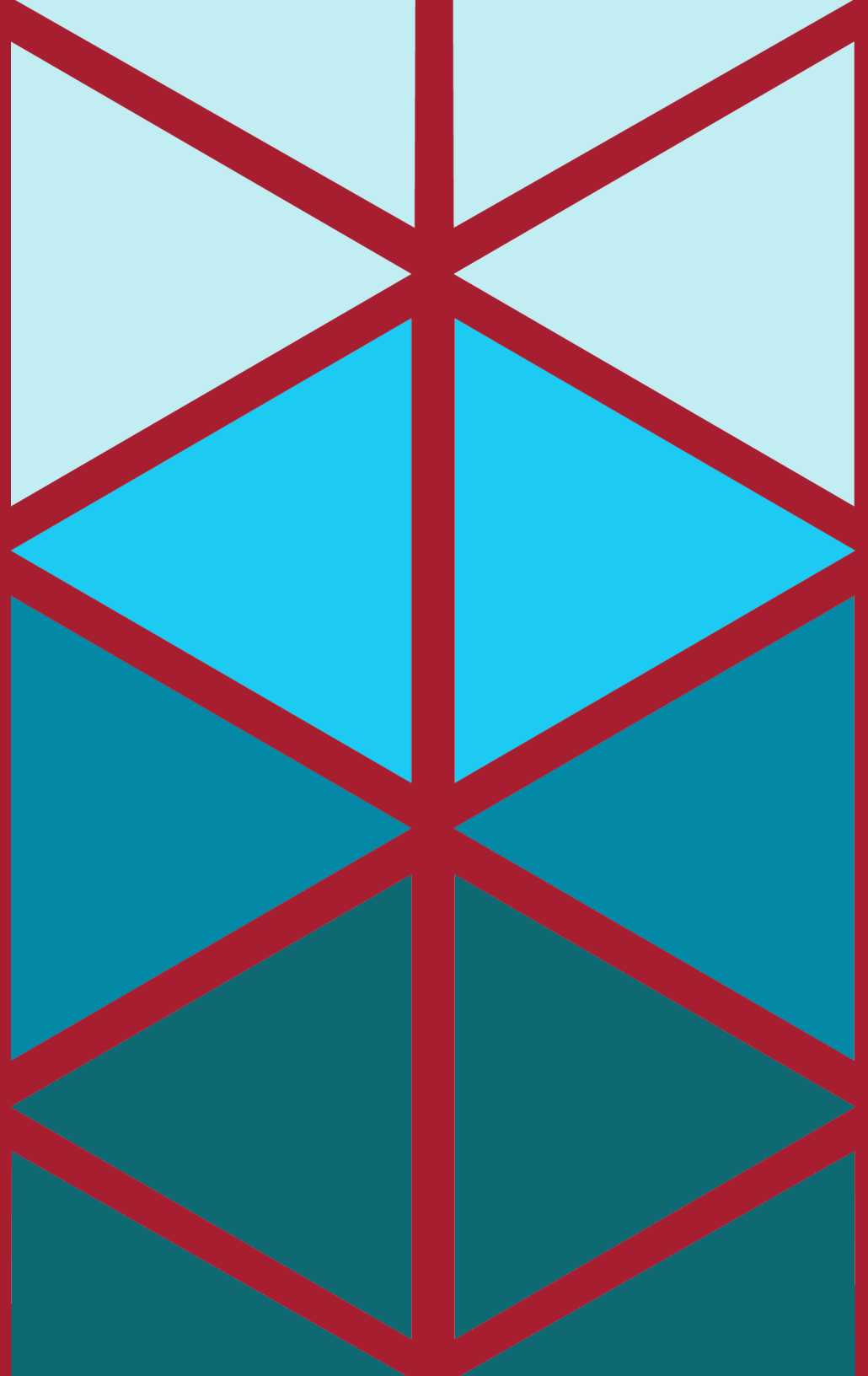
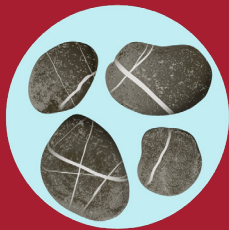




# *Step into the River:*

Section Two

- ▶ Introduction
- ▶ Context



# Introduction

## A Story of Economic Transformation

**What if economic reconciliation were a means of transforming our collective economy from the current state to a desired future state?**

