ABSTRACT

Studies show that Ainu Indigenous Entrepreneurs have reinvented the production and display of Ainu cultural traditions as tourist attractions (Hiwasaki, 2000; Cheung, 2005). This paper reports on a longitudinal study of the efforts by Ainu Indigenous Entrepreneurs from 1988-2007. Contrary to expectations, commercialization of symbols of Ainu traditions has not led to the loss of Ainu culture and identity. Instead, enterprising business activities serve to promote interest in and knowledge of the traditional language and culture. At the same time Indigenous Entrepreneurship appears to be instrumental in instilling a sense of pride and dignity in the Ainu people.

INTRODUCTION

Ethnographers classify the Ainu as part of the people of the northern regions who are indigenous to the areas around the Arctic Circle (see for instance Fitzhugh & Crowell, 1988). The Ainu formerly inhabited southern Sakhalin, the Kurile Islands, northern Honshu (the main island of Japan) and Hokkaido. Today, the Ainu homeland, Ainu mosir, is Hokkaido, Japan. After the Japanese began colonization of and migration into Hokkaido during the late 1800s, the Ainu suffered socially, economically and politically as they were displaced from their land and resources and denied the right to use their traditional language and culture or practice their way of life. This legacy still exists today.

Cultural distinctiveness, a lower socio-economic situation, and lack of political power are not the only factors that define the Ainu as an ethnic group different from mainstream Japanese. The concept of ‘indigenousness’ is the main feature of the Ainu identity. However, a major problem for researchers is that there is not a single and operational definition for the term ‘indigenous people’ (Mauro and Hardison, 2000). International law provides the most accepted definition and includes the following characteristics:

- self-identification as indigenous;
- descent from the occupants of a territory prior to an act of conquest;
- possession of a common history, language and culture regulated by customary laws that are distinct from national cultures;
- possession of a common land;
- exclusion or marginalization from political decision-making;
- claims for collective and sovereign rights that are unrecognized by the dominating and governing group(s) of the state.

(Anaya 1996)

Other definitions include common geographic origins and race, religion, traditions, values, and symbols, literature, music, and folklore, nutrition, social and political organization; an internal sense of
The notion of group identity is recognized as an important factor in cultural and linguistic maintenance (Giles, Leets and Coupland, 1990, 1995). An Indigenous group’s identity is therefore central in museum displays and exhibits. Scholars argue that current issues of Ainu nationalism and identity are a heritage movement in which today’s Ainu are reconstructing their ethnic identity in response to structural inequalities and deprivation (Siddle, 1997:17-49). Ainu activism to regain self-determination, achieve a guarantee of human rights, improve their level of education and economic status has focused on cultural revitalization since the enactment of the Promotion of Ainu Culture and Dissemination and Advocacy for the Traditions of the Ainu and the Ainu Culture Act (hereafter, the Ainu Cultural Promotion Act, or CPA) in 1997.

Museums have played a central role in assisting the Ainu to retain their culture. They have the power to influence public opinion while preserving and protecting material culture. A negative feature of the museumification process is, as Anderson posits, that the state attains guardianship of tradition through museums (1991:178-184). He argues that the power of the state is increased in the museum by the reproduction of the material symbols of tradition. However, on the other hand, traditions and material culture could then be widely distributed throughout the country to reinforce the nation’s past in a visual form. Bal (1992) asserts that nineteenth century museums aided emerging nation-states to establish and maintain power relations through their use of language and portrayal of images. Teslow (1998) observes that museums depict and maintain power relations between the peripheries of colonial borders and the centers of the ruling elite. Therefore, the depiction of a certain group of people in a public museum is apt to be very different from that of a privately run one or one that is set up and run by a minority group themselves.

Ethnographic displays in museums attract tourists and consumers as part of popular culture (Armstrong, 1992). Power relations between the government and the minority people who are depicted in the exhibits might be completely overlooked by museum visitors who might instead perceive the exhibits as exotic and exciting displays from other cultures.

**HERITAGE TOURISM AND MUSEUMS**

In the process of presenting cultural materials for museum displays, everything has the potential to become an artifact. Cultural artifacts therefore include concrete items such as entire villages, as well as abstract concepts such as people, ‘ethnicity’ and ‘nation’ (Dellios, 2002:1). Importantly, artifacts that are exhibited in a museum are not confined by it.

