2 Brave spirits on new paths: toward a globally relevant paradigm of indigenous entrepreneurship research

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Introduction

This chapter reports a quest to articulate a globally relevant research paradigm of Indigenous entrepreneurship. In this field, there is an expanding volume of activity in at least five areas: journalistic investigation (we have assembled a database of over 800 non-refereed periodical articles on American Indian entrepreneurship alone); government policy and programme creation; attention from the established business community (Allen Consulting, 2001); academic investigation (Anderson, 2002) and, most importantly, by Indigenous communities and leaders (Daly, 1994; Hunter, 1999; Pearson, 1999; Trudgen, 2001). The absence of an explicit, globally relevant, research paradigm prevents the achievement of both cumulative effects accruing to research efforts and useful comparison between various policy and programme initiatives. We can no longer avoid the fundamental, research paradigm questions. What are the boundaries of this field? What should be studied within it?

In all nations with significant Indigenous minorities, the economic and social deprivation of Indigenous peoples has long been of deep policy concern, but both debate and administration of the issues (particularly the welfare issue) have not been in Indigenous control. Whether the intentions of non-indigenous governance and aid agencies have been malicious or benign, the result of taking responsibility out of Indigenous hands has resulted in a handout culture (Pearson, 1999). Stimulation of Indigenous entrepreneurship has the potential to repair much of the damage through creation of an enterprise culture, which fully respects Indigenous traditions but empowers Indigenous people as economic agents in a globally competitive modern world. Indigenous entrepreneurship research should and will quickly emerge as one of the most important fields within the discipline of entrepreneurship. However it is a frontier area that badly needs a map.

Definition of key terms

> A nation is a cultural territory made up of communities of individuals who see themselves as 'one people' on the basis of common ancestry, history, society, institutions, ideology, language, territory, and often, religion. A person is born into a specific nation.
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> A state is a centralized political system within international legal boundaries recognized by other states. Further, it uses a civilian–military bureaucracy to establish one government and to enforce one set of institutions and laws. It typically has one language, one economy, one claim over all resources, one currency, one flag, and sometimes one religion. (Neitschmann, 1994: 226)

Indigenous people   The convention observed in this chapter is to use a capital 'I' for every use of the word 'Indigenous'. Australia has two groups of Indigenous people: Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. The basis of classification was given in a High

Court judgment in the case of *Commonwealth* v. *Tasmania* (1983) 46 ALR 625. An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives. Essentially, various United States agencies also use self-identification to determine Indigenous status for members of the 500 Indian nations.

> [We define] Indigenous entrepreneurship as the creation, management and development of new ventures by Indigenous people for the benefit of Indigenous people. The organizations thus created can pertain to either the private, public or non-profit sectors. The desired and achieved benefits of venturing can range from the narrow view of economic profit for a single individual to the broad view of multiple, social and economic advantages for entire communities. Outcomes and entitlements derived from Indigenous entrepreneurship may extend to enterprise partners and stakeholders who may be non-Indigenous.
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> A paradigm is made up of the general theoretical assumptions and laws and techniques for their application that members of a particular scientific community adopt. (Chalmers, 1984: 90)
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> A research paradigm provides a template against which any study purporting to belong to a field may be assessed and, with reference to which, productive comparisons between studies may be made. (Hindle, 2002)

Dominant themes from a diverse literature

Canada may justifiably be acclaimed as the world's most advanced state in policy making, enterprise development and research in the field of Indigenous entrepreneurship. Canada pioneered the granting of high levels of governmental autonomy to Indigenous nations within the borders of a mainstream state. The First Nations Advantage Credit Union is a world leader (Allen Consulting, 2001; Guly, 1998). The world's first PhD in the field was completed by a Canadian, Léo-Paul Dana. Subsequent publication of aspects of the thesis in a major journal (Dana, 1995) was instrumental in alerting the mainstream of entrepreneurship researchers to the possible existence of a new and important field.

Canadian publishing house Coptus Press has the world's most extensive specialist catalogue of works specifically dedicated to Indigenous entrepreneurship. Canada houses the journal currently most relevant to the field, the *Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development*.