We recognize and acknowledge that there is a need for dialogue to articulate what the 'future or desired state' is for Indigenous communities. One has to pay complete and full respect to the truth that First Nations have come a very long way in the past two generations. The leaders of today are the first generation not to go to residential school, not be governed by the 'Indian Agent', to control many of the administrative affairs of their own community, etc. and finally have some financial capacity to seriously play in the economic game dominating our development. Thus, many First Nations communities rely on participation in the dominant economic system in order to build a base of livelihood for their members. Discussion about the ailments of this economic system can cause tension and division in dialogues, and yet moving towards these tensions is what is needed in order to articulate what communities desire both in the present and in the future.

**So in this sense, economic reconciliation is more than just normalizing relations with First Nations, it's about transforming the economy for all of our collective well-being.** This document describes the current state of economic reconciliation, both in BC and more broadly in Canada. Based on our conversations with Indigenous leadership in the economic development sector, it envisions a future economy centred in well-being and rooted in Indigenous values and knowledge. A B.C. Economic Reconciliation Framework offers a set of values, mind shifts and guide posts to support how practitioners, local governments, organizations, institutions and industry partners can engage in reconciliation to meet that desired outcome.

## Process: Engagement with Indigenous leadership and practitioners

With the foundational intention of exploring the elements of a future economy, which is meaningful for reconciliation,

we embarked on a year of deep engagement to better understand and represent Indigenous views on economic reconciliation. This process consisted of generative dialogues with many Indigenous thought leaders and practitioners, as well as non-Indigenous individuals representing Indigenous-led organizations, across B.C. Stemming from the commitment to righting the historical wrongs of colonialism, and centering Indigenous ways of being and Indigenous economies, this work has been based on engagement with Indigenous leadership in the economic development sector.

We held our first convening for Economic Reconciliation in January 2020 in Vancouver. During this session we also invited non-Indigenous agencies working in close

collaboration with Indigenous communities to listen in on the conversations. In the middle of our process, the COVID-19 pandemic began, which challenged us to find new ways to complete the work. We responded by moving our engagement process online, holding a series of virtual convenings during 2020 with a working group of practitioners from First Nations and Indigenous organizations across B.C.

Whereas the initial session in January served as a starting point for understanding how economic reconciliation is being thought of amongst Indigenous leaders, our subsequent online convenings took a deeper dive into key issues that would enable the framework to take shape in a more definitive way.



Photo of Convening participants, January 2020

Our dialogue sessions during 2020 included the following:

- **What is Economic Reconciliation?**
- **The Role of Women and Matriarchs in Economic Reconciliation:**
  - Rematriation in relation to leadership, governance and traditional laws and teachings and the role of women in the new economy.
- **Traditional Governance Structures and Economies:**
  - Looking at how First Nations are balancing modern and traditional governance and economic development and influencing the transformation to a new economic system.
- **Economic Reconciliation and Non-Indigenous Stakeholders:**
  - Identifying actions that need to be taken by non-Indigenous residents, municipalities, and regions to engage in economic reconciliation.
- **Cross-Provincial and Regional Collaboration:**
  - How do we make advances together for Economic Reconciliation? How do we remove the silos and work collaboratively for the collective benefits of Indigenous communities and future generations to come?
- **Mapping the Ecosystem of Economic Reconciliation Actors and Initiatives**
- **Investment Readiness for Indigenous Communities**

## Our approach to building this framework

Following our engagement sessions we explored the stories, experiences, and data we had gathered, looking for themes and truths about reconciliation. As will become more apparent throughout this work, there are many different viewpoints even within Indigenous circles. We have written our interpretation of these viewpoints, and have tried to express what they mean to us. In doing so, we have used approaches that hold various spaces for various knowledges and understanding. Our choice to use these approaches reflects our desire to create space for something different and not more of the same. One must not only question and be critical of current systems, but also be creative and open to a new knowing. We must find space for the best of everything and use all of it to develop a new space for our well-being today and forever.

A few approaches that help inform the lens through which we are creating this framework include Two-Eyed Seeing, Community Economic Development, Developmental Evaluation and the Two Loops framework.

