

BUSINESS



Sho Sho Esquiro is a celebrated contemporary Native American fashion designer from a village in the Yukon (Kaska Dena, Cree Tribes)

“Up there [in Yukon], we really have to produce quality work. That is where the couture came in for me, which is kind of a white man word; for us, it just means quality. My relatives taught me to be mindful of the intention that I am putting into the work. They told me to strive for perfection. If it isn’t sewn right, unpick it, do it over again. Because if you’re sewing something for somebody and it’s 30 to 40 degrees below zero outside and their clothes are defective, somebody could get hurt.

Everything comes organically. I find the fabric first. I figure out what to make from that. I can’t rush anything. I put a lot of prayer into my work. When I’m using animals, I’m giving thanks and prayers for that relationship. It’s an organic process.

I would tell our young people that any opportunity you’re given, you should try to do it. You never know what will come of it. Be respectful of people. Don’t burn your bridges. I love to tell people, ‘Go to school, go to college,’ but I’m a dropout. I still work hard at learning new skills. I feel like I’m in school in my own way. My advice would be to try to acquire all the knowledge you can in whatever way you can.”

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Josh passionately creates positive awareness and action to overcome the purposeful eradication of Hawaiian culture and damage of US occupation through his work as a farmer, as an advocate for healthy lifestyles, and as a teacher. He founded Iwikua, a nonprofit on the westside of Kaua'i, which now has a physical wellness center, a farm, and a cultural exchange programs for youth.

“We’re working to create an opportunity for wellness in our community. By owning and operating a wellness center— we wanted to create an enterprise that can be malleable to move with what the need of the community is and do something that ultimately the community owns. We have a lot of health problems— diabetes, obesity, like most Native or Indigenous or aboriginal populations, or just human populations right now. Educating and having a positive option is the way we’re gonna get out of it; let’s just look into the past and see how we were so healthy before and create opportunities for young people to lead us back into this way of being well and healthy. Unless you are okay with the current state of a really unhealthy society— mental and physical health problems and I guess a vacancy in spirit— then you really have to do something now, or you’re a part of the problem. Our land is really unhealthy, and as Hawaiians, you have kuleana. I got into it because that’s our kuleana, an inescapable obligation to take care of the land, and the land takes care of you.

With a traditionally rooted understanding, Josh uses the farm as a catalyst to teach the young people in his community about connection to land and their traditional foods, so that they may build upon the work and wisdom of their Kūpuna.

“My work is about wanting to take back the food system and really attack colonialism at the source. At our root source, our diet, which affects everything in our bodies— how we feel, how we think, how we love, how we procreate. Food, in my opinion, affects all of that. So we’re doing aquaponic farming, which is just taking a traditional model of a food system and just shrinking it down to modern technology. We take our traditional Native knowledge and integrate it with modern technology to make it more accessible in a smaller and smaller area— that’s what we’re doing with aquaponics.

We’re trying to create for young future farmers inspiration to how they can marry traditional knowledge, with technology into food production into the future. I think it’s going to be really important. Because Native culture isn’t static, it’s always moving. It was always changing and evolving, and that’s what Native people did so amazingly across the board is learn and observe and make adjustments when it was necessary for the people and that doesn’t have to stop.”

BUSINESS

INVESTIGATION

How can we imagine future economies and business models that will center environmental and social justice, community well-being, and a high standard of living?

Citation: <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/sustainable-business-practices>

How can companies promote racial equity in the workplace?

Citation: <https://hbr.org/2020/09/how-to-promote-racial-equity-in-the-workplace>

<https://www.brookings.edu/essay/from-commitments-to-action-how-ceos-can-advance-racial-equity-in-their-regional-economies/>

How can society collaborate with Native American entrepreneurship?

Native American entrepreneurship is not just about money, it is about history, tradition, culture and language embedded in time and traditional territory. It is the creation, management and development of entrepreneurial ventures by Native American peoples for the benefit of Native American peoples. With increased recognition of rights come increased opportunities for Native American entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial ventures that focus on social, economic and environment value creation for and by Native American peoples. Native American ventures are more successful when the rights of Native American peoples are addressed and when these initiatives utilize nation-building approaches led by Native American communities. It is a means by which they can assert their rights to design, develop and maintain Native American-centric political, economic and social systems and institutions.

Citation: Rick Colbourne (2017) An understanding of Native American entrepreneurship, *Small Enterprise Research*, 24:1, 49-61, DOI: 10.1080/13215906.2017.1289856

How can western forms of entrepreneurship learn from Indigenous methodologies in business?

EXPLORATION

Read the article, Why Tribal Communities are being overlooked by investors.

Then, discuss the reasons why Tribes are ignored by investors and possible solutions to promoting Native Americans in business.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2022-11-03/how-to-stop-native-american-communities-from-being-overlooked-by-investors>