Museums are part of the heritage tourism experience. Horne (1986) refers to tourism as public culture. He explains that tourism expresses the ways that governments and interested parties produce an image for national capitals, towns, villages, museums, art galleries, ancient temples, monuments, festivals and other interpreted performances. The creators of tourist areas manufacture versions of public culture as preferred by a certain privileged group or groups at the expense of silencing or downplaying other versions (Hollinshead 1999:267). On the other hand, expression through art and cultural performances or displays provides under-represented groups a voice with which they may attract the attention of the elite. Certain images are projected through tourism in order to depict the narratives of a given people, its places and its past. Mainstream heritage sites in many of the developed places around the world are being enlarged and transformed from areas that target the professional, affluent and genteel segment of the population to places that will appeal to the general populace. One such example comes from America, where heritage sites are being transformed by the popularity of once despised and powerless minority groups (Lowenthal, 2003:7-13). Heritage tourism appeals to the tastes of the general public by depicting the more popular aspects of an ethnic group’s culture in order to attract customers.

Even though public culture is often manufactured to make it more appealing, the issue of authenticity or the status of tradition is of central importance. This raises the question of whether the commercialization of cultural symbols generates new forms of authentic culture, or if it instead undermines the authenticity of traditional cultures. The notion of authenticity is related to the idea of traditions handed down from generation to generation (Warnier & Rosselin, 1996) and is sometimes referred to as patrimony. Patrimony explains why the Ainu language and cultural revitalization
movement expends energy and effort on defining Ainu history and former way of life rather than on how the language and culture are used and manifest today. Hoben and Hefner (1991) note that what is considered to be *traditional* today is often in reality quite untraditional. Miller (1987:9) explains this phenomenon in his observation that consumer goods and symbols such as language that evoke nostalgia are constantly being reinvented depending on the situation and expectations of both the consumer and the creator in order to create images of stability.

In heritage tourism, the travel agent is responsible for recreating and supporting traditional and authentic performances and other manifestations of ethnic identity. Although what is displayed or performed may not be entirely traditional, in order to reach long-term sustainability of heritage stewardship, widespread popular support is a necessity (Lowenthal, 2003:10). The point of heritage displays is to show the public historical facts from the point of view of the victim rather than the victor, facts that may not be found in textbooks or taught in the schools. By raising public awareness of the narratives of an ethnic group’s cultural products, intervention occurs from producers, retailers, consumers or politicians. These products are socially constructed as authentic and are marketed for sale by concentrating on the quality, authenticity, tradition and originality. Moreover, innovations are necessarily added in the process of reviving traditional methods of making a product or performing a cultural or art form to suit contemporary tastes. They are never perfect reproductions of the past (Warnier and Rosselin, 1996).

As Warnier and Rosselin (1996) note in regard to the promotion of regional revival in France, the idea of authenticity is elaborated to sell *authentic commodities*. In the ever-changing landscape of what is acceptable to the public as ‘authentic’ renditions of an ethnic group’s cultural products, intervention occurs from producers, retailers, consumers or politicians. These products are socially constructed as authentic and are marketed for sale by concentrating on the quality, authenticity, tradition and originality. Moreover, innovations are necessarily added in the process of reviving traditional methods of making a product or performing a cultural or art form to suit contemporary tastes. They are never perfect reproductions of the past (Warnier and Rosselin, 1996).

It is argued that once culture and language end up as museum displays, the actual practice of that culture and language is mainly confined to the museum and cultural villages rather than being a living culture that is practiced in the everyday life of an ethnic group (Peckinpaugh, 2000). Peckinpaugh’s observation may be an over-simplification of the process of reviving traditions, as the revival of culture involves construction and reconstruction of identity as a natural consequence. Maunati (2000) found that the process of commercializing culture leads to a shift in economic and political forces impacting on the ethnic group in her study of the Dayak in East Kalimantan. The power-relations between the government, tourist agents, museum curators, the tourists, and the Dayak themselves exert pressure on identity formation and re-formation through pressures from tourists and tourism agents, and the Dayak’s own responses to these various pressures. Identity formation and re-formation must also accommodate changes in the contemporary social situations and technology. As Bruno Latour so aptly points out, people are not born traditional; they become that way through a great deal of learning (Latour, 1991).