### **Etuptmumk: Two-Eyed Seeing**

Etuptmumk, or Two-Eyed Seeing, enables us to hold western and Indigenous spaces and perspectives simultaneously. In simple terms, Two-Eyed Seeing means that with one eye, we view the world through Indigenous ways of knowing and with the other eye, we view the world through Western, or Eurocentric, ways of knowing. Elder

## Navigating complexity:

How do you familiarize yourself with a new worldview and how do you start adapting your workplace or organization for multiple worldviews to be truly practiced?

Albert Marshall (Mi'kmaw) shares that taking the strengths from multiple perspectives provides for the realization that beneficial outcomes are much more likely, in any given situation, when they are brought together into play for the benefit of all.<sup>1</sup> Through this process, we have attempted to translate Indigenous worldview into a traditionally Western style of reporting. Writing in general is a Western approach to communicating, as Indigenous knowledge-sharing is often done through oral traditions and ceremony. We have turned to Indigenous knowing to inform the vision of this framework. The basis of our knowledge has been the voices of Indigenous peoples in economic development. At the same time, since this document is written for primarily non-Indigenous readers we have been conscientious of how to communicate this knowledge in a Western way in order to invoke action and commitment to reconciliation. In this process, we have also been committed to a holistic approach to reconciliation, recognizing the need to engage in healing and truth-telling around intergenerational harm and trauma in order to envision a collective future economy.

### **Reconciliation and Community Economic Development (CED)**

CED principles and practices<sup>2</sup> are complementary to Indigenous values and ways of being. Embedding principles of Community Economic Development, this process

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1 "Two-Eyed Seeing." [www.integrativescience.ca/Principles/TwoEyedSeeing/](http://www.integrativescience.ca/Principles/TwoEyedSeeing/)

2 What is CED? <https://www.sfu.ca/ced/certificate/About.html>

## 5 Principles of Community Economic Development



stems from the understanding that whatever direction reconciliation takes, it is inherently local and place-based. Although calls to action may come from the provincial, national and global frameworks, it is up to local and regional decision-makers and practitioners to adopt and enact these commitments.

CED has been heavily influenced by Indigenous economic approaches, especially in Latin America. The principles of CED and Indigenous worldviews have a lot in common including holism, interconnectivity, systems thinking, grounding initiatives in place, and centering well-being and the environment, and not just production/profit. Reconciliation is an implementation of CED in that it:

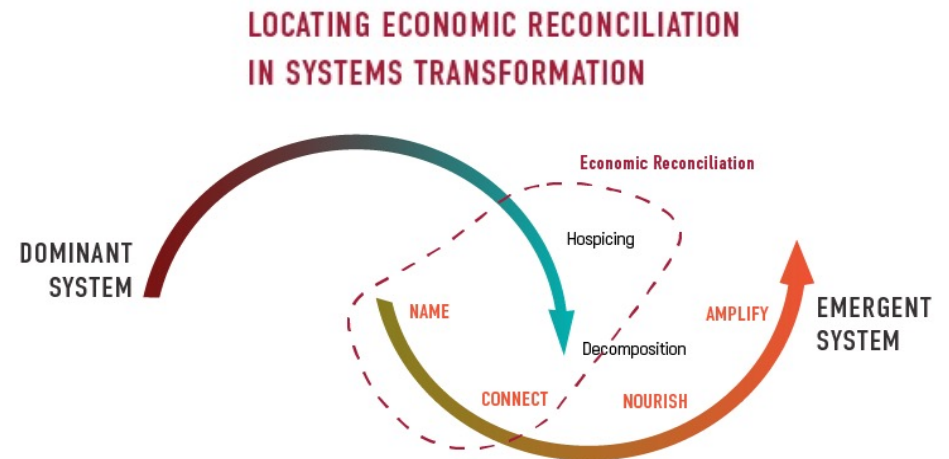
- Recognizes place as it pertains to Indigenous people's connection to their traditional territory and the reciprocal relationship to it
- Supports Indigenous control of resources and decision-making
- Respects the rights, needs and aspirations of Indigenous peoples and their livelihoods, with ongoing commitment to building and maintaining strong working relationships and partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous entities and communities
- Considers the well-being of multiple generations and not just the present one
- Respects the unique cultural knowing of each First Nation.