Globally, much interesting work is emerging. An initial search driven by obvious key words revealed 31 studies, which might qualify as refereed research containing a significant emphasis on Indigenous entrepreneurship. The growing volume of what might be classified as 'Indigenous entrepreneurship literature' is not yet matched by any strongly emergent *structure* in that literature. Studies did not build on one another or refer to one another. Most studies seemingly 'start from scratch'. However, two related themes are strongly evident in the literature.

1. *Reconciling tradition with innovation*. Modern entrepreneurship is focused upon the commercialization of innovation. A prime motive in all Indigenous nations' desires for self-determination is preservation of heritage. The superficial temptation is to classify the Indigenous heritage orientation as 'looking back' and contrast it with the mainstream entrepreneurship ethic of 'looking forward'. This is a false dichotomy but a real impediment to creating well-grounded study and execution of Indigenous

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enterprise. The challenge is to understand the dynamic potential inherent in heritage, not simply regard it as a roadblock to future-oriented commercial development.
2.   *The importance of understanding non-mainstream world views and values*. We will address the world view and values issues in greater detail in subsequent sections of the chapter.

Relevant theoretical contexts
As a predicate to empirical research design, we drew insight from four theoretical domains: fourth world theory, Whetten's hybrid theory, value theory and the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) model.

Fourth world theory (Neitschmann, 1994; Seton, 1999) focuses on the formidable challenge that the durable but depressed existence of Indigenous nations poses to a world where thought and action have been dominated by states possessing a single, mainstream culture. The *Fourth World Journal* is available online.

David A. Whetten is renowned as a pioneer in the field of organizational identity. A lesser-known component of his scholarship may be called 'Whetten's hybrid theory' (Whetten, 2002). Elements from two primary social institutions, such as church, education, government, business, military or family, may be crossbred to produce a hybrid organization. The essence of the hybrid duality is always the existence of paradox between *ideology* and *instrumentality*. A good example is 'family business', where 'family' is a largely ideological concept and 'business' is far more instrumental. Indigenous (ideological component) entrepreneurship (instrumental component) may be regarded as a hybrid phenomenon. Whetten's theory offers practical strategies for fostering coherence among highly incompatible identity elements.

Value theory has been a mainstream concern of economics since the eighteenth century and includes a seminal debate between advocates and opponents of state redistributive activity. The focus of disagreement centers on the opposed views of Rawls' 'Original Position' argument (1972, 1975) in favor of a redistributive role for government and Nozick's 'Theory of justice in distribution' (1974), which rejects such a role. The overwhelming failure of government Indigenous welfare programs (Pearson, 1999: *passim*) is strong evidence that Rawls has lost the argument. Unfortunately, neither Nozick specifically, nor value theory generally, supplies any practical guidelines for either research or policy-making. In order to study the field of Indigenous entrepreneurship better, we need not 'value theory' (economic singular) but a theory of values (human plural).

Values, as an issue for the field of sociology, was first raised by Hutcheon, who noted that 'American sociology has tended to develop in isolation from the humanities, and in the form of a highly specialized technique rather than as a broad, philosophically and historically sophisticated perspective for the study of humanity (Hutcheon, 1972: 177). In common with sociology, entrepreneurship research has shown scant interest in values. It has been isolated from the humanities. The discipline's commendable concern for technical excellence in quantitative methodology may have come at the expense of philosophical and historical sophistication. In her most recent book, Hutcheon revisits the values issue and concludes that, if we are ever going to solve the problems of society, we must understand how humans function as both the creators and creatures of an evolving culture (Hutcheon, 1999). Richard Trudgen argues that mutual misunderstanding of values is at the heart of most problems between Indigenous and mainstream cultures (Trudgen, 2001: 68–136).

All three relevant theoretical contexts converge on one practical necessity: Indigenous people themselves must create the paradigm of Indigenous entrepreneurship. It cannot be thrust upon them by non-Indigenous scholars as just one more imposition of the dominant culture. Fortunately there is a generic research method for facilitating this outcome. It involves distilling the collective wisdom of opinion leaders using depth interviews (Jones, 1985a, 1985b). Furthermore, there is a specific, tested application of the technique in the field of entrepreneurship. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) project (Reynolds et al., 2001) provides, for our intended study, both its fourth theoretical context and a tested method of effective depth interviewing to generate insights on entrepreneurship.

