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Lean Canvas for Indigenous Enterprise

BUILDING NATURE FINANCE PARTNERSHIPS WITH CONFIDENCE.

This tool is part of a suite developed by Pollination Foundation to help address gaps identified by partners in readiness support for Indigenous Peoples and local communities engaging in nature markets. It has been informed by lessons from world-leading projects, advisory and investment expert practitioners, and community members with lived experience. It provides a simple framework to explore whether a business idea is workable, valuable, and aligned with community aspirations.

- Treat each block as a prompt for discussion, evidence gathering, and staged decision-making rather than a one-off form.
- Ask others to review your lean canvas once completed. Test assumptions and ask for feedback.

Concept

A one-line description that aligns everyone and helps funders or buyers "get" what we are offering.

- Preferably a concept developed with community input and endorsement.
- You can try using something like the "X for Y that does Z" formula, e.g. "Netflix for Queensland Traditional Owners that helps people find local films".

1. Right to proceed

Authority, consent, and boundaries before any enterprise design work moves ahead.

PLACE	DECISION AUTHORITY
Whose Country/Place is this on? What cultural rights and responsibilities apply?	Who can approve, pause, reshape, or stop the project?
COMMUNITY MANDATE	**CONSENT PROTOCOLS**
Who asked for this? Which community body, Elders group, or other authority supports exploration?	What processes are required: e.g. meetings, cultural approvals, seasonal timing, or other steps?

2. Community foundations

Ground the enterprise in community aspiration, governance, safety, and long-term benefit.

COMMUNITY ASPIRATION

What problem are we solving, or what are we trying to strengthen/achieve economically, culturally, socially, or environmentally? E.g.

- Language, culture, healing, self-determination, nature stewardship – i.e, what's the main goal?
- Jobs for whom? Skills for whom?
- What does success look like in 5-10 years / with an intergenerational lens

PEOPLE SERVED

Who are our rights-holders and stakeholders? E.g.

- Community members (youth, Elders, families)
- External customers (tourists, wholesalers, online buyers)
- Partners/decision-makers (land councils, Indigenous corporations, government)
- "Internal customers" (e.g., rangers needing services)

GOVERNANCE & OWNERSHIP

Who owns it, who decides, and how are benefits shared? Consider:

- Legal structure (co-op, corporation, trust, social enterprise, joint venture)
- Board/elders/advisory: roles and decision rules
- Profit distribution: wages, dividends, community reinvestment, cultural programs
- Employment commitments: local hiring, traineeships

RIGHTS & DATA SOVEREIGNTY

How will we reduce the risk of exploitation? E.g.

- Who owns stories, designs, recordings, names, imagery?
- Licensing terms (what can partners use, for how long)?
- Data governance (who can store/use customer or cultural data?)
- Brand protection and authenticity controls
- Benefit-sharing arrangements in writing

CULTURAL SAFETY

What relationships and safeguards are needed for the enterprise to be safe and sustainable? Consider:

- How will customer behaviour be managed (e.g., tourism etiquette)?
- How will staff/participants be supported (cultural load, sorry business, kinship obligations)?
- What's the complaint/repair process if harm occurs?

SUCCESS MEASURES (KEY METRICS)

What financial, social, cultural, and environmental out-comes matter most (and can be measured)? E.g.

- Financial: gross margin, cash runway, repeat customers
- Social: jobs created, staff retention, youth participation
- Cultural: language use, cultural program funding, connection

3. Market / desirability

Test whether there is real demand, for whom, and why this proposition would win.

VALUE PROPOSITION / MARKET NEED

Why is there a need for this enterprise? What problem or opportunity does it address that is important enough for customers, partners, or funders to act on?

- What's our unique value for customers – simple and compelling message about why we are different and worth paying attention to.
- What cultural value is created or protected?
- What community benefit is created (not just profit)?

TARGET CUSTOMERS

Who are our specific customer segments, users, or buyers? What is their ability and willingness to pay? How do we reach them? Are there some we might want to exclude (e.g. certain industries)?

MARKET SIZE

How big is the entire market? Realistically, how much of that market could we capture in the short term and long term?

COMPETITIVE POSITION

What alternatives already exist, including mainstream options, substitute products, or doing nothing? Why is what we are proposing more compelling than the alternatives?

WHY US? (ENDURING ADVANTAGE)

Why are we best placed to meet this need? Are our advantages long term and consistent with community protocols? (Separate whether the idea is good from whether this team is the right one to pursue it.)
E.g.