### Developmental evaluation: Reflecting and iterating

In doing this work, we were committed to evaluating ourselves and the process along the way. Rather than using Summative Evaluation at the end to ask “how did this turn out”, we used Developmental Evaluation<sup>3</sup> to respond to new learnings along the way and change the course of our analysis as necessary. By asking a series of questions, “What happened?”, “So what does that mean”, and “Now what do we do differently?” alongside the process, we continuously adapted the direction of the framework to build on new learnings and directions. Similar to other circular learning concepts such as “double-loop learning”<sup>4</sup> used in education, Developmental Evaluation focuses not on committing to a predetermined set of outcomes to achieve, but rather on testing and challenging previous assumptions made in order to shift the process itself in order to be open to different outcomes.

### Two Loops framework: Locating economic reconciliation in systems transformation

Another concept that influences the transformative nature of this framework is the “Two Loops” framework, described by Margaret Wheatley and the Berkana Institute.<sup>5</sup> Two Loops is a framework that describes the state of systems or organizations and how they transform. More specifically, it frames an “ongoing evolutionary process of living and dying that organizations and systems are dancing in, often simultaneously.”<sup>6</sup> This model enables initiatives to articulate where they are intervening within this process of systems change. In seeing reconciliation as a space



Locating Economic Reconciliation along the Two Loops Framework (Wheatley and Frieze)  
Design adapted from Solutions Lab.

3 Developmental Evaluation. Patton, Michael Quinn (2011).

4 Single and Double Loop Learning. <https://organizationallearning9.wordpress.com/single-and-double-loop-learning/>

5 Using Emergence to take Social Innovations to Scale. Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze (2006). <https://www.margaretwheatley.com/articles/emergence.html>

6 Two Loops Framework. Solutions Lab. <https://www.strategicdesign toolkit.com/two-loops>

of transformation, we recognize the need for economic reconciliation to meet the needs of Indigenous People within the current economic system while also being used as a means for transforming into a new economy that centers well-being of all beings.

Our choice to use these approaches reflects our desire to create space for something different and not more of the same. One must not only question and be critical of current systems, but also be creative and open to a new knowing. We must find space for the best of everything and use all of it to develop a new space for our well-being today and forever.

## Indigenization, Decolonization and Reconciliation in Canada

Our journey in creating this framework has also involved an exploration of what is meant by Reconciliation and how it relates to other processes such as Indigenization and Decolonization. These terms are sometimes used interchangeably, but they are distinct yet interconnected processes. As will be discussed throughout this work, there is a common practice of tokenizing reconciliation when one is claiming to be engaging in it without committing to and enabling the processes of decolonization and Indigenization. These three are interconnected, and they are all necessary to facilitate the others. Before getting further into this document, it is important to understand more fully what these processes are and how they are interconnected. Readers can think about these processes not as having fixed universal definitions but as being specific to the context





in which they are showing up. In this case, our particular context relates to the sphere of land use and community economic development in the region of British Columbia. These understandings are important especially in working towards systems-transformation in the Canadian economy.

### **Decolonization**

Decolonization requires questioning and dismantling the Western worldview in places where it has asserted dominance in structures, processes and knowledge systems over those of Indigenous peoples. It is a process of naming and shifting imbalances in power for the purpose of valuing and balancing many worldviews. For the economic sector in particular, it involves examining and dismantling the institutions and structures in place that favour settler society with regards to land use, business ownership and entrepreneurship, financing and community development.

For individuals of settler identity, decolonization involves examining in what ways settler colonialism has afforded you privileges in our current economic system. It also calls for reflections on how you and your ancestors came to arrive on the land you are on, and who you are in relation to the Indigenous peoples in the community where you live. Decolonization invites you to develop an awareness of worldviews that are different from your own.

### **Indigenization**

Indigenization is also a process that works to find balance between different worldviews by embedding Indigenous

knowledge, values and ways of being into systems and practices. These ways of knowing can serve to transform systems, places, and hearts where desired.<sup>7</sup> Two-eyed seeing is important here because Indigenization is not about merely replacing Western knowledge and practices with those of Indigenous people, but rather bringing Indigenous and Western knowledge systems into conversation with one another, recognizing that both can be harnessed for the well-being of all.

