

Primer on Rural Philanthropy in an Indigenous Context

May 2019

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May 2019*

General Overview and Demographics (847 nationally recognized Indigenous-focused charities)

Indigenous¹ peoples across Canada (and other nation states across the colonized world) have been and continue to be disproportionately marginalized from settler-society. From the onset of large-scale colonization, newly formed governments and settler society have often imposed ideologies onto Indigenous nations and subsequently stripped away culture and identity (The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, 2017). Narrowing the focus to Canada, a country plagued with a bloody history of Indigenous genocide, an ethical shift has recently been identified.

To assimilate the Indigenous nations found within the political borders of Canada to dominant settler culture, Canada has historically marginalized, segregated and disadvantaged Indigenous peoples for centuries (Battiste, 2016). Despite insurmountable challenges, many Indigenous communities have remained present and strong. Mi'kmaw writer and academic Marie Battiste (2016) states that “the Elders reminded me that our people have survived despite scalping bounties on our heads, deaths in residential schools and attempts to legislate us out of existence” (p. 31). Perhaps in response to Indigenous activism and resiliency, the current literature on Indigenous philanthropy recognizes a paradigm shift towards mending the relationships between Indigenous peoples and settler society within Canada (Delormier, Horn-Miller, McComber and Marquis, 2017). Documents such as the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* published in 2007 as well as the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* released in 2015 have acted as the grounds on which several legislative actions have taken place in Canada concerning Indigenous peoples and settler society. Earlier than the publication of these reports, however, philanthropic efforts were taking place in small Indigenous communities across Canada that can be viewed as small-scale attempts at what is now seen as a movement towards truth and reconciliation.

Marshall and Sterparn (2012) present a case study of the philanthropic efforts of Oxfam Canada, a foundation originally from the UK that was incorporated in Canada in 1962. In the early 1960's, Oxfam Canada partnered with the Salvation Army after stories were shared of incredible hardships in the community of Nelson House, a small Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation in northern Manitoba. The Salvation Army Manitoba commander, Colonel Arthur Moulton, reached out to collect blankets, winter clothes and money for the community. Marshall and Sterparn continue importantly note that the relief efforts for Indigenous communities at the time was not favored by the federal government. In fact, the authors state that "Oxfam's man in Toronto Albert Dalziel could have expected it, as he had been told that aid to First Nations would trigger the disapproval of federal authorities" (Marshall and Sterparn, 2012, p. 306). Though not what would necessarily be considered "Indigenous Philanthropy" to contemporary standards, it is interesting to recognize the position of philanthropy as a vehicle for reconciliation even before governmental structures. For example, Oxfam Canada's involvement in Nelson House happened just a few years before the "1969 White Paper" introduced by then-Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Jean Chrétien.

According to The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples report (2017), in 2013 there were a reported 847 "Indigenous-focused charities identified nationally" (p.13). The following section will provide a better understanding of how "Indigenous philanthropy" is defined today as well as the importance of terminology in relation to Indigenous philanthropy.

Terminology

The following excerpt taken from the most recent comprehensive report on philanthropy in Indigenous communities encompasses several dimensions of what is contemporarily understood as Indigenous philanthropy among academic and non-academic circles in Canada. This section will unpack what the literature on Indigenous philanthropy highlights about terminology and the importance of language through an Indigenous perspective.

Indigenous philanthropy refers to the activities of both donors and recipients that are directed to the benefit of Indigenous peoples. The term encompasses charitable foundations, "charities," non-profit organizations and qualified donees. The term also encompasses contemporary expressions of traditional forms of community sharing. An example is a community freezer used to store meat or fish that is shared among community members from traditional hunting, fishing and gathering activities (The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples, 2017, p. 5).

To center the discussion about language, Indigenous peoples have fundamentally been stripped of language through processes of assimilation. Language is an important facet of culture and has played a large role in the fight for self-determination in Indigenous communities and governance (Belanger and Williams, 2012). An interesting case-study in Alberta notes that Indigenous communities were subject to a demand from the provincial government to register as a "charity." Belanger and Williams (2012) discuss implications of on-reserve casinos in Indigenous communities in Alberta and outline that "at no time did First Nations formally object to the provincial demand that they register as 'charities,' something First Nations could have identified

as an overt challenge to their self-proclaimed sovereignty” (p. 556). There was not much other literature available to substantiate the “charity” status of Indigenous communities in Alberta however it is important to recognize the implications that defining a community of people as a “charity” can have on identities and self-governance when a charity is inherently reliant on outside sources for survival.

