

The Community Forum

Welcome to The Community Forum, a collection of stories, perspectives, and ideas for action from Forum Community Relations. This edition offers an exploration of the term “economic reconciliation” in a Canadian context. In it, you’ll find a feature article from Steven Francis (Cree-Métis, from Nekaneet First Nation), a 15 minute video offering four unique perspectives on the term economic reconciliation, and a story from Anne’s early days as an Indigenous relations professional.

Thanks to everyone who has subscribed so far and thanks in advance for sharing our content with anyone else you think might be interested. You - our community - offered some suggestions for regular features in this newsletter, which you’ll find here as well: a one minute video that answers the question “What’s one thing?” (...that I can do to advance reconciliation), along with a recommended children’s book to help the young people in your life become more informed and aware about Indigenous ways of knowing and being, which we’re calling “Bobby’s Pick”.

We hope you enjoy it!

All my relations,

~ Anne



What does Indigenous Economic Reconciliation mean to you and how can it be accomplished?

By Steven Francis

“Reconciliation” for me is about the recognition of legal rights – treaty and Aboriginal rights per section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, - and the history of Indians, Métis & Inuit and their respectful place in Canadian society. Other dimensions or elements like economic, environmental, social & cultural issues are also important for

meaningful “Reconciliation” and the related process on a go forward basis.

Aboriginal (Indigenous) Economic Reconciliation?

Aboriginal (Indigenous) Economic Reconciliation is about ongoing s.35 implementation.

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

Aboriginal (Indigenous) Economic Reconciliation could be assisted by: (1) a local or regional “moderate livelihood” definition; (2) an Indigenous Policy requiring economic inclusion for Indigenous Peoples when projects are approved by Canadian Governments; or by (3) Indigenous economic inclusion in legislation or a regulatory mechanism.

An important dimension of/for Aboriginal (Indigenous) Reconciliation must include economic issues, i.e. a revenue stream linked to Government as in British Columbia and to resource development proponents and infrastructure companies or businesses for impacts to land and rights; recognition that Aboriginal (Indigenous) People have not been fairly compensated for sharing their former Lands and its proceeds with other Canadians since Confederation or when Treaties were negotiated; and a legislated or policy approach requiring local Aboriginal (Indigenous) People to participate and benefit from natural resource development occurring anywhere in the country.

Aboriginal (Indigenous) Economic Reconciliation will not be achieved everywhere in Canada quickly, so it must remain a continuous work in progress and be an enduring commitment by all senior Canadian Governments, including the federal, provincial and territorial Governments regardless of political party.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Report in 2015 challenged many Canadian sectors, the churches and the citizenry generally to address Indigenous issues and reconciliation from their own perspectives. In addition to enhanced and improved awareness, six of the 94 Calls-to-Action (CTA) dealt with professional learning & development, specifically, medical and nursing schools (CTA 24); the Federation of Law Societies (CTA 27);

Law schools in Canada (CTA 28); federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments (CTA 57); journalism programs and media schools (CTA 86); and the corporate sector in Canada (CTA 92).

Aboriginal (Indigenous) Economic Reconciliation can be a relatively easy policy solution that is local or regional or sector specific that enhances community well-being (i.e. social conditions & infrastructure); aids resource & economic development; supports a sustainable environment; and preserves rights and the land for the future. It will also contribute to better socio-economic conditions for people and enhanced self-sufficiency of communities.

How to do Aboriginal (Indigenous) Economic Reconciliation?

Aboriginal (Indigenous) Economic Reconciliation should be undertaken by Governments in consultation and partnership with national Indigenous Political Organizations, like the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the Métis Nation Council (MNC), and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) over 12 months as a starting point. Doing so, will signal to all their constituent members and communities that change from the “status quo” can be addressed, so that local conditions and circumstances improve for more Indigenous Canadians within a decade.

Alternatively, federal United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) legislation could be a mechanism that deals with Indigenous Economic Reconciliation and the many issues requiring attention between Indigenous Peoples and other Canadians as was done in British Columbia in 2019. For instance, the BC Government has begun implementing provincial legislation in conjunction with the three Aboriginal groups in BC, the First Nations

Continued on page 3

Summit, AFN BC, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, in a coordinated and ongoing fashion. The resulting efforts should lead to marked improvements in socio-economic conditions for Indigenous people in BC, however, only time will tell.

From my point of view, concrete actions should be undertaken that inform and enhance reconciliation between Indigenous People and other Canadians, so that everyone that

lives here comes to know a more complete history of the country, with the possibility that relationships between everyone change for the better and become more respectful and collaborative in perpetuity.

Follow the QR code to read the original article online at forumrelations.com and to link to the different materials and articles referenced herein.



More than one right way: A story of weaving Indigenous and Western approaches to strategy

By Anne Harding

It was 2007 and I was less than a year into my first role in Aboriginal Affairs at

Petro-Canada. Our Manager at the time, John, had recognized that at the age of 50 he was the youngest person in the department, so brought on two bright eyed and bushy tailed new recruits to shape, train, and mould in our approach to Indigenous relations. I thought I had won the lottery. My first six months were entirely focused on hanging out with community and corporate elders, asking questions and soaking up their knowledge and wisdom.

home in Calgary, AB). That winter, I fell in love with Canada's North. The jagged rocks of the Canadian Shield in Yellowknife followed by the vast expanse of the open northern tundra was exotic and beautiful, though it was the people that truly captured my heart. The openness and kindness and joy for life that I was met with was contagious, and I felt I could breathe more deeply up there.