Empirical research design

At a broad level of purpose-focused methodological classification, the empirical component of this study is a blend of ethnography (Cresswell, 1994: 11) and grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: *passim*). Its fundamental purpose was to understand the relationship between behavior and culture (the realm of ethnography) in order to determine the domain of a field linking participants' perspectives to general social science theory (the realm of grounded theory).

Our empirical research objective was to discover and articulate the essential elements, boundaries and laws describing a paradigm of Indigenous entrepreneurship research from the consensus elements contained in the discourse of 40, purposively chosen, individually interviewed experts representing two different cultural traditions.

Between December 2001 and April 2002, 40 semi-structured depth interviews were conducted: 20 in Australia and 20 in the USA. If similar patterns of opinion could be detected among representatives of such strongly distinct Indigenous traditions, the claim for global relevance of any discoveries would be enhanced. On the grounds that Indigenous enterprise could not avoid interface with mainstream enterprise, it seemed appropriate to include a minority of non-Indigenous respondents knowledgeable in the field. We arbitrarily determined that a minimum of 28 interviews (70 per cent) should be with respondents of Indigenous status. Every respondent, Indigenous or non-Indigenous, had to possess credentials recognized in both the mainstream state and at least one Indigenous nation as a person knowledgeable in and respected for: their wisdom about general, fundamental issues affecting Indigenous development in at least one major community; their deep knowledge of and experience in mainstream government policy and programs affecting Indigenous people; and their knowledge of the technical and managerial issues relevant to entrepreneurship, startup, business development and business success in mainstream culture.

Our investigation was conducted using an operationalization of an aspect of the *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor* (GEM) research model (Reynolds et al., 2001). The GEM model postulates, and the interview structure utilizes, nine 'entrepreneurial framework conditions': financial support, government policies, government programs, education and training, R&D transfer, commercial infrastructure, internal market openness, access to physical infrastructure, and cultural and social norms. These describe the most salient features of the opportunity and motivational environment in which would-be entrepreneurs create and develop their ventures. Construct validity and reliability of results were strengthened by detailed research protocols, archival regimes and adherence to Hindle and Rushworth's (2001) preference that respondents not be cloaked in anonymity. All respondents stand

willing to repeat the views contained in their depth interviews in open forums, including media interviews. Many are prominent national and international figures (including the Chairman of the Finance Committee of the US senate, the deputy leader of the Northern Territory government and Indigenous leaders with global reputations). Space constraints alone prevent our supplying a full list of respondents and their affiliations as an appendix. Bona fide scholars can contact us for access to original interviews.

Analytical techniques employed included cognitive mapping (Jones, 1985a: 59–67), content analysis (Krippendorf, 1980: *passim*) and appropriate techniques of statistical description, especially iterative cross-tabulation of coded data. All of these techniques were employed as tools in the service of 'the constant comparative method' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: *passim*). Finally, we selected a formal framework for reporting our findings. Hindle has developed a conceptualization of and system for the articulation of any *research* paradigm (Hindle, 1997; Legge and Hindle, 1997; Hindle, 2002). He demonstrates that the research paradigm for any area of science can be succinctly presented as a matrix, illustrated in Figure 2.1, where the columns universally represent the four key ingredients common to every paradigm (Kuhn, 1970) and the rows specifically represent the 'elemental issues' of the particular field that is under scrutiny (Hindle, 1997, 2002). Laws, success rules and instrumentation requirements are accordingly located in 'boxes' described by the intersection of rows and columns.

An 'elemental issue' (see Figure 2.1) is defined as 'an issue so fundamental to effective study of the field that it must be present (implicitly or explicitly) in every study that can claim to belong to the field' (Hindle, 2002). In this study, we limited our analytical attention to the attempt to do three things: (1) to discover the paradigm's elemental issues; (2) to determine its boundaries; and (3) to determine its laws. No attempts to postulate success rules or instrumentation requirements were made. These are tasks for future studies.

