their own economic blueprints (see Union of Ontario Indians, 2008, for an example) and to strengthen their local business ecosystems.

7.3 Conclusion

My PhD research has mainly focused on federal procurement in Canada. Thus, the scale of my research is limited only to the federal level. Although it is outside the scope of my research, I argue that there are significant opportunities for future research on Indigenous procurement at the provincial, territorial, municipal, and local levels. I further argue that the engagement approaches that were utilized in the IPE-sessions, especially Indigenous-led sharing circles, design thinking, and Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), could be effective methods for uncovering the challenges and providing solutions for Indigenous procurement at the provincial, territorial, municipal, and local levels. As it has been stressed in my thesis, Indigenous-led engagement and research is important as it ensures the incorporation of Indigenous perspectives and worldview(s) into research, and it helps to decolonize research by prioritizing Indigenous Voices (Rigney, 1999).

One potential challenge for Indigenous businesses is the learning curve of pursuing contracts and procurement opportunities with the GC. As a First Nations business owner that has done sole-source contracts with the federal government and gone through the procurement process, I can attest to the learning curve. When my company first started doing contracts with the GC in 2018, I was fortunate because my business partner had extensive experience with proposal writing and already knew how to write an effective bid.

In addition, my company had developed a strong network in Ottawa through referrals, by being active at networking events, and through public speaking opportunities (i.e., several contracting opportunities came from speaking at Indigenous business events in Ottawa). However, when I think of brand-new companies that would like to provide services or products to the public and private sectors, and if they do not have proposal writing experience, or if they do not know how to connect with the right departments and representatives, I can see how this would be an overwhelming experience.

With some procurement-readiness training and mentorship, I argue that Indigenous businesses will have greater confidence and more opportunities for success because they will have the tools to succeed. I truly believe that there are many talented and skilled Indigenous businesses in Canada. With procurement training and mentorship, I further contend that several Indigenous businesses could scale up (if they want to) and succeed in public and private sector contracting and procurement. NIOs, regional Indigenous organizations (i.e., Aboriginal Financial Institutions [AFIs]), Indigenous and non-Indigenous business support organizations, and First Nations communities can play an important role to help prepare Indigenous entrepreneurs for federal procurement opportunities through providing support and resources.

One of the main challenges for supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship and procurement at the local, regional, national, and territorial levels is that national and regional Indigenous organizations are reliant on government funding to provide business support services for Indigenous entrepreneurs. Without adequate long-term funding, Indigenous regional and national organizations, as well as Indigenous and non-Indigenous business support organizations will not be able to provide the level of support needed to

support Indigenous businesses (e.g., ongoing business mentorship, workshops, accelerators, incubators, etc.).

Another challenge to supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship and procurement is geography: northern and remote communities have less access to business resources and important services, such as high-speed Internet (i.e., to connect to business resources and support services online). Thus, in addition to providing long-term funding to Indigenous and non-Indigenous business support organizations, it is important that the GC invest in important infrastructure to ensure that northern and remote First Nations and Inuit communities have access to high-speed Internet and other important business support services, such as a local small business centre. Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) (2023) reports that the GC will connect “98% of Canadians to high-speed Internet by 2026 and 100% of Canadians by 2030” as “operating a business” requires “a fast, dependable Internet connection” (para. 1).

Canadian politics can also create another level of complexity for supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship and procurement. For example, a change in government can create uncertainties about funding (i.e., concerns that previously funded programs could lose their funding with a change in government). In addition, political agendas can result in the creation of successful Indigenous business programs and support services in the short term (i.e., up to 3 years), and result in the collapse of the same programs once the funding ends. An example of this is the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy’s (WES) Ecosystem Fund, which resulted in several organizations receiving funding from April 1, 2020, to March 31, 2023, to support women’s entrepreneurship (including programming for Indigenous women entrepreneurs) (see Innovation, Science and Economic Development

Canada [ISED], 2021). After the funding completed on March 31, 2023, several of these organizations were not successful in receiving extended funding, and their highly successful programs were ended.³³ The downside of this is that these (Indigenous/non-Indigenous) business support organizations would have built up a clientele of potentially hundreds (or thousands) of clients, which they might no longer be able to support (i.e., through business mentorship, workshops, accelerators, etc.) unless they find other source(s) of funding.

Despite the challenges and complexities of supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship and procurement in Canada (i.e., funding, geography, and politics), I am still hopeful. With the increase in Indigenous procurement in Canada (i.e., due to the reconciliation agenda and the federal 5% minimum Indigenous procurement target), I argue that there has never been a more opportune time for Indigenous businesses to scale-up to meet this extraordinary opportunity. In addition, my research has demonstrated that Indigenous procurement is a catalyst for community building; thus, the development (and support) of Indigenous procurement in Canada is of utmost importance. Through supporting Indigenous businesses to scale-up to meet the increased need for Indigenous procurement, First Nations communities will also benefit through jobs, the creation/expansion of Indigenous supply chains, and community economic development opportunities.

