

## *Note on methodology*

### Objective of this note

This note explains the process and methods used to produce this report and the analytical framework used by the OECD to develop policy recommendations for linking Indigenous communities with regional and rural development.

### Formation and initial scoping

Over a number of years, the OECD Working Party on Rural Policies (WPRUR) has engaged with Indigenous issues, including through the *OECD Rural Policy Review: Chile*, the 10<sup>th</sup> *OECD Rural Development Conference* in Memphis, United States (2015), and the *OECD Territorial Review of the Northern Sparsely Populated Areas* (NSPA) (OECD, 2014<sup>[1]</sup>; 2015<sup>[2]</sup>; 2017<sup>[3]</sup>). Engagement with Indigenous leaders revealed the complexities and differences of Indigenous world-views about development, the importance of territory to the reproduction of Indigenous languages, culture and livelihoods and their lack of visibility in regional and rural development strategies. This engagement demonstrated the need to better link Indigenous peoples and communities with regional and rural development efforts.

With the support of several member countries, the OECD Secretariat prepared a scoping paper about how to better link Indigenous communities with rural and regional development (OECD, 2016<sup>[5]</sup>). The paper identified the importance of Indigenous peoples to regional and rural development because of their unique place-based assets and the need to address disparities in socio-economic outcomes within regions. Based on this initial review of the literature, a number of potential priorities were identified to support the implementation of a place-based approach to Indigenous economic development:

- Improving data and information about Indigenous communities.
- Identifying areas of comparative advantage and initiatives to build skills, employment and opportunities for entrepreneurship.
- Building the capacity of Indigenous leaders and communities and better linking them with multi-level governance arrangements (thereby better linking top-down and community-led initiatives).
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities (and complementarities) between different levels of government and public agencies, and improving mechanisms and incentives for alignment and co-ordination.
- Reforming and adapting regulatory frameworks in order to help unlock the value of Indigenous-owned assets and increase their participation in decision-making.
- Identifying and promoting service delivery innovations in order to deliver improved outcomes in areas such as education and skills.

## Dialogue and engagement with Indigenous peoples and governments

In order to inform the WPRUR about Indigenous perspectives on development and frame the approach to the topic, the Sámi Parliament of Sweden and the Indigenous Peoples Secretariat of the Arctic Council participated in the 19<sup>th</sup> meeting of the OECD WPRUR in November 2016.

The OECD WPRUR and supporting countries gave clear guidance that the OECD's engagement in this topic should be based on the principle of “nothing about us without us” meaning that Indigenous peoples should play a central role in the project. The OECD was encouraged to focus on its strengths in data collection, country comparative peer review and the identification of good practices – and to be humble in terms of opening up a respectful dialogue with Indigenous peoples about development in rural areas. This included a focus on learning from and including Indigenous peoples in the process through direct engagement and peer review. In this sense, a participatory research methodology was employed which created mechanisms for reflection and learning between all the actors involved.<sup>1</sup>

Further dialogue with policymakers and Indigenous leaders commenced in 2017, which included a survey to member countries in order to understand their preferences for such a project. This initial engagement culminated in a three-day workshop at Wendake First Nation in Quebec, Canada, in September 2017.<sup>2</sup> Policymakers and Indigenous leaders from Australia, Canada, Colombia, Peru, Sweden and the United States participated in this workshop. Four initial research questions were proposed based on feedback from governments and Indigenous leaders, the OECD framework for regional and rural development, and initial engagement with the academic and grey literature:

1. What is the role and contribution of Indigenous peoples to regional/national economies and which factors constrain/enable their economic participation at a regional level?
2. What are the key features of governance arrangements that enable Indigenous communities to realise the development potential of land and related natural resources, including negotiating benefits with investors to create sustainable business and employment opportunities?
3. What policies help promote Indigenous entrepreneurship and innovation opportunities in rural areas, particularly in the tradeable sector?
4. What incentives and mechanisms should be implemented to support an integrated place-based approach to development that is inclusive of and empowers Indigenous communities?