Findings

An example of early stage pattern exploration
Table 2.1 is just one example of the many exploratory cross-tabulations used in the early stages of our analysis. It employs GEM classification codes (see above) as a 'first round' method of aggregating respondents' opinions concerning the 'most important issue' in the field of Indigenous entrepreneurship. Even at this early stage of the pattern matching process, it was possible to observe the great importance attached to the issues coded under the general heading, 'cultural and social norms' and its commonality to both Australian and American respondents. Differences in emphasis are also apparent in the table (Chi-squared analysis could not be used because the table contains some cells with counts less than 5). To facilitate insight as analysis progressed, we generated, among other techniques of content analysis and pattern matching, many such cross-tabulations. They involved crossing a variety of respondent sub-divisions in the columns (e.g. sex, indigenous status, degree of tribal connection and so on) with various codings of data communication blocs in the rows (e.g. abstract idea, concrete example, degree of local focus, standard GEM code).

Middle stage emergent themes
A major emergent theme, with many ramifications, was the degree to which heritage was important in an enterprise. How much or how little Indigenous character or involvement

	Domain: What defines and distinguishes the field?		Operations: How is success obtained within the field?	
	Where Does It Apply?	What Must Be Done?	How Do You Do What Must Be Done?	
	Paradigm Boundaries	Paradigm Laws	Paradigm Success Rules	Instrumentation Requirements
ELEMENTAL ISSUE 1	?	?	?	?
ELEMENTAL ISSUE 2	?	?	?	?
ELEMENTAL ISSUE 3 et cetera	?	?	?	?
Theoretical Justification, Why does this paradigm contain these prescriptions?				

Source: Hindle (1997, 2002).

Figure 2.1 Conceptualizing the general paradigm articulation matrix

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Table 2.1   Example of a first round coding cluster of 'most important issue'

	Australian		American		Total	
Cultural & social norms	9	45%	10	50%	19	48%
Education and training	1	5%	7	35%	8	20%
Financial support	2	10%	2	10%	4	10%
Other	4	20%			4	10%
Combination of categories	2	10%			2	5%
Government policies	1	5%			1	3%
Commerc. & prof. infrastucture	1	5%			1	3%
Internal market openness			1	5%	1	3%
Total	20	100%	20	100%	40	100%

qualified an enterprise to be called 'Indigenous'? Clearly a business whose mission was to sell selected traditional art-works and having an all-Indigenous board and management would qualify. But what about a casino, employing a majority of non-Indigenous labor? Nothing in Indian tradition supports such a venture. Its right to operate results from a statute in mainstream law. What distinguishes it from any mainstream, profit-oriented enterprise?

A theme pervading many interviews was the need to deal with what might be called the 'individuality versus collectivity paradox'. There is undoubted need for a large measure of individuality if any process deserves the adjective 'entrepreneurial'. Simultaneously there is a need to respect much that is collective in Indigenous tradition. How does deep attachment to the land and the harmonies of nature fit with the drive for profit and success?

> Lakota philosophy is: each individual is responsible for themselves. And each individual was born with a gift of some kind to develop and to share with the people. . . . We need to find what that gift is within ourselves. (Albert White Hat)

> Tribal entrepreneurs tend to think about what they're doing for their community instead of thinking about how their business is actually going to survive. They have to think about both. (Gerald Sherman)

Another major theme concerned 'partnership' and all forms of interface with mainstream culture:

> No culture is static. It changes all the time. Language changes all the time. To me it's a matter of how we deal with change that's inevitable. We have to look around us and see what it is that we really want to preserve in terms of our identity as tribal people and American Indians and then take steps to do that. (Perry Horse)

For Australian Indigenous leader Noel Pearson this need to find ways to reconcile and blend the best in mainstream and Indigenous cultures was and is the number one issue for Indigenous entrepreneurship. The key is not just to recognize the problems but to find the right paths to travel to fix them.

