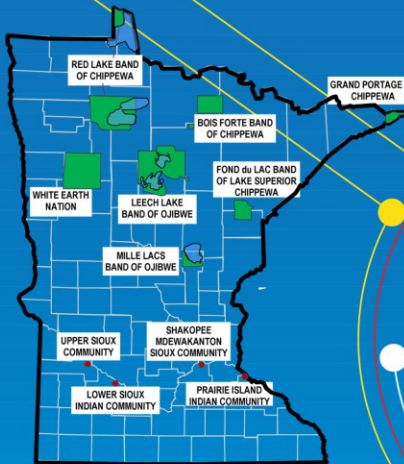


ENTREPRENEURIAL LISTENING SESSIONS LESSONS LEARNED

FEBRUARY 2016



*A Focused Approach to
Sustaining and Increasing
American Indian Owned Businesses*



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MNIBA's goals were to facilitate a series of statewide conversations about what is needed to get at the heart of how we can sustain and increase American Indian-owned business, both within and outside our tribal communities.

The goals were to:

- Identify new policies that are needed to mobilize and cultivate the next generation of American Indian business owners, entrepreneurs and artisans.
- Identify the role of tribal leadership, tribal economic development, tribal colleges, tribal and community development financial institutions (CDFI's), higher education, the regional Indian business alliances, small business development organizations, financial institutions, native and non-native art and service organizations and elected officials play in sustaining and increasing American Indian-owned business in Minnesota.
- Identify the issues that American Indian businesses continue to face in gaining access to quality financial and business technical assistance, professional development and supportive networks necessary to sustain and grow their businesses and determine what steps are needed for change.
- Identify the ways that American Indian businesses could support other American Indian businesses.

"This was the first time that I was invited to sit with other native entrepreneurs and share my thoughts and express what I needed to succeed as a small business owner!" - Participant comment

- Determine the steps that can be taken now to support American Indian businesses.

To meet our objectives, MNIBA, with the assistance of our facilitator, worked to design and execute a series of entrepreneurial listening sessions. Between June and October 2015, four entrepreneurial listening sessions were held throughout the state. Sessions were held at Leech Lake Reservation, Minneapolis, Duluth and Bemidji. These sessions drew over 100 attendees made up of emerging entrepreneurs, artisans, small businesses, and practitioners.

The information discussed in small group conversations was harvested to identify key themes, emergent patterns and subsequent planning and action to promote American Indian owned-business in Minnesota. MNIBA acted as the host and listener, and encouraged a safe environment for participants to share their stories and speak openly.

Throughout the sessions, MNIBA collected information about the needs of American Indian businesses related to tribal, federal and state governments, advocacy and policy issues, access to financial and technical assistance and resources, physical infrastructure, and professional development, etc.

MNIBA found the feedback harvested from these sessions invaluable in forming its recommendations. MNIBA further expects that information from these sessions will guide its future work and goals.

2015 Entrepreneurial Listening Sessions

MNIBA explored several methodologies and formats that would invite conversation. We were aware of the many issues entrepreneurs encounter, but wanted to keep the focus on finding common ground and creative solutions. We understood going in that it was important to let people give voice to the problematic issues, and needed a platform that would invite respectful conversation, encourage ideas, creativity and action and decided upon the World Café.

A consultant was secured and several meetings were scheduled to identify our over arching purpose, what we intended to do with the information that would be harvested from the conversations and subsequent questions and development.

After several meetings the over arching purpose was identified; *“To get at the heart of how we can sustain and increase American Indian-owned business, both within and outside of our tribal communities.”*

To address our purpose, we intentionally designed the following series of questions:

- *What does it mean to be an American Indian entrepreneur?”*
- *What would be helpful for you as an American Indian-owned business?*
- *What can you do to support other American Indian-owned businesses?*
- *What steps can be taken now to support American Indian-owned business in Minnesota?*

The target audience was defined to include; emerging entrepreneurs, native artisans, American Indian business, and tribal enterprise. An invitation was designed and sent through several channels including; mail, email, social media, broadcast email, partner organizations and list-servs.

The room set up and layout was intentionally designed, this included covering the tables with butcher paper and providing markers. A family style meal was offered to invite conversation and check in before the sessions began. Participants were invited to introduce themselves, their tribal affiliation and share what curiosity brought them there.

Introductory Presentations

Participants were introduced to the World Café assumptions and etiquette:

- *The knowledge and wisdom we need to move forward is right here in this room*
- *We can figure out a way forward by respecting each other, really listening to each other and looking for common themes and questions*
- *We can all be a part of a new way to be and work together as we come to understand our unique gifts and strengths and combine them in creative ways*
 - **Focus** on what matters
 - **Contribute** your thinking and experience
 - **Listen** to understand
 - **Connect** ideas
 - **Listen** with others for insights and deeper questions
 - **Doodle** on the paper tablecloth
 - **Have fun** - play and experiment

Finally, the participants were introduced to the World Café Theme: What possibilities exist to increase and sustain American Indian-owned business in Minnesota?

MNIBA determined that what was harvested during each listening session would be distilled and reported by a breakdown of each of the four questions asked during the listening sessions, notes preserved on the table clothes, and other insights that emerged during table conversations.

HARVEST ANALYSIS

Each World Café entrepreneur listening session was framed with the same over-arching question: *“What possibilities exist to increase and sustain American Indian-owned business in Minnesota?”*

There were four questions following the over arching theme, and they were the same at each listening session. After each one of the four questions, the group would identify 3-4 key ideas that emerged from their table’s conversation and put each idea on a post-it note.

When patterns and themes emerged, the consultant would engage the entire group in this discovery and further discussion. Reoccurring themes from other listening sessions were also shared by the consultant before the new group.

The Harvest

Before each session began, prayers were offered in gratitude and to seek guidance. Following the meal, participants broke-out into groups of four, and a question was posed. The question was then discussed at each table for about 20 minutes. Participants were then asked to identify and prioritize their top 3-4 ideas. They were provided 5” x 7” post-it notes to write each take-away point. Each table would appoint a person to speak on behalf of the group and the post-its were placed on the walls. At the end of each session, the consultant would point out any new themes and patterns that were emerging and the group as a whole would discuss these new insights. Additionally, both the facilitator and host shared closing thoughts and observations with the participants.



The following pages reflect the patterns and insights that emerged during each listening session. Themes emerging during each listening session and questions were discussed during the Harvest. Following that, we drilled down to include additional conversations that occurred during each series of questions and during the family style meal.

What we observed there were very strong themes that emerged at each listening session. For this reason, we have separated the findings from the listening session that focused primarily on native artists and additional emerging conversations that warranted documentation.

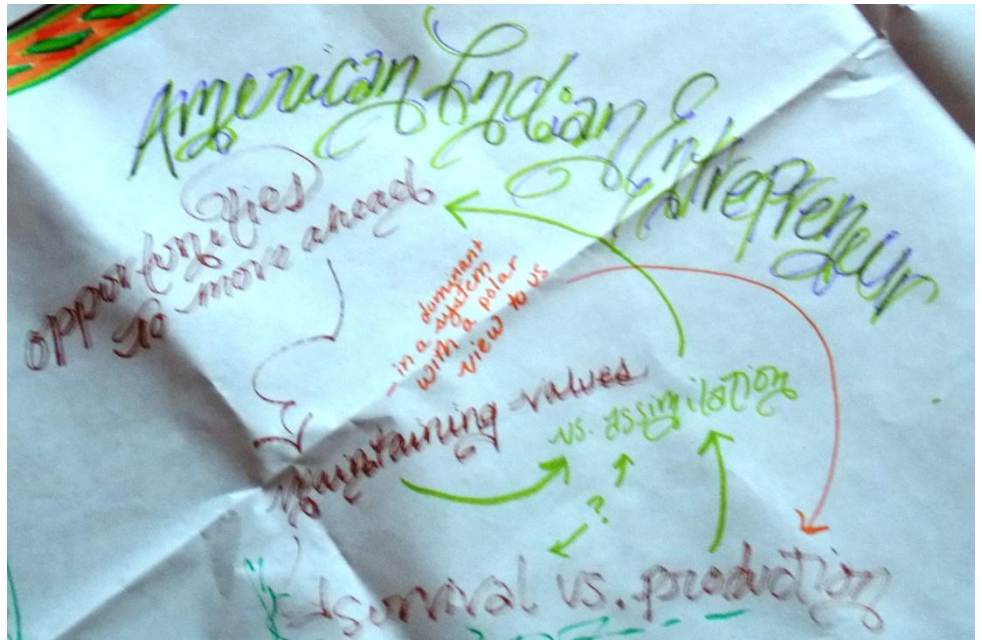
As a result of these conversations, MNIBA is taking away several actionable items that can be addressed through partnerships and ongoing statewide efforts, both in the short and long-term.

HARVEST THEMES

Question One: *What does it mean for you to be an American Indian entrepreneur?*

Theme: Opportunity

- ❖ Do what I love.
- ❖ Provide a livelihood for my family.
- ❖ Being an example of the possibilities and success as a native person.
- ❖ To honor family.
- ❖ Independence.
- ❖ Have the ability to call the shots and take the blame.
- ❖ Personal and professional recognition.
- ❖ Have an idea and pursue it.
- ❖ Freedom to structure time to attend ceremonies and community events.
- ❖ Having your own thoughts.
- ❖ New frontiers.
- ❖ Maximize opportunities, i.e., technical assistance, preferential statuses, Buy Indian Act, and set-aside contracts.
- ❖ Contributing to building economies.
- ❖ Create a business that others carry on and the business keeps going.
- ❖ Building business so people can make a livelihood/benefit.
- ❖ Being an example to other native entrepreneurs.
- ❖ Being a positive representation of tribal communities.
- ❖ Learning how to become business savvy/smart.
- ❖ Evolution.
- ❖ Overcoming and doing your own thing.
- ❖ Ability to accept criticism, open self up to grow and learn and improve products



Theme: Characteristics

- ❖ Resilient.
- ❖ The ability to think outside the box.
- ❖ Willing to learn and grow professionally.
- ❖ Being a risk taker.
- ❖ Has an idea and pursues it.
- ❖ Ability to accept criticism, open self up to grow and learn and improve products.
- ❖ Ability to work on my own, be my own boss and love what I do.
- ❖ Pride.
- ❖ Overcoming and doing my own thing.
- ❖ Great faith in self-abilities
- ❖ My business and time needs to be relevant to the communities I care about.