**METHODOLOGY**

The research design comports with well-established procedures of ethnography particularly as they pertain in the field of anthropological linguistics and is theoretically anchored in the context of the emerging literature of Indigenous entrepreneurship (Hindle and Moroz 2007). The study includes fieldwork from 1988-2007 in Hokkaido, homeland of the Ainu people. A triangulated approach employing interviews, unobtrusive observation, and documentary evidence was undertaken. Ethnographic methodologies using Milroy’s (1987) participant observer techniques were employed for Ainu events. Interviews were conducted in Japanese with museum curators, event organisers and Ainu leaders. Data on Ainu events and the production and sale of Ainu arts and crafts were sought.

The use of the ethnographic framework as a data collection method has been questioned as posing an ethical dilemma for academics perceived as being in a more powerful position as part of an elite segment of society. The question of propriety cannot be avoided, particularly since the researchers are nationals of colonial powers foreign to Japan and the Ainu. Propriety refers to “ownership; rightness…seemliness, decency, conformity with good manners” (Geddie, 1964:49 in Strang,
2003:172). Therefore, our representation of the Ainu community’s perspective with regard to cultural events, festivals, museum displays and exhibits must be addressed. The question of whether it is appropriate, proper, and suitable for an academic to represent the ‘other’ relates to the concepts of ownership and appropriation. The question of who should decide how or even whether or not representation will be constructed is important to consider (Strang, 2003:181). The position taken in this research is that ethnography is less a scientific approach than a humanitarian one and therefore, useful in any investigation concerning issues of human rights.

Moreover, it is the nature of ethnographic fieldwork to move from participation and observation to reflection and analysis (Strang, 2003:192). As a result, it is hoped that the theoretical and analytic aspects of this research will provide a valuable resource for the Ainu community. The present study may encourage them to reflect on the issues they face and enable them to ask (and perhaps answer) constructive questions that will help them achieve a more equal position in Japanese society.

Fieldwork was carried out in Hokkaido, Japan at different periods of time over nearly 20 years from 1988-2007. The first introduction to the Ainu people occurred during a two-year period from 1988-1990 through contacts at the Ainu Association of Hokkaido, while living and working in Sapporo, the capital of Hokkaido. At this time, the Ainu movement for recognition of human rights was in its infancy and we had the opportunity to be participant observers in several of the Ainu traditions that were being revived at that time such as the Cepkmuy Matsuri (Salmon Festival), traditional Ainu embroidery classes, fashion parades featuring traditional and contemporary Ainu designs, the First Ainu Cultural Festival and the International Indigenous People’s Conference in Sapporo and Nibutani.

In 1997, after the passage of a law to promote, protect and disseminate Ainu culture, we returned to Hokkaido to do preliminary fieldwork on the Ainu entrepreneurship. Five years later, in 2003, we returned to Hokkaido. Participant-observer methodology was used. Semi-structured interviews of museum curators and museum shop owners, Ainu leaders, and activists in the various towns and cities of Hokkaido were also carried out. We also met and interviewed a group responsible for producing and publishing a newsletter written in Ainu and the producers and technicians of community radio broadcasts about Ainu language and culture.

**EARLY AINU ECONOMY**

Some Ainu people in Hokkaido have recently revived authentic hunting, fishing, dancing, singing, weaving, embroidery and speech in order to provide a livelihood for themselves and their families. However, the Ainu have engaged in entrepreneurial endeavors in regards to their cultural symbols in response to interest from mainstream Japanese as well as foreigners since at least the 17th century. Until 1789, the Ainu enjoyed an autonomous stable political system with a developed economic system as the intermediaries in trade with people to the north and west of Japan (Sasaki, 1999:86-87). It is known that the Ainu traded with the peoples in Japan, China, Russia, Korea and the Kamchatka peninsula from the fifteenth century (ibid.:86) until the Tokugawa regime exerted control over all traditional domains of Ainu trade. Once the Japanese overpowered the Ainu economically, the Matsumae clan demanded they hand over the silk they had obtained from trade with the Santan (also known as the Ul’chi people), who are native to the Kiji Lake area on the Asian continent (Sasaki, 1999:87-88). The Japanese would pay handsomely for Chinese-made silk from the Santan via the Ainu.