This research has provided an opportunity for me to learn more about procurement and to contribute to policy and social change in Canada. It is my hope that the IPE-sessions

³³ As of the completion date of my PhD thesis, the list of organizations that were successful in receiving the second round of WES funding was not available (see ISED, 2022). Through my consulting business, I am aware of business support organizations that were *not* successful in receiving extended WES funding after March 31, 2023. Due to confidentiality, I will not disclose this information in my thesis. However, once the new WES funding announcements have been made, interested readers may review the original funded list of organizations (see ISED, 2021) and the new list of funded organizations, once available (see ISED, 2022).

from 2018 to 2021 and the 5% federal mandate for Indigenous procurement will just be the beginning; it is my hope that the private and public sectors will continue to work closely with NIOs, Indigenous businesses, and First Nations communities over the coming years so that relationships can deepen and so that improvements can be made. I argue that a one-size-fits-all approach to Indigenous procurement will not work. The changes to Indigenous procurement are part of a longer learning journey that Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples alike will benefit from if all Peoples continue to meet and work together.

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Appendix A – Letters of Permission (Received by Email)

Description: Permission from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to use the data from the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada project in 2018.

Subject: RE: Thank you and confirmation of data for ethics application
Date: Thursday, April 30, 2020 at 7:33:46 PM Eastern Daylight Saving Time
From: Giraldez, John (AADNC/AANDC) <john.giraldez@canada.ca>
To: Shyra Barberstock <shyra.barberstock@queensu.ca>

I'm glad our discussion was helpful. I don't see an issue with you using the workshop data since it has been made public through the "What Heard" report on Indigenous procurement modernization.

John Giraldez
Director / Directeur
Business Development / Développement des entreprises
Indigenous Services Canada / Services aux Autochtones Canada
10 Wellington Street, Room 1105, Gatineau QC K1A 0H4 / 10, rue Wellington, pièce 1105, Gatineau (QC) K1A 0H4
Telephone / Téléphone: 1 (873) 353-3618

From: Shyra Barberstock <shyra.barberstock@queensu.ca>
Sent: Thursday, April 30, 2020 7:25 PM
To: Giraldez, John (AADNC/AANDC) <john.giraldez@canada.ca>
Subject: Thank you and confirmation of data for ethics application

Hi John,

I hope all is well with you. Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with me on the weekend about my proposed doctoral research on Indigenous Procurement. I appreciate your support and the insights that you shared. It is greatly appreciated! I will definitely keep you in the loop as the research progresses.

The next step in my research is to create a PhD research proposal and to go through the ethics application process. For ethics, I'll need a confirmation from you that I can use the data collected from the three 'Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement Exploratory and Design Thinking Workshops,' which took place November 28, 2018 in Ottawa and December 12 & 13, 2018 in Toronto. My understanding (from what you explained in our discussion) is that as the engagement sessions were supported by public funds, the data is public domain and I can access it for my doctoral research. If you can confirm by email, that would be great!

Thanks again and I hope you enjoy the rest of your week!

Best regards,

Shyra

Shyra Barberstock
PhD Student, Geography & Planning
Mackintosh-Corry Hall
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Kingston, ON K7L 3N6
shyra.barberstock@queensu.ca

Queen's University is situated on the traditional Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Territories

Description: Permission from the National Aboriginal Capital Corporation (NACCA) to use the data from the National Procurement Roundtable in 2020.

Subject: RE: Thank you and confirmation of data for ethics application
Date: Friday, May 1, 2020 at 8:22:44 AM Eastern Daylight Saving Time
From: Mark Dokis <mdokis@nacca.ca>
To: Shyra Barberstock <shyra.barberstock@queensu.ca>
Attachments: image001.png

NACCA would be pleased to collaborate with Shyra Barberstock on doctoral research into Indigenous Procurement. Greetings!



Mark Dokis
Senior Advisor
National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association
Suite 908 - 75 Albert Street, Ottawa ON K1P 5E7

T: 613-688-0894 Ext. 503 C: 613-986-0895 E: mdokis@nacca.ca W: www.nacca.ca

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From: Shyra Barberstock [mailto:shyra.barberstock@queensu.ca]
Sent: April 30, 2020 7:24 PM
To: Mark Dokis <mdokis@nacca.ca>
Subject: Thank you and confirmation of data for ethics application

Hi Mark,

Thank you very much for chatting with me yesterday about my proposed doctoral research on Indigenous procurement and for your support, it means a lot! I will definitely keep you in the loop as the research progresses.