"An entrepreneur is a modern day warrior - a means to provide for family & community." - Participant comment

Theme: Culture

- ❖ Community & Family responsibility and Honor.
- ❖ Unique cultural perspectives.
- ❖ Giving help & providing services to those who cannot afford it.
- ❖ Ability to walk in two worlds.
- ❖ Maintain values.
- ❖ Be myself and find my spirit.
- ❖ Freedom, Culture, Spiritual, Togetherness, Interconnected, Great Purpose!
- ❖ Perpetuating culture, by helping building someone else's skills and abilities.
- ❖ Move ahead realizing identities are important.
- ❖ Responsibility to share knowledge.
- ❖ Use our gifts and experiences to work with tribes to benefit our communities.
- ❖ Ability to express from the heart.
- ❖ Knowing that whatever we give away or when we help others it comes back to us!
- ❖ Being an example of the possibilities and success as a native person.
- ❖ Sharing is not the same as in dominant culture where competition is strong.

Opportunities exist to move ahead, while maintaining cultural values in a dominant system polar opposite to ours versus assimilation. - Participant comment

The knowledge and wisdom we need to move forward exists right here in this room. - Participant comment

Culture and cultural identity were woven throughout all the conversations. Participants felt their culture set them apart in a positive way. Sharing, giving help, helping building others up, providing for family and community are closely held values.

There was consensus about being grounded in the understanding of their place in the universe, what it means to be human and how to be balanced. Ways of knowing are community; observation and place based and come from elders, and knowledge holders, not books, and is validated through community.

Facilitator Comments:

He noted that the language we were using to talk about business/entrepreneurship was all grounded in the dominant culture's language of business. He wondered what Anishinaabe or Dakota language could be used to talk about business that may be more inviting.

Host Comments:

She shared that as indigenous people we have long history of entrepreneurship. It is part of our culture. Prior to contact, we had trade representatives and trade routes, these people were fluent in various trade languages so they could communicate and negotiate with other tribal nations. A value was set on goods, and in trade negotiations, we were strong, we knew what our goods were worth and their trade value in exchange for other goods.

Our oral traditions remind us of how we practiced the give-away and shared our wealth and prosperity with our families, community and guests. We owned property, even though our land may have been held in common, we owned our dwellings, furnishings, our gardens, our tools, etc. Families were assigned hunting and gathering areas and these rights were respected by others in the community.

The Creator favored us with a keen intellect, a rich culture and language; we are industrious and creative, loyal and spiritual people.

HARVEST THEMES

Question Two: What would be helpful for you as an American Indian-owned business?

Theme: Government (Tribal, State, Federal, Private and Public Sector Business)

Tribal

- ❖ Adopt strong Buy Indian policy that is enforced and transparent
- ❖ Ensure Department of Interior are implementing and enforcing the Buy Indian Act
- ❖ Procurement staff buys from tribal citizens first, then from American Indian businesses in state/region/nation next
- ❖ Provide training to all tribal procurement staff on Buy Indian Policy
- ❖ Procurement personnel reviews are commensurate with their Buy Indian efforts and increases
- ❖ Development of a Buy Indian Procurement Code of Ethics
- ❖ Showcase directory of tribal citizen businesses (tribal paper, website, and social media)
- ❖ Development of a vendor appeal process
- ❖ Hold an annual American Indian Business-owner and showcase Appreciation Day at the tribe
- ❖ Apply **self-quota 25% rule** to American Indian businesses
- ❖ Development of sound commercial laws that protect and grow Indian business
- ❖ Foster environment that supports American Indian business development
- ❖ Development of cooperative business procurement agreements
- ❖ Casinos would provide free ad space for tribal citizen owned business
- ❖ Provide American Indian business incentives that utilize advantages
- ❖ K-12 Business education provided in our schools to our youth

Integrity - rules apply to all - Participant comment

State

- ❖ Remove gaps and rules that hinder business development
- ❖ Hold an annual American Indian Business Day in Minnesota
- ❖ Open partnerships and American Indian liaison on the city councils
- ❖ Support and enforcement of minority contract opportunities
- ❖ Removing inequitable barriers for minority businesses in accessing state contracts
- ❖ K-12 business and financial education for our youth

Federal

- ❖ Buy Indian Act is fully implemented and enforced

Private and Public Sector Business

- ❖ Native businesses, native organizations and native non-profits adopt Buy Indian Policies





Theme: Resources

- ❖ Statewide Indian business directory
- ❖ Statewide financial and resource directory
- ❖ Service and resource organizations that make native people feel welcome
- ❖ Chamber of Commerce – or other type of supportive native resources
- ❖ Access to a menu of business plans linked to providers of those services
- ❖ Indian list serv focused on business and financial training, workshops, networks, etc
- ❖ Business training
- ❖ Access to credit repair services
- ❖ Credit Awareness – financial education
- ❖ Cooperative development and training
- ❖ How to form a guild
- ❖ Training for native organizations/non-profits in organizational structure
- ❖ Access to training for computer technology, social media, website to generate business
- ❖ Development of “How to” guides, i.e., how to enter into the native arts market, how do you find venues, a business plan check list, etc.
- ❖ Networks – the meaning to network in our languages
- ❖ Entrepreneurial – business – trade – the meaning of these actions in our languages

Theme: Financial

- ❖ Access to capital (banks, CDFI’s, tribal loan funds, etc.)
- ❖ Equity fund and access to low interest loans
- ❖ Access to capital through crowdfunding
- ❖ Access to marketing funding to develop flier/brochure
- ❖ Access to funding for supplies
- ❖ Individual artists and businesses pooling financial resources for greater visibility and marketing (i.e. TV commercials, magazine, etc.)
- ❖ Financial support that is accessible and available to native (earmarked for natives)
- ❖ A statewide financial and technical assistance directory



Theme: Professional Development

- ❖ Connecting with people and peers that are a positive relationship
- ❖ Access to mentors and sponsors
- ❖ Having native business mentorships and resources
- ❖ Mentorships with the type of business you want to go into
- ❖ Access to mentorships, knowledge, connections, elders (wisdom)
- ❖ Crowdfunding training (Kickstarter, Go Fund Me, Hatchfund for Arts, Indiegogo, etc.)
- ❖ Access to professional networks

Closer collaboration is needed to make this work, and speak in one voice to be heard. - Participant comment

Theme: Infrastructure

- ❖ Internet –having access to broadband in rural communities
- ❖ Commercial space developed and identified for American Indian business
- ❖ Tribal incubators that support business development and reduces start-up expenses
- ❖ Incubators with access to professional networks

Other

- ❖ Promote and feature businesses in tribal, organizational, corporate and vendor newsletters, web sites and social media, etc.

Facilitator Comments:

Shared the idea that we live in the stories we tell and asked the group; “What is the story you want to tell about entrepreneurship and business development in tribal communities?”

HARVEST THEMES

Question Three: What can you do to support other American Indian-owned businesses?

Theme: American Indian Business Directory

- ❖ Get myself listed
- ❖ Encourage others to get listed
- ❖ Use the directory to promote other businesses
- ❖ Use the directory to link to other businesses
- ❖ The directory elevates the wealth of talent to the public

*Become visible - not invisible to ourselves
and our communities - Participant comment*

Theme: Buy Native – Choose Local First Statewide Campaign

- ❖ Educate the public about the importance of Buy Native
- ❖ Educate buyers and producers
- ❖ Share *how-to steps* on buying Buy Native
- ❖ Challenge myself and others to set annual goals (personal and organizational) to increase Buy Native purchases
- ❖ Shop local and know who you are sourcing your products from
- ❖ Patronize these businesses
- ❖ Provide letters of reference
- ❖ Support local artists, markets and businesses during the holidays
- ❖ Make referrals
- ❖ Educate the public on how these businesses and artists contribute to the local economy
- ❖ Utilize genuine/authentic sourcing for American Indian art/products/services
- ❖ Support an American Indian business day and showcase in my community

Theme: Employment

- ❖ Hire other American Indian businesses in contract work
- ❖ Hire natives – hire local
- ❖ Build employment opportunities through my business

*Don't be shy, be famous, follow your passion,
and never give up! - Participant comment*

Theme: Networking

- ❖ Promotion, marketing and referrals
- ❖ Introductions
- ❖ Host monthly meetings for native business professionals in my community
- ❖ Host an annual dinner or luncheon showcasing businesses
- ❖ Talk about native issues to non-native community or at work place
- ❖ Create a network of businesses and business cards
- ❖ Support a community event
- ❖ Sponsor, promote and attend native events
- ❖ Use the internet and social media to advertise and promote other American Indian businesses and artists
- ❖ Host casual networking conversations
- ❖ Develop respectful partnerships and collaborations

Theme: Support Indian Businesses through:

- ❖ Mentoring
- ❖ Coaching
- ❖ Provide professional development
- ❖ Share knowledge
- ❖ Share resources
- ❖ Do introductions
- ❖ Sponsorships (time and money)
- ❖ Provide moral support
- ❖ Pool resources
- ❖ Serve on boards
- ❖ Attend each other's events

Other

- ❖ Develop a model Procurement Code of Ethics for Tribes, businesses and organizations, targeted at those who represent American Indian constituents
- ❖ Work with my tribal council to adopt a model Buy Indian policy
- ❖ Host regularly scheduled meetings for the purpose of creating an Indigenous Think Tank. Traditional Indigenous Knowledge (TIK) and apply to the contemporary world of business, best practices, markets, processes, networks, supplies, sponsorships, etc
- ❖ Cultivate our own experts



Host Comments:

During each of the listening sessions, participants identified a great need to connect on a regular basis and have these types of conversations, also to network and learn from one another. Entrepreneurs expressed a sense of feeling very isolated; because they are not generating the revenue necessary to pay high annual dues to belong to membership organizations that could connect them to other American Indian businesses, buyers and suppliers. During the table discussions, people shared they felt they were being heard and they were learning and being supported by the other participants.

HARVEST THEMES

Question Four: Given what we have discussed tonight, what steps can be taken now to support American Indian owned business in Minnesota?

The following themes emerged across all of the listening sessions and called for:

- *A statewide American Indian Business Directory*
- *A statewide Financial and Resource Directory*
- *Strong Buy Indian policies and practices (tribes, businesses, organizations and non-profits)*
- *Establish an annual American Indian Business-owner and showcase Appreciation Day at the tribe*
- *Minnesota State adopts an American Indian Business Day*
- *A statewide Buy Native – Choose Local First Campaign*
- *Networking and gatherings for small business*
- *Access to mentors*
- *Access to capital*
- *Access to business supportive and financial resources*



Theme: Government

Tribal

- ❖ Work with tribes to adopt meaningful and enforceable Buy Native-Choose Local First resolutions
- ❖ Work with tribes to host annual American Indian business appreciation day and showcase
- ❖ Work with casinos to provide free ad space for tribal citizen owned business
- ❖ Create statewide work group to develop a model Indian Procurement Code of Ethics
- ❖ Tribes ensure federal Buy Indian Act is implemented and enforced

Federal

- ❖ Monitor and ensure that federal funding is being tapped by American Indian businesses and those \$\$\$ are brought to and benefitting our communities
- ❖ Advocate locally, regionally and nationally that the Buy Indian Act is fully implemented and enforced

State

- ❖ Ensure that state funding is being tapped by American Indian communities for commerce, small business, economic and workforce development and those \$\$\$ are brought to and benefitting our communities
- ❖ Work with other minority advocacy groups to call for transparency and enforcement of minority contract opportunities
- ❖ Work with other minority advocacy groups to restructure policy in order to remove inequitable barriers for minority businesses in accessing state contracts

Theme: Advocacy & Education

- ❖ Identify and cultivate native experts and mentors/coaches
- ❖ Host gathering to determine interest and participation for the purpose of creating an Indigenous Think Tank. Traditional Indigenous Knowledge (TIK).

