

LESSONS IN RECONCILIATION

What We Heard in Saskatoon

May 13, 2019



Canadian
Chamber of
Commerce

Chambre de
Commerce
du Canada

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An opportunity, not an obligation

A great deal has been said recently about reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Businesses and Indigenous peoples will not wait, and do not need to be led by government in moving forward with reconciliation and the actions that make it meaningful. In many instances they have long been living reconciliation day-to-day, providing lessons from which government – and all of us - can learn.

Despite repeated requests of the federal government to be part of the reconciliation discussion, business has been by-and-large excluded. This unfortunate reality is why the Canadian Chamber of Commerce seeks to demonstrate to the federal government that business and Indigenous peoples are often way ahead of it in reconciliation. Reconciliation is frequently accomplished by straightforward business decisions and respectful actions, not necessarily grandiose strategies that are perceived as tokenism.

Based on the perspectives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous business and community leaders, at three roundtables in Western, Central and Atlantic Canada, we are highlighting productive relationships between businesses and Indigenous peoples and the “lessons in reconciliation” they offer.

An impossible thing to define

On May 13, 2019, we sat down with business and Indigenous leaders in Saskatoon to hear what they had to say regarding reconciliation, what it means to them, their communities and their businesses.



Those present at this roundtable agreed that reconciliation is an impossible thing to define because, like happiness, it means different things to different people. “It’s hard and it’s different for everybody,” said one participant. Participants did agree that reconciliation boils down to those involved seeing eye-to-eye on what needs to be reconciled and addressing it.

“It doesn’t matter what you call it, as long as you’re making change to move forward in a better way,” said one participant.



The reconciliation conversation has reached unprecedented levels

Those attending this roundtable shared the view that the federal government’s reconciliation agenda has not made the hoped-for progress in improving the lives of Indigenous peoples and relationships with the Crown. That said, they acknowledged that the level of discussion regarding relationships between

Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and governments has moved from “out of sight, out of mind” to a level never before seen. They also recognized that the government’s efforts – despite the best of intentions - are inevitably drawn up into politics. Business and Indigenous peoples have the advantage of being able to move forward without this burden.

Politics aside, participants said they believe the federal government could have made more progress than it has by focusing less on grandiose strategies, announcements and events. Instead, it should look more to business and Indigenous peoples to see how reconciliation is lived day-to-day, and how it is frequently accomplished by straightforward business decisions and respectful actions. One participant said that relationships with Indigenous peoples have evolved from “how can we just treat each other as

equals” to something very different that acknowledges the importance of incorporating Indigenous culture into how business is done. Participants agreed that governments must do the same for their own processes and policies.



Business can show governments the way

Participants stressed that governments at all levels need to look to where business has been successful in creating respectful, mutually-beneficial relationships with Indigenous peoples – whether it be in procurement, employment or investment - and ask them how they did it.

First Nations Bank of Canada, which received its charter in 1996, is a great example of business success in reconciliation. Originally capitalized by one of Canada's largest chartered banks, today it is an 83% Indigenous-owned and controlled full-service financial institution with branches in five provinces and the three territories, with 70% of the Bank's employees being Indigenous. The Bank provides financial services tailored to Indigenous governments, enterprises and consumers. Yet, the government does not seem to reach out to private sector successes like the Bank to get input from them on how to move forward towards economic inclusion.

Nutrien's Aboriginal Content Playbook

Nutrien believes that a fundamental contributor to reconciliation and its business is “investing in the potential of Aboriginal people and business”. The company complemented its own Indigenous inclusion practices with the early 2019 release of its [Aboriginal Content Playbook](#) for suppliers. Nutrien's Playbook seeks suppliers that not only deliver value in their products and services, but also allocate 10 per cent of a supplier's RFP evaluation to its strategy to increase Local Aboriginal Content (LAC) in its business. The objective is to increase opportunities for Indigenous peoples throughout Nutrien's supply chain. Nutrien is the world's largest potash producer and the second-largest producer of nitrogen fertilizer. With 2,000 suppliers in Saskatchewan alone, Nutrien's footprint in the province's economy is huge.



According to one of Nutrien's suppliers, the Playbook sent a “shock wave” through its supplier community. However, that initial shock softened when Nutrien provided suppliers with tools to help them meet its requirements. These tools included an Aboriginal Applicant Database, an overview of Saskatchewan's Indigenous peoples and their communities, definitions of Aboriginal Content and tips on developing Aboriginal content plans scalable to suppliers' size and capacity as well as access to procurement experts.

As a direct result of the creation and dissemination of Nutrien's Aboriginal Content Playbook, a supplier association in the community - with assistance from Nutrien - began offering Indigenous inclusion training to its members. Nutrien helped this same association organize a business-to-business event involving its members and Indigenous communities. When this association went to various Crown Corporations for assistance in creating inclusion guidelines, the response was - at best - lacking when compared to industry's. “It's a perfect example of business being way ahead of government, of creating opportunities to gain a little knowledge about each other and discuss how we can work together,” said one participant.

The City of Saskatoon looks to businesses when developing its Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. As a result, the City works with businesses on forecasting job opportunities and developing pre-employment training and education for Indigenous peoples to be qualified for upcoming positions. The City and

businesses are more likely to fulfill employment needs with qualified Indigenous people. This process meets the employment demands rather than focusing on politically motivated targets. This has helped the Indigenous communities in and around Saskatoon prepare for the jobs that will need filling.