The Ainu practice of using credit in terms of fur pelts with the Santan traders in order to satisfy the demands of the Matsumae merchants led to the eventual undermining of their economic autonomy. After 1790, the Tokugawa authorities, who feared that the Ainu might have to cede land to the Santan traders in order to pay their debts from the silk trade, they appointed Matsuda Denjuro, who had been a former explorer to Sakhalin, as representative of the Tokugawa regime in negotiating payment of Ainu incurred debts with the Santan. From then on, Matsuda set up a system whereby only licensed dealers could trade with the Santan in a designated trade area in Shiranushi, thereby prohibiting ordinary Ainu from trading (ibid.:88-89). At this time the Ainu lost an important economic base for sustaining themselves as a distinct social and economic powerhouse as the middlemen in trade with the Matsumae Clan as one of their main clients. From that time on, the Ainu were completely dependent on the Japanese for trade and cultural exchanges (Sasaki, 1999:89). Chinese and Russian merchants
took over trade in Sakhalin by the end of the 1800s and the Santan lost all political and economic influence there, although trade still went on between the Ainu of Sakhalin and the Santan.

Studies show that Indigenous and other ethnic groups engage in entrepreneurial activities, such as heritage tourism, as a response to social upheaval (Kahn, 1999; Maunati, 2000). The Ainu lost political and economic autonomy in 1868 when the Japanese expanded their territory to include Ezo (present day Hokkaido). In response to the social and economic changes, some Ainu engaged in heritage tourism during the Meiji Period (1868-1911). Ainu tourism enterprises rapidly developed after the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). It was at this time that Japan formalized its boundaries to include Hokkaido and official visits to the island by members of the imperial family and other high-ranking officers of the government became more common. The Ainu areas visited as part of these official inspection trips eventually became regarded as tourist attractions and people from the main island of Japan, Honshu, flocked to Hokkaido to see the exotic Ainu in their natural setting (Ohtsuka, 1999:92). The Japanese tourists from Honshu were reportedly fascinated by the ‘primitive’ manners and customs of the Ainu people, similar to the way Europeans and people who lived in the Eastern part of the US were attracted to see the native peoples in the Western part of North America around the same period of history.

One example of the commercialization of a traditional art form for consumption by tourists is woodcarvings. Carvings of bears and other native animals of Hokkaido developed popularity as a handcraft for the Ainu in the 1920s after Tokugawa Yoshichika, who ran a successful farm in Yakumo on the Oshima Peninsula (in the southern-most part of Hokkaido closest to Honshu), brought a carving of a bear from Switzerland to Hokkaido (Ohtsuka, 1999:93). As many Ainu farmers were struggling to make ends meet during that period, he persuaded them to carve bears to sell as souvenirs to the increasing number of tourists who were coming to Hokkaido from Honshu during the summer months. Traditionally, the Ainu people produced miniature carvings of bears on prayer sticks and men’s headdresses. Only the Ainu of Sakhalin carved full-figured bear carvings for use as fetishes to promote bear fertility (Dubreuil, 1999:337). Secular images of bears carved by the Hokkaido Ainu were not realistic being stylized representations of the animals like the ones used as fetishes, and were known as “pig bears” or “alligator bears”. However, by the early 1920s, the Ainu in Chikabumi, in the Asahikawa region, began perfecting the skill of carving lifelike bears (Dubreuil, 1999:337-338).

**AINU MUSEUMS**

In Hokkaido, an Ainu Village was set up in 1965 as part of a resettlement scheme to help the Ainu to establish an economic base through cultural tourism (Dellios, 2002:3). The theme was a traditional village that was so successful others soon followed. Even though some Ainu belittle the Kankō-Ainu (‘Ainu who work in tourism’) for pandering to the Japanese people from the mainland, heritage tourism has been instrumental in helping to create solidarity for the Ainu as a group and helped in creating an Ainu identity. A study of Ainu tourist villages found that the rituals, songs, dances and music that are performed for the tourists have taken on new meaning in the new context of representing the traditional cultural form for the public (Hiwasaki, 2000:395). Hiwasaki’s findings indicate that Ainu traditions are interpreted at the official level not as being expressions of an identity that is separate from Japanese culture, but rather “a mere variation” of it (Hiwasaki, 2000:402). Official acceptance of a minority culture as a part of Japanese culture is helpful in developing tolerance for cultural and ethnic diversity within a nation that has developed the myth of cultural and racial homogeneity.