- ❖ Ensure a native voice and presence is at the table (institutions - state and private) when tackling issues that impact Indian Country
- ❖ Meet with language speakers to identify language that addresses business, the act of business/trade, prosperity, what it means to be successful, etc. so that we create a more inviting environment to discuss business through an indigenous lens
- ❖ Circulate Secretary of State Announcements for open seats/committees and commission positions throughout Indian country to encourage American Indian applications
 - Ensure there is an American Indian voice on state committees/commissions
 - Follow-up and see appointees selected, especially when diversity criteria was part of the selection
- ❖ Bring attention to institutional barriers in accessing federal and state funding and how that can be funneled in Indian country
- ❖ Bring attention to institutional and social barriers that prevent full native participation
- ❖ Work with ALANA/Chai and continue updating annual report; American Indian Capital and Minnesota's future and elevate visibility the economic contributions of American Indians in Minnesota
- ❖ MNIBA to strengthen partnerships with advocacy groups such as; ALANA, Chai, Everybody In, etc.
- ❖ MNIBA to partner with other organizations to champion American Indian disparity reports and other data pertaining to American Indian communities and businesses
- ❖ MNIBA to strengthen partnerships with state agencies such as; Department of Human Rights, Indian Affairs Council, Department of Employment and Economic Development, State Arts Board and Department of Tourism.
- ❖ Ensure the MN State Art Board has qualified, knowledgeable people reading grant applications and making recommendations on culturally appropriate award decisions
- ❖ Launch a series of stories about American Indian business/artisans/gatherers

Theme: Resources

- ❖ Create statewide work group to develop a model Buy Native Procurement Code of Ethics for business, organizations and non-profits
- ❖ Partner with artisans and art organizations to publish a "Guide for Purchasing American Art"
- ❖ Develop a sticker/cling logo for American Indian-owned business (or "Ask me how I support American Indian businesses") to post at place of business and use in marketing materials, social media and web site

Theme: Networks

- ❖ Create a series of regional American Indian Business intentional meet-ups for conversation, support, learning and sharing
- ❖ Promote each other's events and encourage participation
- ❖ Encourage and create partnerships

HARVEST

American Indian Artist Listening Session

This listening session was hosted at the American Indian Community Housing Organization of Duluth, MN. Their Urban Indian Center, Gimaajii Mino Bimaddiziyaan is home to beautiful community meeting spaces, permanent native art collections and an art gallery. Over 10,000 people attended their community events and art gallery openings in 2015. Artists that attended this listening session represented many mediums and art forms.



"It was a great opportunity to meet new artists that are 'like-minded.' It reiterated the importance of supporting other Native artists." - Participant comment



ARTIST HARVEST

Question One: *What does it mean for you to be an American Indian entrepreneur?*

- ❖ Ability to walk in two worlds
- ❖ Walking a fine line between artist and advocate
- ❖ Responsibility to share knowledge
- ❖ Recognition
- ❖ Positive representation of communities
- ❖ Acceptance
- ❖ Maintaining Values
- ❖ Independence
- ❖ Perpetuating culture, by helping building someone else's skills and abilities
- ❖ Passion to help people
- ❖ Freedom, Culture, Spiritual, Togetherness, Interconnected, Great Purpose
- ❖ We have the mindset to do things
- ❖ Adapting the skills of that past into contemporary times

*Much of my time is spent educating "clients - consumers" on being native.
- Participant comment*

At one table the conversation drilled down further to the essence of progress, what is happening if you are making progress? What is progress? How do you measure progress as an entrepreneur?

- Making \$'s
- Building status
- Improving what you are doing
- Learning and interaction with other people
- Moving something forward in a positive manner
- Gaining knowledge
- Seeing a new vision
- Focusing more on quality

ARTIST HARVEST

Question Two: *What would be helpful for you as an American Indian-owned business?*

Theme: Resources

- ❖ Native business directory
- ❖ Promotions and business directories
- ❖ Access to resources and know where those resources are located
- ❖ Mentors and sponsors
- ❖ Business training
- ❖ Assistance with organizational structure
- ❖ Social media support for reoccurring social events
- ❖ Networking
- ❖ TV commercial for native artists

Theme: Finance

- ❖ Dollars and funding for supplies
- ❖ Financial support that accessible and available to natives (earmarked for natives)
- ❖ Access to marketing funding to develop flier/brochure
- ❖ Pooling financial resources for greater visibility and marketing (i.e. TV commercials, magazine, etc.)



Theme: Infrastructure (Physical and Organizational)

Physical

- ❖ Internet –having access to broadband in rural communities
- ❖ Space for artists (studio – retreat)
- ❖ Having a permanent art gallery space
- ❖ Access to an incubator space

Organizational

- ❖ Creation of an artist's guild
- ❖ Creating an artist cooperative
- ❖ Artists in Residencies/Partnerships that is:
 - Nurturing for business and art
 - Nurtures creative thought
 - Native centered and not commercial
 - Grounded in the culture
- ❖ Develop a Think Tank that meets regularly and uses TIK – Traditional Indigenous Knowledge
- ❖ Work with the MN Arts Board to secure funding from the budget to organize an American Indian Arts board in Minnesota

We must elevate native art and level the playing field, where it has its place and value in the mainstream and in the tribal communities. - Participant comment

Theme: Professional Development

- ❖ Portfolio development and training
- ❖ Education for the artist (pricing and staff)
- ❖ How to choose and use an agent
- ❖ Access training for computer technology, social media, website to generate business
- ❖ Business training for the arts

Theme: Education and Advocacy

Education

- ❖ Educating the public about American Indians and American Indian art
- ❖ Educating the public on the difference of genuine native made art/products from fake foreign market, fake native motif art/jewelry
- ❖ Develop a platform to invite other organizations, boards and institutions to hear and learn from American Indian Artists about what is "Native Art"

Advocacy

- ❖ Ensure the MN State Art Board has qualified, knowledgeable people reading grant applications and making recommendations on culturally appropriate award decisions

Host Observations:

Overall there was a need for people to have not only an appreciation of native art, but acceptance and support by both the American Indian and non-Indian community in order for the arts to thrive. Conversations focused on the need for support from other artists, and for change to occur they need closer collaboration and to speak in one voice to be heard.

ARTIST HARVEST

Question Three: What can you do to support other American Indian-owned businesses?

Theme: Buy Native, Choose Local First

- ❖ Shop local and know who you are sourcing your products from
- ❖ Shop, buy, and advertise a native business
- ❖ Support local artists, markets and businesses during the holidays
- ❖ Purchase native art – Buy Native

- ❖ Educate self and others of why Buy Native is so important
- ❖ Educate the public that these businesses and artists contribute to the local economy

Theme: Business Directory

- ❖ Have access to a native directory and comprehensive American Indian search
- ❖ Utilize genuine/authentic sourcing for American Indian art/products/services

Theme: Promotion

- ❖ Sponsor, promote and attend native events
- ❖ Promote and refer American business and artists
- ❖ Use the internet and social media to advertise and promote other American Indian businesses and artists
- ❖ Promote other Indian businesses and native artists by word of mouth, social media and email
- ❖ Make referrals
- ❖ Collaboration
- ❖ Provide moral support



Theme: Mentoring

- ❖ Be a mentor or coach a native business
- ❖ Mentor young people to get them started in the arts

Theme: Networking

- ❖ Host Think Tank Events:
 - Like chamber events
 - Like “TED” talks instead use “TIK” - Traditional Indigenous Knowledge
 - Like regularly scheduled meetings
 - Share knowledge of business, markets, processes, networks, supplies, sponsors, etc.
- ❖ Host monthly and annual business gatherings

ARTIST HARVEST

Question Four: Given what we have discussed tonight, what steps can be taken now to support American Indian owned business in Minnesota?

Theme: Business Directory & Promotions

- ❖ American Indian Business Directory
- ❖ Develop Native-owned sticker/logo to post on your business door and marketing materials/social media/web site.
- ❖ Develop a “Buying Native Art Guide”
- ❖ Create an Artist Directory



Theme: Events

- ❖ Establish a 2016 Native Art Market
- ❖ Host a Native Art Crawl throughout the state

Theme: Organizational Structures

- ❖ Cultivate our own experts
- ❖ Central voice/union
- ❖ Create a Native Arts Guild

- ❖ Create a Native Art Cooperative
- ❖ Develop a native tourism association – create destination locations, work with tour bus companies and international tours
- ❖ Host Think Tank Events:
 - Like chamber events
 - Like “TED talks” (but called TIK- Traditional Indigenous Knowledge talks)
 - Like regularly scheduled meetings
 - Share knowledge of business, markets, processes, networks, supplies, sponsors, etc.



Theme: Advocacy & Education

- ❖ Work with the MN Arts Board to secure funding from the budget to organize an American Indian Arts board in Minnesota
- ❖ Ensure the MN State Art Board has qualified, knowledgeable people reading grant applications and making recommendations on culturally appropriate award decisions
- ❖ Develop a platform to invite other organizations, boards and institutions to hear and learn from American Indian Artists about what is “Native Art”

Theme: Networking

- ❖ Encourage and create partnerships
- ❖ Develop a list of patrons
- ❖ Recruit Artists
- ❖ Work together to buy wholesale
- ❖ Build networks/connections:
 - Facebook friends
 - Maintain lists of participants/visitors
 - Attend each other’s events

*As an artist, it is all about finding that balance between survival and production.
 - Participant comment*

Host Comments:

The artists discussed a great need for people to connect on a regular basis and have these types of conversations, also to network and learn from one another and others. They wanted to form a Think Tank, as well as an artist cooperative or artist guild. They want to create their own experts and not rely on the outside to define who they are.

They feel they are overlooked in the art circles, and shared their frustration in how their work is classified as “folk art” or simply “tribal arts and crafts” within these circles.