As part of the City of Saskatoon's general procurement review, feedback regarding social and Indigenous procurement was requested from external stakeholders. The City conducted an Indigenous procurement workshop and the event was focused on convening stakeholders to understand their experiences, ideas and lessons learned in working with and developing Indigenous procurement procedures. Committed to achieving "real outcomes" for Indigenous peoples, the City's procurement strategy includes evaluation criteria that recognizes suppliers' employment of Indigenous peoples, Indigenous ownership and the extent of Indigenous persons training and development.

As the federal government seeks to modernize its procurement policies to provide more opportunities for Indigenous suppliers, it should look to business and other levels of government for inspiration. The government must look to increase Indigenous participation throughout its entire supply chain, rather than focusing solely on Indigenous-owned/controlled suppliers. After sitting down with provincial government officials to discuss engagement and a province-wide procurement policy for Crown Corporations, one Indigenous business person said, "the first words that came out of their mouths was 'we don't do anything for special interest groups.'" He is now leveraging relationships in the business community to move forward. "When you have the business community behind you," he said, "it can be easier to meet the challenges of dealing with government by showing it how it can be done. We hope that change in the business community - which is part of the government's supply chain - will lead to change in how the government acts."

Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce's Indigenous Engagement Charter Program

Saskatchewan recognizes that the most important economic opportunity for the province is bridging the Indigenous education gap while bringing Saskatchewan's Indigenous peoples to the same economic level as the broader population. As a result, the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce is preparing to launch its Indigenous Engagement Charter in September 2019. The Charter's objective is to serve as an Indigenous engagement roadmap/toolkit for businesses and to assist companies in demonstrating the role they must play in reconciliation.

Businesses signing onto the Charter agree to a 3-year commitment to undertake actions – scalable to their size and capacity - that include developing an Indigenous engagement strategy, as well as workplace education, human resource recruitment and procurement. They also agree to report annually on their progress.

The Saskatchewan Chamber will have resources available to help businesses meet their commitments.

It is important that just as businesses plan for leadership succession – government needs to do the same so that champions of reconciliation are not lost when political leadership changes. "Reconciliation is seeing Indigenous peoples in positions of leadership in business, said one participant. "It needs to be the same in government."

What lessons can government take away?



- Sit down with Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses that have been successful in reconciliation to learn from them
- Work with Indigenous peoples to:
 - Determine what needs to be reconciled and be specific about it
 - Set goals that benefit all concerned, are realistic, meaningful, doable and take Indigenous culture into account
 - Provide tools for all involved to help them achieve those goals
 - Establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for each goal and make officials accountable for achieving them
 - Make awareness training regarding Indigenous peoples – that includes their history and that of residential schools - mandatory for officials whose jobs involve relationships with Indigenous peoples and/or programs targeted towards them
 - Don't delegate reconciliation downward within government
 - Engage early when developing laws, policies or regulations with those affected. This will reduce the risk of them being rejected (based on the process as much as the content)
 - Incorporate Indigenous culture into government operations
 - Know that tokenism and paternalism will be called out and will be embarrassing
 - Ensure there is leadership succession planning in the public service so that reconciliation continues beyond political mandates, and that Indigenous peoples have the opportunity to fill those roles
 - Create pathways for Indigenous entrepreneurship. This includes expanding federal procurement thinking beyond having more Indigenous suppliers to incentives for all suppliers to have more Indigenous content in their businesses
 - Recognize that reconciliation is a (very) long-term journey and not to create expectations otherwise
- Finally, recognize reconciliation for what it is; an opportunity, not an obligation. Many businesses and Indigenous peoples have based their successful relationships on this belief. Government needs to do the same.



Roundtable Participants

John	Lagimodiere	President	ACS Aboriginal Consulting Services
Cheryl	Foster	Chief Financial Officer	First Nations Bank of Canada
Darla	Lindbjerg	President & CEO	Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce
Milton	Greyeyes	Coordinator, Supply Chain Diversity & Inclusion	Nutrien Ltd.
Lisa	Mooney	Sr. Advisor, Strategic Inclusion	Nutrien Ltd.
Maria- Ines	Maita	Engagement Lead, Indigenous Relations	TC Energy
Eric	Anderson	Executive Director	Saskatchewan Industrial and Mining Suppliers Association
Pam	Schwann	President	Saskatchewan Mining Association
Doug	Barker	President	Park Derochie (Coatings) Saskatchewan
Nick	Wright	Vice-President, Marketing & Technology	EngComp
Cliff	Tawpisin	Industry Relations Manager	Saskatoon Tribal Council
Gilles	Dorval	Director of Aboriginal Relations	City of Saskatoon
Keith	Moen	Executive Director	North Saskatoon Business Association
Thomas	Benjoe	President & CEO	File Hills Qu'Appelle Developments
Joel	Pederson	Founder & CEO	Fitness 2J2
Chris	Sicotte	Indigenous Liaison (Saskatchewan)	Aon
Eugene	Arcand	Advisor to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission	Muskeg Lake First Nation
Shaun	Howdle	General Manager	STC Industrial Contracting
Jason	Aebig	Partner	Creative Fire

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