Participants endorsed a focus on these four questions (which continued to be refined throughout the project), the delivery of advice at a global level and within countries, and emphasised the importance about the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the process of data collection and analysis (OECD, 2017<sup>[3]</sup>).

## Developing the analytical framework

The first substantive task was to develop a robust analytical framework for the project. The project team drafted four OECD policy papers that addressed the key questions identified above. The objective was to incorporate existing literature about Indigenous economic development into the OECD framework in order to create an analytical framework to guide

the empirical analysis. In this case, the project team set up a conceptual dialogue between the OECD approach to regional and rural development and the literature on Indigenous development issues.

The conceptual starting point for this work was the OECD programme of work on regional and rural development policies, which has been developed over the past 40 years (OECD, 2019<sup>[6]</sup>). This work has shown that subnational regions strongly differ in their performance and growth rates (Garcilazo and Oliveira Martins, 2013<sup>[7]</sup>; OECD, 2016<sup>[8]</sup>). Across the OECD, these differences persist over time suggesting that regional level factors yield significant differences in productivity and consequently income levels among regions. In the past, these policies tended to focus on addressing disparities between regions through the provision of subsidies to compensate them for lower incomes. This approach was seen as increasingly ineffective as it created dependency relationships rather than a development process. The new approach to regional policies emphasises a focus on competitiveness and empowering all regions to unlock their growth potential. A basic principle is that, in any place, local people should set their own development strategies because they typically have the best knowledge about what they want and are best positioned to know how to go about achieving it (OECD, 2018<sup>[9]</sup>).

The literature on Indigenous peoples is large, diverse and difficult to summarise. Historically, policies of assimilation have driven Indigenous research agendas with health and anthropological disciplines playing a prominent role. Research was done *to* Indigenous peoples and generally supported these political agendas and as such was part of the overall colonisation process. As organised resistance to these policies strengthened, there was a growing recognition of the need to decolonise research methodologies and to better link research agendas with Indigenous values and aspirations (Smith, 2012<sup>[10]</sup>). A cursory search of the most cited academics papers on Indigenous peoples reveals the continued dominance of health disciplines and of legal scholars examining human rights issues. Human rights issues are incredibly important because they strengthen the institutional frameworks that make it possible to have development that is inclusive of Indigenous peoples (United Nations, 2007<sup>[11]</sup>).

This study takes a different approach. It focuses on locating Indigenous peoples in regional economies and examines how regional development policies can be made more inclusive for them. The basic “bottom-up” logic of the OECD approach to rural development is aligned with the existing literature on Indigenous economic development. For instance, the work of the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development has found that Indigenous control over Indigenous affairs (practical self-rule), a set of capable governing institutions and a suitable cultural match are key to development success (Cornell, 2003<sup>[12]</sup>; 2006<sup>[13]</sup>). The work at the Australian National Universities Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research echoes these findings (Moran, 2009<sup>[14]</sup>). In addition, their work demonstrates how Indigenous economies are a mix or hybrid of formal market activity, traditional subsistence and government support (Altman, 2001<sup>[15]</sup>). This reinforces the need to avoid spatially blind policies and have a development approach that is adapted to the geographic context and led by Indigenous peoples.

This initial conceptual dialogue revealed learnings both ways. For the OECD, it revealed learnings such as the existence of functional geographies (i.e. traditional territory of a clan or tribe), the spiritual value of land and the role of kinship relations in shaping decision-making and engagement with outsiders. The OECD could add to this significant body of knowledge by better understanding the development dynamics of Indigenous economies across different types of regions (urban, rural and remote); developing advice about how to

create an enabling environment for local entrepreneurship; and creating multi-level governance systems that enable the adaptation of policies to local needs. Drafts of these papers were circulated and peer-reviewed by countries. The initial framework developed by the OECD is outlined in the table below.