The term “charity” is further unpacked by The Circle on Aboriginal Peoples in Canada (2017).

The term ‘charity’ itself is problematic and implies the opposite of self-determining, community-based ways of being. In particular, spiritually and culturally based relationships based on reciprocity, of giving and receiving among one another, are viewed by the Indigenous Elders and Traditional Knowledge Holders as outside the parameters of ‘charities’” (p. 25).

This excerpt pulls several aspects of a community together that distinguishes its values from that of a charity. Indigenous communities place weight on terminology and language because certain words connote particular feelings and understandings that are in conflict with the actions and beliefs of community members.

Elson, Fontan, Lefèvre, and Stauch (2018) recently produced a lengthy study on foundations in Canada, with a focus on partnerships and acts of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in Canada. The authors support the contradictions between the understandings behind Indigenous philanthropy and “charity” because of the very nature of Indigenous giving and receiving that significantly predate colonial foundations. Elson et al. (2018) posit that “whether it is a ‘giveaway’ at a powwow, the day-to-day sharing of food, or a Potlatch ceremony, the sacred nature and collective community benefit of giving and receiving through prescribed protocols continues to take place” (p. 1782). Much of the literature speaks to the community-based nature of Indigenous philanthropy and the unique practices that take place regularly in Indigenous communities.

It is significant to recognize the importance of terminology and language around forms of philanthropy and “giving” through an Indigenous perspective in order to ensure an appropriate level of respect and understanding for a community’s situation. Issues in Indigenous communities are intersectional and diverse, and it is only through self-determined, Indigenous focused and led action that meaningful philanthropic efforts can be sustained (The Circle on Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, 2017). The following section will discuss forms of Indigenous philanthropy and provide some examples from “Indigenous-focused foundations” from across Canada.

Self-Determination and Intersectionality

Present throughout much of the literature on Indigenous philanthropy are the meaningful ways in which philanthropy can contribute to development within an Indigenous community. The two main themes of Indigenous philanthropy and meaningful engagement at a grassroots level are self-determination and intersectionality. First, the concept of self-determination refers to the ability of a community to have autonomy over the decisions that are made and the actions that are taken in response to an issue within that community. Indigenous philanthropy calls for Indigenous-focused foundations to put the interests of a community first and for non-Indigenous foundations to

meaningfully involve and empower community members around any decision relevant to that community (Elson et al., 2018; The Circle on Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, 2017). Second, intersectionality from an Indigenous perspective refers to the multi-value considerations that are made at the community level (Tedesco, 2015). For example, in an economic development project, an Indigenous community may consider the economic benefit that inherently involves the cultural aspects of the people as well as the environmental responsibility that is present in Indigenous ways of living.

Expanding on self-determination, an article from the *Globe and Mail* (Galloway, 2017), highlights the donation of \$12 million from the Slight Family Foundation to “improve the lives of Indigenous peoples across Canada” (para. 1). Though the intentions of this donation are not fully realized and the goal blatantly vague, the article mentions Roberta Jamieson – the first First Nations woman in Canada to earn a law degree who was tasked with the process of researching which foundations would have the largest impact. Though it is unsure how the money impacted communities at the ground level, this is an example of meaningful involvement that look to Indigenous leaders as resources and not obstacles.

On the contrary, a blog post from Indigenous Corporate Training (2016) identifies a near \$10 billion dollars that Canadians donated to charitable institutions in 2007 stating that “little of this funding finds its way to Aboriginal communities” (para. 2). On a grand scale, the percentage of what is donated to “charity” across Canada that makes its way to some of Canada’s most vulnerable communities (Marshall and Sterparn, 2012) is low. Coupling this lack of funding with a lack of meaningful involvement of Indigenous communities in decisions and self-determination can result in the small amount of money that is fed into the community being used inappropriately. It is important to recognize the historical implications of self-determination. The introduction of section 141 of the Indian Act in 1927 saw that no Indigenous person shall pursue a land claim, and noted that a monetary fine or jail time would be consequence for anyone locating funds or fundraising for such causes (Leslie, 2002) This section was repealed in later amendments of the Indian Act.

