



STAY NATIVE



FRONTIER CENTRE
FOR PUBLIC POLICY
Profile Series

Profile of:

CHANELLE ARMSTRONG

"just go for it."

For Chanelle Armstrong, 31, creating her family business Stay Native was a chance to turn a growing New Zealand tourism industry into an opportunity to promote self-reliance among the Indigenous Māori. Many Māori businesses aim to help their community. "Being a social enterprise is nothing new to the Maori," she said.



Stay Native is an online platform and business that consists of Chanelle, Chanelle's husband Te Ara Armstrong, mother-in-law Pam Armstrong, sister-in-law Chala Chase, and cousin Eliza Leuluai.

The basis of the business is a single website that connects locals and international tourists with authentic cultural experiences in New Zealand. The visitor becomes immersed in a unique cultural experience involving the host. The visitor and the host communicate through the website and payments are all arranged online. The hosts are not performers and do not rehearse the experience beforehand. It is a completely authentic experience where the host shares their own knowledge of their culture.

According to Tourism New Zealand, in the year ending May 2018, international visitor arrivals to New Zealand had increased 5.3 percent, with holiday arrivals increasing by 6.5 percent. There was also continued growth in international tourists arriving in the off-peak months with a 5.6 percent increase on the previous year. Also, regional spending increased by 14.1 percent.

The Ministry of Tourism stated that spending by international tourists accounted for 17.1 percent of New Zealand's export earnings (nearly NZ\$12 billion) and almost 6 percent of the total GDP. International and domestic tourism contributes, in total, NZ\$34 billion to New Zealand's economy every year, supporting 188,000 full-time-equivalent jobs (nearly 7.5 percent of New Zealand's workforce).

In the Stay Native business model, the Māori hosts have complete control over what the experience consists of, including cost and the business takes care of the administration and promotion. Stay Native takes a 20 percent commission on every experience.

Armstrong comes from a Māori family and her parents were mixed Māori and European ancestry. The eldest of eight children, Armstrong remembers a very close-knit family, which is very common among Māori.

She lives on the top of the North Island of New Zealand. Her love of her country's beauty and her entire

family's fondness for travel helped inspire the business.

One of the business' goals is to allow Māori to see how their skills and talents can be used to promote self-reliance for their household. The dignity of work is an important value to promote among Māori, she said.

She was seeing lots of Māori struggle in their lives. In terms of statistics, she said challenges remain in terms of crime and poverty among the Māori. So, the Armstrongs wanted to combine their personal business passions and desire for business success with a means to address Māori poverty.

According to Statistics New Zealand, unemployment among Māori people is at a nine-year low, but is still double the national rate among non-Indigenous people. Much of the hope comes from youth. More than half of the increase in employment came from Māori aged 15–24 years. Also, the involvement of young Māori in education or the economy has never been higher. Now, five in every six Māori aged 15–24 years are in some form of education, training, or work.

Stay Native's goal is to find many of these people and help them start a business and improve their life. In one separate media account, Armstrong recalled one story of how she helped a young Indigenous man; "I met a man a couple of months ago who didn't finish high school. He considered himself low-

skilled and struggled to find work he enjoyed. But he had been carving for 43 years and now with Stay Native, he can be paid for using his talents."

In helping Māori find self-reliance and employment, Armstrong considers her business a "social enterprise." The idea of social enterprise is newer to New Zealand, she said, but not new to Māori. The idea of social enterprise works well with Māori values and worldview. Community members look out for each other and their communities.

After high school, Armstrong studied communications and Māori development in university. She graduated with a bachelor's degree of applied social work, but marriage and children interfered in that. "I met my husband and then six kids later," she said, with a laugh. Armstrong said her mother came up with the idea for Stay Native.

Initially, funding was a challenge, as it is for many Māori businesses, she said. However, some Māori organizations stepped up to help the family and provide them with business advice.

Another challenge, she said, was to get Māori themselves to value their products and skills. Many Māori own land and possess skills, but the challenge is getting them to see value in that and turn it into a means to become self-sufficient.

Māori, said Armstrong, are very humble people and they would

easily give away their talents, skills, and time for free. To find employment, Māori must learn to monetize their time and talents for others. Sharing cultural talents for money is still a stigma among Indigenous peoples that must be overcome. That is one way they can draw upon their traditional cultures and use it in the modern economy.

By finding Māori hosts who have skills and talents that can be monetized, the idea of Stay Native is to help them eliminate the barriers and costs of starting their own business.

As far as advice for aspiring Indigenous entrepreneurs and business leaders, Armstrong recommends that they “just go for it.” She also said to find good mentors who can help guide you during the process.

“It is helpful to have that support. Supportive structures are important,” she said.



In 2017, Stay Native was the recipient of Northland Inc.'s Pick 2017 Award for most innovative entrepreneurial ideas in the Northland. The award drew 147 entries. The “supreme winners” (which Stay Native was awarded) each won \$18,000 of services, plus mentorship and guidance.



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Joseph Quesnel is a research fellow for the Frontier Centre for Public Policy who mainly focuses on Aboriginal matters and property rights. Presently based in eastern Nova Scotia, he is from north-eastern Ontario and has Métis ancestry from Quebec.

He graduated from McGill University in 2001, where he majored in political science and history. He specialized in Canadian and U.S. politics, with an emphasis on constitutional law. He also has a Master of Journalism degree from Carleton University, where he specialized in political reporting. His master's research project focused on reformist Indigenous thinkers in Canada.

He is currently studying theology at the Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax.

In the past while as a policy analyst, he was the lead researcher on the Frontier Centre's flagship Aboriginal Governance Index, which is measured perceptions of quality of governance and services on Prairie First Nations.

For over two years, he covered House standing committees as well as Senate committees. Quesnel's career in journalism includes several stints at community newspapers in Northern Ontario, including in Sudbury and Espanola. He also completed a radio broadcasting internship at CFRA 580 AM, a talk radio station in Ottawa, and the well-known Cable Public Affairs Channel (CPAC).

He is a past editor of C2C Journal, an online Canadian publication devoted to political commentary. He wrote a weekly column for the Winnipeg Sun and contributes to The Taxpayer, the flagship publication of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

Quesnel's policy commentaries have appeared all over Canada, including the Globe and Mail, the National Post, the Financial Post, the Vancouver Sun, the Ottawa Citizen, the Montreal Gazette, the Calgary Herald, Winnipeg Free Press, among many other major papers. Over the years, he has been featured as a guest commentator on many radio and television news programs.