**Table 1. Initial analytical framework: Linking Indigenous Communities with Regional Development**

Dimension	Key themes
Indigenous trends and statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Functional Indigenous geographies, differentiated by type of region (urban, rural and remote)</li> <li>● Identification of local assets and bottlenecks</li> <li>● Strengthening linkages to regional, national and international markets</li> <li>● Assessing well-being and progress (with similar types of regions)</li> </ul>
Indigenous entrepreneurship and small business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Defining Indigenous entrepreneurship (individual, collective and linked to community well-being)</li> <li>● Importance of developing the tradeable sector</li> <li>● Establishing local vision and priorities for development</li> <li>● Creating an enabling environment for entrepreneurship (e.g. access to finance and preferential procurement policies)</li> </ul>
Indigenous lands: recognition, management and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Land rights and security of tenure</li> <li>● Models of Indigenous land governance (based on level of autonomy)</li> <li>● Mechanisms to resolve conflicts and negotiate benefit sharing</li> </ul>
Strengthening governance and partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Importance of a place-based approach to policies</li> <li>● Cultural match and dialogue</li> <li>● Strengthening Indigenous governance capacities</li> <li>● Multi-level governance systems that facilitate coherence and alignment of policies</li> </ul>

## Collecting and analysing the data

The unit of analysis for the study was defined as place-based Indigenous communities (groups sharing a common sense of belonging and identity and attachment to a territory) in a regional economy (subnational geography based on administrative boundaries or functional relationships). The role of Indigenous communities in regional economies is a complex phenomenon with many variables and factors of potential interest. Although a theoretical framework was defined, it would demand multiple sources of evidence to be bought together to draw valid conclusions. As a result, the study employed a mixed methods approach by simultaneously drawing together different quantitative and qualitative research methods.<sup>3</sup> Core elements included case studies of different Indigenous communities, which was chosen as a research strategy in order to enable in-depth investigation of the issues and direct engagement with Indigenous peoples (Yin, 2003<sub>[16]</sub>). These cases were selected on the basis that the participating Indigenous communities: gave their consent; had made progress in addressing economic development issues; and were located across different types of regions (urban, rural close to cities and rural remote). This case study research was complemented by questionnaires, as well as documentary and statistical analysis in order to make broader generalisations about national policies. The different methods employed in this study are outlined below.

### *Surveys and desktop data collection*

Based on the analytical framework, a questionnaire was designed in order to collect quantitative and qualitative data from national governments (and select

Indigenous organisations in some cases). National governments were also encouraged to distribute the survey to peak and representative Indigenous organisations. Thirteen countries responded to a survey: Argentina, Australia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Denmark/Greenland, Finland, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States. A catalogue of policy documents and reports from national and subnational governments, communities and representative Indigenous organisations was also developed. Furthermore, data about Indigenous peoples at a national and subnational level was collected and organised for the five OECD member countries where it was available (Australia, Canada, Mexico, New Zealand and the United States). This included a large amount of quantitative data (on Indigenous demography, educational attainment, land use, labour market issues and business ownership), which was organised into a single database.

### ***OECD fieldwork to Indigenous communities***

Throughout 2018, the OECD carried out four fact-finding missions for this project to Australia, Canada and Sweden together with policymakers from national governments and Indigenous leaders. A total of 25 working days were spent on these fact-finding missions and it is estimated that during this fieldwork the OECD team directly engaged with over 600 people. Semi-structured interviews and workshops were conducted where the project team spent time visiting and engaging with local Indigenous leaders and community members, representative bodies (e.g. representative organisations, statutory authorities and trusts), ministries of national and subnational governments, municipalities, and not-for-profit organisations. Further, communities were included in shaping meeting agendas prior to the visits, sometimes leading to significant changes based on their input. Agendas were also translated into local languages where necessary. A summary report of each trip was then provided back to participants for their records and further feedback. In addition, another engagement was undertaken to Alaska in the United States in April 2018, which focused on innovation and natural resource-based development, and this allowed for discussions with local Indigenous and government representatives.