### **Reconciliation**

While Indigenization and Decolonization are oriented towards finding balance in worldviews and respecting and allowing for multiple ways of being and knowing to guide us, reconciliation in this context refers to the process of healing relationships built on abuse, exploitation, oppression and violence. This relationship has led to ongoing trauma, mistrust, inequality and continued privilege of one group over another. With reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada, this harmful relationship spans multiple groups of people and many generations over hundreds of years.<sup>8</sup> While there is a common assumption that reconciliation is primarily the work of Indigenous people, the onus is in fact on settler individuals and society to ameliorate the harm done, and requires a great deal of

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<sup>7</sup> Indigenization, Decolonization and Reconciliation, Pulling Together: A Guide for Curriculum Developers. <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationcurriculumdevelopers/chapter/indigenization-decolonization-and-reconciliation/>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

emotional work and reckoning for all those involved.

## Braiding the three processes together

Reconciliation is certainly an important and necessary beginning: the start of recognizing, knowing and understanding of the history and impacts of ongoing settler colonialism on Indigenous peoples. Because these are deep wounds in need of healing, the process of reconciliation is ongoing. Decolonization can be viewed as the 'undoing' of colonial origins and Indigenization is the resurgence of Indigenous knowing and being. Indigenization moves beyond tokenistic gestures of acknowledgment or basic inclusion done in a colonial way, to a shift in practices, structures, institutions, systems, and so forth.<sup>9</sup> In short, all processes work towards honouring sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples and Nations, whilst recognizing and allowing for their unique ways of knowing to be respected, practiced and learned in the ways that other ways of knowing and doing have been.

Instead of looking for an endpoint where all of these processes lead to, we invite you to take a step along the journey and see where it takes you. As you dig deeper with each step you take, recognize that mistakes will be made along the way. Patience and an openness to change is absolutely required along this learning path and opportunities for growth will present themselves.

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<sup>9</sup>What is Decolonization? What is Indigenization? Centre for Teaching and Learning. <https://www.queensu.ca/ctl/teaching-support/decolonizing-and-indigenizing/what-decolonizationindigenization>

**“If you feel connected to the future of this country, and if you feel responsible for the future, then you need to care about reconciliation, for the sake of the future of this country.”**

Chief Justice Murray Sinclair,  
Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

## **What this Document is (and what it isn't)**

There are many assumptions about what a Framework for Economic Reconciliation is. Some might expect it to be definitive: an “expert” analysis grounded in “facts”. Others might expect it to be a “how to” guide that will distill the “best practices” for reaching some desired end state. These approaches to frameworks tend to be based in a colonial worldview and used by institutions or organizations that were created from a colonial foundation. Building on our approaches described previously and stemming from the commitment that this document be grounded in Indigenous knowledge forms, it is important up front to describe what this document truly is, and what it isn't.

### **A living framework**

The Framework is a living document and is likely to evolve over time. At present it incorporates Indigenous insights concerning economic reconciliation within the current state, provides a vision for a desired future state, and outlines a framework to begin the process of transformative reconciliation. The insights presented here are not meant to be firm conclusions, but rather findings that are open to interpretation and evolution. Moreover, given that this work is about transforming our economic system, which is in itself a living process, the evolving nature of the economic

system is reflected in the evolving nature of the document and our learnings.

We invite readers to join us in evolving through the process of learning and adapting, to see from many worldviews, to resonate with the heartbeat of all things in ceremony, to the land and all living creatures, and to the interconnectedness of everything. In order to do so, people need to hear, listen, learn, connect, and be grounded in the beauty of it all.

### **A document for multiple audiences**

This is written to non-Indigenous practitioners and readers, and is accountable to Indigenous people and communities. We acknowledge that this binary division does not come close to capturing the complexity that exists across these distinctions, especially when considering the shared experiences of oppression and resilience amongst Indigenous, Black and Communities of Colour on Turtle Island. And still, the reality is that there are two very distinct experiences owing to the course of settler colonialism within Canadian legal systems and society at large, and this binary is in need of addressing if we are to transform our systems.

**To our Indigenous participants and readers:**

This framework is a process in listening, learning, and designing from your shared visions, ideas, thoughts, feedback, questions, curiosity, and leadership. This work has always been about breaking down silos, working collaboratively, creating relationships, building trust, and understanding the places where you are coming from. Most importantly, it is about your own unique cultures across B.C. as being the foundation of placed-based Economic Reconciliation embedded in values and a holistic approach to well-being for your people, land and resources, and for all the generations to come.