In order to educate the public about the Ainu civilization, three Ainu families in Hokkaido took responsibility for initiating the establishment of two Ainu museums. The first Ainu museum in Hokkaido, the “Kawamura Ainu Kinenkan” [川村アイヌ記念館] (“Kawamura Ainu Memorial Museum”), was set up and funded as a private museum in Asahikawa in 1916 by Kaneto Kawamura, and is an on-going venture today, nearly ninety years since it first opened. A second Ainu museum, the Nibutani Ainu Culture Information Centre, was established in 1972. Both were established in an attempt to preserve as well as advance the development of the material culture and language of the Ainu for future generations.

Apart from the museums in Asahikawa and Nibutani, contemporary tourist areas include Ainu villages at Lake Akan and Shiraoi, where the museum includes hourly performances of traditional dance. Other museums located at Shizunai, Obihiro, Abashiri, Hakodate, Kushiro, and Sapporo each focus on a different aspect of Ainu history, traditional lifestyle, and culture.
An example of how heritage tourism can be economically beneficial for the Ainu is an enterprise set up at Lake Akan, near Kushiro in southeastern Hokkaido. Lake Akan has been a renowned tourist destination since the 1920s for mainland Japanese and, more recently, Taiwanese. A recent study indicates that heritage tourism gave the Ainu at Lake Akan a unique opportunity to openly preserve and promote their folk traditions and heritage (Cheung, 2005). Heritage tourism has therefore become a source of empowerment, allowing those Ainu who are involved to reclaim their cultural heritage (ibid.:208). Lake Akan is a successful Ainu heritage tourist area where both Ainu and Japanese people have managed to reap economic benefits and preserve Ainu cultural heritage. Furthermore, as the Ainu Kotan at Lake Akan was a gift to the Ainu seasonal workers from Maeda Mitsuko, the third successor of the Maeda family’s forestry dynasty in Hokkaido, it is a classic example of the slow process of regaining sovereignty as well as an excellent example of the future of Ainu heritage preservation (Cheung, 2005:208).

Alongside tours to Ainu villages such as Lake Akan, museums also display Ainu material culture. Many museums in Hokkaido receive public funding, but some notable exceptions such as the Kawamura Kaneto Ainu Memorial Museum in Chikabumi, Kayano Shigeru’s Nibutani Ainu Museum, and Poroto Kotan-Ainu Ethnographic Museum in Shiraoi, Hokkaido are privately funded and were conceived by Ainu people. Ainu tourist areas, including the museums, are helping to promote and disseminate information about the past and present Ainu situation and lifestyles. The enactment of traditional Ainu songs, dances, and ceremonies and the display and sale of handicrafts in these areas contribute to the construction of the Ainu identity as a distinct ethnic group within Japan.

An important aspect of each museum is the museum shop where the Ainu sell artwork and handicrafts. Traditionally, the Ainu made carvings and embroidered clothing for ritualistic purposes to attract good spirits and ward off evil spirits that cause illness, disease, floods, famines or other hardships. Contemporary Ainu handicrafts, however, have undergone a transformation since colonization to appeal to tourists from the main island of Japan and abroad. As a result, most of the religious significance has disappeared from the artwork that is for sale to tourists. Stereotypic images for sale in Ainu tourist areas include embroidered items and woodcarvings of Ainu ‘couple dolls’, and various animals, particularly the bear, the owl, and the salmon. Even though these carvings have become a trademark of the Ainu, woodcarvings of animals are a relatively new invention as animals were considered to be too sacred to represent realistically in art. Contemporary woodcarvings include items that have a utilitarian purpose in the home such as key rings, salt and pepper shakers, beer openers, wooden spoons, and letter openers. According to informants, sales of the carvings became so popular that it was impossible to keep up with the demand at first. There are numerous styles of carvings for sale in museum and tourist shops around Hokkaido.