There is no single way to define an “Indigenous community” and in our own understanding, the project team directly engaged with 36 different Indigenous communities during this project.

**Table 2. OECD fieldwork to Indigenous communities**

First Nations and local communities	
Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alice Springs, Northern Territory</li> <li>Yilpara (Baniyala), Northern Territory</li> <li>Broome (Yawuru), Western Australia</li> <li>Gunyangara (Gumatj), Northern Territory</li> <li>Dampier Peninsular (Ardyaloon, Djarindjin, Lombadina, and Mercedes Cove), Western Australia</li> <li>NPY/APY Lands, Northern Territory and South Australia</li> <li>Ntaria (Aranda People), Northern Territory</li> <li>Shepparton/Goulburn Valley (Yorta Yorta Nation), Victoria</li> <li>Western Sydney, New South Wales</li> <li>Yirkkala (Rirratjingu), Northern Territory</li> </ul>
Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hamlet of Gjoa Haven (phone-based), Nunavut</li> <li>Millbrook First Nation, Nova Scotia</li> <li>Kahnawá:ke Mohawk Territory, Quebec</li> <li>4 leaders of Mi'kmaq Nations from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick</li> </ul>

	Mashteuiatsh First Nation, Quebec
	Matawa Tribal Council (represents nine First Nations including Neskatanga), Ontario
	Mississaugas of the New Credit, Ontario
	Neskatanga First Nation, Ontario
	Pangnirtung, Nunavut
	St'át'imc Nation, British Columbia (phone-based)
Sweden	Gällivare, Norrbotten
	Jokkmokk, Norrbotten
	Umeå, Vasterbotten
	Lycksele, Vasterbotten
United States	Kotzebue, Alaska

### ***OECD workshops***

Over the course of the project, the main preliminary findings of the study and its analytical framework were shared at workshops. A workshop was held in Brussels with the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs on “Indigenous peoples in the European Arctic” in June 2018 (OECD, 2018<sub>[17]</sub>). This included representatives from the Government of Greenland, Sámi Parliaments of Finland, Norway and Sweden, and the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. A side meeting was also held on this project at the 17<sup>th</sup> UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in April 2018. Finally, in November 2018 a “zero draft” of the four chapters was presented to national delegates and Indigenous leaders in Paris, who provided feedback and input. This incredibly rich dialogue with Indigenous peoples and policymakers was inspiring and provided us with intelligence and know-how that significantly enriched the work.

### ***Peer review***

Central to the work of the OECD is the principle that each member reviews the other on an equal basis. This principle was operationalised in this project through peer reviewers from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden and the United States. This included government officials and Indigenous leaders who formed part of the mission team. The inclusion of Indigenous peer reviewers had the added benefit of strengthening relationships and providing opportunities for knowledge sharing beyond the project. In addition, countries and other OECD committees and directorates reviewed the project outputs.

### ***Data analysis***

The questionnaires, fieldwork, workshops and peer review process generated an enormous amount of qualitative data (notes, proceedings and documents). The analytical framework was used to organise this data and a content analysis was undertaken to identify common themes to begin answering the research questions. The quantitative research included the collection and organisation of data as well as its statistical analysis including trend analysis, measures of central tendency and dispersal, and bivariate and multivariate analysis.

## **Key learnings and refining the analytical framework**

The process of undertaking the study revealed a number of insights and lessons, which changed the analytical framework, set out in the table below. The main points are:

- The fieldwork demonstrated the sheer diversity of local Indigenous communities and the most obvious point that a one-size-fits-all or spatially blind approach to

policies is unlikely to be effective. This is particularly the case for remote Indigenous communities, which have a very different development context due to high transport costs and the hybrid nature of local economies. This point is developed further in Chapters 2 and 3 of this report.