They feel they are only called upon to donate art to these organizations for their fund raisers, but they are not sitting at the table being heard or that their work is seen as contemporary or considered “fine art.” They feel continually overlooked in the planning and inclusion of community art showings. They see a great need to educate the public and tribal governments who are purchasing art.

HARVEST

Additional Emerging Conversations

In addition to addressing the four questions, the following insights emerged during table conversations that warranted documentation. These themes focused on tribal government and culture.

Theme: Tribal Economic Sovereignty

A participant asked his table what did **Economic Sovereignty** mean to them, and what has to be done for this to occur? The comments shared were:

- ❖ It requires strong tribal governance.
- ❖ It requires separation of powers.
- ❖ It requires best practices.
- ❖ It requires development and implementation of significant commercial codes.
 - There is a need for ongoing training after each election cycle and new hires to ensure understanding that commercial code implementation and protocols are followed.



Theme: Tribal Government's Role in a Strong Tribal Economy

The conversation drilled down deeper and explored leakage, and how can we ensure dollars earned on the reservation, circulate on the reservation to jumpstart new jobs and sustain business growth? The conversation led to the need to conduct a "leakage" study and suggested steps to accomplish this:

- ❖ Identify all tribal government spending off reservation.
- ❖ Identify community spending off reservation.

The conversations delved deeper into what other actions could occur as a result of the data gathered in the leakage study and the group discussed conducting GAPS analysis with more actionable steps:

- ❖ Identify current tribal spending.
- ❖ Identify future tribal spending.
- ❖ GAPS identification.
- ❖ GAPS description.
- ❖ Factors responsible for GAPS.
- ❖ Remedies, Actions and Proposals.

Gap Analysis

A technique that businesses use to determine what steps need to be taken in order to move from its current state to its desired, future state. Also called need-gap analysis, needs analysis, and needs assessment.

Gap analysis consists of:

1. Listing of characteristic factors (such as attributes, competencies, performance levels) of the present situation ("what is"),
2. Listing factors needed to achieve future objectives ("what should be"), and then
3. Highlighting the gaps that exist and need to be filled.

Gap analysis is powerful tool for business to use and reflect on who it is and asks who they want to be in the future.

Theme: Differing Cultural Views on Wealth Creation

A participant shared a story of what he personally experienced and felt was a cultural myth and its negative financial implications and impact on tribal economic development.

“Indians are not supposed to make money, let alone a profit”

His story was about a major project in a tribal community that had the potential to bring \$2 million in annual revenues into the community, in the form of jobs, services and supplies. More importantly, was how the project would contribute to the maintenance of well-being and personal health and promote the human development of its tribal citizens.

The project was stopped because the leadership felt conflicted about the revenue the project would generate and viewed this as making a profit off its citizens. The tribe was already spending millions dollars annually to care for its citizens off tribal lands in the hands of non-native institutions.

It was money that was already being spent and was leaking off the reservation. Money that could have been invested and used to hire qualified native professionals, improve local workforce and workforce development and higher education, and purchase supplies locally and support American Indian business.

Theme: Public Lack of Awareness and Understanding of American Indians, Communities and Culture

It is impossible to discuss business development and accessing supportive business environments without having the conversation about American Indian culture. Participants shared their frustration of feeling they spend too much time educating consumers and the public on what it means to native. Many citizens in both private and public sectors still lack cultural awareness and have a general lack of historical and contemporary awareness about American Indian people in business and daily life. Whether unintentional or deliberate, it creates uncomfortable situations for many American Indian entrepreneurs and artisans.

FACILITATOR AND HOST CLOSING COMMENTS

It was a privilege to work with the Minnesota Indian Business Alliance. MNIBA's work in supporting American Indian owned business and emerging American Indian entrepreneurs reflects their commitment to Minnesota's American Indian community and especially its economic and social well-being. The four listening sessions I facilitated and was a part of were very informative and creative. Participants shared a strong pride in their culture, their businesses and the potential to make a real difference for both Native Americans and Minnesota as a whole. Many stories of hard work, overcoming barriers, success and, yes, sometimes failure were shared. Each story brought people closer together and connected them to each other during the listening sessions.

Participants in the listening sessions did not focus on requests for money. Instead they asked for support in being visible in Minnesota, in overcoming barriers to business success and in greater access to the work that their firms could be doing.

There is all the potential for a strong future for American Indian owned businesses to be an important contributor to an economically vibrant and healthy Minnesota. Equally important, they can contribute to Minnesota being a socially and culturally vibrant state. The listening sessions showed that MNIBA can be a leader in making this happens.

- *Dr. Jerry Nagel, Meadowlark Institute*

It was an honor and privilege for MNIBA to host the entrepreneurial listening sessions and connect with so many entrepreneurs and artisans. We were inspired by the openness, the sharing of stories, experiences, insights and wisdom.

MNIBA needed American Indian businesses, entrepreneurs and artisans at the table to help inform and shape the work we need to do together. We believe recommended actions harvested from the conversations are realistic and actionable next steps! To accomplish this will take strong partnerships and collaboration.

We want to advance and champion the key ideas identified by the participants in response to the question; "what steps can be taken now to support American Indian owned business in Minnesota?" MNIBA will engage tribal and elected officials and key decision makers to build support and influence public opinion to advocate for change!

MNIBA sees a very bright future for our tribal communities. It is time to be visible and shine, and to celebrate one another's accomplishments! We see small business thriving in our tribal communities, and growing to where it is commonplace! We see new job creation as result of our dollars being circulated in our communities.

The participant's efforts and recommendations will not go ignored by the Minnesota Indian Business Alliance.

- *Pamela Standing, Minnesota Indian Business Alliance*

BARRIERS TO SUSTAINING AND INCREASING AMERICAN INDIAN BUSINESS

During the entrepreneurial listening sessions, MNIBA harvested information and key themes from participants on what would help them as businesses, and the following themes emerged:

1. Lack of Detailed Data on American Indians
2. Underutilized Buy Indian Procurement Policies & Procedures
3. Overcoming Invisibility
4. Underdeveloped Infrastructure
5. Lack of a Strong, Unified and Uncompromised Voice for American Indian-Owned Business
6. Insufficient Access to Supportive Business Resources & Networks
7. Need for Coordinated Advocacy & Educational Efforts

This report summarizes that information. Each section includes a brief description of the barriers identified across the listening sessions.

The report also includes summaries of quotes, observations and comments, any statement not attributed to an individual by name, is a paraphrase of the participant's comments.

Within this report, the terms "American Indian," "Native American," "indigenous," "American Indian business," "entrepreneur," "native business," and "native artist/artisan" are used interchangeably.

1. Lack of Detailed Data on American Indians

American Indians continue to be invisible to most other Minnesota citizens, state government, federal agencies and policy makers due to an absence of detailed data.

This type of *invisibility* is *institutional* and perpetuated by federal and state agencies and policies that leave American Indians out of data collection efforts, data reporting and analysis, and/or public media campaigns.

American Indians and Alaska Natives may be described as the “Asterisk Nation” because an asterisk, instead of data point, is often used in data displays when reporting racial and ethnic data due to various data collection and reporting issues, such as small sample size, large margins of errors, or other issues related to the validity and statistical significance of data on American Indians and Alaska Natives.¹

Federal

The Bureau of Indian Affairs Indian Population and Work Force Report with roots going back to 1982, is supposed to be a tool for both tribes and Congress, depicting the labor and employment landscape across a wide range of tribes facing a multitude of economic situations.

Congressional supporters of the rationale for the report say that tribes could ideally use the data, which is supposed to be issued every two years, to make fact-based quantitative arguments for improved federal and other assistance.

The 2013 report (the first in eight years) by the Bureau of Indian Affairs is far from a helpful document,” Rep. Don Young (R-Alaska) chair of the Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs tells Indian Country Today Media Network. “In reality, this document has more potential to cause harm than good. What was published is essentially a reprint of unhelpful and outdated U.S. Census Bureau data, all of which was publically available prior to the release of the report.” Young notes the failings of Census Bureau data collection, including the miscounting and undercounting of thousands of Alaska Natives and American Indians, are already well known.

“From what I’ve seen, the report contains huge gaps in data for many parts of Indian country and relies heavily on making estimates about tribes’ economic circumstances,” Young adds. “Additionally, the report’s labor and employment statistics are not accurate metrics for providing a realistic picture of the actual circumstances in Native communities.” Young believes that Alaska Native and American Indian communities will actually suffer if agencies use this report for making policy decisions or determining how best to allocate federal resources meant to support programs in Indian country.

<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2014/02/07/frustration-surrounds-new-tribal-labor-force-report-153463>

Two other examples were released in 2015:

- American Community Survey; September 2015 and provided estimates of median household income, changes in real income and per capita income, home ownership, poverty rates, unemployment, rent greater than 30% of income, entrepreneurship and job creation: 3 Year Data Set 2011-2013.
- US Census Survey of Business Owners; December 2015 and provided estimates of business ownership by gender, ethnicity, race and veteran status: 2012 Survey Results.²

¹ National Congress of American Indians, NCAI Policy Research Center - Data Quality

² Bruce P. Corrie, PhD, Economist, Concordia University, St. Paul, MN – Why Equity Matters for Minnesota! September 2015

*Though this did not make headlines in Minnesota, the new data released September 2015, showed American Indian economic assets with the **sharpest decline** among all racial groups and:*

- *Had the biggest drop -17% changes in real income between years 2007 – 2012;*
- *Had the largest drop – 15% changes in per capita income between years 2007 – 2012;*
- *Rated second in poverty rates at 30.40% for 2013;*
- *Had a 6% increase in poverty rates between years 2007 – 2013;*
- *Rated second in poverty rates for female head of households at 48.10% for 2013;*
- *Had the highest increase in poverty rates of any racial group for female head of households at 14% for 2007 – 2013;*
- *Unemployment was at 10.80%, more than double the 3.90% unemployment rate reported for the state of Minnesota 2013;*
- *Had a dramatic increase of 11.90% in change in rent payments greater than 30% of income for 2007 – 2013.*

2. Underutilized “Buy Indian – Targeted Business” Procurement Policies and Procedures

Most tribal governments have adopted Buy Indian resolutions. However, a disconnect remains between resolutions passed at the tribal council level and the procurement department, where staff are reminded of the bottom line. This results in the issuance and purchases and awards of RFPs where Buy Indian is rarely applied or let alone enforced.

The Buy Indian Act is one of the oldest Indian Preference laws on the books. Effective July 8, 2013, the U.S. Department of the Interior adopted final rules that require the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to give preference to Indian-owned or -controlled businesses in matters of procurement. Three years have passed, and there has been little to no progress in implementation or enforcement to these rules.

Minnesota Statute 16C.16, which calls for 25 percent of all public spending to be allocated to small and targeted businesses needs to be fully implemented and enforced. There is also great need to develop a universal application and make the process more business friendly.