I so wanted to do right by the community of Déline. And I wanted to do right by Petro-Canada.



Déline,
NWT

Then that winter, I got my "big break" and had the distinct privilege of becoming the "community liaison" for a drilling project in a place I had never before heard of: Déline, NWT (a mere 1600 km and three airplanes from my



As the company representative who was "on the ground" and in the community, it was my job to translate the interests of the people in the towers and the interests of the people on the land. Before my time with the project, the

Continued on page 4

Continued from page 3

company had spent a couple of years building strong relationships with community members, which resulted in an Access and Benefits Agreement that clearly spelled out expectations for both community and company related to the project. At least, everyone thought they were spelled out clearly.

What I learned that winter has shaped my personal, academic, and professional life. It turned out that even though the Agreement negotiations had happened in good faith and with the best of intentions by all parties, the expectations were not clear on either side of the 60th parallel.

When the company had talked about “making best efforts to include Indigenous businesses in the project” so the community could benefit from the economic activity, the company thought that meant that if there was an Indigenous-owned business or joint venture that was qualified to do the work and reasonably competitive on price, that business would get enough extra points in the procurement process to win the contract.



The community, however, had a different interpretation of what “making best efforts”

looked like in real life. The fact was that at the time of the Agreement being signed there were very few local Indigenous businesses that could do the work that the project needed. So the community expected that Petro-Canada, which had said in good faith that it wanted the community to benefit from the economic activity of the project, would put some effort in up front to support the community in building businesses or partnerships so that they could be involved.

What resulted from these mis-matched expectations didn't make headlines. There were no protests or rallies against the project or against Petro-Canada. The results were simply disappointment from a community who thought they had done all the right things. They had ensured that the Agreement included environmental protections for the land they hold dear, while getting excited about the new relationship with industry that came with the promise of economic activity and capacity building for the remote community. And without the revenues associated with an active well (the project resulted in what was affectionately called a “money injection well”), there was little more to be done except scratch our heads and wish things could have felt different.

When I think about the term economic reconciliation, I think about my time in Déline. What would have happened if both parties had advocated for intentional Indigenous economic inclusion, rather than just “best efforts”? What conversations might have emerged if the good faith negotiations included not just good intentions but also a discussion about specific actions that could be taken and measured? What innovative business models and new partnerships might have been formed that would outlast the six month drilling project, leading to lasting community prosperity?

It's been over a decade since my time in Déline, and progress toward greater Indigenous economic inclusion is being made. Many companies in Canada are responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #92, which calls on all of Corporate Canada to look at the ways in which they might repair, strengthen and advance relationships with Indigenous people and communities across the country through the lens of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. And there are also many



**CTA
#92**

Continued on page 5



Continued from page 4

companies who still believe that they do not have a role to play in economic reconciliation. To everyone working in the private sector across this nation, I hope that the next time you have an opportunity to affect the economic participation of others in your organization, you'll ask yourself if and how Indigenous businesses might be involved, and take action to turn those "best efforts" into true economic reconciliation.



Indigenous Perspectives Sharing our stories, learning together

In summer of 2020, Anne brought together a group of Indigenous friends and colleagues to co-create learning opportunities for Canadians. We didn't necessarily know what it was we were building together when we started, and we look forward to continuing to listen and learn from each other and Creator as we walk this journey together.

After we got to know each other a bit better, the first place we started was to record some of our conversations about common topics or questions related to Indigenous interests and experiences.

Here's a 15 minute clip featuring Art Cunningham, Steven Francis, Teneya Gwin and Anne Harding discussing the concept of Indigenous Economic Reconciliation from each of our perspectives.



What's one thing that Canadians can do to help advance economic reconciliation?

Check out this 2 minute video to find out.



What are you reading?

One of the easiest ways that Canadians can advance reconciliation is to make a choice to diversify your media intake! What books, articles, & podcasts are you reading and listening to? Send us your top picks and we'll feature them in the next edition! Check out what's on Anne's nightstand and in her earbuds right now.

Braiding Sweetgrass is my favourite book of this year! Robin Wall Kimmerer's stories offer insightful ways in which Indigenous ways of knowing and Western science come together.

I'm just getting into **A Geography of Blood**, and already appreciate how it connects the perspectives and experiences of modern day descendants of settlers to a much longer history of the Canadian prairies.



The **Red Man Laughing** podcast is my go-to place for contemporary Indigenous perspectives on current events and issues. I recently recommended this episode from Season 7 ("Celery Not Salary") to a cultural agility coaching client to share a different point of view on our western idea of "prosperity".



Bobby's Pick

The Sharing Circle by Theresa "Corky" Larsen-Jonasson

"I like this book because it teaches you that sometimes when you're mad at someone, it might just be a misunderstanding."

- Bobby Harding, 7 years old



Anne is privileged to live, work, and play in traditional Treaty 7 territory and home of Métis Nation of Alberta Region 3.

Anne is the Owner of Forum Community Relations, a Calgary based consulting company dedicated to catalyzing better communities through Indigenous relations, community engagement, and culturally appropriate facilitation.

Connect with her work at www.forumrelations.com