The next step in my research is to create a PhD research proposal and to go through the ethics application process. For ethics, I'll need a confirmation from you that I can use the data collected from the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA) National Procurement Roundtable (February 4, 2020 in Ottawa) for my doctoral research on Indigenous procurement. If you can respond to this email to confirm you are in agreement, that would be great!

Thanks again and I hope you enjoy the rest of your week.

Best regards,

Shyra

Shyra Barberstock
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Queen's University is situated on the traditional Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Territories

Description: Permission from the National Aboriginal Capital Corporation (NACCA) to use the data collected from the focus group and one-on-one sessions that were part of the research-based contracts in 2021.

Subject: RE: Confirmation to access procurement data for PhD research
Date: Wednesday, September 15, 2021 at 11:52:03 AM Eastern Daylight Saving Time
From: Mark Dokis <mdokis@nacca.ca>
To: Shyra Barberstock <shyra.barberstock@queensu.ca>

Yes, go ahead and NACCA looks forward to receiving the final PhD paper. Mark Dokis, NACCA

From: Shyra Barberstock <shyra.barberstock@queensu.ca>
Sent: September 15, 2021 11:49 AM
To: Mark Dokis <mdokis@nacca.ca>
Subject: Confirmation to access procurement data for PhD research

Hello Mark,

Thank you for your time today. It was wonderful to touch base and to provide updates on my PhD research on Indigenous procurement. Your support is greatly appreciated. As mentioned in the call, the data collected from our most recent research project with NACCA (April 2021 – August 2021) is highly relevant to my PhD research. I understand that as the research was funded with public dollars, the data is open; however, as this was a NACCA-led project, and for purposes of ethics, I will need confirmation from you that I can use the data collected between April 2021- August 2021 for my doctoral research on Indigenous procurement. If you can respond to this email to confirm you are in agreement, that would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks again and enjoy the rest of your week.

Kind regards,
Shyra

Shyra Barberstock
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Appendix B – Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada Workshop Agenda (2018)

Description: Agenda from the Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada design thinking workshop, facilitated by Okwaho Equal Source in 2018.



Re-envisioning Indigenous Procurement in Canada 2018 Workshop Agenda

Time	Description
9:00am-9:30am	Sharing circle – Facilitator & participant introductions, overview of agenda, and introduction to Design Thinking.
9:30am-10:30am	Design Thinking Group Activity #1 – Empathy and need finding.
10:30am-10:45am	15-minute break
10:45am-12:00pm	Design Thinking Group Activity #2 – Ideation.
12:00pm-1:00pm	Lunch
1:00pm-2:00pm	Design Thinking Group Activity #3 – Prototyping.
2:00pm-2:30pm	Group presentations & general discussion.
2:30pm-2:45pm	15-minute break
2:45pm-3:35pm	Setting a new vision for Indigenous procurement in Canada.
3:35pm-4:00pm	Wrap-up, final remarks and next steps.

Workshop Description and Objectives: Design Thinking is a human-centric, innovative approach to problem solving. This interactive workshop will provide opportunities to participate in problem solving, ideation and prototyping sessions, with the goal of re-envisioning Indigenous procurement in Canada. By participating in this workshop, participants will contribute to future policy and modernization of the Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Peoples (PSAB) in Canada.

Appendix C – National Procurement Roundtable Agenda (2020)

Description: Agenda from the National Procurement Roundtable in 2020, hosted by the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA) and facilitated by Okwaho Equal Source.

National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA) National Procurement Roundtable Tuesday February 4th, 2020 Lord Elgin Hotel, Ottawa, ON

Tuesday February 4 th , 2020		
8:00 AM	Breakfast & Registration	
9:00 AM	Welcome/Prayer – Shannin Metatawabin	
9:20 AM	Review Agenda - Mark Dokis, NACCA	
9:25 AM	Background Presentation – Mohan Denetto, Indigenous Services Canada Review of the work undertaken by ISC Findings of the Indigenous Participation in Procurement: Discussion Paper 2019	
	Break	
10:15 AM	Roundtable discussion #1 – Okwaho Equal Source Based on the recommendations made in the <i>Modernization of Indigenous participation in procurement discussion paper</i> and your own procurement experiences, what is your feedback/thoughts? Do you agree or disagree with the recommendations? Is there anything missing that should be added? What are the barriers that have disadvantaged Indigenous businesses? What best practices/solutions could be adopted to improve Government's relationship with Indigenous businesses?	2 Breakout Groups
11:30 AM	Report Back and Breakout Group Findings	
12:00 Noon	Lunch	
1:00 PM	Roundtable discussion #2 – Okwaho Equal Source One of the main recommendations from previous roundtable engagement sessions is a required 5% procurement target across government. What are the obstacles and/or challenges that need to be addressed for a 5% Indigenous procurement target to be fully implemented?	2 Breakout Groups
2:15 PM	Report Back and Breakout Group Findings	
2:45 PM	Break	
3:00 PM	Roundtable discussion #3 - Okwaho Equal Source How can Government (PSPC, ISC, Treasury Board, etc.) and the Indigenous business community work together to ensure an effective and timely procurement target is implemented across the whole of government?	
4:00 PM	Wrap up/Adjournment – Shannin Metatawabin	
	Reading Materials: Indigenous Participation in Procurement: Discussion Paper (2019) https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1554219055004/1554219078355	