American Indian businesses have a vested interest in contributing to the development of policy and uniform documentation procedures that will ensure equitable access to contracts and funding awards.

3. Overcoming Invisibility

American Indian-owned business continues to be invisible to state agencies, corporations and other Minnesota citizens due to an absence of media portrayal, as well as the lack of historical and contemporary awareness about American Indian people in business and daily life.

There is no single statewide data base for American Indian business and artisans. There is a strong need to coordinate business listings and events to elevate visibility.

Another barrier cited that impacts visibility is underrepresentation of American Indian constituents serving on tribal, city, county and state boards, commissions, councils, committees and task forces.

There are a total of 224 state agencies (including state boards, commissions, councils, committees and task forces) administered under Open Appointments, with a total of 2187 members as of June 30, 2015.³

In total, 2105 applications for service on state agencies were submitted and 1065 individuals were appointed to fill vacancies or newly created positions during this period, and only 32 of those appointments were American Indian.

The Governor made 505 appointments, and only 7 of those appointments were American Indian.

Appointing Authorities other than the Governor made 559 appointments, and only 25 of those appointments were American Indian.

Furthermore, agreements and collaborative efforts between Tribal Nations and the State go unrecognized. These agreements and collaborative efforts not only benefit the tribal communities they serve, but impact the well-being of Minnesota communities and regions outside their jurisdiction.

4. Underdeveloped Infrastructure

Infrastructure needs identified by the participants included; building facilities for businesses, business incubators and studio space, and lack of broadband access. Underdeveloped infrastructure in tribal communities remains a barrier to small business development.

The US Department of Commerce 2010 report entitled *“Exploring the Digital Nation – Computer and Internet Use at Home,”* further suggests that rural residents have less access than urbanites do, and racial minorities like African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans all have less access compared to their Caucasian and Asian American counterparts. American Indian and Alaska Native household characteristics showed computer use in the urban area at 74% and 52% in the rural area. Additionally, the report showed broadband adoption in the urban area at 66% and in the rural area at 31%. Despite the reasons, ethnic minorities and those of lower socioeconomic status get the short end of the digital stick. *U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey School Enrollment and Internet Use Supplement, October 2010, and ESA calculations.*

5. Lack of a Strong, Unified and Uncompromised Voice for American Indian-Owned Business

The need exists to create a strong, uncompromised voice for American Indian-owned business in Minnesota. The participants identified the need for the development of a statewide “Buy Native - Choose Local First” campaign.

Currently, the “Buy Local” type campaigns focus on a very narrow audience, typically campaigns focus on a small regional area, town or community. These communities typically have store fronts and a main street.

³ Fiscal Year 2015 Open Appointments Annual Compilation and Statistical Report of Multi-Member Agencies, Minnesota Secretary of State

Indian Country requires a platform that is statewide in scope and can target institutional buyers such as; tribal, governments, tribal enterprises, tribal colleges, BIE schools, local and county governments, schools, colleges, hospitals, and others in regional clusters.

6. Insufficient Access to Supportive Business Resources & Networks

Participants cited a major barrier to accessing resources was the lack of understanding on the part of state agencies and service organizations regarding American Indians, communities and cultures.

Participants identified the need for a range of financial products that included: equity funding, low interest loans targeted for American Indians, and access to smaller/microloan products for artists.

Participants called for a statewide financial and technical assistance directory that would identify resources and financial products, and contact information by regional/tribal areas.

MNIBA heard from the participants about the need to access business resources in a supportive environment that are meaningful to them and included; access to technical assistance, business and marketing development, financial products and education, buying clubs, mentoring and professional development.

Participants expressed the need for the development of networks to provide higher-level learning opportunities that further personal and professional growth. Participants requested to link with other American Indian owned businesses and business professionals to expand their career and business potential. They identified the need to cultivate a listing of American Indian experts and mentors with experience in a variety of fields.

7. Need for Coordinated Advocacy & Educational Efforts

There is a need for the development of a communication platform that can be deployed to organize and galvanize groups quickly around political issues impacting American Indian small business development and full participation.

MNIBA learned from participants about the need to develop a Think Tank guided by Traditional Indigenous Knowledge (TIK). Currently, no such platform exists to share knowledge and inform best practices.

Participants felt it was important to identify Anishinaabe and Dakota language that addresses business, the act of business/trade, prosperity, what it means to be successful, etc. in order to create a more inviting environment to discuss business through an indigenous lens.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The following recommended actions were harvested from conversations and key themes that emerged during the entrepreneurial listening sessions. Additionally, recommended actions were further informed by recently released studies and reports, and current policy work being conducted with statewide partners.

The need for continued and increased collaboration among stakeholders is necessary and can potentially result in mobilizing new resources and achieving their missions/goals far more efficiently, effectively, and sustainably than they could by working alone.

MNIBA chose to list the recommended actions by stakeholder group rather than by issue. We wanted each stakeholder group to be able to identify the actions that can be done in collaboration, or alone, should they have resources or authority to remedy.

The report lays out recommended actions that when implemented will lead to closer collaboration and cooperation among and between all stakeholders.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS PROPOSED FOR TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

The recommended actions set forth in this section are a culmination of new studies, research, reports and themes that emerged during the entrepreneurial listening sessions.

Enhance Reporting on Detailed Data on American Indians

- ❖ Seek federal, state, philanthropic funding to ensure data collection methods within tribal jurisdiction more accurately reflect the status of the communities.
- ❖ Develop strategies to respond to disparity studies impacting American Indians.
- ❖ Work in partnership and engage in public dialogue about issues that impact the sustainable development of American Indian business and develop new frameworks for thinking about policy.
- ❖ Strengthen partnerships with advocacy groups that focus on small business development and growth, institutional barriers and capacity building.
- ❖ Identify new partnerships to champion American Indian disparity reports and other data pertaining to American Indian communities and small business development.
- ❖ Elevate American Indian contributions to Minnesota's consumer, entrepreneurial, productive, fiscal, human, global and political capital.

Strengthen "Buy Indian – Targeted Business" Procurement Policies and Procedures

- ❖ Review current Buy Indian resolutions on books and bring current.
- ❖ Develop a Procurement Code of Ethics.
- ❖ Develop a transparent annual reporting mechanism that reports on procurement goals, incremental increases in Buy Indian and notes for improvement.
- ❖ Establish a Vendor Appeal process program to safeguard tribal procurement compliance with its own preference policies.
- ❖ Conduct an internal analysis of current and projected future procurement spending and breakdown by classification to identify annual increases and set-aside purchases for tribal citizen-owned and American Indian-owned business.
- ❖ Include tribal citizen-owned businesses in contributing to the development of policy and uniform documentation procedures that guide implementation and enforcement of tribal Buy Indian resolutions.
- ❖ Include tribal citizen-owned businesses in economic development strategic planning and presence on committees whose work will impact the development of small business within tribal jurisdiction.
- ❖ Establish a link for tribal citizen-owned small business on tribal website, to include:
 - Current Buy Indian resolution/policy
 - Preference policy

- Vendor Appeal process
 - Tribal Procurement Code of Ethics
 - Solicitations for Requests for Proposal
- ❖ Work with State lawmakers to ensure Minnesota Statute 16C.16 spending allocation for small and targeted businesses is enforced. Call for transparency in reporting of all state contracting awards and ensure small and targeted business preferences are enforced.
 - ❖ Hold the BIA and IHS accountable to the Buy Indian Act of 2013 and ensure Indian preference, simplified acquisitions, and set-asides are followed, implemented and enforced.
 - ❖ Adopt resolutions in favor of the National Congress of American Indians Resolution #MSP-15-008, TITLE: Urging Federal Agencies to Fully Implement the Buy Indian Act Regulations. Send tribal resolution and letters to the Interior Secretary and Human Health and Services Secretary calling for full implementation and enforcement.

Increase Visibility

- ❖ Create a listing of all tribal citizen-owned business, both in and outside tribal jurisdiction and post them to the tribal website.
- ❖ Develop a brochure of all tribal citizen-owned business for promotional use.
- ❖ Partner with casinos to provide “free ad space” for tribal citizen-owned business.
- ❖ Partner with casino hotels to include a listing of all tribal citizen-owned business and artisans in the welcome book and at guest services.
- ❖ Ensure tribal newspaper is showcasing tribal citizen-owned business and artisans.
- ❖ Ensure Tribal Employment Rights Office (TERO), Tribal CDFI and Tribal Economic Development maintains a listing of all American Indian-owned business in the state and region.
- ❖ Host an annual American Indian-owned Business Day and showcase event on the reservation.
- ❖ Establish an annual award for Tribal Citizen-Owned Business of the Year.
- ❖ Support and participate with a statewide working group of American Indian artists to establish an annual American Indian Art Market.
- ❖ Establish a National Treasures Award for tribal citizens who are making significant contributions or a lifetime commitment to the preservations of traditional tribal art, language, graphic arts, contemporary arts and music.

Develop Physical Infrastructure

- ❖ Cause tribal realty staff to explore available inventory that could be developed into small business store fronts, and/or business incubators for tribal citizen business and the arts.
- ❖ Expedite the leasing or other use of vacant buildings by tribal citizen-owned businesses and artisans.

- ❖ Identify, develop and establish commercial business zones and regulations that support private sector business development.
- ❖ Engage partnerships, funding and training to develop and establish business incubators.
- ❖ Have representation sitting at the table with the State of Minnesota that ensures access to new broadband and fiber optic funding flowing into rural communities.

Build a Strong, Unified and Uncompromised Voice for American Indian-Owned Business

- ❖ Support and participate in a statewide working group in the development of a statewide “Buy Native – Choose Local First” campaign.
- ❖ Encourage tribal citizens, tribal colleges, BIE schools, tribal museums, vendors, local and county governments, schools, and colleges, hospitals, non-profit and other like organizations serving American Indians to “Buy Native – Choose Local First.”
- ❖ Host and promote a series of seasonal “Buy Native – Choose Local First” events.

Increase Access to Supportive Business Resources & Networks

- ❖ Support and participate in regional and statewide coalitions/alliances that provide resources and support for American Indian-owned business, entrepreneurs, and artisans.
- ❖ Seek and develop partnerships and collaborations with local and regional development groups.
- ❖ Support and participate in a statewide working group to develop:
 - A guide for State Employees on tribal relationships and preserving the State – Tribal government to government relationship
 - A guide to build cultural awareness
 - An annual Tribal Relations training to support state employees in developing meaningful and productive interactions with tribes and tribal communities
 - A series of community educational events on American Indian culture, sovereignty, doing business in Indian Country, history and contemporary life, native art, etc.
- ❖ Host space for local and regional entrepreneur gatherings and networking events.
- ❖ Sponsor American Indian-owned business and artisan professional development events.