- Authority/mandate to operate
- Exclusive access to places with permission and clear protocols
- Trusted relationships (community trust, local networks)
- Capability (trained workforce, rangers, cultural educators)

4. Delivery & feasibility

Test whether the proposition can be delivered well, safely, and consistently.

OFFER / SOLUTION

What solution are we offering and what are the boundaries?

- Minimum viable offering (smallest respectful version to test)
- What knowledge/ stories/ images are permitted vs restricted?
- Who delivers it (and what training/support is needed)?
- Do we need technical/ financial partners?

CAPABILITY & PARTNERS

Who delivers it, and what training, workforce capability, systems, or support are needed? Do we need technical, financial, channel, or operating partners?

ACCESS / CHANNELS

How will people find, trust, and access our offering? Consider local networks, community organisations, cultural centres, online channels, distributors, procurement panels, and industry events.

EARLY ADOPTERS / PILOTS

What are the characteristics of our early customers and partners? What is the smallest culturally safe pilot?
E.g.

- Early customers/partners (first buyers, first contracting org, first channel partner)
- Early community participants (first staff cohort, first cultural knowledge holders involved, first families/ youth groups)

OPERATIONAL RISKS & CONSTRAINTS

What practical factors could stop delivery or create harm? Consider safety on Country, rostering, cultural leave, infrastructure, data control, compliance, maintenance, and stop rules.

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5. Commercial viability

Test whether the model can sustain itself financially and what makes the economics work.

REVENUE MODEL

What income streams are expected? Which are core (e.g. ongoing sales) and which are transitional (e.g. time-limited grants)?

- Sales revenue
- Contracts/procurement (corporate/government)
- Grants/philanthropy (usually time-limited)
- Membership fees, licensing, royalites
- In-kind support (e.g. vehicles, rangers)

CAPITAL COSTS

(Capital expenditure is money spent to acquire or improve something that will last a long time.)

What capital investment is required to start and grow, i.e. what will we need to buy to make this work?
E.g. equipment, certifications, systems, vehicles, fit-out, product development, or partner support

CAPABILITY & OPERATIONS

(Operating expenditure is money spent to keep the business running now.)

What are the full costs, including those that might be less visible in mainstream plans? E.g.

- Cultural governance costs (e.g. hosting meetings, travel to consult, interpreters, cultural elements)
- Nature stewardship costs (e.g. caring for Country, access, permits, compliance)
- Seasonal shut-down periods
- Staff support – e.g. training, mentoring, supervision
- Marketing/logistics
- Admin/finance/legal
- MRV (e.g. measuring impact, maintaining certification, running audits)

COMMERCIAL MODEL

What is the intended commercial model? Does it scale? E.g.

- Are we selling a product or a service?
- What will it cost to deliver it?
- How much profit do we need?
- How will we manage the money?
- What working capital do we need?

FINANCIAL LOGIC

What are key features or levers that make the model work? E.g.

- How much can we charge? How much income is generated by each customer or deal?
- How often will people use it? Will they come back and buy again?
- How long will contracts last?
- How much money is left after the direct costs of delivery?
- How many staff do we need to run it?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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LEAN CANVAS FOR INDIGENOUS ENTERPRISE

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Tip: For the best experience, print this Lean Canvas at A3 size and fill it in by hand — scribbling, crossing out, and revising as you go often leads to sharper thinking than typing directly into a digital version.

Concept

1. Right to proceed

PLACE

DECISION AUTHORITY

COMMUNITY MANDATE

CONSENT PROTOCOLS

2. Community foundations

COMMUNITY ASPIRATION

PEOPLE SERVED

GOVERNANCE & OWNERSHIP

RIGHTS & DATA SOVEREIGNTY

CULTURAL SAFETY

SUCCESS MEASURES (KEY METRICS)

3. Market / desirability

VALUE PROPOSITION / MARKET NEED

TARGET CUSTOMERS

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4. Delivery & Feasibility

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ACCESS / CHANNELS

EARLY ADOPTERS / PILOTS

OPERATIONAL RISKS & CONSTRAINTS

CAPABILITY & PARTNERS

5. Commercial Viability

REVENUE MODEL

CAPITAL COSTS

CAPABILITY & OPERATIONS

COMMERCIAL MODEL

FINANCIAL LOGIC