**To our non-Indigenous participants and readers:**

This framework is here to support your journey in creating space for your entities to engage, from an Indigenous worldview, with your local neighboring First Nation(s) in Economic Reconciliation and the hard work required to establish a trusting working relationship, and a collaboration and partnership with them.

This is **not** another guide or toolkit outlining a step-by-step process to move through economic reconciliation as a checklist of action items. This is a space to tell non-Indigenous readers that in terms of mandates, resources and recommendations, you have a lot of information to support your learning, help you to understand, and make commitments to economic reconciliation. You have the means to create space for curiosity to begin or deepen your Economic Reconciliation journey. Most importantly, you have

the ability and responsibility to transform systems, policy, practices, values and colonized processes to be respectful and inclusive of local Indigenous worldviews.

This document is not a pan-Indigenous representation or guidebook. The unique cultures of all 204 First Nations with 32 Nation language groups in BC stand alone. Each Nation's cultural knowledge needs to be shared and learnt locally with their non-Indigenous allies, businesses, partners, etc.

This document is a way of truth-telling about how Indigenous peoples in British Columbia currently experience the economy. It holds up a mirror to our economy that is currently failing in being able to support the well-being of all Canadians. It is written to disrupt the current path, the status quo of thinking about business as usual, and to take stock of the reality of our current state.

**This document is an invitation to be curious and imagine what else is possible beyond our current economic system.**

## How to use this document

There are many components to this document. It is a framework, a guide, a community engagement report, and a resource reservoir. To help organize content and guide your curiosity, throughout the document there are special framework pop-out boxes for the following topics:

**Quick Reference:** A brief list of resources related to a specific topic that you can access while you're reading. More resources are available in our Appendices and Resources section.

**Case Study:** Case examples related to specific content to see how economic reconciliation is being applied in practice.

**Deeper Dive:** These are special call-outs and spreads that offer a more detailed story related to a particular topic.

**Navigating Complexity:** Because reconciliation in Canada is a highly complex issue, there are certain tensions and questions that are not possible to conclude on. Throughout the document we pose key questions for deeper reflection or research, along with naming key tensions that do not have a perfect answer per se, but are still in need of navigating.



“If we believe the story that humans are better, separate and different from other living beings, then we get the world we have now, one that is wrought with crisis, trauma, and grief, a place we all understand now. One pathway toward transformation to greater sustainability is to re-infuse our understanding of the world with the values of respect, reciprocity, reverence, responsibility, and relations. Western science, by definition, does not incorporate values, Dr. Kimmerer reminded us—it can’t. Indigenous knowledge, which retains its understanding of interconnection and the values of survival and reciprocity that are at stake, can help bring balance to guide us in these critical times.”

Braiding the Ways of Knowing

# Context

## Why an Economic Reconciliation Framework?

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the pressures of climate change, all regions across Canada are facing severe and increasing economic challenges. In order to deal with these immediate and long-term economic challenges, everyone must be empowered and free to contribute to the sustainability of their children and future generations.

First Nations recognize all of these challenges and have been loudly sending the message for decades that Indigenous prosperity and well-being is essential to Canada's and every region's prosperity. There is immense potential that is currently unrealized in Indigenous human resource capital, business acumen, lands and resources, and in their spirit. With a collaborative effort between corporate Canada, small businesses, educational and health institutions, and all levels of government, economic reconciliation can and should be integrated into the economic strategies of BC and Canada.

A framework for Economic Reconciliation that is specific to BC is pivotal given the unique context of First Nations and Crown relations in this region. A majority of the province does not have treaties signed, and there are many Title and Rights court cases within the region. There are 204 First Nations (which is 1/3 of the National total of 603), many of which comprise small, rural and remote communities facing barriers to infrastructure, financing, capacity, and more. There are about 32 major family language groups in BC, meaning there are many diverse cultures and worldviews. Moreover, BC is the first province in Canada to formally implement UNDRIP through provincial law, confirming its commitment to UNDRIP as a framework for reconciliation.

Not all Indigenous communities are at the same stage in terms of governance, capacity, self-determination and economic independence. Some of the earliest industry and First Nation community partnerships were grossly one-sided with minimal participation from First Nation

communities. The evolution of collaboration agreements, impact benefit agreements (IBA's), and opportunities agreements created avenues of participation through employment, business development, procurement and joint venture agreements. Today, many First Nation communities are capable of taking on a much greater stake and being full equity partners and participants in many areas of community economic development.