Improve the Coordination of Advocacy & Educational Efforts

- ❖ Be responsive when political issues surface that impact American Indian small business development and full participation.
- ❖ Support and participate in a statewide working group in developing a native think tank utilizing Traditional Indigenous Knowledge.
- ❖ Identify language speakers to assist in identifying native language that addresses business, the act of business/trade, prosperity, what it means to be successful, etc. from an indigenous lens.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS PROPOSED FOR FEDERAL AGENCIES

The recommended actions set forth in this section are a culmination of new studies, research, reports and themes that emerged during the entrepreneurial listening sessions.

Enhance Reporting on Detailed Data on American Indians

- ❖ Reevaluated and revised the metrics applied to the BIA's Indian Population and Workforce Report data.
- ❖ Ensure the BIA's Indian Population and Work Force Report is published every two years.
- ❖ Provide funding to tribes to collect data on the ground to guarantee the report's labor and employment statistics are in alignment with the tribe's data and presents a realistic picture of the actual circumstances in tribal communities.

Strengthen "Buy Indian – Targeted Business" Procurement Policies and Procedures

- ❖ The US Senate Committee on Indian Affairs and Secretaries of Interior and Health and Human Services provide oversight and ensure the Buy Indian Act of 2013 is fully implemented and enforced.
- ❖ The following actions should be under taken by the aforementioned entities to ensure accountability, transparency and economic parity:
 1. Align BIA and IHS performance plans, bonuses, and annual raises to the successful implementation and enforcement of the Buy Indian Act's set aside authority with a goal of 30% for ISBEE and 25% for IEE business owned and controlled by American Indian and Alaska Natives;
 2. American Indian and Alaska Native business are at the table to provide clearly communicated recommendations for procedures and policies that ensure implementation and enforcement of the Buy Indian Act;
 3. Other Federal agencies working in Indian Country are utilizing the Buy Indian Act;
 4. BIA/IHS Contract officers adhere to the Rule of Two practice, especially in the area of Simplified Acquisition and GSA schedules;
 5. BIA and IHS develop and distribute a Buy Indian Act report annually, showing progress and goals;
 6. BIA and IHS demonstrate a commitment to small business through regular training of acquisition, program, contracting staff and senior management.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS PROPOSED FOR STATE GOVERNMENT

The recommended actions set forth in this section are a culmination of new studies, research, reports and themes that emerged during the entrepreneurial listening sessions.

Enhance Reporting on Detailed Data on American Indians

- ❖ Work in close consultation with tribes to facilitate effective and appropriate data collection, and include tribes in statewide statistics, analysis and data sets (i.e., unemployment and labor force statistics).
- ❖ Assign research analysts to Indian Country for the purpose of:
 - Updating and maintaining labor market data
 - Identifying American Indian-owned business throughout the state
- ❖ MN Indian Affairs Council posts new data, disparity studies and analysis affecting Indian Country on their website.

Strengthen “Buy Indian – Targeted Business” Procurement Policies and Procedures

- ❖ Fully implement and enforce Minnesota Statute 16C.16, which calls for 25 percent of all public spending to be allocated to small and targeted businesses, and include the University of Minnesota under this statute.
- ❖ Engage American Indian businesses to provide recommendations for clearly communicated and uniform documentation procedures dealing with application and certification of small and targeted businesses to address waste, and ensure transparency and accountability.
- ❖ Develop and distribute a Small and Targeted Business report each biennium reporting spending across all agencies and departments, to include but not limited to:
 - How much each agency/department spent with small and targeted business versus non-targeted business enterprises
 - How each agency/department used and met the 25% public spending goal as laid out in Minnesota Statute 16C.16, and any other state mandated social economic goals.
- ❖ Demonstrate a commitment to small and target business utilization through regular training of procurement staff to ensure ongoing implementation and enforcement.

Increase Visibility

Executive Order 13-10 formalizes and outlines the fundamental principles of consultation, coordination and cooperation of the government-to-government relationship between the State and Tribal Nations of Minnesota. And still *American Indians continue to be invisible* to state agencies, and other Minnesota citizens due to an absence of media portrayal, recognition of economic and social contributions to Minnesota as a whole, and the lack of historical and contemporary awareness about American Indian people in daily life.

To draw the distinction between diversity and developing a culture of real inclusion, we offer the following recommendations:

- ❖ Governor increases American Indian appointments to serve on state boards, commissions, councils, committees and task forces, and have member representation on the Cabinet Agencies referenced in paragraph 2 of Executive Order 13-10.
- ❖ Each Cabinet Agency makes public their “Tribal Consultation Policy” and post on the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council website.
- ❖ Support and assign designated Cabinet Agency staff to work in partnership with a statewide working group to develop the following materials:
 - A guide for State Employees on tribal relationships and preserving the State – Tribal government to government relationship
 - A guide to build cultural awareness
 - An annual Tribal Relations training to support state employees in developing meaningful and productive interactions with tribes and tribal communities
 - A series of community educational events on American Indian culture, sovereignty, doing business in Indian Country, history and contemporary life, native art, etc.
- ❖ Fund the development and publication of the above-mentioned culturally contextualized materials and training modules.
- ❖ The Governor publish an annual State – Tribal Relations report showcasing all American Indians serving Minnesota on state boards, commissions, councils, committees and task forces, and Governor appointments, and a complete listing of State – Tribal Agreements, by tribe, agency, activity, agreement name, status and contact information.
- ❖ The Governor’s office in partnership with Tribes develops and publishes a report on the Economic Contributions of Tribal Nations to Minnesota’s Economy every biennium.
- ❖ Governor issues a proclamation and sets aside a day during May’s American Indian Month, to annually recognize accomplishments of American Indian-owned business in Minnesota.
- ❖ The Minnesota Indian Affairs Council posts and maintains a current listing on their website for the following resources:
 - Media List (tribal and urban newspapers and radio stations)
 - Tribal Colleges
 - Listing of Tribal Departments, (by tribe, director name and contact Information)
 - Urban Indian Centers
 - Minnesota State American Indian liaisons, by agency, name and contact information
 - Bureau of Indian Affairs - statewide offices, contract officers and contact information
 - Indian Health Service – statewide offices, contract officers and contact information
 - American Indian nonprofit organizations and contact information
 - American Indian lawyers, by name, practice specialty and contact information

Develop Physical Infrastructure

- ❖ Ensure tribes and their representatives are included in statewide economic and business development programs and planning as they pertain to infrastructure development.

- ❖ Ensure tribes and their representatives are notified in a timely manner of new and available funding opportunities (i.e. broadband, etc.) as they pertain to infrastructure development.
- ❖ Support and participate in a statewide working group for the purpose of meeting with local city governments and country commissioners to investigate funding and available properties that could be developed into a business incubator and/or a permanent gallery front with studio space for artists.

Increase Access to Supportive Business Resources & Networks

- ❖ Fund or co-fund an equity grant fund for American Indian-owned small business.
- ❖ Fund or co-fund a series of professional development training opportunities for American Indian-owned businesses two years and older.
- ❖ Seek opportunities to collaborate with reservation-based small business development program and resource providers.
- ❖ Ensure small business development center staff understand and are responsive to the needs of American Indian small business owners, entrepreneurs and artisans.
- ❖ Provide annual training to small business development center staff on tribal relations and training to enhance cultural awareness and understanding.

Improve the Coordination of Advocacy & Educational Efforts

- ❖ Be responsive and proactive when issues surface that impact American Indian small business development and full participation.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS PROPOSED FOR SMALL BUSINESS RESOURCE PROVIDERS

The recommended actions set forth in this section are a culmination of new studies, research, reports and themes that emerged during the entrepreneurial listening sessions.

MNIBA defines Small Business Resource providers as: technical assistance, financial education, CDFIs, loan funds, small business and professional development training, business certifications, state and federal contracting services,

Enhance Reporting on Detailed Data on American Indians

- ❖ Assist in identifying and compiling a statewide data base of American Indian-owned businesses.
- ❖ Maintain and communicate data on the number of American Indian entrepreneurs and artisans served, and what types of services they were seeking and secured.
- ❖ Conduct an annual survey of American Indian businesses to reassess and revise if necessary services currently offered.
- ❖ Engage in public dialogue about issues that impact the sustainable development of American Indian business and develop new frameworks for thinking about policy.
- ❖ Strengthen partnerships with advocacy groups that focus on small business development and growth, institutional barriers and capacity building.

Strengthen “Buy Indian – Targeted Business” Procurement Policies and Procedures

- ❖ Work with State lawmakers to ensure Minnesota Statute 16C.16 spending allocation for small and targeted businesses is enforced. Call for transparency in reporting of all state contracting awards and ensure small and targeted business preferences are enforced.
- ❖ Work with elected officials to ensure the Buy Indian Act of 2013 follows Indian preference, simplified acquisitions, and set-asides.

Increase Visibility

- ❖ Promote and solicit American Indian-owned business, professionals and artisans to get listed in MNIBA’s statewide business directory.
- ❖ Create a series of success stories about American Indian-owned businesses, highlight recent accomplishments, awards and recognition and circulate throughout various media and social media outlets.
- ❖ Promote and circulate announcements for openings on tribal, city, county and state boards, commissions, councils, committees and task forces and application processes among American Indian constituents.

Build a Strong, Unified and Uncompromised Voice for American Indian-Owned Business

- ❖ Support and participate in a statewide working group in the development of a statewide “Buy Native – Choose Local First” campaign.
- ❖ Support and participate in a statewide working group in the development of:
 - Model Buy Native – Choose Local First organizational policy;
 - Model Procurement Code of Ethics;
 - Model Vendor Appeal process;
 - Model for annual reporting on procurement goals, increases and notes for improvement;
 - Pro-local - Buy local business and institutional policies.

Increase Access to Supportive Business Resources & Networks

- ❖ Seek federal, state, philanthropic, tribal and financial institution partners to develop an equity grant for American Indian-owned businesses.
- ❖ Develop partnerships with local tribal and non-tribal colleges and universities and other organizations to establish financial education and entrepreneurship training opportunities.
- ❖ Develop partnerships with local tribal and non-tribal colleges and universities and other organizations to establish small business professional development training opportunities.
- ❖ Ensure that annual training for business resource staff on tribal relations and training to enhance cultural awareness and understanding is ongoing.
- ❖ Stay informed on all services being offered at the tribal level for small business development.
- ❖ Support and participate in a statewide working group to review and publish a Statewide Financial and Technical Assistance directory.
- ❖ Host space for local and regional entrepreneur gatherings and networking events.
- ❖ Sponsor American Indian-owned business and artisan professional development events.