All 40 of the respondents expressed, to varying degrees, the belief that the paths to an entrepreneurial future could come directly from the heartland of Indigenous tradition if only we understood that tradition well enough and were adventurous enough to use it creatively. Richard Trudgen spoke for many respondents when he argued that Indigenous heritage has been so battered by mainstream culture that many young Indigenous people themselves now doubt its power and value. Yet, despite all problems, the respondents in this study believed that the strength of Indigenous tradition was robust enough and the spirits of individual Indigenous people were adventurous enough that paths to economic self-determination can and will be found. No one expressed this more potently or joyously than Lenore Dembski, a female Aboriginal entrepreneur who, when asked what she thought was the biggest positive factor in the entire arena of Indigenous entrepreneurship, said:

> Well it's the fact that we – my Aboriginal people – we're so smart. For thousands of years we found ways to live richly in deserts and hard places where other people might have just shrivelled and died. And despite all the mistreatment of the last two hundred years, we're still here; we're still trying. We're resilient you know. (Lenore Dembski)

Every one of our respondents believed that a blend of Indigenous tradition with sheer, Indigenous 'smartness' is an essential key to the future.

Theoretical saturation

The constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: *passim*) was the fundamental technique used to distill the core paradigm concepts and relationships from the communication blocs contained in our interview data. It was an iterative process of theory development whereby concepts and relationships were formulated as categories and their properties. The data were constantly revisited seeking ever more parsimonious categorization until we believed we had obtained the minimum set of fundamental issues, boundary conditions and laws capable of defining the paradigm. At this point, the categories were 'theoretically saturated' so that further data revisits and new incidents in the data ceased to contribute to understanding. The grounded theory had 'solidified' and it was appropriate to articulate it using the paradigm matrix (see Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2 formulates three essential elements, three boundary statements, and seven laws. The paradigm of Indigenous entrepreneurship is thus described (minus its success rules and instrumentation requirements, as discussed above). We provide brief amplifications of the three essential elements of the paradigm.

1. *The heritage positioning index*. If heritage and the importance of Indigenous culture do *not* constitute an issue for a given venture, then we may not be talking about Indigenous entrepreneurship, even though the particular enterprise may have a degree of Indigenous ownership or involvement. It might be adequately studied as part of the entrepreneurial mainstream. The idea of an 'index' is metaphorical, not literal. What is required is some explicit treatment of the degree to which heritage matters and influences the management and growth of the enterprise under scrutiny in the study.

2. *The autonomy–accountability network*. Among the respondents in our study, there was a multiplicity of concerns about the degree of Indigenous autonomy that distinguishes

| | RESEARCH DOMAIN — A field comprising studies focused on three essential issues. | | OPERATIONS — How is success obtained? | |
| | Where Does It Apply? | What Must Be Done? | How Do We Do What Must Be Done? | |
	Paradigm Boundaries	Paradigm Laws	Paradigm Success Rules	Instrumentation Requirements
The Heritage Positioning Index	The relative importance of Indigenous heritage issues must be made extant and will determine the degree to which any study in the field must include cultural analysis as well as economic analysis.	1. Provide a positioning statement, indicating the degree to which Indigenous heritage issues play a role in the mission and operation of the enterprise.	?	?
The Autonomy– Accountability Network	All Indigenous entrepreneurship studies must address the degree of enterprise autonomy, the extent to which enterprise stakeholders are accountable under both mainstream and Indigenous constraints and the extent to which important stakeholders other than management, employees and equity holders are expected to share in benefits.	2. Address all relevant issues of partnership, conflict and governance with key individuals, organisations and institutions from the dominant culture. 3. Address all relevant issues of partnership, conflict and governance with key individuals, organisations and institutions within the Indigenous milieu. 4. Describe and explain all relevant cross-cultural issues impacting on enterprise philosophy and operations. 5. Articulate a benefit distribution statement, indicating the nature and level of required and expected sharing in enterprise outputs.	?	?
The Twin Skills Inventory	Indigenous entrepreneurship is distinguished by a need for practitioners and researchers to integrate two very different skill sets.	6. The instrumentality law. Address all relevant issues of mainstream, technical entrepreneurship knowledge germane to enterprise success. 7. The ideology law. Articulate the requisite, Indigenous, 'cultural sensitivity' knowledge and skills germane to enterprise success.	?	?