Furthermore, intersectionality is an important concept when considering Indigenous philanthropy as decisions made at the community level are multi-surfaced and involves a wide range of perspectives. For example, Tedesco (2015) writes of a case-study in the Great Bear Rainforest where environmental campaigns to save this important ecosystem (home to several Indigenous nations) faced ecological, socio-economic, and political challenges that negated “traditional” models of environmental protection. In this case, negotiations between government and Indigenous peoples revealed many aspects of forest protection which involved “litigation to establish First Nations’ legal rights” (Tedesco, 2015, p. 16). Tangentially related to self-determination, it is only through meaningful involvement in philanthropic projects that intersectional and holistic decisions can be made at the community level.

Further Research (knowledge gaps)

Taken from The Circle on Aboriginal Peoples in Canada (2017) report, Indigenous philanthropy is certainly in its early stages in becoming meaningful in mainstream foundation pedagogy. The report highlights an “Indigenous philanthropic sector that is vibrant, diverse and distinctive” (The Circle on Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, 2017, p. 28). However, the report also presented the following recommendations to strengthen Indigenous philanthropy in Canada (p. 29 – 32):

1. Define Indigenous “charities” as those led by Indigenous people, rooted in Indigenous values.
2. Establish an indigenous organization accreditation process with guiding principles.
3. Prioritize funding to Indigenous communities and organizations to advance Truth and Reconciliation.
4. Recognize Indigenous philanthropists.
5. Seek out and support guidance from Indigenous Elders and Traditional Knowledge Holders.
6. Expand training related to Indigenous philanthropy.
7. Improve funding structures and processes to increase access for Indigenous ‘charities.’
8. Continues to support research on Indigenous philanthropy.

In terms of further research that needs to be conducted in the sector of Indigenous philanthropy, it is important to continue to highlight positive stories and case-studies in order to foster a deeper appreciation for Indigenous philanthropy as a solution. Outlining and studying the best practices of Indigenous philanthropy through an Indigenous methodology would grow the ways in which non-Indigenous foundations associate with Indigenous ways of knowing. The Circle on Aboriginal Peoples in Canada (2017) recommends further detailed research at a provincial and territorial level on Indigenous philanthropy in Canada to begin to recognize intra- and interprovincial patterns when it comes to giving in an Indigenous perspective.

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Draft - For Discussion

Place-Based Endowments in the Canadian Periphery

Place-Based Endowments in the Canadian Periphery research initiatives is a multi-year research initiative examining wealth, place-based development, and investing in rural Canada. Peripheral communities are sites of wealth, fuelling the Canadian economy through natural resource industries since confederation. Although the periphery is a source of wealth, over the past thirty years this wealth has largely been redirected out of rural regions to larger urban centres. These domestic issues are exacerbated by processes of globalization, which facilitate the hyper-mobility of finance. Finance is no longer tied to place. Finance has become ‘disembedded’ with increasing interconnections and advancements in Internet technologies, leading to emerging patterns of uneven development across the Canadian periphery.

A counterbalance to these trends is the emergence of philanthropic organizations in Canada that have been exploring and implementing place-based collective endowments as a response to re-embedding finance in local areas. Under the federal *Charities Act*, philanthropic organizations (such as community foundations and trusts) can collect money to invest in place-based collective endowments. The funds collected are under the guidance of local actors, who also prioritize how to spend interest generated from the endowment. These philanthropic organizations organize around place and people’s connection to place. These organizations are starting to understand their potential impact on the local development. Yet little research has been conducted on philanthropy in rural Canada.

In light of the ‘retreat from the periphery’ and the hyper-mobility of money, this research will examine place-based collective endowments as a mechanism to facilitate revitalization in peripheral regions from theoretical, public policy, and local development perspectives.

This research initiative involves researchers at Grenfell Campus, Memorial University, Simon Fraser University, and the University of Guelph. Further information on this research initiative can be obtained at www.ruraldev.ca/place-based-endowments-in-the-periphery/. The project has been financially supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.



ⁱ This report uses the term “Indigenous” rather than “Aboriginal” to refer to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. “Indigenous” is a globally recognized term that is codified in international human rights instruments such as United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. “Indigenous” also has positive associations with self-

determination, human rights and Indigenous peoples' connection to the land. Terminology used by Indigenous peoples has been fluid, as the process of decolonization unfolds and as the identities of Indigenous peoples are re-established and reclaimed, based on Indigenous teachings and understandings (The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, 2017, p. 8).

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