Appendix D – Federal Procurement Research Project - Small Group and One-On-One Session Questions (2021)

Questions for Indigenous National and Regional Organizations

1. The Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business (PSAB, 1996) can be best identified as a government administrative document with a lackluster record of performance and outcomes. Based on this knowledge and in your professional opinion, do you believe that future Indigenous Procurement in Canada should be enshrined in legislation or regulation to enforce Indigenous procurement targets across government and federally regulated industries (e.g., telecommunications, transportation, banking, etc.) If so, why? Do you have examples of where governments or others have legislated procurement targets?
2. Do you believe Indigenous regional and national organizations have a role to play in co-creating (with the Government of Canada) the necessary Indigenous procurement standards, principles and procedures that must be adhered to ensure Government of Canada compliance? From an NIO perspective, what immediate and long-term investments will you require to ensure adequate representation by your organization in the Indigenous procurement space?
3. The Australian and New Zealand governments have incorporated an Indigenous-led intermediary model (for example, Supply Nation—business verification, procurement services, database, etc.) to further advance Indigenous participation in the procurement supply chain. Do you believe this intermediary model would be a benefit to Indigenous businesses? If so, how do you see this intermediary model operating in Canada?

4. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Questions for Federal Government

1. Do you believe an Indigenous procurement policy update or enhancement(s) to the PSAB is enough to enact the necessary behavioural change within the Government of Canada and the federally regulated industries (e.g., telecommunications, transportation, banking, etc.)? Do you believe it needs to go further to ensure government system-wide compliance? I.e., making Indigenous procurement policy targets into law/regulation? If yes/no, why?
2. Fast-track to 2025 and the minimum 5% Indigenous procurement target has been achieved. What do you envision being the key to your department or agency achieving this goal? What external/internal investments do you foresee being necessary to create a robust federal Indigenous procurement plan and procurement leadership environment?
3. The Australian and New Zealand governments have incorporated an Indigenous-led intermediary model (for example, Supply Nation—business verification, procurement services, database, etc.) to further advance Indigenous participation in the procurement supply chain. Do you believe this intermediary model would be a benefit to the Government of Canada and government and private sectors? If so, how do you see the government aligning with an Indigenous-led model?
4. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Questions for Indigenous Business and Industry

1. As a company currently procuring with the federal government, have you used the PSAB as a gateway to federal procurement opportunities? Do you have a preference for the PSAB or the conventional federal tendering processes? If so, why?
2. Do you have any recommendations or potential models that you view as being critical to ‘evening out the playing field’ by improving federal Indigenous procurement opportunities and outcomes at the local, regional or national level?
3. The Australian and New Zealand governments have incorporated an Indigenous-led intermediary model (for example, Supply Nation—business verification, procurement services, database, etc.) to further advance Indigenous participation in the procurement supply chain. Do you believe this intermediary model would be a benefit to Indigenous businesses? If so, how do you see this intermediary model operating in Canada and by whom?
4. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Questions for Canadian Industry (Non-Indigenous)

1. Based on your professional experiences and industry observations in Indigenous procurement, how would you describe the challenges and successes of your company/industry in meeting current Indigenous procurement targets?
2. What are the three best performance indicators which your company/industry has developed to improve Indigenous supplier and procurement opportunities? Has your corporate procurement strategy met its full potential? If not, what are the

areas that you believe require further investment to achieve a robust Indigenous procurement strategy?

3. From a corporate procurement standpoint, it is well documented that trying to find Indigenous businesses to procure goods and services can be difficult. Have you been successful in establishing a programme or practice that identifies Indigenous procurement-ready businesses? Does your company/industry have Indigenous supply chain/procurement professionals? Do you believe an increase in hiring certified Indigenous supply chain managers and/or procurement officers would improve Indigenous procurement targets/outcomes for your corporation/industry?
4. Is there anything else you would like to share?