THEORETICAL JUSTIFICATION. Pattern matched depth interviews; content analysis; convergence of four theoretical frameworks.

Figure 2.2   The Indigenous entrepreneurship research paradigm

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one venture from another and the range of stakeholders to whom the venture must account for its performance and for whom it must provide rewards. Thinking of this set of concerns as a network permitted distillation of a single, elemental issue.
3. *The twin skills inventory*. The previous elemental issues imply but do not specify the need for significant participants in an entrepreneurial process to possess a relevant mixture of technical and cultural skills.

Discussion
Initial utility of the paradigm
Our investigation of Indigenous entrepreneurship research began with two questions. What are the boundaries of this field? What should be studied within it? The discovered paradigm provides some answers. The new question becomes how can the paradigm be used?

Initially its principal utility will be as a taxonomic device. Studies can now be profitably classified and arranged in meaningful clusters. Two brief examples of hypothetical studies will illustrate. Venture 1 is a casino, situated on an Indian reservation, and run in partnership with a non-Indigenous company. It employs a mixture of Indigenous and non-Indigenous labor and has a policy of distributing a fixed percentage of profits to the tribal council, which seeks to use the surplus as a venture fund for stimulating local small business. This venture would rate very low on heritage positioning but might profitably be studied to learn about important issues of partnering, governance and skills transfer. Venture 2 is a business totally owned by Indigenous members of a remote, desert community in central Australia. They are learning to use the Internet as a marketing tool to promote the sale of art they wish to make available to the world market. Just as important is what they do not wish to sell. By controlling their own company, they seek to protect certain sacred art works against the possibility of ever being seen by uninitiated outsiders. This enterprise rates highly on heritage but is largely accountable only to itself. A few technical (mainly Internet) skills are important – but not many. The learning that comes from researching this venture might be focused on the use of modern business skills in the service of heritage protection.

Investigations on both ventures would occupy very different but possibly equally valuable 'learning niches' in the Indigenous entrepreneurship research 'space'. More generally, scholars and practitioners may find the paradigm useful as a device for focusing research interest on specific topics needing urgent investigation. This focus can now be achieved without losing contact with the context that distinguishes Indigenous entrepreneurship from all other fields.

Future research directions
This study was intended as merely the first stage of a research sequence, which we have labeled the Indigenous Entrepreneurship Paradigm Project (IEP[2]). Paradigm building will continue through many more interviews embracing many more states and nations. Hopefully, paradigm usage will itself generate feedback and critique. Projects envisaged include a longer version of this chapter with more space devoted to literature survey, theory, methodology and insights from respondents; a retrofitting study using the paradigm to classify, arrange and draw cumulative conclusions from many existing studies in the field; replication studies using the same research procedures in other countries with

Indigenous populations (Canada, New Zealand, Africa and Norway have been canvassed); a book exploring the history, problems and prospects of Indigenous entrepreneurship in Australia using the paradigm as a framework; and the search for support to establish an international journal of Indigenous entrepreneurship. Collaboration, extension and critique by scholars in all branches of the social sciences and humanities is invited.

Using tradition as a path to innovation
The major lesson learned in this study was that Indigenous entrepreneurs can use their heritage: they do not have to lose it when they set out in pursuit of venture success. The Dreaming in Australia, the realm of the Great Spirit in the Americas and all Indigenous spiritual and cultural traditions, wherever they are found, can be positive entrepreneurial forces. These traditions offer not a closed book of immutable scripture, but an open universe of continuous possibility. The potent allegories of Indigenous tradition can show the way to what might be, as well as what has been. There need be no paradox, no contradiction, no values sacrifice, no false dichotomy between heritage and innovation. The teachings of many Indigenous traditions are rich in stories of brave-hearted, individual men and women in quest of new knowledge, new ways of doing things, new discoveries leading to a better life for many people.

   Indigenous tradition echoes to the footsteps of brave spirits on new paths. That is where entrepreneurs travel. Now they have a map.

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