Embroidered items include traditional designs worked onto tablecloths, coasters, traditional Ainu-style kimonos, headbands and other clothing. Embroidered designs were put at the openings of all items of clothing to prevent disease from entering into the body of the person wearing the garment. Each region of Hokkaido had its own unique design and colors and these have been revived in recent years.

Funding sources for museum exhibits and Ainu music and dance performances vary from municipal, prefectural and national government agencies to private businesses. Guidelines for the museums or exhibitions are minimal with six out of ten museums having none at all. Certain exhibits must follow guidelines stipulated in a law enacted in 1997 known as the Ainu Cultural Promotion Act (CPA) because they are funded by the Foundation for Research into the Preservation of Ainu Culture (FRPAC). Consequently, the exhibition is not allowed to address political issues. However, items sold in the museum shops are not subject to such guidelines and the Ainu are free to express themselves as long as they appeal to the buyers (the general public). (See appendix for photos of items for sale in tourist areas and museum shops.)

IWOR NETWORK OF HERITAGE SITES
More recently, a plan to set up a network of traditional living spaces for the Ainu in the towns and villages where there is a concentration of Ainu people known as iwor [often translated as ‘traditional living spaces’] was initiated in 2000. Iwor is an Ainu word referring to a remote mountain or the hunting ground of one village or a hunting territory shared by several villages. Iwor symbolizes the sense of belonging (Cheung, 2003:958). The intention of iwor is to set up a network of heritage sites
in conjunction with already existing museums and Ainu villages. It is envisaged that these sites will be places where the Ainu people will be able to practice their traditional culture and way of life, including hunting, fishing, whaling, and the use of the Ainu language. The plan includes building display facilities for cultural preservation, the construction of a cultural exchange hall, and a school that includes a study of the traditional Ainu environment, and an eco-museum. They also plan to carry out research on oral tradition, including an international exchange of research.

The main reason for developing iwor is to train Ainu children in the various Ainu traditions. However, according to an Iwor Planning Committee Panel Member, the network will also help to develop a place in which natural resources such as the thatch used to make cise (‘traditional Ainu houses’) can more easily be obtained. It is anticipated that these sites will become tourist attractions and at the same time stem the progression of the loss of Ainu heritage while simultaneously strengthening the economic environment of the communities and improving social networks. Consequently, it is envisaged that the Iwor network will help to improve the Ainu socio-economic and cultural environments. The current business plan is for iwor to consist of a network of places all over Hokkaido in towns such as Nibutani, Asahikawa, Shiraoi, Muroran, and Kushiro.

In 2000 the National Round-Table on Measures to Promote Ainu Culture and Other Matters was established in Hokkaido. The members of the Round-Table selected a committee of experts on Ainu culture. The committee noted the success of heritage tourism throughout the world in promoting indigenous communities and proposed a plan to create a network of traditional living spaces for the Ainu in the towns and villages where there is a concentration of Ainu people. The expert panel consists of anthropologists, ethnologists, museum curators, but no Ainu people. The intention of Iwor is to set up a network of heritage sites where the Ainu people will be able to practice their traditional culture and way of life, including hunting, fishing, whaling, and the use of the Ainu language. The plan includes building display facilities for cultural preservation, the construction of a cultural exchange hall, and a school that includes a study of the traditional Ainu environment, and an eco-museum. They also plan to carry out research on oral tradition, including an international exchange of research. The current proposal is for iwor to consist of a network of places all over Hokkaido in towns such as Nibutani, Asahikawa, Shiraoi, Muroran, and Kushiro.