Improve the Coordination of Advocacy & Educational Efforts

- ❖ Engage in public dialogue about issues that is impacting the sustainable development of American Indian business both inside and outside the eleven tribal communities in Minnesota and offer new frameworks for thinking about policy and context for the work.
- ❖ Engage in a series of articles and blogs to increase public perception about the importance for diversity and inclusion on non-profit, tribal, city, county and state boards, commissions, councils, committees and task forces.
- ❖ Utilize native experts whenever possible in the delivery of services and training.
- ❖ Support and participate in a statewide working group to develop the following materials:
 - A guide for State Employees on tribal relationships and preserving the State – Tribal government to government relationship;

- A guide to build cultural awareness;
- An annual Tribal Relations training to support state employees in developing meaningful and productive interactions with tribes and tribal communities;
- A series of community educational events on American Indian culture, sovereignty, doing business in Indian Country, history and contemporary life, native art, etc.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS PROPOSED FOR MNIBA AND ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERS

The recommended actions set forth in this section are a culmination of new studies, research, reports and themes that emerged during the entrepreneurial listening sessions.

Service organizations with their roots in Indian Country such as the Minnesota American Indian Chamber of Commerce (MAIC), American Indian Business Leaders (AIBL), American Indian Resource Center, American Indian OIC, Northwest Indian Community Development Center, American Indian Community Development Center (AICDC), Native American Development Institute (NACDI) and the American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO), to name a few, are important partners and play a crucial role in developing statewide strategies that will benefit American Indian individuals, businesses and communities.

Enhance Reporting on Detailed Data on American Indians

- ❖ Assist in identifying, tracking and compiling a statewide data base of American Indian-owned businesses.
- ❖ Develop strategies to engage tribal leaders, tribal citizens, state agencies, elected officials and organizational partners to respond to disparity studies impacting American Indians.
- ❖ Engage in public dialogue about issues that impact the sustainable development of American Indian business and develop new frameworks for thinking about policy.
- ❖ Identify new partnerships to champion American Indian disparity reports and other data pertaining to American Indian communities and small business development.
- ❖ Elevate American Indian contributions to Minnesota's consumer, entrepreneurial, productive, fiscal, human, global and political capital.

Strengthen “Buy Indian – Targeted Business” Procurement Policies and Procedures

- ❖ Work with tribal leaders to reassess, review and revise and/or develop new Buy Indian resolutions and policies that are more equitable, accessible and supportive of American Indian businesses and artisans.
- ❖ Work with lawmakers to ensure Minnesota Statute 16C.16 spending allocation for small and targeted businesses is enforced. Call for transparency in reporting of all state contracting awards and ensure small and targeted business preferences are enforced.
- ❖ Work with elected officials to ensure the Buy Indian Act of 2013 follows Indian preference, simplified acquisitions, and set-asides.
- ❖ Continue promoting the Buy Indian Act white paper and organize action locally, regionally and nationally to ensure implementation and enforcement.

Increase Visibility

- ❖ Populate and promote the Statewide American Indian Business Directory and the Regional Indian Business Alliance’s online directory.
- ❖ Identify technical schools, two year programs, undergraduate and graduate programs with an American Indian purpose and focus.
- ❖ Develop a series of stories featuring American Indian-owned businesses, artisans and emerging entrepreneurs to showcase their services, accomplishments, awards and recognitions in a variety of mediums.
- ❖ Promote and circulate announcements for openings on tribal, city, county and state boards, commissions, councils, committees and task forces and application processes among American Indian constituents.
- ❖ Convene a statewide working group to establish an annual American Indian Art Market.
- ❖ Convene a statewide working group to develop an educational series on “Native Art” and a “Guide to Buying American Indian Art.”

Develop Physical Infrastructure

- ❖ Convene a statewide working group for the purpose of meeting with local city governments and country commissioners to investigate funding and available properties that could be developed into a business incubator and/or a permanent gallery front with studio space for artists.

Build a Strong, Unified and Uncompromised Voice for American Indian-Owned Business

- ❖ Convene a statewide working group to develop a statewide “Buy Native – Choose Local First” campaign.
- ❖ Convene a statewide working group in the development of:
 - Model Buy Native – Choose Local First organizational policy;
 - Model Procurement Code of Ethics;
 - Model Vendor Appeal process;
 - Model for annual reporting on procurement goals, increases and notes for improvement;
 - Pro-local - Buy local business and institutional policies.
- ❖ Develop a sticker/cling logo for American Indian-owned businesses to post at their place of business and use in marketing materials, social media and website.

Increase Access to Supportive Business Resources & Networks

- ❖ Seek federal, state, philanthropic, tribal and financial institution partners to develop an equity grant for American Indian-owned businesses.
- ❖ Explore opportunities and locations to host entrepreneurial gathering sessions, by communities and urban area throughout the state to keep entrepreneurs connected and learning together.
- ❖ Convene a statewide working group to review and publish a Statewide Financial and Technical Assistance directory.

- ❖ Communicate new trends and best practices in Indian Country and stay informed on any new tribal consumer, commercial and land-use laws being implemented that impact small business development.
- ❖ Convene a statewide working group to:
 - Develop a series of “lunch and learn – food for thought” mini-business training events.
 - Develop a series of face-to-face and webinar trainings for American Indian businesses.
 - Identify available professional development workshops and trainers, both for business and the arts.
 - Begin a thorough examination of culturally contextualized business resources and professional development tools available.

Improve the Coordination of Advocacy & Educational Efforts

- ❖ Identify new mechanisms and communication tools and costs to develop a “call for action” that increases the ability galvanize and organize partners, tribal leadership, tribal organizations, citizens and American Indian businesses around political issues.
- ❖ Strengthen partnerships with advocacy groups that focus on policy development for small business development and growth.
- ❖ Engage in public dialogue about issues that is impacting the sustainable development of American Indian business both inside and outside the eleven tribal communities in Minnesota and offer new frameworks for thinking about policy and context for the work.
- ❖ Engage in a series of articles and blogs to make a case for diversity and inclusion on non-profit, tribal, city, county and state boards, commissions, councils, committees and task forces.
- ❖ Advocate the Governor’s office to increase the number of American Indian appointments to state boards, commissions, councils, committee and task forces.
- ❖ Advocate the Governor’s office to publish an annual State – Tribal Relations report showcasing American Indians serving Minnesota.
- ❖ Advocate the Governor’s office to publish a report on the Economic Contributions of Tribal Nations to Minnesota’s Economy every biennium.
- ❖ Identify and cultivate American Indian experts as a resource to tribal leaders and elected officials who rely upon the experience and expertise of private citizens and the non-profit sector to inform their understanding of the issues and policy choices that they are making at every level of government.
- ❖ Cultivate an American Indian cross-generational leadership that blends the wisdom and experience of elders and community leaders with the curiosity and creativity of younger emerging leaders and community members to make our work stronger.
- ❖ Convene a statewide working group to develop a native think tank utilizing Traditional Indigenous Knowledge.
- ❖ Convene a statewide working group to develop the following materials:
 - A guide for State Employees on tribal relationships and preserving the State – Tribal government to government relationship;
 - A guide to build cultural awareness;

- An annual Tribal Relations training to support state employees in developing meaningful and productive interactions with tribes and tribal communities;
 - A series of community educational events on American Indian culture, sovereignty, doing business in Indian Country, history and contemporary life, native art, etc.
-
- ❖ Partner with tribal governments, organizations, and American Indian businesses and communities to advocate the Governor setting aside and proclaiming an “American Indian Business Day,” during May’s American Indian Month to spotlight businesses and their contribution to the MN economy.
 - ❖ Identify language speakers to assist in identifying native language that addresses business, the act of business/trade, prosperity, what it means to be successful, etc. from an indigenous lens.

LOOKING AHEAD

The listening sessions highlighted several critically important themes, including: lack of detailed data on American Indians in Minnesota, underutilized “Buy Indian-Targeted Business” procurement policies & procedures, overcoming invisibility, underdeveloped infrastructure, and lack of a strong, unified and uncompromised voice for American Indian owned business, insufficient access to supportive business resources & networks and the need for coordinated advocacy & educational efforts.



During 2016 and beyond, MNIBA will identify and cultivate American Indian experts as a resource to tribal leaders and elected officials who rely upon the experience and expertise of private citizens and the non-profit sector to inform their understanding of the issues and policy choices that they are making at every level of government.

As well, we need to cultivate an American Indian cross-generational leadership model that blends the wisdom and experience of our elders and community leaders with the curiosity and creativity of younger emerging leaders and community members to make our work stronger.

Not just immediately, but in the long term as we prepare for the current generation of Leaders to retire.

MNIBA will advocate for the full participation of American Indian experts, and ensure they are invited to sit at the table and help inform decisions impacting small business development.

MNIBA will engage in public dialogue about issues that is impacting the sustainable development of American Indian business in Minnesota and offer new frameworks for thinking about policy and context for the work.

As we look ahead, MNIBA will pursue partnerships with tribes to develop Reservation Economic Profiles to showcase their communities, economic and small business development efforts and for use as tool to attract and encourage tribal citizen-owned business and development and outside investment.

MNIBA will identify partnerships modeled after the work done at Bois Forte in conducting GAPS analysis and leakage study. This type of research and data will assist tribal governments to identify the types of sustainable business opportunities that can be developed and contribute to the reservation economic multiplier, and ensure dollars are remaining in the community and contributing to the creation of new jobs. It will further inform tribal governments as to the types of infrastructure needed and development of new supportive small business commercial business laws and zoning.

Tribal governments and individual American Indian-owned businesses have the ability to reshape their community's economies and influence economic sovereignty. They have a wonderful opportunity to redefine wealth from an indigenous lens. This report lays out actions that when implemented will lead to closer collaboration and cooperation among and between all stakeholders.

ABOUT THE WORLD CAFÉ

Using seven design principles and a simple method, the World Café is a powerful social technology for engaging people in conversations that matter, offering an effective antidote to the fast-paced fragmentation and lack of connection in today's world. Based on the understanding that conversation is the core process that drives personal, business, and organizational life, the World Café is more than a method, a process, or technique – it's a way of thinking and being together sourced in a philosophy of conversational leadership.

Seven Design Principles

1) Set the Context

Pay attention to the reason you are bringing people together, and what you want to achieve. Knowing the purpose and parameters of your meeting enables you to consider and choose the most important elements to realize your goals.

2) Create Hospitable Space

Café hosts around the world emphasize the power and importance of creating a hospitable space—one that feels safe and inviting. When people feel comfortable to be themselves, they do their most creative thinking, speaking, and listening.

3) Explore Questions that Matter

Knowledge emerges in response to compelling questions. Find questions that are relevant to the real-life concerns of the group. Powerful questions that “travel well” help attract collective energy, insight, and action as they move throughout a system.