Economic Reconciliation has been formulating in the minds of many throughout the ecosystem and is being driven by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous leadership across public, private and social sectors. This framework is built on their thought leadership, commitments and actions and is written to encapsulate as much of it as possible, to demonstrate the reality of the work ahead and to build upon the foundation being laid.

## So whose land is it anyway?

Some may have heard the term “Land Back” and may wonder what it means. The words ‘Land Back’ may seem obvious, yet, they include a complex and intergenerational web of Indigenous ideas or movements. It could mean numerous things such as,

- the immediate and literal restoration of land ownership

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10 Aboriginal Lands and Resources: An Assessment of the Royal Commission's Recommendations. Kent McNeil (1997). [https://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3771&context=scholarly\\_works](https://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3771&context=scholarly_works)

**“Aboriginal title to specific lands, it is argued, does not exist until it has been proven in a court of law. This argument is wrong because it rests on a rebuttable presumption that the Aboriginal peoples didn't occupy and use the lands when Canada was colonized by Europeans, when we all know the opposite to be true.”<sup>10</sup>**



- to First Nations;
- reaffirming connection to the land which is more than stewardship, sustainability and protection of certain lands and Mother Earth;
- fulfilling treaty rights, land claims and the land question, self-governing agreements for self-determination.

No matter what meaning is attached to the words ‘Land Back’, First Nations have the right to reconnect with their traditional territories in very deep and meaningful ways.<sup>11</sup>

A majority of B.C. is built on unceded Indigenous land, which means that it does not have a treaty attached to the land, or a right to control over that land. BC’s legal foundation is on uncertain footing and this is consistently being tested in the courts. In fact, Troy Hunter has asserted that,

**“Since B.C. has failed to disencumber the majority of Indian title in the province and to reconcile with all of the First Nations through treaties or otherwise, it’s only a matter of time that more land is removed from provincial jurisdiction by way of aboriginal title court declarations and for that matter, the land question may become a major going concern for all British Columbians”.** <sup>12</sup>

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11 LAND BACK! What do we mean? <http://4rsyouth.ca/land-back-what-do-we-mean/>

12 The land question should be a matter of concern. Troy Hunter (2017). <https://vancouver.sun.com/opinion-the-land-question-should-be-a-matter-of-concern>

## **Quick reference: Learn more about Land Back**

### **CBC Unreserved**

Land back, two words that have become popular at rallies, gatherings and protests across Canada. Today on Unreserved, what does it mean to give land back to Indigenous communities?

[Land back: Movement to reclaim Indigenous land grows](#)

### **Yellowhead Institute**

[Land Back Media](#)

[Weaponizing Injunctions: How Canada criminalizes Indigenous land defense](#)

As Canada moves towards a strategy of sectoral self-governance —slowly deconstructing the Indian Act rather than negotiating all-encompassing self-governance agreements — the management of reserve lands is becoming a critical component of this model and a supposed means for First Nations to ‘catch up’ to the speed of business and build prosperity for their communities.

[The Rise of the First Nations Land Management Regime in Canada: A Critical Analysis](#)

Thus, an Economic Reconciliation framework specific to BC is paramount given the legal, cultural and justice considerations for this region. It is time for all British Columbians to seriously partake in all aspects of Economic Reconciliation. It has been formulating of many throughout many systems and is being driven home by many Indigenous leaders, First Nations, Indigenous entities for some time now.

**“Land is a fundamental asset for sustainable economic development. This is no different for Indigenous communities in Canada and it is a reason why land rights are critical for self-determination. However, land is much beyond just an economic asset for Indigenous peoples. Land provides sustenance for current and future generations; it is connected to spiritual beliefs, traditional knowledge and teachings; it is fundamental to cultural reproduction; moreover, commonly held land rights reinforce nationhood.”** <sup>13</sup>

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13 The Importance of Land for Indigenous Economic Development. OECD. <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/fc2b28b3-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/fc2b28b3-en>

Yellowhead Institute’s Land Back report delivers devastating critique of land dispossession in Canada. Data shows First Nations overwhelmingly lose in the courts to corporations and government.

[Land Back: A Yellowhead Institute Red Paper](#)

[Cash-Back-A-Yellowhead-Institute-Red-Paper.pdf](#)