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Difficulties for the establishment of Iwor include resource preservation, interpretation and development. According to the Foundation of Research into the Preservation of Ainu Culture (FRPAC), funding to set up the sites comes from the Japanese government via their organization but local governments are responsible for the planning, establishment and running of the sites (FRPAC informant, 3 & 10 November 2003). The panel consists of experts in historic preservation, public history, museum studies, ethnography and folk life together with local government officials. However, at the time of my data collection, one criticism is that there were no Ainu people on the advisory panel (ibid.). One panel member’s assessment of the lack of Ainu representation in the Iwor project is that since the opinions of the Ainu are so varied, it would cause problems for any Ainu who happened to be selected to be on the panel. In fact, several disputes have occurred among regional groups over the last few years because Ainu culture varies significantly from region to region (Iwor Planning Committee Panel Member informant, October 30, 2003; Cheung, 2003:958). In order to avoid disputes, the advisory committee decided that it is best to invite a variety of Ainu people to the meetings, especially those who hold special expertise in certain fields as the need arises (Iwor Planning Committee Panel Member informant, October 30, 2003). Although, the experts from amongst the Ainu population do not have the power to vote on issues and they are not permanent members of the advisory board, their opinions are being sought.

The planners of Iwor envisage that apart from ‘traditional’ Ainu displays, there will be souvenir shops and restaurants (Iwor Planning Committee Panel Member informant, October 30, 2003) from which not only the Ainu, but also non-Ainu people from the local communities will benefit. On October 18, 2004, the second joint assembly with the Ministry for Land and Transport agreed to use existing facilities as a course of action for passing on traditional Ainu culture. It was decided to put off the construction of new facilities to a later date (Hokkaido Shimbun, 19 October 2004, p.18).
DISCUSSION

The pervasive cultural value of *amae* or dependency and interdependence within a group situation is a possible stumbling block for entrepreneurship to occur in Japan. The basis of the tendency for Japanese to view personal responsibility as part of a web of social relationships can be understood from an examination of the concept of belongingness in Japanese society. Individuals are obliged to be loyal and completely committed to her/his group and to conform to group norms (Lebra, 1976:25-37). Generally, Japanese tend to be more collectivistic with a more interdependent sense of self (Fiske et al. 1995; Hofstede, 1980; Lebra, 1976; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). Lebra (1976:11) asserts that there is a tendency in Japan for interdependency and a belief in the importance of intragroup harmony. She elaborates that the group is obliged to fulfill the needs of its individual members (ibid.:1976:31). Hence, in general, risk-taking is comparatively low in Japan as there are strong social sanctions against people who stand out in the crowd. Consequently, as innovativeness is less valued, it is less likely that new ventures will be created in such a socio-cultural environment. This is one explanation why the Ainu, as a distinct ethnic group, are so reliant on government assistance. Nevertheless, private enterprises owned and operated by Ainu were initiated and have been successful, some for over one hundred years.

Nevertheless, the *iwor* initiative provides powerful potential for harmonizing an Indigenous people’s desire to protect its cultural integrity with the potential to create substantial wealth in the modern world through entrepreneurship, innovation, new venture creation and commercial best practice in a number of fields including tourism and arts marketing. The Ainu experience of Indigenous entrepreneurship potentially offers insights that could be highly valuable to Indigenous peoples all over the world. Exposition and analysis of that experience will enhance the literature and deepen theoretical understanding in the field of Indigenous entrepreneurship.

Sustainability of Indigenous Entrepreneurship

The findings of this study indicate that sales of recordings and video-tapings of oral literature, contemporary plays, speech contests, musical performances and teaching materials for the Ainu language are commercially viable. Ainu enterprises tend to be motivated to achieve a sense of social value by preserving and revitalizing their traditional culture and language. Furthermore, tourist activities involving the Ainu culture dates back to the Meiji Period (1868-1911). Tourism has provided impetus for the Ainu to preserve and display certain aspects of their culture, including elements of their language (e.g. performances and recitations of *kamuy yukar* (‘stories of the gods’) at the tourist villages). Some of the museums have played an instrumental role in this regard, such as the *Poroto Kotan* at Shiraoi, *Kawamura Kaneto Ainu Kinenkan* in Chikabumi (Asahikawa), and the Ainu Museum in Nibutani. The museums have tapped into the marketability of the Ainu language and culture through heritage tourism. Ainu Indigenous entrepreneurial activities involving the sale of linguistic and cultural symbols are successfully helping to instil a sense of pride and dignity in the Ainu.
Appendix

Plate 1: Carvings, embroidery and other items for sale in Shiraoi souvenir shop

Plate 2: Ainu embroidery, Shiraoi souvenir shop
REFERENCES