4) Encourage Everyone's Contribution

As leaders we are increasingly aware of the importance of participation, but most people don't only want to participate, they want to actively contribute to making a difference. It is important to encourage everyone in your meeting to contribute their ideas and perspectives, while also allowing anyone who wants to participate by simply listening to do so.

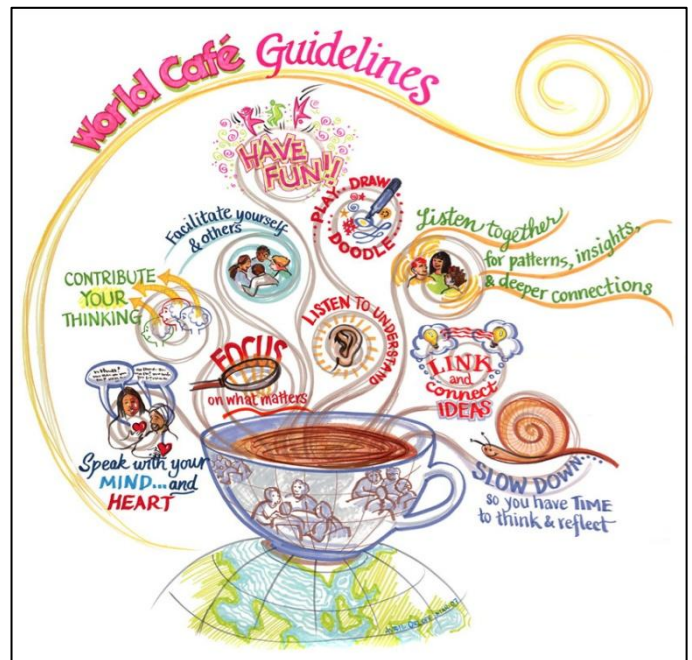
5) Connect Diverse Perspectives

The opportunity to move between tables, meet new people, actively contribute your thinking, and link the

essence of your discoveries to ever-widening circles of thought is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Café.

6) Listen together for Patterns and Insights

Listening is a gift we give to one another. The quality of our listening is perhaps the most important factor determining the success of a Café.



7) Share Collective Discoveries

Conversations held at one table reflect a pattern of wholeness that connects with the conversations at the other tables. The last phase of the Café, often called the “harvest”, involves making this pattern of wholeness visible to everyone in a large group conversation. Invite a few minutes of silent reflection on the patterns, themes and deeper questions experienced in the small group conversations and call them out to share with the larger group.

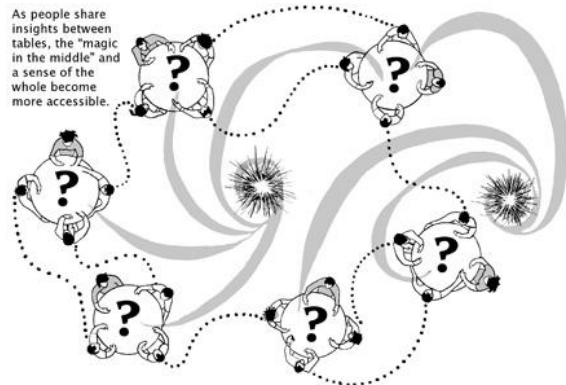
The World Café Method

Drawing on seven integrated design principles, the World Café methodology is a simple, effective, and flexible format for hosting large group dialogue. Specifics of context, numbers, purpose, location, and other circumstances are factored into each event's

unique invitation, design, and question choice, but the following five components comprise the basic model:
1) Setting: Create a “special” environment, most often modeled after a café, i.e. small round tables covered with a checkered or white linen tablecloth, butcher block paper, colored pens, a vase of flowers, etc. There should be four chairs at each table (optimally) – and no more than five.

2) Welcome and Introduction: The host begins with a warm welcome and an introduction to the World Café process, setting the context, sharing the Cafe Etiquette, and putting participants at ease.

3) Small Group Rounds: The process begins with the first of three or more twenty minute rounds of conversation for the small group seated around a table. At the end of the twenty minutes, each member of the group moves to a different new table. They may or may not choose to leave one person as the “table host” for the next round, who welcomes the next group and briefly fills them in on what happened in the previous round.



4) Questions: each round is prefaced with a **question** specially crafted for the specific context and desired purpose of the World Café. The same questions can be used for more than one round, or they can be built upon each other to focus the conversation or guide its direction.

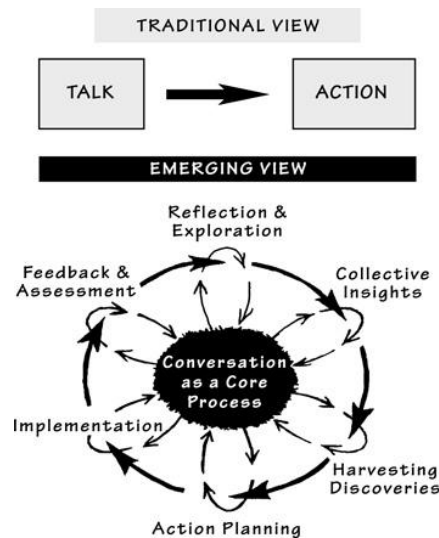
5) Harvest: After the small groups (and/or in between rounds, as needed), individuals are invited to share insights or other results from their conversations with the rest of the large group. These results are reflected visually in a variety of ways.

Conversational Leadership

As those who walked before us, talking together and listening to one another have been our primary means for discovering common interests, sharing knowledge, imagining the future and cooperating to survive and thrive.

The natural cross-pollination of relationships, ideas, and meaning as people move from one conversation to others enables us to learn, explore possibilities, and co-create together.

The World Café recognizes the importance of conversation as a core meaning-making process. It is a natural and effective way to host meaningful conversations that inspire collective wisdom and engage collaborative action.



From this perspective, conversations are action—the very heartbeat and lifeblood of social systems like organizations, communities, and cultures.

Conversational leadership takes root when leaders see their organizations as dynamic webs of conversation and consider conversation as a core process for effecting positive systemic change. Taking a strategic approach to this core process can not only grow intellectual and social capital, but also provide a collaborative advantage in our increasingly networked world.

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN INDIAN ART TODAY

American Indian art today is fused with the past, vibrating with the now, and transcending into the new. The former styles merging with modern techniques and new colors invigorate indigenous representation. Individual styles enhance or overlap with former conventional techniques.

The American Indian artist continues to refine his/her skills, use of improved materials, bold experimentation and incorporating new ideas and new attitudes that have been integrated, bringing about powerful results and stirring emotion.

At one time American Indian arts and crafts emulated an identifiable culture base, later a tribal principle that has now evolved into a new phase of individual/personal persuasion, so that it meets the criteria of distinct fine art.

American Indian artists react with an amazing creative enthusiasm. Whether the artist is self taught, mentored by master craftsman or improves his/her skills at art institutions, each creates a style all of their own. In the world of fine art, distinction of style is a principal decisive factor.

All great artists become great by focusing their personal vision and energy into hard work and discipline. This holds true with the thousands of American Indian artists specializing in various disciplines, often without “indigenous” suggestion.

Those that “color outside the lines” bring about inspiration and changes, and set precedence for other American Indian artists. Their freedom of expression is greater than that of artists even a few generations ago.

Contemporary artists define art broadly. Art, as a communicator of meaning, has always been a part of all things created and honored by indigenous peoples.

They link worlds and time together. Reminiscent of the old ones, some work the old art forms reverently implying their own spirit. Through their traditional and contemporary creations we are reminded of our connection to the Creator and Mother Earth.

Some have achieved a style so that their work is identified by their name. But regardless of how innovative their style may be the next stroke of paint on a canvass, clay, wood, bronze, photograph or digital image reveals the initial cultural inspiration.

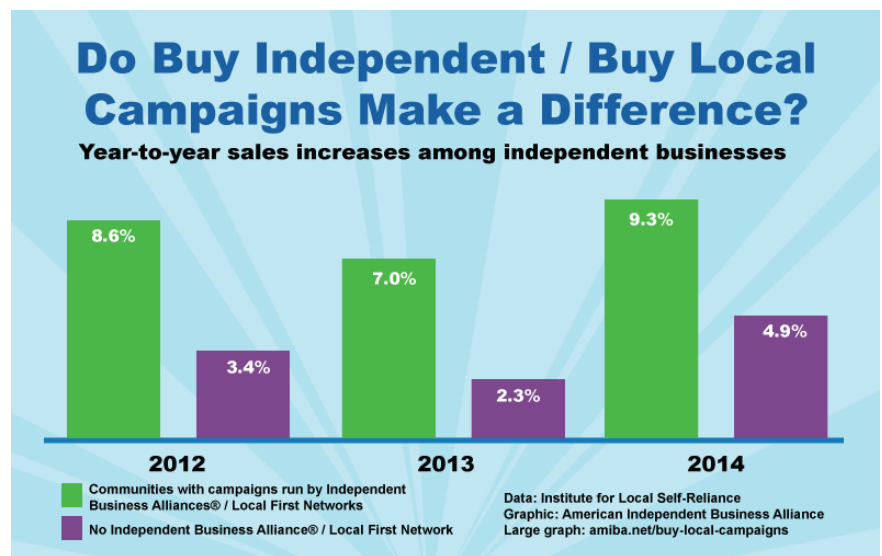
So even if the contemporary American Indian artist conveys resolute individuality, it is through their eyes we are offered an opportunity to see and feel the sacredness, the humor, the pain, and the beauty we all share in this life. We experience the culture that sustains them and their reliance upon its strengths.

WHY “BUY LOCAL” CAMPAIGNS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Recognition of the crucial role small businesses play in creating jobs, strengthening community cohesion and enhancing local character is rising -- thanks largely to a rapidly growing number of community coalitions and campaigns that have formed specifically to support local business and build thriving local economies.

Leveraging the power of institutional buyers by helping them source even slightly more goods or services locally can yield a large local economic stimulus. These entities include tribal, governments, tribal enterprises, tribal colleges, BIE schools, local and county governments, schools, colleges, hospitals, and others that, by their nature, are rooted in the community.

Several compelling studies demonstrate the increased local economic multiplier resulting when people spend at local independents, and other economic arguments for supporting local business. Studies by the private research firm, Civic Economics and the non-profit ILSR both have shown dollars spent at local independent businesses in locally-owned property return, on average, \$45 or more per \$100 spent to the local economy, compared to just \$14 or less for \$100 spent at a chain outlet.



This results in a direct multiplier three or more times greater when people spend with independents, compared to patronizing local chain outlets (and infinitely more than buying online). Small business is the major engine of job creation, and creates more jobs per sales dollar than chain competitors and several times more than large online retailers.¹

¹ American Independent Business Alliance, 2014 Building “Buy Local” Campaigns that Shift Spending and Culture