- Indigenous economies are embedded in unique institutional contexts and there is a need for different measures and indicators about development. In these contexts, kinship relations, the continuity of language, traditional knowledge about the land and customary practices play a central role. The choices made by Indigenous peoples in terms of the production, consumption and management of resources is shaped by a complex negotiation between these traditions and the dominant norms in settler societies. This has practical implications in terms of how development or progress is defined with greater weight given to cultural and environmental factors. Chapter 1 includes a discussion about the incorporation of Indigenous values and perspectives in well-being frameworks.
- Research has traditionally been done *to* Indigenous peoples and development defined *for* them. This approach tends to ignore traditional knowledge and values; indeed, it is based on a logic of assimilation. There is strong evidence that if partnerships with Indigenous peoples are absent or weak then policies are unlikely to deliver long-term improvements in Indigenous well-being. This is particularly the case in terms of data, and there is a need to re-conceive the governance of data in ways that include Indigenous peoples in the collection, storage, use and analysis of it. Chapter 1 includes a discussion about data governance and Indigenous data sovereignty.
- In some jurisdictions, the protected and indivisible nature of Indigenous lands does create challenges in terms of economic development because there are limits to its transferability. However, this problem is not insurmountable and different jurisdictions have developed innovations in Indigenous land governance and through instruments such as long-term leasing to deal with it. Different instruments to mobilise the economic potential of Indigenous lands are outlined in Chapter 3.
- Opportunities to build entrepreneurial capabilities and financial literacy are an important part of the mix in creating an enabling environment for Indigenous entrepreneurs. Support for Indigenous peoples to develop these “soft skills” is needed alongside investment in economic infrastructure, measures that improve access to capital and improve access to markets through preferential procurement policies. This topic is addressed further in Chapter 2.
- Indigenous-led local intermediaries and brokers play a vital role in Indigenous economic development and this was not fully apparent in the existing literature. This may include an Aboriginal Financial Institute (AFI), a social enterprise running activities such as arts and culture, retail and health services, and/or a community trust managing and investing resource revenues. They play key roles in translating government actions and policies to the community, matching capital and resources to entrepreneurs, articulating a vision for development and resolving local conflicts. The effectiveness of these intermediaries is an important factor in Indigenous economic development and they are discussed further in Chapter 4.

As a result, this study has led to a change in the analytical framework, which can guide future international collaboration and analysis on this topic.

**Table 3. Linking Indigenous Communities with Regional Development – Analytical framework**

Dimension	Key themes
Indigenous economic development well-being: statistics and data governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Geographic distribution of Indigenous peoples across different types of regions (urban, rural and remote)</li> <li>● Well-being outcomes (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) at the national level and across different types of regions</li> <li>● Factors influencing Indigenous economic outcomes across different types of regions</li> <li>● Incorporation of Indigenous values and perspectives into well-being frameworks and geographic classifications</li> <li>● Indigenous data governance and data sovereignty</li> </ul>
Promoting Indigenous entrepreneurship and small business development in partnership with communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Defining Indigenous entrepreneurship (individual, collective and linked to community well-being) and innovation (including traditional knowledge)</li> <li>● Domestic efforts to improve cultural and intellectual protection and certification of Indigenous goods and services</li> <li>● Structural characteristics of the Indigenous business sector (size, growth, sectoral specialisation and use of trust arrangements)</li> <li>● Differentiation of growth and opportunities and constraints across different types of rural regions (close to cities and remote)</li> <li>● Assessing competitive advantages in the tradeable sector and opportunities for social entrepreneurship in the non-traded sector across different types of rural regions</li> <li>● Local strategies for economic development and creating an enabling environment for entrepreneurship and small business (through increasing access to finance, building financial literacy and business capabilities, and preferential procurement policies)</li> </ul>
Indigenous lands: recognition, management and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Definition of statutory Indigenous property rights within countries and size and nature of the Indigenous estate</li> <li>● Procedures for the allocation and protection of land rights (registration, mapping, and land titling and demarcation)</li> <li>● Model of Indigenous land management within countries (self-governance, joint management and co-existence)</li> <li>● Instruments to mobilise the economic development potential of land (e.g. land use planning, land acquisition, leasing, and regulation of natural resources)</li> <li>● Inclusion in project elaboration and environmental licensing procedures</li> <li>● Mechanisms to negotiate benefit-sharing with project proponents (energy, mining developments)</li> </ul>
Toward a place-based approach to Indigenous economic development: strengthening governance and partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Coherence of the national policy framework for Indigenous economic development including the incorporation of Indigenous values and perspectives, differentiating policies for different regions and measurable outcomes</li> <li>● Co-ordination mechanisms that support alignment of objectives and implementation across ministries and between different levels of government</li> <li>● Mechanisms and tools provided by governments to foster partnerships and participation in decision-making across all dimensions of the policy cycle</li> <li>● Measures to empower Indigenous organisations to lead and manage regional economic development (strengthening capabilities and building scale)</li> </ul>

## Outcomes

This report delivers on the global analysis promised at Wendake First Nation in September 2017. The objectives of this report are to: i) identify lessons and leading practices from across OECD member countries about linking Indigenous communities to regional and rural development; and ii) provide recommendations to support future policy development and implementation. This is not a “one-size-fits-all” approach and recognises the diversity of relations with Indigenous peoples, their land rights, socio-economic status, and progress towards self-determination. Rather, it presents a set of options for consideration by



Indigenous peoples and governments to create an enabling environment for Indigenous economic development.

The report is organised around four substantive chapters:

- **Indigenous economic development and well-being – statistics and data governance:** assesses Indigenous economic development and well-being outcomes at the national and subnational levels and provides recommendations about how to improve Indigenous statistics and empower Indigenous peoples to use it.
- **Promoting Indigenous entrepreneurship and small business development in partnership with communities:** identifies lessons and leading practices related to creating an enabling environment for Indigenous entrepreneurs and small businesses in rural areas, including access to finance, business capabilities and procurement.
- **Indigenous lands – recognition, management and development:** assesses leading practices and lessons related to the clarification of Indigenous property rights, the availability of tools in the Indigenous land tenure system to mobilise development opportunities and mechanisms to negotiate effectively with project proponents.
- **Towards a place-based approach to Indigenous economic development – strengthening governance and partnerships:** focuses on identifying good practices and lessons about governance mechanisms and tools for implementing a place-based approach to Indigenous economic development.

This study aims to contribute to an ongoing global dialogue about better rural and regional development policies in collaboration with Indigenous peoples.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> There is a large literature on participatory research methodologies, for example, see Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2018<sub>[18]</sub>) and Reason and Bradbury (2008<sub>[20]</sub>). In essence, this involves the transfer of power from the research to the research participants. There were a number of techniques employed in this study to operationalise this idea, which included the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the framing of the study, enabling communities to change agendas and semi-structured interview questions, giving opportunities for participants to ask questions of the OECD team and providing records of meetings back to participants and opportunities for further feedback.

<sup>2</sup> The objectives of the workshop were to: i) share policy lessons and insights in relation to Indigenous economic development; ii) discuss project outputs, methodology and timeline; and iii) determine the next steps for the project. The proceedings can be found here: <http://www.oecd.org/regional/regional-policy/Indigenous-project-launch-Proceedings.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> For further information please see Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007<sub>[19]</sub>) and Small (2011<sub>[21]</sub>). This was particularly important given the exploratory nature of some of the topics in this study and the importance of tacit knowledge embedded in kinship systems to Indigenous societies. The systematic analysis of the qualitative data also ensured Indigenous perspectives were assessed and incorporated into the analysis and recommendations.

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